



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Welsh language in Wales (Census 2021)

Census 2021 data about the Welsh language skills (ability to understand spoken Welsh, speak Welsh, read Welsh, and write Welsh) of people aged three years or older living in Wales.

**First published:** 6 December 2022

**Last updated:** 6 December 2022

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

# Contents

**Introduction**

**Main points**

**Ability to speak Welsh**

**Ability to speak Welsh by age**

**Ability to speak Welsh by local authority**

**Ability to speak Welsh by age and local authority**

**Ability to speak Welsh by small area**

**Other Welsh language skills**

**Future publications**

**Quality and methodology information**

**Contact details**

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

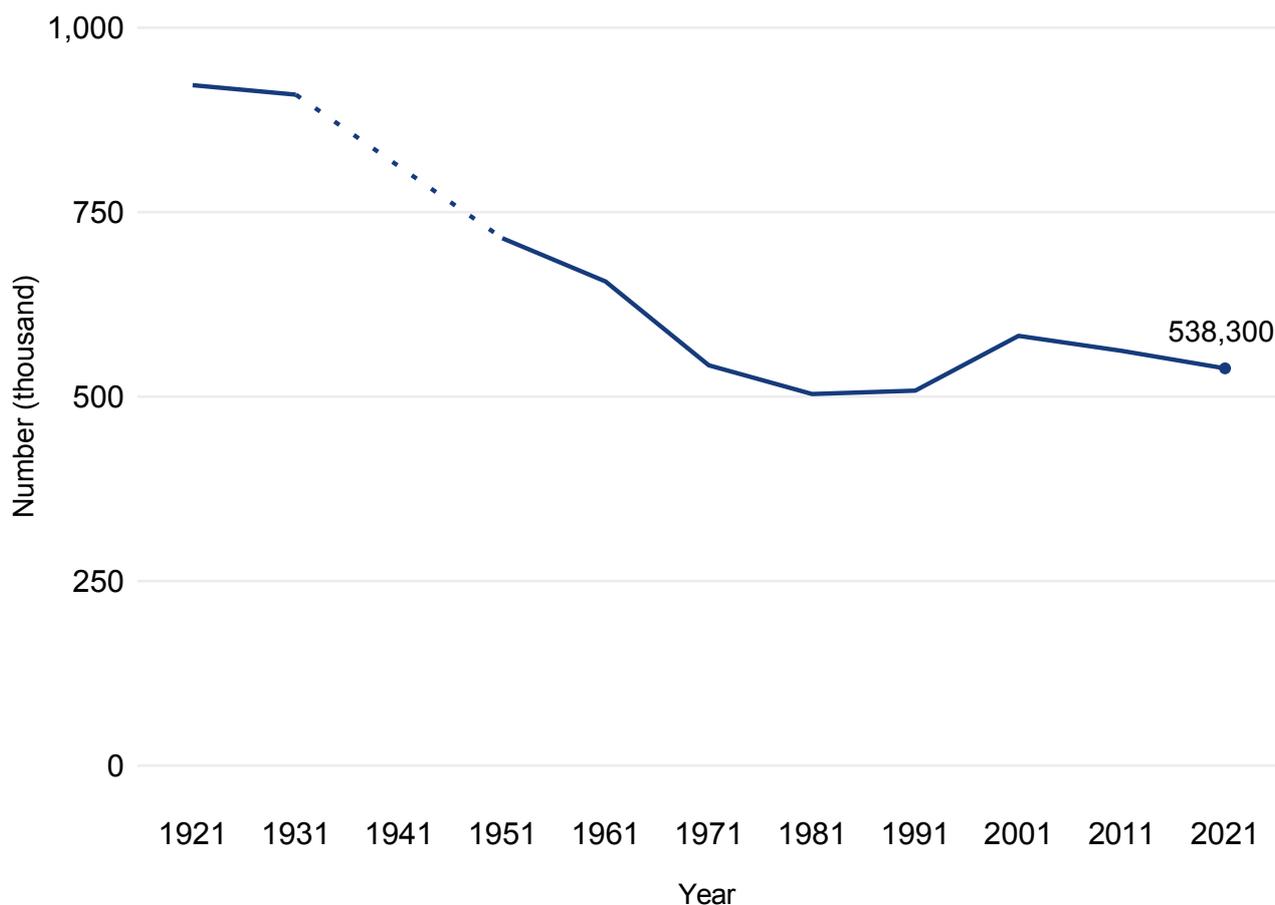
# Introduction

Information about Welsh language skills in the census is based on a person's self-assessment of their ability. In some cases, especially for children, Welsh language ability was reported by another person, for example, a parent or guardian.

Census 2021 was held during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, on 21 March 2021. This followed periods of lockdown, remote learning for children and many people were working from home. It is not known how the pandemic may have impacted people's reported Welsh language ability (or perception of the Welsh language ability of others).

## Main points

**Chart 1: Number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, 1921 to 2021**



This line chart shows how the number of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh has changed over the last century, with the number decreasing -reaching a low of 503,500 in 1981. Increases were seen between 1981 and 2001, but the number of able to speak Welsh has since decreased.

Source: Census of population, 1921 to 2021

Note: The census did not take place in 1941 due to the Second World War.

## Ability to speak Welsh

- On Census Day, 21 March 2021, an estimated 538,300 usual residents in Wales aged three years or older reported being able to speak Welsh, or 17.8% of the population.
- This is a decrease of around 23,700 people since Census 2011, and 1.2 percentage points lower than Census 2011.
- The percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh in 2021 was the lowest ever recorded in a census. The number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh in 2021 was the third lowest recorded in a census, higher than in both 1981 and 1991 only.

## Ability to speak Welsh by age

- The decrease in both the number and percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh is mainly driven by a fall among children and young people who reported as being able to speak Welsh.
- Children aged 5 to 15 years old saw a 6.0 percentage point decrease in the proportion reported as being able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021. A similar decrease was seen for 3 to 4 year olds.
- There were small increases in the percentage of people able to speak Welsh in the younger adult age groups (people aged 16 to 19 years old, and people aged 20 to 44 years old respectively), with decreases for the older age groups.

## Ability to speak Welsh by area

- The highest percentages of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh were in north-west Wales, with 64.4% in Gwynedd, and 55.8% in the Isle of Anglesey.
- The percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh decreased between 2011 and 2021 in all local authorities except Cardiff, Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.
- Carmarthenshire saw the largest decrease in the percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak, falling from 43.9% in 2011 to 39.9% in 2021, a fall of 4.1 percentage points. Carmarthenshire also saw the largest fall between the 2001 and 2011 Census.
- All local authorities saw a decrease in the percentage of children aged 3 to 15 reported as being able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021. The decreases tended to be larger in areas with lower concentrations of Welsh speakers, such as in Blaenau Gwent, Newport and Torfaen.
- Of the 1,917 small areas in Wales, the percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh ranged from 86.3% (a small area within Gwynedd) to 3.8% (a small area within Blaenau Gwent).
- More than half the population aged three years or older were reported as being able to speak Welsh in 7% of these small areas, down from 9% in 2011.

