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WISERD Education Multi- Cohort Study briefing for the Senedd CYPE Committee

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Introduction

The WISERD Education Multi Cohort Study (WMCS) is an annual cohort study of pupils in Welsh secondary schools. Launched in 2012, the WMCS has recently completed data collection for the tenth sweep of the study. Each sweep typically combines recurring questions on topics such as pupil perception of education, political engagement, and the Welsh language, alongside more global issues such as climate change and the impacts of coronavirus.

Subsequent sweeps revisit the same pupils as they get older. For example, participating pupils in Years 7, 9 and 11 one year will be revisited the next year in Years 8, 10 and 12, enabling individuals to participate annually for several years until they leave school.

Aims and objectives of work

Each year, researchers on the project look at the key findings for dissemination with a view to inform policy and practice. The WMCS also employs longitudinal analysis of indicators, with a decade of data providing significant opportunities to consider the changing views and perception of pupils in Wales over time.

Respondents

The WMCS aims to maintain a long-term relationship with a sample of schools to ensure participation over multiple years, increasing the likelihood that young people become repeat respondents. Just under ten thousand young people (9,839) have participated in the WMCS on at least one occasion (Table 1), with the annual number of participants ranging from 560 (when the coronavirus pandemic hampered participation) to 1,464. Figure 1 includes details of the school year groups involved in each sweep.

Table 1 Respondent numbers across WMCS sweeps

Sweep	School year	Year groups	Respondents
1	2012/13	6*, 8,10	1179
2	2013/14	7,9,11	1055
3	2014/15	8,10,12	826
4	2015/16	9,11,13	707
5	2016/17	7,10,12	1109
6	2017/18	8,11,13	855
7	2018/19	7,9,12	1464
8	2019/20	8,10	560
9	2020/21	7,9,11	930
10	2021/22	8,10,12	1154

*Year 6 data excluded as analysis focused on pupils in secondary school

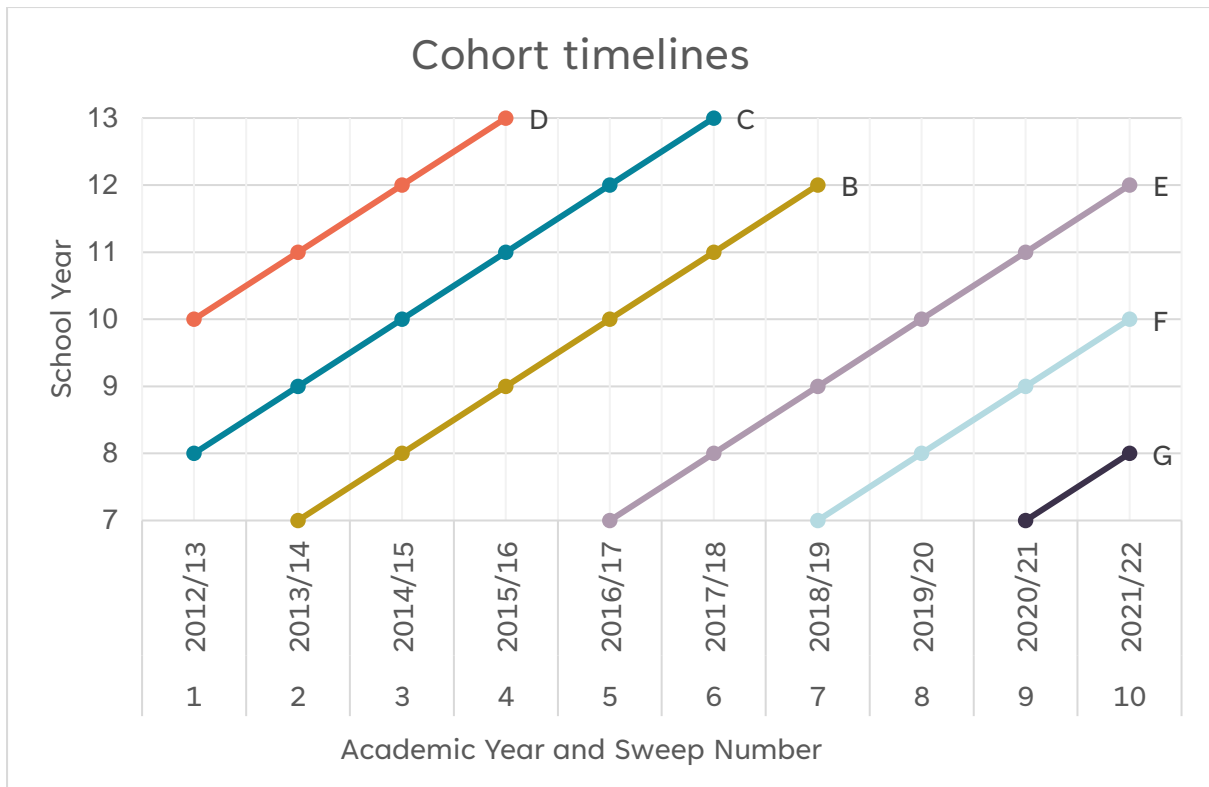


Figure 1 Cohorts of the WMCS over time

In this briefing

This briefing document collates data from WISERD blogs and forthcoming papers and reports that we believe are most relevant to the remit of the committee.

Trends in school-related issues over the last decade

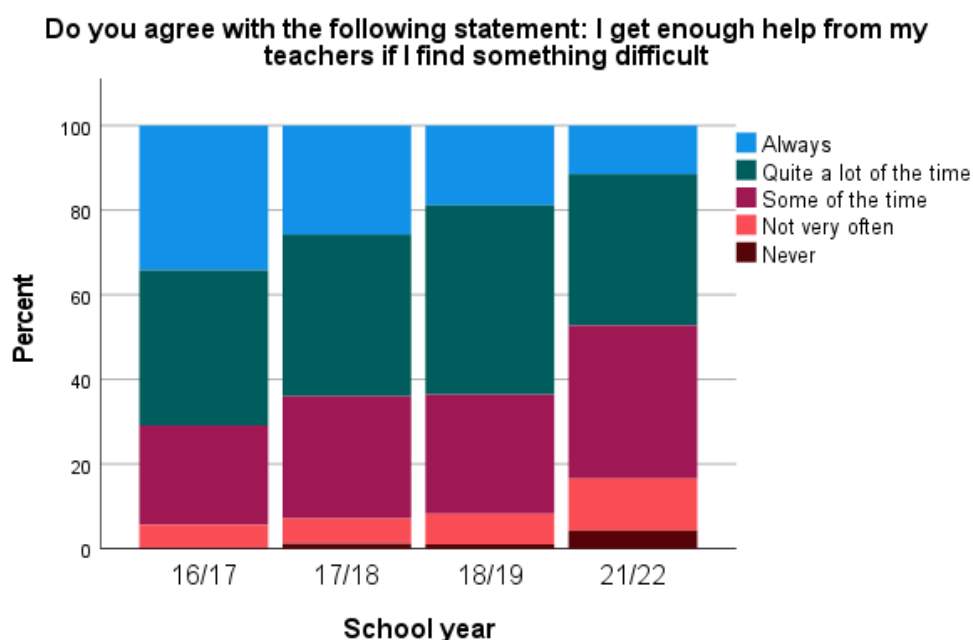
Ed Janes, edited by Laura Arman and Zoe Rozelaar

