Because of the inexorable power of demographics to shape the future, much about the story of human life on earth through 2050 has already been determined: births through 2010, working-age populations in 2030, and the elderly in 2050. The three figures that accompany the world map focus on the three most populous nations (China, India, and the United States) and the most populous nations of Africa, Latin America, and Western Europe (Nigeria, Brazil, and Germany).

**1950–2010**

**FERTILITY FALLS**
From 1950 through 2010, fertility rates fell sharply in most major countries, with the United States as a notable exception since 1980.

**2010–2030 WORKERS OF THE WORLD SHIFT**
The working-age populations of 2030 have already been born. In that year, the populations of people between the ages of 20 and 59 will be larger in many countries than they were in 2010 but smaller in several important others.

**2010–2050**

**FEWER WORKERS IN RELATION TO ELDERS**
Even in Brazil, India, and the United States, despite their growing working-age populations through 2050, the people of working age will account for declining fractions of the national populations by then because of their longer life spans.

**2050**

**THE RISE OF THE OLDEST OLD**
In many countries, the skyrocketing populations of those 85 and older will have far fewer working-age people per capita on whom to depend.