



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

STATISTICS, DOCUMENT

# Welsh language by sexual orientation and gender identity (Census 2021)

This release provides information on the Welsh speaking ability of the population aged 16 years or older by their self-reported sexual orientation and gender identity from Census 2021.

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# Introduction

On 6 December 2022, we published a statistical bulletin summarising the initial results from Census 2021 on the [Welsh language in Wales](#). We have since used Census data to publish topic summaries on the [Welsh language by population characteristics](#), [Welsh language composition of households](#) and [Welsh language transmission rates by sex](#).

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) recently published data tables on the Welsh language skills of the population living in Wales by [sexual orientation \(ONS\)](#) and [gender identity \(ONS\)](#) from Census 2021. This statistical release summarises these results.

Information about Welsh language skills in the census is based on a person's self-assessment of their ability.

Census 2021 was held during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, on 21 March 2021. This followed periods of lockdown, remote learning for children and many people were working from home. It is not known how the pandemic may have impacted people's reported Welsh language ability (or perception of the Welsh language ability of others).

Census 2021 asked voluntary questions on sexual orientation and gender identity to all usual residents aged 16 years and over. This was the first time a question on either topic was asked in a census.

The ONS has said that the census estimates for gender identity are subject to a higher level of uncertainty than some other topics. There are some patterns in the data that are consistent with some respondents not interpreting the question as intended. For more information on the Census 2021 questions and guidance on interpreting the data in this release, see the [quality and methodology information section](#).

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In February 2023, the Welsh Government published its **LGBTQ+ Action Plan for Wales** which includes a glossary of terms for sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQ+ terminology continues to evolve in both English and Welsh and the Welsh Government welcomes any feedback on terminology used on this subject. See the **action plan** for information on how to provide feedback on terminology. This release uses terminology that aligns with the sexual orientation and gender identity questions asked on Census 2021.

## Main points

### Sexual orientation and the Welsh language

- According to Census 2021, around 13,320 Welsh speakers aged 16 years and over identified as “Gay or Lesbian”, “Bisexual”, or another minority sexual orientation (LGB+). This represents 3.4% of all Welsh speakers aged 16 years and over.
- Among the population aged 16 years and over who identified as LGB+, 17.3% reported that they could speak Welsh, compared with 15.3% of people who identified as “Straight/Heterosexual”. This is at least partly because of the age profile of the population who identify as LGB+ which, like the Welsh-speaking population, is younger than that of the general population.

### Gender identity and the Welsh language

- In Census 2021, around 1,380 Welsh speakers aged 16 years and over recorded that their gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth. This represents 0.4% of all Welsh speakers aged 16 years and over.
- Among the population aged 16 years and over whose gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth, 13.4% reported that they could speak

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Welsh. This is lower than the equivalent proportion among the population whose gender identity was the same as their sex registered at birth (15.4%).

## Sexual orientation

Sexual orientation is an umbrella term covering sexual identity, attraction, relationships, and behaviour. For an individual respondent, these may not be the same.

Further information can be found in separate statistical bulletins on [Sexual orientation and gender identity in Wales](#) and [Sexual orientation and gender identity differences in health, education and economic status](#).

## Sexual orientation and the Welsh language

In Census 2021, around 391,670 people aged 16 years and over were recorded as being able to speak Welsh, of which:

- 349,180 or 89.2% of Welsh speakers identified as “Straight/Heterosexual”
- 13,320 or 3.4% of Welsh speakers identified as “Gay or Lesbian”, “Bisexual”, or another minority sexual orientation (LGB+)

A further 29,170 or 7.4% of Welsh speakers declined to answer the voluntary question about their sexual orientation.

