

Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

Statistics on Welsh Language Use in Wales, 2013-15

*(produced by the Welsh Government and the Welsh
Language Commissioner)*

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NATIONAL STATISTICS STATUS

National Statistics status means that official statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and public value.



All official statistics should comply with all aspects of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. They are awarded National Statistics status following an assessment by the Authority's regulatory arm. The Authority considers whether the statistics meet the highest standards of Code compliance, including the value they add to public decisions and debate.

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1 Summary of findings

Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a series of reports¹ prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*². The Act allows an appropriate authority³ to request an assessment of official statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*⁴ in order for them to gain National Statistics status. This report is in response to such a request. The report covers statistics on Welsh language use, reported in *Welsh Language Use in Wales, 2013-15*⁵ (*WL UW 2013-15*), produced jointly by the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 1.2 This report was prepared by the Authority's Assessment team, and approved by the Regulation Committee on behalf of the Board of the Statistics Authority, based on the advice of the Director General for Regulation.

Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

- 1.3 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics published in *WL UW 2013-15* are designated as new National Statistics.
- 1.4 *Welsh Language Use in Wales* is an intermittently published statistical report, and was previously published on 6 November 2008. This is the first statistical report on Welsh language use to be published as an official statistic. The Welsh Government and Welsh Language Commissioner do not have specific plans for the timing of the next survey and told the Assessment team that subsequent surveys will be planned dependent upon user need and its prioritisation of statistical resources. The National Statistics status of future *Welsh Language Use in Wales* statistical publications will be considered by the Statistics Authority prior to the design of any future survey.

Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.5 National Statistics status means that the statistics meet the highest standards of trustworthiness, quality and value. *Welsh Language Use in Wales* is a specialist set of statistics, based on a survey that has been designed to meet specific user needs and provides an evidence base for the work of the Welsh Government, the Welsh Language Commissioner and others involved in the planning of Welsh language provision in Wales. The statistics are presented impartially and have been developed and produced professionally. The statistics are produced to a high standard, using robust methodology; they are easy to navigate and readily accessible from both the Welsh Government's and

¹ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publications-list/?keyword=&type=assessment-report>

² http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf

³ Subsection 12(7) of the Act defines 'appropriate authority' as Ministers of the Crown, Scottish Ministers, Welsh Ministers, Northern Ireland departments or the National Statistician

⁴ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

⁵ <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/151126-welsh-language-use-in-wales-2013-15-en.pdf>

the Welsh Language Commissioner's websites. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner published interim statistics in January 2015, to present early findings from the survey to users. The final statistics, presented in *WLUW 2013-15*, were produced shortly after the end of the survey data collection period. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner engaged with users during 2015 to gather views on the content and design of the statistical report. In any future surveys, the value of the statistics could possibly be enhanced by engaging with a wider range of users more frequently and earlier in the survey design process.

- 1.6 The statistics presented in *WLUW 2013-15* are of a good quality. By following the standard data collection procedures of the National Survey for Wales⁶ (NSW) and using the questionnaire design from the Welsh Language Use Surveys of 2004-06, the survey methodology is efficient, sound and broadly consistent over time. Throughout this assessment, statisticians from the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner developed analytical commentary to enhance the value of the statistics, by placing the data in the context of the subject area. We consider that the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner could have added further value to these statistics through enhancing the commentary in the statistical report to focus on contextual discussion of results, and by enhancing the supporting documentation to include information about aspects of the methodology to help users to interpret the data further.
- 1.7 Throughout the course of this assessment, the Assessment team identified areas where the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner should strengthen their compliance with the *Code* to enable designation of *WLUW 2013-15* as National Statistics. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner addressed those areas identified that would otherwise have been presented as Requirements. The Assessment team has also identified areas where the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner could improve and further enhance the value of the statistics; these are presented as Suggestions in para 1.8.

