The Welsh Language and Social Networks

Mentrau Iaith Cymru
2014

Sponsored by BT Wales

Contents

Executive Summary

Mentrau Iaith Cymru has recognised the need for specific research into language use on social networks, with a view to influencing language use in the future. The research was sponsored by BT Wales, and was carried out with a sample of 400 people in early 2014. We want to know more about the linguistic tendencies of social network users, so that we and other organisations and institutions may be in a better position to act to increase the future use of the Welsh language.

Findings

As predicted, the Research confirms that there is huge variety in the use of Welsh by fluent Welsh speakers socially, and on social networks in particular. The work confirms anecdotal evidence regarding the factors which impede and/or encourage the use of Welsh, reflecting a pattern of language use similar to that seen in the real world.

Our research work shows that there is much to be done in order to change the attitudes and habits of individuals regarding their use of Welsh on social networks.

The research shows that respondents have high levels of fluency, and that 75% of them use Welsh regularly on social networks. Although this percentage is relatively high, we must consider the 25% that do not habitually use Welsh on the networks. If we consider that the people who took part in the study are principally fluent Welsh speakers who make regular use of Welsh in their "real" lives, the fact that around a quarter of them do not habitually use Welsh on the networks strongly suggests a need to act in order to influence attitudes and behaviour, and encourage a greater use of Welsh on social networks.

More positively, 95.2% of those who stated that they would modify their use of Welsh on social networks in the future said they would do this by increasing their use of Welsh. There is a desire for change, therefore, but there are many factors affecting their Welsh language use, which are, once again, similar to those factors which exist in the real world.

Some of the factors we can influence reflect those in the real world; for example, encouraging the greater use of Welsh, normalising its use and sharing good practice with organisations and institutions.

Individuals' use of Welsh on social networks depends upon the language use of others, including that of other individuals, institutions, organisations and companies in all sectors.

It is evident from the research that there are other factors which are unique to the digital world; for example, software/apps companies such as Twitter and Snapchat which have not developed Welsh language interfaces.

From our research, the main factors which have an influence on the use of Welsh on social networks are:
- the language use of others and the language proficiency of the "audience"
- the lack of Welsh-medium technological developments, including Welsh interfaces
- confidence and skill levels in Welsh
- the lack of Welsh-medium content, compared with English-medium content

We must recognise that we are always likely to be one step behind when it comes to promoting use of the Welsh language on social networks. Whilst we are now looking at the use of Welsh on Facebook and Twitter by the majority of individuals, young people are moving towards other new forms and stages for communication, and constantly using new platforms.

Recommendations

Further work is needed now and in the future to promote the use of Welsh on social networks. This will normalise the use of the language, increase people's confidence in using the networks in both languages, and thereby lead to more content and a greater natural use of Welsh on these networks which are an important medium of communication in the digital age.

A national target is required for increasing the use of Welsh on social networks - for individuals, organisations and institutions. Achieving the change needed in this field requires an investment in time and money.

Further research and development work is needed in order to identify the most effective ways of bringing about change in individuals' attitudes in order to increase the use of Welsh on social networks.

Consideration must be given to international models which have succeeded in encouraging individuals and organisations to use minority languages successfully on social networks. Similarly, the fields of social marketing, behaviour change and hyperlocal communication need to be researched further for lessons and principles which could be carried over to the field of Welsh language promotion.

Long-term work is required to change attitudes, along with regular revision of what we are doing in order to ensure that it remains relative and that the work continues to reach people effectively.

We need to be positive in influencing the language use of private companies and public and voluntary organisations so that they communicate on social networks through Welsh. Although the main aim is to encourage more natural and social use of Welsh on the part of individuals, we must recognise the importance of content - advertisements, postings and pages - of organisations and institutions which create the material for people to share. Organisations can

institutions can lead the way on this. We need to share good practice regarding the use of Welsh by national organisations, following a period of research.

We need to cooperate with partners who work in the field of Welsh language promotion. By working together we can reach a wider audience and multiply our efforts.