Put another way, among the population who identified as LGB+, 17.3% recorded that they could speak Welsh. Although this rate is higher than the proportion of Welsh speakers among the population who identified as “Straight/Heterosexual” as well as the general population aged 16 years and over (15.3% for both), this is at least partly because of the age profile of the population who identified as

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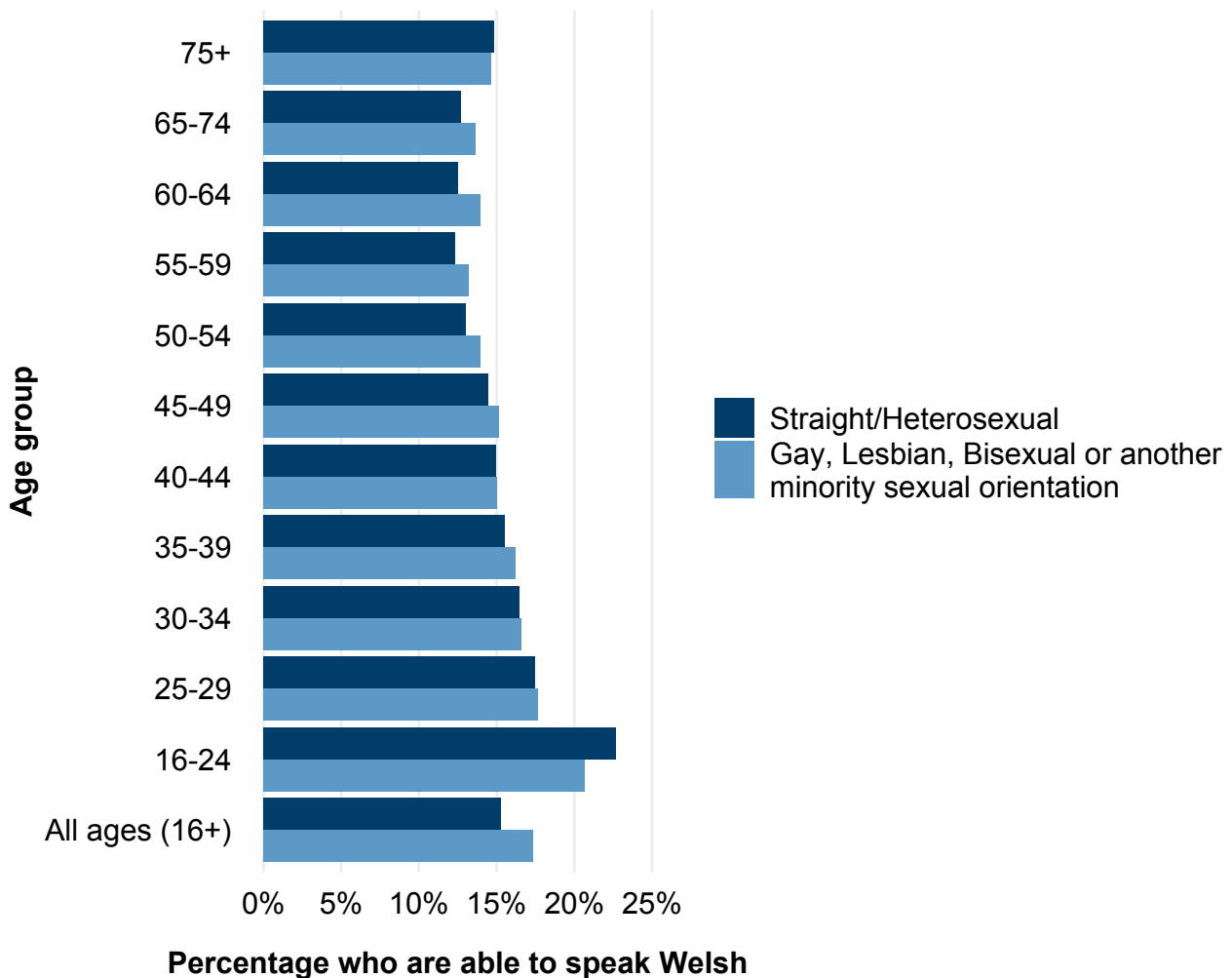
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LGB+. The age profile of the LGB+ population, **like the Welsh-speaking population**, is younger than that of the general population.

Nevertheless, when we examine the data by age group, the proportion of Welsh speakers remains higher among the population who identified as LGB+ than among the population who identified as “Straight/Heterosexual” across all age groups, except for people aged 16 to 24 years old and 75 years and over.

**Figure 1: Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over able to speak Welsh, by sexual orientation and age group**



Description of Figure 1: This bar chart shows that the proportion of Welsh speakers is highest among people aged 16 to 24 years and generally decreases as we progress through the older age groups. This was true among both the population who identified as “Straight/Heterosexual” and the population who identified as LGB+.

