

SOCIAL RESEARCH NUMBER: 27/2020  
PUBLICATION DATE: 26/03/2020

# What factors are linked to people speaking the **Welsh language**?

Future Generations Indicators 36 & 37

The [National Survey for Wales](#) includes questions about whether people can speak Welsh, how often they do so, and their level of fluency. The questions are asked of people aged 16+.

This report is based on National Survey interviews carried out in **2018-19**, and provides an overview of key factors linked to speaking Welsh in everyday life. It is an update of [previous analysis based on the 2014-15 survey](#).

## Key findings

Holding other factors constant<sup>1</sup>, the factors below were found to be linked to speaking Welsh.

### Factors linked to speaking Welsh in general:

- Being **younger**
- Being an **owner/occupier**

### Factors linked to speaking Welsh in daily life, and being able to speak more than a few words:

- Having **children living in the household**
- Feeling that people in the local community **treat each other with respect and consideration**

### Factors linked to both:

- Being **female**
- Being **qualified to a high education level**
- Being a **Christian**
- Being **white**
- Being **employed**
- Living in a **rural area**
- Living in **Gwynedd**, Isle of Anglesey, or Ceredigion
- Feeling a **sense of belonging** to the local community.

As with all analysis of this type, we are unable to attribute cause and effect or to allow for factors not measured in the survey.

<sup>1</sup> For this analysis, we have controlled for a range of factors so that even if they are related (e.g. general health and age), the link between each factor and the likelihood of speaking Welsh can be explored independently.

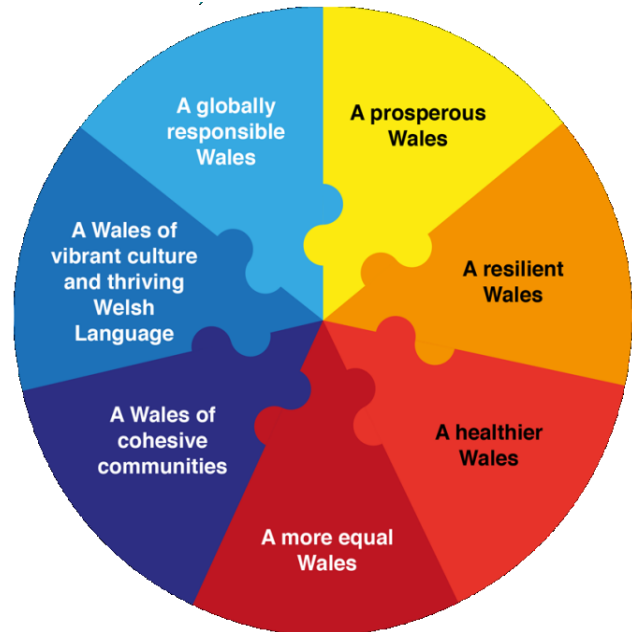
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## 1. Background

[The Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) focuses on improving the social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. To achieve this, the Act requires public bodies in Wales to think about long-term issues and targets, work better with communities and stakeholders, and to take a more joined-up and cohesive approach to decision-making. To ensure that this vision is achieved, the Act puts in place seven well-being goals<sup>2</sup> (**Figure 1**).

The Act requires the Welsh Government to set [national indicators](#) measuring achievement against the well-being goals. The [National Survey for Wales](#) measures progress against 15 of the 46 national indicators. The survey involves face-to-face interviews with a random sample of 12,000 people across Wales each year.

This report focuses on [National Indicator 37](#): ‘Percentage of people who can speak Welsh’ (in general) and [National Indicator 36](#): ‘Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh’.



**Figure 1.** *The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: seven well-being goals<sup>3</sup>.*

## 2. Questions used in the National Survey

Information relating to National Indicator 37 was collected by asking people whether they speak Welsh. People could respond ‘yes’, ‘no’, or ‘no, but I have some Welsh speaking ability’ to this question.

National Indicator 36 (whether people speak the Welsh language in everyday life) is based on people who report that they have at least some Welsh speaking ability and that they also ‘speak Welsh on a daily basis’.

**Overall, 18% of people said that they could speak at least some Welsh; and 11% said they spoke Welsh in everyday life.**

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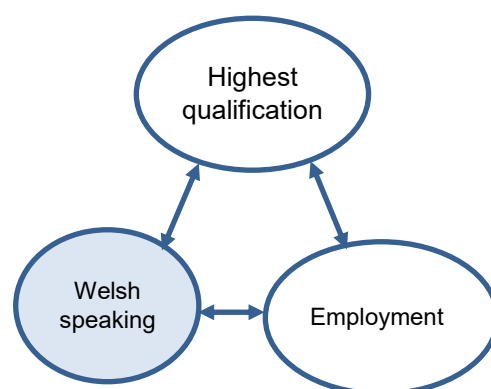
<sup>2</sup> Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: The Essentials, which can be viewed [online](#).

### 3. Method of analysis

To get a clear understanding of how each individual factor contributes to people speaking Welsh in general, and in everyday life, we used a **statistical technique<sup>3</sup> to explore the link<sup>4</sup> between particular factors and the percentage of people speaking Welsh, whilst holding all other factors constant**. Holding other factors constant (also referred to as controlling for other factors) is important because it allows us to look at each factor independently (i.e. ensuring that the effect we are measuring is not influenced by external factors). For example, we could examine the link between two separate factors (highest qualification and employment status) and people speaking Welsh (in general). We might know that highest achieved qualification is linked to people speaking Welsh, however highest qualification could also be linked to employment status (see **Figure 2**). To look at the effect of one factor alone (e.g. highest qualification) on speaking Welsh, we need to control for the effects of all other factors. We can then get a much clearer idea of how one single factor links to speaking Welsh, without the influence of other factors.

#### ***The complexity of relationships between factors***

To understand these results, it is important to note that we cannot always be sure about what factors cause, and which are caused by, speaking Welsh. For some factors this relationship is clear based on prior knowledge. For instance, being female might be linked to an increased likelihood of speaking Welsh (in general); however, we know that a person speaking Welsh (in general) is not linked to changes in gender. For other factors, however, this relationship is not as obvious.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 2.** *The importance of holding other factors constant in statistical analysis.*

#### ***Interpreting the results***

All of the factors presented in the charts in this report are statistically significant predictors of speaking Welsh, as tested by our chosen regression model. In this report, we use ‘predictive margins’ – presented as percentages (%) – to show the probability of a relationship between each factor (whilst holding other factors constant) and the dependent variable (speaking Welsh). The results show within a particular factor (e.g. sex) the likelihood of one ‘average’ group of people with a shared characteristic (e.g. females) speaking Welsh, compared with another ‘average’ group of people with a different shared characteristic (e.g. males). Error bars on the charts show the 95% confidence interval of the predictive margins for each group. Overlapping error bars mean that while a factor is a significant predictor of speaking Welsh, it is not entirely clear which group within the factor is the most predictive.

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<sup>3</sup> This technique is known as logistic regression. More information about the methods used in this report can be found in the accompanying [regression methodology report and technical report](#).

<sup>4</sup> While this analysis can tell us about the *likelihood* of relationships between factors, it cannot tell us about causal relationships.

