Is the prevalence of Welsh in schools stopping the language decline?

Catrin Jones
Accenta
<lcj@accenta.net>

Abstract

Since the mid 1990's, education through the medium of Welsh has increased significantly. A brief outline of Welsh medium education is given, followed by an introduction of its effect on the results pertaining to the Welsh language of the 2001 UK population census. This census shows an increase in Welsh speakers in Wales, particularly in the younger age groups. A shift in the linguistic geography of Wales, and an alarming decline in those areas traditionally considered to be the strongholds of the language is also revealed by the census results. This shift is largely due to immigration, a phenomenon which has become particularly significant in Wales over the last twenty years. This article ends with the conclusion that the progress made in the arrest of language decline through Welsh medium education is being counterbalanced by the effects of immigration.

Keywords: Sociolinguistics, education, immigration, Welsh language.

1 Background

The 20$^{\text{th}}$ century was a period of great transformation for the Welsh language. Prior to the second half of the century, the language had no official status in Wales, and was mainly the language of family life and religion. Welsh was not present in public administration and had a minimal role in education, and as a result the number of Welsh speakers was steadily declining. Between 1931 and 1991 the number of Welsh speakers fell from 909,300 (36.8 % of the total population of Wales) to 508,000 (18.7 %).

The progress made in language rights and status during the latter half of the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century can be largely attributed to the work of pressure groups and individuals committed to the survival of the Welsh language, without forgetting of course, governmental cooperation. The first Welsh language act in 1967 gave the right to use Welsh in court, and also authorized its use in public administration. The establishment of the Welsh language radio station (Radio Cymru) in 1977 and the Welsh language television channel (S4C) in 1982 contributed further to

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the public presence of Welsh. The most significant language legislation to date is the Welsh Language Act of 1993, which gives Welsh a greater degree of equality with English: «in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales the English and Welsh languages should be treated on a basis of equality.»

2 Education

The 1944 Education Act stated that children should be educated according to their parents' wishes and therefore gave Welsh speakers a legal basis for their demands for Welsh medium education. This led to some parents and individuals joining forces and establishing private Welsh medium schools. In 1952, the Union of Welsh Medium School Parents (*Undeb Rhieni Ysgolion Cymraeg*) which later became Parents for Welsh Medium Education (*Rhieni Dros Addysg Gymraeg*) was established. Over the next fifty years, this pressure group had a profound influence on the establishment of state run designated Welsh medium primary and secondary schools in the more anglicised areas of Wales.

Nevertheless, up to the end of the 1990's, the provision of Welsh language education in Wales was a very haphazard affair in non-designated Welsh medium schools, depending largely on the number of Welsh speakers in any given class, on whether the teacher wished to teach in Welsh or not and also on the language policy of the local education authority. However, by the end of the 20$^{\text{th}}$ century, the process of normalisation, (promoting the use of the language and aiding its recuperation in all sectors and activities of society) had significantly changed the situation of the Welsh language.

According to results of the 2001 Census, the absolute number and proportion of Welsh speakers had increased since 1991:

Table 1: *Welsh Speakers in Wales 1921-2001.*

Year	**Thousands**	**% of Total Population**
1921	922,1	37.1
1931	909,3	36.8
1951	714,7	28.9
1961	656,0	26.0
1971	542,4	20.8
1981	508,2	18.9
1991	508,0	18.7
2001	575,6	20.5

Source: Office for National Statistics and the National Assembly for Wales.

This resurgence has been claimed to be a direct result of the increase in the presence of Welsh in education.

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2.1 Pre-school Education

Compulsory education in Wales begins at the age of 5. However, there is some state-run provision available for children under 5. In the majority of areas, there are schools which admit pupils before the statutory age —this largely depends on the space available. The National Assembly Guidance states that free, at least half-time education in the three terms (equivalent to 1 year) before the beginning of compulsory education should be available for every 4 year old. When space in a Welsh medium pre-school is unavailable because of high demand for limited places, the LEA buys into spaces in *Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin* (Nursery Schools Association) which was established in 1971. It was created in order to provide Welsh language education for children under 5 (both Welsh mother tongue speakers and monoglot English speakers), and in 1971 ran 68 schools. By 2003 there were 586 schools. The movement has played a key role in the growth of the use of Welsh in primary schools, as more pupils arrive at primary schools from *MYM* schools, the need for education through the medium of Welsh has increased.