Extract of a longer report to be published on our website

We asked pupils about their experiences at school over a period of 10 years. Not every sweep included every question, but the overall trends can still be observed. Included below are some of our results relating to school experience with particular attention to areas to be improved with the introduction of the new curriculum.

Getting help from teachers

The results of academic year 2016/17 indicate that 70.8% of pupils felt supported by teachers with tasks that they found difficult – either ‘always’ or ‘quite a lot of the time’. While this figure was high, there was a clear decreasing trend to 47.3% in 2021/22.

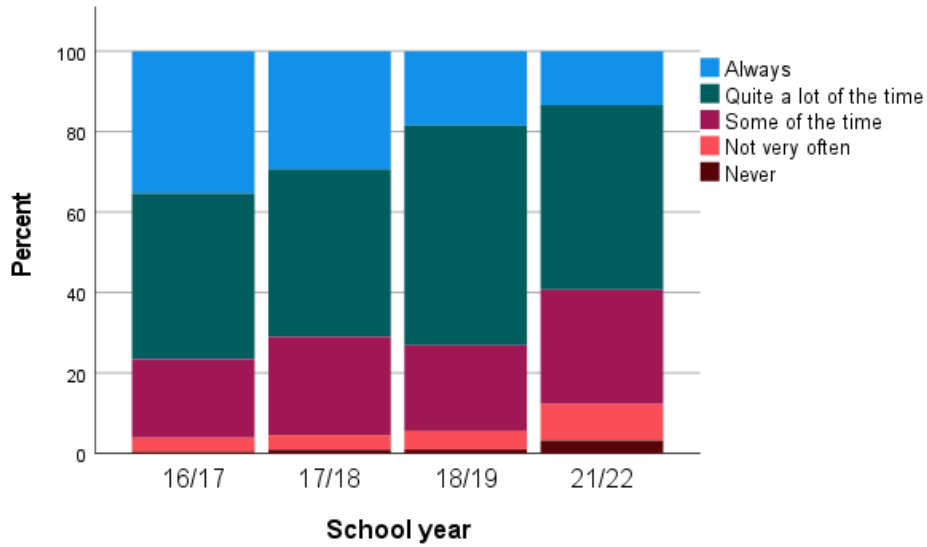


Year	16/17	17/18	18/19	21/22
# of Responses	1104	845	1449	1037

Understanding lessons

Over three-quarters of pupils reported being able to understand their lessons either ‘always’ or ‘quite a lot of the time’. While this figure is high, it has deteriorated over a six-year period, down to 59.3% in the most recent sweep of data.

How much do you agree with these statements about school. I understand my lessons

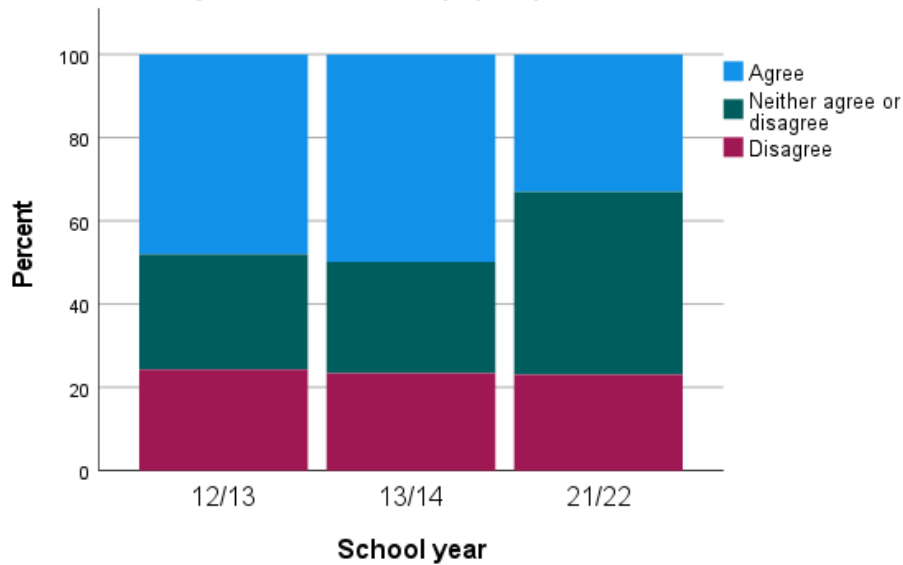


Year	16/17	17/18	18/19	21/22
# of responses	1101	847	1460	1029

Dealing with poor behaviour

In 2012/13, just under half of respondents (48%) agreed that their school dealt with poor pupil behaviour well, with 27.6% unsure and 24.3% disagreeing. Results in 2013/14 were similar but there was significant difference seven years later, after –and perhaps due to– the Covid-19 pandemic. At this point (2021/22), those disagreeing remained similar at 23.1%, while the proportion in agreement fell to 33% and those unsure increased to 43.9%.