We need to influence the large and small technology companies on an international level in order to develop more Welsh interfaces. So far, the developments in the field of Welsh-medium technology - including interfaces, spell checks, translations and Welsh medium content (e.g. Amazon's decision to sell e-books) - have raised the profile of the Welsh language online. However, it is essential that Welsh-medium developments continue to grow in the future.

1. Background

1.1 Mentrau Iaith Cymru

Mentrau Iaith Cymru is an organisation that supports the work of local Mentrau Iaith/Welsh Language Ventures across Wales. There are 22 Mentrau Iaith working locally as voluntary, community organisations, to develop, promote and facilitate the use of the Welsh language.

As an organisation that supports the work of the local Mentrau Iaith, Mentrau Iaith Cymru operates on behalf of the Mentrau on a national level, and for the benefit of the Welsh language in the communities of Wales. Further background information about Mentrau Iaith Cymru can be found on www.mentrauiaith.org

1.2 The Research

Increasing the use of Welsh in all aspects of life is essential if Welsh is to survive as a community language: increasing its use within the online communities and networks is key to ensuring the future growth and development of Welsh in our local communities.

Other Welsh language organisations and institutions are fully aware of the importance of ensuring Welsh-medium developments in the field of technology and social networks, and some specific activities and interventions are already in place with the aim of increasing the use of Welsh online. Moreover, the Welsh Government states the importance of digital media and Welsh language developments in the field of technology in its *Welsh Language Strategy, A Living Language: A Language for Living*: "To strengthen the Welsh language infrastructure, research suggests focussing Welsh language marketing and promotional approaches on younger age groups, maximising the potential of technology such as the internet and new social media, and improving the accessibility to, and relevance of, available Welsh-language media and resources. The media, in all forms, plays an important part in supporting the infrastructure of the language."

This research was embarked upon, therefore, with the aim of collecting information which would create a better understanding of the factors affecting individuals' use of Welsh specifically on social networks, as they form an influential and all-important media which will contribute towards increasing the use of Welsh in the future.

2. Aims and Terms of Reference

2.1 The Aim of the Research

The purpose of the research was to investigate the use of Welsh by individuals on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, in order to gain a better understanding of the factors that influence individuals' language use on the various social networks. This would inform our decisions regarding future actions related to possible projects and interventions, allowing us to act positively to increase individuals' language use on social networks.

2.2 Constraints

It must be recognised that the scope of the research is not sufficiently wide to permit conclusions regarding individual language use on social networks, and the factors which come to bear on them. In fact, the factors which influence language use are numerous, complex, and difficult to measure. Moreover, the resources available to the research were limited, and with additional resources a more profound investigation with more respondents and participants would be possible.

We also recognise that there are limitations to questionnaires as a tool for gathering information form individuals, resulting from the bias of social appropriateness. Similarly, qualitative and anecdotal information collected from focus groups and written comments received via questionnaires, although valuable, make analysis and clear conclusions difficult.

It is also worth noting that drawing comparisons with other research studies is challenging, as the methodology varies (i.e., between quantitive and qualitative studies, focus groups, one-to-one interviews). The relatively small number of existing studies relating to Welsh language use on social networks make it difficult to come to clear conclusions and to draw comparisons between them.

2.3 Other Research

From the start we ensured that we built on previous research into the use of Welsh on social networks. To this day there has been little research in this field, with a substantial part of research having concentrated on the language use of young people. Although young people are key to ensuring the growth and advancement of the Welsh language, the Mentrau Iaith exist in order to provide services and support to people of all ages. Our research therefore provided a good opportunity to ask people of different ages about their language use on social networks.

Some significant research has been carried out recently, all of which identifies the social networks and online media as essential fields to which language planners should give consideration now and in the future.

In 2013 Beaufort Research published an important study *Exploring Welsh Speakers' Language Use in their Everyday Lives*, commissioned by the Welsh Government, S4C and BBC Wales. Although the research does not concentrate solely on Welsh speakers' language use on social networks, it does however specify the significance of the web, social networks and other online media in the lives of individuals, providing valuable information regarding the use of Welsh on those networks, and the factors which affect language use.