2.2 Primary Education

The first Welsh medium primary school was opened in Llanelli in mid Wales in 1947. This was a significant step for education through the medium of Welsh in areas where English was the language of the majority of the population. In the heartlands of Welsh, the language had been the medium of education in most primary schools for a number of years prior to this. Many other local education authorities followed the example of Sir Gaerfyrddin and in the next few years a dozen other Welsh medium primary schools were opened. The effects of migration from England on schools in majority Welsh speaking areas caused demands for some schools in those areas to become designated Welsh medium. Today, there are primary schools in each county in Wales teaching through the medium of Welsh to native speakers and non-native speakers alike. By the year 2003, 28 % of primary schools in Wales were using Welsh as the only or main language of instruction. While in 67.5 % of schools it was only taught as a second language. Today, there is hardly a primary school in Wales where Welsh is not taught at all. Table 2 lists primary schools according to the use of Welsh and by local education authority:

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TABLE 2: *Maintained Primary schools, by the use of Welsh, by LEA 2003.*

	Schools having classes where Welsh is the sole or main medium of instruction		**Schools having classes where Welsh is used as a medium for teaching part of the curriculum**		**Schools having classes where Welsh is taught as a second language**	
	Number	**%**	**Number**	**%**	**Number**	**%**
Ynys Môn	41	78.8	9	17.3	2	3.8
Gwynedd	104	98.1	1	0.9	1	0.9
Conwy	26	41.3	6	9.5	31	49.2
Dinbych	14	26.9	6	11.5	32	61.5
Fflint	5	6.7	1	1.3	69	92.0
Wrecsam	6	8.3	1	1.4	65	90.3
Powys	14	12.8	12	11	83	76.1
Ceredigion	64	84.2	8	10.5	4	5.3
Penfro	21	26.9	8	10.3	19	62.8
Caerfyrddin	80	61.5	18	13.8	32	24.6
Abertawe	10	10.9	0	0.0	82	89.1
Castell-nedd Port Talbot	13	17.8	0	0.0	60	82.2
Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	4	6.7	0	0.0	56	93.3
Bro Morgannwg	5	10.4	0	0.0	43	89.6
Rhondda Cynon Taf	15	11.4	1	0.8	116	87.9
Merthyr Tudful	2	6.9	0	0.0	27	93.1
Caerffili	8	10.0	0	0.0	72	90.0
Blaenau Gwent	1	3.0	0	0.0	32	97.0
Torfaen	2	5.0	0	0.0	38	95.0

Source: National Statistics (Annual Schools' Census).

While these figures seem encouraging with 28 % of primary schools in Wales using Welsh as the sole or main medium for teaching, in real numbers of pupils the figure is significantly lower. Of the 217,934 pupils over 5 years old attending maintained primary schools in Wales, only 40,754 (18.7 %) are taught in classes where Welsh is the only or main medium of instruction. This apparent anomaly is due to the fact that the traditional strongholds of the Welsh language (highlighted in yellow) are largely rural with a small and widespread population which results in schools with low numbers of pupils.

Table 3 shows the increase in actual numbers of pupils receiving their primary education through the medium of Welsh since 1990. It is important to note that the proportion of schools where no Welsh is taught has declined very rapidly from 22.8 % in 1990 to only 1.2 % in 2003. In the same vein, Welsh as a second language has spread from 55.4 % to 78.2 % of primary schools during this period.

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TABLE 3: *Welsh teaching in primary schools.*

Percentage of Pupils in classes where Welsh is:	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2003**
the sole or main medium of instruction	14.1	17.2	17.9	18.7
used as a medium of teaching for part of the curriculum	7.7	3.4	2.4	1.9
taught as a second language	55.4	71.9	78.1	78.2
no Welsh is taught	22.8	7.5	1.6	1.2

Source: Statistical Directorate, National Assembly for Wales.

2.3 Secondary Education

Before 1956, Welsh had not been used as a language of instruction in secondary schools. From an educational point of view, it was treated as a foreign language. Even in rural Anglesey in the 1950's pupils had to choose between studying Welsh or French. The opening of *Ysgol Maes Garmon* (in the north east) in 1956 paved the way for other Welsh medium schools and by the mid 1980's there were fifteen state run Welsh medium secondary schools in Wales. In the more Welsh areas (notably Gwynedd and Dyfed), secondary school education was bilingual, the sciences, maths and modern languages were often taught in English while Welsh literature, geography and history were taught in Welsh. During the late 1980's, more subjects began to be offered through the medium of Welsh.

