



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS

# Social use of the Welsh language: July 2019 to March 2020

This analysis reports on the use of Welsh in the community, including use of the language within different social groups and situations.

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# Introduction

This analysis reports on the social use of Welsh, including use of the language within different social groups and situations. It also reports on the use of Welsh skills outside the workplace or school, digital use of Welsh and if they have attended social events and activities in Welsh.

This report presents some findings from the Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20. The survey ended earlier than planned due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. More information on the implications of this, and the consequent limitations of the data, can be found in the section on [quality and methodology](#).

We intend to publish the remainder of the survey's results in separate statistical bulletins, according to theme, combining data from the National Survey for Wales 2019-20 where relevant.

## Main points

### Adults

- Welsh speakers in north west Wales, fluent Welsh speakers, those who speak the language daily and those who started to learn the language at home as a young child are most likely to use Welsh with their social groups.
- Welsh speakers are more likely to use Welsh in texts and emails than on social media.
- About a third of Welsh speakers attended a social event or activity held in Welsh during the previous 12 months, an additional 23% attended at least one event held using both Welsh and English.

## Children and young people

- Almost 70% of Welsh-speaking children and young people say that more of their friends can speak Welsh than can't.
- Children and young people who are able to speak Welsh are more likely to do so with their friends in school than they are to speak Welsh with friends outside school.
- About two-thirds of children and young people who are able to speak Welsh say that they have sufficient opportunities to speak Welsh outside school.
- Four in ten children and young people who are able to speak Welsh had attended at least one event held through the medium of Welsh over the last 12 months, and a further 24% had attended an event held using both Welsh and English.

## Adults' social use of Welsh

The Welsh Government's strategy for the Welsh language, [Cymraeg 2050](#), sets out the vision for achieving a million Welsh speakers by 2050. It also includes the target of doubling the daily use of the Welsh language during the same period, including using Welsh socially and in the workplace.

Adults and children and young people aged three or older selected for the Welsh Language Use Survey were asked about their use of Welsh in social situations. All Welsh speakers are included in this analysis, from those who considered themselves to be fluent to those who noted that they could say just a few words. There is a clear link between the frequency of speaking Welsh and fluency as seen in [previous analyses](#) using this data. It is important to remember this when interpreting these findings.

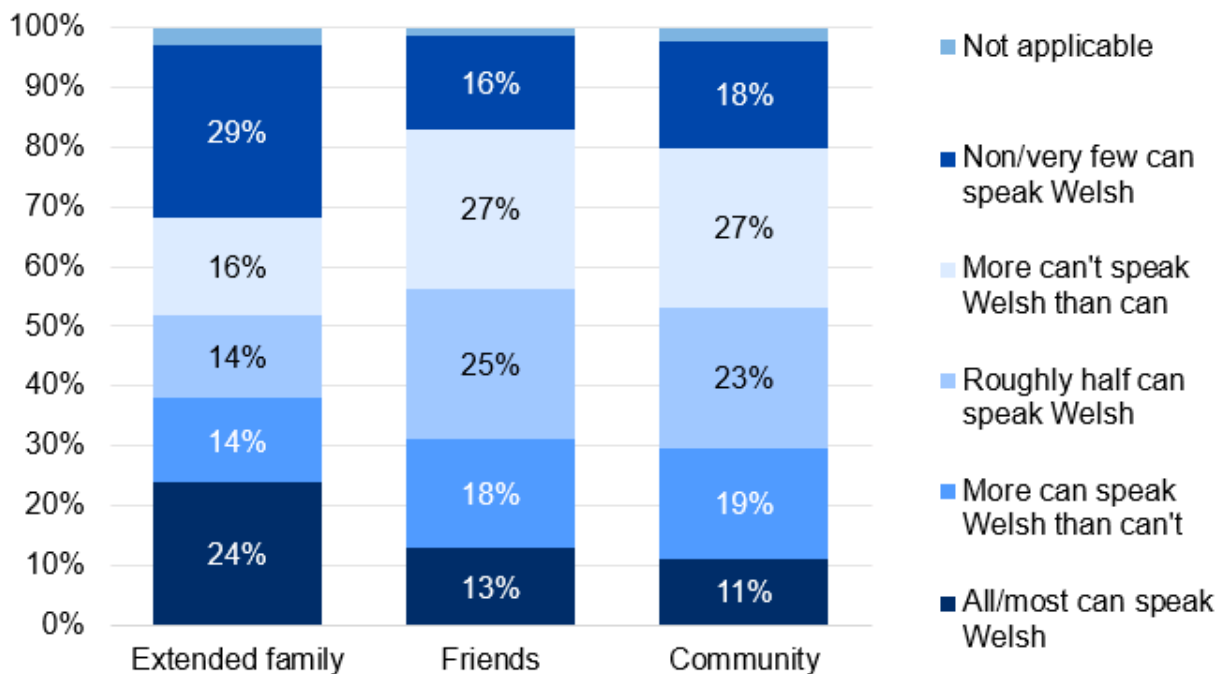
## Social groups' ability and use of Welsh

To better understand social use of the Welsh language, respondents were asked about the Welsh language ability of the groups of people that they usually spoke with. It should be taken into consideration that this is the respondent's assessment of the Welsh-speaking ability of their social groups, which may differ to how those individuals would report their own Welsh-speaking ability.

The reason why we asked about the Welsh-speaking ability of respondents' social groups was that it can provide an indication of their opportunities to speak Welsh in a social context.

We can compare the opportunities available for Welsh speakers to speak the language with how much Welsh they report using. This may indicate which groups make use of the opportunities to speak Welsh, or conversely, which groups have more unused opportunities to speak the language.

