

# Yr Iaith Gymraeg: un miliwn o siaradwyr Cymraeg erbyn 2050?

## Welsh Language: A million Welsh speakers by 2050?

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### A MILLION WELSH SPEAKERS BY 2050?

A stated goal of the Welsh Government is to have a million Welsh speakers by 2050 (<https://cymraeg.gov.wales/splash?orig=/Mwy/1MiliwnErbyn2050>). How feasible is this goal? We used the ONS LS to look at the characteristics of those who gained ability in Welsh over a ten year period (2001-11) and those who retained an existing ability.

We define 'retaining ability' as a characteristic of people resident in Wales in both 2001 and 2011 who said in 2001 that they had at least one Welsh language capability (see box 'Language questions in the Census'), and who also said in 2011 that they had at least one capability. We define 'gaining ability' as not reporting a capability in 2001, but doing so in 2011, and 'losing ability' as reporting a capability in 2001 but not in 2011.

Tables 1-3 are based on LS members resident in Wales in both 2001 and in 2011. The odds of gaining Welsh increased with age and with the number of co-resident Welsh speakers. The odds of retaining Welsh increase with age and with the number of other Welsh speakers in the household. The odds of retaining Welsh speaking ability were lower for married / partnered persons than for non-married persons. Women were more likely to gain Welsh speaking ability than not gain it, as were people with a degree. The odds increased with the number of other Welsh speakers in the household. Those aged 25-44 were more likely to not gain Welsh than to gain it.

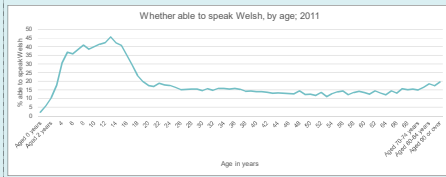


Figure 1: Source: 2011 Census Microdata Individual Safeguarded Sample (Regional)

### MAIN POINTS

- The peak rate of Welsh speaking in 2011 was age 13. If all people retained their ability to speak Welsh, the one million target would be easily surpassed
- After a big post-school decline, the odds of retaining Welsh speaking increased with age
- There are many current Welsh speakers in England; this is strongest in people who were in Wales for longer periods (at least two censuses). The million Welsh speaker target may be easier to achieve if it includes people living in England
- There is a relatively large group of people in England who have previously spoken Welsh; encouraging language retention in England would help build the overall numbers of Welsh speakers, including those who might later return to Wales

### PRIF BWYNTIAU

- Y gyfradd uchaf o siarad Cymraeg yn 2011 oedd 13 oed. Pe bai pawb yn cadw eu gallu i siarad Cymraeg, byddai'n hawdd rhagori ar y targed miliwn
- Ar ôl dirywiad mawr ar ôl ysgol, cynyddodd yr ods o gadw'r Gymraeg gydag oedran
- Mae yna lawer o siaradwyr Cymraeg cyfredol yn Lloegr; mae hyn ar ei gryfaf ymhlith pobl a oedd yng Nghymru am gyfnodau hirach (o leiaf dau gyfrifiad). Efallai y bydd yn haws cyflawni'r targed miliwn o siaradwyr Cymraeg os yw'n cynnwys pobl sy'n byw yn Lloegr
- Mae yna grŵp cymharol fawr o bobl yn Lloegr sydd wedi siarad Cymraeg o'r blaen; byddai annog cadw iaith yn Lloegr yn helpu i adeiladu nifer gyffredinol y siaradwyr Cymraeg, gan gynnwys y rhai a allai ddychwelyd i Gymru yn ddiweddarach

Table 1: Odds for gaining Welsh language compared with losing it (n=1713)

Factor	Odds ratio	P-value	Confidence intervals	
Age (16-24 years)	1			
25-34 years	5.54	<0.001	3.76	8.16
35-44 years	5.24	<0.001	3.35	8.18
45-54 years	5.62	<0.001	3.43	9.23
55-64 years	6.92	<0.001	4.17	11.5
65-74 years	5.72	<0.001	3.24	10.11
>74 years	6.5	<0.001	3.4	12.46
Number of co-resident Welsh speakers (0)	1			
1	6.94	<0.001	4.99	9.66
2	9.8	<0.001	5.85	16.42
3	19.41	<0.001	8.9	42.34

Adjusted for sex, highest education qualifications, socio-economic status, marital status  
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Table 2: Odds for retaining Welsh language compared with losing it (n=3533)

Factor (reference category)	Odds ratio	P-value	Confidence intervals	
Age (16-24 years)	1			
25-34 years	2.68	<0.001	1.97	3.64
35-44 years	2.99	<0.001	2.08	4.32
45-54 years	4.83	<0.001	3.28	7.11
55-64 years	7.07	<0.001	4.73	10.57
65-74 years	8.64	<0.001	5.62	13.28
>74 years	13.64	<0.001	8.26	22.53
Marital status (Never married / partnered)	1			
Married / civil partnership	0.63	0.001	0.48	0.83
Separated / divorced	0.94	0.728	0.64	1.36
Widowed	1.01	0.972	0.63	1.62
Number of co-resident Welsh speakers (0)	1			
1	11.79	<0.001	8.83	15.73
2	22	<0.001	13.87	34.91
3	54.68	<0.001	26.54	112.63

