

An Assessment of the Welsh Language's situation and the demographic trends in the Dwyfor area based on the 2001 and 2011 censuses

Initial notes

This assessment was prepared by *Ymgynghoriaeth Iaith Hanfod*, at the request of Councillor Aled Evans and Iwan Edgar.

The observations included in it should be read in conjunction with the attached assessment of the Welsh language's situation in Gwynedd, which is mainly based on work that had already been done. It gives full attention to Llŷn and Eifionydd as one of Gwynedd's areas and there is no purpose in reproducing these graphs.

However, it is noted that there will be an element of variation in the figures in this assessment compared with the general document. The area referred to as Llŷn and Eifionydd in that document does not include the Clynog ward. There was a good reason for that, as some wards had been merged for some of the figures used; amongst those merged together were Clynog and Llanllyfni. Therefore, for the purposes of these assessments, Llŷn and Eifionydd is the Dwyfor area excluding Clynog. As the Council acknowledges Dwyfor as a region and publishes figures for it, the Dwyfor figures are used in these observations.

Adding the Clynog figures to the figures for Llŷn and Eifionydd makes little difference to the percentage of Welsh speakers; however as the number of Welsh speakers has increased by 140 here, it gives a more favourable image in terms of the general reduction in the numbers in Dwyfor.

In addition to the figures relating to the ability to speak Welsh, it is intended to look in more detail on inward migration to the Dwyfor area, and also on the relationship between the increase in household spaces, number of households and the increase in the population.

Introduction

The first thing to note about the Welsh language in the Dwyfor area is that there is a very positive picture here in one sense, but that the general trend of gradual decline is cause for concern.

The percentage of 71.3% of Welsh speakers is amongst the highest in Wales; 94% of the people born in Wales speak Welsh. It is good to see very high percentages of children and young people speaking Welsh; the percentage of 92.5% of children speaking Welsh is expected in such an area, and the percentage of 88.6% of young people aged between 16 and 24 years who speak the language is amongst the highest in Wales.

It is also encouraging that approximately three-quarters of the adults aged between 25 and 49 in the area can speak Welsh. The comparative figures relating to the percentage of Welsh speakers in this age group are 67.5% in Gwynedd as a whole, 57% in Anglesey,

46% in Ceredigion and 36% in Carmarthenshire. Therefore, Dwyfor stands out as a particularly Welsh area.

70% of this age group in the Dwyfor area was born in Wales; on the other hand, less than 60% of the people aged over 50 years were born in Wales.

This means that the general percentage of the Welsh-speaking population is down to 71.3%. The decline of almost 2 percentage points has been a continuing trend over decades - as over 80% of the residents spoke Welsh in 1971.

In addition, we should not mislead ourselves too much that older people are the only ones who move here. Although many older people from outside Wales are moving in, we should not disregard the 30% of younger adults that have been born outside Wales either and who have the potential to influence the language of the community.

The general proportion of the population who speak Welsh is dangerously close to the threshold of 70% that is referred to by statisticians as the minimum percentage that is required for the Welsh language to continue as the society's main language. [It is true that this percentage is taken too literally by some observers, as circumstances can vary from area to area. However, it should be emphasised that it should be used as a guide, not just to create the impression that any area where over 70% speak Welsh is completely safe.]

The percentage of Welsh speakers in Dwyfor is not above and beyond the figures for the Caernarfon area and the vicinity; however, as the graphs in the general document indicate, the percentages of people who were born in Wales and who speak Welsh are amongst the highest in Wales. Another sign of the language's strength here is that the general percentage of the population that speaks Welsh is higher than the proportion of people who were born in Wales.

Attention was also drawn in that document to how critical Gwynedd is to the continuation of the Welsh language as a language that is spoken naturally by the majority of the population. The vast majority of the principal core area of the north-west - in terms of surface area and population - lies in Gwynedd and that includes the majority of Arfon, excluding Bangor, Dwyfor and northern Meirionnydd.

The figures show that Dwyfor is a part of the principal core area that is under threat. We only need to see a slight further decline to bring the entire region under the threshold of 70% being able to speak Welsh. Being a vast area where 70% of the population of 25,000 can speak Welsh is an all-important asset to the Welsh language, and it accounts for approximately three-quarters of the entire core area in population terms. To underline its importance, there is no village or diocese to the south of Trawsfynydd that has a similar proportion of its population that is able to speak Welsh.

Seeing the percentage fall below 70% would be a serious blow to the Welsh language, and would contribute towards a division between the heartlands of northern Meirionnydd and Arfon.

Therefore, Dwyfor is an area of linguistic uniqueness - but an area where that uniqueness is vulnerable and under threat.

The Council's Language Strategy

It was very encouraging to see Gwynedd Council, in its language strategy that was launched recently, setting an aim of increasing the percentage of Welsh speakers by five percentage points by 2021, which would mean increasing the percentage for the entire county to approximately 70%.

What must be noted here is that this would be impossible to achieve without ensuring an equal increase in the Dwyfor area also. We can never obtain sufficient increase in the more English areas of the county to increase the percentage of the county as a whole. Therefore, it must be assumed that the aim is to increase the percentage of Welsh speakers in the Dwyfor area to 76.3% by 2021.

The ability of any planning policies to create a positive change in the situation of the Welsh language is relatively restricted; it would be very difficult and complex to make decisions on the exact nature of the types of development that would assist to create the conditions that could lead to growth. On the other hand, planning policy has the power to be destructive if too much development takes place, and we need only look at the English seaside towns of the northern coast to show the impact of such over-development.

Ideally, what one would wish to see would be for those who prepared the Council's language strategy to also receive responsibility for suggesting the numbers of houses that would be most likely to promote the Welsh language in each area. These figures could then be used as a starting point when drawing up the Local Development Plan, and adapt according to local needs.

When drawing up planning policy for areas that are so varied from counties that are urban and where English is mainly spoken such as Newport or Torfaen on one hand, and rural and Welsh-speaking counties such as Anglesey and Gwynedd on the other, it is impossible for any policy for Wales as a whole to give due attention to the main heartland of the Welsh language and the special attention that needs to be given to maintaining the numbers and percentages here.