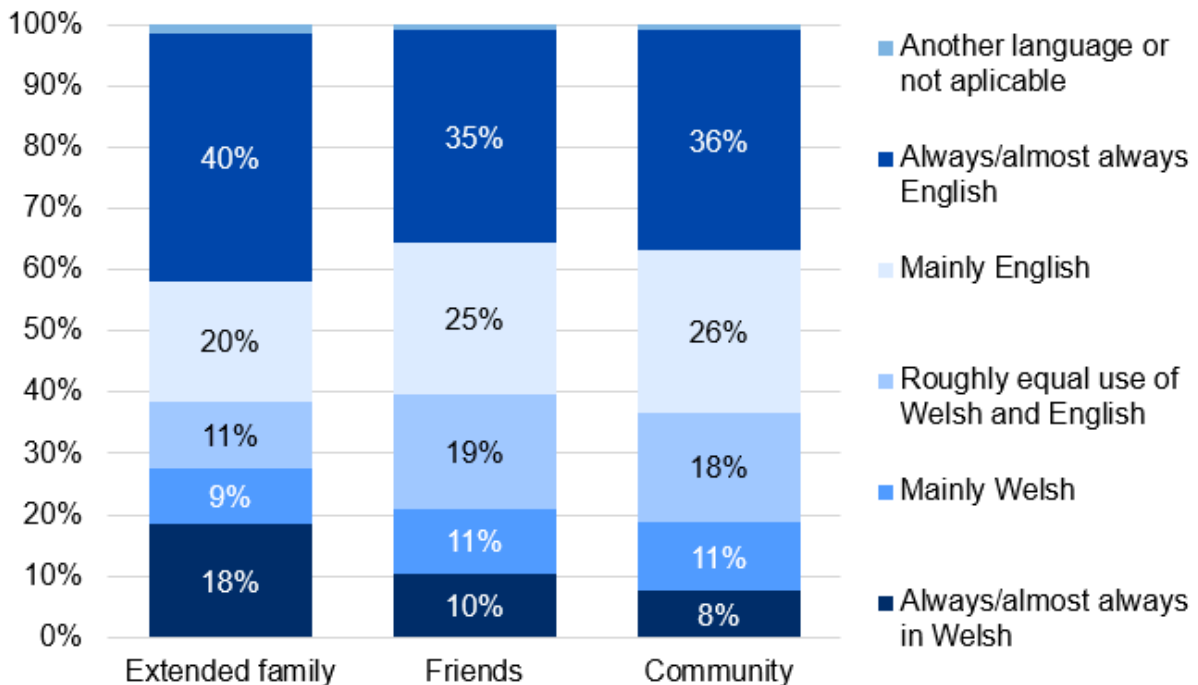
## Chart 1: Welsh-speaking ability of Welsh speakers' social groups, July 2019 to March 2020



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Note: The number of respondents who have indicated that this question was not applicable to them are small and should be treated with caution.

## Chart 2: Language usually spoken with social groups, July 2019 to March 2020



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Note: The number of respondents who have indicated that they used another language or that this question was not applicable to them are small and should be treated with caution.

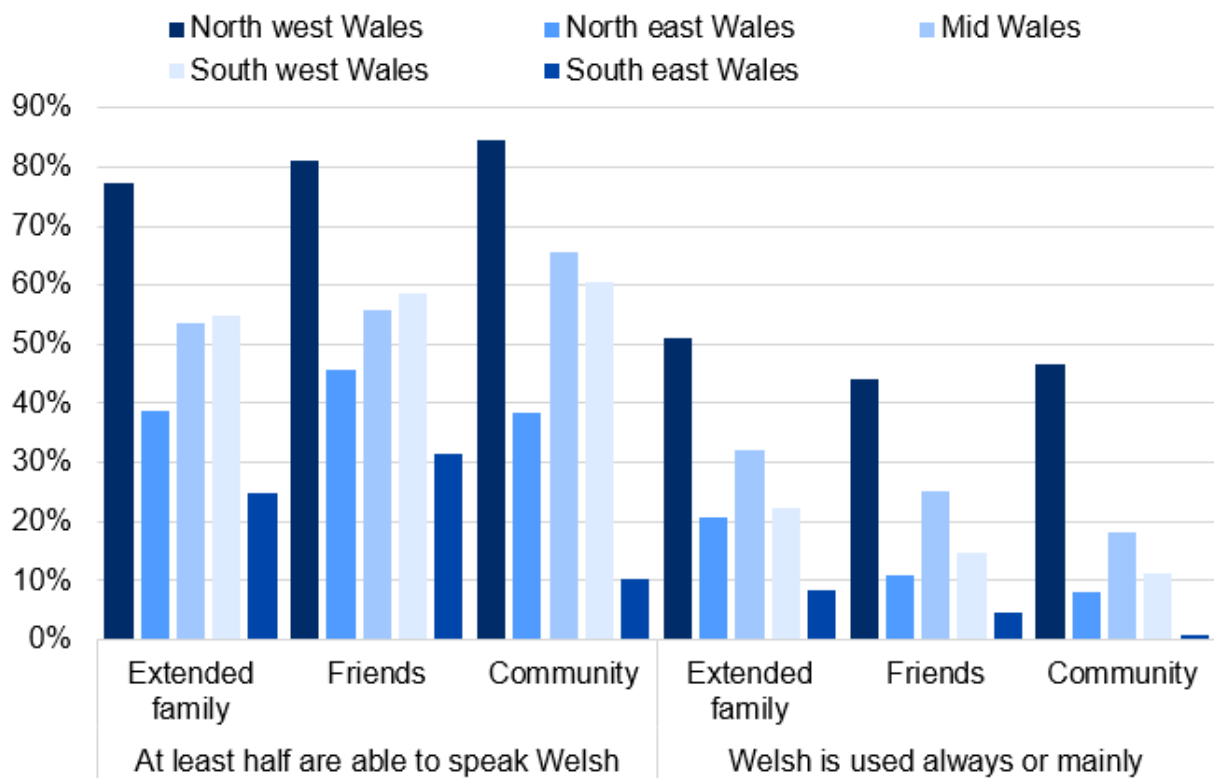
Overall, 52% of Welsh speakers said that at least half of their extended family could speak Welsh, 56% said that at least half of their friends could speak Welsh and 53% of Welsh speakers say that at least half of people in their local community could speak Welsh.

Looking at the language usually spoken with these groups of people, 28% mainly or always spoke Welsh with extended family. This falls to 21% with friends, and 19% with people in their local community. This shows that less use

is made of opportunities available to socialise in Welsh with friends and in the community than within extended family.

