

Who identifies as Welsh?

National identities and ethnicity in Wales

Summary

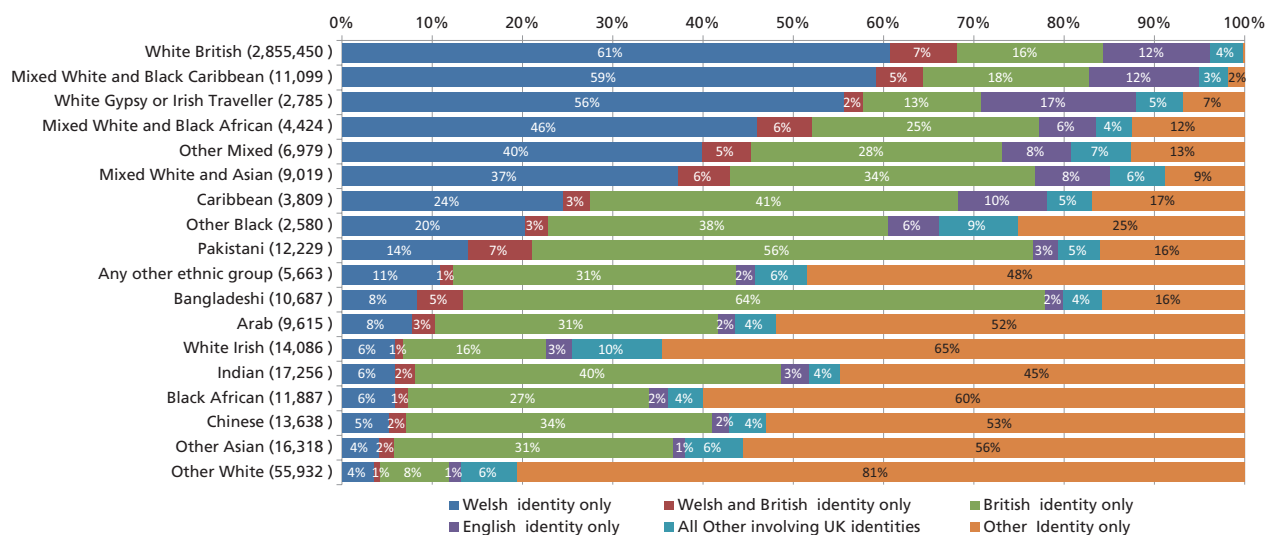
- In Wales, 1.8 million people identify only as Welsh (58% of the population) and 218,000 identify as Welsh and British (7% of the population).
- Mixed ethnic groups are more likely to identify with only a Welsh national identity than all other ethnic minority groups, with the highest proportion being amongst the White and Black Caribbean (59%) group.
- Mixed groups are more likely to identify only as Welsh (47%) than mixed groups in England (46%) and Scotland (37%) identify as English or Scottish only.
- The ethnic groups in Wales most likely to identify only as British are Bangladeshi (64%), Pakistani (56%) and Black Caribbean (41%).
- Welsh only national identity is reported more for younger people aged 0 to 17 than those aged 18 or older.
- People who can speak Welsh are more likely to report only a Welsh national identity (77%) than those who do not speak Welsh (53%). Yet, in some areas where a high number of residents identify as Welsh only, the proportion of Welsh speakers is relatively low.
- People born in Wales are more likely to report only a Welsh national identity (76%). People born in Oceania and North America and the Caribbean are more likely to report only a Welsh national identity (14% and 10% respectively) than people born in England (8%).

Introduction

Since devolution, the Welsh Government has sought to support a common Welsh national identity through the 'One Wales' strategy. This has included, for example, strengthening the place of 'Wales in the World' and continued support for the Welsh language.¹ The inclusion of a question on national identity in the 2011 Census provides us with an opportunity to examine how people living in Wales describe themselves. The Census shows that 58% of people living in Wales identify only as Welsh and a further 7% identify as Welsh and British.² These figures will represent a mix of different allegiances to Wales and a Welsh identity. National identity is more complex and nuanced than is often suggested in political debates over nationhood, citizenship and belonging.

The Census allows us to examine the question on Welsh national identity in relationship to other aspects of identity.

Figure 1. National identity and ethnic group, Wales, 2011



[Click here for data in Excel](#)

This Briefing highlights findings in relation to place of birth, age, Welsh language proficiency and geographical location. We can also think about how Wales compares with other parts of the UK to draw out what might be distinct about the Welsh context in comparison to England and Scotland.