The likely impact of 1200 additional houses in Dwyfor

The long-term trend in Dwyfor is a gradual decline in the native Welsh-speaking population and a slightly higher increase in the number of inward migration from areas outside Wales, with those, on the whole, tending to be older people,

We start by providing a brief summary of the main statistics for Dwyfor: (We need to remember that they differ slightly to those that refer to Llŷn and Eifionydd in the other document, and another complexity is that the language-related statistics have been restricted to the population aged over 3 years, which explains the differences in the following figures.)

Table 1: Population

Dwyfor's Population in 2011	27,725 compared with 27,322 in 2001
Increase since 2001	403 (1.5%)
Number able to speak Welsh in 2011	19,124 compared with 19,361 in 2001
Percentage able to speak Welsh in 2011	71.3% compared with 73.2% in 2001
Reduction since 2001	237 (1.9% reduction in the percentage)
Number of people who were born in Wales, 2011	19,064 compared with 19,209 in 2001
Percentage born in Wales, 2011	68.7% compared with 70.3% in 2001
Reduction since 2001	145 (1.6% reduction in the percentage)
Number of people born outside Wales, 2011	8,661, compared with 8,113 in 2001
Percentage of people born outside Wales, 2011	31.2% compared with 29.7% in 2001
Increase since 2001	548 (1.5% increase in the percentage)

Note that percentages are provided as figures for the increase; the increase of 548 in the people from outside Wales is an increase of 6.7% in numbers compared with 2001.

These are the figures regarding the numbers and constitution of households and household spaces in 2011 and 2001:

Table 2: Constitution of households

	2011	2001	Change since 2001
Total households	12,479	11,762	717
Single person households	4551	3721	830
Pensioner only households	3808	3743	65
Total households	15,896	14,538	1,358
Number of individuals per household	2.22	2.32	-0.1
% of single person households	36.5	31.6	+4.9
% of pensioner only households	30.5	31.8	-1.3

Upon initial examination, the increase of 1,200 in the number of new houses is not high compared with the increase of 1,358 seen between 2001 and 2011. On the other hand, considering that 717 was the increase in household numbers, it suggests that the rest are either second homes, or are homes on the market.

Note also that the average number of people in each household has reduced from 2.32 to 2.22 in 2011.

Based on a rough population of 27,000, that in itself would equate to 525 additional households; it is reasonable to believe that the difference between that and the 717 additional households accounts for the increase of 403 in the population.

It is reasonable to assume that it makes more sense to use the increase in household numbers than in the number of homes as a basis for comparison - it is unlikely that builders would build houses unless people wish to purchase and use them.

If so, the 1,200 new houses for which it is intended to allocate land is substantially more than the increase of 717 seen in household numbers between 2001 and 2011.

As noted, that increase of 717 in households has led to an increase of 403 in the population; however, one reason why that increase is comparatively low is due to the reduction in the population density of households from 2.32 to 2.22. It cannot be taken for granted that the same rate of reduction in density will happen again.

In addition, we can see that the population density of Dwyfor is lower than the 2.3 in Wales as a whole. The proportion of overcrowded households - 3.8% - is also lower than the 4.7% in Gwynedd and 5.2% in Wales as a whole.

Another factor that can account for an increase in households is the increase in the number of single person households (although this is not true in all cases, e.g. widowed individuals). An increase of 830 was seen in such households in Dwyfor, and they now account for 36.5% of all households. Once again, we cannot take for granted that the same trend will continue, because, this percentage is higher than the 35.3% in Gwynedd on average, and is substantially higher than the Wales average of 30.8%.

More important than anything possibly, the total households as a percentage of houses is exceptionally low in Dwyfor. It accounts for 78.5% compared with 85.9% in Gwynedd and 94.0 in Wales as a whole on average. This strongly suggests that there is a strong potential for a population increase within the current housing stock.

Possible projections

Although any statistics given in development linguistic impact assessments are projections, evidence of current trends enable us to theorize based on information.

As noted above, the trend in Dwyfor is a reduction in the native population and an increase in the population that moves here from outside Wales, and that those tend to be older people. These projections are based on the continuation of current trends in the native population; a figure of 19,000 was used as the number of Welsh speakers (a

reduction of 124 of the current number). It is not believed that there is room to assume that there will be any natural increase in the number of Welsh speakers, or that building houses in itself would lead to that.

Projection 1

No increase in the number of houses or household numbers.

A reduction of 124 in the numbers of Welsh-speakers, and the population remaining the same:

Percentage of Welsh-speakers down to 70.8%.

Projection 2

No increase in the number of houses, however, a 1% increase in the population (on the presumption that there is potential for that within the current housing stock):

Percentage of Welsh-speakers down to 70.1%.

Projection 3

An increase of 1200 in the number of households, thus leading to an increase of 672 in the population. (A factor of a 0.56 increase in population was used as it equates to the situation where the increase of 717 in households led to an increase of 403 in population between 2001 and 2011)

Percentage of Welsh-speakers down to 69.0%.

Projection 4

A combination of scenarios 2 and 3 - an increase in the number of households and an increase of 1% within the current housing stock:

Percentage of Welsh-speakers down to 68.4%.

Projection 5

Scenario 3 is based on a continuation of the trend of reducing the average household population density and an increase in the number of single person households. If this would not happen, the worst case scenario would be a situation where an increase of 1200 in household numbers would lead to an increase of 2640 (1200 x 2.2) in the population numbers.

If that is the case, the proportion of Welsh-speakers would be down to 64.5%.

It is true to say that this would be the worst case scenario; however, given the strong possibility that there is already an over-supply of houses in the area, this cannot be completely disregarded. This number was calculated without assuming any increase in the population within the current housing stock; if that happened, the decline could be much more. As the above figures indicate, every 1% increase in the population leads to a decline of more than 1% in the percentage of Welsh speakers.

Each of the above-mentioned options causes an obstacle of a different degree to the council's strategy of increasing the percentage of Welsh speakers in Dwyfor to 76.3%.

In the least destructive scenario, Projection 1, it would mean that there would be a need to ensure that almost 1,500 non-Welsh speakers would learn the language fluently. With these numbers increasing in each projection, in the case of Projection 5, it would involve over 10,000 non-Welsh-speaking residents and at least 3,500 of them would have to learn the language fluently in order to reach the Council's target. As the vast majority of children are already able to speak Welsh, this would mean having to teach Welsh to adults. Anyone who is familiar with the Welsh for Adults field will realise that such a task in a period of a few years is completely impractical. In order to maintain and promote the Welsh language in its heartlands, it is also essential to consider the demography.