The remainder of this section shows that, in general, groups who say that high proportions of their social groups can speak Welsh are also likely to say that they speak Welsh more frequently with those social groups.

**Chart 3: Welsh-speaking ability and language usually spoken with social groups by region, July 2019 to March 2020**



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Note: The number of respondents in south east Wales in Chart 3 are small and should be treated with caution.



We know from our [previous releases](#) and other data sources that there are big regional variations in the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales and that is echoed in these findings.

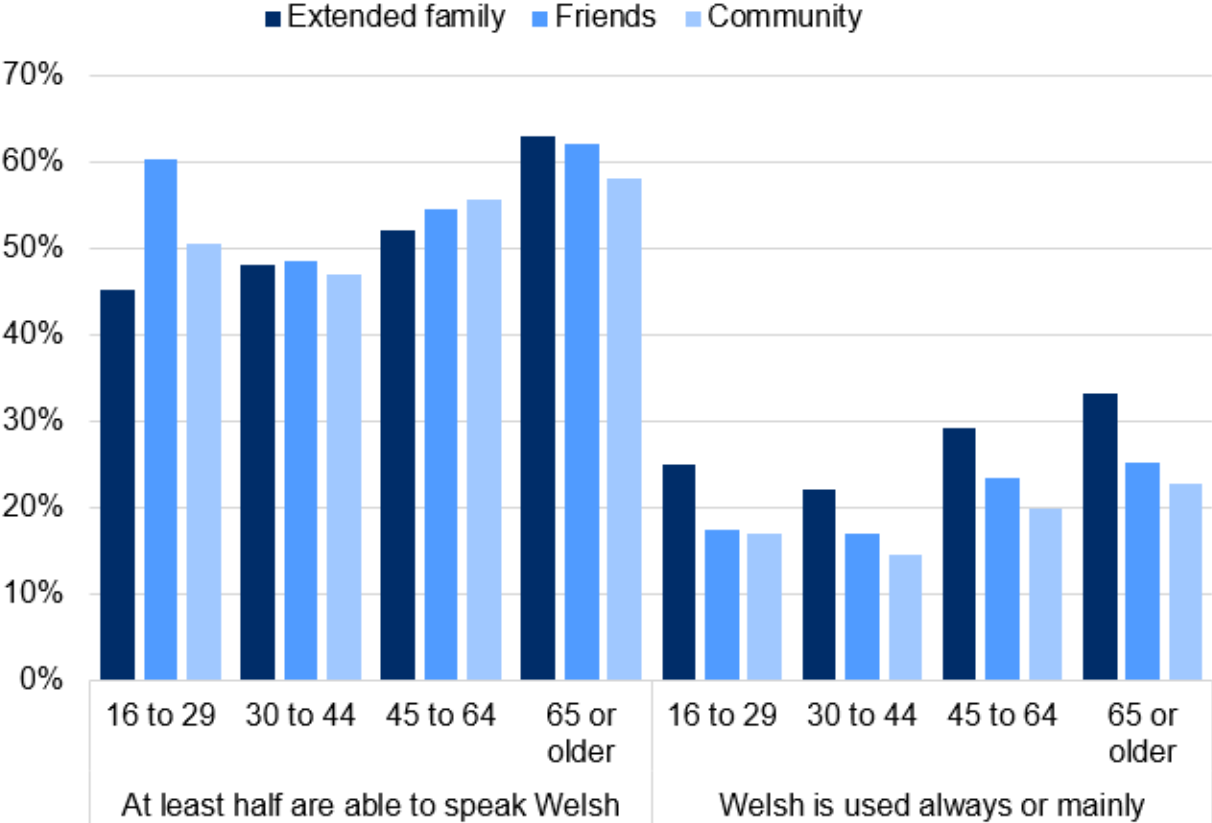
Welsh speakers in north west Wales were statistically significantly more likely than Welsh speakers in other parts of Wales to say that at least half of their social groups could speak Welsh (77% for extended family, 81% for friends and 85% for people in their local community).

Welsh speakers in south east Wales were substantially less likely than Welsh speakers in other parts of Wales to say that at least half of their social groups could speak Welsh (25% for extended family, 31% for friends and 10% for people in their local community).

Similar patterns were seen when looking at Welsh language use, with 51% of Welsh speakers in north west Wales mainly or always speaking Welsh with their extended family, 44% reported doing so with their friends and 46% with people in their local community. For Welsh speakers in south east Wales, 8% mainly or always spoke Welsh with their extended family, 5% reported doing so with their friends and only a very small number reported doing so with people in their local community.

Fluent Welsh speakers, those who speak Welsh daily, and those who learnt Welsh at home as a young child are far more likely to say that at least half of their social groups can speak Welsh, and that they mainly or always speak Welsh with their social groups.

# Chart 4: Welsh language ability and language usually spoken with social groups by age group, July 2019 to March 2020



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Social use of Welsh varies by age and social group. Welsh speakers aged 65 or older were more likely than any other age group to report that their social groups were able to speak Welsh. They were also more likely to be using Welsh with their social groups than Welsh speakers in the other age groups.

Welsh speakers aged 16 to 29 reported that their friends were more likely to be able to speak Welsh than their extended family or people in their local community. However, Welsh speakers aged 16 to 29 were less likely to use

Welsh with their friends than Welsh speakers in the other age groups, relative to their social groups' reported Welsh-speaking ability.

Female Welsh speakers were slightly less likely than males to report that their social groups were able to speak Welsh, and that they were less likely to use Welsh within their social groups.

## Language of the last conversation

Respondents were asked in what language their last conversation with someone not in their family had taken place. While this conversation might not necessarily have been in a social context (it could, for instance, have taken place in the workplace, about work), it is fair to assume that many of these will have taken place in a social context. The answers to this question therefore give an indication of the overall use of Welsh socially.

Overall, 28% of Welsh speakers reported that their last conversation with someone not in their family was in Welsh.