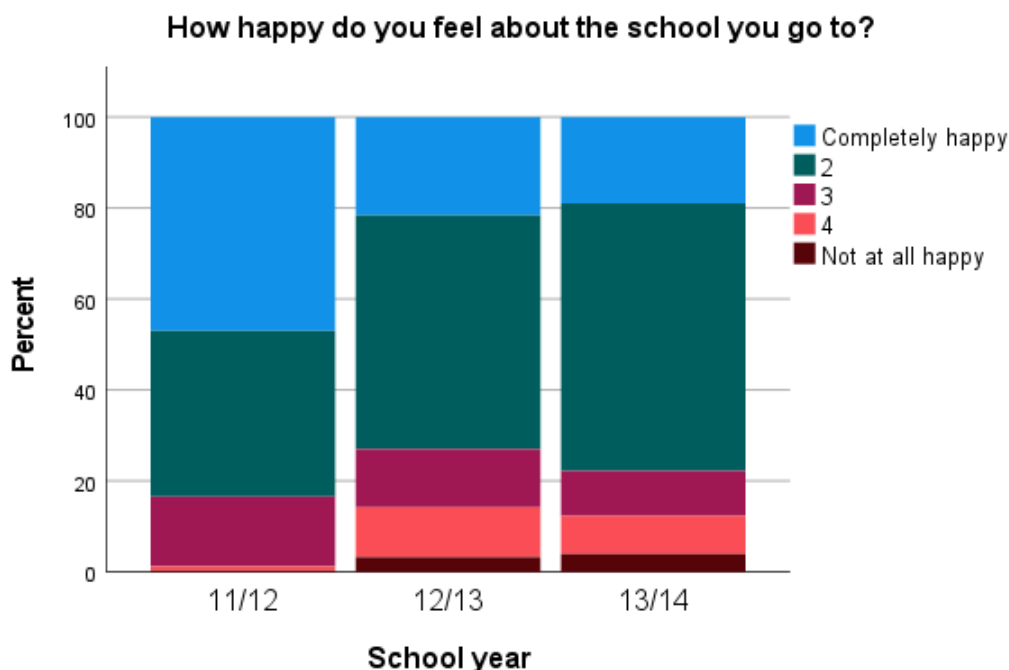
Please state how much you agree or disagree with the following statement: My school deals with pupil's poor behaviour well



Year	12/13	13/14	21/22
# of responses	691	662	1032

Happiness at school

Pupils were highly positive about their schools in 2011/12, with 47% ‘completely happy’, and 36.4% selecting the next option on the five-point scale. While the positivity remained, far fewer selected ‘completely happy’ in 2013/14 (19%), with 58.8% selecting the next option.

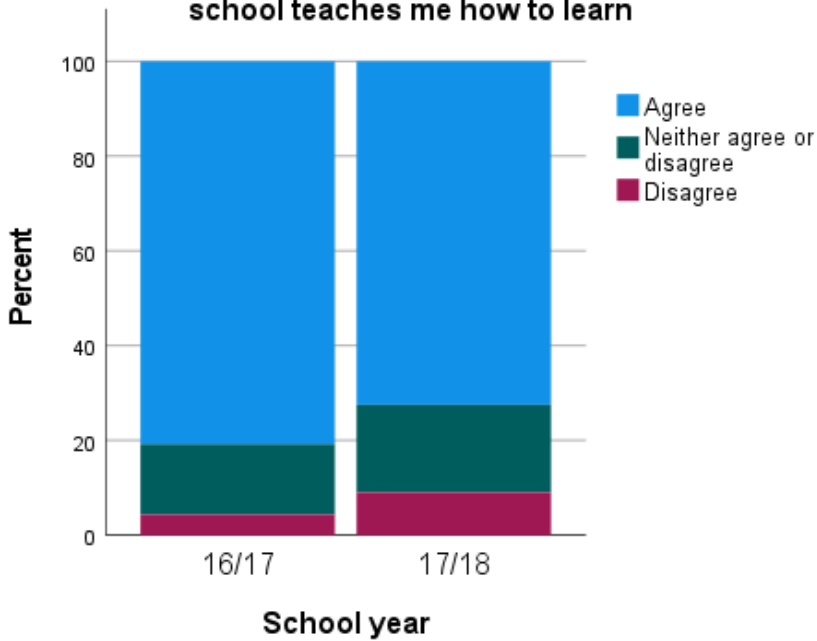


Year	11/12	12/13	13/14
# of responses	323	1043	811

Teaching pupils how to learn

These findings show a slight negative change in pupil view as to whether their school was teaching them how to learn. In 2016/17, almost three-quarters (80.8%) of respondents agreed with this statement, with 4.4% disagreeing. In 2017/18 the percentage of pupils disagreeing *and* not knowing whether to agree nor disagree had increased, with agreeing falling to 72.5%.

How much do you agree with the following statement: My school teaches me how to learn

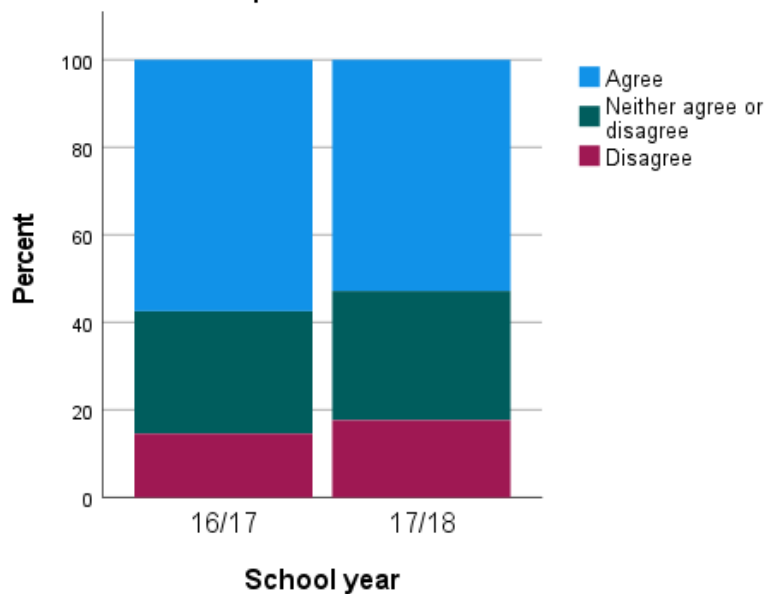


Year	16/17	17/18
# of responses	510	855

Healthy, fit pupils

Again, there is a negative change in pupils' views, this time concerning whether their school helps them be healthier and fitter. In Sweep 5, 57.5% agreed with this statement, with 14.6% disagreeing. In Sweep 6 those agreeing fell to 52.3%, with 17.7% disagreeing.