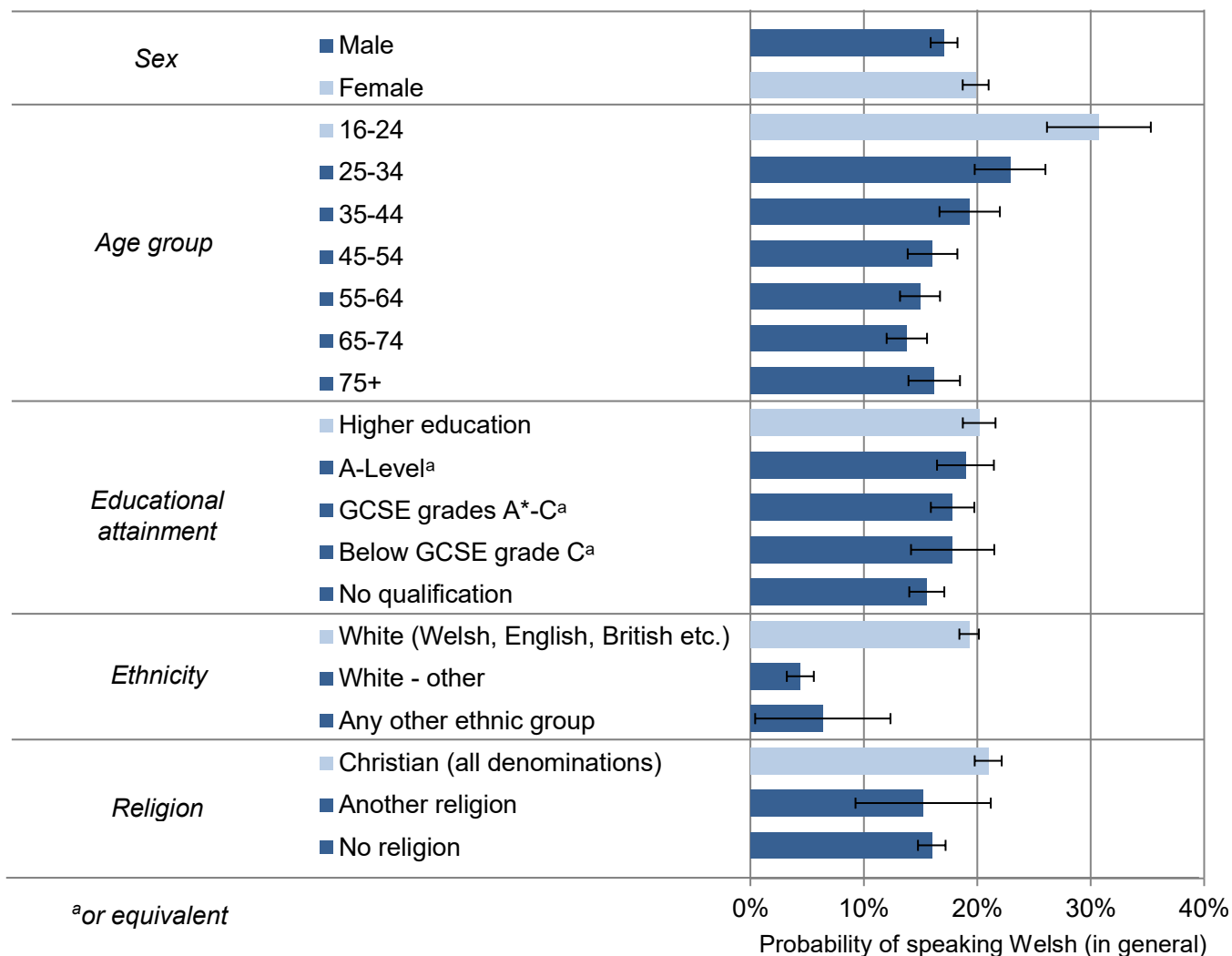
<sup>5</sup> This relationship can be even more complex, as there could be other factors which we haven’t considered (and are not available from the National Survey) which may be linked to speaking Welsh *and* sense of belonging.

#### 4. Main factors linked to speaking Welsh in general

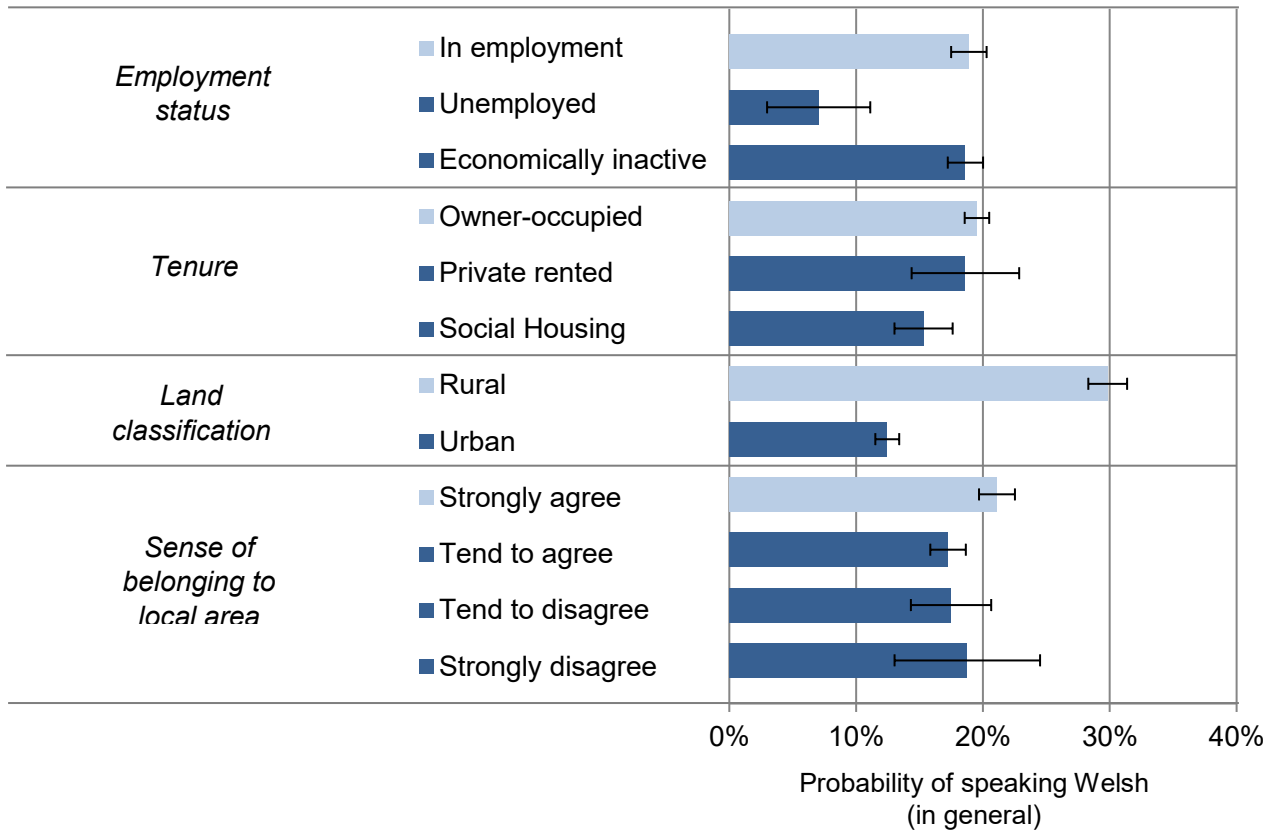
Overall, **18%** of people said that they could speak at least some Welsh. Figure 3.1 shows each of the factors (whilst **holding other factors constant**) which were found to have an association with speaking Welsh. Within each factor, the group with the highest probability (percentage) of speaking Welsh is highlighted in light blue.

