

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER: 11/2017
PUBLICATION DATE: 01/03/2017

Who is more likely to 'speak Welsh' and 'speak Welsh daily and more than just a few words'?

(Future Generations Indicators 36 & 37)

The National Survey for Wales 2014-15 results are used here to investigate what factors are linked to whether people speak Welsh. We have controlled for a range of factors, so that even when factors are related (e.g. age and having children in the household) the link between each factor and speaking Welsh can be explored independently.

Key findings

There are many factors that predict whether people speak Welsh, and whether they speak Welsh more¹. When controlling for a wide range of other factors, people are more likely to both speak Welsh, and to speak Welsh more if they:

- Identify themselves as white;
- Live in Gwynedd, Anglesey, Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire
- Are aged 16 to 29;
- Are more highly educated;
- Identify themselves as Christian.

Additionally, people are likely to speak Welsh more if they:

- Live in rural areas;
- Have more close family and friends;
- Are employed;
- Own their home, rather than rent;

People who say that they speak Welsh but who do not speak it much are more likely to be from traditionally Welsh-speaking areas, aged 16 to 29, or widowed.

We did not find a link between having children in the household and speaking Welsh, or speaking Welsh more.

¹ Defined here as people who both speak Welsh daily and are also fluent enough to speak more than a just few words.

1. Background

The [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) is designed to improve the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by putting in place seven well-being goals. The Act places a legal requirement on the Welsh Government to set [national indicators](#) which measure achievement of the well-being goals. This report focuses on two of the indicators: indicator 36, 'percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh'; and indicator 37, 'percentage of people who can speak Welsh'.

The [National Survey](#) is used to measure progress against many of these national indicators. It is a large-scale, face-to-face survey collecting detailed information on people's views and well-being. The 2014-15 survey covered 14,285 people. It provides robust information on people's views about a wide range of issues.

2. Measures of speaking Welsh

21% of people said that they could speak Welsh. 12% of people said that they speak Welsh more: that is, that they both spoke Welsh daily and were fluent enough to speak more than just a few words of Welsh. 9% said that they speak Welsh but do not speak it every day or do not speak more than a few words.

3. Analysis method

To get a clear understanding of how each individual factor contributes to material deprivation, we used a technique called regression analysis. Regression analysis allows us to explore the links between particular factors and speaking Welsh.

For example, we know that people with children in their household are more likely to speak Welsh. However, people with children are also more likely to be aged 30 to 50; and 30 to 50 year olds are more likely to speak Welsh. This makes it difficult to say whether speaking Welsh is due to having children in the household or to age. Once other factors are controlled for, using regression analysis, it is clear that having children in the household does not, in itself, affect the likelihood of speaking Welsh more. But age does affect the likelihood of speaking Welsh more even when others factors are taken into account.

The analysis of each factor presented below controls for a range of other factors, so the link between each factor of interest can be isolated and explored. All factors reported below have a statistically significant link with speaking Welsh (that is, we have a high level of confidence that these findings are robust and not just due to some variability in the survey estimates).

Regression analysis can identify relationships between variables; however, it cannot tell us about causality. While for some variables this is fairly clear based on prior knowledge (e.g. speaking Welsh does not cause changes in gender; gender causes changes in speaking Welsh), for others the relationship between cause and effect is more blurred (high qualifications can affect whether a person speaks Welsh; speaking Welsh can affect qualification levels). Therefore, where prior knowledge does not make the direction of causality clear we have generally noted that causality can operate in either direction (or both).

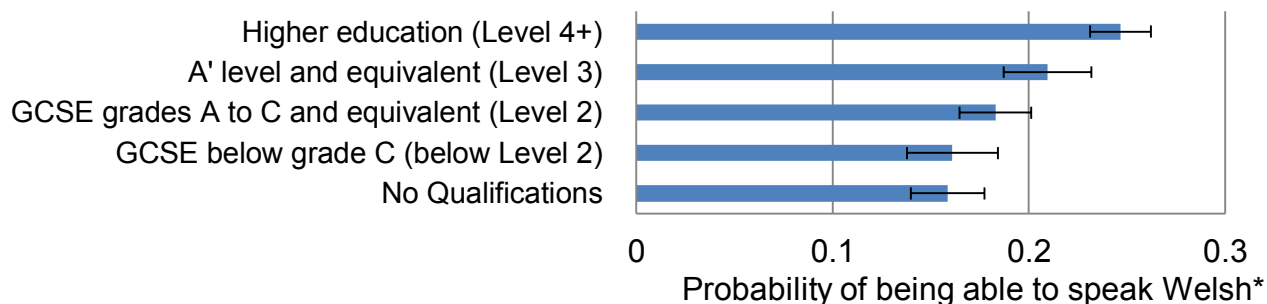
For a full description of how we carried out the analysis, see the accompanying [technical report](#).

4. Main findings: predictors of speaking Welsh

When controlling for other factors, the following were found to be predictors of whether a person can speak Welsh².

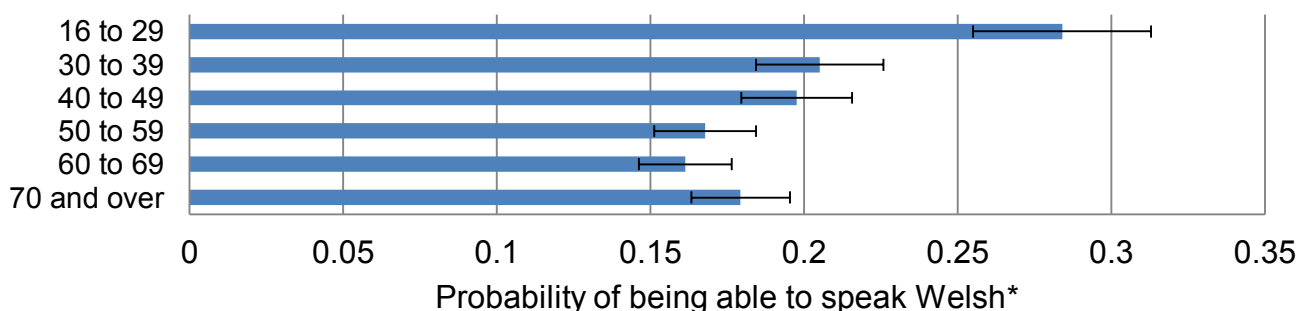
Highest qualification: Holding the other factors constant, people with education at degree level and above are most likely to speak Welsh (0.25)³. People with no qualifications are least likely to speak Welsh (0.16), as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The link between qualification level and being able to speak Welsh