Suggestions for extracting maximum value from the statistics

- 1.8 This section includes some suggestions for improvement to the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner's statistics presented in *WLUW 2013-15*, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will enhance the value of the statistics in aiding users' interpretation and understanding of them. We suggest that the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner consider the following improvements:

1	Include more-detailed discussion in the <i>Quality Report</i> of the similarity and differences between the Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-15, the Welsh Language Use Surveys of 2004-06 and other similar surveys, to enhance transparency between the surveys and support
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⁶ The National Survey for Wales is a large-scale survey of adults in Wales, covering a range of topics such as wellbeing and people's views on public services: <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about-national-survey-wales/?lang=en>

	users' interpretation of the statistics over time (para 3.10).
2	Focus the statistical commentary so that it draws out analysis that provides new or interesting insight into Welsh language use and analysis that is responding to a defined user need, and reduce the amount of superfluous commentary. In doing this, the statistics team could consider, based on user feedback, whether the statistics presented in <i>WL UW 2013-15</i> could be made more accessible and valuable to users by being disseminated as a shorter report presenting the main findings, supplemented by multiple focused reports. This approach would be in line with the approach taken to disseminate statistics presented in <i>National Survey for Wales</i> (para 3.15).
3	Enhance the analysis and supporting commentary in <i>WL UW 2013-15</i> to further aid users' understanding and interpretation of the relative changes in Welsh language use over time, by presenting prominent analysis in the statistical report that accounts for the impact of the population changes over time supported by a clear narrative for users (para 3.26).

2 Subject of the assessment

Introduction

2.1 The Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-15 (WLUS 2013-15)⁷ is a voluntary survey of Welsh residents, which collects information from Welsh-speaking adults and young people in order to ascertain how well they can speak Welsh, how often they speak Welsh, where, when and with whom they use it. It is not intended to be used to present statistics on the number of people who speak Welsh; the 2011 Census⁸ is considered as the official source of this information.

Subject of the Assessment

2.2 The statistics presented in *Welsh Language Use in Wales 2013-15 (WLUW 2013-15)* are a continuation of research into the use of the Welsh language that was originally undertaken on behalf of the Welsh Language Board⁹ and published in the *Welsh Language Use Surveys of 2004-2006*¹⁰ (WLUS 2004-06), on 6 November 2008. Since the WLUS 2004-06, there has been no other large-scale, comprehensive source of information on how people speak and use Welsh within households and in the community in Wales. The WLUS 2013-15 has been designed to enable direct comparison with the WLUS 2004-06 as far as possible.

2.3 The Welsh Language Use Survey is an add-on survey to the National Survey for Wales (NSW). The NSW is a large-scale voluntary survey of people across Wales. The NSW started in July 2010 and is carried out face-to-face in respondents' homes, with interviews typically lasting 25 minutes. The NSW was developed in response to the Welsh Government's policy needs and replaced the Living in Wales Survey¹¹, which ran from 2004 to 2008. Each year, the NSW involves a randomly-selected sample of 14,500 people aged 16 and over, 660 people per local authority. The survey covers a range of topics, with a focus on well-being and people's views about the provision of public services. The statistics from the NSW, presented in *National Survey for Wales*¹² and related topic-based statistical reports, were assessed against the *Code of Practice* and designated as National Statistics in May 2013¹³.

Role of the Welsh Language Commissioner

2.4 The role of Welsh Language Commissioner¹⁴ was established in 2012 by the *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011*¹⁵, replacing the Welsh Language Board. The Welsh Language Commissioner's role is to promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language, by raising awareness of the official status of the

⁷ http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-language-use-survey/?lang=en#/statistics-and-research/Welsh-language-use-survey/?tab=previous&lang=en&_suid=1450694315328014558697464919173

⁸ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/census-population-welsh-language/?lang=en>

⁹ <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/ukwa/target/100770/source/search>

¹⁰ http://www.esds.ac.uk/doc/7477/mrdoc/pdf/7477_methodology_in_english.pdf

¹¹ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/living-in-wales-survey/?lang=en>

¹² <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/national-survey/?tab=current&lang=en>

¹³ <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/publication/national-survey-for-wales/>

¹⁴ <http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.org/english/Pages/Home.aspx>

¹⁵ www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/1/contents/enacted

Welsh language in Wales and imposing standards on organisations. The Welsh Language Commissioner is named as one of the producers of official statistics in *The Official Statistics (Wales) Order 2013*¹⁶.