Conclusion

We cannot overstate the linguistic disaster should the worst case scenario be realised in this case. There are too few areas where the Welsh language is as strong as it is in Dwyfor and the Welsh language cannot afford such a loss. One of the most important messages of the 2011 Census is the degree in which children lose their Welsh language after leaving school in the most English-speaking areas, which indicates that we cannot depend on education only to create new Welsh speakers. Maintaining the type of society that continues to exist in Gwynedd is essential.

From seeing the worst case scenario, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that 1200 additional houses is excessive - especially as no sufficient evidence has been proposed regarding the need for an increase on this scale.

The latest statistics received from the Council show that house prices are out of reach for 67.8% of the residents in the Dwyfor area. Given that more people from the outside can afford houses here, that is certainly going to be much higher within the native population.

Therefore, there is a strong argument in favour of limiting every new house built to affordable houses. Of course, this in itself would not prevent inward migration; however, it would possibly avoid intentionally encouraging it taking place.

Another aspect of the plan that needs to be addressed is the distribution of the houses. It could be argued here that there is too much centralisation in urban areas or in Pwllheli in particular. One of the features of language change in Gwynedd over the past decade or more is the gradual shift of Welsh speakers from the rural areas to the towns, to such extent where the Welsh language is often stronger in the urban centres than in the rural villages.

Merely saying that over-development in towns can have a negative impact on the surrounding countryside is not an argument that seeks to prevent this. If we look specifically at the Dwyfor area, an increase of approximately 100 was seen in the number of Welsh speakers in the town of Pwllheli between 2001 and 2011 (although an increase of approximately 200 in the general population brought the percentage down to about 2%). Such increase in the number of Welsh speakers must be placed in the context of the wider area - in the same period a reduction of 127 was seen in Nefyn and

Morfa Nefyn, a reduction of 105 in Abersoch, 26 in Efailnewydd and Buan, 27 in Abererch and 17 in Llanaelhaearn.

One weakness in the linguistic impact assessment prepared by the Unitary Plan unit is that it tends to look at trends in individual wards rather than in the context of a wider area. If an increase occurs in one place, it is not a meaningful increase if this is at the detriment of another area.

Of course, we will need to look further than the current development plan when considering the future of the Welsh language in Gwynedd. If a general aspiration to move towards the towns continues in the native population, a mature discussion will be required on how to maintain the Welsh language in the countryside. It may be time to start thinking about more creative ideas and turn our backs on the traditional taboo that are now referred to as holiday homes. There may be room to keep more of these houses in local hands to use as holiday accommodation; encouraging more of the native population who has moved away to live to purchase property in the countryside to use on weekends and holidays would be a boost to the Welshness of the area.

Another matter that requires attention is the definition of local persons when considering eligibility for affordable housing or social housing. All census figures suggest that up to 95% of the people born in Wales who live in the Dwyfor area speak Welsh. If the ability to speak Welsh is substantially lower amongst the people on a social housing waiting list, there are fundamental questions to ask about the criteria. Housing associations should be required to record the ability to speak Welsh, and that information should be available to the public.

It may become clear that building new social housing is not what is needed as much as ensuring that genuinely local people are given the houses available.

However, turning our attentions back to the local development plan, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it would be wise to reduce the number of additional housing that are being proposed, and to look again at the distribution of a smaller number of houses. As it is so difficult to project the exact trends that are to be expected within the current housing stock, there may be no justification for prohibiting the erection of new houses - although there is a strong argument for limiting these to affordable housing. In light of the signs that there is significant laxity within the current housing stock, however, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that it would be wiser to make the mistake of building too few rather than too many houses.

Huw Prys Jones

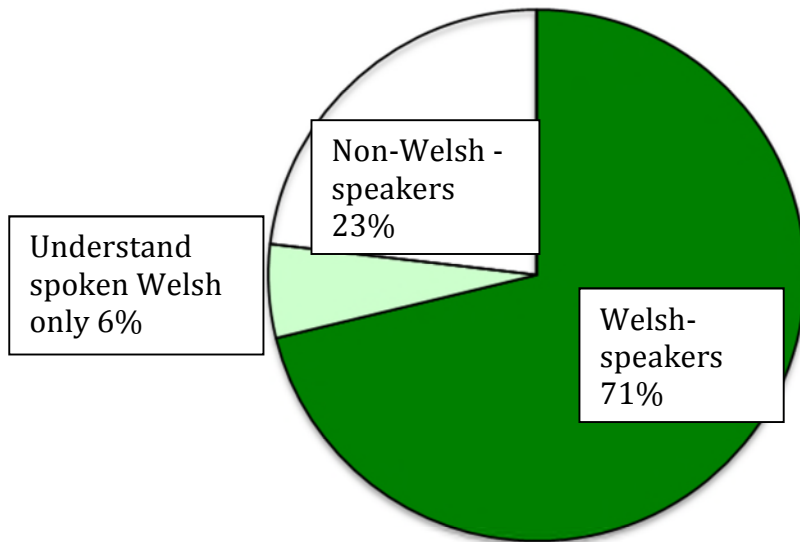
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Ymgynghoriaeth iaith a gwasanaethau golygyddol