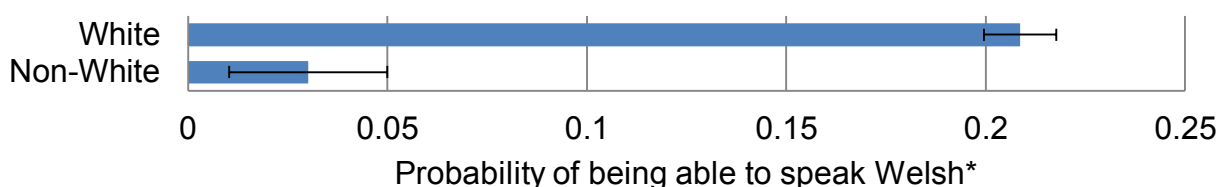
Age: Holding the other factors constant, the people most likely to be able to speak Welsh are those aged 16 to 29 (0.28), as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: The link between age and being able to speak Welsh



Ethnicity: Holding the other factors constant, people that identify themselves as white are more likely to be able to speak Welsh (0.21). Those who are non-white⁴ are least likely to speak Welsh (0.03), as shown in Figure 3:

Figure 3: The link between ethnicity and being able to speak Welsh



² If the error bars for each response do not overlap, the responses are statistically significant different from one another.

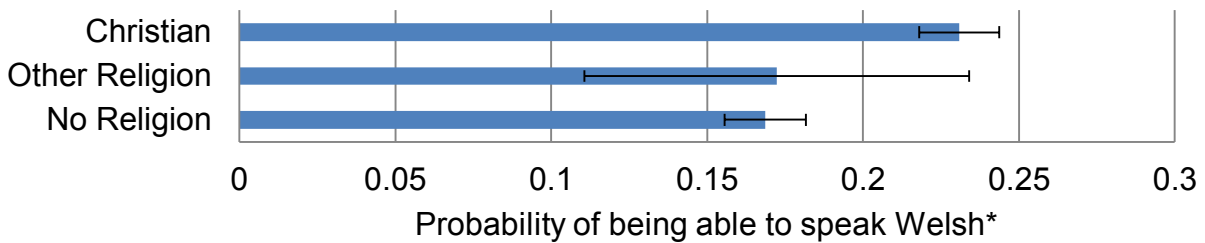
³ When controlling for the other factors, a probability of 0 would indicate a 0% likelihood of a respondent in this group being able to speak Welsh. A probability of 1.0 would indicate a 100% likelihood of a respondent in this group being able to speak Welsh.

* Holding the other factors constant.

⁴ It was not possible to split this category up into ethnic groups, as the number of non-white respondents was too small.

Religion: Holding the other factors constant, the people most likely to speak Welsh are Christian (0.23). Those who are least likely to speak Welsh are those with no religion (0.17). There was large variability in those with other religions, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4: The link between religion and being able to speak Welsh



Area: Holding the other factors constant, the people most likely to speak Welsh are people from Gwynedd (0.71), Isle of Anglesey (0.61), Ceredigion (0.46) and Carmarthenshire (0.46), as shown in Figure 5.