- 2.5 There are two principles that underpin the Commissioner's work: in Wales, the Welsh language should be treated no less favourably than the English language; and persons in Wales should be able to live their lives through the medium of Welsh.
- 2.6 The *Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011* sets a legal framework which places a duty on some organisations to comply with one or more standards pertaining to the Welsh language in relation to service delivery, policy making, operational, promotion and record keeping.

Role of the Welsh Government

- 2.7 The Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17: *A living language: a language for living*¹⁷ sets out the Welsh Government's aspiration to see an increase in the number of people who both speak and use the language in all aspects of daily life. The strategy notes the 'need to have baseline data on language use and regular data collection to allow us to monitor progress against the desired outcome'.

Users and Uses

- 2.8 The Welsh Language Commissioner, Welsh Government ministers and policy teams are the main users of the statistics. However, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner told the Assessment team that they expect the results from the survey to also benefit a wide range of other users, including Welsh local government organisations, other public sector organisations, media, academic institutions, members of the public and the voluntary sector in Wales.
- 2.9 The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner told us that they expected the statistics to be used:
- to provide the Welsh Government with information to help measure the progress made towards achieving an increase in the number of people who both speak and use Welsh as set out in the Welsh Government's Welsh Language Strategy 2012-17
 - to identify areas where policy needs to be strengthened and developed further by the Welsh Government
 - to provide the Welsh Language Commissioner with important evidence on the use of the Welsh language in various situations, ensuring that policy makers have up-to-date statistical information about Welsh language use. This is in line with the Commissioner's Strategic Plan 2013-15¹⁸ which identifies five strategic objectives, one of which is to influence the consideration given to the Welsh language in policy developments

¹⁶ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2013/649/contents/made>

¹⁷ <http://gov.wales/docs/dcells/publications/122902wls201217en.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.org/English/Publications%20List/20130327%20S%20Strategic%20Plan%202013-2015.pdf>

- by local government to develop, monitor and evaluate policies such as local planning policies
- by public sector bodies as contextual information for service planning, to ensure that the services available reflect the linguistic profiles of specific areas
- by users in academia to undertake research into the position of the Welsh language in Wales

Users' views

- 2.10 In February 2013, the Welsh Language Commissioner and the Welsh Government agreed to jointly fund a continuation of the *WLUS 2004-06* to improve the evidence base regarding Welsh language use. The survey is managed jointly by the Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services team and the Welsh Language Commissioner.
- 2.11 The Assessment team undertook a user engagement exercise during May and June 2015. The majority of respondents were representatives from local and central government or the media. Users provided their views on the statistics presented in *WLuw 2013-14*, given that *WLuw 2013-15* had not yet been published.
- 2.12 Many of the respondents use the statistics to develop and evaluate policy on Welsh language use. Others use the statistics to support other research into Welsh language use; to support grants for funding; to inform the provision of Welsh-speaking staff; to plan service provision in local authorities; in schedule planning for television programmes; and as a teaching resource.
- 2.13 Most respondents told us that the statistics were of sufficient quality for their needs and some specifically noted the importance of these statistics for their work. Some users welcomed the fact that the survey was conducted in the intervening period between publication of statistics from the 2011 and 2021 Censuses.
- 2.14 Users suggested improvements to the statistics including data being available at local authority level and a larger sample size, to support more meaningful analysis at local authority level. It should be noted that while *WLuw 2013-14* did not present the data at a local authority level, *WLuw 2013-15* does present statistics at this level, since the larger sample size after including the 2014-15 survey data enabled this analysis.
- 2.15 The majority of users told us that the commentary was useful to them; many commented that the report was accessible with good explanation of the statistics. Suggested improvements to the commentary made by users include: more interpretation of the statistics, including longitudinal comparisons and to make comparisons relative to total sample size. It should be noted that while *WLuw 2013-14* presented few, high-level longitudinal comparisons, *WLuw 2013-15* does present a more comprehensive comparison between *WLUS 2013-15* results and *WLUS 2004-06*.