## Other Welsh language skills

- The percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak, read and write Welsh decreased slightly from 14.6% to 14.2%. This equates to around 1,400 fewer people. This is a considerably smaller decrease than was seen for the percentage and number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh.

- There was very little change in the percentage of people aged three years or older who were able to understand spoken Welsh only, falling slightly from 5.3% in 2011 to 5.2% in 2021.
- Almost three quarters (74.8%) of the population aged three years or older had no Welsh language ability in 2021. This is an increase from 73.3% in 2011.

This release contains data for one of the **national wellbeing indicators** (37: Number of people who can speak Welsh).

There is an associated milestone with this national indicator, namely 'a million Welsh speakers by 2050'. 538,300 of people aged three years or older were reported as being able to speak Welsh in 2021.

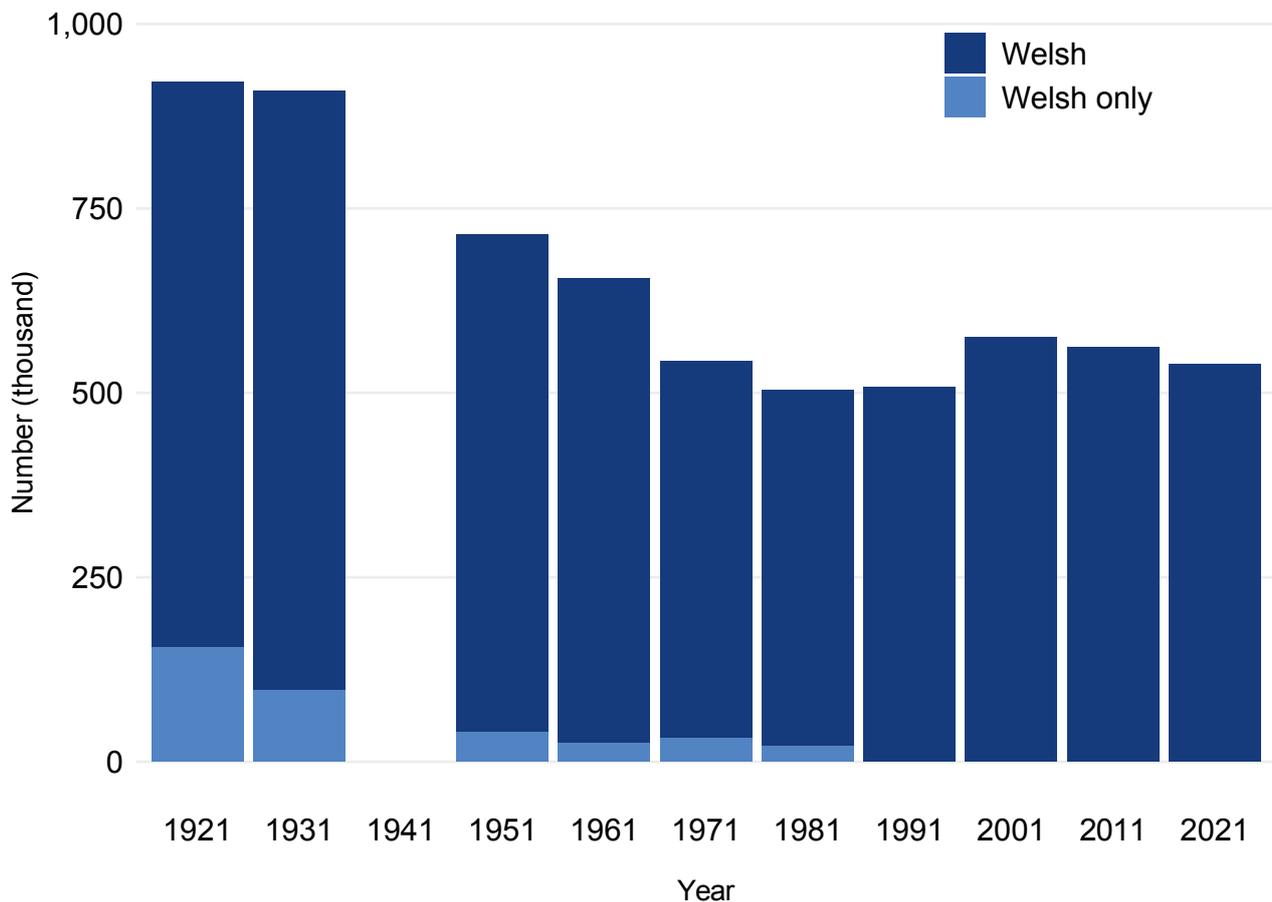
## Ability to speak Welsh

A question about Welsh language ability has been included in the census in Wales since 1891.

In 1921, there were a little under a million people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh in Wales (922,100 people). This decreased over the last century, reaching a low of around 503,500 in 1981. The number of people able to speak Welsh increased between 1981 and 2001, but has since decreased.

On Census Day, 21 March 2021, an estimated 538,300 usual residents in Wales aged three years or older were reported as being able to speak Welsh. This is around 17.8% of the population in Wales, the lowest proportion ever recorded in a census. This is a decrease of around 23,700 people since Census 2011, or a decrease of 1.2 percentage points.

## Chart 2: Number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, 1921 to 2021



This bar chart shows how the number of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh has changed over the last century, with the number decreasing - reaching a low of 503,500 in 1981. Increases were seen between 1981 and 2001, but the number of able to speak Welsh has since decreased.

Source: Census of population, 1921 to 2021

Note: The census did not take place in 1941 due to the Second World War.

The census stopped collecting information on the number of people who spoke Welsh only from 1991.

Differences in the number of people able to speak Welsh could be due to several reasons, including changes in the population over time, and changes in people's ability between censuses. For example, people may have stated that they were able to speak Welsh in 2011 but could no longer do so in 2021, or vice versa.

We know from Census 2021 data that the population of Wales is estimated to have increased by 1.4% since 2011, and this is due to more people moving into Wales than leaving Wales. There were more people who were born outside Wales living here in 2021 than in 2011. We know from previous censuses that people born outside Wales are much less likely to report being able to speak Welsh than people born in Wales.