In overall numerical terms, the size of some of the ethnic groups listed in the 2011 Census in Wales is small in comparison to the rest of the UK. This is most distinct in many rural areas. However, it is important to recognise that Wales does have a very longstanding ethnic minority population and is becoming increasingly diverse.

National identity and ethnicity in Wales

In Wales, 1.8 million people identify as Welsh only (58% of the population) and 218,000 identify their national identity as Welsh and British (7% of the population). Amongst those who described themselves as belonging to the White British ethnic group 61% identified only as Welsh and 7% identified as Welsh and British. The proportion of White British who report Welsh as a sole identity is lower than the proportion of White British in England who report English as a single identity (72%) and lower than the proportion of the combination of White Scottish³ and White British in Scotland who record Scottish as a single identity (67%) (see the Briefings *Who feels Scottish?* and *Who feels British?*).

The proportion of people who identified with one of the ethnic minority group categories and described their national identity only as Welsh ranged between 59% (for Mixed White and Black Caribbean) and 4% (for Other White). The Other White group in Wales, as in England and Scotland, is the ethnic group least likely to report a single UK national identity. This group is associated with a shorter length of residency in Wales and includes a growing number of migrants from Europe.

Ethnic minority groups in Wales, with the exception of the Mixed groups, are less likely to report Welsh as a sole national identity than those in England or Scotland are to report English or Scottish only national identities. A quarter (24%) of Black Caribbean and a fifth (20%) of Other Black groups report only a Welsh identity and 14% of Pakistani and 8% of Bangladeshi groups report only a Welsh identity. These groups each make up less than 0.5% of the total population of Wales. The greater likelihood of people in the Black Caribbean and Other Black groups to identify only as Welsh compared with people in the Asian groups which are marginally larger may reflect ties to people who identify with the Mixed Black group, which is historically more established in Wales and more likely to identify as Welsh only (see also below).

Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean groups are more likely to report a British only national identity (64%, 56%, and 41% respectively) than any other ethnic group. In addition to the lower densities of these populations in Wales compared to the rest of the UK, this perhaps reflects the historical relationship of the geographical regions those ethnic categories represent with Britain as opposed to Wales and ties to larger populations in other parts of the UK.

How would you describe your national identity?

A question on national identity was included for the first time in the 2011 Census in England, Wales and Scotland. The Census in Wales did not ask about a 'feeling' for national identity as it did in Scotland, but asked 'How would you describe your national identity?' People were asked to 'tick all that apply' from a list of options. Unlike in the instruction in the Scottish Census, the whole word 'all' was not capitalised. As with the Census in England and Scotland, the ordering of the options prioritised the nation in which the Census was conducted. In Wales, the options offered in order were: Welsh, English, Scottish, Northern Irish, British and finally an option to tick Other was offered and persons were asked to write in a national identity.

In terms of its position in the form, the question on national identity came immediately before the question on ethnicity and shared the page with questions on religion, language proficiency and prior address. It was on the page before the question on passports held (see also the Briefings *Who feels Scottish?* and *Who feels British?*).

Overall, ethnic minorities in Wales are more likely to describe having a national identity from outside the UK, in comparison to England. 81% of Other White, 60% of Black African, 53% of Chinese and 45% of Indian groups report a non-UK identity only. This may be because in Wales, all of these groups are comprised of significant proportions of international students. HESA statistics on student enrolments on HE courses in Welsh HE institutions show the top ten non-EU countries of domicile in 2012/13 for non EU students to be China, India, Nigeria and Bangladesh.⁴