2.16 The majority of users access the statistics and data via the Welsh Government's website or the Welsh Language Commissioner's website. The publication of *WLUW 2013-15* led to coverage in national and regional media.

Methods and Sources

- 2.17 NSW interviewers identified Welsh-speaking respondents by asking each respondent if they or anyone in their household spoke Welsh. All those identified as speaking Welsh were left a self-completion questionnaire (available in both English and Welsh) to be returned by post. The WLUS 2013-15 comprises two separate questionnaires – an adult questionnaire (for respondents aged 16 or over) and a young person questionnaire (for respondents aged 3 to 15). Both cover Welsh language use in various situations. The majority of the questions in the survey were unchanged from the 2004-06 survey, apart from the addition of new questions such as one about the use of social media. The WLUS 2013-15 was conducted during two separate NSW data collection periods: 2013-14 and 2014-15.
- 2.18 Data collection for both the NSW and Welsh Language Use Survey is contracted out to TNS BMRB¹⁹ and Beaufort Research²⁰. The contractors are responsible for printing and distributing fieldwork materials, briefing interviewers, data preparation, production of the final dataset, and production of the two Technical Reports (para 2.17).

Assessment process

2.19 In January 2015, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner published an interim report *National Survey for Wales, 2013-14: Welsh Language Use Survey (WLUW 2013-14)*²¹ which presented the findings from the first survey period. This report was accompanied by:

- *Welsh Language Use Survey Quality Report (Quality Report)*
- *Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-14 Technical Report*²² (*Technical Report 2013-14*)

The final statistical report *WLUW 2013-15* was published on 26 November 2015, combining data from both the 2013-14 and 2014-15 data collection periods. This statistical report was accompanied by:

- *Welsh Language Use Survey Quality Report*²³ (*Quality Report*), superseding the report published alongside *WLUW 2013-14*
- *Welsh Language Use Survey 2014-15 Technical Report*²⁴ (*Technical Report 2014-15*)

2.20 The Assessment team conducted this assessment during the period that the statistics teams at the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language

¹⁹ <http://www.tns-bmrb.co.uk/>

²⁰ <http://www.beaufortresearch.co.uk/>

²¹ http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/welsh-language-use-survey/?lang=en#/statistics-and-research/Welsh-language-use-survey/?tab=previous&lang=en&_suid=1450694315328014558697464919173

²² <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/150129-welsh-language-use-survey-2013-14-technical-en.pdf>

²³ <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/151126-welsh-language-use-survey-2014-15-quality-en.pdf>

²⁴ <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/151211-welsh-language-use-survey-2014-15-technical-en.pdf>

Commissioner were developing a draft version of the final statistical report *WLUW 2013-15*. Due to the short time frame available for the statistics team to prepare the final report, once the full 2013-15 survey data were available in August 2015, the Assessment team provided feedback relating to compliance with the *Code* based on *WLUW 2013-14*. This enabled the statistics team to address areas of non-*Code* compliance during the development of *WLUW 2013-15*. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner were also supported in their development of the final statistical report by the Government Statistical Service's Good Practice Team.

Data access

2.21 Sir Tim Berners-Lee first proposed a 5* rating system for linked open data in 2010²⁵. Subsequently in June 2012, the UK Government published its *Open Data White Paper: Unleashing the Potential*²⁶, and began promoting to UK government departments the release of operational data in electronic open formats and equating to at least a 3* rating in the 5* scheme. The Northern Ireland Open Data Strategy (2015-18)²⁷ has as one of its principles that all dataset owners will publish their data at level 3 (or above) on the 5* scheme and that the vision is to move to data publication at level 5. In February 2015, the Scottish Government adopted an Open Data Strategy²⁸ stating that it seeks to publish data as 3* and work towards, where it is appropriate and there is demand, offering the data in higher formats. The Welsh Government does not have a published Open Data strategy but statisticians aim for at least 3* data dissemination as far as it is appropriate. This is generally done operationally on its web platform, StatsWales²⁹, in re-usable formats.

Costs

2.22 The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner told the Assessment team that the total cost of running the survey and producing the statistical output was around £250,000 and that the survey costs were substantially less than running a stand-alone survey on Welsh language use, by conducting the survey as a supplement to the NSW.