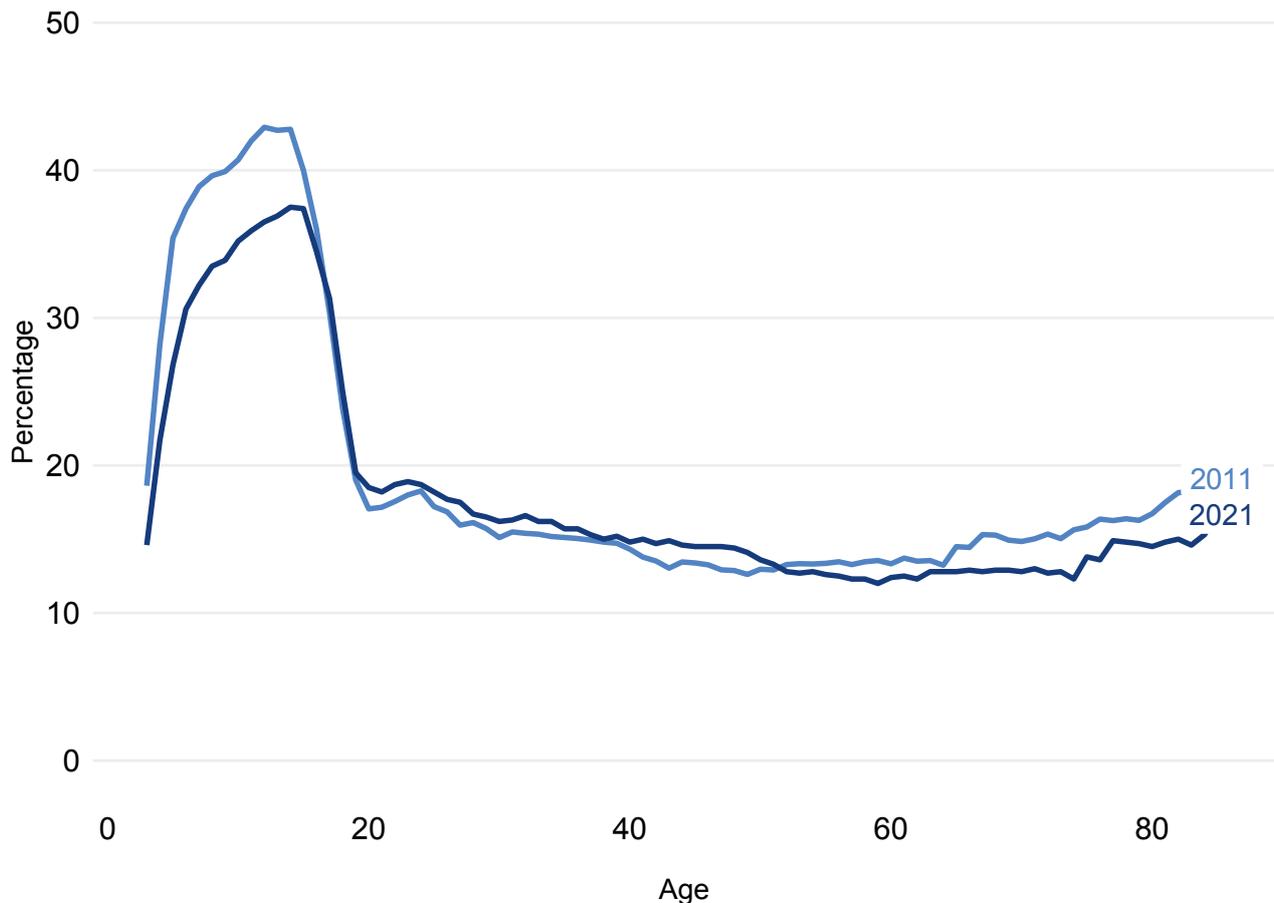
We also know that the proportion of children and young people aged under 15 years in Wales has decreased since 2011. Reported Welsh-speaking ability is typically highest in this age group compared with all other age groups.

The question about Welsh language ability was not asked in England, however there was a question on main language. In 2021, 7,000 people in England (less than 0.1%) said Welsh was their main language. This is a decrease from 8,200 reported in 2011. Please note that it is likely that this doesn't capture everyone in England who is able to speak Welsh, only those who considered Welsh to be their main language.

To see Census 2021 data that has already been published, please see the links in the [quality and information section](#).

## Ability to speak Welsh by age

**Chart 3: Percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, by single year of age, 2011 and 2021**



This line chart compares the percentage of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh by single year of age, between 2011 and 2021. The percentage of children and young people who are able to speak Welsh is higher than the percentage of adults, but has decreased since 2011.

Source: Census of population, 2011 and 2021

In 2021, children and young people aged 5 to 15 years old were more likely to be reported as being able to speak Welsh than any other age group, consistent with findings from previous censuses.

However, the percentage of 5 to 15 year olds reported as being able to speak Welsh decreased between 2011 and 2021, from 40.3% in 2011 to 34.3% in 2021, a 6.0 percentage point decrease. This was the largest percentage point decrease of any age group. There was a similar decrease for three to four year olds, decreasing from 23.3% in 2011 to 18.2% in 2021, a 5.2 percentage point decrease.

Census 2021 was held during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, on 21 March 2021. This affected the population in a variety of ways. For example, children had been learning remotely, and many early childcare facilities, including Welsh-medium childcare facilities were closed for extended periods of time. For this age group, Welsh language ability would likely have been reported by parents or guardians on their behalf. Their assessment of the child or young person's Welsh language ability may not be the same as that of the child or young person themselves. It is not known how the pandemic may have had an impact on people's reported Welsh language ability, or on their perception of the Welsh language ability of others.

The decrease in the percentage of children and young people reported as being able to speak Welsh was not reflected in the percentage of children being taught Welsh as a first language. Data from the [Pupil-Level Annual School Census \(StatsWales\)](#) shows that the percentage of pupils taught Welsh as a first language increased slightly over the same period, from 19.8% in 2011 to 21.7% in 2021.

The differences in the age profile of children and young people able to speak Welsh seen between Census 2011 and Census 2021 varies substantially by

local authority. We look at this in more detail in the section about [ability to speak Welsh by age and local authority](#).

The percentage of adults aged 16 years or older who were able to speak Welsh decreased slightly between 2011 and 2021. There were small increases in the percentage of people able to speak Welsh in the younger adult age groups (those aged 16 to 19 years old and those aged 20 to 44). In contrast, there were decreases for 45 to 64 year olds, 65 to 74 year olds, and people aged 75 years or older.

The age profile of adults who are able to speak Welsh appears to be changing. In 2021, among people aged 20 years or older, 20 to 44 year olds was the age group most likely to be able to speak Welsh (16.5%). This was different from 2011, where the percentage was highest for people aged 75 years or older (17.5%).