Source: Census of population 2021 (ONS)

A majority of Welsh speakers who identified as LGB+ were younger than 30 years old.

According to Census 2021:

- 53.7% of Welsh speakers who identified as LGB+ were younger than 30 years old and 37.5% were younger than 25 years old
- 46.0% of the LGB+ population who were recorded as being unable to speak Welsh were younger than 30 years old and 30.1% were younger than 25 years old

Examining the results by local authority, we find that the proportion of Welsh speakers who identified as LGB+ was highest in Cardiff (8.1%) and lowest on the Isle of Anglesey (1.9%). The same pair of local authorities also had the highest and lowest proportion of the population identifying as LGB+ among the general population in 2021 (5.3% and 2.0% respectively).

Of the 13,320 people who identified as LGB+ and recorded that they could speak Welsh on Census 2021:

- 2,310 (17.3%) lived in Cardiff, compared with 7.0% of Welsh speakers who identified as “Straight/Heterosexual”
- 1,290 (9.7%) lived in Gwynedd, compared with 15.2% of Welsh speakers who identified as “Straight/Heterosexual”
- 1,140 (8.5%) lived in Carmarthenshire, compared with 14.9% of Welsh speakers who identified as “Straight/Heterosexual”

These three local authorities had the highest number of Welsh speakers who identified as LGB+ in Wales.

## Figure 2: Percentage of Welsh speakers aged 16 years

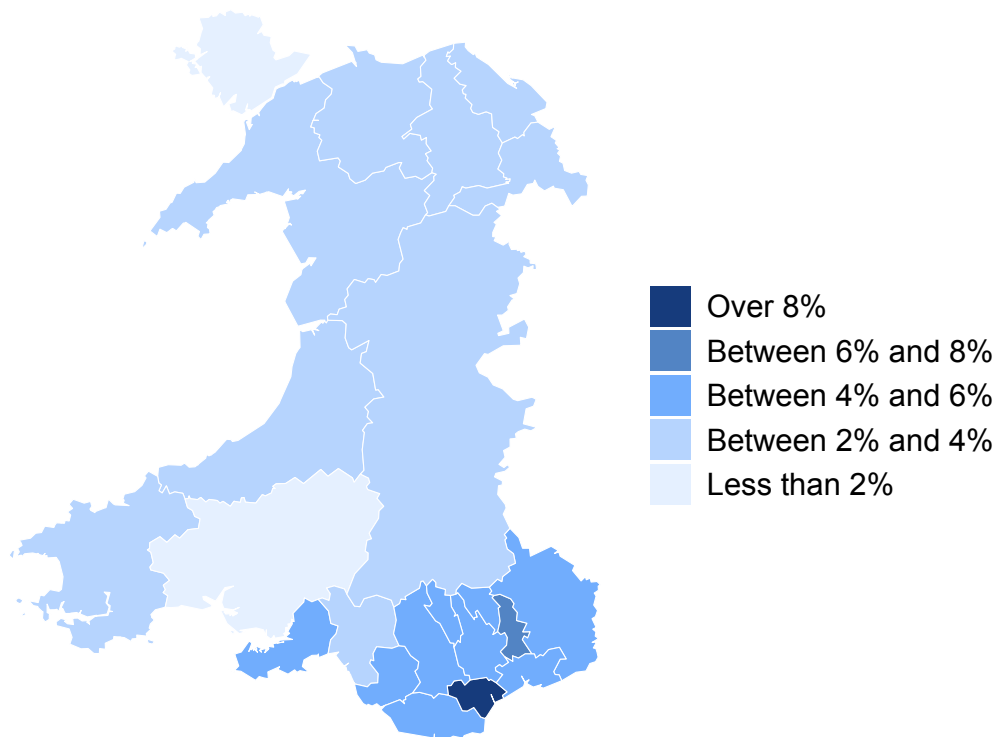
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## and over who identified as Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual or another minority sexual orientation, by local authority [Note 1]



Description of Figure 2: This map shows that the proportion of Welsh speakers identifying as LGB+ was highest in south-east Wales and lower in north, mid and west Wales.