Figure 5: The link between area and being able to speak Welsh

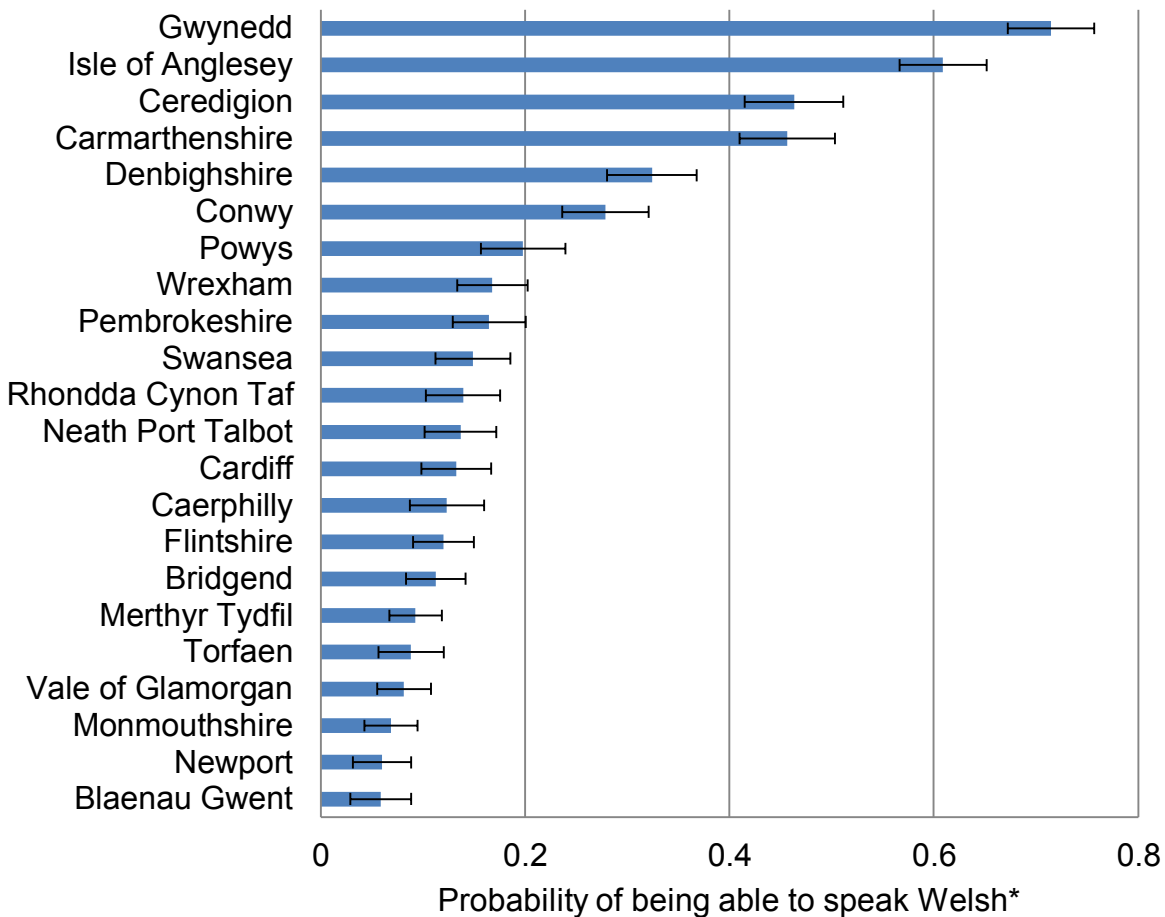
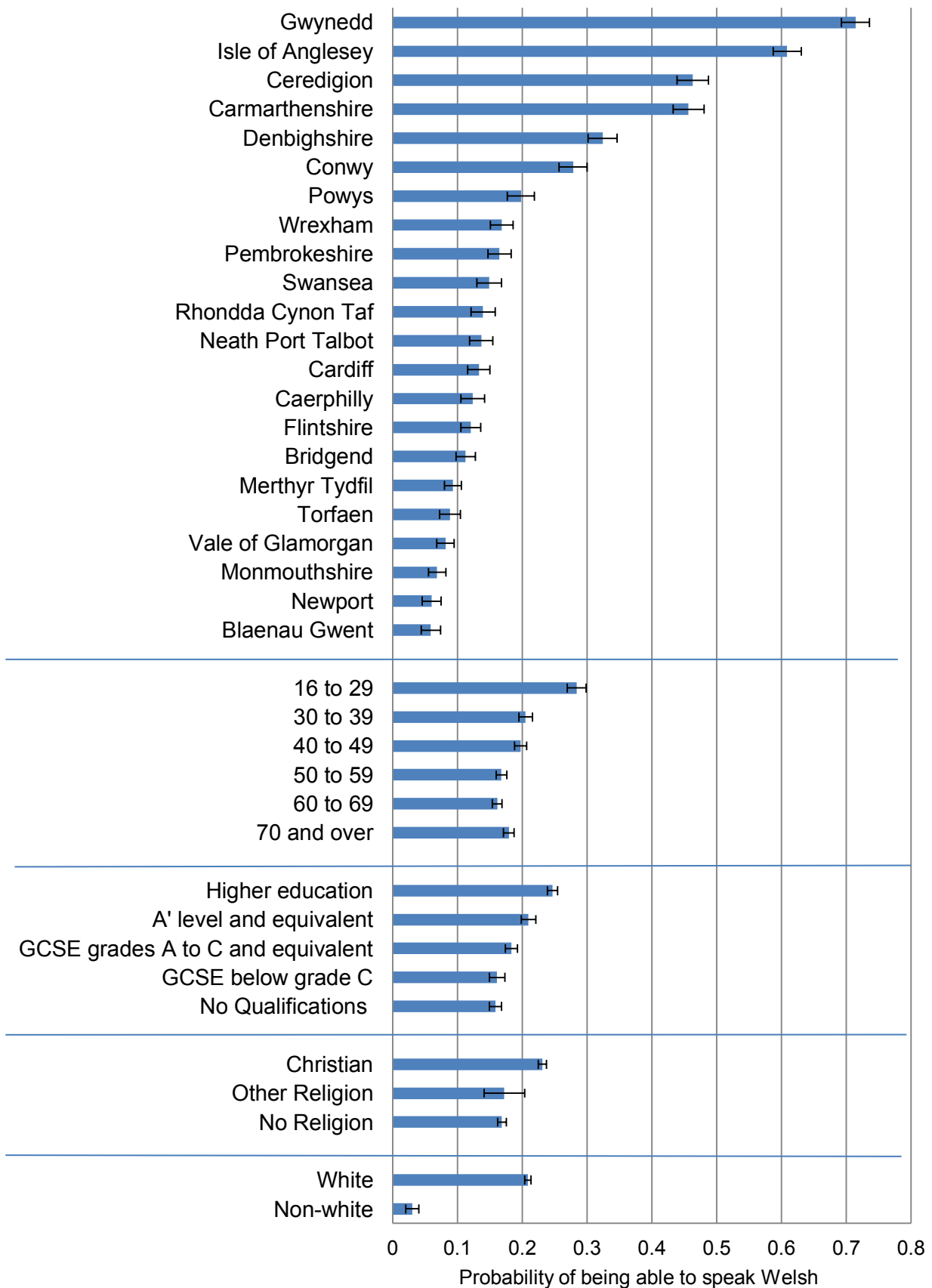


Figure 6 summarises the relationship of the above factors on being able to speak Welsh. The graph shows that local authority area is clearly a powerful indicator of whether someone can speak Welsh, whereas being 'non-white' strongly predicts not speaking Welsh.

Figure 6: Probability of responding 'can speak Welsh'⁵



⁵ As before, the error bars can be used to see where there are statistically significant differences among categories of each variable: if the bars do not overlap, the difference is likely to be 'real'. However, it would not be correct (or meaningful) to compare directly and conclude that non-overlapping error bars mean that a category of one variable (e.g. people with high qualifications) predicts Welsh speaking significantly differently to a category of another variable (e.g. single).

4.1 Factors not linked to speaking Welsh

We did not find a link between the following and speaking Welsh speaking: gender; economic status; having children in the household; and feeling valued in society.

