

# The intergenerational transmission of the Welsh language

Hywel Jones, Welsh Language Commissioner

## Background

The census of population provides relevant data to assess the extent to which the Welsh language is being transmitted within the family. It asks about the ability of everyone in Wales to speak Welsh. On the basis of the responses, every family is categorised according to the Welsh speaking ability of all members of the family aged 3 and over. The following three categories were analyzed, namely families where there was:

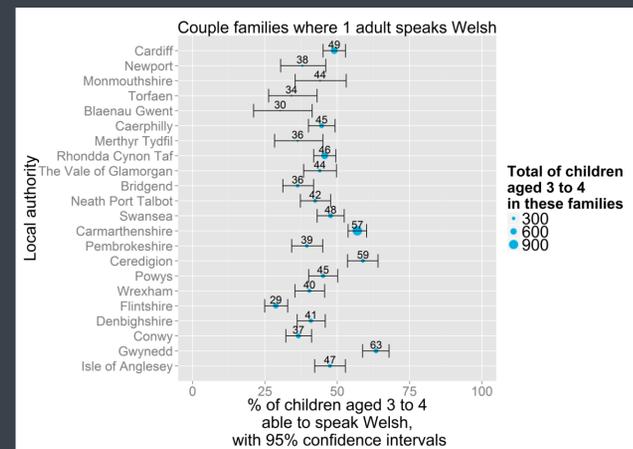
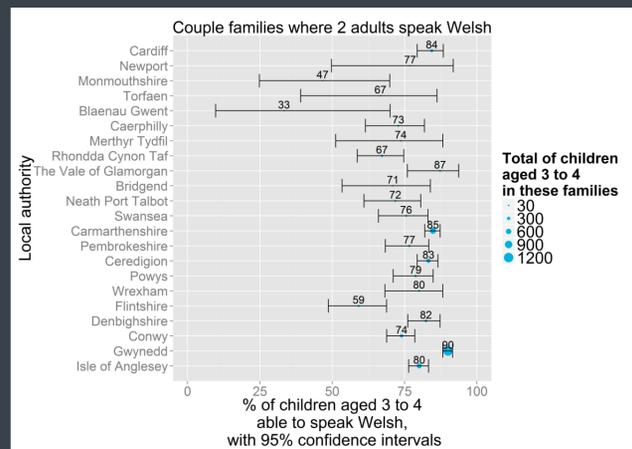
1. A couple, with the two adults able to speak Welsh;
2. A lone parent who was able to speak Welsh;
3. A couple, but with only one of the two adults able to speak Welsh.

The first two categories include families where Welsh could be the main language of communication within the family—if the children were raised to speak Welsh—as all the adults of the family can speak Welsh.

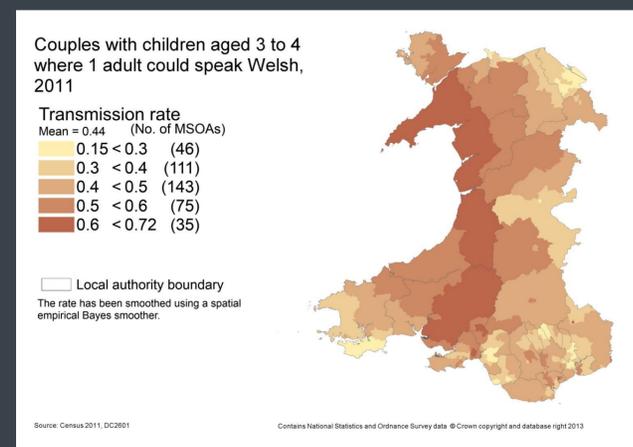
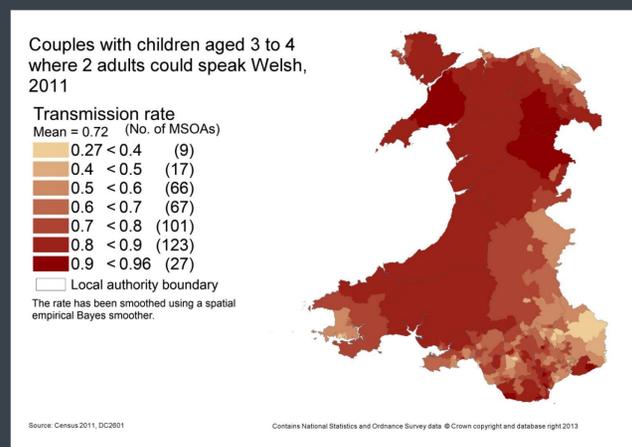
The proportion of the children aged 3 to 4 who are able to speak Welsh is the measure used to assess the extent to which Welsh is being transmitted within the family; this is the 'transmission rate'.