The following sections provide a more in-depth analysis of each of these factors. We also looked at the likelihood of people speaking Welsh at each local authority level: see [Section 4.1.4](#).

**Figure 3.1** Main factors linked with speaking Welsh (in general)



**Figure 3.1 (continued)** Main factors linked with people speaking Welsh (in general).



#### 4.1 Analysis – speaking Welsh in general

**Holding all other factors constant**, the following factors were found to be linked to people speaking Welsh in general. Individual factors which share a similar characteristic are grouped into **themes** (e.g. demographic factors). Factors **not** found to be linked to people speaking Welsh in general are listed in [Section 4.2](#).

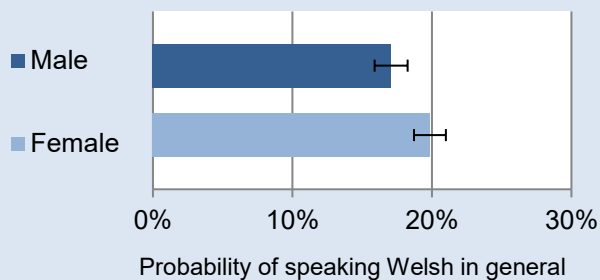
When people were asked whether they can speak Welsh, 15% of people answered ‘no, but I have some Welsh speaking ability’. For the analysis in this section, we have treated this the same as a ‘no’ response. We have then done further analysis to look at what factors are linked to people saying that they do not speak Welsh, but do have some Welsh speaking ability. This is shown in [Section 4.3](#).

### 4.1.1 Demographic factors

#### Sex

**Females** were more likely to speak Welsh, compared with males. See **Figure 4.1**.

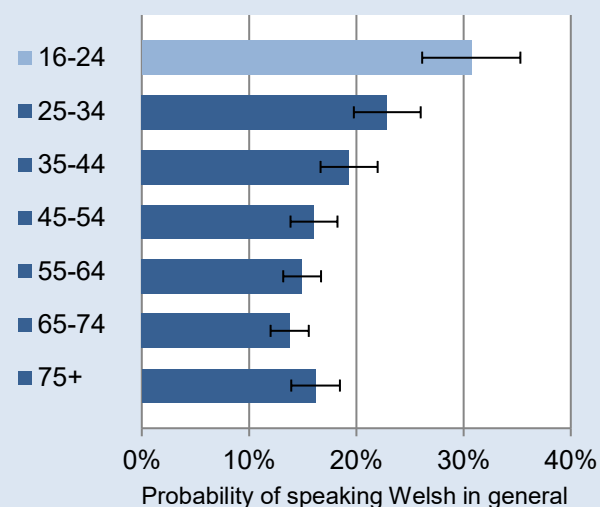
**Figure 4.1** The relationship between speaking Welsh (in general) and sex.



#### Age group

Overall, **younger people** were more likely to speak Welsh, compared with older people. People aged 16-24 were the most likely to speak Welsh, and people aged 65-74 were the least likely. See **Figure 4.2**.

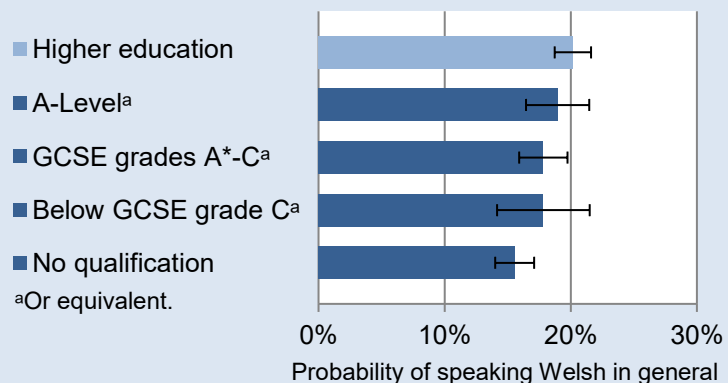
**Figure 4.2** The relationship between speaking Welsh (in general) and age group.



#### Educational attainment

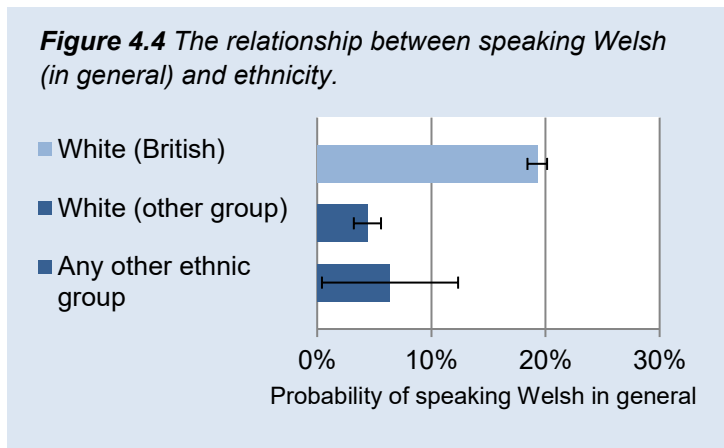
People qualified to a higher education (degree) level were the most likely to speak Welsh, and people with no qualifications were the least likely. See **Figure 4.3**.

**Figure 4.3** The relationship between speaking Welsh (in general) and educational attainment.



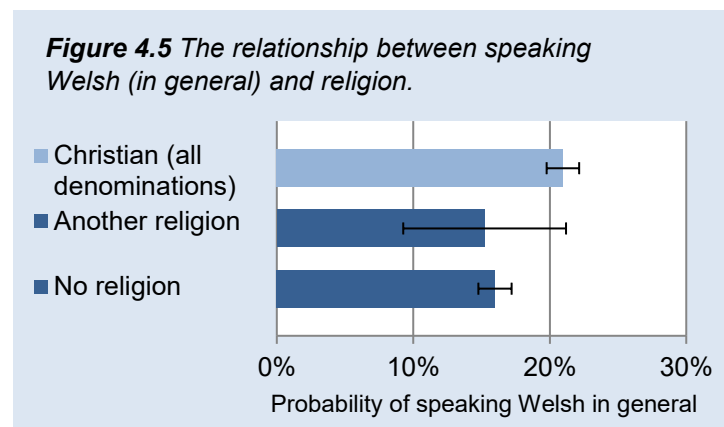
## Ethnicity

People who are from a white (British, Welsh, English, etc.) ethnic background were the most likely to speak Welsh. People from other white ethnic backgrounds were the least likely. See [Figure 4.4](#).



## Religion

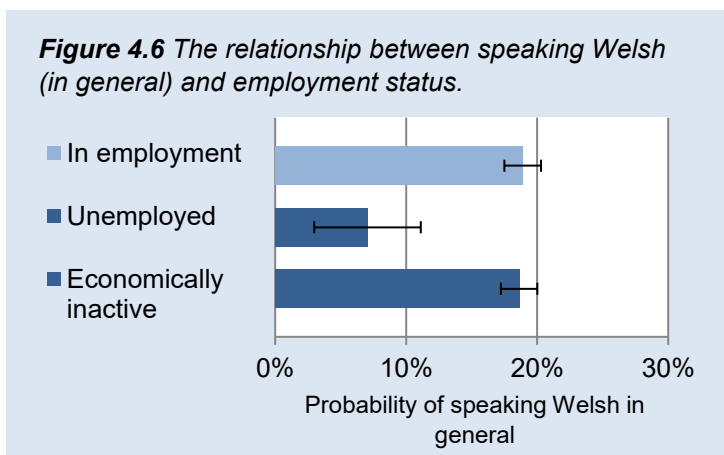
People who self-report as Christian were the most likely to speak Welsh, compared with people who don't follow any religion. See [Figure 4.5](#).