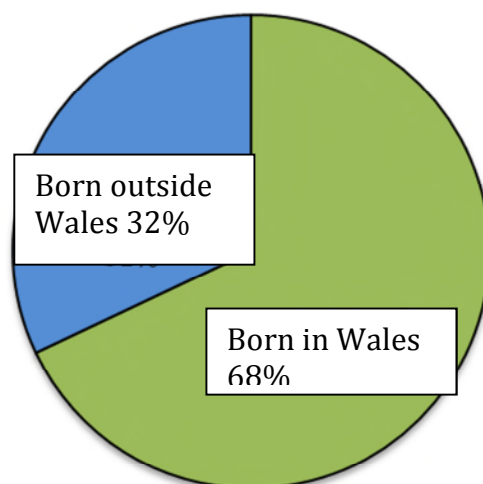
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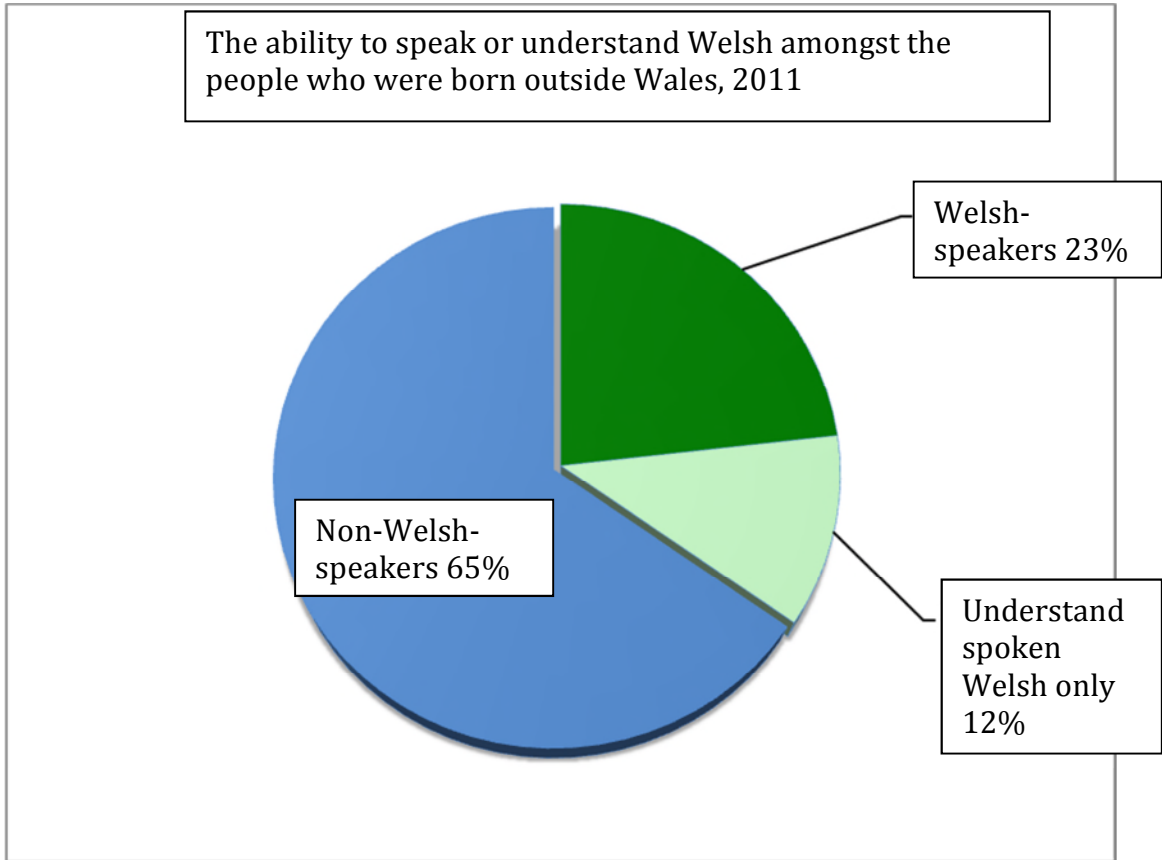
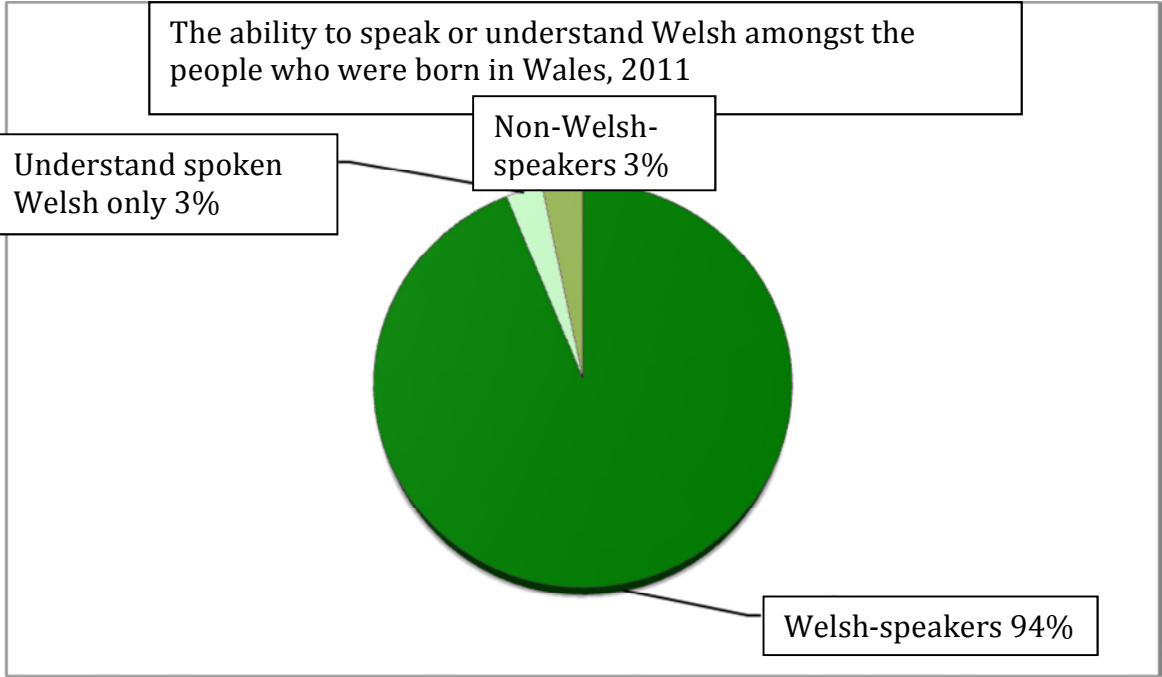
Llŷn and Eifionydd language and population graphs

Welsh-speakers and those who understand spoken Welsh only, as a percentage of the population, 2011