**Table 1: Number and percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, by age group, 2011 to 2021**

| Age group       | 2011    |      | 2021    |      | Difference |         |
|-----------------|---------|------|---------|------|------------|---------|
|                 | Number  | %    | Number  | %    | Number     | % point |
| <b>3 to 4</b>   | 16,500  | 23.3 | 11,900  | 18.2 | -4,500     | -5.2    |
| <b>5 to 15</b>  | 152,300 | 40.3 | 134,700 | 34.3 | -17,600    | -6.0    |
| <b>16 to 19</b> | 43,700  | 27.0 | 38,800  | 27.5 | -4,800     | 0.5     |
| <b>20 to 44</b> | 150,700 | 15.6 | 153,800 | 16.5 | 3,000      | 0.9     |

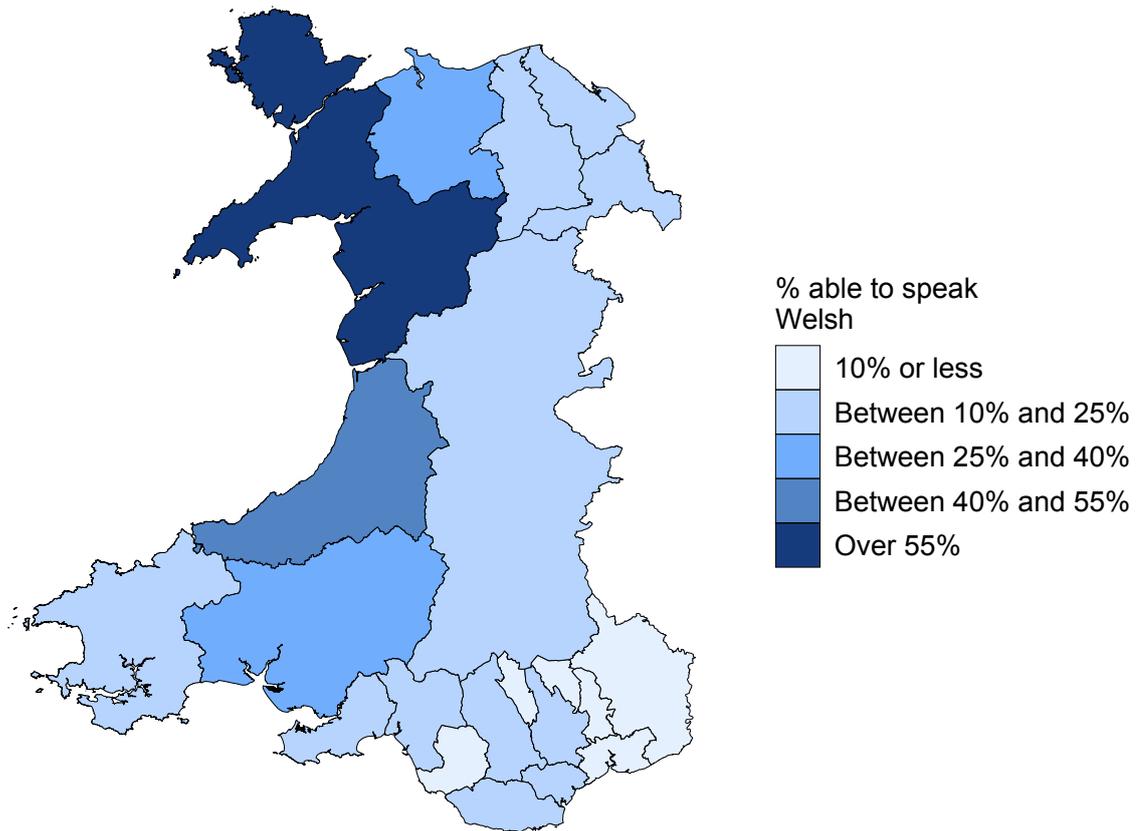
| Age group     | 2011    |      | 2021    |      | Difference |      |
|---------------|---------|------|---------|------|------------|------|
| 45 to 64      | 107,900 | 13.3 | 107,300 | 13.0 | -600       | -0.2 |
| 65 to 74      | 45,100  | 15.0 | 45,900  | 12.8 | 800        | -2.2 |
| 75 or older   | 45,800  | 17.5 | 45,800  | 15.1 | 0          | -2.4 |
| All ages (3+) | 562,000 | 19.0 | 538,300 | 17.8 | -23,700    | -1.2 |

Source: Census of population, 2011 and 2021

## Ability to speak Welsh by local authority

The highest numbers and percentages of people aged three years or older who were reported as being able to speak Welsh are typically seen in parts of north and west of Wales.

## Map 1: Percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, by local authority, 2021



This map shows how the percentage of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh varies by local authority. Local authorities in north west Wales have the highest percentages, whereas local authorities in the south east have the lowest percentages.

Source: Census of population, 2021

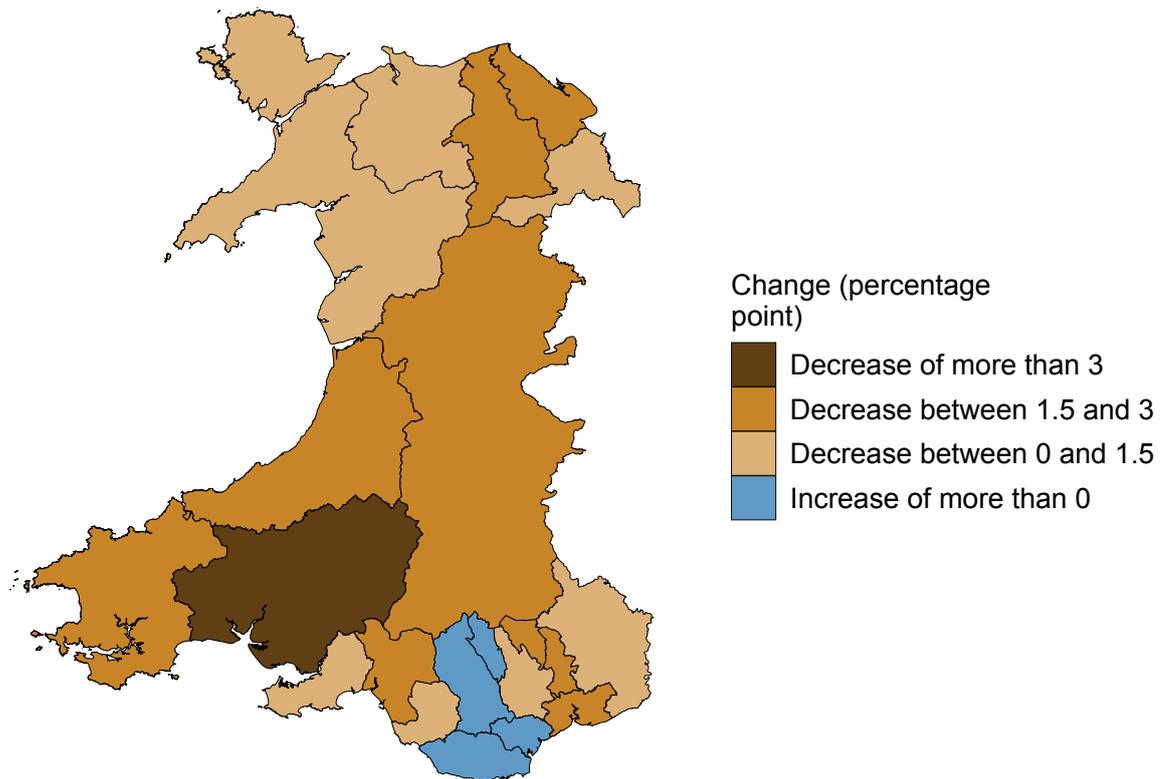
The highest numbers of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh

were in Gwynedd (73,600) and Carmarthenshire (72,800). The lowest numbers of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh were in Blaenau Gwent (4,000) and Merthyr Tydfil (5,100).

