



University and College Union

‘Further, higher, better’

**Submission to the government’s
second Comprehensive Spending
Review**

Section 19

19 Demographics

Although the pace of demographic change varies slightly among the four countries of the UK, the number of people aged 15-29 in the UK in the period 2004-8 will continue rising, and then fall by about 2% in the decade following 2008, with much sharper falls at the younger end of the spectrum. The impact of the fall in numbers of young people in 2008-18 will presumably be felt first in the further education sector, and then slightly later in higher education.

England

The overall numbers of people in England aged 15-29 will continue rising to 2008, then fall slightly in the decade following 2008. In the period 2004-8, the number of 15-19 year-olds in England will increase slightly, while there will be approximately 10% increases in the number of 20-24 year-olds and 25-29 year-olds. In the period 2008-18, the number of 15-19 year-olds will fall by 12%; there will be a slight fall in the number of 20-24 year-olds, and an 11% rise in 25-29 year-olds.

England, 15-29 year-olds

England					
Ages	2004	2008	2018	2004-8	2008-18
	thousands	thousands	thousands	% change	% change
15-19	3,261	3,308	2,928	1.5%	-11.5%
20-24	3,172	3,469	3,362	9.4%	-3.1%
25-29	3,104	3,399	3,773	9.5%	11.0%

Source: Government Actuary's Department, 2004-based projections. Percentage calculations by AUT

Wales

The overall numbers of people in Wales aged 15-29 will continue rising to 2008, then fall slightly in the decade following 2008. In the period 2004-8, the number of 15-19 year-olds in Wales will increase slightly, while there will be an 8% increase in the number of 20-24 year-olds, and a 14% rise in 25-29 year-olds. In the period 2008-18, the number of 15-19 year-olds will fall by 14%; there will be a slight fall in the number of 20-24 year-olds, and a 14% rise in 25-29 year-olds.

Wales, 15-29 year-olds

Wales					
Ages	2004	2008	2018	2004-8	2008-18
	thousands	thousands	thousands	% change	% change
15-19	199	202	173	1.7%	-14.2%
20-24	186	201	194	8.2%	-3.7%
25-29	156	177	201	13.7%	13.6%

Source: Government Actuary's Department, 2004-based projections. Percentage calculations by UCU

Scotland

The overall numbers of people in Scotland aged 15-29 will continue rising slightly to 2008, then fall by 7% in the decade following 2008. In the period 2004-8, the number of 15-19 year-olds in Scotland will decrease slightly, while there will be a 6% increase in the number of 20-24 year-olds, and an 11% rise in 25-29 year-olds. In the period 2008-18, the number of 15-19 year-olds will fall by 17%; there will be an 8% fall in the number of 20-24 year-olds, and a slight rise in 25-29 year-olds.

Scotland, 15-29 year-olds

Scotland					
Ages	2004	2008	2018	2004-8	2008-18
	thousands	thousands	thousands	% change	% change
15-19	328	326	272	-0.6%	-16.5%
20-24	325	345	316	6.0%	-8.3%
25-29	291	323	333	10.9%	3.0%

Source: Government Actuary's Department, 2004-based projections. Percentage calculations by AUT/Nathfe

Northern Ireland

The overall numbers of people in Northern Ireland aged 15-29 will rise by 5% to 2008, then fall by 6% in the decade following 2008. In the period 2004-8, the number of 15-19 year-olds in Northern Ireland will decrease slightly, while there will be a 12% increase in the number of 20-24 year-olds, and a 9% rise in 25-29 year-olds. In the period 2008-18, the number of 15-19 year-olds will fall by 14%; there will be a 10% fall in the number of 20-24 year-olds, and an 8% rise in 25-29 year-olds.

Northern Ireland, 15-29 year-olds

NI					
Ages	2004	2008	2018	2004-8	2008-18
	thousands	thousands	thousands	% change	% change
15-19	133	129	111	-3.3%	-14.0%
20-24	117	130	117	11.6%	-10.2%
25-29	107	116	125	8.5%	7.5%

Source: Government Actuary's Department, 2004-based projections. Percentage calculations by UCU

Comment

Given the importance of further and higher education to the development of the skills and knowledge needed by young people, we urge the government to maintain the numbers of students in both sectors in the decade from 2008. Although numbers of young people are projected to decrease in the decade to 2018, we consider it would be a mistake simply to maintain the percentage of young people in further and higher education. Maintaining the proportion of

those participating in further and higher education would imply a cut in the numbers of learners and students. This would be a retrograde step at a time when the sort of skills and knowledge being learned in further and higher education will be more – not less – important to the economy and society, particularly given the Chancellor's goal of making universal education or training available to the age of 18. As the government's 2005 14-19 Education and Skills white paper said: 'Numbers staying on post-16 have improved but are still too low far down the international league table.' Following on from this came the target of increasing participation at age 17 from 75% to 90% over the next 10 years.¹¹³ To achieve this will require significant additional investment to 2015.