²⁵ The scheme is summarised as 1* Available on the web (in any format) with an open licence; 2* Available as structured data (e.g. Excel instead of an image scan of a table); 3* Available in an open non-proprietary format (e.g. CSV or XML); 4* All the above plus Uniform Resource Locators (URLs) so that people can 'point' to them directly, rather than just to an area on a website; and 5* All the above, plus a link from the data to other people's data to provide context.

²⁶ https://data.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Open_data_White_Paper.pdf

²⁷ <https://www.dfpni.gov.uk/publications/open-data-strategy-northern-ireland-2015-2018>

²⁸ <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/02/6614>

²⁹ <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue>

3 Assessment findings

User Engagement

- 3.1 The statistics team presented evidence of its broad user engagement within the Welsh Government about the statistics presented in *WLUS 2013-15* through inviting comments and contributions to Welsh Government's Knowledge and Analytical Services Evidence Plan³⁰. The team also engaged with other public sector organisations about data and statistical matters, such as through the Welsh Statistical Liaison Committee³¹. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner told us that they did not consult non-government users on the design and implementation of the WLUS 2013-15 since the survey's main aims are to assess and strengthen policy on Welsh language use, and as such the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner are considered to be the main users. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner also told us that before data collection, the survey questions were assessed for consistency with the WLUS 2004-06 and relevance to Welsh language use in Wales by Hywel Jones, the former statistician for the Welsh Language Commissioner, who was responsible for implementing the 2004-06 surveys and author of *A statistical overview of the Welsh Language*³².
- 3.2 The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner are aware of a wider user base for *WLUS 2013-15* and presented evidence to the Assessment team of identified users from academia, the media and representatives from local authorities. The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner did not engage with this wider user base before the WLUS 2013-15 data collection period. There was less opportunity for Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner to gauge and discuss user opinion and maximise public value from the survey. There is therefore little evidence that wider user need has been considered during the development of the survey. During the course of this assessment, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner ran several user sessions at other public events to gather user views on the format and content of the statistical report, including a session at the National Eisteddfod in August 2015. The structure of some of these events allowed for users' feedback and discussion, but others were more formal presentations with less opportunity for users' input.
- 3.3 We consider that before the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner conduct future Welsh Language Use Surveys, they should engage with a wider range of users at an earlier stage during the survey design, to ensure maximum value of the resultant statistics.
- 3.4 The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner told us that the format of the statistics follows that of the *National Survey for Wales* statistical report, in response to positive user feedback on that format; and that

³⁰ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/user-engagement/plans-practices/knowledge-analytical-services-evidence-plan/?lang=en>

³¹ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/about/user-engagement/statistical-groups-committees/welsh-statistical-liaison-committee/?lang=en>

³² <http://www.webarchive.org.uk/wayback/archive/20120330040554/http://www.byig-wlb.org.uk/English/publications/Publications/A%20statistical%20overview%20of%20the%20Welsh%20languagef2.pdf>

it also collated user opinion to feed into its presentation of *WLUW 2013-15*. For example, users requested that the data tables be available at a local authority level to allow meaningful local analysis. In addition, the Welsh Government developed a short user survey which it circulated to known users in summer 2015 to gather users' views, to inform its development of the *WLUW 2013-15* format. Using these sources of information together with comments collected from planned user events, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner has committed to document and publish the needs of users and how *WLUW 2013-15* meets these needs. This is due to be published in February 2016.

- 3.5 During the course of the assessment, the Assessment team encouraged the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner to publish more information about who uses the statistics, what purpose they serve, what types of decisions they inform and to discuss how the statistics relate to policy developments. In response, the statistics team presented a helpful section in both *WLUW 2013-15* and the *Quality Report* detailing the types of users of the statistics and uses, including how the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner will use the statistics and the types of policy areas that they could inform in the future.
- 3.6 The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner envisage that there could be a user need for a continuation of this survey. They told the Assessment team that they have no current plans for subsequent runs of this survey and no resource in place to develop future plans, but that plans would be developed in conjunction with user need in the future. In its recent user survey, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner asked users how frequently they would like the Welsh Language Use Survey to be conducted to be most helpful to them. Users stated that the most useful range for another survey would be between 1 and 5 years. In response to a suggestion from the Assessment team, *WLUW 2013-15* now includes a summary of future plans to conduct the survey.