Other studies were published in the last two years by D. Cunliffe, C. Prys a D. Morris, including *Social Networks and Minority Languages Speakers: The use of Social Networking Sites Among Young People* (2012) and *Young Bilinguals' Language Behaviour in Social Networking Sites: The use of Welsh on Facebook* (2013). These two studies concentrate on young people's language use on the networks, and once again they point to the social networks and digital media as being important fields for language planners to address in the future.

Bearing the above studies in mind we see that there are elements of our research which touch upon similar aspects, while there are also different factors involved, such as:

- Our research involves people of all ages. Although young people's language use is essential in the context of wider language planning, social networks are no longer exclusive to young people.
- Our research provides an additional opportunity to gather further information and qualitative feedback related to individuals' language use on social networks, as well as reasons and factors which may affect that use.
- Our focus groups have provided a new opportunity for Mentrau workers to share experiences and anecdotal information regarding the use of Welsh on social networks, drawing from local and personal experience.
- With the above, therefore, the work supplements the research work carried previously out by others, whilst contributing to attempts to increase understanding of the current use of Welsh on social networks.

3. Objectives and Methodology

Following a period in which consideration was given to previous research in the field, an electronic questionnaire was drawn up on the online tool Survey Monkey. This asked individuals a number of questions designed to offer a relatively clear cross-section of their language use in daily life, their background, profile information and online language use, and the factors which affect that use.

The questionnaire was bilingual, care being given to ensure that the language employed for each question was clear and straightforward. A copy of the questions used can be found in Appendix 1. The questionnaire was designed with the aim of collecting quantitative data at first, although qualitative comments were gathered for a number of questions regarding language

use, obstacles, and further descriptive feedback related to the Welsh language and social networks.

The questionnaire was completed between January and February 2014 by 400 people across Wales. The final number of completed questionnaires was much higher than the initial target which had been set at 200.

As well as online questionnaires, a series of focus groups were also held, with 30 Mentrau Iaith Field Officers, in February 2014.

4. An Analysis of the Information Collected

4.1 Main Findings

4.1.1 The Significance of Social Networks

- Social networks and their related use of Welsh constitute an essential field that language planners, as well as organisations which promote the Welsh language, need to consider and provide for, now and in the future.
- 74.2% of the people questioned considered that increasing the use of the Welsh language on social networks was *"very important"*.

4.1.2 Language Use

- As expected, the language used by individuals online with friends and contacts reflects language use in the real world.
- Considering the high levels of Welsh language use in everyday life on the part of the 400 individuals who participated in the study, their use of Welsh on social networks is relatively low, with over a quarter of participants saying they use *"English every time"* or *"more English than Welsh"* on the networks.
- In addition to the above, 49.5% of respondents stated that they write on social networks in Welsh every day, which is lower than the language use regarding the writing of emails, personal notes and other computer documents.
- Also, the qualitative information gathered during research suggests that a substantial part of Welsh speakers do not habitually make use of Welsh on social networks.

4.1.3 Changing Habits and Increasing the Use of Welsh

- A positive element was that 95.2% of those who stated they would change their use of Welsh on social networks in the future wanted to use more Welsh.
- Although an increase of Welsh language use by individuals on a personal level on social networks is essential, there is also a need for organisations and companies in all sectors to increase their use of Welsh on their own networks and online platforms.

4.1.4 Factors Affecting the Use of Welsh and Opportunities to Influence Change

- The project offered many opportunities to ask participants about the factors and obstacles that affect their use of Welsh on social networks. These factors can be placed in two main groups:
  - Factors similar to those which affect the use of the Welsh language *in the real world*, namely: other people's language proficiency and use, the language proficiency and confidence of the individual.
  - Factors which are *more specific to social networks*, namely: technology, the nature of the medium (i.e., the fact that networks call chiefly for written communication, and that this mode of communication is public)
- Of all the obstacles noted by participants and focus groups, the following were stated as being the most influential:
  - The language use/proficiency of others
  - Technology
  - Language skills and confidence
  - Criticism and the fear of criticism
  - A lack of Welsh medium content

4.2 The Questionnaire: Further Analysis

An electronic questionnaire was carried out during January and February 2014. 400 responses were received, from people all over Wales, providing a good geographical cross-section.