National identity and 'mixed' identities

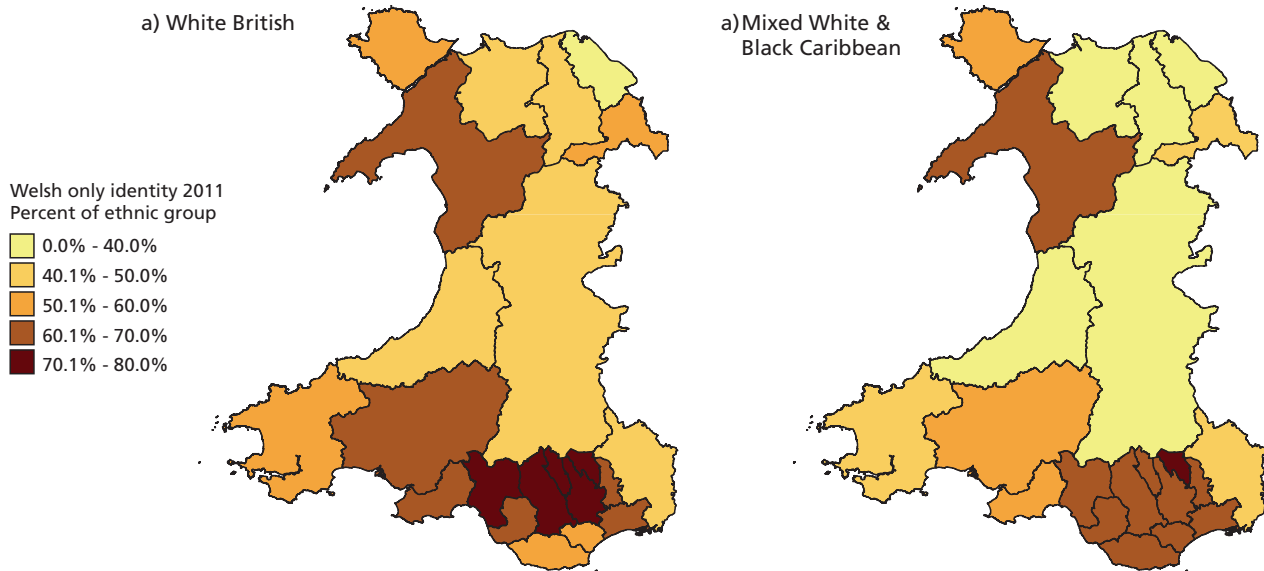
All of the 'Mixed' ethnic groups in Wales are more likely to report a Welsh only identity than all other ethnic minority groups. The highest proportion is amongst the White and Black Caribbean (59%) group which is a difference of 1.5% less than that reported by the White British.

Overall, the 'Mixed' groups are more likely to report their country of residence as their sole national identity in Wales (47%) than in England (46%) and Scotland (37%). In 2011 Wales had a greater proportion of people identifying with one of the 'Mixed' groups than in Scotland (1% compared with 0.4%) and a lower proportion than in England (2.3%).

National identity and the Welsh language

The 'language issue' in Wales and its association with national identity has long been a topic of debate. The Welsh Government promotes the Welsh language as "an essential part of the cultural identity and character of Wales".⁵ Data from the 2011 Census tells us that language may not be as central in choosing national identity as popular debate sometimes suggests. Census data reveals that people who

Figure 2. Welsh identity only and ethnic group by Local Authority, Wales, 2011



Note: These maps show the proportion of White British and Mixed White & Black Caribbean people in each district in Wales reporting a single Welsh identity.

[Click here for data in Excel](#)

'can speak Welsh' are more likely to report a single Welsh national identity (77%) than those who do not speak Welsh (53%). However, whilst the overall picture suggests a direct association between those who describe themselves as only Welsh and those who report they 'can speak Welsh' this is not always the case. When we examine data across Local Authorities we can see significant variation. In Merthyr Tydfil, for example, 77% of people who describe their ethnicity as White British describe their national identity only as Welsh (77%) yet Merthyr scores second to last amongst all Local Authorities for the percentage of Welsh speakers (8.9%). This example highlights how the way people identify themselves is more complex than reducing it to any single factor.

Geographies of national identity

The distribution of the total population across local authorities in Wales is highly varied and includes dense urban centres and sparsely populated rural areas. Figure 2a shows how, amongst the White British, identifying only as Welsh is most common in the densely populated former industrial parts of the south and in parts of the North and the West. Identifying as only Welsh is less likely in Powys, Flintshire and

Welsh language

A Welsh language question has been asked in Wales on every Census held since 1891. Since 2001 the wording of the question has been 'Can you understand spoken Welsh, speak, read or write Welsh?' and persons are asked to tick all that apply. This marked a shift from earlier Censuses which asked 'Do you speak...'

The Census is known to consistently produce the lowest estimates for the proportions of people understanding, speaking, reading and writing Welsh than other surveys in Wales, including the Welsh Local Labour Force Survey (WLLFS), the Welsh Omnibus and the Annual Population Survey (APS). A number of possible reasons for this have been suggested including the variety of interpretations of 'Understanding' which can encompass a broad range of skills, the effects of question wording, routing and context.⁶

Conwy. These are also the local authorities with the highest number of people who identify as English.

The second most likely ethnic group to identify as Welsh only in Wales is the Mixed White and Black Caribbean

Table 1. National identity by age (broad groups), Wales, 2011

	Welsh identity only	Welsh and British identity only	British identity only	English identity only	All Other involving UK identities	Other identity only
Age 0 to 17	65%	8%	16%	6%	3%	3%
Age 18 to 34	55%	7%	16%	10%	4%	7%
Age 35 to 59	56%	7%	19%	11%	4%	3%
Age 60 to 74	55%	7%	17%	16%	4%	1%
Age 75 or above	57%	6%	14%	17%	4%	1%

group. Figure 2b shows how their distribution is similar to the distribution of the White British reporting a single Welsh identity. The size and density of this ethnic minority population reflects historic patterns of settlement in industrial areas with higher densities in the south East.

