The world’s population has grown from about 2.5 billion in 1950 to 7.5 billion now and is expected to rise to 9.7 billion by 2050. But countries are experiencing demographic change at different rates and it is important to understand which places are likely to have the largest absolute numbers of children, potential workers, or those typically retired or needing care.

This fact sheet illustrates the size of these demographic groups across continents and countries and over time, as if comparing the dimensions of stars and planets.

By using circle area to represent population size and applying a ranking over time, we trace the constellations of the most staggering global demographic shifts in modern history. These will have implications for the patterns of production and consumption, investment and interest rates, and social and diplomatic institutions.

By 2050, India and China will still have the largest child and working-age populations (Charts 3 and 4) but higher fertility in Africa will see its countries rise in the child- and working-age-population rankings. Nigeria can expect a larger potential workforce than the US. In Europe, only Russia and the UK are expected to feature in the top 25 countries by size of their working age population.

Some countries’ total populations are expected to have peaked and will decrease in rank (Chart 2). These include Russia, Germany, Japan, and China. But the story becomes more complex when we look at age groups separately.

1. THE OLDEST OLD
Population aged 80+ by continent and continent rank, 1950-2050

Take those aged 80+, the most likely group to require care. Their population was about 14 million in 1950 and is now 125 million. By 2050, it is projected to be 430 million. The majority will reside in Asia, but every region will see a rapid increase (Charts 1 and 6). Indeed, even as European countries see soaring retirement-age populations (Chart 5), Asian countries will replace them at the top of the aged-population-size rankings. For example, Indonesia currently has fewer people of retiring age than either Italy or Germany but within a generation it is expected to have more than both of these countries put together.

In each case, it is instructive to compare the rankings: Australia is not featured among the top 25 with respect to total population (it ranks about 50th), yet it is within the top 25 when it comes to those aged 80+.
2. TOTAL POPULATION
Resident population by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050

Note: Areas of circles, which represent population size, are not comparable across charts (e.g. children circles are not drawn relative to total or working age)
4. WORKING AGE
Population aged 15-64 by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050

- China: 333m
- India: 223m
- USA: 102m
- Russia: 67m
- Japan: 49m
- Germany: 47m
- Indonesia: 40m
- UK: 34m
- Italy: 30m
- Brazil: 30m
- France: 28m
- Ukraine: 24m
- Nigeria: 21m
- Bangladesh: 21m
- Pakistan: 20m
- Spain: 19m
- Poland: 16m
- Vietnam: 16m
- Mexico: 15m
- Egypt: 12m
- Turkey: 12m
- Thailand: 11m
- Argentina: 11m
- Myanmar: 11m
- Romania: 11m

Year:
- 1950
- 1960
- 1970
- 1980
- 1990
- 2000
- 2010
- 2020
- 2030
- 2040
- 2050

India: 1.1b
China: 795m
Nigeria: 242m
USA: 235m
Indonesia: 213m
Pakistan: 206m
Brazil: 148m
Bangladesh: 136m
Ethiopia: 127m
DR Congo: 118m
Mexico: 105m
Philippines: 99m
Egypt: 97m
Tanzania: 81m
Russia: 79m
Vietnam: 70m
Uganda: 61m
Kenya: 60m
Iran: 58m
Japan: 55m
Sudan: 51m
Iraq: 51m
South Africa: 45m
UK: 44m
5. OLDER PEOPLE
Population aged 65+ by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050

- China: 24m
- USA: 13m
- India: 12m
- Germany: 7m
- UK: 5m
- Russia: 5m
- France: 5m
- Japan: 4m
- Italy: 4m
- Ukraine: 3m
- Indonesia: 3m
- Pakistan: 2m
- Spain: 2m
- Brazil: 2m
- Bangladesh: 1m
- Poland: 1m
- Nigeria: 1m
- Canada: 1m
- Vietnam: 1m
- Mexico: 1m
- Belgium: 1m
- Romania: 0.9m
- Iran: 0.9m
- Sri Lanka: 0.8m
- Netherlands: 0.8m

Country ranks:
1. China
2. India
3. USA
4. Brazil
5. Indonesia
6. Japan
7. Bangladesh
8. Mexico
9. Russia
10. Pakistan
11. Germany
12. Vietnam
13. Iran
14. Italy
15. Turkey
16. Thailand
17. France
18. UK
19. Korea
20. Spain
21. Nigeria
22. Egypt
23. Philippines
24. Ethiopia
25. Canada

6. THE OLDEST OLD
Population aged 80+ by country and country rank, top 25 countries, 1950-2050

- USA
- China
- India
- UK
- Germany
- France
- Russia
- Italy
- Ukraine
- Pakistan
- Japan
- Indonesia
- Sri Lanka
- Poland
- Mexico
- Bangladesh
- Kenya
- Vietnam
- Australia
- Brazil
- Germany
- Italy
- Mexico
- France
- Bangladesh
- Colombia
- Poland
- Pakistan
- Iran
- Argentina
- Australia

Population figures from 1950 to 2050 are shown for these countries, with a focus on the USA, China, India, and Japan.