

MEETING:	LANGUAGE COMMITTEE
DATE:	JANUARY 17 2013
TITLE:	CENSUS 2011: FIRST RESULTS ON WELSH LANGUAGE
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PURPOSE OF REPORT:	FOR INFORMATION

1. Background

- 1.1. The Census was held on 27 March 2011, and is a key source of information on the Welsh language: Indeed, Census statistics provide us with the most reliable evidence on the situation of the language.
- 1.2. The 2011 Census question asked, “Can you understand, speak, read or write Welsh?”- answered by ticking one or more of five boxes (one for each category and one for “none of these”) in any combination.
- 1.3. The first Census 2011 results on the Welsh language were published on December 11 2012, and below are noted some of the key findings for Wales and for Gwynedd.

2. Key Results for Wales.

- 2.1. Between 2001 and 2011, there was a decrease in the number and proportion of people aged 3 and over able to speak Welsh in Wales. The decrease was due to demographic changes in the population (e.g. fewer children, older adults, the loss of older cohorts with higher levels of Welsh speakers) migration, and changes in skills between the two Censuses.
- 2.2. The proportion of people able to speak Welsh decreased from 20.8% in 2001 to 19.0% in 2011 (a decrease of 1.7 percent). Despite an increase in the size of the population, the number of Welsh speakers decreased from 582,000 in 2001 to 562,000 in 2011. It should however be noted that the number and proportion of Welsh speakers was higher in 2011 than the equivalent figures for 1991 (18.7% and 508,000 people.)
- 2.3. Differences between 2001 and 2011 varied by age group- with considerable increases for younger children (aged 3-4), a slight increase for adults 20-44, and decreases for other age groups.
- 2.4. The proportion of people aged 3 and over able to speak Welsh decreased in nearly all local authorities. The largest decreases were in areas with higher proportions of Welsh speakers. Carmarthenshire saw the largest percentage drop- from 50.3% in 2001 to 43.9% in 2011 (a decrease of 6.4 percent).

3. Key Results for Gwynedd

- 3.1 The number of Welsh speakers in Gwynedd has decreased from 77,846 to 77,000 between 2001 and 2011. This fall of 846 individuals is equivalent to a decrease of 1.1% in the number of Welsh speakers in the county. Between 2001 and 2011, the county's population increased by approximately 5,000- a rise of 4.4%. Given this increase in population, the percentage of Gwynedd residents who speak Welsh has decreased from 69% to 65.4% (a decrease of 3.6 percent).
- 3.2. Although these are worrying figures, it should be borne in mind that the decrease in the number and percentage of Welsh speakers is lower in Gwynedd than some of the other Welsh language strongholds e.g. Carmarthen and Ceredigion (see 2.4. above).
- 3.3. Looking at the tendencies by age group, we see a decrease of 1,430 in the number of children aged 3-15 who can speak Welsh (a decrease of 8.7%). However the percentage of the whole population aged 3-15 who can speak Welsh has increased from 88.6% to 89.1% (an increase of 0.5 percent). This is because the decrease in the number who can speak Welsh represents 83.5% of the overall decrease in the age group (1,712 people). And so, although fewer within this age group can speak Welsh, the percentage of Welsh speakers has increased, as the number within this group has decreased in Gwynedd between 2001 and 2011.
- 3.4. In the 16-64 age group, we see that the number of Welsh speakers has increased by 95 (an increase of 0.2%). In spite of this, the percentage of Welsh speakers has decreased from 65.6% to 62.5% (a decrease of 3.1. percent). The increase in the number of Welsh speakers represents 2.5% of the whole increase in this age group (3,764 people). With this age group, the total number and the number of Welsh speakers have both increased, but the percentage of Welsh speakers has decreased. This would suggest that emigration by Welsh speakers and in-migration by non-Welsh speakers contribute significantly to the statistics.
- 3.5. For the 65+ age group, the pattern noted in 3.4. above is repeated, with an increase of 878 in the number of Welsh speakers (an increase of 3.5%), but a decrease in the percentage of those who can speak Welsh (from 63.5% to 58.0%- a decrease of 5.5 percent). The increase in the number of Welsh speakers represents 16.6% of the total population increase within this age group (2,937 people). This would suggest a tendency for older non-Welsh speakers to move to the area.

- 3.6. Looking at Welsh language skills, the number of people who can speak read and write in Welsh has decreased from 68,395 to 65,921, a decrease of 2,474 people (3.6%). As a percentage of the whole population, there was a decrease from 60.6% to 56.0% (4.7 percent).
- 3.7. The number of people who can speak and read Welsh, but who cannot write it has increased from 2,609 to 3,947, an increase of 1,338 people (or 51.3%). As a percentage of the whole population, there was an increase from 2.3% to 3.4% (or 1.0 percent).
- 3.8. The number of people who can understand spoken Welsh only has increased from 6,663 to 8,125, an increase of 1,462 people (or 21.9%). As a percentage of the whole population, there was an increase from 5.9% to 6.9% (or 1.0 percent).
- 3.9. The number of people with no Welsh language skills has increased from 26,953 to 31,177, an increase of 4,224 people (or 15.7%). As a percentage of the whole population, there was an increase from 23.9% to 26.5% (or 2.6 percent).
- 3.10. With Welsh language skills, there was a small increase in the number of people who can speak and read and who can understand Welsh, but a larger decrease in the number who can write Welsh. It would appear that the language skills suite is narrowing. We can also note a possible link to immigration: While the population of Gwynedd increased by 5,000, there was an increase of 4,224 in the number of people who have no Welsh language skills.

4. Next Steps

- 4.1. It should be stressed that only preliminary findings are available to us at the moment. We can only analyse the data by age group, county and nationally at the moment.
- 4.2. We can expect language data to ward level by the end of January and as more Census data becomes available over the coming months, we can start comparing different data sets in order to get a better picture of the situation of the Welsh language in Gwynedd. We expect to have enough evidence to start a full analysis by the end of October 2013.