Integrity and Impartiality

- 3.7 Compliance with the *Code* requires that the Chief Statistician in the Welsh Government has sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods and procedures, and on the content and timing of statistical reports. This remains the case where statistics are published jointly by two producers, in this case by the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner. The Chief Statistician's responsibility is understood and recognised by both the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner, and is documented in the form of a contract between both parties, which defines the roles of statistical staff in both organisations. The statistics in *WLUW 2013-15* are presented impartially and objectively.

Methodology

- 3.8 Welsh language use statistics are collected using robust survey methodology using standard sampling frameworks defined by the NSW. The questions in the *WLUS 2013-15* are well defined and largely consistent with the 2004-06 surveys.

3.9 The *Quality Report* that accompanies *WLUW 2013-15* is easily accessible, but quite broad, with the description of the methodology often being at a high-level. During the course of this assessment, we suggested that the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner expand on their discussion about:

- The response rate to the survey, by drawing out the rates of survey acceptance³³, return and response
- Comparability of the questions and methodology in both the WLUS 2004-06 and WLUS 2013-15, describing the changes between the two surveys and the potential impact this has on comparative analysis
- The difference in the reported percentage of the Welsh population that speaks Welsh in the WLUS 2013-15, compared with other surveys (2011 Census, Annual Population Survey³⁴ and the NSW) and to discuss the potential impact of the survey methodology and sample size on this indicator

3.10 During the course of this assessment, the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner included more information in *WLUW 2013-15* and supporting documentation in response to these suggestions that:

- Presents more specific quality information on the WLUS 2013-15 in an annex of *WLUW 2013-15*, including a detailed discussion on response rates in relation to the NSW
- Ensures that comparable data are drawn out in the statistical report and data tables, clearly indicating in the data tables where analysis is not possible due to the small sample size (such as for sub-local authority level), or known variability in the data (for example, young children's speaking ability)
- States clearly in *WLUW 2013-15* that the 2011 Census figures are the main authoritative source of the percentage of Welsh speakers in Wales and uses historic Census data in Figure 1 of the report to illustrate the change in Welsh language use over time

We suggest that the statistics would benefit from more-detailed discussion in the *Quality Report* of the similarity and differences between the WLUS 2013-15, the WLUS 2004-06 and other similar surveys, in order to enhance transparency between the surveys and support users' interpretation of the statistics over time.

Dissemination

3.11 The Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner published data tables from *WLUW 2013-15* on StatsWales³⁵ in re-usable formats, which included data presented at a local authority level. The data tables are presented alongside data from the 2011 Census on the numbers and proportions of Welsh speakers in Wales. The statistics team told the

³³ The proportion of respondents interviewed for the NSW who accepted a paper survey for Welsh language use

³⁴ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/annual-population-survey/?lang=en>

³⁵ <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Welsh-Language>

Assessment team that they will deposit a more-detailed, anonymised, dataset with the UK Data Archive³⁶ in March 2016.

- 3.12 The Assessment team found the *WL UW 2013-15* landing page³⁷ on the Welsh Government website to be accessible, being easy to locate from main search engines with supporting documents easily accessible. The statistics are also accessible from the Welsh Language Commissioner's website³⁸. *WL UW 2013-15* and all supporting documentation are published in both Welsh and English. The Assessment team welcomes the use of an infographic³⁹ published alongside *WL UW 2013-15*, which is appropriate for the main results of the survey. We consider that the impact of the infographic could be further enhanced if it was presented as a graphic on the main *WL UW 2013-15* landing page rather than presented as a PDF, to quickly inform users of the main findings. The statistics team told us that it is investigating whether this is possible within the current web infrastructure.