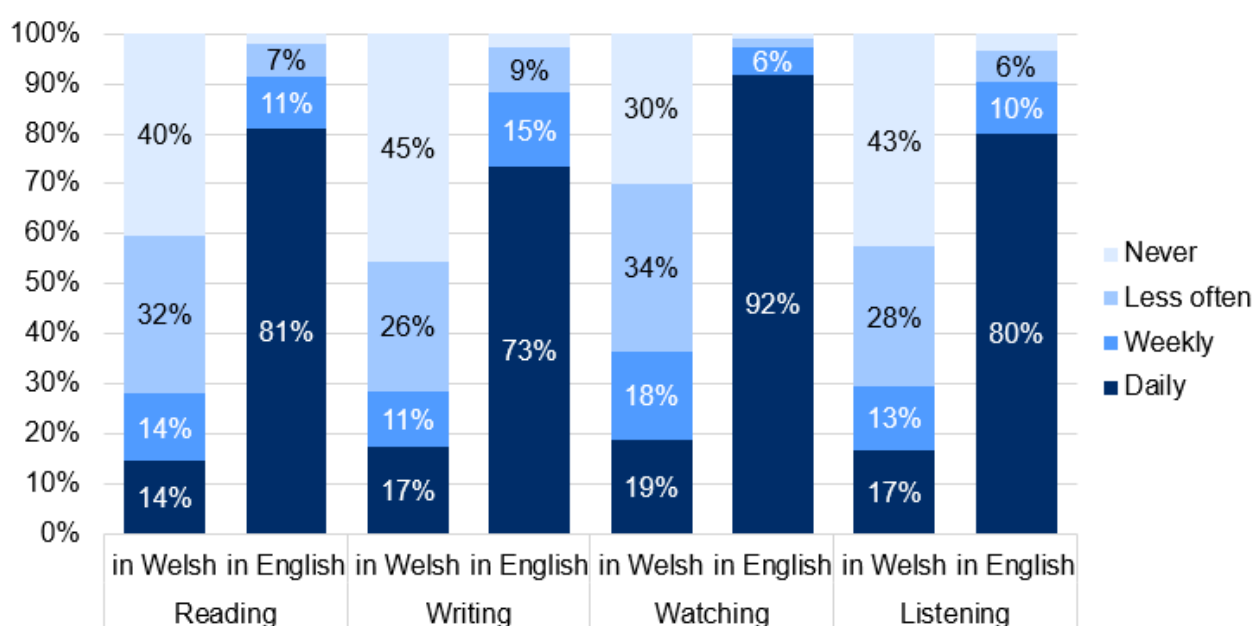
Those who responded that their last conversation with someone not in their family was in Welsh were more likely to be:

- aged 65 or older
- a fluent Welsh speaker
- someone who spoke Welsh daily
- someone who started learning to speak Welsh at home as a young child
- living in north west Wales

## Use of Welsh skills outside work

Respondents were asked how frequently they read, wrote, watched TV, videos or online clips and listened to music or radio both in Welsh or English, outside of a work context.

**Chart 5: Proportion of Welsh speakers who use Welsh or English skills outside work, July 2019 to March 2020**



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Note: The number of respondents who reported that they never used these skills in English are small and should be treated with caution.

Welsh speakers are more likely to read, write, watch TV or videos and listen to music or radio in English than in Welsh outside of work. Welsh speakers are also more likely to say they never use any of these skills in Welsh outside of work than they are in English.

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Welsh speakers were more likely to watch TV, videos or clips on-line in Welsh than reading, writing or listening to music or radio. Over half (55%) of Welsh speakers did report writing in Welsh at least sometimes, and about one in six wrote in Welsh daily. This was slightly higher than the proportion who read in Welsh daily.

Welsh speakers aged 65 or older were much more likely to watch or listen to things in Welsh than younger Welsh speakers, but only slightly more likely to read in Welsh. There was very little difference between the age groups in how often they wrote in Welsh.

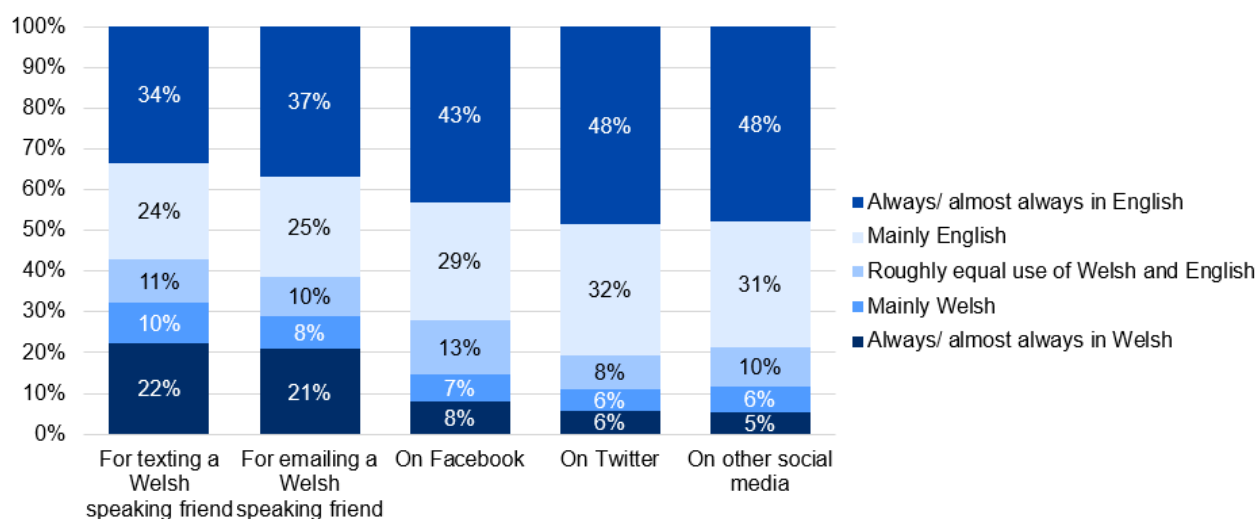
Fluent Welsh speakers, those who spoke Welsh daily and those who started to learn Welsh at home as a young child were more likely to read, write, watch and listen to things in Welsh outside of the workplace than non-fluent Welsh speakers, those who spoke the language less often or those who started to learn Welsh in school or as an adult.