According to the 1996 Education Act «a Welsh speaking secondary school is one where more than one half of the following subjects [namely] religious education and subjects other than English and Welsh which are foundation subjects in relation to pupils at the school are taught wholly or partly in Welsh.»[1] This definition therefore encompasses the relatively new Welsh medium schools and those schools that have traditionally taught some subjects through the medium of Welsh. Of the 227 maintained secondary schools in Wales (212,024 pupils),[2] 53 of them are designated Welsh medium schools, with a total of 39,458 pupils (18.6 % of all pupils in Wales). Table 3 lists the number of schools classified as Welsh medium according to the 1996 Education Act, by local education authority.

[1]Education Act 1996, Section 354(8).
[2]Figures for 2002.

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TABLE 4: *Welsh speaking secondary schools 2003, by LEA.*

	Number of pupils	**Number of schools**
Ynys Môn	3,830	4
Gwynedd	6,748	13
Conwy	1,445	2
Dinbych	2,025	2
Fflint	517	1
Wrecsam	777	1
Powys	4,079	6
Ceredigion	3,912	6
Penfro	793	1
Caerfyrddin	5,386	6
Abertawe	992	1
Castell-nedd Port Talbot	1,183	1
Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	0	0
Bro Morgannwg	368	1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	3,820	4
Merthyr Tudful	0	0
Caerffili	1,021	1
Blaenau Gwent	0	0
Torfaen	768	1
Mynwy	0	0
Casnewydd	0	0
Caerdydd	1,794	2
Total	**39,458**	**53**

Source: National Statistics (Annual Schools' Census).

Since the Education Act of 1996, Welsh has become a core subject in all schools in Wales. Thus all pupils in Wales have obligatory Welsh lessons from the age of 5 up to the age of 16. This is a vast improvement on the previous situation where pupils who did not wish to take Welsh as a subject were not obliged to do so. The results of this policy are seen in Table 5 which shows the increase in the teaching of Welsh in secondary schools.

TABLE 5: *Welsh teaching in secondary schools in year groups 7 to 11.*

Percentage of pupils	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2003**
Taught Welsh as a first language	11.7	12.4	14.0	14.4
Taught Welsh as a second language	49.5	63.2	84.5	84.4
Not taught Welsh at all	38.8	24.4	1.4	1.2

Source: Education, Training and Economic Statistics Unit of the Welsh Assembly.

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3 Is Welsh winning?

The increase in Welsh language provision in education has greatly affected the number of Welsh speakers in the younger age groups as shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6: *Percentage of persons able to speak Welsh by age group, 1997 and 2001.*

Age group	**3-15**	**16-44**	**45-64**	**65+**
1997	29.5	17.2	17.6	22.3
2001	31.2	32.3	19.5	17.0

Source: 1997 Welsh Household Interview Survey and Office for National Statistics (Census 2001).

This is an encouraging increase in the number of Welsh speakers but there is no room for complacency. The linguistic geography of Wales is changing, there is a resurgence of Welsh speakers in many areas of Wales from which the language had previously disappeared and a decline in areas that have always been considered as strongholds of the language. Figures 1, 2, and 3 below show the changes in the geography of Welsh between 1981 and 2001. The language is gaining ground in some areas and losing it in others.