Percentage of the population who were born in Wales, 2011

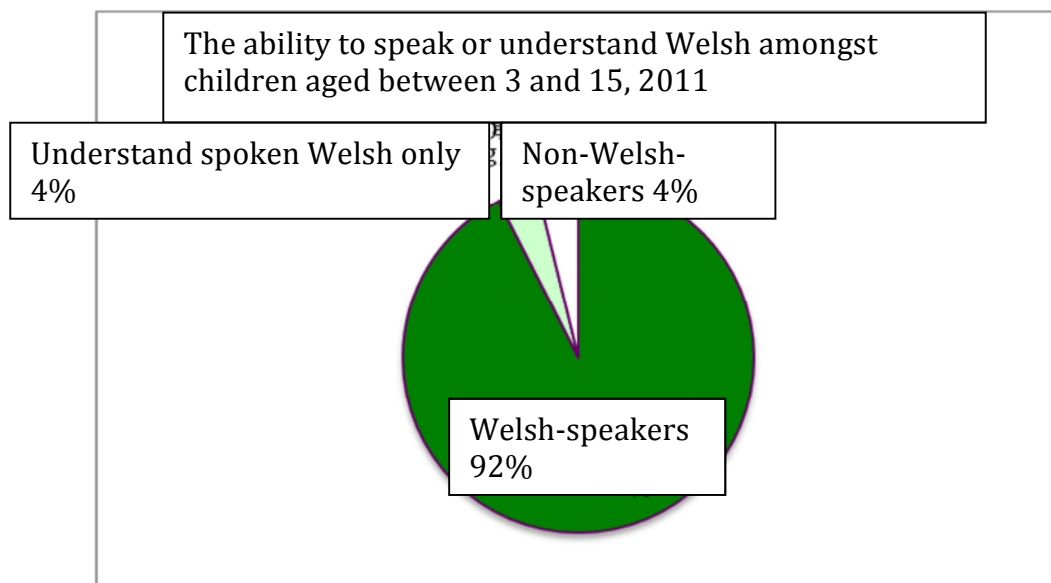
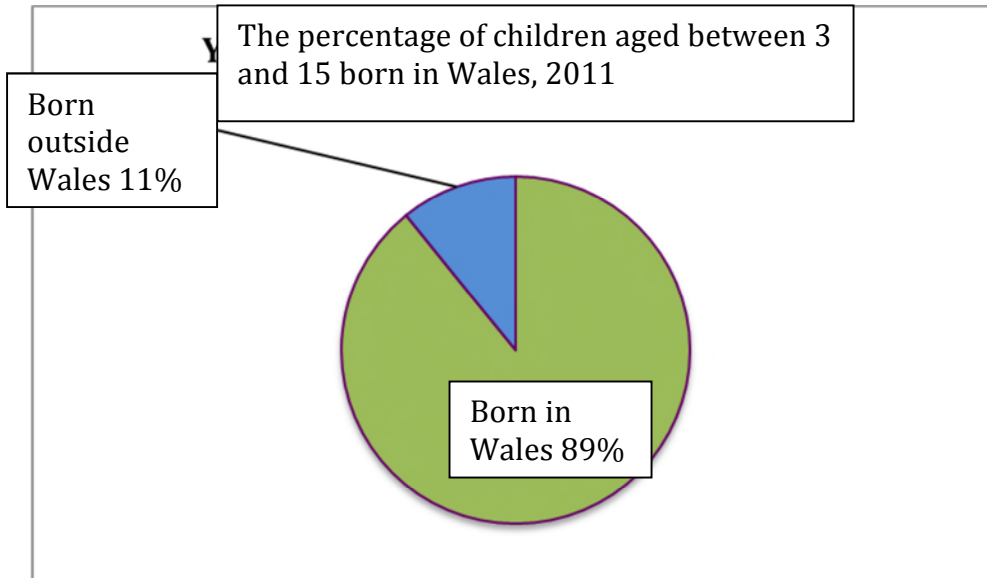




It is worth noting that the proportion of Welsh-speakers in both graphs is unusually high compared with other areas. The percentage of people who were born in Wales and

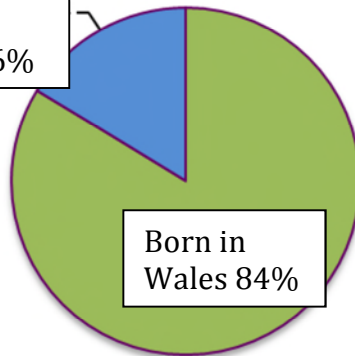
who speak Welsh is between 92% and 95% in every age group, which is amongst the highest in Wales.

Language and birth places according to age



The percentage of young people aged between 16-24 born in Wales, 2011

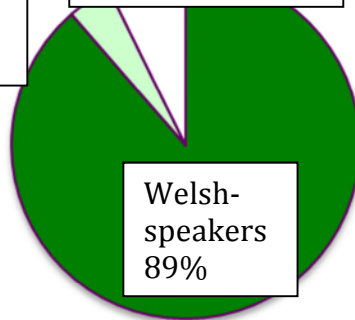
Born outside Wales 16%



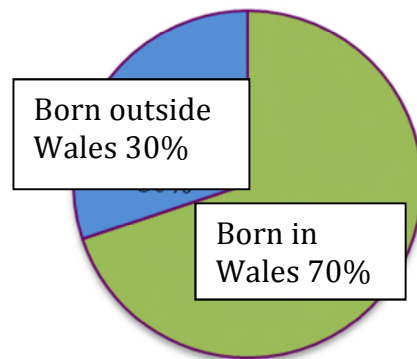
The ability to speak or understand Welsh amongst young people aged between 16 and 24, 2011

Understand spoken Welsh only 4%

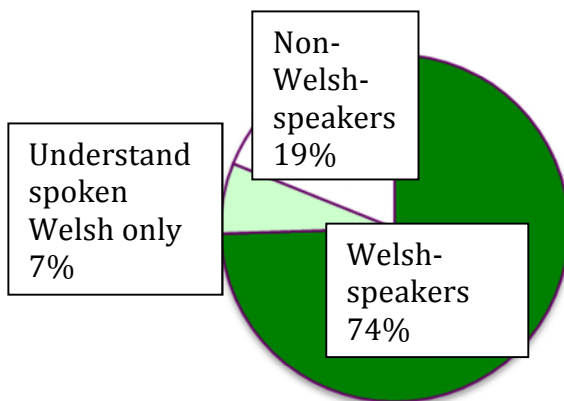
Non-Welsh-speakers 7%



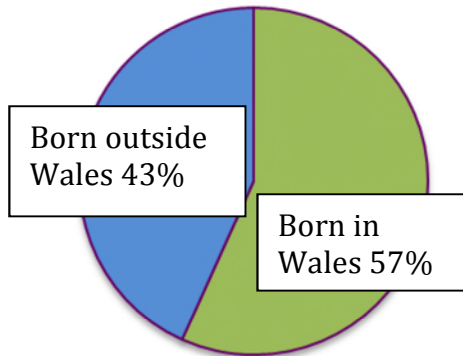
Percentage of adults aged between 25 and 49 born in Wales, 2011