Welsh speakers in north west Wales were more likely than those in other areas in Wales to read or write in Welsh, while those in north west or mid Wales were more likely to watch or listen to things in Welsh than Welsh speakers in other areas in Wales.

## Digital use of Welsh

Respondents were asked which language they typically used for texting, emailing, and on social media.

**Chart 6: Language used on digital media by Welsh speakers, July 2019 to March 2020**



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Just under a third of all respondents mainly or always used Welsh to text or email a friend who could speak Welsh.

Posting on social media in Welsh was less popular, with 15% or less of respondents mainly or always posting in Welsh. This may be, at least partly, due to the likelihood that not all of their friends or followers on social media are able to understand, speak, read or write Welsh.

Fluent Welsh speakers were much more likely to use Welsh in emailing, texting, or social media than non-fluent Welsh speakers.

52% of Welsh speakers who spoke Welsh daily used Welsh mainly or always to text friends who could speak Welsh, compared with 13% of those who spoke Welsh weekly.

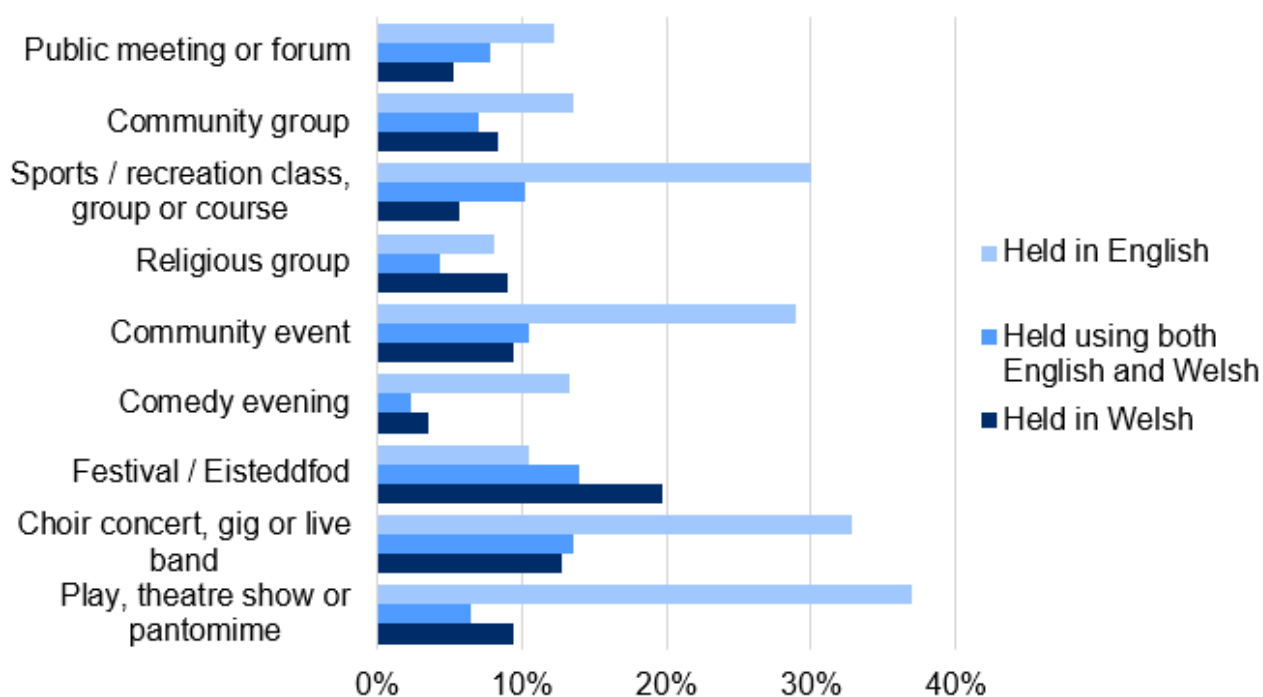
Welsh speakers in north west Wales were most likely to use Welsh to send texts or emails to Welsh-speaking friends, or to post on social media in Welsh.

## Organised events and activities

Respondents were given a list of events and activities and asked whether they attended any of these over the previous 12 months and whether they were held in Welsh only, in both languages (Welsh and English) or in English only.

Almost a third of Welsh speakers reported having attended an organised event or activity held in Welsh in the previous 12 months, an additional 23% of Welsh speakers attended at least one event held using both Welsh and English. 31% of Welsh speakers reported that they had only attended English events over the past 12 months and 13% hadn't attend any events or activities.

## Chart 7: Organised events or activities attended by Welsh speakers, by language of event, July 2019 to March 2020



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Welsh speakers were most likely to have attended a festival or Eisteddfod in Welsh than any other type of organised event or activity held in Welsh, with 20% having attended such an event in the previous 12 months. This was also the only type of organised event or activity that Welsh speakers were more likely to have attended held in Welsh than held in English.

The groups of Welsh speakers who were most likely to have attended an organised event or activity in Welsh were:

- living in north west Wales
- a fluent Welsh speaker



- someone who spoke Welsh daily
- someone who started learning to speak Welsh at home as a young child

Welsh speakers aged 16 to 29 were least likely to have attended an organised event or activity held in Welsh, though this difference is only statistically significant when compared with Welsh speakers aged 65 or older.

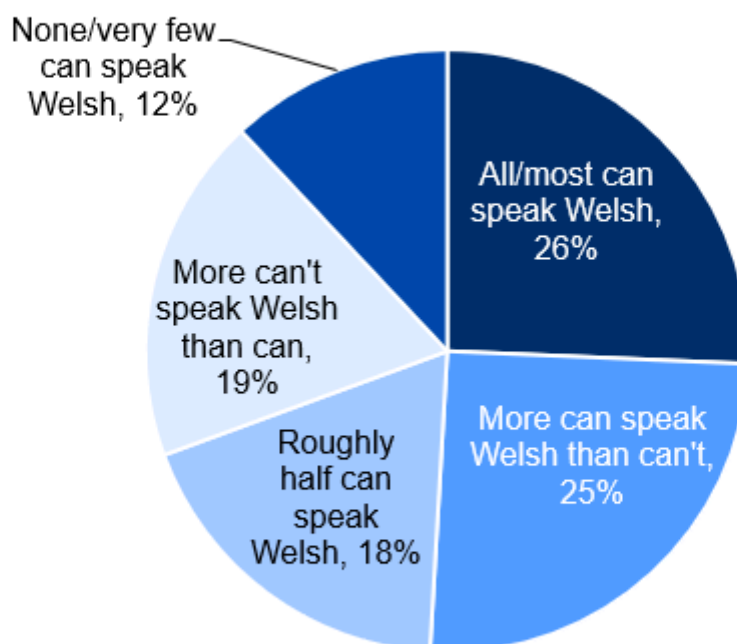
The most common way that people found out about community events held in Welsh was by word of mouth.