How much do you agree with the following statement: My school helps me to be healthier and fitter

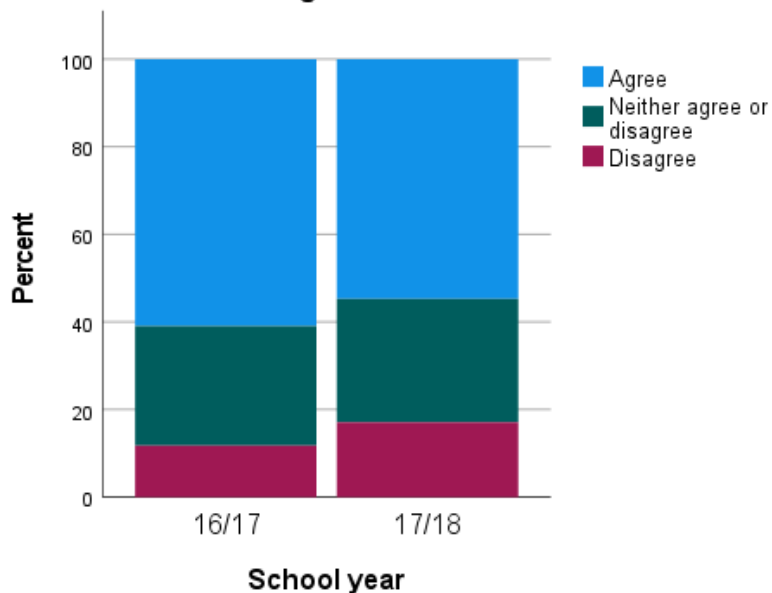


Year	16/17	17/18
# of responses	1098	855

Confident pupils

The final longitudinal indicator concerns schools supporting pupils to be more confident. Pupils responded positively to this statement in Sweep 5 with 61% agreeing, compared to 11.8% who disagreed, but again there was a negative change in Sweep 6 with 54.7% agreeing and 17.1% disagreeing.

How much do you agree with the following statement: My school encourages me to be more confident



Year	16/17	17/18
# of responses	1096	855

Discussing and dealing with issues of race and racism: WMCS survey reveals wide variations between schools in Wales

Sally Power

Published: 18th November 2022 as a WISERD Blog

In October 2022, the Welsh Government announced that anti-racist professional learning would be mandatory for all schoolteachers in Wales as part of its [Anti-Racist Wales Action Plan](#). Evidence from the latest sweep of the [WISERD Education Multi-Cohort Study \(WMCS\)](#) suggests that such universal and compulsory training is badly needed.

In the summer of 2022, we asked 1,100 pupils attending a representative sample of schools across Wales about the extent to which they are encouraged to discuss issues of race and racism in their school. As Chart 1 below shows, nearly half said that they are encouraged to discuss these issues. However, one fifth disagreed, and nearly one third did not know, which perhaps indicates if there were discussions they were not particularly engaging or challenging.

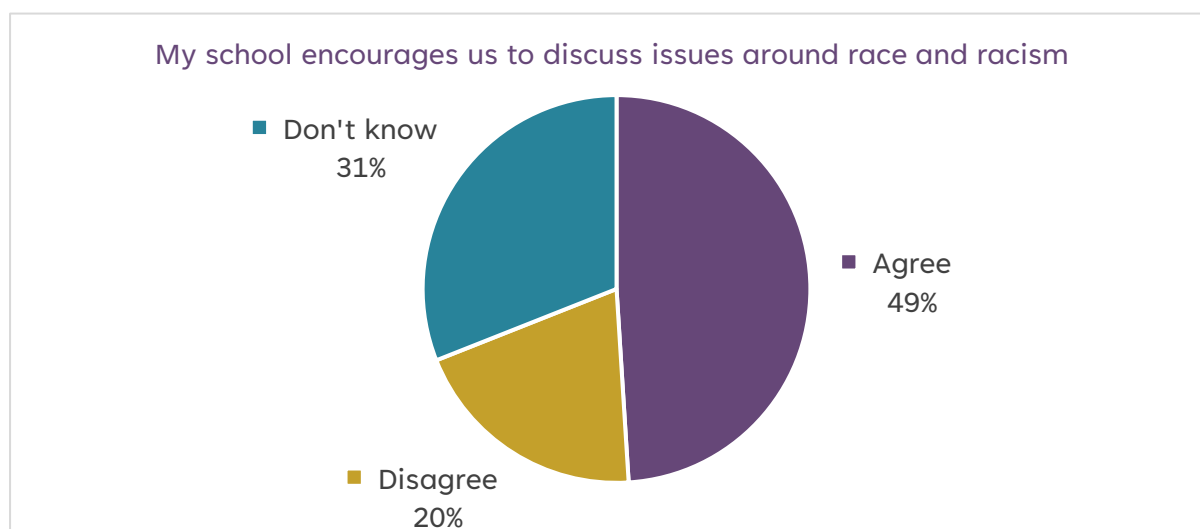


Chart 1

We also asked these pupils whether they had discussed the Black Lives Matter movement in their classes at any point in the previous year. We were particularly interested in this as the previous year's survey (Sweep 9) had shown that this was a social movement which pupils felt very strongly about. [Over two-thirds had said that racism was the one issue they thought about most often](#) and many had taken part in the Black Lives Matter demonstrations.

In this latest survey, over half the pupils (51%) said that they *had* discussed the Black Lives Matter movement at some point in their classes in the previous year. However, there are wide school-level variations. As Chart 2 shows, the Black Lives Matter movement was nearly nine times more likely to have been discussed in School J as in

School A. To some extent, this wide variation reflects the different ethnic profile of the schools, but this just raises further issues about the extent to which teachers in schools with few Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) pupils feel confident or comfortable discussing issues of race and racism – or indeed feel it is even necessary.

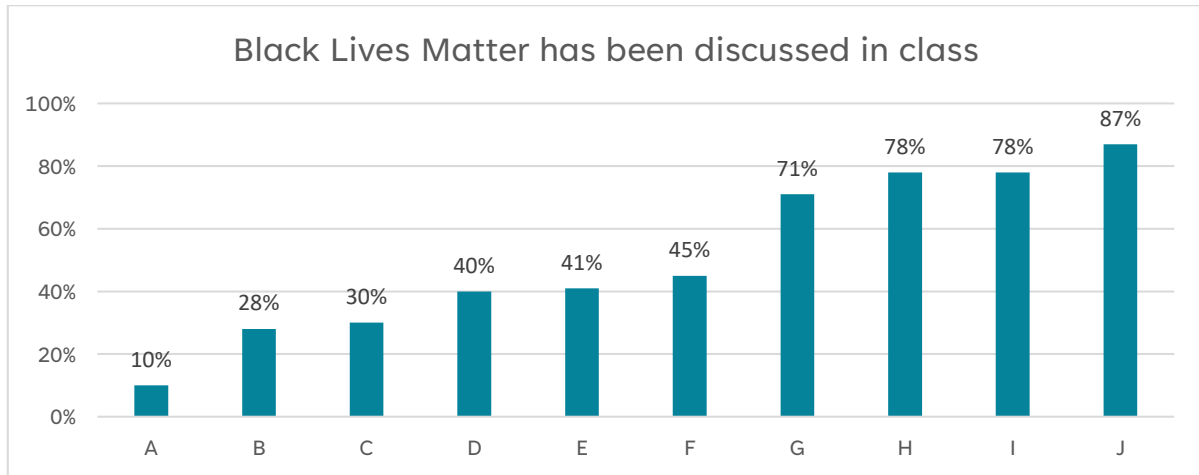


Chart 2

In addition to asking about whether issues of race and racism are discussed, we were also interested to find out whether the pupils feel that their school takes reports of racism seriously. To some extent, their responses indicate that schools *do* take racism seriously. The overwhelming majority (81%) of respondents agreed, and only one fifth disagreed that their school takes racism seriously. However, there is a wide difference between the responses of white and minority ethnic pupils.