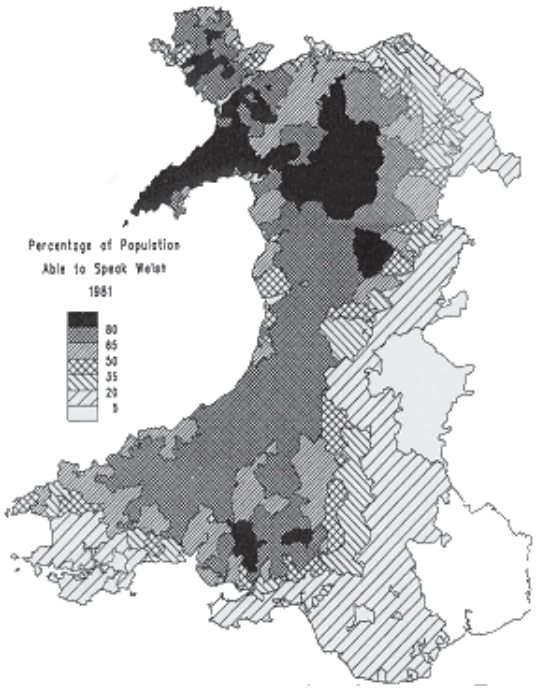


FIGURE 1: *Welsh Speakers in 1981. From Aitchison and Carter (2000).*

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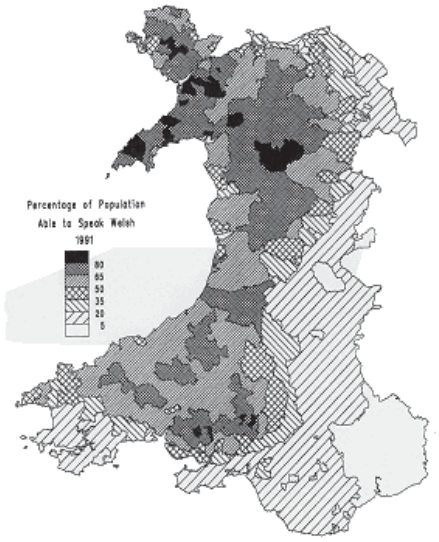


FIGURE 2: *Welsh Speakers in 1991. From Aitchison and Carter (2000).*

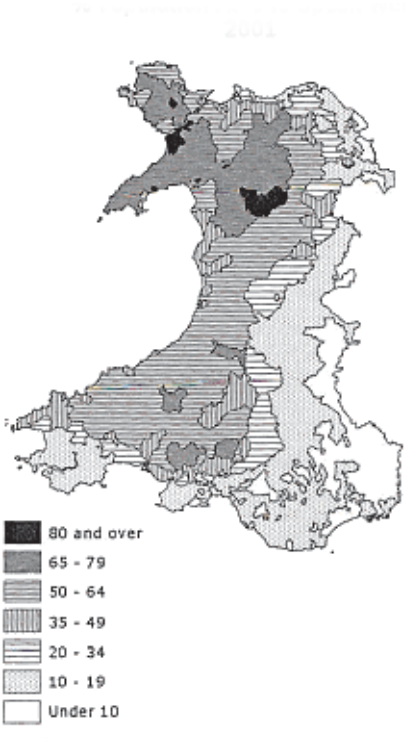


FIGURE 3: *Welsh Speakers in 2001. From Aitchison and Carter (2004).*

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The increased presence of Welsh in schools is to a great extent responsible for the increase in new speakers. As is shown in Tables 7 and 8 below, among Welsh speaking pupils, the overwhelming majority of them (89.7 %) do not come from Welsh speaking households.

TABLE 7: *Primary school pupils, aged 5 years and over by ability to speak Welsh, 2003.*

	Speak Welsh at home		**Do not speak Welsh at home but are fluent**		**Speak Welsh but not fluently**		**Cannot speak Welsh**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Ynys Môn	1,706	63.6	266	5.7	1,646	35.3	691	14.8
Gwynedd	5,037	62.1	607	7.5	1,861	23.0	466	5.7
Conwy	926	12.4	125	1.7	2,038	27.3	4,375	58.6
Dinbych	623	9.1	321	4.7	1,876	27.4	3,288	48.1
Fflint	230	2.0	474	4.2	4,301	38.0	6,109	54.0
Wrecsam	319	3.5	310	3.4	875	9.5	7,669	83.6
Powys	491	5.3	651	7.0	4,448	48.0	3,651	39.4
Ceredigion	1,539	34.8	503	11.4	1,705	38.6	591	13.4
Penfro	386	4.5	514	6.0	3,790	44.1	3,635	42.3
Caerfyrddin	2,871	23.7	722	6.0	2,591	21.4	4,159	34.3
Abertawe	458	2.9	570	3.6	2,264	14.3	12,560	79.1
Castell-nedd Port Talbot	661	6.7	438	4.4	1,324	13.4	7,351	74.2
Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	136	1.4	575	5.8	1,462	14.7	7,743	78.1
Bro Morgannwg	427	4.4	329	3.4	1,052	10.9	7,453	77.5
Rhondda Cynon Taf	786	4.6	2,101	12.2	2,043	11.9	12,176	70.7
Merthyr Tudful	123	2.7	315	6.9	733	16.1	3,372	74.1
Caerffili	204	1.5	1,200	8.8	3,508	25.6	8,553	62.4
Blaenau Gwent	0	0.0	238	4.4	2,506	46.3	2,673	49.3
Torfaen	13	0.2	345	4.7	3,517	48.1	3,407	46.6
Mynwy	31	0.5	47	0.8	2,639	42.9	3,433	55.8
Casnewydd	10	0.1	284	2.5	3,265	29.2	7,639	68.2
Caerdydd	632	2.8	1,311	5.8	3,943	17.4	16,532	72.8
Total	**17,609**	**8.2**	**12,246**	**5.7**	**53,387**	**24.8**	**127,526**	**59.2**