National identity and age

Welsh only national identity is more likely to be reported among the 0 to 17 age groups than age groups 18 or above. The difference in the proportion of people in the 0 to 17 age groups reporting a single Welsh national identity and those aged 18 or over is at least 10 percentage points (see Table 1). Among the 0 to 17 years age group there is also a smaller proportion that identify as English only. The 2011 Census does not provide evidence on why this might be, however since it is typically adults who complete the Census on behalf of everyone in the household, it suggests that parents and guardians are completing their own categories differently to those given for their children.

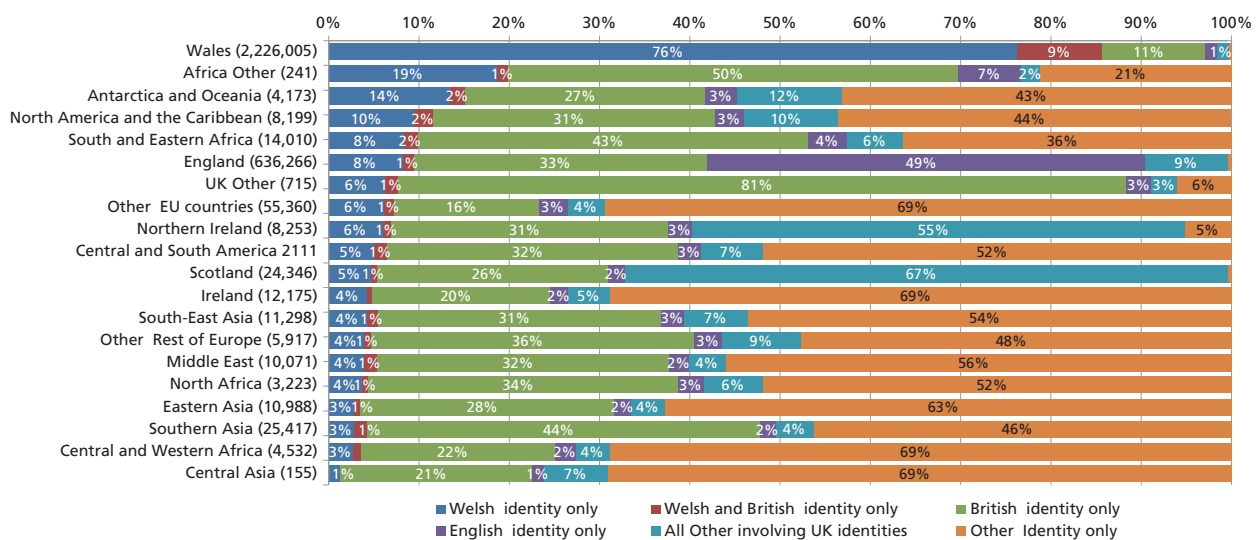
National identity and country of birth

As with the findings reported in the '*Who feels Scottish?*' and '*Who feels British?*' Briefings, we can see a strong association between national identity and country of birth. 76% of people born in Wales reported a Welsh only national identity.

In Wales, people born in Oceania and North America and the Caribbean are more likely to report a Welsh only identity (14% and 10% respectively) in comparison to the English born (8%). The aforementioned regions have historical ties to Wales and represent established populations in Wales. The lower proportion of English-born identifying only as Welsh could be indicative of Wales' relationship to England and English residents' geographical proximity to the country they identify with.

People born in Europe, Central Asia and Central and Western Africa are more likely to only report a non-UK national identity (Figure 3). In Wales, these populations include significant numbers of students.

Figure 3. National Identity and country of birth, Wales, 2011



[Click here for data in Excel](#)

¹ <http://wales.gov.uk/strategy/strategies/one-wales/one-walese.pdf?lang=en>

² Data is unavailable for Welsh and other identities.

³ White Scottish appears as an ethnic group on the Scottish Census.

⁴ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/free-statistics>

⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2011/09decemberwelshlanguage-report/?lang=en>

⁶ For a detailed discussion of this see Haselden, L (2003). *Differences in estimates of Welsh Language Skills*. Ethnicity and Identity Branch, ONS

This briefing is one in a series, *The Dynamics of Diversity: evidence from the 2011 Census*.

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