As Chart 3 below shows, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic pupils were more than twice as likely to *disagree* with the statement that their school takes reports of racism seriously.

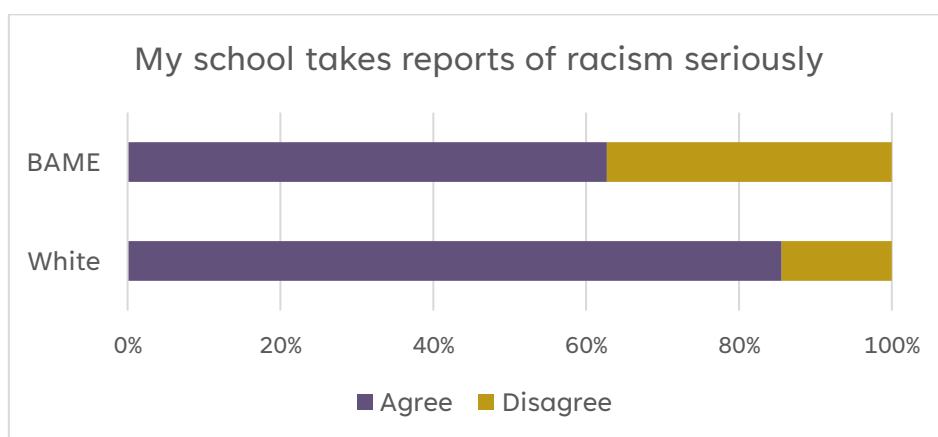


Chart 3

As with discussions in class, there is significant school-level variation. Chart 4 shows that in School A, fewer than half (44%) of the pupils think their school takes reports of racism seriously, compared with over 90% of pupils at school H. Comparison of Charts

2 and 4 indicates that there is some relationship between pupils reporting discussions on Black Lives Matter in class and their perception that reports of racism are taken seriously. School A features at the 'bottom' of both charts, while School H features near the top end of both.

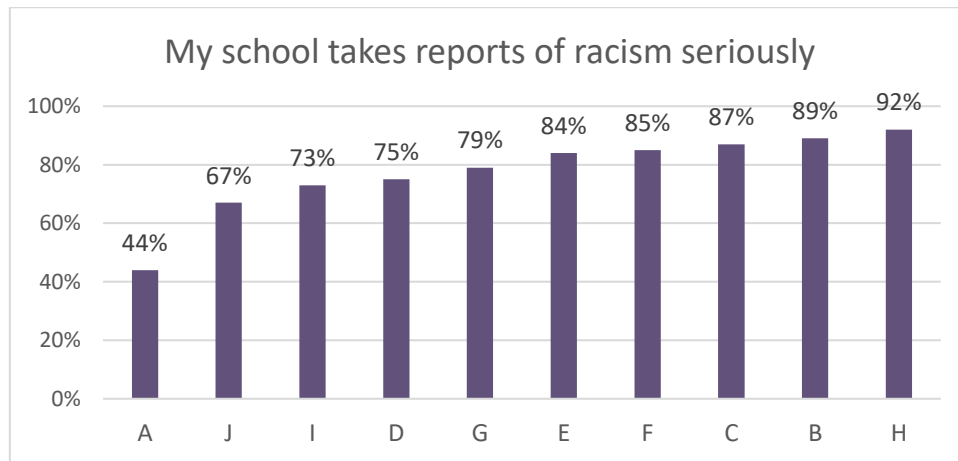


Chart 4

Clearly the relationship between discussing issues of race and racism in school and dealing with racist incidents is complex. Nevertheless, the latest findings from the WMCS indicate that there is work to be done if all pupils in Wales are to understand and feel able to discuss issues of racial injustice, and to feel confident that racism will be tackled in their school. It will be important to see whether the measures being put in place by the Welsh Government make a difference in future years.

Hundreds of working hours are wasted due to schoolteachers lacking a centrally shared language resource

Laura Arman

Published: 7th December 2022 as a WISERD Blog

Hundreds of working hours are wasted due to schoolteachers lacking a centrally shared language resource. Despite [recent developments in use of the virtual learning platforms like Hwb](#) (available to Welsh schools for free since 2012), teachers lacking Welsh-language resources for their classroom are unable to access translations of other resources.

Under the current system, if a teacher wants to use a contemporary textbook or any other resource developed outside of Wales in a Welsh-medium class, they must translate it themselves. This increased workload for Welsh-medium teachers may feed into an already high rate at which people leave teaching as a profession, at a time when the Welsh Government are already introducing additional measures to increase the recruitment of Welsh-medium teachers.

According to qualitative interviews with school leaders conducted as part of the [WISERD Education Multi Cohort Study](#)'s annual survey of secondary schools, each school in Wales uses its own bespoke translated resources on an ad hoc basis.

This is due to fewer teaching resources being available in Welsh and due to Welsh being historically a minoritised language – an effect especially felt during the rise of mandatory education. Welsh-medium teachers are being made to compensate for this historical impact:

“...dwi ‘di gwario oriau ac oriau ac oriau yn cyfieithu. Wel ‘di hwnna ddim yn deg. [...] Mae athrawon cyfrwng [Cymraeg] yn gorfod gweithio nifer fawr fwy o oriau nag athrawon di-Gymraeg”

[...I’ve spent hours and hours and hours translating. Well that’s not fair. [...] Welsh-medium teachers have to work a great deal more hours than non-Welsh speaking teachers]

Interview L4

The same situation is described across both English- and Welsh-medium schools:

“be sy’n drist... Mae CBAC yn cyfieithu llyfrau, mae’r athrawon yn cyfieithu nhw hefyd ac erbyn i’r llyfr ddod allan, falle bod yna ddeg, pymtheg o wahanol bobl wedi cyfieithu nhw. [...] Mae pawb yn ail greu yr olwyn.”

[what’s sad... The WJEC translates books, the teachers translate them as well and by the time the book comes out, maybe ten, fifteen different people have translated them. [...] Everyone is reinventing the wheel.]