Adjusted for sex, highest education qualifications, socio-economic status  
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

Table 3: Odds for gaining Welsh language compared with not gaining it (n=18327)

Factor	Odds ratio	P-value	Confidence intervals	
Sex (male)	1			
Female	1.23	0.017	1.04	1.46
Age (16-24 years)	1			
25-34 years	1.08	0.653	0.78	1.5
35-44 years	0.6	0.004	0.42	0.85
45-54 years	0.64	0.02	0.43	0.93
55-64 years	1.21	0.336	0.82	1.78
65-74 years	1.2	0.401	0.78	1.84
>74 years	1.15	0.574	0.71	1.84
Marital status (Never married/partnered)	1			
Married / civil partnership	0.47	<0.001	0.38	0.59
Separated / divorced	0.66	0.008	0.49	0.9
Widowed	0.82	0.324	0.55	1.22
Qualifications (none)	1			
1-4 O Levels/CSEs/GCEs (any grades), 5+ O Level (Passes) equivalent	1	0.989	0.73	1.37
2+ A Levels/VCEs, 4+ AS Levels, HSC Degree / Higher Degree	1.22	0.232	0.88	1.68
Vocational/Work-related / Foreign Apprenticeship	1.93	<0.001	1.47	2.53
Number of co-resident Welsh speakers (0)	1			
1	18.15	<0.001	14.77	22.32
2	28.73	<0.001	21.56	38.28
3	110.47	<0.001	70.66	172.71

Adjusted for socio-economic status  
Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

### LANGUAGE QUESTIONS IN THE CENSUS

A question on Welsh language capabilities has been asked of people in Wales for many censuses; the questions asked in 2001 (left) and 2011 (right) are shown below. In 2011, a new question was asked in all parts of the UK (with slightly different wording) about main language used. In England (right, top), a tick box was available for English. In Wales, a tick box was used for 'English or Welsh' (right, middle and bottom). It is therefore not possible to distinguish Welsh as opposed to English, unless it was specifically stated in the write-in box.

18 What is your main language?

English → Go to 20

Other, write in (including British Sign Language)

17 Beth yw eich prif iaith?

Cymraeg neu Saesneg → Ewch i 20

Arall, nodwch (gan gynnwys iaith Arwyddion Prydain)

18 What is your main language?

English or Welsh → Go to 20

Other, write in (including British Sign Language)

Figure 2: 2001 Census forms (ONS)

Figure 3: 2011 Census forms (ONS)

Figure 4: 2011 Census forms (ONS)

Table 4: LS members resident in Wales 2001 and in England 2011 with Welsh capability<sup>1</sup> 2001, by main language 2011

Table 5: LS members resident in England in 2011 and previously resident in Wales, with main language Welsh in 2011

Main language 2011	Persons
English	326
Welsh	23
Other	<10
Total	<359

Number of censuses (1971-2001) resident in Wales	Number of censuses present				4 TOTAL
	1	2	3	0-9	
1	0.9	0.9	0.9	0.9	15
2+	15	12	11	38	

Source: ONS Longitudinal Study

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Welsh speakers – especially at school – have a variety of main languages. Fig 5, from cross-sectional census microdata, shows ability to speak Welsh by main language, for usual residents of Wales in 2011.

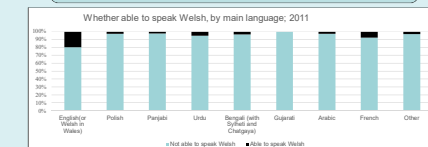


Figure 5: Source: 2011 Census Microdata Individual Safeguarded Sample (Regional)

### WELSH SPEAKING DIASPORA

The LS also gives us scope to look at Welsh speakers in England. Table 4 shows LS members who had some Welsh ability in 2001, and moved from Wales to England in the period 2001-11 (see Fig 6 for age distribution of Welsh net migration). At least 6% of these people stated that Welsh was their main language in 2011. Table 5 gives information about LS members resident in England in 2011 and with Welsh as their main language, who had previously been resident in Wales. All previous censuses are considered (unlike Tables 1-4). LS members were more likely to have Welsh as a main language if they had been resident in Wales for at least two censuses.

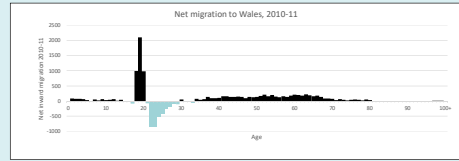


Figure 6: Source: 2011 Census Special Migration Statistics (Table MU01AUK)

### ABOUT THE ONS LS

The ONS Longitudinal Study is a 1.1% sample of all persons of any age or gender, identified as having an LS date of birth (one of four dates, spread through the year) and usually resident in England and Wales, who completed a census form and have joined through birth or immigration, since 1971 (Shelton et al 2019)

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Shelton, N, Marshall, C, Stubbury, R, Grundy, E, Dennett, A, Tomkinson, J, Duke-Williams, O, and Xun, W, Cohort Profile: The Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study (The LS), *International Journal of Epidemiology*, Volume 48, Issue 2, April 2019, Pages 383-384g. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ije/dy243>