The highest percentages of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh were in Gwynedd (64.4%) and the Isle of Anglesey (55.8%). The lowest percentages of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh were in Blaenau Gwent (6.2%) and Newport (7.5%).

Most local authorities saw a decrease in the percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh.

## Map 2: Change in the percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh by local authority, 2011 to 2021



This map shows that the change in the percentage of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021 varies by local authority. Decreases were seen in most local authorities with the largest decrease seen in Carmarthen. Four local authorities in south east Wales saw increases.

Source: Census of population, 2011 and 2021

The percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh increased in four local authorities between 2011 and 2021. All four local authorities are in south-east Wales. The largest increase was in Cardiff, increasing from 11.1% in 2011 to 12.2% in 2021, which is an increase of around 6,000 people able to speak Welsh. Increases were also seen in nearby local authorities, namely in the Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil.

Carmarthenshire saw the largest decrease in the percentage and number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, from 43.9% in 2011 to 39.9% in 2021, a decrease of 4.1 percentage points. This is almost twice the size of the next largest decrease, a decrease of 2.1 percentage points in Denbighshire, Powys and Pembrokeshire. Carmarthenshire also saw the largest decrease between Census 2001 and Census 2011. Welsh-speaking ability within Carmarthenshire varies widely by small area.

In addition, Denbighshire, Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire and Powys all saw a decrease of two or more percentage points in the percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh. This differs from the decreases seen between Census 2001 and Census 2011, where the largest percentage point decreases were in areas with higher proportions of people able to speak Welsh. In these areas, there had been a greater loss of older cohorts with large proportions of people able to speak Welsh.

## Ability to speak Welsh by age and local authority

The percentage of children and young people aged 3 to 15 years reported as being able to speak Welsh decreased between 2011 and 2021 in all local authorities. However, Cardiff saw an increase (around 1,300) in the number of people aged 3 to 15 years reported as being able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021.

**Table 2: Change in the percentage of people able to speak Welsh, by age group, 2011 to 2021**

| Local authority  | Aged 3 to 15     | Aged 16 to 64    | Aged 65+         | All ages (3+)    |
|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                  | Percentage point | Percentage point | Percentage point | Percentage point |
| Isle of Anglesey | -3.5             | 0.3              | -3.7             | -1.5             |
| Gwynedd          | -3.0             | 0.5              | -3.3             | -1.0             |
| Conwy            | -5.6             | 0.4              | -2.8             | -1.4             |
| Denbighshire     | -7.8             | -0.2             | -3.0             | -2.1             |
| Flintshire       | -7.5             | 0.0              | -1.2             | -1.6             |
| Wrexham          | -3.1             | 0.4              | -2.6             | -0.7             |
| Powys            | -7.0             | 0.0              | -2.9             | -2.1             |
| Ceredigion       | -6.5             | 0.5              | -6.4             | -2.0             |
| Pembrokeshire    | -8.5             | -0.2             | -2.2             | -2.1             |
| Carmarthenshire  | -2.6             | -3.0             | -8.7             | -4.1             |
| Swansea          | -0.6             | 0.6              | -3.2             | -0.2             |

| Local authority     | Aged 3 to 15 | Aged 16 to 64 | Aged 65+ | All ages (3+) |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| Neath Port Talbot   | -6.6         | -0.1          | -4.1     | -1.8          |
| Bridgend            | -6.6         | 1.0           | -0.5     | -0.5          |
| Vale of Glamorgan   | -2.5         | 2.0           | -0.1     | 0.7           |
| Rhondda, Cynon, Taf | -5.4         | 1.8           | -0.6     | 0.1           |
| Merthyr Tydfil      | -3.0         | 1.0           | -1.0     | 0.0           |
| Caerphilly          | -7.6         | 1.2           | 0.1      | -0.7          |
| Blaenau Gwent       | -12.5        | 0.5           | -0.1     | -1.6          |
| Torfaen             | -11.2        | 0.5           | -0.2     | -1.6          |
| Monmouthshire       | -8.4         | 0.9           | 0.2      | -1.2          |
| Newport             | -12.3        | 0.4           | 0.0      | -1.8          |
| Cardiff             | -0.5         | 1.4           | 0.7      | 1.1           |
| Wales               | -5.7         | 0.3           | -2.3     | -1.2          |

Source: Census of population, 2011 and 2021

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

A decrease was seen in the percentage of children aged 3 to 15 years reported as being able to speak Welsh across all local authorities between 2011 and 2021, but the decreases tended to be larger in areas with lower concentrations of Welsh speakers, such as in Blaenau Gwent, Newport, and Torfaen.

Smaller changes of between -3.0 to 2.0 percentage points were seen in the percentage of adults aged 16 to 64 who were able to speak Welsh across local authorities between 2011 and 2021. The largest decrease in this age group was seen in Carmarthenshire, decreasing by 3 percentage points between 2011 and 2021.

Most local authorities saw a decrease in the percentage of the population aged 65 years or older who were able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021. This continues the trend seen between 2001 and 2011. The largest decrease in this age group was seen in Carmarthenshire where the percentage of people able to speak Welsh aged 65 years or older decreased from 48.8% in 2011 to 40.1% in 2021.