## **Children and young people's social use of Welsh**

Children and young people (those aged 3 to 15) were asked similar questions on the use of Welsh language in a social context. It is important to note that the questions may have been answered by a parent or guardian on behalf of their children. In these cases, therefore, this is likely to be the assessment of the parents or guardians themselves, rather than the child or young person.

## Social groups' ability and use of Welsh

**Chart 8: Welsh-speaking ability of children and young people's friends, July 2019 to March 2020**



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

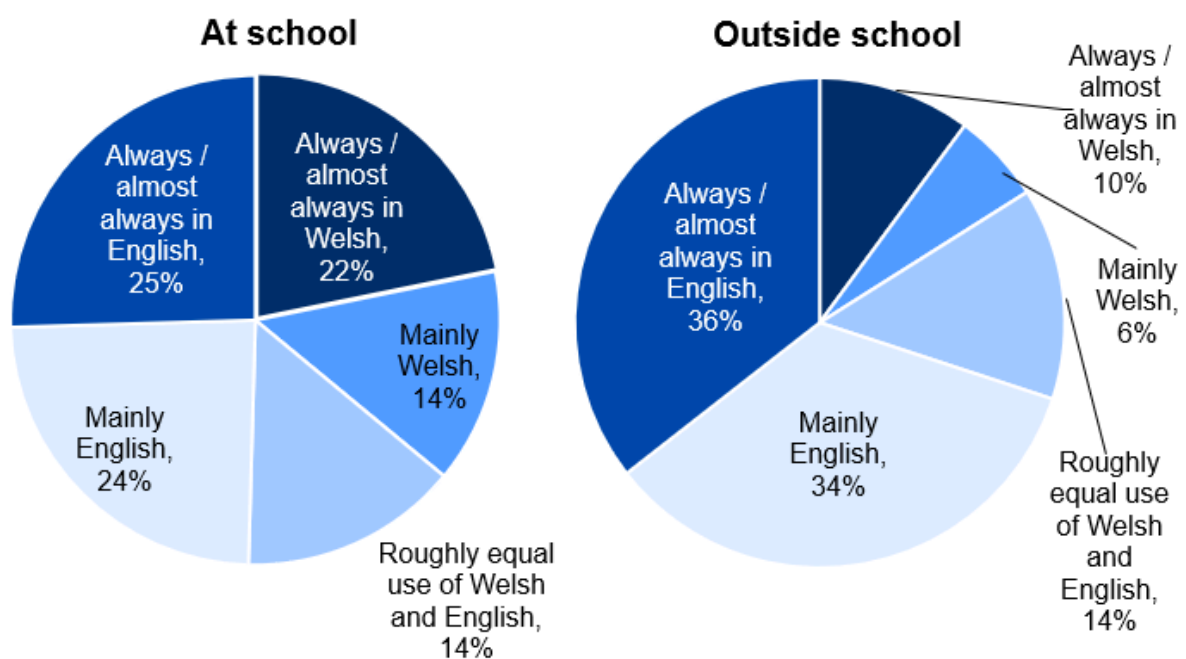
Note: A small number of respondents have indicated that this question was not applicable to them. These are not included in the chart.

Welsh-speaking children and young people were more likely to report that at least half of their friends could speak Welsh (69%) compared with Welsh-speaking adults (56%).

Children who started learning to speak Welsh at home were much more likely to say that their friends could speak Welsh, with 94% saying that at least half of their friends could speak Welsh, compared with 58% of those who started learning to speak Welsh at nursery or school.

Welsh-speaking children and young people who speak the language daily were more likely to say that their friends could speak Welsh than those who speak Welsh less often.

**Chart 9: Welsh-speaking children’s use of Welsh with friends, July 2019 to March 2020**



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Note: A small number of respondents have indicated that this question was not applicable to them. These are not included in the chart.

Children were asked what language they speak with their friends both at school

and outside school. Respondents were substantially more likely to speak Welsh with their friends at school than outside school. Over a third of Welsh-speaking children and young people mainly or always used Welsh when speaking to friends at school, compared with 16% outside school. Comparing Welsh-speaking children and young people's use outside of school with Welsh-speaking adults use outside of work, Welsh-speaking adults were more likely to speak Welsh with their friends.

Children and young people were also asked about the ability of their grandparents and extended family. They were also asked about the language usually spoken with their grandparents.

Overall, 41% of Welsh-speaking children and young people said that at least half of their grandparents could speak Welsh, and 35% said that at least half of their extended family could speak Welsh. The most common response, however, for both grandparents and extended family was that none or very few of these could speak Welsh, with 45% saying this about their grandparents, and 41% about their extended family.

Almost one in five Welsh-speaking children and young people said that they mainly or always spoke Welsh with their grandparents. Again, Welsh speakers who spoke Welsh daily, those who were fluent, those who started learning to speak Welsh at home as a young child and those living in north west Wales were most likely to say that they mainly or always spoke Welsh with their grandparents.

There is a strong link between where a child or young person started learning to speak Welsh and mainly or always speaking Welsh with grandparents. Over half of children and young people who started learning to speak Welsh at home as young children mainly or always spoke Welsh with their grandparents.

## Use of Welsh skills outside school

Welsh-speaking children and young people were asked if they read, wrote, watched, listened and downloaded apps or games in Welsh outside school. However, it may be that some of these activities may be related to school, such as reading and writing for homework.

Outside school, just over 4 in ten Welsh-speaking children and young people read things in Welsh, and just under 4 in ten wrote in Welsh. Fewer Welsh-speaking children and young people watch or listen to things in Welsh or download apps or games in Welsh.