Source: National Statistics (Annual Schools' Census).

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TABLE 8: *Secondary school pupils, aged 11-15 by ability to speak Welsh, 2003.*

	Speak Welsh at home		**Do not speak Welsh at home but are fluent**		**Speak Welsh but not fluently**		**Cannot speak Welsh**	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Ynys Môn	1,687	40.1	464	11.0	1,217	29.0	704	16.7
Gwynedd	4,116	56.8	982	13.5	1,309	18.1	276	3.8
Conwy	679	10.0	411	6.1	2,214	32.7	3,461	51.1
Dinbych	669	10.0	459	6.9	2,478	37.1	3,060	45.8
Fflint	165	1.8	301	3.3	1,946	21.0	6,610	71.5
Wrecsam	226	3.3	465	6.8	1,240	18.0	4,772	69.5
Powys	402	5.1	343	4.4	1,405	17.8	4,270	54.2
Ceredigion	1,428	33.1	704	16.3	1,787	41.5	380	8.8
Penfro	412	5.7	533	7.4	2,197	30.4	2,654	36.7
Caerfyrddin	1,935	17.6	1,100	10.0	2,976	27.0	2,026	18.4
Abertawe	281	2.0	555	4.0	3,534	25.2	9,651	68.8
Castell-nedd Port Talbot	488	5.4	663	7.3	2,486	27.5	5,395	59.7
Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	28	0.3	33	0.4	1,051	12.4	7,352	86.9
Bro Morgannwg	166	2.1	225	2.8	3,612	44.8	3,773	6.8
Rhondda Cynon Taf	468	2.8	2,809	16.9	1,012	6.1	11,746	70.6
Merthyr Tudful	2	0.1	7	0.2	705	17.9	3,216	81.8
Caerffili	99	0.8	809	6.6	2,928	23.9	5,338	43.6
Blaenau Gwent	25	5.7	7	0.2	472	10.5	3,756	83.6
Torfaen	5	0.1	695	9.7	2,004	28.1	3,317	46.5
Mynwy	2	0.0	5	0.1	3,075	64.0	1,722	35.8
Casnewydd	4	0.0	10	0.1	3,068	33.3	6,121	66.5
Caerdydd	578	3.0	894	4.7	3,365	17.5	17,731	66.3
Total	**14,096**	**7.5**	**12,474**	**6.6**	**46,081**	**24.4**	**102,331**	**54.2**

Source: National Statistics (Annual Schools' Census).

Despite the huge increase in teaching Welsh and through the medium of Welsh in schools, a staggering percentage of pupils in Wales are unable to speak any Welsh (59.2 % of primary pupils and 54.2 % of secondary pupils).

Table 9 shows the changes in the population of Wales between the Population Censuses 1991 and 2001.