## 4.1.2 Socio-economic factors

### Employment status

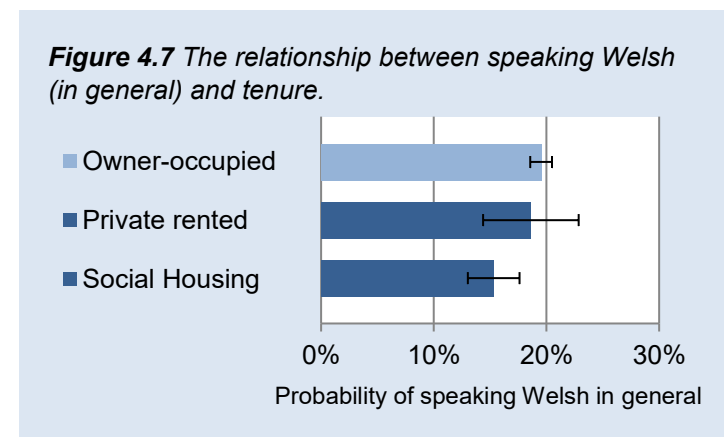
People who were in employment were the most likely to speak Welsh, and people who were unemployed were the least likely – see [Figure 4.6](#).



## 4.1.3 Household characteristics

### Tenure

People who lived in an **owner-occupied** house were most likely to speak Welsh, compared with people living in social housing. See [Figure 4.7](#).





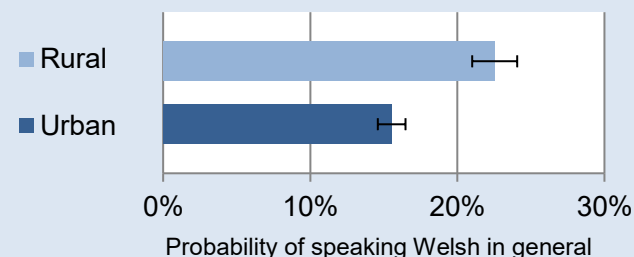
## 4.1.4 Local area characteristics

### Area classification

People who live in rural areas were more likely to speak Welsh than people who live in urban areas.

See [Figure 4.8](#).

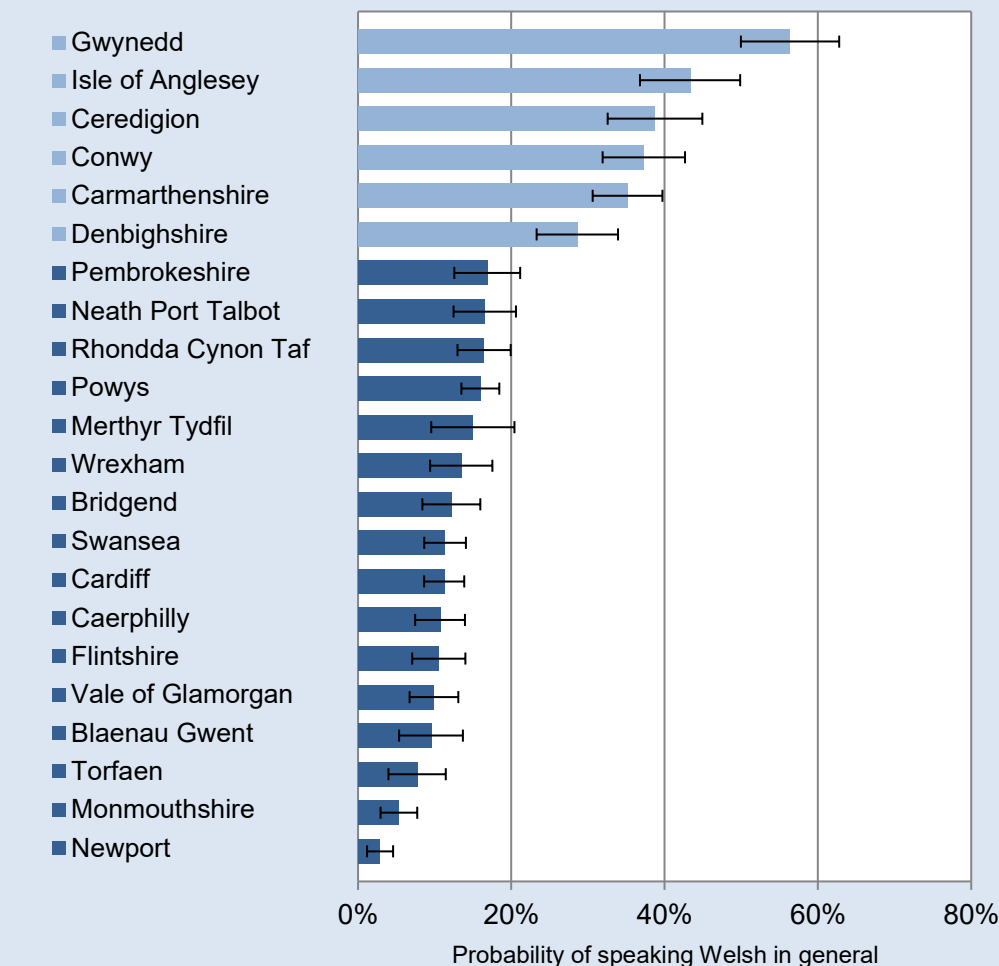
**Figure 4.8** The relationship between speaking Welsh (in general) and area classification.



### Local authority

People were most likely to speak Welsh if they live in **Gwynedd**, and least likely in **Newport**. Areas with a notably higher probability of speaking Welsh are highlighted in light blue ([Figure 4.9](#)).

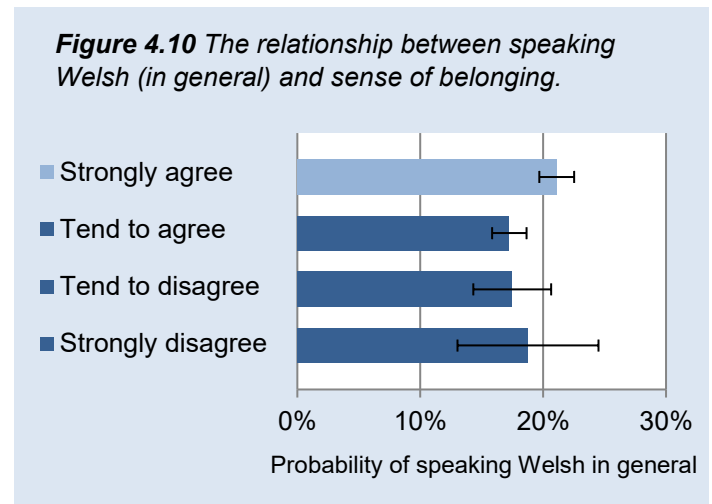
**Figure 4.9** The relationship between speaking Welsh (in general) and local authority.



## 4.1.5 Community cohesion

### *Sense of belonging to local area*

People who ‘strongly agree’ that they feel a **sense of belonging** to their local community were the most likely to speak Welsh. See **Figure 4.10**.