Commentary

- 3.13 As mentioned elsewhere in this assessment report, the Assessment team provided feedback to statisticians at the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner on *WL UW 2013-14*. The Assessment team recommended that the statistical report be improved by: (a) focusing analysis in areas that were of most interest to users; (b) placing the findings of the survey in the context of Welsh language use in Wales and explaining how these statistics relate to other research, or relate to policy; and (c) explaining the overall change to Welsh language use in Wales over time.
- 3.14 *WL UW 2013-15* is structured into distinct sections, which are clearly labelled from a contents page. Each section presents an introduction that clearly states what statistics are being presented and the main findings. This is very useful to assist the reader in navigating the report. The statistics team told us that due to the wide range of expected users of the survey's results, they considered it important to provide as much analysis of the data and a description of findings where sample size allowed, particularly at a local authority level, to meet the needs of a wide range of users. As a result, *WL UW 2013-15* is a lengthy statistical report, at 130 pages including annexes.
- 3.15 During the course of this assessment, the report has benefited from increased analytical commentary and including references to policy and other research into Welsh language use to explain the contextual environment in which the data were collected. The report is comprehensive, presenting all the findings that the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner considered reliable to draw inference from. Whilst many of the main findings provide good insight into Welsh language use, there are often lengthy descriptions and associated figures describing small or insignificant differences between categories or changes between the survey results over time, where the impact of these changes to the use of the Welsh language is not obvious. Other analysis is presented on small sub-groups of data, or by grouping frequent and occasional use of the language across a range of situations,

³⁶ <http://data-archive.ac.uk/>

³⁷ <http://gov.wales/statistics-and-research/Welsh-language-use-survey/?lang=en>

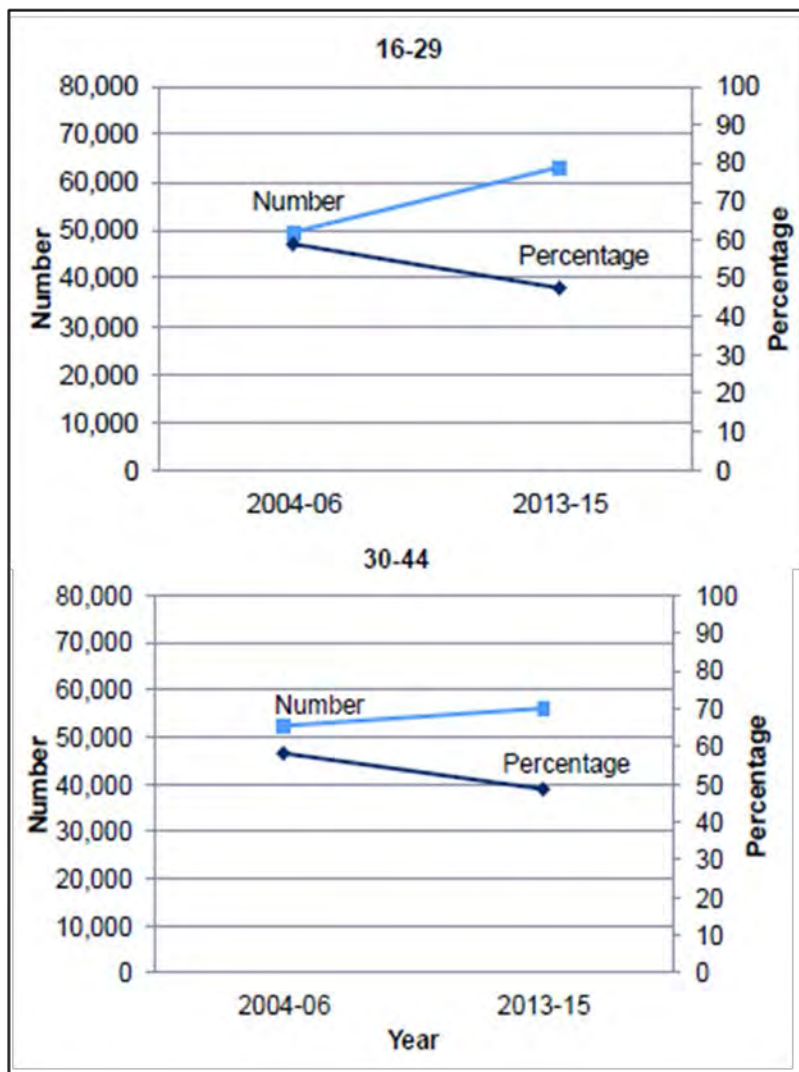
³⁸ <http://www.comisiynyddygydraeg.cymru/english/Pages/Home.aspx>