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TABLE 9: *Changes in the population of Wales between the Population Censuses 1991 and 2001.*

Year	**Population (thousands)**	**Natural change (thousands)**			**Migration to/from (thousands)**			**Total Change**
		Births	Deaths	Total	Rest of UK	Rest of World	Total	
1991	2873.0	38.1	34.1	4.0	4.0	3.4	7.4	11.4
1992	2877.4	38.1	33.7	4.4	3.8	–1.9	1.9	6.3
1993	2882.5	36.7	33.8	2.9	2.8	–1.1	1.7	4.6
1994	2886.4	36.7	35.6	1.1	1.5	1.6	3.1	4.2
1995	2887.2	34.8	34.3	0.5	1.6	3.7	5.3	5.8
1996	2889.3	34.9	34.6	0.3	2.0	0.5	2.5	2.8
1997	2892.3	35.4	35.1	0.3	4.1	6.3	10.4	10.7
1998	2896.0	33.9	33.6	0.3	2.1	1.5	3.6	3.9
1999	2897.2	32.1	35.0	–2.9	4.7	4.0	8.7	5.8
2000	2900.1	31.3	33.3	–2.0	7.4	–1.9	5.5	3.5
2001	2903.1	30.6	33.0	–2.4	8.5	5.0	13.5	11.1

While the figures show a low and declining natural growth rate. The low birth figures are actually being counterbalanced by immigration which has maintained high levels during the decade providing between 5,000 and 6,000 immigrants a year. Most of the immigrants come from the rest of the UK.

The biggest threat facing the Welsh language today is migration from England. Wales has always been a popular tourist destination for the English but in recent years it has also become increasingly popular as a retirement resort and as the final destination for English families looking for a better lifestyle. The explanation behind this is largely economic. Property prices in Wales compared to England have always been considerably lower, therefore it is an extremely viable option to sell a small property in a town in England and buy a larger one in the Welsh countryside and still make a profit (see Table 10). In 1999, 30 % of all properties sold in Gwynedd were bought by people from outside the area.[3]

TABLE 10: *Property Prices UK, 2004.*

Region	**Average Price** (Pounds Sterling)
Greater London	280,430
South East England	213,828
South West England	187,495
East Anglia	162,718
West Midlands	147,541
East Midlands	141,560
Wales	125,330
Yorkshire and Humberside	125,285
North West England	122,260
North of England	114,694

Source: UK Land Registry Property Prices.

[3]Source: Planning Committee, Gwynedd Council.

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Table 11 below shows the average weekly earnings in Wales compared to the average earnings in the UK as a whole. There is a significant difference. The county which has the highest percentage of Welsh speakers, Gwynedd, has one of the lowest rates in Wales, the average weekly wage there is £368.68.

TABLE 11: *Average gross weekly earnings of full-time employees in Wales and England, April 2003.*

Ynys Môn	£392.59
Gwynedd	£368.68
Conwy	£417.59
Dinbych	£425.53
Fflint	£436.99
Wrecsam	£404.31
Powys	£439.83
Ceredigion	£395.71
Penfro	£407.64
Caerfyrddin	£387.26
Abertawe	£402.35
Castell-nedd Port Talbot	£416.62
Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	£421.74
Bro Morgannwg	£470.48
Rhondda Cynon Taf	£383.01
Merthyr Tudful	£388.96
Caerffili	£392.32
Blaenau Gwent	£350.93
Torfaen	£401.09
Mynwy	£502.69
Casnewydd	£444.48
Caerdydd	£445.25
Wales	**£416.04**
England	**£484.86**

Source: Office for National Statistics.

Due to the huge rise in house prices that has occurred over the last few years, local people in many areas of Wales have been priced out of the housing market. There is a chronic shortage of affordable housing particularly in the traditional Welsh language areas. As a result, many young people are forced to leave their communities in order to be able to afford a house. In addition, the Welsh heartlands are still suffering from the repercussions of the economic difficulties and recession of the 1980's and 1990's. Absence of work and bleak future prospects resulted in many young people leaving their villages and towns to look for work outside Wales, leaving increasingly ageing communities behind. Many of those who left went across the border to England and even further afield.

According to the 2001 census 20.3 % of residents in Wales were born in England.