## 4.2 Factors not linked to speaking Welsh (in general)

In this analysis, other factors were included in our regression model, but we did **not** find a link between the following factors and people speaking Welsh in general:

- Material deprivation.
- Whether there are children living in the household.
- Whether people from different backgrounds get along in their local area.
- Whether people in their local area treat each other with respect and consideration.

## 4.3 Analysis of factors linked to people not speaking Welsh in general, but having some Welsh speaking ability

Overall, **15%** of people said that they did not speak Welsh, but had **some Welsh speaking ability**. To further investigate this answer, we conducted analysis on this particular group of people in isolation. People who answered this question directly with ‘yes’ or ‘no’ were grouped into an ‘other’ group, so that we can see what factors are linked to people answering ‘no, but I have some Welsh speaking ability’. **Table 1** provides a summary of all the factors linked to this individual response, and **Appendices A** and **B** show a more detailed breakdown of each of these factors.

**Table 1. Summary of factors found to be linked to people not speaking Welsh, but having some Welsh speaking ability**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Factor</b>	<b>Most likely to not speak Welsh, but to have some Welsh speaking ability</b>
Demographic factors	<i>Gender</i>	Females
	<i>Age</i>	Younger people
	<i>Educational attainment</i>	Higher education
Socio-economic factors	<i>Ethnicity</i>	White (Welsh, British)
Local area characteristics	<i>Local authority</i>	Swansea
Household characteristics	<i>Whether has children living in the household</i>	Yes
Socio-economic factors	<i>Employment status</i>	In employment

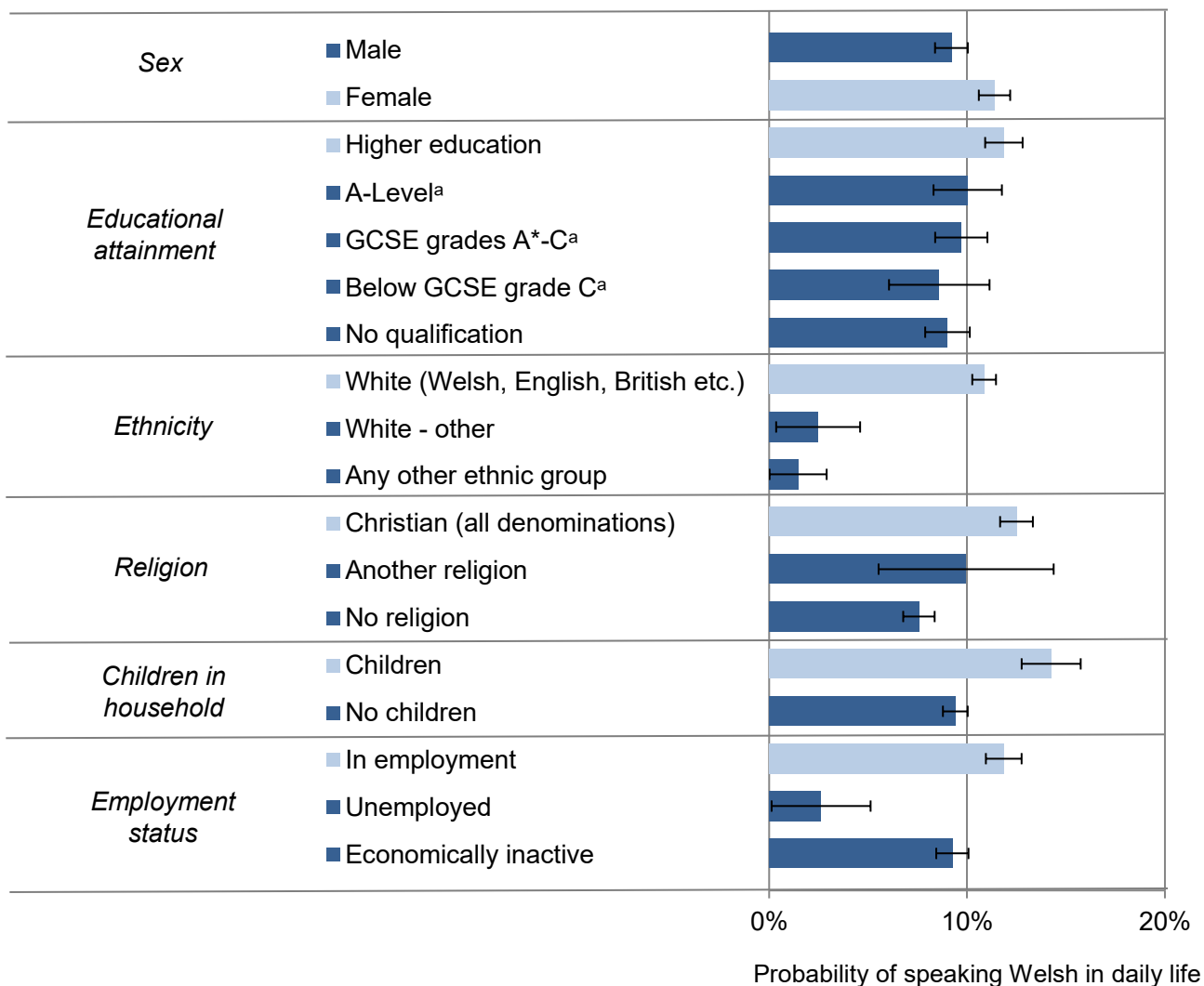
## 5. Main factors linked to people speaking Welsh in everyday life

Overall, **11%** of people said that they spoke Welsh daily, and could speak more than a few words.

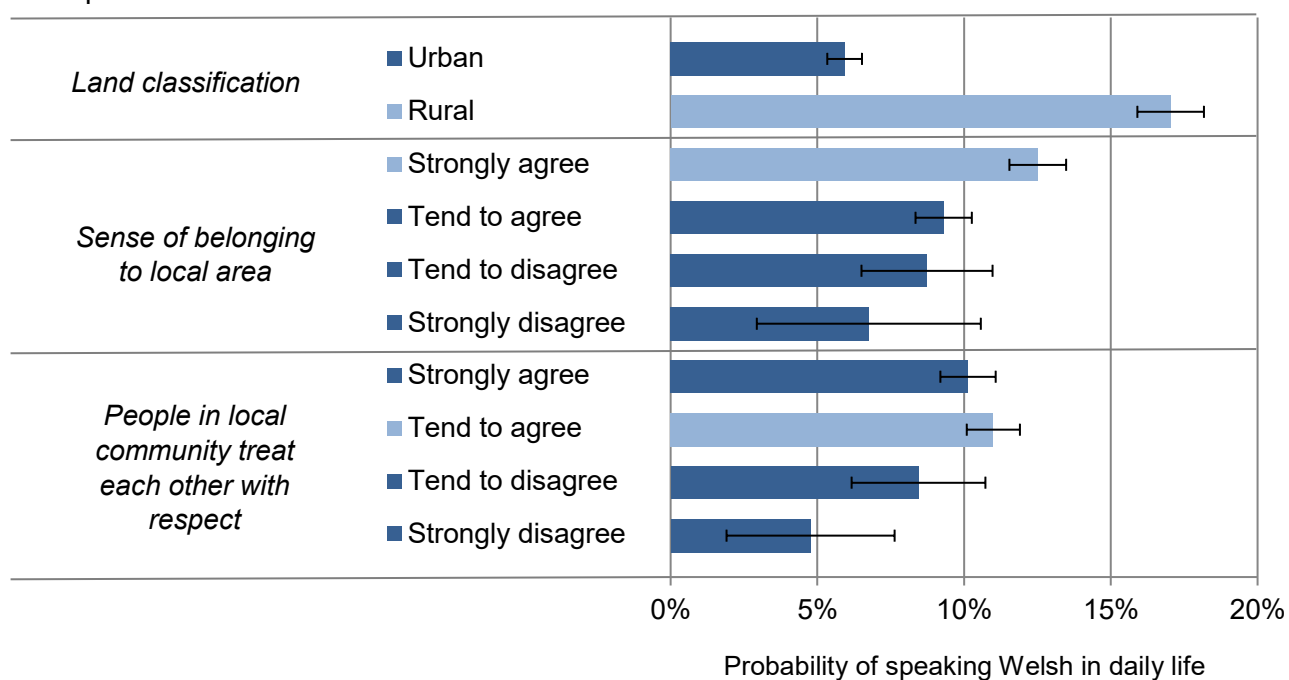
Figure 5.1 shows all the individual factors (whilst **holding other factors constant**) which were found to have an association with people speaking Welsh every day, and being able to speak more than a few words. Within each factor, the group with the highest probability (percentage) of speaking Welsh in everyday life, is highlighted in light blue.

