

'A fire that's burning again': Welsh language resurges thanks to adult learners

Level 1: Elementary

1 Warmer

a. Discuss the questions.

1. Why are local and indigenous languages important?
2. How much do you think language and culture are connected?
3. Do you think it's important to maintain languages that are spoken by few people? Why?

2 Key words

a. Match the correct word to each definition. Then find them in the article to read them in context.

stable

risk

aware

intervention

target

1. _____ : danger or the possibility of harm
2. _____ : staying mostly the same
3. _____ : knowing something clearly
4. _____ : a goal you want to reach
5. _____ : action taken to improve a situation

identifying

element

community

diverse

percentage

6. _____ : including people from different backgrounds
7. _____ : a group of people who share a place or connection
8. _____ : an important part of something
9. _____ : an amount shown as part of 100
10. _____ : saying which group you belong to

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b. Complete the sentences with words from the previous activity.

1. Prices have stayed _____ this month.
2. Driving too fast can increase the _____ of an accident.
3. The government planned a(n) _____ to help schools.
4. She became _____ of the problem after the meeting.
5. Their _____ is to finish the project by July.
6. The class includes students from _____ backgrounds.
7. Trust is an important _____ of a good team.
8. A small _____ of students study abroad each year.
9. The form asks people for _____ details.
10. The new centre helps the local _____.

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The number of people taking Welsh courses with Dysgu Cymraeg has risen by 61% since 2017, as people in Wales rediscover the 'poetry' of the language.

Bethan McKernan

29 March, 2026

- 1 Elinor Staniforth, from Cardiff, did not like Welsh lessons at her English-medium school. When she left, she said she "forgot all about it". Later, she won a place at Oxford University. This made her think again about who she was and about her connection to Welsh.
- 2 She said, "I suddenly became very aware of being Welsh." There were only two Welsh people in her college. When they asked if she spoke Welsh, she had to say no. She felt "like a switch turned on" and thought she had "missed out on something".
- 3 Later, back in Cardiff, she started learning Welsh online. Then she became a finalist for the Cymraeg Learner of the Year prize at the 2024 national Eisteddfod. She said adult classes were "an amazing experience". After that, she decided to teach Welsh too.
- 4 New figures from the National Centre for Learning Welsh show that many other adults are learning too. The number of adult learners has increased by 12% in a year and has reached more than 20,000 for the first time.
- 5 This is good news. A recent report said that the number of Welsh speakers has stayed "more or less stable" for decades, but it has not grown with the population. This makes the language more at risk. The commissioner, Efa Gruffudd Jones, said "bold and transformative" intervention would be needed to reach the target of one million Welsh speakers by 2050.

- 6 The number of learners has gone up every year since 2016, up 61% since then. Almost 40% come through work. There are also many more young learners. The number of learners aged 16 to 24 went up by 56% in 2024-25. The percentage identifying as from "diverse ethnicities" was 5%, up 1% from the year before.
- 7 Scott Gutteridge said learning Welsh is popular again. He said, "It seems like a fire that's burning again."
- 8 Like Staniforth, he said adult learning was better than Welsh lessons at school. He said Welsh "has an added element for me. It's good for the mind, good for the heart, good for the soul."
- 9 Staniforth also said the new learners come from many places. But she said the future of Welsh is still complicated. She said learning Welsh must be enjoyable, because community is what keeps the language alive.

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3 Comprehension check

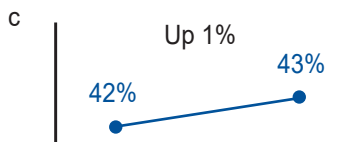
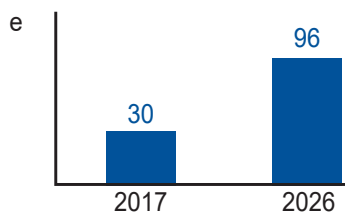
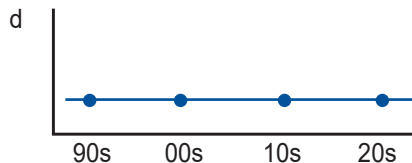
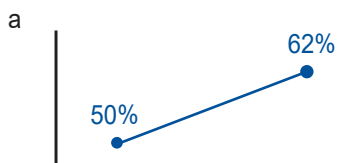
a. Read the sentences and write True or False.

1. While at university, Elinor felt bad for not speaking Welsh. _____
2. After university, she stayed in Oxford. _____
3. More people are learning Welsh than before. _____
4. Learning Welsh is still not popular. _____
5. Most people go to Welsh classes through work. _____

4 Key language

a. Match the phrases with the visual representations.

1. "more or less stable for decades" _____
2. "has risen by 61% since 2017" _____
3. Almost 40% of people _____
4. up 1% from the year before _____
5. "increased 12% in a year" _____



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b. Match the phrases from the previous activity with its opposite.

stable	has risen	almost	up	increased
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1. exactly _____
2. fluctuating _____
3. has fallen _____
4. decreased _____
5. down _____

5 Discussion

a. Discuss these statements.

- You cannot learn a language without learning about the culture(s) it comes from.
- It's more important to learn languages that can help in your career.
- It is the government's responsibility to keep languages alive.

6 In your own words

a. In groups, research an indigenous language you can present to the class. Answer the following questions in your presentation:

- Where do people speak it?
- How many speakers are there today?
- How has that number changed over the last year, decade and century?
- What is interesting about this indigenous language and culture?

b. Present your research to the class. Include charts and graphs to demonstrate the number of speakers and learners compared to the past.