Source: Census of population 2021 (ONS)

[Note 1] The percentages recorded are calculated by including the population who declined to answer the voluntary question about their sexual orientation on Census 2021 in the denominator.

The larger proportion of Welsh speakers who identified as LGB+ in local

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authorities in the south-east may be related to the demographic of Welsh speakers in these local authorities. Welsh speakers living in south-east Wales tend to be younger than in areas where there are higher proportions of Welsh speakers. As previously mentioned, we also know that there was a **higher proportion of people who identified as LGB+ in younger age groups than in the population overall.**

## Gender identity

Gender identity refers to a person's sense of their own gender, whether someone is a man, woman, or another identity such as non-binary. This may or may not be the same as their sex registered at birth.

The census question and estimates for gender identity are subject to a higher level of uncertainty than some other topics. See the **quality and methodology information** section for more information.

## Gender identity and the Welsh language

Among the population aged 16 years and over who were recorded as being able to speak Welsh on Census 2021:

- 367,390 or 93.8% of Welsh speakers recorded that their gender identity was the same as their sex registered at birth
- 1,380 or 0.4% of Welsh speakers recorded that their gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth (this includes trans men, trans women, people with another gender identity, including “non-binary”, and people who did not provide a specific identity)

A further 22,920 or 5.9% of Welsh speakers declined to answer the voluntary

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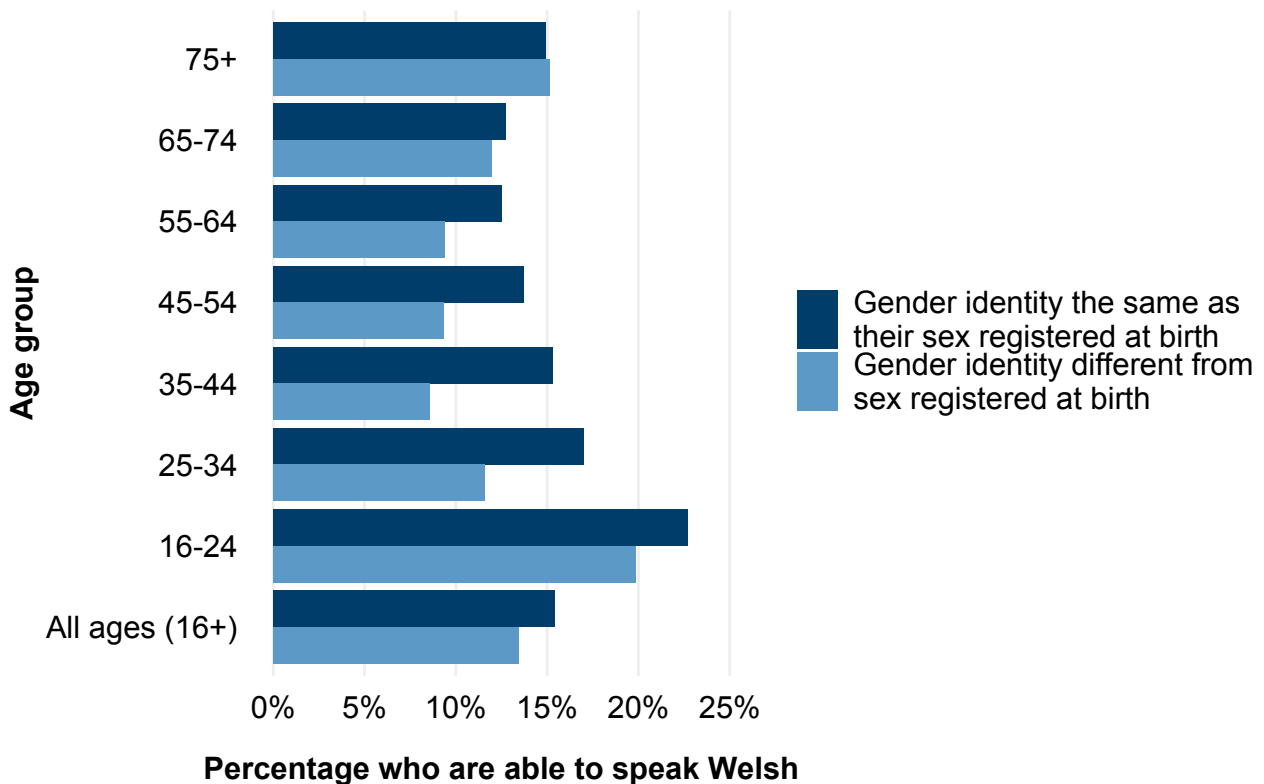
question about their gender identity.