The following sections provide more details about each factor. We also conducted analysis of the likelihood of people speaking Welsh in everyday life at each local authority level, which is listed in [Section 5.1.3](#).

**Figure 5.1** Main factors linked with people speaking Welsh in daily life, and can speak more than a few words.



**Figure 5.1 (continued)** Main factors linked with people speaking Welsh in daily life, and can speak more than a few words.



## 5.1 Analysis – speaking Welsh in everyday life

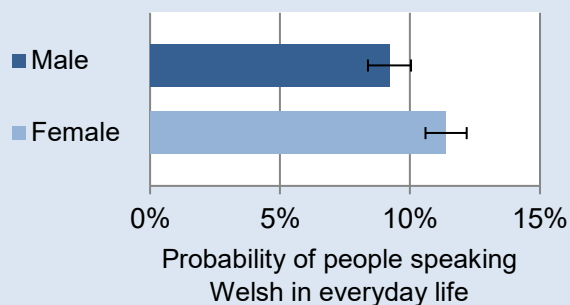
**Holding all other factors constant**, the following factors were found to be linked to people speaking Welsh in everyday life, and speaking more than just a few words. Individual factors which share a similar characteristic are grouped into **themes** (e.g. demographic factors). Factors **not** found to be linked to people speaking Welsh in daily life and speaking more than just a few words, are listed on page 16.

### 5.1.1 Demographic factors

#### Sex

Females were found to be more likely to speak Welsh in everyday life than males. See **Figure 5.3**.

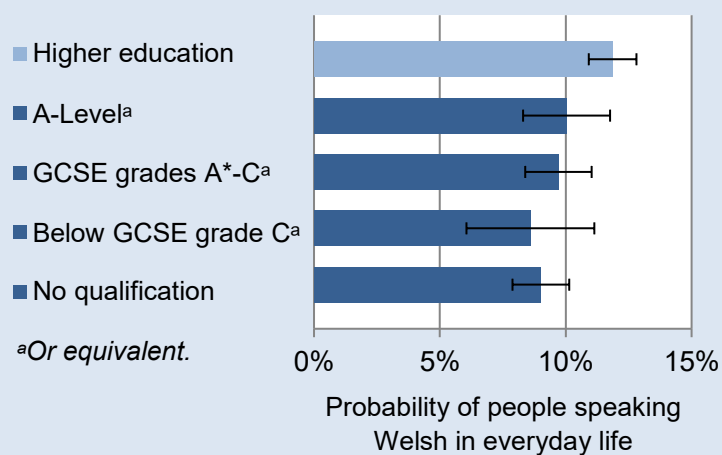
**Figure 5.3** The relationship between speaking Welsh in everyday life and sex.



#### Educational attainment

People with higher education (i.e. Bachelor's degree or above) had the highest chance of speaking Welsh in everyday life, compared with those with no qualifications. See **Figure 5.4**.

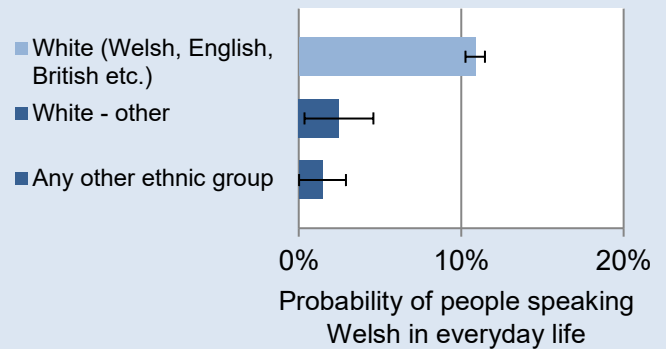
**Figure 5.4** The relationship between speaking Welsh in everyday life and educational attainment.



## Ethnicity

Overall, people who reported that they were white (**Welsh, English, British, etc.**) were the more likely to speak Welsh in everyday life compared with any other ethnic group. See **Figure 5.5**.

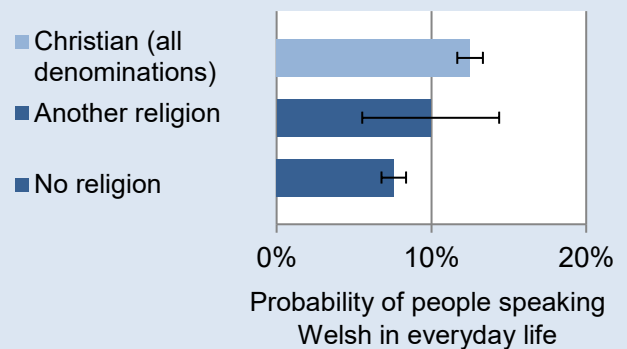
**Figure 5.5** The relationship between speaking Welsh in everyday life and ethnicity.



## Religion

People who were Christian, or had another religion, had a higher chance of speaking Welsh in everyday life compared with those with no religion. See **Figure 5.6**.

**Figure 5.6** The relationship between speaking Welsh in everyday life and religion.

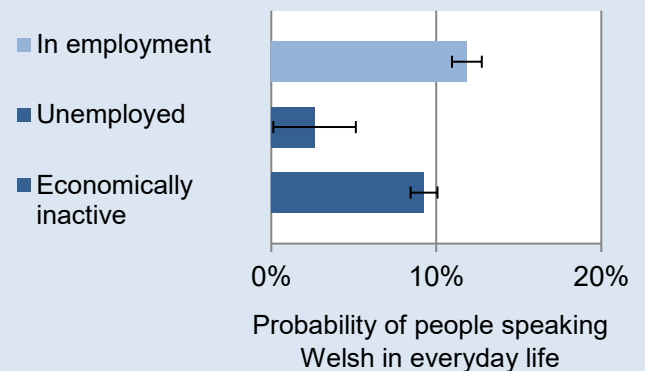


## 5.1.2 Socio-economic factors

### Employment status

Overall, people who were **in employment** were more likely to speak Welsh in everyday life, compared with people who were unemployed or economically inactive. Those who were unemployed were the least likely to speak Welsh in everyday life. See **Figure 5.7**.