5. Predictors of speaking Welsh more

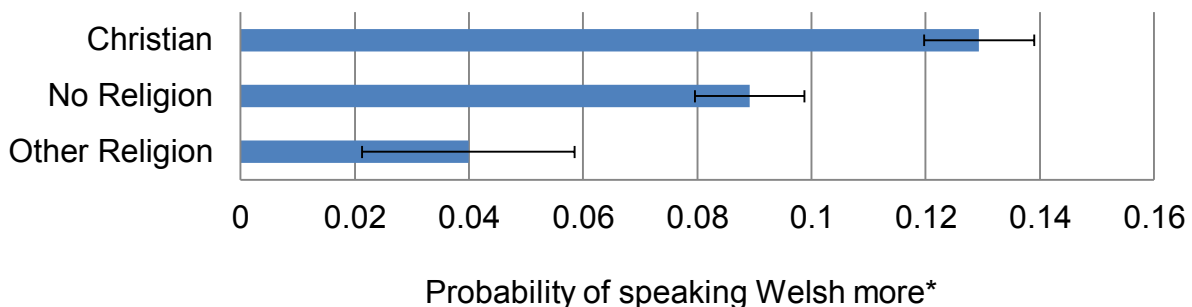
We also looked at people who speak Welsh daily and also more than just a few words. When controlling for other factors, the following were found to be predictors of whether a person 'speaks Welsh daily and more than just a few words'.

5.1 Respondent characteristics

Ethnicity: Being non-white is a very strong predictor of not speaking Welsh more. Only four respondents who spoke 'Welsh more' were non-white. As there is such a small number in this category it can not be included in the regression model (i.e. investigated while controlling for the other factors, or taken into account when exploring other factors). However, it is a key factor to bear in mind.

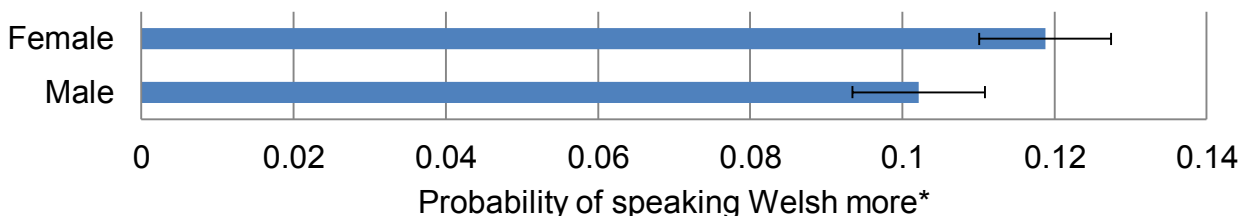
Religion: Holding all other factors constant, people who are Christian are the most likely to speak Welsh more (0.13). Those with no religion are less likely to speak Welsh more (0.09). The people least likely to speak Welsh more were those of other religions (0.04). As noted above it was not possible to tease apart the effects of religion and ethnicity in this analysis.

Figure 7: The link between religion and speaking Welsh more



Gender: Holding the other factors constant, women are most likely to speak Welsh more (0.12) as shown in Figure 8⁶.

Figure 8: The link between gender and speaking Welsh more

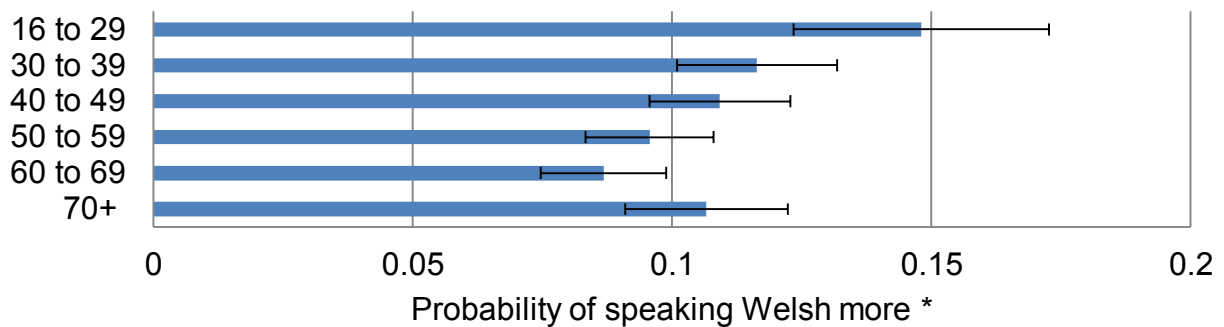


⁶ Even though the error bars slightly overlap, further tests showed that the difference is statistically significant.

* Holding the other factors constant.

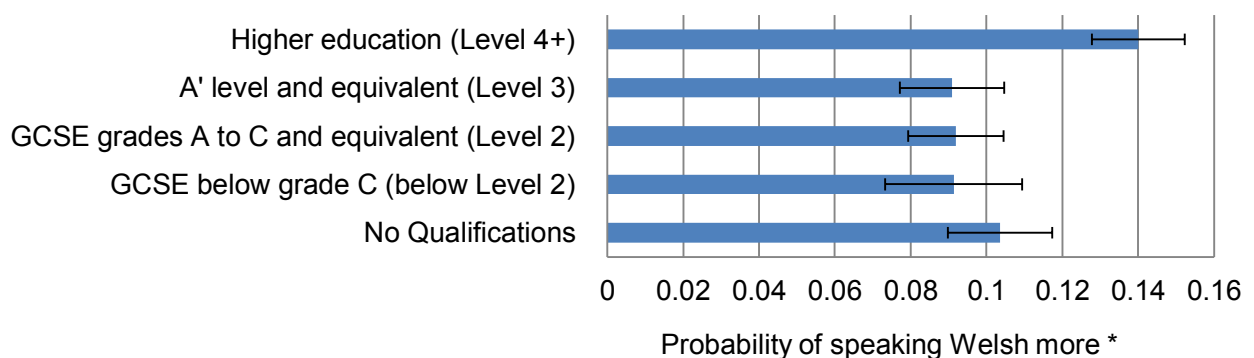
Age: Holding the other factors constant, people aged 16 to 29 are most likely to speak Welsh more (0.15). This probability decreases with age, apart from the 70+ category, as shown in Figure 9:

Figure 9: The link between age and speaking Welsh more



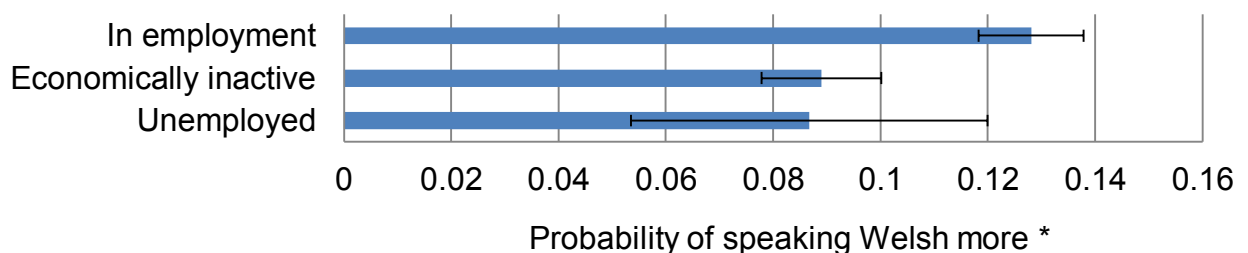
Highest qualification: Holding the other factors constant, people who have qualifications of degree level and above are most likely to speak Welsh more (0.14), as shown in Figure 10:

Figure 10: The link between qualification level and speaking Welsh more



Economic status: Holding the other factors constant, people who are in employment are the most likely to speak Welsh more (0.13)⁷, as shown in Figure 11⁸:

Figure 11: The link between employment status and speaking Welsh more.

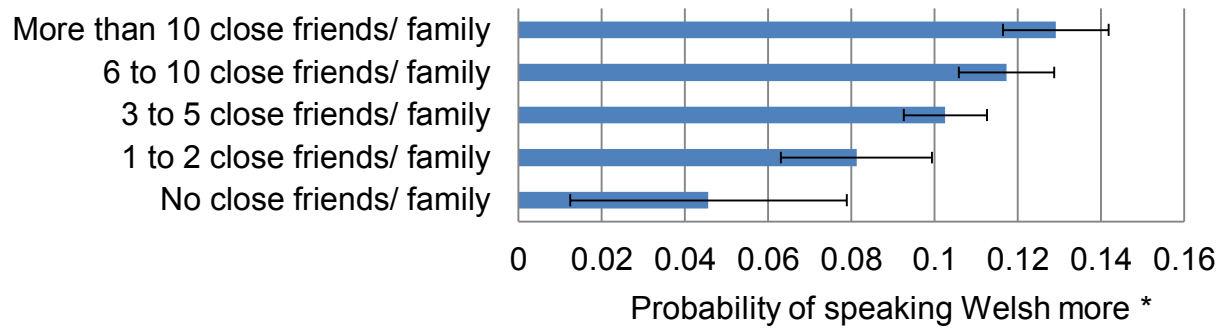


Close family and friends: Holding the other factors constant, the more close friends or family the respondent reported, the higher the probability that they speak Welsh more. Those who are least likely to speak Welsh more are those who have no close friends or family (0.05). Those who are most likely are those with more than ten close friends and family (0.13), as shown in Figure 12:

⁷ Even though the error bars slightly overlap, further tests showed that the difference between 'economic status' is statistically significant

⁸ Economically inactive includes those who are students and pensioners.

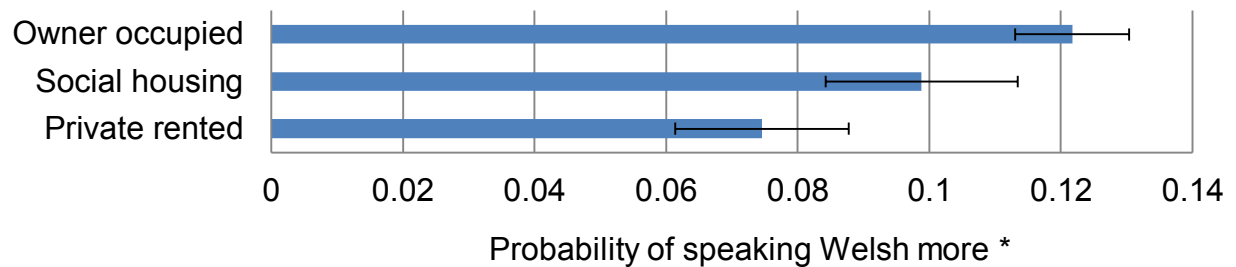
Figure 12: The link between close family and friends and speaking Welsh more



5.2 Housing and Area

Tenure: Holding the other factors constant, people who live in owner occupied housing are the most likely to speak Welsh more (0.12). Those who live in privately rented accommodation have the lowest probability (0.07), as shown in Figure 13:

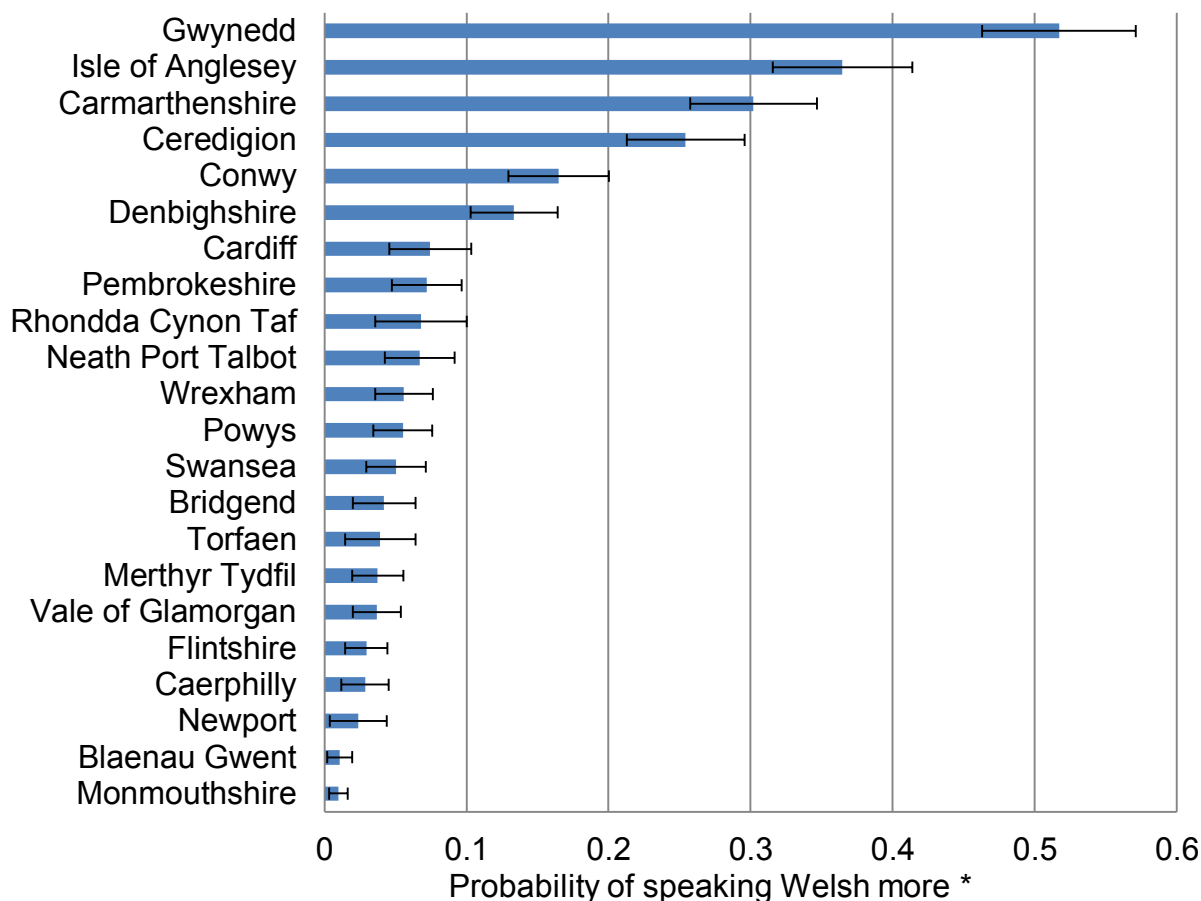
Figure 13: The link between tenure and speaking Welsh more



Local authority: Holding the other factors constant, people who live in Gwynedd are the most likely to speak Welsh more (0.52), followed by the Isle of Anglesey (0.36), Carmarthenshire (0.3) and Ceredigion (0.25). Those who are least likely live in Monmouthshire and Blaenau Gwent (both 0.01) and Newport (0.02), as shown in Figure 14:

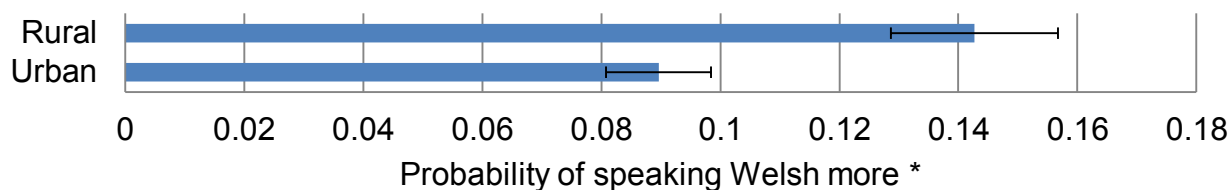
* Holding the other factors constant.

Figure 14: The link between area and speaking Welsh more



Urban / rural area: Holding all other factors constant, people living in rural areas are more likely to speak Welsh more (0.14) than those living in urban areas (0.09), as shown in Figure 15:

Figure 15: The link between urban or rural area and speaking Welsh more



Combined effect of age and qualification level: For people with no qualifications, those aged 70+ are most likely to speak Welsh more. For younger people, those with qualifications at or above degree level are the group most likely to be Welsh speakers. Those aged 50-59 with a qualification level below GCSE grade C are least likely to be Welsh speakers, as shown in Figure 16:

* Holding the other factors constant.