Interview L1

Headteachers express great frustration at the work being reduplicated across schools in Wales, understanding the impact on their staff.

“Ni gyd yn neud yr un swydd mewn mannau gwahanol [...] ‘S neb yn cyd-drefnu fe.”

[We’re all doing the same work in different locations [...] No one is co-ordinating.]

Interview L4

The frustration is that staff hours are going to translate – a skilled job in itself – which impacts either their wellbeing or potentially distracts from focus on teaching methods and other duties which are central to any teaching role.

The urgency of the translations was also emphasised by two school leaders. Despite new courses and new curricula being planned for years, it seems that translating materials into Welsh is an afterthought in this process. As well as current resources being decades old (a science textbook even making reference to *francs* as a currency), Welsh resources are being released a year or two after the English ones for the same new course.

“Wel, os ydyn nhw eisiau bod yn gyfartal, ddyle’r cwrs ddim cael ei, ei gynnig oni bai bod yr adnoddau i gyd ar gael.”

[Well, if they want to be equal, the course shouldn’t be offered unless all the resources are available.]

Interview L1

Co-ordinating professional translations of new and interesting resources may have proven unmanageable and highly costly, but co-ordinating an online repository of resources already translated and compensating teachers for their work may be a fair trade-off for working hours already invested. A centrally co-ordinated effort by subject area would ensure equal contribution – or compensation – to each school.

The underlying and fair principle that the workload of teachers should be roughly equal from one school to the next also travels across the border. Teachers aware of the additional burden placed on Welsh-medium teachers choose to take their skills elsewhere, despite having the profile needed in Wales:

“dwi’n nabod llawer o athrawon sy’n dysgu mewn ysgolion Saesneg er bod nhw’n rhugl [yn y Gymraeg], oherwydd y gwahaniaeth yn y gwaith [...] mae rhai o ffrindiau fi yn dweud, o ‘dwi ddim yn neud e rhagor, dwi’n mynd i gael yr un pae mewn ysgol Saesneg, yn gwneud llai o waith!’”

[I know a lot of teachers who teach in English schools even though they are fluent [in Welsh], because of the difference in the work [...] so, some of my friends are saying, “oh I’m not doing it any more, we get the same pay in an English school, doing less work!”]

Interview L4

Teaching as a profession already [struggles to attract and retain staff due to unmanageable workloads and pressures](#). Therefore, not only does the lack of centrally co-ordinated resource translation have an impact on increasing those hours of work for Welsh-medium teachers and indeed on how quickly new materials will reach pupils, but it also contributes to the difficulties the Welsh Government is having in increasing the number of Welsh-speaking teachers.

Attitudes towards Welsh

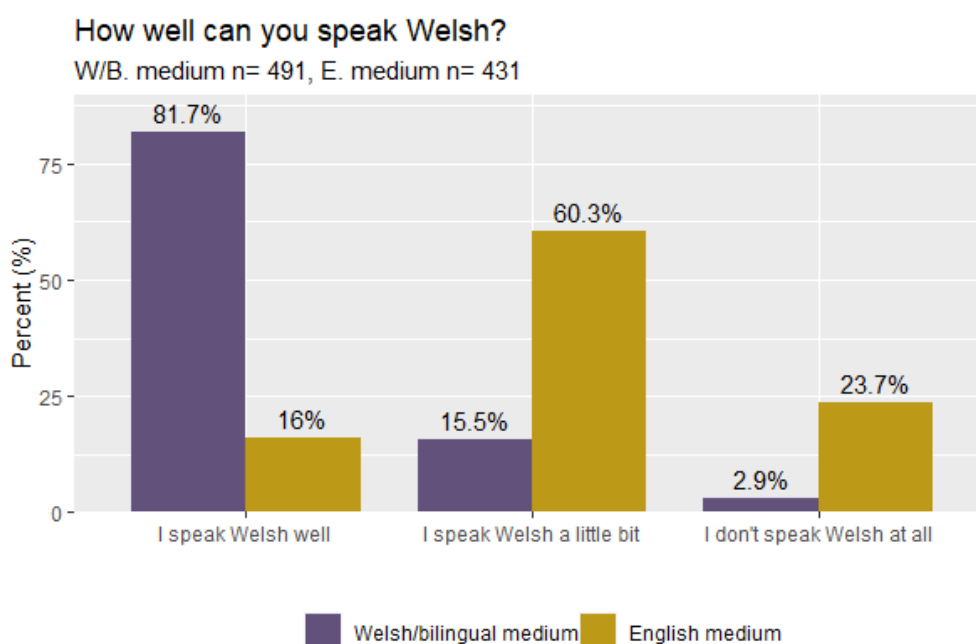
Laura Arman

Our 10th annual survey included a set of questions to better understand pupils' attitudes towards the Welsh language. Here are some key findings of those results.

Differences by school

Our study sampled pupils' views from 10 schools and half of our schools were classified as Welsh- or bilingual- medium. 53% of the pupils in this year's survey attended Welsh- or bilingual-medium schools.

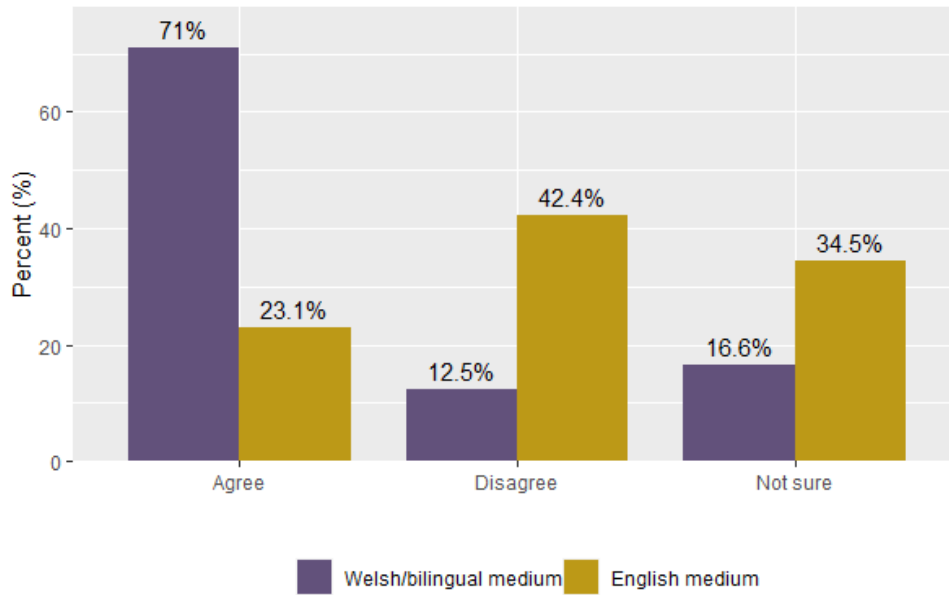
As such, the results are presented contrasting their views with those of pupils attending English-medium schools (including English-medium with significant Welsh). This plot shows a contrast in Welsh-language abilities by school medium.