It should be noted that some of the numbers underlying the data on gender identity are relatively small, particularly for older age groups and smaller local authorities. This means that any differences observed in the Welsh-speaking ability of some of these smaller groups might be affected by the higher levels of uncertainty in the gender identity data. In these circumstances, it may not be appropriate to make comparisons between some groups.

Among the population aged 16 years and over whose gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth, 13.4% reported that they could speak Welsh. This is lower than the equivalent proportion among the population whose gender identity was the same as their sex registered at birth (15.4%).

This trend is also evident for most age groups.

**Figure 3: Percentage of usual residents aged 16 years and over able to speak Welsh, by whether their gender identity is the same as their sex registered at birth**



Description of Figure 3: This bar chart shows that the percentage of Welsh speakers is lower among the population whose gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth than Welsh speakers whose gender identity was the same as their sex registered at birth. This is true for all age groups apart from people aged 75 years and over. The numbers underlying the data for people aged 75 years and over are relatively small and therefore may be affected by the higher levels of uncertainty in the gender identity estimates.

Source: Census of population 2021 (ONS)

The age profile of the population whose gender identity was different to their sex

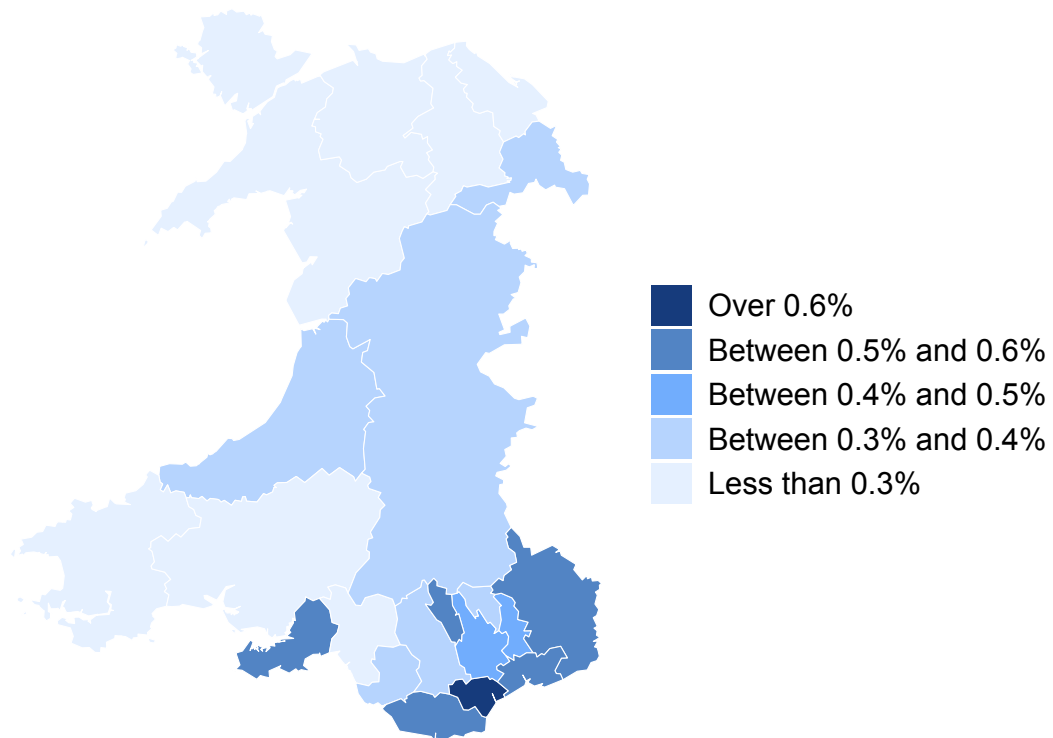
registered at birth was considerably younger than that of the general population.