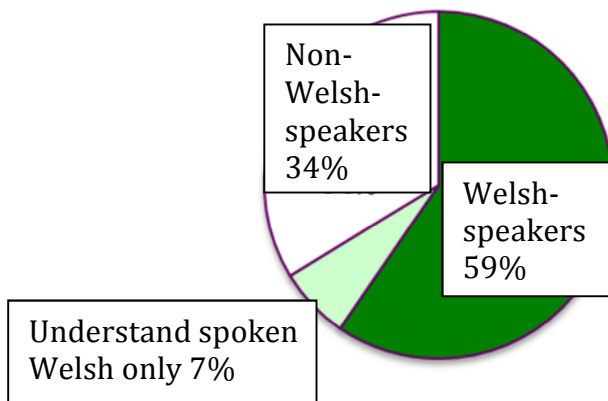
The ability to speak or understand Welsh amongst adults aged between 25 and 49, 2011



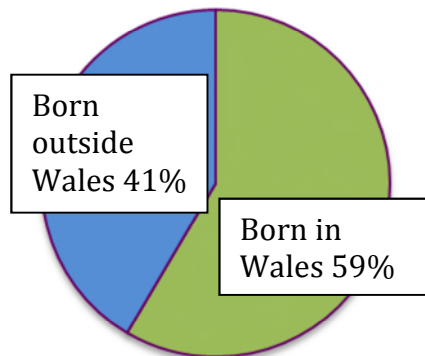
Percentage of adults aged between 50 and 74 born in Wales, 2011

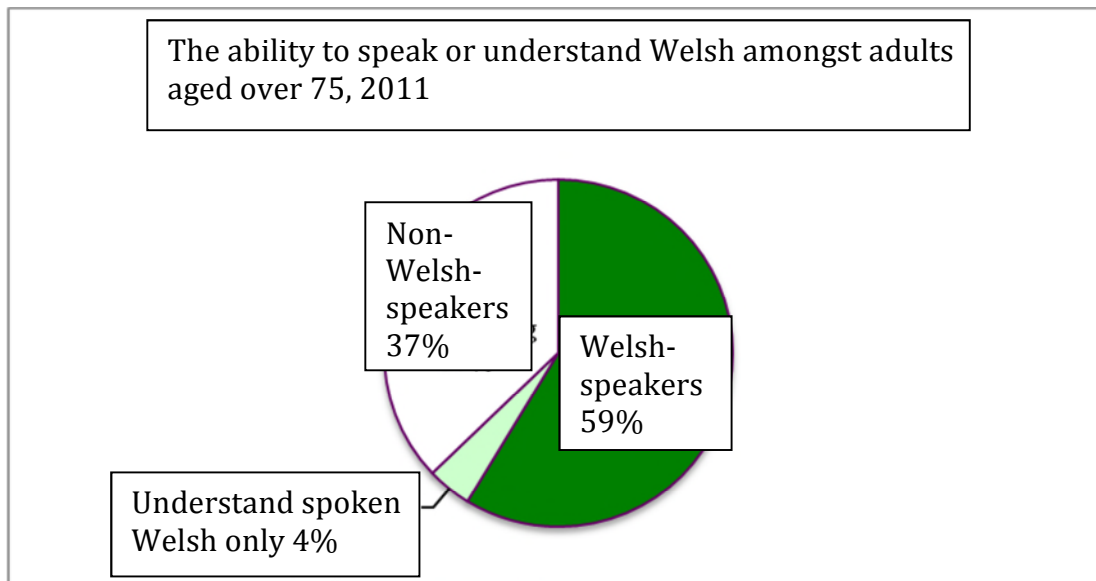


The ability to speak or understand Welsh amongst adults aged between 50 and 74, 2011



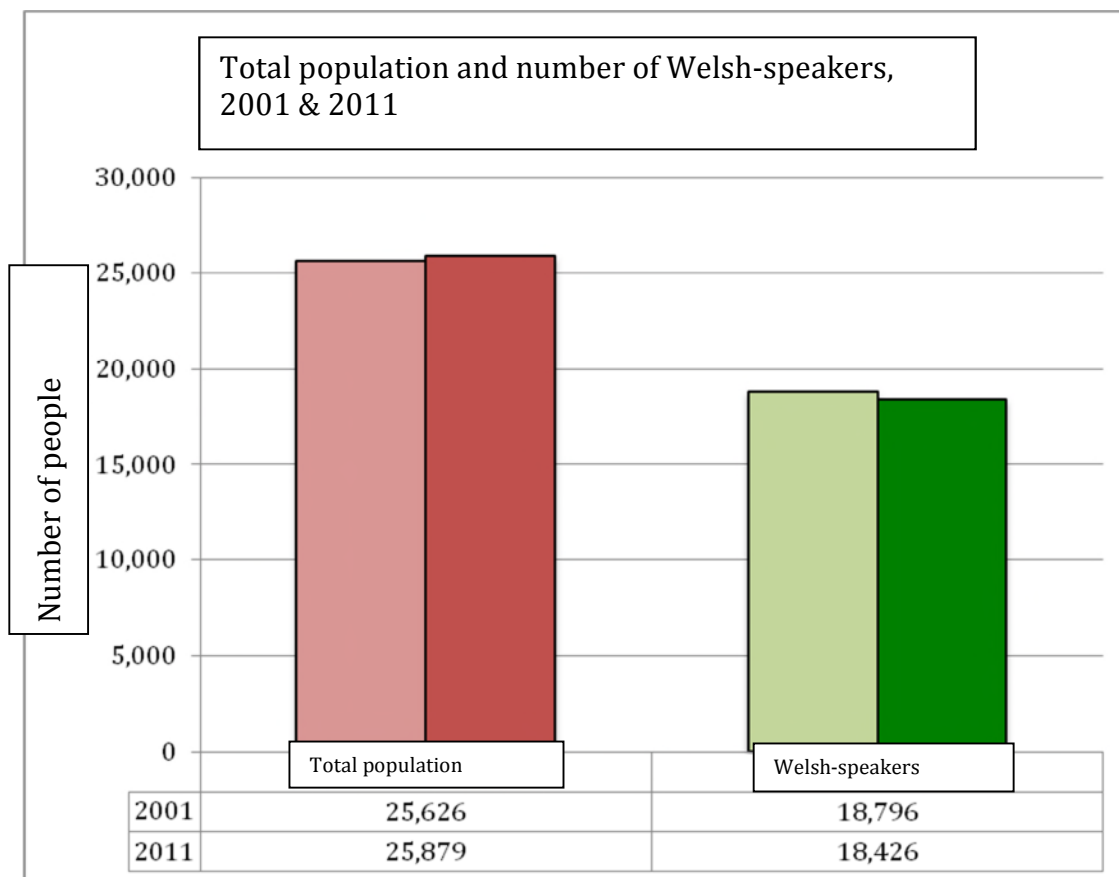
Percentage of adults aged over 75 born in Wales, 2011





