

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

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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 20th 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 20th 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

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 20th 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.

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:

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 | 13 | 17.8 | 0 | 0.0 | 60 | 82.2 |
| Port Talbot | | | | | | |
| 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.

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.

¹Education Act 1996, Section 354(8).

²Figures for 2002.

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.

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.

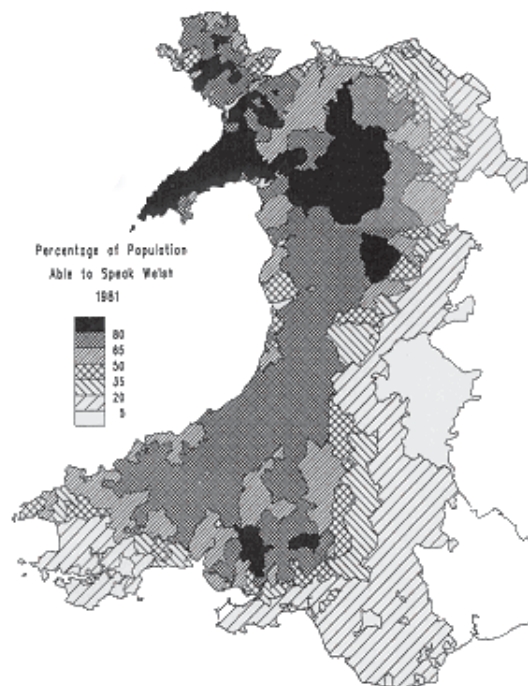


FIGURE 1: *Welsh Speakers in 1981. From Aitchison and Carter (2000).*

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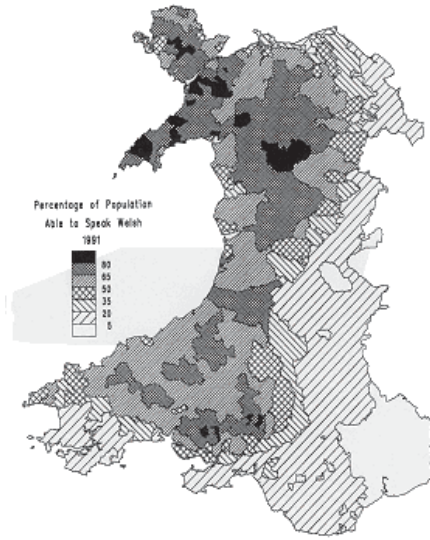


FIGURE 2: *Welsh Speakers in 1991. From Aitchison and Carter (2000).*

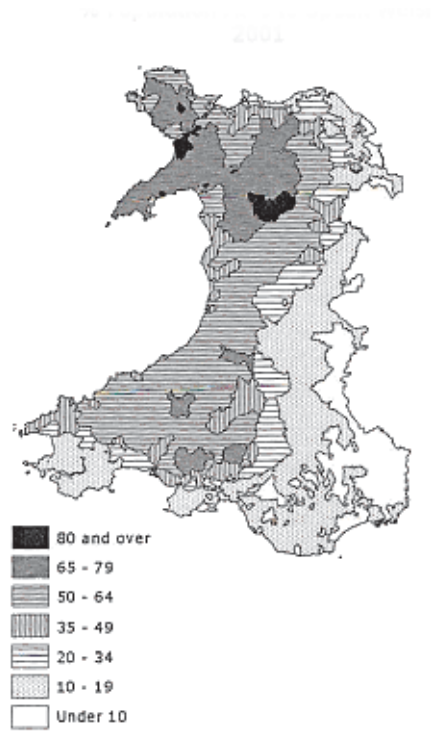


FIGURE 3: *Welsh Speakers in 2001. From Aitchison and Carter (2004).*

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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).

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.

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.

³Source: Planning Committee, Gwynedd Council.

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.

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).

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

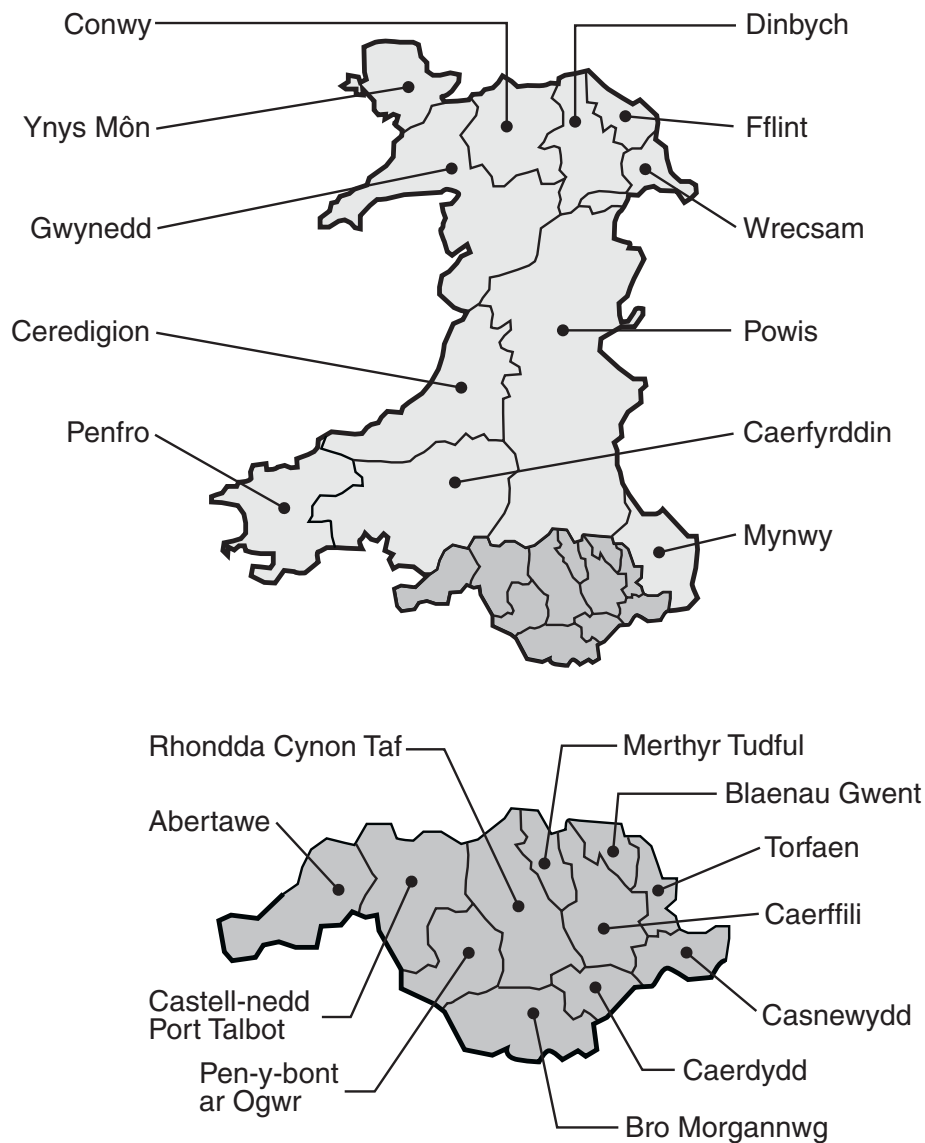
| | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII |
|-----------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| Ynys Môn | 64679 | 8.73 | 6.39 | 2.94 | 50.51 | 1.82 | 29.6 |
| Gwynedd | 112800 | 5.91 | 5.75 | 2.31 | 60.63 | 1.5 | 23.89 |
| 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.

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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