Among the population whose gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth:

- 44.9% of people who were recorded as being able to speak Welsh were younger than 25
- 28.1% of people who were recorded as being unable to speak Welsh were younger than 25

The proportion of Welsh speakers whose gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth was highest in Cardiff (0.7%) and lowest in Denbighshire and the Isle of Anglesey (0.2% for both).

**Figure 4: Percentage of Welsh speakers aged 16 years and over whose gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth, by local authority [Note 1]**



Description of Figure 4: This map shows that, the proportion of Welsh speakers whose gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth is highest in south-east Wales. This mirrors the pattern seen among the population who identified as LGB+ in Figure 2.

Source: Census of population 2021 (ONS)

[Note 1] The percentages recorded are calculated by including the population who declined to answer the voluntary question about their gender identity on Census 2021 in the denominator.

# Quality and methodology information

For full information on quality and methodology, including a glossary of terms, visit the [ONS quality and methodology information report](#). Quality information specific to the census data for this topic can be found on the [Welsh language quality information \(ONS\)](#) and [Sexual orientation and gender identity quality information \(ONS\)](#) pages for Census 2021.

## Statistical disclosure control

For Census 2021 the ONS made changes to the data (called statistical disclosure control) so that it is not possible to identify individuals. These changes included:

- Swapping records (targeted record swapping), for example, if a household was likely to be identified in datasets because it has unusual characteristics, they swapped the record with a similar one from a nearby small area. Very unusual households could be swapped with one in a nearby local authority.
- Making small changes to some counts (cell key perturbation), for example, change a count of four to a three or a five.

This causes small changes to cells but does not fundamentally impact the meaning of the data. Differences in the methods used for statistical disclosure control may result in minor differences in data totals between census products. Figures may differ slightly in future releases because of the impact of rounding and applying further statistical processes.

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# Measuring the data

## Welsh language

Census 2021 included a question about people's ability to understand spoken Welsh, speak Welsh, read Welsh, and write Welsh. This question was included in Wales only. The census does not include questions about how often people speak Welsh, or how well they speak the language.

Information about Welsh language skills in the census is based on a person's self-assessment of their ability. Guidance for completion of the census stated, if you live in Wales, it's up to you to decide whether you're able to speak Welsh, read Welsh, write Welsh and/or understand spoken Welsh. People were asked to select all the options they believed to be right for them, however not everyone will have read this instruction, and they may have selected only one option.

The way in which people perceive and report on their skills can be influenced by a number of factors and can vary from person to person. In some cases, Welsh language ability was reported by another person. Their assessment of the person's Welsh language ability may not be the same as that of the person themselves.

Census 2021 was held during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, on 21 March 2021. This followed periods of lockdown, remote learning for children and many people were working from home. It is not known how the pandemic may have impacted people's reported Welsh language ability (or perception of the Welsh language ability of others).

For further information, including information on how the census fits in with other data sources on the Welsh language, please see the [quality and methodology information section in our previous release on the Welsh language in](#)

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## **Sexual orientation and gender identity**

For full quality and methodology information, please visit the [ONS's quality and methodology information report](#). Users can also read about the [specific quality considerations for sexual orientation and gender identity \(ONS\)](#). A glossary of terms can be found in the [Census 2021 Dictionary \(ONS\)](#).

The ONS has said that the census estimates for gender identity are subject to a higher level of uncertainty than some other topics. There are some patterns in the data that are consistent with some respondents not interpreting the question as intended. For example, the percentage of people reporting that their gender identity was different to their sex registered at birth was higher for people whose main language was not English or Welsh than the general population. It was higher still among people who did not speak English or Welsh well at all. As such extra consideration needs to be taken when interpreting the data. See the [Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Quality Information page \(ONS\)](#) for more information.

We have also published separate topic summaries on sexual orientation and gender identity in Wales from Census 2021:

- [Sexual orientation and gender identity in Wales \(Census 2021\)](#)
- [Sexual orientation and gender identity differences in health, education and economic status \(Census 2021\)](#)

Users should note that the sexual orientation and gender identity questions asked on Census 2021 are not mutually exclusive. A person may have recorded that their gender identity is different to their sex registered at birth, and at the same time identify as “Gay or Lesbian”, “Bisexual” or another minority sexual orientation. As such, the figures quoted in each section of this release cannot be

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meaningfully aggregated to derive the total number of LGBTQ+ people who are able to speak Welsh in Wales.