³⁹ <http://gov.wales/docs/statistics/2015/151126-welsh-language-use-survey-2013-15-infographic-en.pdf>

where only general inference of the data is meaningful. We consider that the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner could have enhanced the value of the statistics presented in *WL UW 2013-15* by focusing the statistical commentary so that it draws out analysis that provides new or interesting insight into Welsh language use and analysis that is responding to a defined user need, and reducing the amount of superfluous commentary. In doing this, the statistics team could consider, based on user feedback, whether the statistics presented in *WL UW 2013-15* could be made more accessible and valuable to users by being disseminated as a shorter report presenting the main findings, supplemented by multiple focused reports. This approach would be in line with the approach taken to disseminate statistics presented in *National Survey for Wales*.

- 3.16 An important aspect of the analysis presented in *WL UW 2013-15* is the comparison of statistics from this survey with those from the WLUS of 2004-06. These analyses present an indication of the change in Welsh language use over time and are important for users of the statistics to understand the changing patterns in the use of the language. Whilst the statistical report clearly presents the main findings of changes in Welsh language use, non-use and fluency in absolute terms, the report makes no reference to the underlying population base and how this has changed over time and influenced these findings. For example, it is apparent from Figures 8 and 15 of *WL UW 2013-15* that changes in the population have occurred over time, given the disparate trends between numbers and percentages of Welsh speakers over time by age group (see Figure 1 below). Whilst the report presents a clear description of how statistical significance is calculated in Annex A, it does not always indicate clearly whether differences between estimates are statistically significant, and there is inconsistent use of language to describe material changes – such as substantial and significant; it is not clear whether these refer to *statistical* significance. Similarly, care should be taken in the interpretation of data where large changes are observed but may not be statistically significant. For example, in explaining the comparative change in people who write Welsh, commentary in the report states: ‘The percentage of Welsh speakers who state that they can write Welsh well or very well has ‘decreased slightly from 67 per cent to 57 per cent’ since the WLUS 2004-06’. Many users would regard a decrease of 10 percentage points as relatively substantial, even if it is not statistically significant. We suggest that the analysis and supporting commentary in *WL UW 2013-15* could be enhanced to further aid users’ understanding and interpretation of the relative changes in Welsh language use over time, by presenting prominent analysis in the statistical report that accounts for the impact of the population changes over time supported by a clear narrative for users.

Figure 1: The impact of changing population on the reported percentage of Welsh speakers



Source: Welsh Language Use in Wales, 2013-15 (extract from Figure 8)

Annex 1: Summary of assessment process and users' views

A1.1 This assessment was conducted from April 2015 to December 2015.

A1.2 The Assessment team – Sara James and Johanna Hutchinson – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner in April 2015. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 22 May 2015. The Assessment team subsequently met the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner during June 2015 to review compliance with the *Code of Practice*, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence. The Assessment team then reviewed *WLUW 2013-15* after its publication on the 26 November 2015.

Summary of users contacted, and issues raised

A1.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare Assessment reports.

A1.4 The Assessment team received 14 responses from the user consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Welsh Government	2
Central Government	1
Local Government	6
Media	3
Other	2

Key documents/links provided

Written Evidence for Assessment document

Written Evidence for Assessment documents completed by the Welsh Government and the Welsh Language Commissioner – organisational evidence and output evidence

- *Welsh Language Use Survey 2013-14*, published January 2015
 - *Interim Quality Report and Technical Report 2013-14*
- *Welsh Language Use in Wales 2013-15*, published November 2015
 - *Final Quality Report and Technical Report 2014-15*

Minutes of Assessment team meetings with users and data suppliers, and email responses.