## Analysis

Even at local authority level, because of small numbers, the confidence intervals of some of the point estimates obtained from the results of the 2011 Census are very wide.



At a more detailed geographical level the problem of small numbers makes it difficult to see the spatial pattern. The rates were smoothed in the maps below to make the pattern more apparent.

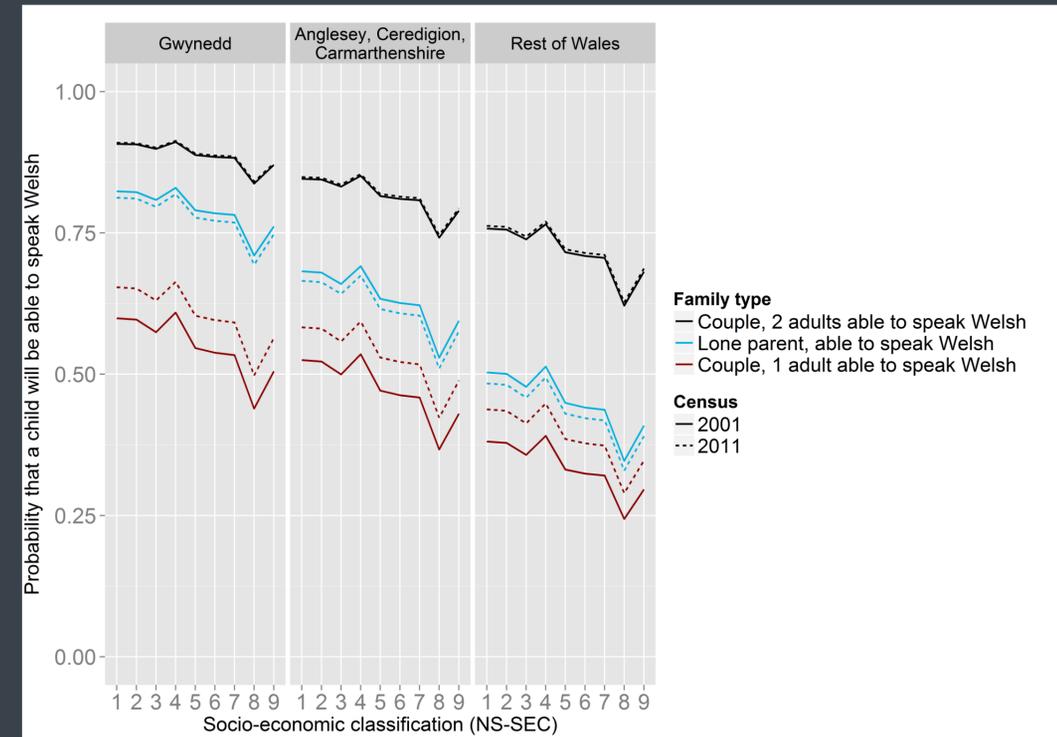


## Analysis

The following logistic model was fitted to the data:

$$\text{Probability that a child will speak Welsh} = \text{logit}^{-1}(\text{Census} + \text{Family type} + \text{Area} + \text{NS-SEC} + \text{Census:Family type} + \text{Area:Family type})$$

Data source: table Co801 2001 Census and DC2601 2011 Census



National Statistics Socio-economic classification (NS-SEC) of the household reference person

1. Higher managerial, administrative and professional occupations;
2. Lower managerial, administrative and professional occupations;
3. Intermediate occupations;
4. Small employers and own account workers;
5. Lower supervisory and technical occupations;
6. Semi-routine occupations;
7. Routine occupations;
8. Never worked and long-term unemployed;
9. Not classified

## Findings:

- There is a relationship between the transmission rate and socio-economic status. The rate is lower amongst classes 5-8 compared with classes 1-4.
- The transmission rate varies geographically. By local authority, it is generally at its highest in Gwynedd.

Between 2001 and 2011:

- There was an increase in the transmission rate of couple families where one adult only was able to speak Welsh. The probability that a child in such a family would be able to speak Welsh was around 0.06 higher in 2011. One could suggest that the expansion of nursery education (where Welsh is introduced as a second language) since 2001 may be a causal factor.
- There was a decrease in the transmission rate of lone parent families where the parent could speak Welsh. The probability that a child in such a family would be able to speak Welsh was about 0.02 lower in 2011.
- There was no change in the transmission rate of couple families where two adults could speak Welsh.

For more information

Contact: [hywel.jones@welshlanguagecommissioner.org](mailto:hywel.jones@welshlanguagecommissioner.org) Tel: +44(0)29 20877575 [welshlanguagecommissioner.org](http://welshlanguagecommissioner.org)



Comisiynydd y  
Gymraeg  
Welsh Language  
Commissioner