Figure 16: The link between age, education level, and speaking Welsh more

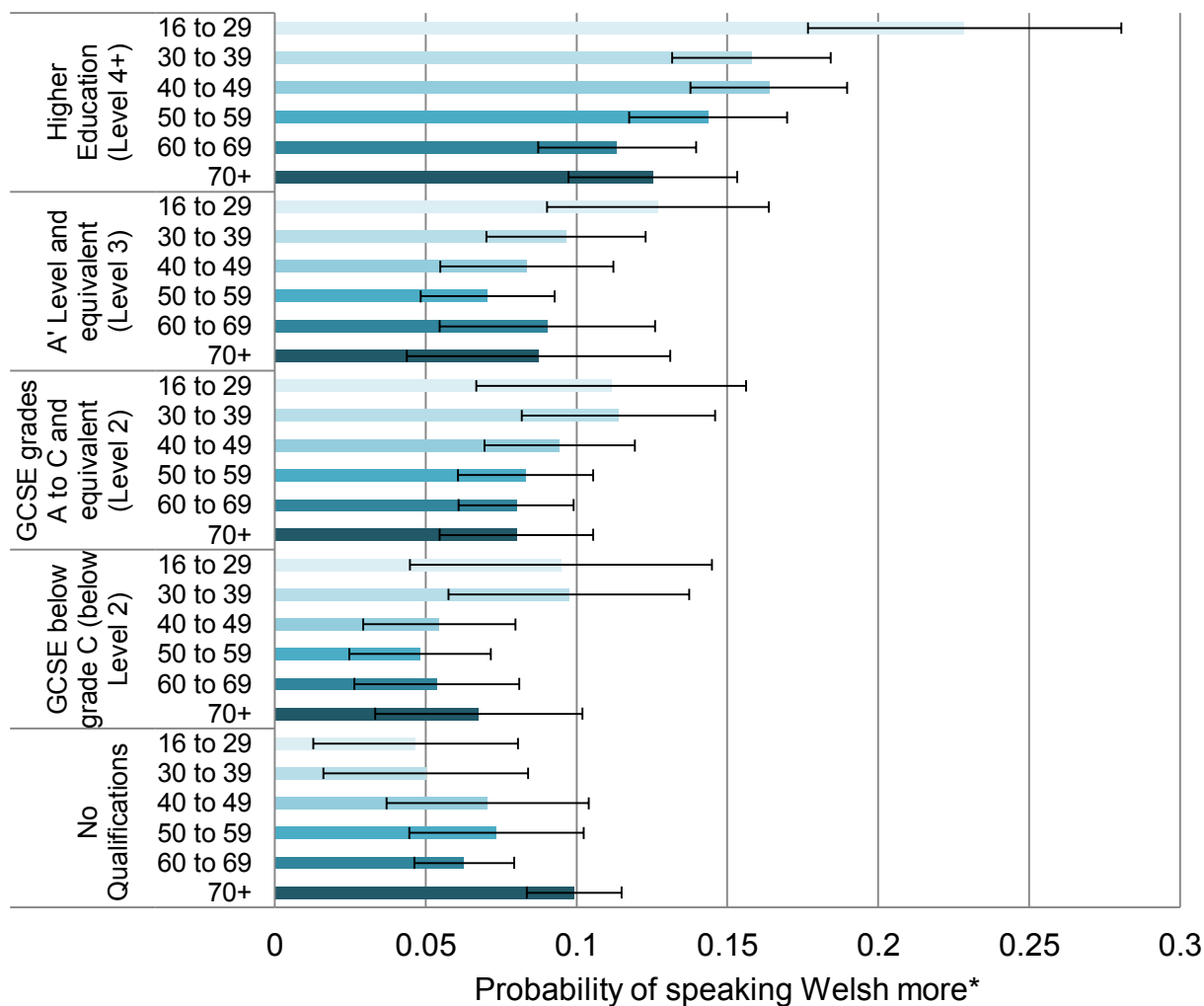
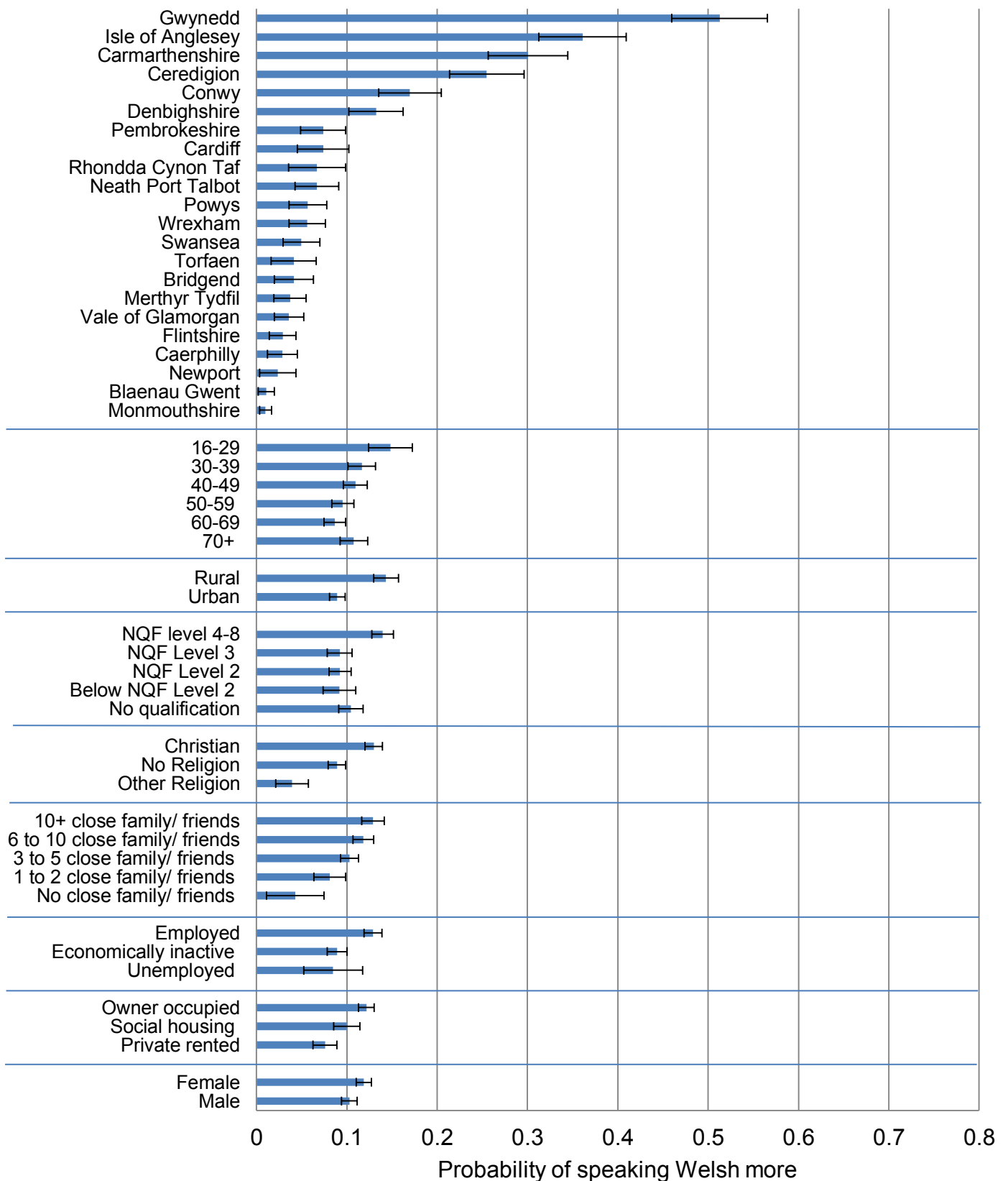


Figure 17 summarises the contribution of all of the above factors to 'speaking Welsh more'. The graph shows that local authority area is the most powerful indicator of whether someone speaks Welsh more.