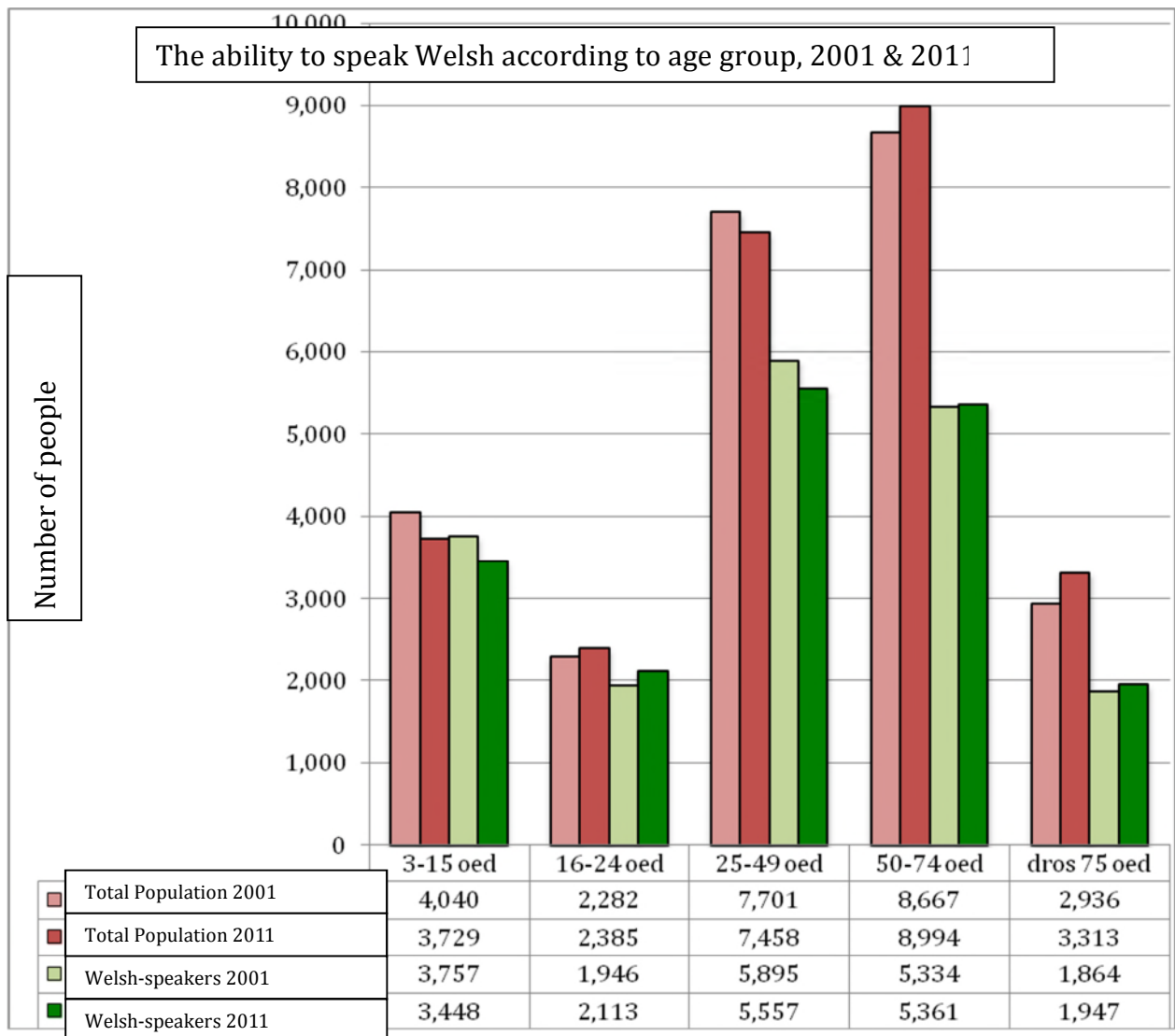
It is encouraging to see the proportion of Welsh-speakers higher than the proportion born in Wales, but it shows very high proportions of the older population who have moved into the area.