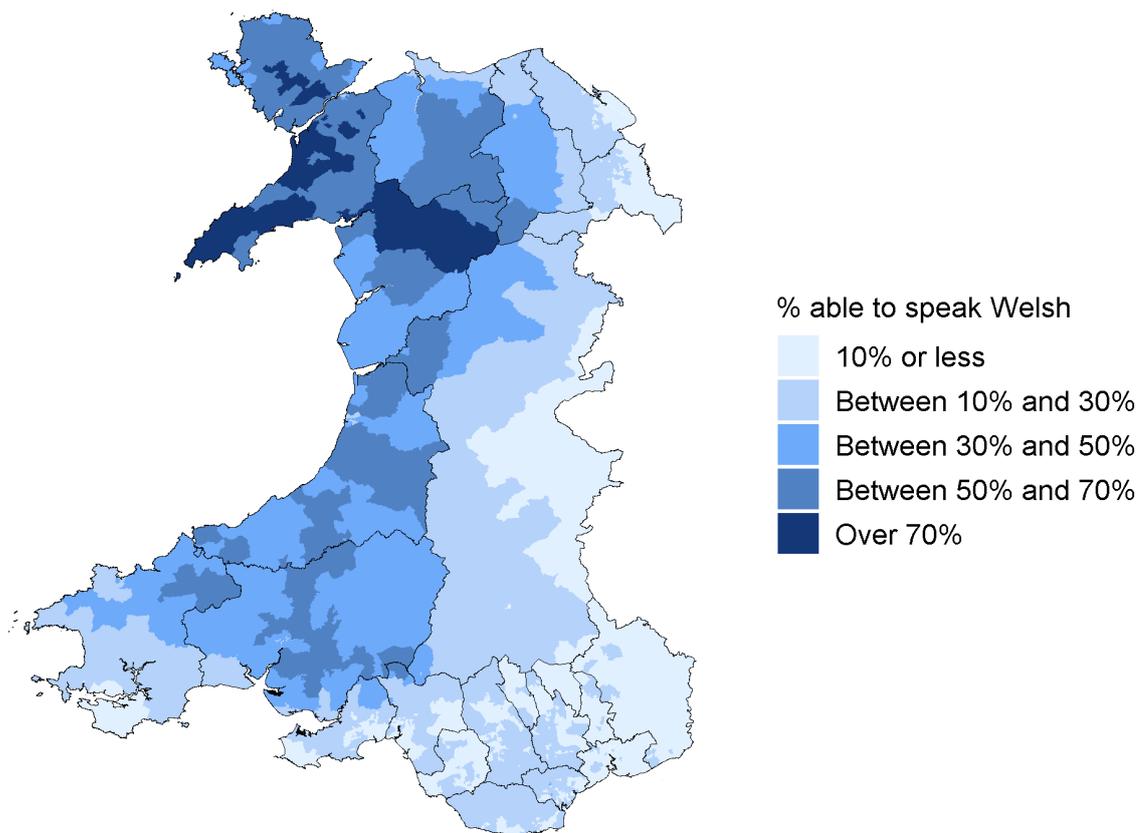
## Ability to speak Welsh by small area

Census data allow us to look at how Welsh-speaking ability varies within local authorities, down to small areas. Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are part of a [hierarchy of statistical geographies \(Office for National Statistics\)](#). They are designed to be as consistent in population size as possible. There are currently 1,917 LSOAs in Wales, each with a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons. Prior to Census 2021 there were 1,909 LSOAs in Wales. Currently, Census 2021 data is only available for statistical geographies. Data for other geographies such as communities will be made available in 2023.

Care should be taken when comparing smaller geographical areas over time

due to boundary changes. Further information on this is provided in the [quality and methodology information section](#).

### Map 3: Percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, by LSOA, 2021



This map shows how the percentage of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh varies by small area known as LSOAs. Small areas where over 70% of their population were able to speak Welsh were in north west Wales whereas most small areas where 10% or less of their population were able to speak

Welsh were in south east Wales.

Source: Census of population, 2021

In 2021, more than half the population aged three years or older were able to speak Welsh in 7% of LSOAs, a decrease from 9% in 2011.

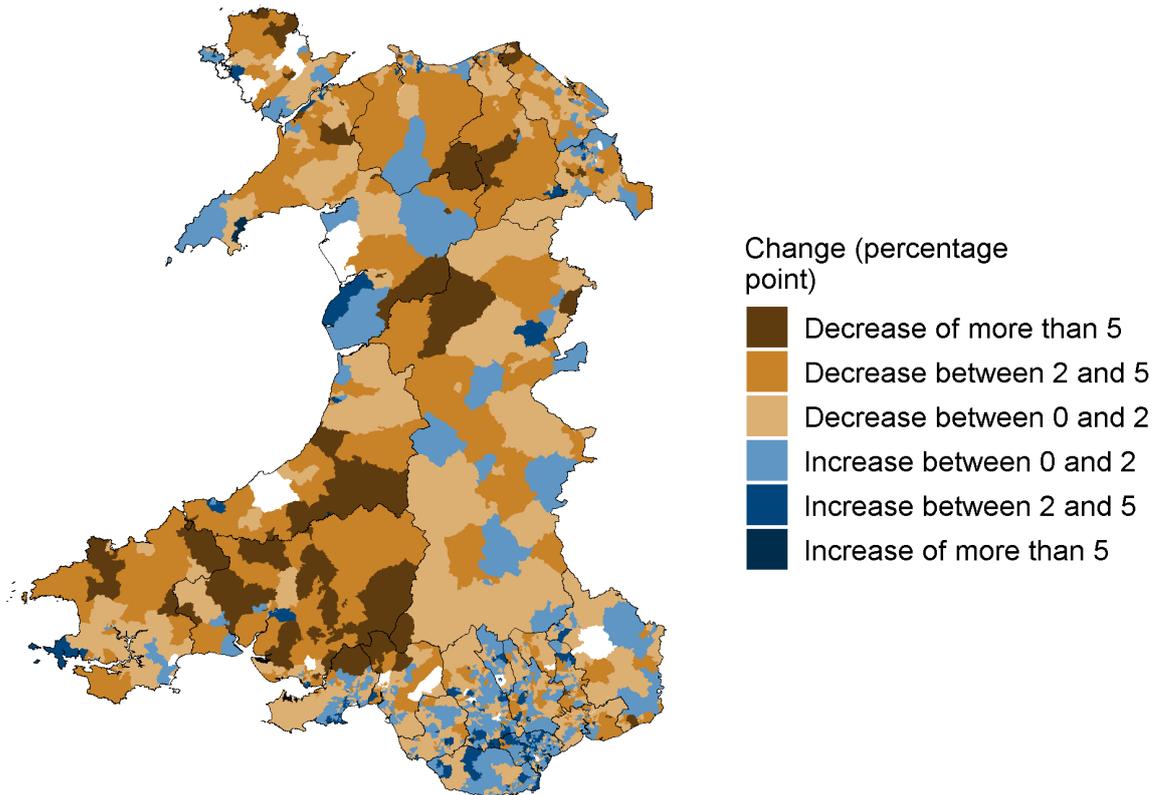
The percentage of LSOAs in which more than 70% of their population aged three years or older were able to speak Welsh also decreased from 3% in 2011 to 2% in 2021.

People able to speak Welsh were slightly less likely to live in areas that had a high proportion of people able to speak Welsh in 2021 compared with 2011. In 2021, 27% of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh lived in LSOAs where over half the population were able to speak Welsh, and 9% lived in LSOAs where over 70% of the population were able to speak Welsh. The equivalent figures for 2011 were 32% and 11% respectively.

Gwynedd had the most LSOAs where over half of the population were able to speak Welsh. Over 80% (58 out of 71) of LSOAs in Gwynedd had over half of the population who could speak Welsh.

The percentage of LSOAs where 10% or less of the population aged three years or older could speak Welsh increased from 34% in 2011 to 40% in 2021. Half of these LSOAs were in south-east Wales.