* Holding the other factors constant.

Figure 17: Probability of speaking Welsh more^{9 10}



⁹ Due to small numbers ethnicity could not be included in this chart.

¹⁰ As before, the error bars can be used to see where there are statistically significant differences among categories of each variable: if the bars do not overlap, the difference is likely to be 'real'. However, it would not be correct (or meaningful) to compare directly and conclude that non-overlapping error bars mean that a category of one variable (e.g. having high qualifications) predicts Welsh speaking significantly differently to a category of another variable (e.g. employed).

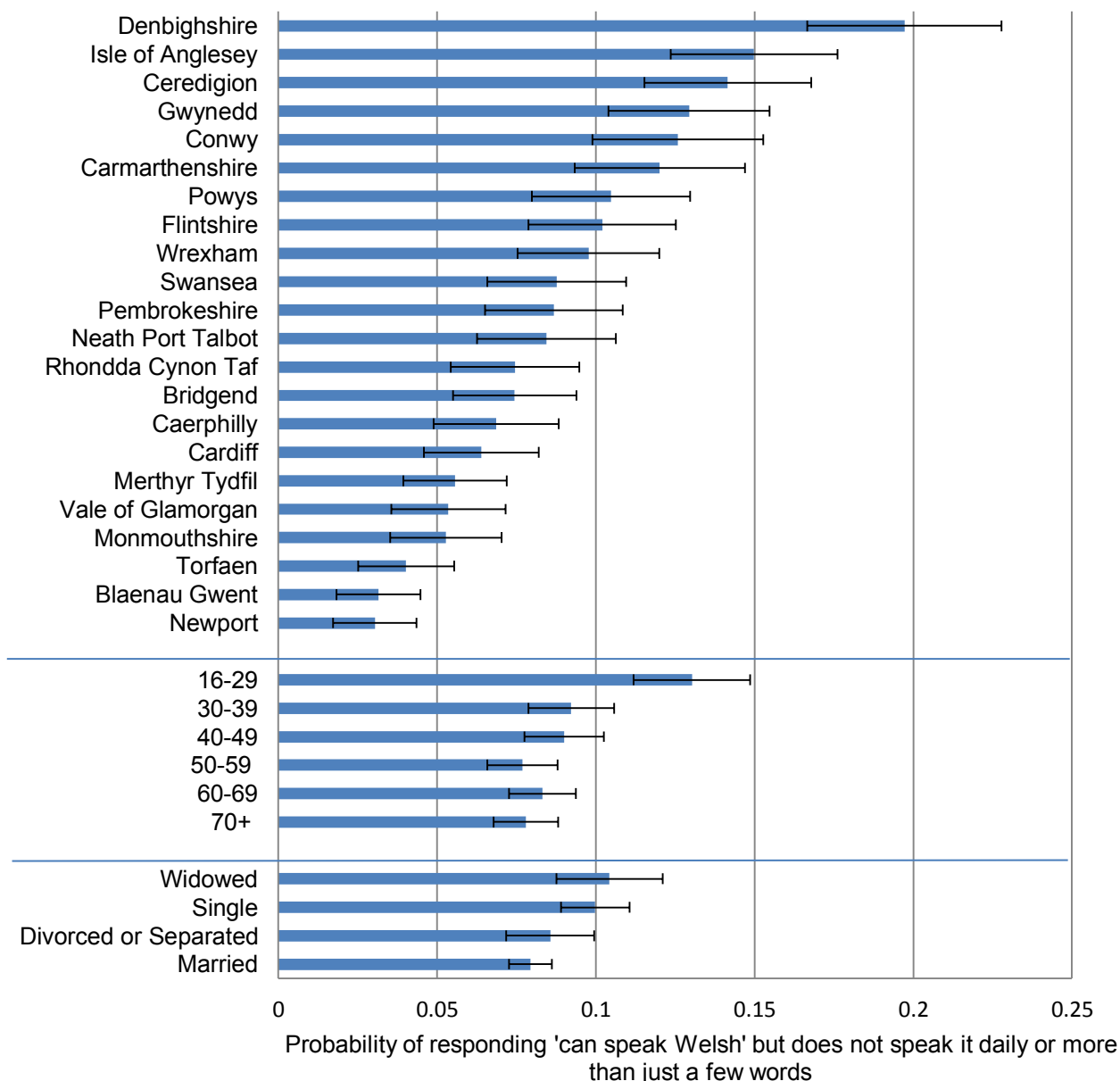
5.3 Factors not linked to speaking Welsh more

We did not find a link between the following and speaking Welsh more: marital status; having a disability or limiting long-standing illness; having children in the household; feeling valued in society; and being in material deprivation.

6. Analysis of people who speak Welsh but not often or fluently

People who can speak Welsh, but who do not speak more than a few words every day, are more likely to be from traditionally Welsh-speaking areas, 16 to 29, or widowed or single (Figure 18).

Figure 18: Probability of responding 'can speak Welsh' but does not speak it daily or more than just a few words¹¹



Further details on how we carried out the analysis are available in the accompanying [technical report](#).

¹¹As before, the error bars can be used to see where there are statistically significant differences among categories of each variable: if the bars do not overlap, the difference is likely to be 'real'. However, it would not be correct (or meaningful) to compare directly and conclude that non-overlapping error bars mean that a category of one variable (e.g. people aged 16 to 24) predicts the outcome significantly differently to a category of another variable (e.g. single).

Report author: Cathryn Knight, Cardiff University



For further information please contact:

Lisa Walters

Social Research and Information Division

Knowledge and Analytical Services

Welsh Government, Cathays Park

Cardiff, CF10 3NQ

Email: lisa.walters@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 025 6685

Mae'r ddogfen yma hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

This document is also available in Welsh.

© Crown Copyright Digital ISBN 978-1-4734-8765-9