Perhaps as expected, this gap in ability also leads to a gap in confidence, though it is quite striking that even in Welsh- and bilingual- medium schools, 60% of pupils report not feeling confident speaking Welsh in front of the teacher, despite being confident at speaking Welsh overall (71%).

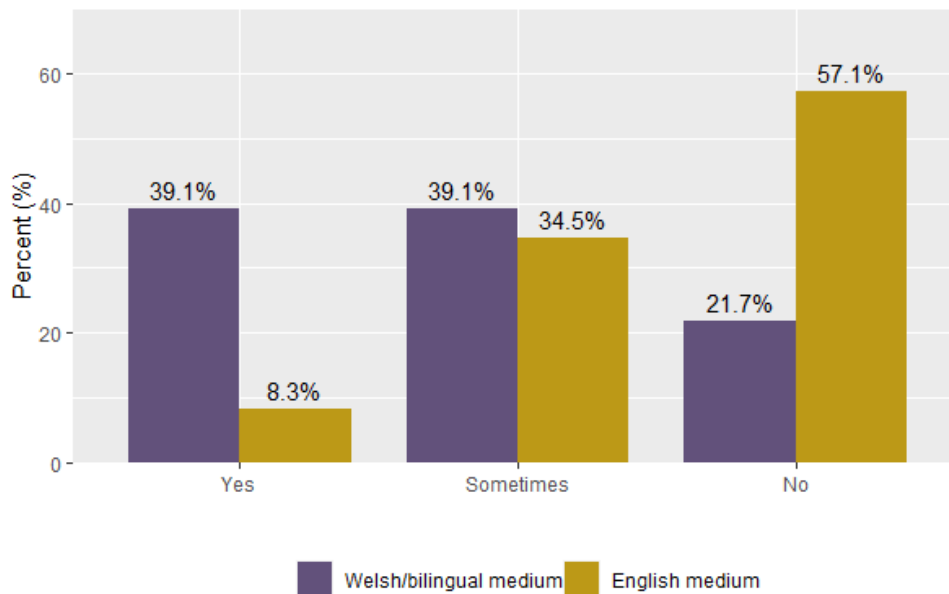
Please state whether you agree with the following or not - I am confident speaking in Welsh

W/B. medium n= 465, E. medium n= 394



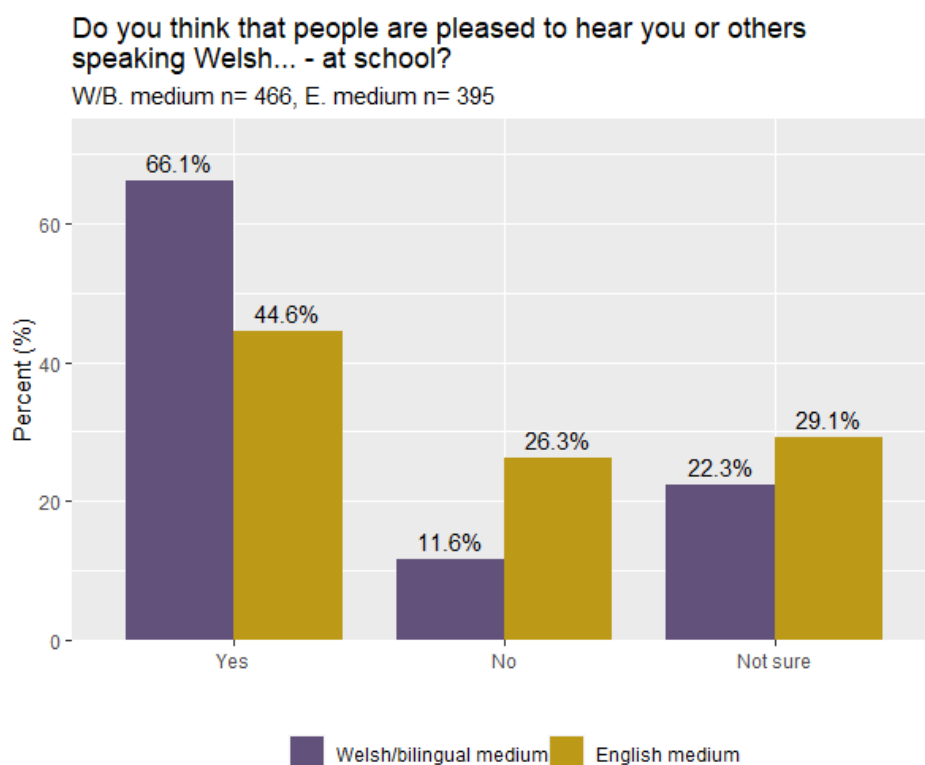
Do you feel confident speaking to your teacher(s) in Welsh when the rest of the class can hear?

W/B. medium n= 92, E. medium n= 168



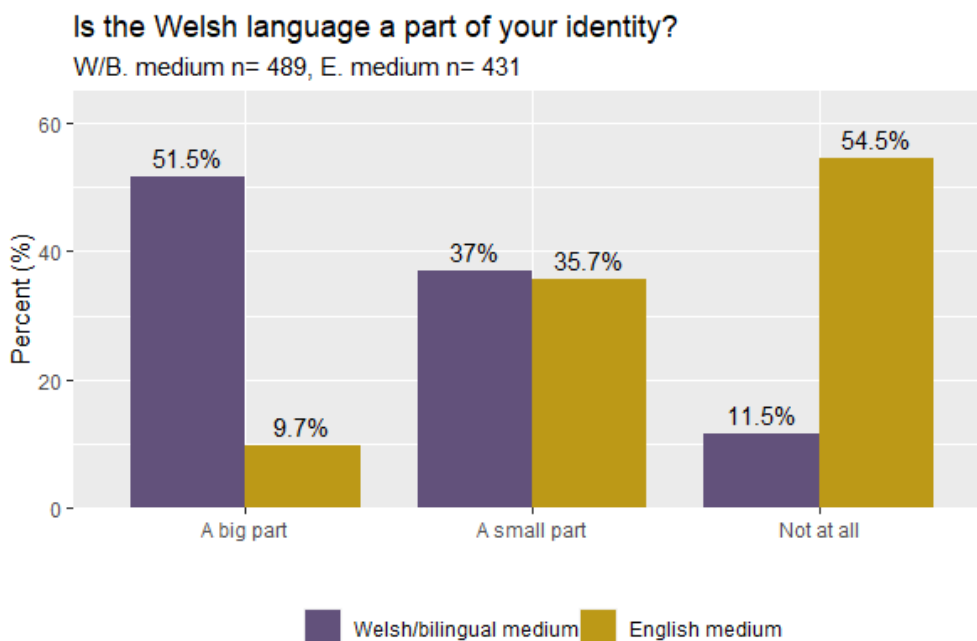
Good to speak Welsh at school

Despite this lack of confidence, it seems that pupils understand that using Welsh is encouraged at school.