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TABLE 12: *Residents of Wales, by country of birth (%).*

	Total Population (thousands)	**Wales**	**Rest of the UK**	**Other countries**
Ynys Môn	66.8	67.6	30.6	1.9
Gwynedd	116.8	69.8	27.9	2.3
Conwy	109.6	54.0	43.6	2.4
Dinbych	93.1	57.9	39.8	2.3
Fflint	148.6	51.1	46.8	2.1
Wrecsam	128.5	71.9	26.0	2.1
Powys	126.4	55.6	42.1	2.3
Ceredigion	74.9	58.6	38.3	3.1
Penfro	114.1	68.7	28.6	2.7
Caerfyrddin	172.8	80.1	18.0	1.9
Abertawe	223.3	82.1	14.8	3.1
Castell-nedd Port Talbot	134.5	89.5	9.0	1.5
Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	128.6	84.7	13.2	2.1
Bro Morgannwg	119.3	75.7	21.1	3.3
Rhondda Cynon Taf	305.4	74.9	18.1	6.9
Merthyr Tudful	231.9	89.9	8.4	1.6
Caerffili	56.0	92.0	6.8	1.2
Blaenau Gwent	169.5	89.9	8.6	1.4
Torfaen	70.1	92.1	6.9	1.0
Mynwy	90.9	85.5	12.9	1.6
Casnewydd	84.9	61.3	35.9	2.8
Caerdydd	137.0	81.1	15.1	3.8
Total	**2,903.1**	**75.4**	**21.9**	**2.7**

Source: Office for National Statistics.

This immigration is affecting the whole of Wales. The only areas where 80-90 % of the population was born in Wales are in some of the southern industrialized regions. All other areas of Wales have a percentage of below 80 %. There are parts of the Welsh heartlands where less than 60 % of the population was born in Wales.

Although the number of Welsh speakers has risen, according to the statistics the number of Welsh residents who can function fully in the language is not as high (Table 13).

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TABLE 13: *Population of Wales, by skills in Welsh, 2003.*

	I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Ynys Môn	64679	8.73	6.39	2.94	50.51	1.82	29.6
Gwynedd	112800	5.91	5.75	2.31	60.63	1.5	23.89
Conwy	106316	7.84	4.03	1.94	23.23	2.63	60.33
Dinbych	90085	7.05	3.66	1.74	20.73	2.86	63.96
Fflint	143382	4.39	2.13	1.06	10.92	2.89	78.62
Wrecsam	124024	5.3	2.36	1.17	10.9	3.17	77.1
Powys	122473	6.07	3.19	1.67	15.97	3.18	69.91
Ceredigion	72884	7.15	4.99	2.73	44.11	2.27	38.76
Penfro	110182	5.43	3.51	1.64	16.35	2.43	70.65
Caerfyrddin	167373	10.45	7.22	3.89	38.96	3.07	36.41
Abertawe	216226	5.99	2.47	1.37	9.38	3.26	77.53
Castell-nedd Port Talbot	130305	6.52	3.26	1.69	12.83	4.51	71.18
Pen-y-bont ar Ogwr	124284	4.28	1.61	0.88	8.09	5.06	80.08
Bro Morgannwg	115116	2.92	1.57	0.69	8.81	2.92	83.1
Rhondda Cynon Taf	223924	4.26	1.66	0.83	9.79	4.55	78.92
Merthyr Tudful	54115	4.03	1.71	0.97	7.35	3.68	82.26
Caerffili	163297	2.83	1.72	0.67	8.52	2.93	83.33
Blaenau Gwent	67795	2.19	1.9	0.59	6.56	2.07	86.69
Torfaen	88062	1.93	1.93	0.69	8.08	1.84	85.53
Mynwy	82351	2.05	1.6	0.6	6.82	1.79	87.14
Casnewydd	131820	1.88	1.77	0.61	7.18	1.92	86.63
Caerdydd	294208	2.93	1.4	0.71	8.75	2.52	83.69
Total	**2805701**	**4.93**	**2.83**	**1.37**	**16.32**	**2.98**	**71.57**

Source: Office for National Statistics.