**Figure 5.7** The relationship between speaking Welsh in everyday life and employment status.

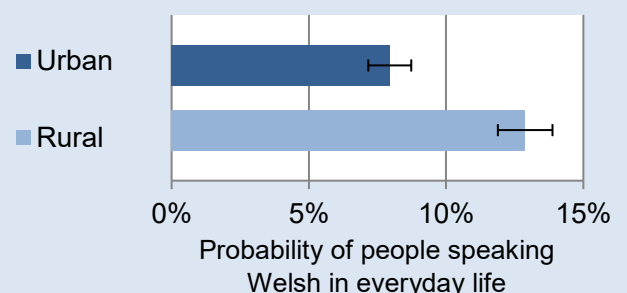


## 5.1.3 Local area characteristics

### Area classification

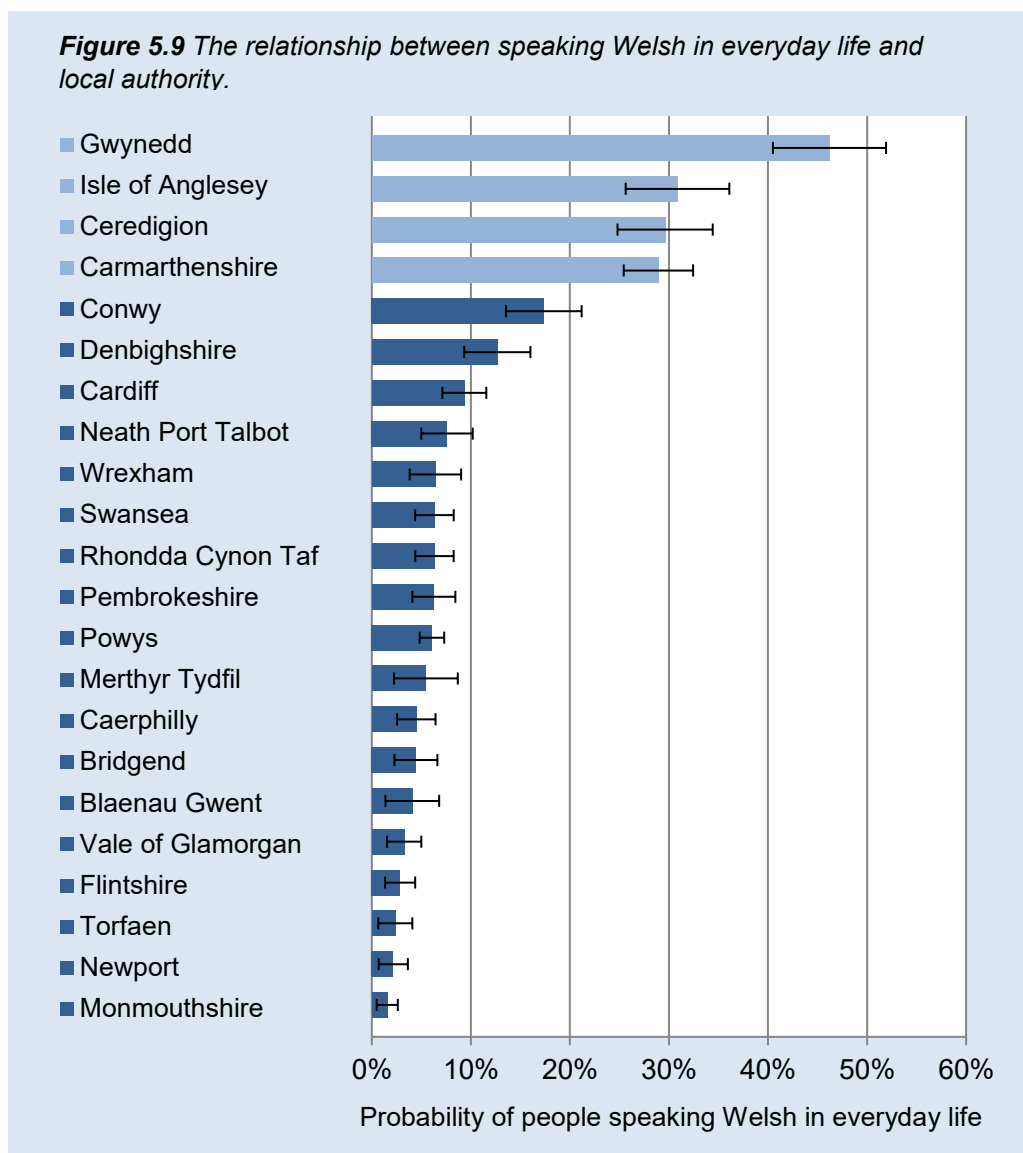
As shown in **Figure 5.8**, people who lived in a **rural area** were more likely to speak Welsh in everyday life, compared with urban areas.

**Figure 5.8** The relationship between speaking Welsh in everyday life and area classification.



## Local authority

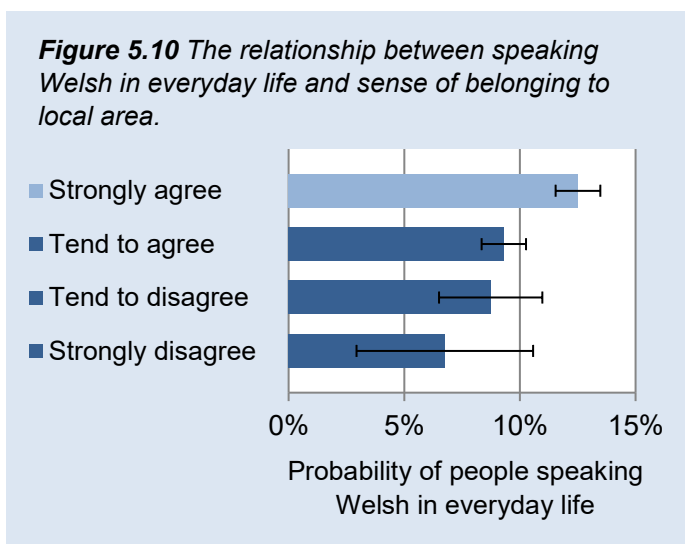
People were most likely to speak Welsh if they live in **Gwynedd**, and least likely in **Monmouthshire**. Some local authority areas had a notably larger probability of having Welsh speakers compared with the rest (highlighted in light blue – see **Figure 5.9**).



### 5.1.4 Community cohesion

#### Sense of belonging to local area

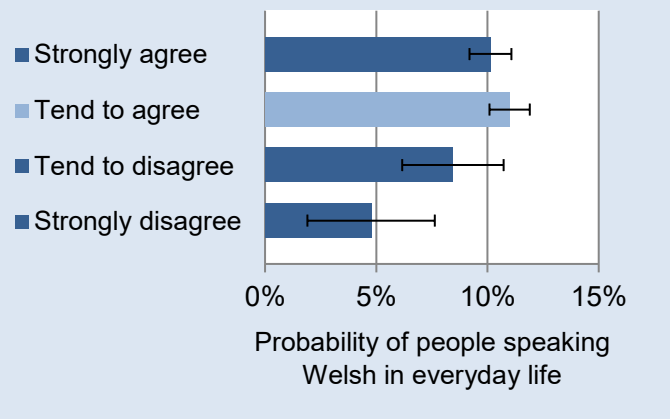
Overall, people who agreed that they felt a **sense of belonging to their local community** were more likely to speak Welsh in everyday life, compared with those who disagreed. People who 'strongly agreed' that they had a sense of belonging had the highest chance of speaking Welsh in everyday life, and those who 'strongly disagreed' had the lowest chance. See **Figure 5.10**.