Fluent Welsh speakers were more likely than those who were not fluent to use all forms of digital media in Welsh. The same was true for those who spoke Welsh daily, compared with those who spoke it less often than daily, and for those who had started learning to speak Welsh at home compared with those who had started learning to speak Welsh at nursery or school.

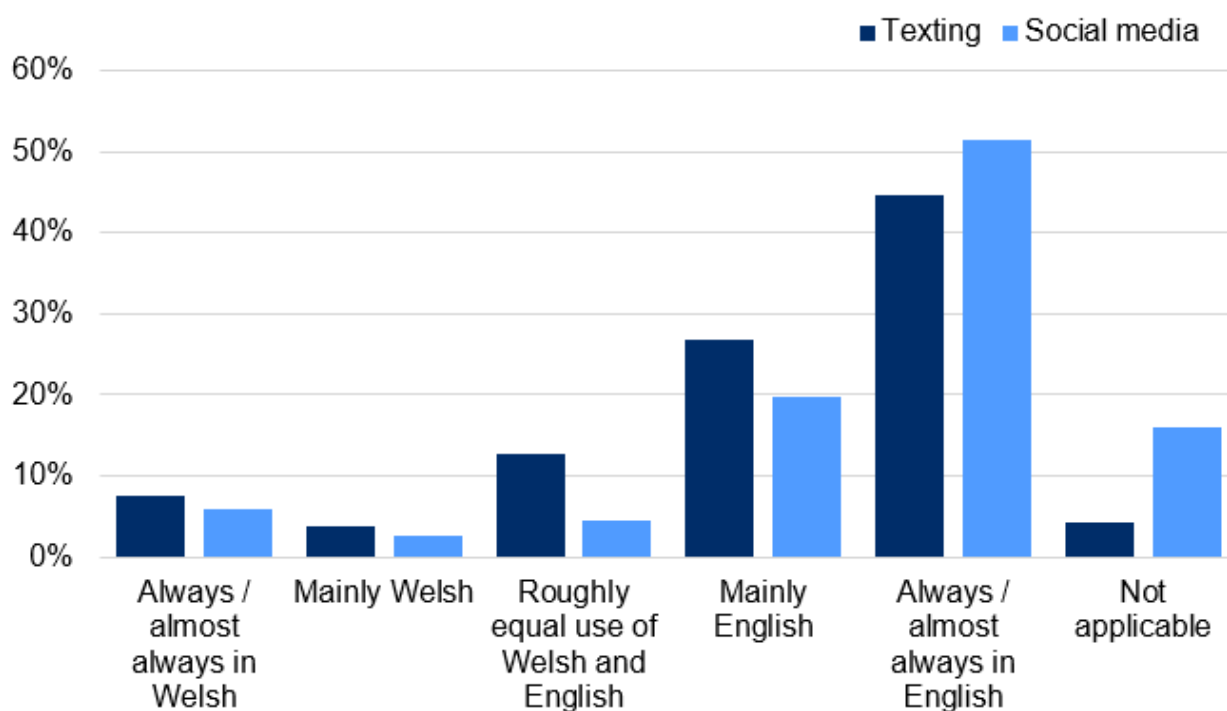
Nearly two-thirds of Welsh-speaking children and young people (66%) said that they had enough opportunities to use Welsh outside school.

Children and young people who spoke Welsh daily, those who were fluent and those living in north west Wales, were most likely to say that they had enough opportunities to use Welsh outside school. Those who had started learning to speak Welsh at home were much more likely to say that they had enough opportunities to use Welsh (over 90%), compared with those who had started learning to speak Welsh at nursery or school (just over a half).

## Digital use of Welsh

Young people of secondary school age were asked about their use of Welsh in digital media.

**Chart 10: Welsh-speaking children and young people's use of Welsh in digital media, July 2019 to March 2020**



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Note: The number of respondents who responded to this question is small and should be treated with caution.

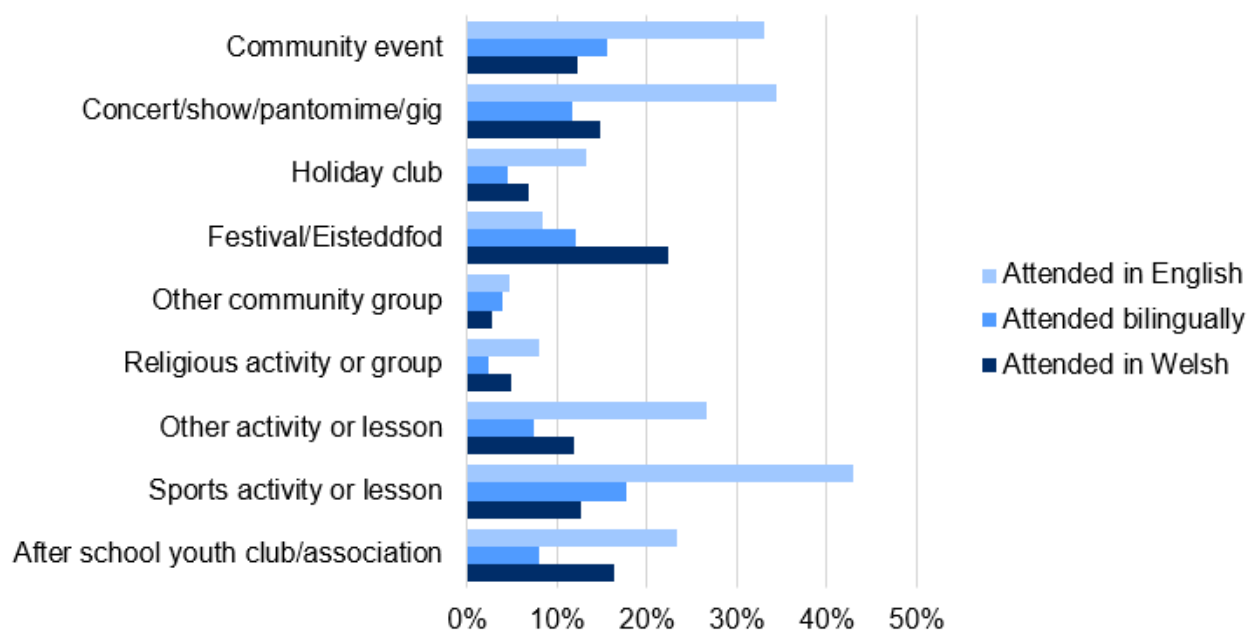
As with adults, Welsh-speaking children and young people used Welsh more to text than to post on social media. However, Welsh-speaking adults were more than twice as likely to use Welsh when texting friends that could speak Welsh

compared with Welsh-speaking children and young people.

