



Increasing your local knowledge

## Demographics

If the 21<sup>st</sup> century is anything like the preceding one, we will see some remarkable changes in society. For example, consider how the size and structure of the human race has changed since 1900. The world population has grown from 1.5 billion people to over 6 billion, and life expectancy at birth has more than doubled. In 1900 the largest city was London with 6 million people – now Tokyo contains a staggering 26 million. Population continues to be one of the most important issues facing society, at a local, national or international level. The following notes aim to raise your awareness of important demographic aspects particular to your region and how these can influence students and their decision to progress onto formal education.

### UNDERSTANDING DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographics or demographic data refers to population characteristics and commonly-used factors include ethnic background, age, income, disabilities, educational attainment, home ownership, employment status, and even location. Understanding demographics and changes over time (trends) is extremely important when it comes to engaging with potential students. If you are familiar with your potential “audience”, you can more successfully understand what factors may be important in their decision to progress onto post-compulsory education. If you do not know your audience, you will not meet your goals.

That is why it is important to spend time analysing the area before you start looking for potential students and identifying key groups. Each group has certain needs. They watch different television shows, read different magazines and have different aspirations in terms of their qualifications. Knowledge of what they do, what they want

and what they are concerned about will help you to better engage with potential students, helping them to understand the benefits of a formal education. In short, if you know your audience, the students will follow!

### SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

- Why is understanding the demography of your region important?
- Give examples of how it can impact students
- Examine your region’s demographics, including aspects such as:
  - ◊ Population
  - ◊ Age
  - ◊ Gender
  - ◊ Ethnic background
  - ◊ Type of location (rural v. urban)
  - ◊ Household income
  - ◊ Employment and unemployment
  - ◊ Most important industries
  - ◊ Qualifications
  - ◊ Schools
  - ◊ Any other relevant issues
- Discuss their relevance
- Discuss how these issues may influence the way you engage with students

### FURTHER INFORMATION

- Local sources
- [Up my street](#)
- [Neighbourhood statistics](#)
- [Government statistics](#)
- [General register Office for Scotland](#)
- [European Statistics](#)
- [UK Data archive](#)
- [Statistical Information for Scotland](#)