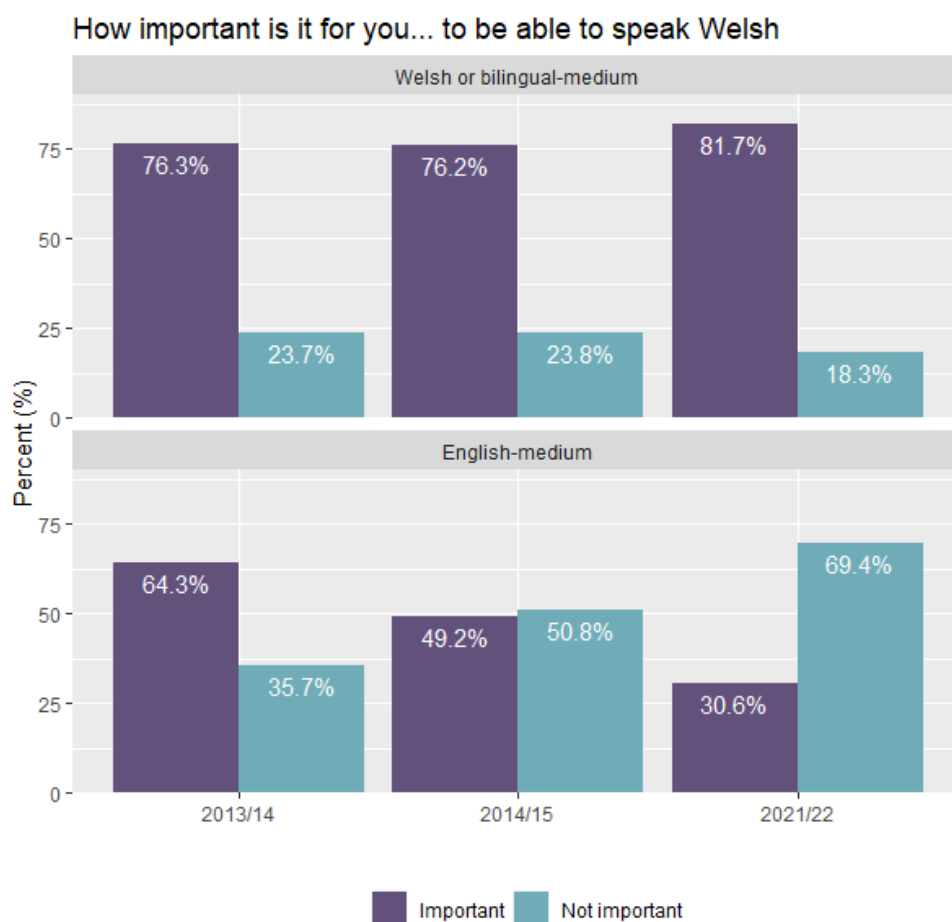
Welsh language and identity

There is also a striking difference in school-medium and how much the pupil considers the Welsh language to be a part of their identity. Pupils in English-medium schools feel less connected to the Welsh language by far.



Decline over time

Perhaps this difference in identity accounts for the decline in the perceived importance of learning Welsh over time.

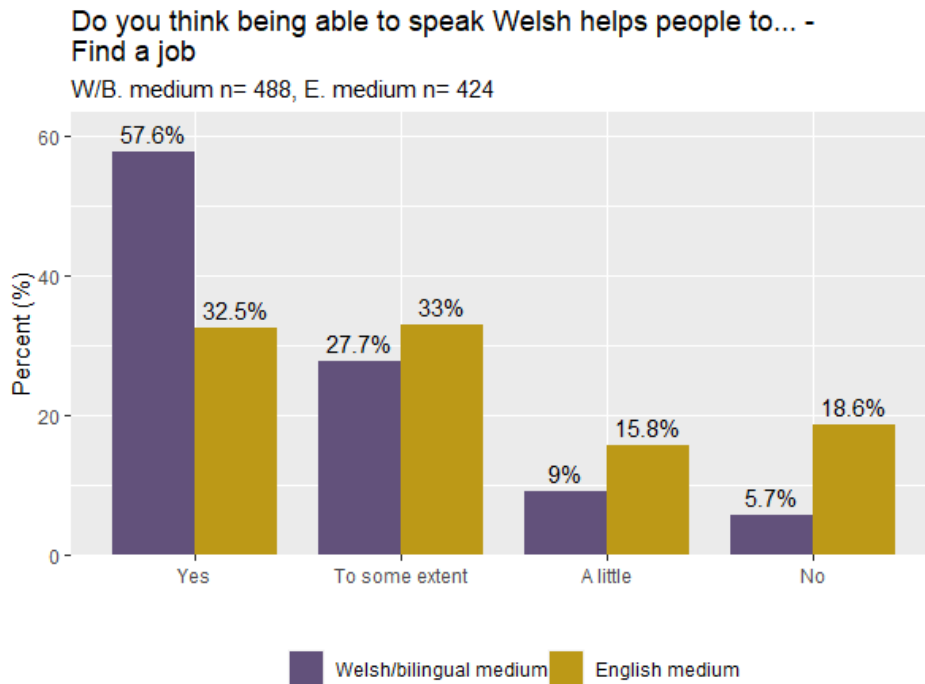


The second plot above shows a decline in the percentage of pupils attending English-medium schools in Wales who found speaking Welsh to be important. The results were similar for the question of “continuing to learn Welsh”.

Despite this lack of importance, pupils do associate knowledge of Welsh with positive outcomes, though these views are not as strong at English-medium schools.

Knowing Welsh helps you

On the whole, pupils feel that speaking Welsh helps people to find a job as detailed below.



Results are similar for “Welsh helps people to learn another language”, though do not extend to areas of life in Wales including “fitting in more at work” or “in higher education”.

While Welsh- or bilingual-medium pupils feel that the ability to speak Welsh will help them in Welsh society, pupils at English-medium schools are more divided on the matter.