### **People from different backgrounds treat each other with respect and consideration**

People who agreed that **people from different backgrounds treated each other with respect and consideration** were more likely to speak Welsh in everyday life, than those who disagreed. See **Figure 5.11**.

**Figure 5.11** The relationship between speaking Welsh in everyday life and whether people treat each other with respect.



## **5.2 Factors not linked to speaking Welsh in daily life, and speaking more than just a few words of Welsh**

In this analysis, other factors were included in our regression model, but we did **not** find a link between the following factors and the percentage of people speaking Welsh in everyday life:

- Age group.
- Tenure.
- Material deprivation.
- Whether people from different backgrounds get along well in the local community.



## 6. Summary and recommendations for future research

In summary, we have provided an analysis of factors (and overall themes) linked to **National Indicator 37: 'Percentage of people who can speak Welsh'** (in general) and **National Indicator 36: 'Percentage of people who speak Welsh daily and can speak more than just a few words of Welsh'**. We also looked at another aspect of National Indicator 37: the 'Percentage of people who did not speak Welsh in general, but had some Welsh speaking ability'.

Overall, five central themes<sup>6</sup> emerged from our analysis:

1. Demographic factors.
2. Socio-economic factors.
3. Household characteristics.
4. Local area characteristics.
5. Sense of community.

The relationship between particular factors and the percentage of people who can speak Welsh could be more complex than suggested in this report, and the results could **vary** between and within different areas. Therefore, further research could include more small-scale investigations involving qualitative<sup>7</sup> or mixed-methods<sup>8</sup> approaches.

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<sup>6</sup> In total, we looked at factors linked to **7 National Indicators for Well-being** as part of a project using data from the 2018-19 National Survey for Wales. As some factors were found to be linked to more than one National Indicator, we have provided a separate document which highlights the similarities and differences between the individual factors, and overall themes, found to be linked to all National Indicators. This document is available online: Hafferty, C. (2020). *Key themes linked to a selection of National Indicators for Well-being in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government, GSR Report. Available at: <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales-april-2018-march-2019>.

<sup>7</sup> **Qualitative research** is often used to understand people's underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations to uncover trends in people's thoughts and opinions to provide a better understanding of a particular issue. Qualitative data collection methods are often small-scale and collect non-numeric data by using techniques such as interviews and focus groups. On the other hand, *quantitative* research seeks to understand a problem by collecting numerical data which can be used in statistical analysis, often to produce generalised results for a large sample of a population (e.g. attitudes, behaviours, and opinions). For example, the National Survey for Wales predominantly collects and analyses information in this way.

<sup>8</sup> **'Mixed-methods'** is an approach to research which involves the collection and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data within the same study. As policy makers, practitioners, and others in applied areas strive to produce well-informed research based on multiple forms of evidence (such as the multi-faceted well-being of communities and future generations), mixed-methods research can be a good way to explore these complex social situations.

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*Views expressed in this report are those of the researchers and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government.*

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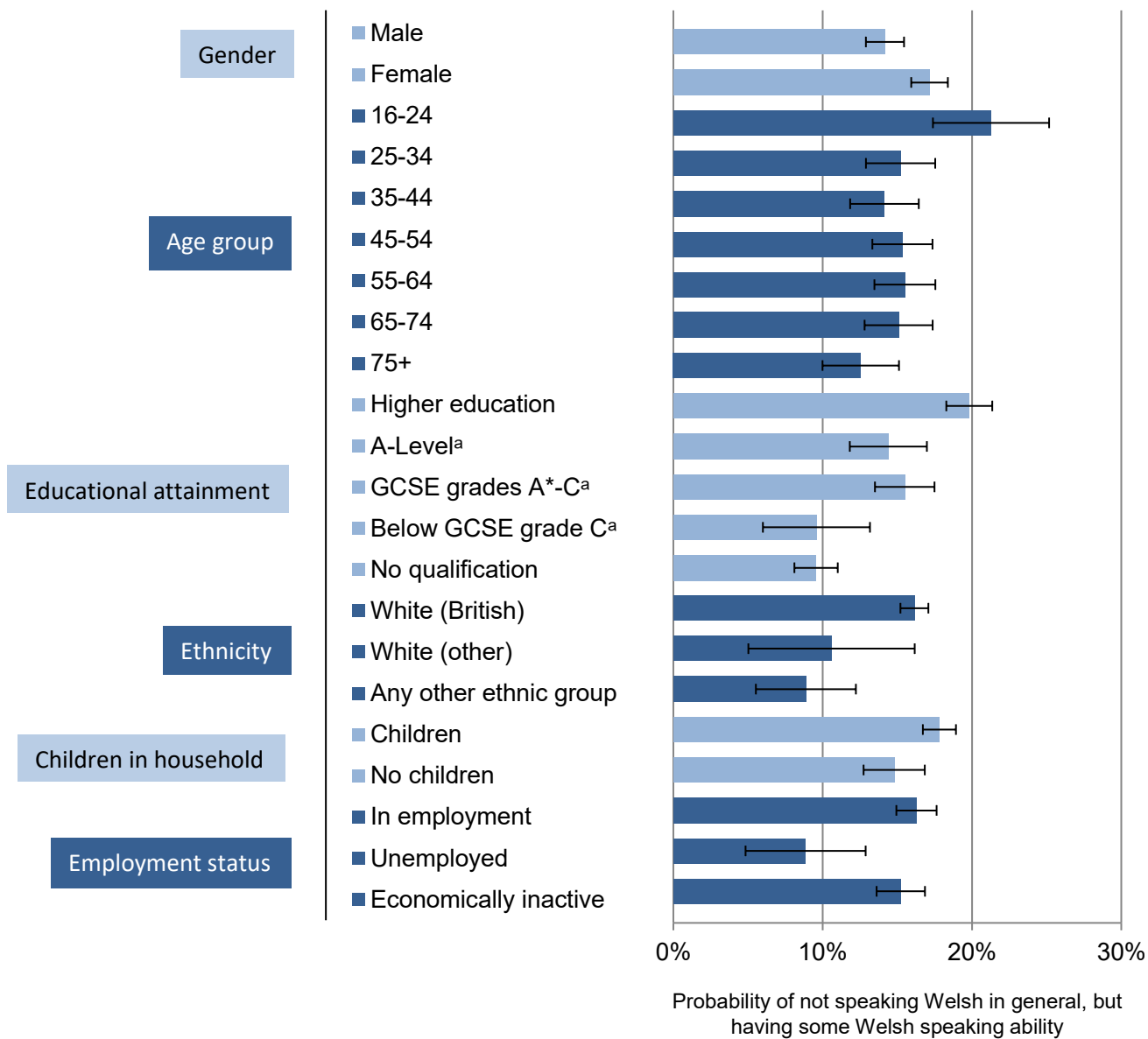
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## Appendices

**Appendix A** – Summary of the main factors linked with people not speaking Welsh in general, but being able to speak more than a few words.



**Appendix B** – The relationship between people who don't speak Welsh in general, but have some Welsh speaking ability, and local authority.