## Map 4: Change in the percentage of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh, by LSOA, 2011 to 2021



This map shows how the change in the percentage of people aged three or older able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021 varies by small area known as LSOAs. Most of the small areas which saw the largest increases were in south east Wales and most small areas which saw the largest decreases were in south west Wales.

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

Source: Census of population, 2011 and 2021

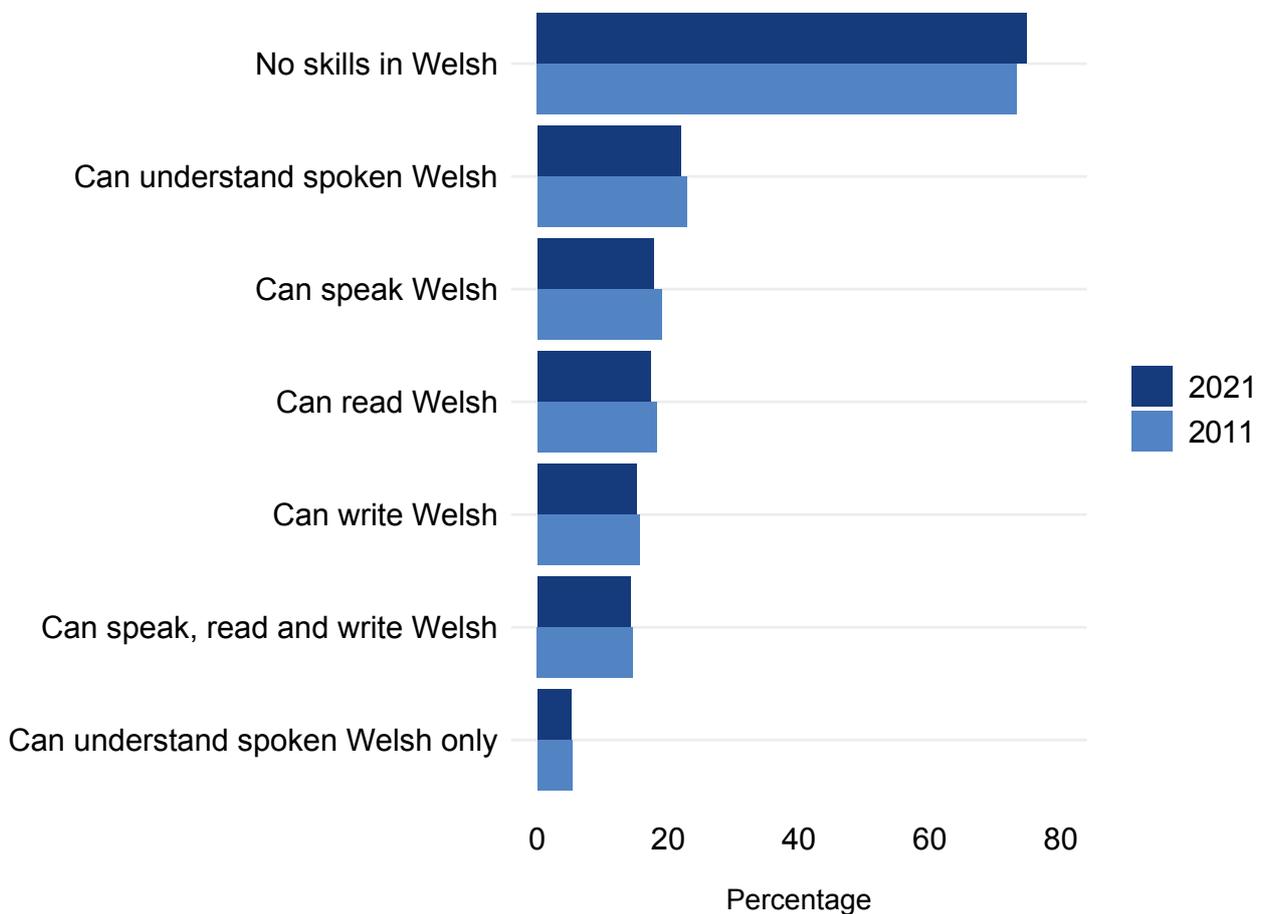
Note: the data presented in map 4 are based on LSOAs that remained unchanged or split between 2011 and 2021 only. Changes could not be calculated for LSOAs that were merged between 2011 and 2021. These areas are coloured white on the map.

## Other Welsh language skills

Respondents were also asked about their ability to understand spoken Welsh, read Welsh and write Welsh.

The percentage of the population aged three years or older, with one or more Welsh language skills decreased between 2011 and 2021.

## Chart 4: Percentage of people aged three years or older with Welsh language skills, 2011 to 2021



This column chart shows the percentage of people aged three or older able to understand spoken Welsh, speak, read or write Welsh in 2021 and how these have changed since 2011.

Source: Census of population, 2011 and 2021

Nearly three-quarters of the population aged three years or older (74.8%) reported they had no Welsh language skills in 2021. This was an increase from

73.3% in 2011.

The percentage of people able to speak, read and write Welsh decreased slightly from 14.6% to 14.2% (equating to around 1,400 fewer people). This is a smaller decrease than was seen for the percentage and number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh.

The percentage of people able to understand spoken Welsh (but not able to speak, read or write Welsh) decreased slightly from 5.3% in 2011 to 5.2% in 2021.

## Future publications

This bulletin has reported on the Welsh language ability of people aged three years or older in Wales.

Further breakdowns of the number of people who are able to speak Welsh by other geographical breakdowns, such as communities, will be published in 2023. Data on the number of people who are able to speak Welsh by other characteristics such as sex and ethnic background will also be made available in 2023. Future publications will also include an update to previous data published on Welsh language transmission within households.

Read about other data and analysis that will be available from Census 2021 in the [Office for National Statistics \(ONS\) release plans](#).

## Quality and methodology information

For full quality and methodology information, including a glossary of terms, please visit the [ONS' quality and methodology information report](#).

This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.

Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.

Get [information on copyright](#).

# Measuring the data

## Welsh language

Census 2021 in Wales included a question about people's ability to understand spoken Welsh, speak Welsh, read Welsh, and write Welsh. This question was included in Wales only. The census does not include questions about how often people speak Welsh, or how well they speak the language.

Information about Welsh language skills in the census is based on a person's self-assessment of their ability. Guidance for completion of the census stated, if you live in Wales it's up to you to decide whether you're able to speak Welsh, read Welsh, write Welsh and/or understand spoken Welsh. People were asked to select all the options they believed to be right for them, however not everyone will have read this instruction and they may have selected only one option.

The way in which people perceive and report on their skills can be influenced by a number of factors and can vary from person to person. In some cases, especially for children, Welsh language ability was reported by another person, for example, a parent or guardian. Their assessment of the person's Welsh language ability may not be the same as that of the person themselves.

Census 2021 was held during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, on 21 March 2021. This followed periods of lockdown, remote learning for children and many people were working from home. It is not known how the pandemic may have impacted people's reported Welsh language ability (or perception of the Welsh language ability of others).