Comparison with 2001



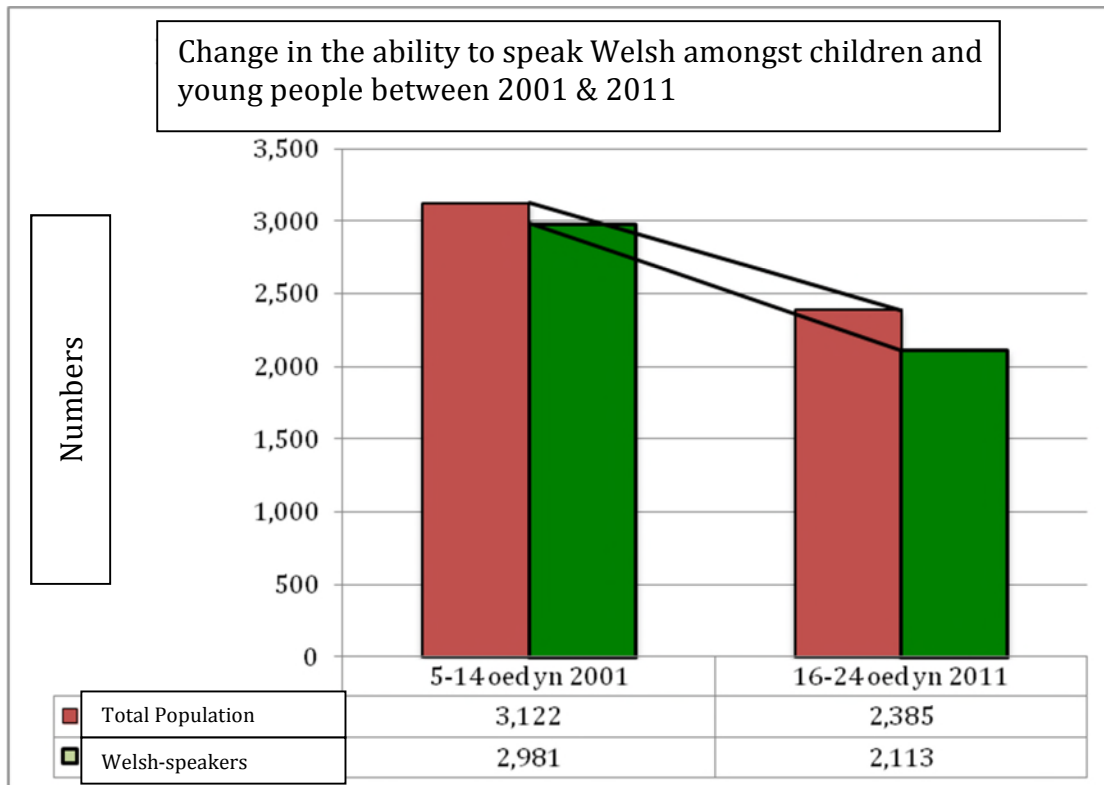
This gives the general picture of change between 2001 and 2011. The general population has increased from 25,626 to 25,879 which is an increase of 253, whilst the Welsh-speaking population has reduced from 18,796 to 18,426 which is a reduction of 370. This means that the non-Welsh-speaking population has increased from 6,830 in 2001 to 7,453 in 2011 - an increase of 673.

The graph below (as in the original report) shows the changes within age groups:

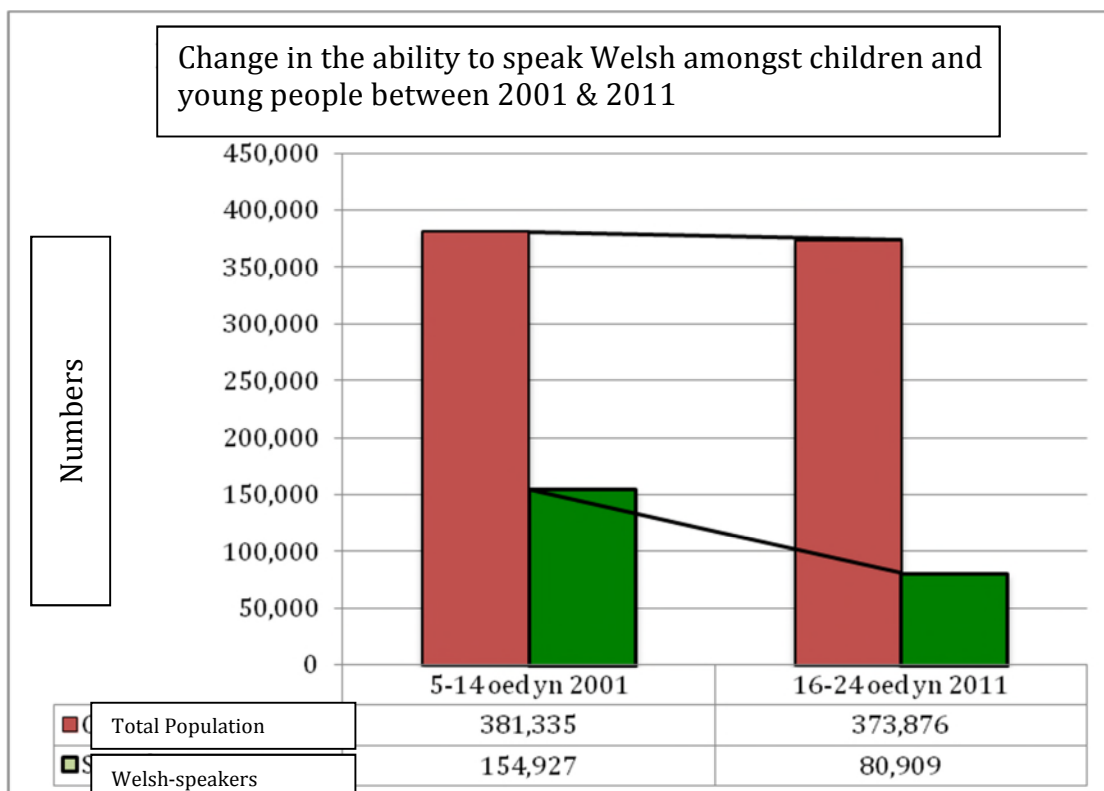


It shows an increase of 327 in the population aged 50-74 between 2001 and 2011 and an increase of 377 in the population aged over 75. Given the corresponding figures about Welsh-speakers, we're able to see that non-Welsh-speakers account for 300 of the increase amongst people aged 50-74, and for 287 of the increase amongst people aged over 75. Given that at least 92% of the people born in Wales speak Welsh, it is obvious that the overwhelming majority of these are people who have moved in from elsewhere. Therefore, a net increase of nearly 600 older people from outside Wales in the area compared with 2001.

The last graph shows the change amongst those who were children aged 5-14 in 2001 and young people aged 16-24 in 2011:



Although information is needed about other areas in order to fully understand the significance of these figures, what they suggest is that the loss of young people is the main threat rather than a deterioration in their ability to speak Welsh. This is the corresponding graph for the whole of Wales:



Considering the figures for the whole of Wales, the figures for population totals for both age groups are approximately the same in 2011 as in 2001 but the numbers of Welsh-speakers have declined to about half.

In Llŷn and Eifionydd on the other hand, there was a reduction of 737, or 23%, in the general population and a reduction of 868, or 29%, in the Welsh-speaking children or young people. Given that 96% of young people aged between 16 and 24 born in Wales speak Welsh, it appears that inward-migration is responsible for the difference, rather than children losing their Welsh-language skills.