When drawing up the questionnaire, our intention was to gather information and data regarding the following:

- Profile Information
- Language Use (in general)
- Language Use and Habits on social networks
- The reasons for language use on the networks
- Changing language use on the networks

A list of the questions contained in the questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1. Complete data from the questionnaire, including charts, can be found in Appendix 2. Below is a summary of the data and information collected.

4.2.1 Key Points: Profile Information

Age

A large number of participants were adults, with 77.8% aged 25 - 60. Responses were received from young people also, with 11.2% of participants being aged 16 - 25.

Gender
Since the questionnaire was open to the public, we were unable to control who could participate. As a result, we found that the number of female participants was much higher than that of males, with 69.2% women and 30.8% men.

Language Choice
88.5% of participants completed the questionnaire in Welsh, with the rest (11.5%) responding in English. The majority of people with whom the Mentrau Iaith are in contact are Welsh speakers or Welsh learners. It was therefore useful to receive a strong response from Welsh speakers, as they are the ones who are most likely to use Welsh on social networks. It was equally useful to receive English language responses, thereby allowing us to include learners and low-confidence Welsh speakers in our work.

Fluency
It was important to ask after participants' fluency and linguistic skills in order to ensure that they were able to speak Welsh, and to identify their level. 83% stated they were fluent Welsh speakers, with 17% stating that they were either learning Welsh at the time of completion, or had done so as a second language and to a high level.

4.2.2 Language Use in Daily Life

Speaking
Regarding language use in different contexts, a high number of participants spoke Welsh every day at work/school (77%), outside work/school (63%), with family at home (75%), or in other activities (55%).

Reading
The data for the frequency with which participants read Welsh was lower for the traditional media, namely books, magazines and newspapers, than that of digital media. 25% said they read books in Welsh every day; 10.9% that they read magazines, and 9.8% said they read newspapers. However, almost half (41.6%) said they read Welsh online every day, and over half (58.9%) said they read Welsh every day through social networks.

Writing
Figures similar to the above were seen for writing in Welsh, with 62% stating they wrote emails in Welsh every day, 49.5% that they wrote in Welsh on social networks, 63.7% that they wrote personal notes, and 53.3% that they wrote documents on computers every day. It is significant that the proportion of participants who write on social networks every day is lower than for the more traditional media - although the figure is not very low - since another study (Beaufort:

2013) discovered: "Regular usage of Welsh online is very low… The results show that much higher proportions of Welsh speakers are communicating online in English than in Welsh…"[1]

4.2.3 Language Use on Social Networks

Participants' Language Use

In the questionnaire participants were asked about their language use on social networks. The purpose of the question was to find out which networks the participants used, and which language they tended to use.

The chart below illustrates the data for the four most popular networks, which are Facebook, Twitter, Youtube and LinkedIn.

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[1] Beaufort Research, "Exploring Welsh Speakers' Language Use in their Everyday Lives", commissioned by The Welsh Government, BBC Wales and S4C, 2013, pp. 12-24.

13. Y 4 ateb mwyaf poblogaidd

Legend:
- Dwi ddim yn defnyddio'r rhwydwaith hwn
- Saesneg pob tro
- Mwy o Saesneg na Cymraeg
- Tua'r un faint o Gymraeg a Saesneg
- Mwy o Gymraeg na Saesneg
- Cymraeg pob tro

Rhwydwaith cymdeithasol (y-axis)