## Data sources

The census is considered to be the authoritative source of information on the number of people aged three years or older able to speak Welsh in Wales. This is how the Welsh Government measures progress towards its ambition of having **a million Welsh speakers by 2050**.

The National Survey for Wales also includes questions about Welsh language ability, how often they speak Welsh, and about their fluency levels. The questions are asked annually of people aged 16 years or older. Results can be found via our interactive **results viewer**.

The Welsh Language Use Survey is carried out as part of the National Survey for Wales. Although the purpose of the Welsh Language Use Survey is to understand more about how Welsh speakers use the language, it also offers another estimate of the percentage of Welsh speakers. **Initial results** and subsequent topical bulletins from the Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20 are available on the Welsh Government website.

The Annual Population Survey (APS) also collects information on Welsh language skills. The APS estimates (published on **StatsWales**) of Welsh language ability are historically considerably higher than census estimates. A **blog post published by the Chief Statistician** in 2019 discussed briefly how to interpret the Welsh language data from the APS. More information about the differences between the APS and the census can be found in a bulletin presenting more **detailed results on the Welsh language from the APS from 2001 to 2018** and in a **research paper by the ONS**.

The Pupil Level Annual School Census is an electronic collection of pupil-level and school-level data provided by all maintained schools in January each year. There are a number of Welsh language indicators available including information about the language of education provision in the school, the Welsh-speaking

ability of pupils and teachers, and whether pupils are taught in Welsh. The most recent data in this report relates to the situation as at February 2022, which were published on 31 August and are available on [StatsWales](#).

A [blog post published by the Chief Statistician](#) alongside this release discusses some of the differences between these data sources, as well as future plans for Welsh language statistics.

## Geographical areas

Output Areas (OAs) are the lowest level of geographical area for census statistics and were first created following Census 2001. Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) are made up of groups of OAs, usually around four or five. They comprise between 400 and 1,200 households, and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons.

Using Census 2021 data, some changes were made to 2011 LSOAs as a result of population and household changes since 2011. New 2021 LSOAs were created by merging or splitting 2011 LSOAs to ensure that population and household thresholds were met.

Outputs from Census 2021 are for 2021 LSOAs and are made up of unchanged 2011 LSOAs and new 2021 LSOAs.

There are 1,917 LSOAs in Wales (and 33,755 in England). [View and download the names and codes of LSOAs on the ONS' Open Geography website](#).

## Students

As in previous censuses, students were enumerated at both their usual term-time address and their usual out-of-term address if these were different.

In light of the pandemic, lockdown restrictions, and the fact that many students may not have been at their term-time address, the ONS reviewed and enhanced the guidance for students on how they should complete the census. The ONS also established methods for estimation of, and adjustment for, non-response or overcount of students. In addition, they designed an extensive quality assurance process which is flexible and adaptable.

Read more about [how ONS ensured an accurate estimate of students in the 2021 Census](#).

## Response rate

The person response rate is the number of usual residents for whom individual details were provided on a returned questionnaire, divided by the estimated usual resident population.

The person response rate for Census 2021 in Wales was 96.4% of the usual resident population of Wales, and over 94% in all local authorities.

The proportion of returns submitted online was lower in Wales (68%) than in England (90%). This is likely because Wales had a higher percentage than England of households in which initial contact was with a paper questionnaire rather than an online access code ([50% in Wales compared with 9% in England \(Office for National Statistics\)](#)), as they were in areas where the take-up of the online option was expected to be low.

## Related links

### [Demography and migration in Wales \(Census 2021\)](#)

Unrounded population and household estimates, including an overview of the

non-UK born population and characteristics of households and residents in Wales from the 2021 Census.

## **Ethnic group, national identity, language and religion in Wales (Census 2021)**

Population and household estimates by ethnic group, national identity, main language and religion of residents and households in Wales from Census 2021.

## **Quality and methodology information (QMI) for Census 2021 (Office for National Statistics)**

Details the strengths, limitations, uses, users and methods used for Census 2021, England and Wales.

## **Census 2021 dictionary (Office for National Statistics)**

Definitions, variables and classifications to help when using Census 2021 data.

## **How the ONS assured the quality of Census 2021 estimates**

Methodology for the validation of Census 2021 population estimates for England and Wales, including the assurance of processes, assessment of estimates, and involvement of local authorities.

## **National Statistics status for Census 2021**

The **United Kingdom Statistics Authority** has designated these statistics as National Statistics, in accordance with the Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007 and signifying compliance with the **Code of Practice for Statistics**.

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality, and public value.

All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the Code of Practice for Statistics. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

It is Welsh Government's responsibility to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we become concerned about whether these statistics are still meeting the appropriate standards, we will discuss any concerns with the Authority promptly. National Statistics status can be removed at any point when the highest standards are not maintained, and reinstated when standards are restored.

The designation of these statistics as National Statistics was confirmed to the ONS in June 2022 following a [full assessment against the Code of Practice by the Office for Statistics Regulation](#).

## Well-being of Future Generations Act (WFG)

The Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals for Wales. These are for a more equal, prosperous, resilient, healthier and globally responsible Wales, with cohesive communities and a vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Under section (10)(1) of the Act, the Welsh Ministers must (a) publish indicators ("national indicators") that must be applied for the purpose of measuring progress towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals, and (b) lay a copy of the national indicators before Senedd Cymru. Under section 10(8) of the Well-being of Future Generations Act, where the Welsh Ministers revise the national indicators, they must as soon as reasonably practicable (a) publish the indicators as revised and (b) lay a copy of them before the Senedd. These national indicators were laid before the Senedd in 2021. The indicators laid on 14 December 2021 replace the set laid

on 16 March 2016 and this release includes one of the national indicators namely:

- (37) Number of people who can speak Welsh.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

The Act states national milestones must be set that “...the Welsh Ministers consider would assist in measuring whether progress is being made towards the achievement of the wellbeing goals.” In doing so Welsh Ministers must specify how we know that a national milestone has been achieved and the time by which it is to be achieved.

National milestones are not performance targets for any individual organisation, but are collective measures of success for Wales.

In this release indicator 37: Number of people who can speak Welsh corresponds to one milestone:

- A million Welsh speakers by 2050

Further information on the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#).

The statistics included in this release could also provide supporting narrative to the national indicators and be used by public services boards in relation to their local wellbeing assessments and local wellbeing plans.

# Contact details

Statisticians: Llio Owen and Martin Parry  
Email: [WelshLanguageData@gov.wales](mailto:WelshLanguageData@gov.wales)

Media: 0300 025 8099



SB 40/2022

**This document may not be fully accessible.**  
For more information refer to our [accessibility statement](#).

**This document was downloaded from GOV.WALES and may not be the latest version.**  
Go to <https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-wales-census-2021-html> for the latest version.  
Get [information on copyright](#).