

Section 6.1a

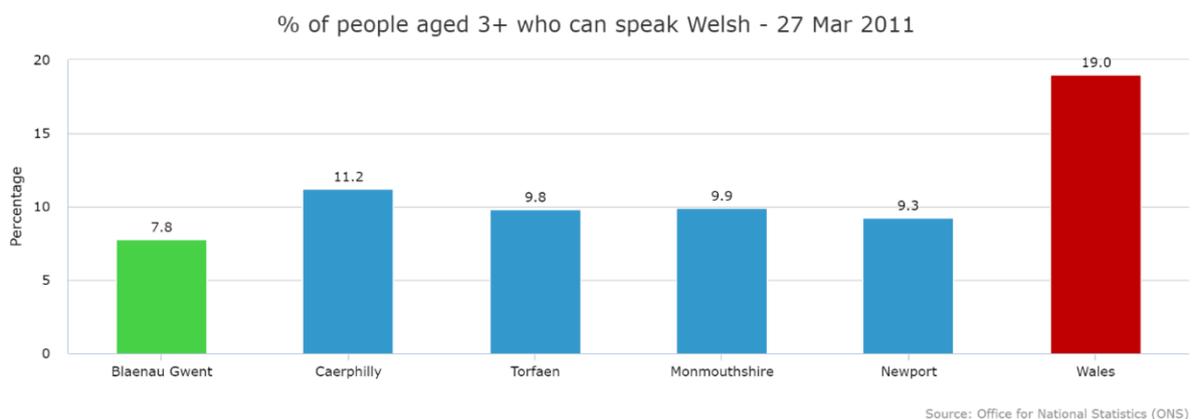
Welsh Language

1. Overview

Figure W1 shows that the percentage of people aged 3 years and over who could speak Welsh at the time of the last Census (2011) in the Gwent region was 9.9%, compared to 19.0% for Wales. Blaenau Gwent had the lowest percentage of its population aged 3 years and over who could speak Welsh at 7.8% across the Gwent region.

This means that around 5,000 people in the area can speak Welsh.

Figure W1



2. Story behind the data

In Blaenau Gwent, there was a small decrease in of people aged 3 years and over who could speak Welsh between the 2001 Census and the 2011 Census 1.7%. This pattern was witnessed across Wales overall.

However, the people who can speak Welsh have risen significantly from 1991 when just 2.2% of the population or around 1,500 of people were Welsh speaking.

The rise in number of people who speak Welsh Speakers between 1991 and 2011 can be directly correlated to the change in national education policy in Wales where teaching of Welsh language to Key Stage 4 was made compulsory in all English medium schooling in Wales from 1999.

As a consequence, it is not surprising that children and young people account for the highest number of Welsh speakers in Blaenau Gwent, a pattern which is mirrored witnessed across Wales overall.

The Census 2011 shows that although there are higher levels of Welsh language ability in those aged 0-15 (31% are able to speak Welsh), only 5% of people age 16 to 64 years are able to speak Welsh and 1% of people 65 and over are able to speak Welsh.

Consideration of Welsh language speakers by neighbourhood areas show that Blaenau Gwent does not have any distinctive pockets of Welsh language speakers within the area , with levels being generally consistent across the area.

When considering by MSOAs, the highest number of Welsh Language speakers is Nantyglo and Blaina (8.6%), and the area with the lowest number of Welsh Language speakers is Central Ebbw Vale (7%).

As well as having low levels of Welsh speakers, information suggests that those that do consider themselves to be able to speak Welsh still do not use the language on a regular basis. The Annual Population Survey shows that in Blaenau Gwent only 2% of people aged 16 years or over who speak Welsh daily, compared to 10% for Wales overall.

3. What we know from engagement



During the Blaenau Gwent We Want Engagement exercise, the partnership undertook and attended numerous engagement activities and events throughout the borough to gather people's views.

Residents also took part via the Blaenau Gwent We Want Facebook page and partnership websites. Links to an online questionnaire were also distributed to many residents known to the partnership, such as members of the Blaenau Gwent Citizen Panel.

Residents were encouraged via the methods above to answer a range of questions that sought to capture:

- Citizen values, aspirations and priorities;
- Citizen needs – insight into the needs they and their communities encounter within daily life and what the best solutions may be and
- Citizen assets – what people can and already contribute themselves such as self-care, citizen and community action and volunteering.

Q1. What do you think is special about BG?

Q2. What things are important to you to live well and enjoy life?

Q3. What would make BG a better place?

Q4. What can you do to help make BG a better place?

Approximately 1,000 residents were engaged with (across all groups) during the engagement phase.

No information from the 'Blaenau Gwent We Want' was received in Welsh. However, the Welsh language was mentioned specifically by nine participants.

The majority of these responses highlighted a requirement for more provision of services and training opportunities to make the area a better place. The remaining comment highlighted that they felt there should be less Welsh language provision.

4. What we know from existing research

Welsh language use in Wales, 2013-15 carried out on behalf of the Welsh Language Commissioner and Welsh Government. This study shows estimates that Blaenau Gwent only has 900 fluent Welsh speakers, similar to levels witnessed when a similar study was carried out in 2004-06. The remaining speakers (estimated to be around 5600 people) are not fluent Welsh speakers.

Local Authority Service User Survey 2015 commissioned by Welsh Language Commissioner is based on a telephone survey with 1 Welsh speaker in each of the 22 local authorities in Wales, to better understand the experiences of individuals and use of local authority contact services in Welsh, and the provision of services available and language preferences of individuals. Figures are not reported at a Blaenau Gwent level but summarised at South and Mid Wales.

5. What this tells us about Well-being in Blaenau Gwent?

The Welsh language is not spoken by the majority of people that live in Blaenau Gwent, and even those that are Welsh language speakers (or have Welsh language ability) have low levels of fluency.

However, in terms of Well-being considerations or challenge for our area will be what can be done collectively in Blaenau Gwent to more effectively work together to promote the Welsh language, and give those in the area that want to use the Welsh language the opportunities.

This will be particularly pertinent if the area is to effectively participate to contribute towards the ambitious target being considered for Wales by Welsh Government to have one million Welsh speakers in Wales by 2050.