## Organised events and activities

Respondents were asked about their participation in organised events and activities outside school over the previous 12 months and whether they were held in Welsh only, in both languages (Welsh and English) or in English only.

**Chart 11: Welsh-speaking children and young people's attendance at organised events or activities outside school, July 2019 to March 2020**



Source: Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20

Note: The number of respondents who responded to this question is small and should be treated with caution.

Just over 40% of Welsh-speaking children and young people had attended at least one event held in Welsh over the previous 12 months, and a further 24% had attended an event held using both Welsh and English. As with adults, Welsh-speaking children and young people were more likely to have attended a festival or Eisteddfod held in Welsh than any other organised event or activity.

Fluent Welsh speakers, those who spoke Welsh daily, those who started learning to speak Welsh at home as a young child and those living in north west Wales were all most likely to have attended at least one event held in Welsh.

The most common way by far for Welsh-speaking children and young people to find out about organised events or activities in Welsh in their local area was through school.

## Quality and methodology information

The purpose of the Welsh Language Use Survey is to know how often, where, when and with whom Welsh speakers use Welsh, and to know more about their skills in the language. We consider that the census remains the main source of information about the Welsh language ability of the population aged three or older in Wales, but this survey provides us with information about the use of the language by Welsh speakers.

The Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20 is a continuation of research undertaken jointly by [the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Welsh Government in 2013-15](#). There was also a [Language Use Survey in 2004 to 2006 \(UK Data Service Provider\)](#), carried out by the Welsh Language Board.

The Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20 was carried out as part of the [National Survey for Wales](#), in similar fashion to the Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-15. The original intention was to conduct the follow-up language



use survey between July 2019 and March 2021, namely the Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-21. However, due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the survey ended earlier than planned, therefore the fieldwork was carried out between 1 July 2019 and 14 March 2020, also resulting in a smaller sample than planned. To allow the detailed analyses with the smaller sample available for 2019-20, we have included totals between 5 and 30 in our analyses. The lower quality is identified where appropriate.

The questionnaires used for the 2019-20 survey were developed by the Welsh Government following consultation with users of statistics about the Welsh language. Most of the questions had not changed since the Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-15. However, some new questions were introduced, for example, about the views of Welsh speakers about the language, and the confidence of Welsh speakers in speaking the language.

There were two types of questionnaires, one for adults (aged 16 or older) and one for children and young people (aged 3 to 15). The questionnaire for children and young people was completed by the parent or guardian, or by the young person if they wished to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaires could be completed in English or Welsh. Copies of both questionnaires can be found on the [survey materials](#) webpage.

The survey response rate was 47%, i.e. of all Welsh speakers identified in the National Survey for Wales, 47% of those had completed and returned the questionnaire. This is slightly higher than the 44% response rate in the Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-15.

Further [technical information and information about the quality of the National Survey for Wales](#) can be found on our website.

Technical and quality information from the Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20 (including further information on the survey acceptance, return and response rates) will be in the National Survey for Wales 2019-20 reports once

available.

## Welsh regions

To be able to report at a consistent geographical level throughout this report, we present data at a regional level. These regions are consistent with those used in the National Survey for Wales's analyses of the Welsh language. Some data from the Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20 will be available at local authority level in data tables that will be published in due course.

### Regions of Wales and constituent local authorities used in this report

#### North west Wales

- Isle of Anglesey
- Gwynedd
- Conwy

#### North east Wales

- Denbighshire
- Flintshire
- Wrexham

#### Mid Wales

- Powys
- Ceredigion

## South west Wales

- Pembrokeshire
- Carmarthenshire
- Swansea
- Neath Port Talbot

## South east Wales

- Bridgend
- Vale of Glamorgan
- Cardiff
- Rhondda Cynon Taf
- Merthyr Tydfil
- Caerphilly
- Blaenau Gwent
- Torfaen
- Monmouthshire
- Newport

## The impact of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the survey ended earlier than planned and what is presented here, therefore, is the results of the first nine months of the survey, the Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20.

Further detail on the impact on the analyses can be found in the quality and methodology section in the [initial findings of the survey](#).

The Welsh Government has published [a report on the findings of a survey](#)

**about the effects of COVID-19 on Welsh language community groups** since the start of the pandemic. Known groups were asked to complete the survey, which gathered evidence on how the groups had operated before the pandemic, whether they had been able to operate since the start of the first lockdown in March 2020 and what their expectations were for the future.

## Future plans

This is the third in a series of statistical bulletins by theme following the publication of the initial findings of the Welsh Language Use Survey 2019-20 in September 2021. There will be bulletins to follow on the Welsh language in the workplace and the use of Welsh with services. We will combine data from the National Survey for Wales 2019-20 where applicable.

## National Statistics status

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 management 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 the responsibility of the Welsh Government to maintain compliance with the standards expected of National Statistics. If we are concerned whether these

statistics still meet the appropriate standards, we will discuss this promptly with the Authority. National Statistics status can be abolished at any time when the highest standards have not been maintained, and re-awarded when the standards are reinstated.

A **full assessment** of these statistics was carried out against the Code of Practice in 2016.

Since the last review by the Office for Statistics Regulation, we have continued to conform to the Code of Practice for Statistics, and we have made improvements, such as consulting further with our users on their needs concerning the use of the Welsh Language.

## **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.

No national indicator has been included in this statement but the national indicator for the use of the Welsh language, which uses the same data source,

the Language Use Survey 2019-20, has been updated in our initial results on [Welsh language use in Wales](#).

Information on the indicators, together with a narrative for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Wellbeing of Wales report](#).

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

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SB 33/2022

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