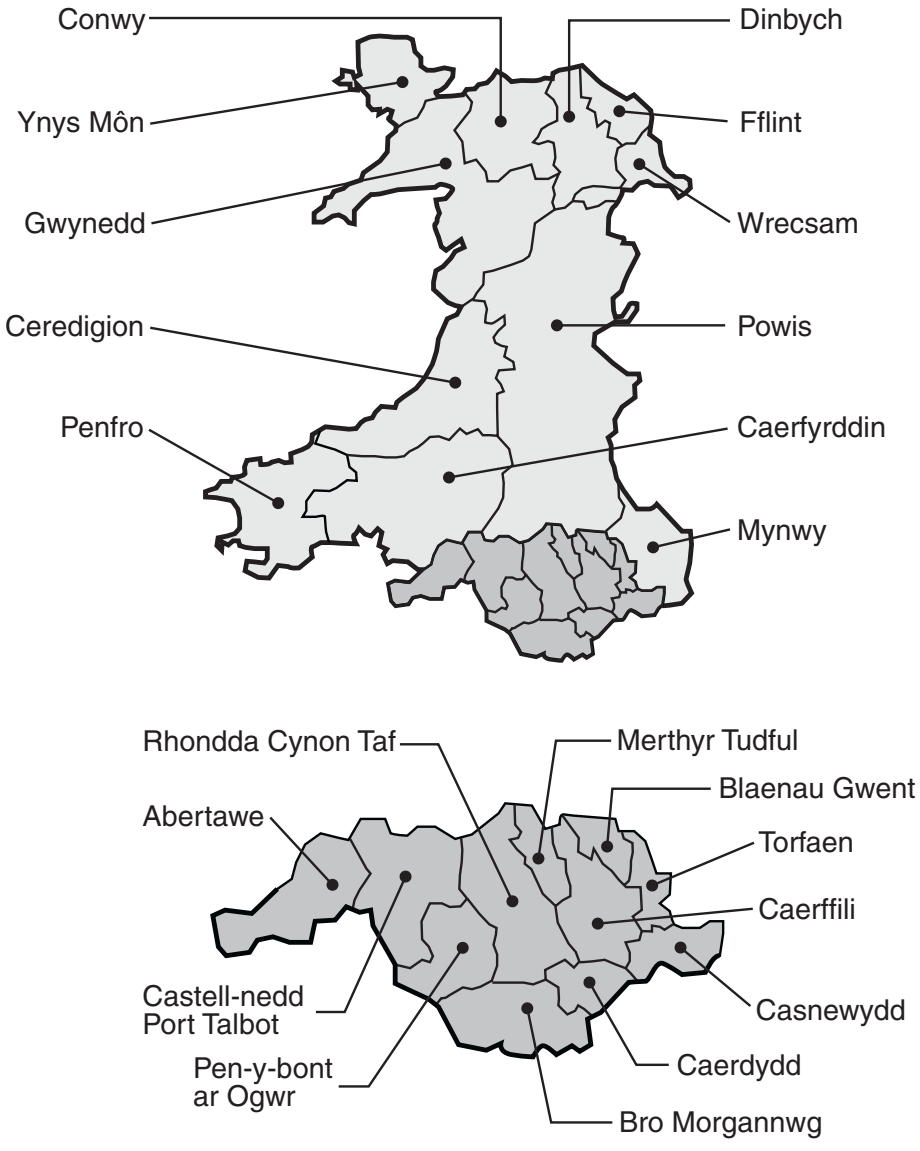
I	=	All people aged 3 and over
II	=	Understands spoken Welsh only
III	=	Speaks but does not read or write Welsh
IV	=	Speaks and reads but does not write Welsh
V	=	Speaks, reads and writes Welsh
VI	=	Other combination of skills
VII	=	No knowledge of Welsh

With the continuing migration trend, Welsh speakers in the heartlands of Wales are becoming marginalized and the traditional linguistic communities are disintegrating. While the political forces in Wales are unwilling to face up to the threat of immigration to the Welsh language, the future of the language hangs on the balance. In order to protect and promote the Welsh language, a commitment must be made by the government, both politically and financially. However, the Welsh Assembly is ignoring the immigration issue and has invested only 0.87 % of its 2004 budget in «Culture, Sports and the Welsh Language», and has yet to officially acknowledge this phenomenon and the danger it poses for the Welsh language and communities.

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The effects of immigration on the survival of the Welsh language is a burning issue today. The fact that the children of non-Welsh speaking parents (migrants and otherwise) will learn Welsh in school is a positive aspect, but the negative effects of migration are largely counter-balancing this positive aspect. And, in order for Welsh to survive those children must continue to speak Welsh into their adult life. Only time will tell if the increased presence of Welsh in schools will lead to a higher percentage of the residents of Wales living their lives through the medium of Welsh.



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Web Resources

The National Assembly for Wales. URL: <http://www.wales.gov.uk>.

Welsh Language Act 1993. URL: <http://www.hmso.gov.uk/acts/acts1993/Ukpga_19930038_en_2.htm>.

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