## Age-specific percentages

The analysis in this release includes age-specific percentages. Age standardisation has not been applied.

## Official statistics status

On 5 September 2024, Emma Rourke, Deputy National Statistician, wrote to Ed Humpherson (ONS), Head of the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), to request that the gender identity estimates from Census 2021 are no longer **accredited official statistics (OSR)** and are classified as **official statistics in development (OSR)**. The change in designation was confirmed by the OSR on 12 September.

This change in designation reflects the innovative nature of the gender identity estimates and the evolving understanding of measuring gender identity, along with the uncertainty associated with these estimates.

For further information and to support appropriate use, please refer to the **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Quality Information page on the ONS website** before using these estimates.

All other Census 2021 estimates, including those on sexual orientation, are still designated as accredited official statistics.

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# Statement of compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics

Our statistical practice is regulated by the Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR). OSR sets the standards of trustworthiness, quality and value in the Code of Practice for Statistics that all producers of official statistics should adhere to.

All of our statistics are produced and published in accordance with a number of statements and protocols to enhance trustworthiness, quality and value. These are set out in the Welsh Government's [Statement of Compliance](#).

These [official statistics in development \(OSR\)](#) demonstrate the standards expected around trustworthiness, quality and public value in the following ways.

## Trustworthiness

These statistics were compiled from Census 2021 data published by the ONS. Census 2021 has been accredited as National Statistics and underwent a rigorous [accreditation process \(ONS\)](#) with the OSR. Users can find out more about the quality and methodology of census data by reading the [Quality and methodology information for Census 2021 report \(ONS\)](#).

Within this release we provide a quality and methodology statement in order to be clear and transparent about our drafting and publication process.

## Quality

The published figures provided are compiled by professional analysts using the latest available data and applying methods using their professional judgement and analytical skillset. This included careful and independent validation of all

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elements of the compiling and drafting process by Welsh Government statistician, and a separate review by co-workers in the ONS.

Before publication, the release is signed off by senior statisticians and published in line with the statement on confidentiality and data access which is informed by the trustworthiness pillar contained in the [Code of Practice for Statistics \(UK Statistics Authority\)](#).

Statistics published by Welsh Government adhere to the [Statistical Quality Management Strategy](#) which supplements the Quality pillar of the Code of Practice for Statistics and the European Statistical System principles of quality for statistical outputs.

## Value

In publishing this data, we aim to provide evidence for ministers, policy makers and external stakeholders on Welsh language policy, and to inform the wider public.

Census 2021 provides an accurate and complete source of population information. In the context of Welsh language data, this allows us to explore trends at a more granular level than we would normally be able to with survey data. This supports organisations in Wales to target their resources more effectively in delivering their services.

Since questions about sexual orientation and gender identity were included in the census for the first time in 2021, this is also the first time we have been able to present complete information on the sexual orientation and gender identity of the Welsh-speaking population in Wales.

The statistics and figures have been styled and published in an accessible format in line with accessibility legislation.

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You are welcome to contact us directly with any comments about how we meet these standards. Alternatively, you can contact OSR by emailing [regulation@statistics.gov.uk](mailto:regulation@statistics.gov.uk) or via the OSR website.

## 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 and this release includes 1 of the national indicators namely:

- (37) Number of people who can speak Welsh.

Information on the indicators, along with narratives for each of the wellbeing goals and associated technical information is available in the [Well-being of Wales report](#).

As a national indicator under the Act, they must be referred to in the analyses of local well-being produced by public services boards when they are analysing the state of economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being in their areas.

The Act states national milestones must be set that “...the Welsh Ministers

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consider would assist in measuring whether progress is being made towards the achievement of the well-being goals.” In doing so Welsh Ministers must specify how we know that a national milestone has been achieved and the time by which it is to be achieved.

National milestones are not performance targets for any individual organisation but are collective measures of success for Wales.

In this release, indicator (37) Number of people who can speak Welsh corresponds to one milestone:

- A million Welsh speakers by 2050.

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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