% (x-axis)
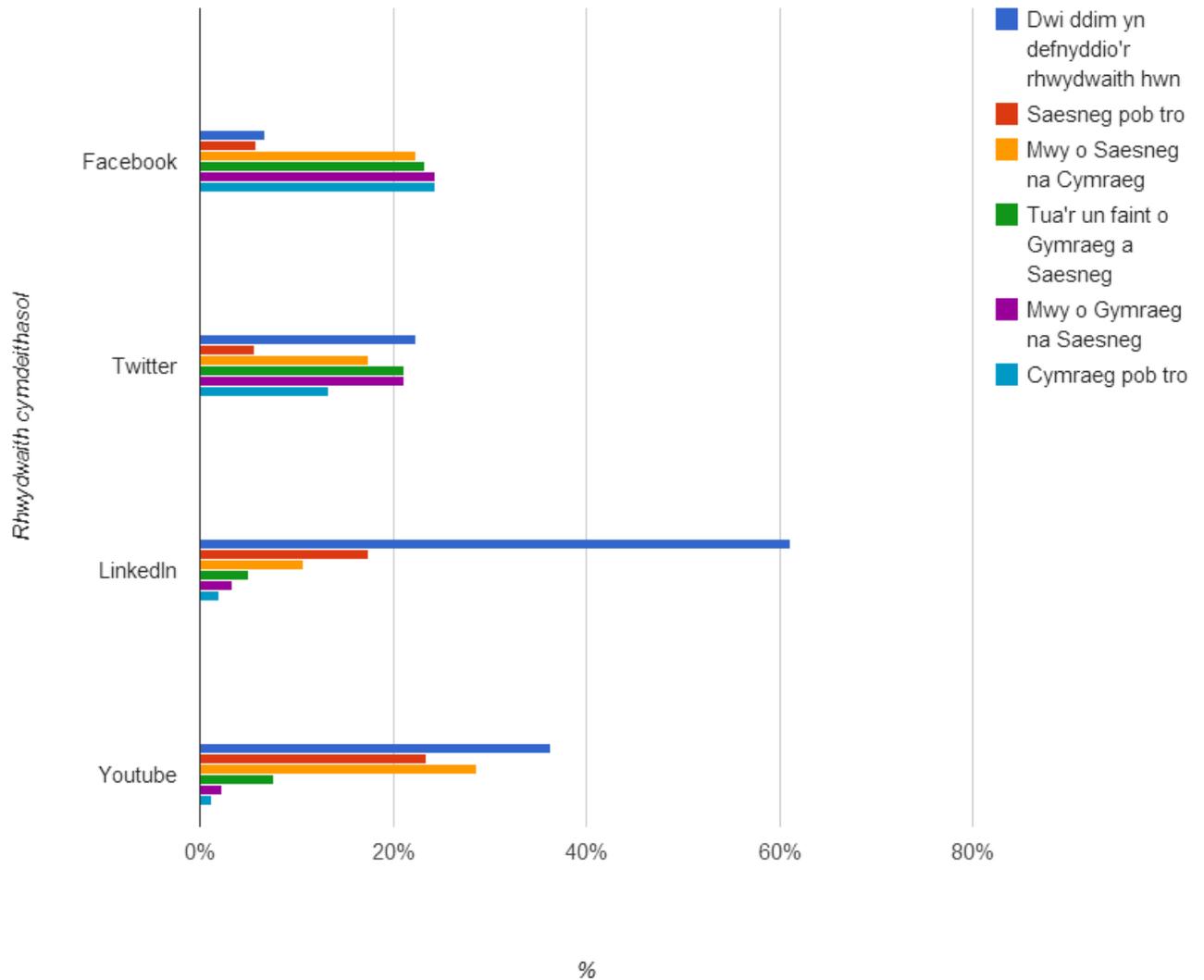
We can see from the data that a significant number of participants say they use more Welsh than English on Facebook and Twitter, with 48.8% stating *Welsh every time* or *more Welsh than English* for Facebook and 34.4% for Twitter. However, many participants also state that they use *English every time* or *more English than Welsh* for these networks, with 28.2% stating this for Facebook and 23% for Twitter. These figures are once again similar to those seen in other recent studies. Our results are similar to those in Honeycutt and Cunliffe (2010), which found

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that 45% of personal profiles on Facebook which use Welsh, use Welsh only. On the other hand, Honeycutt and Cunliffe found that 29% of Welsh speakers do not use Welsh on their Facebook profiles at all.

When we consider the very high percentages found in our study in response to the question regarding general language use for speaking, reading and writing (questions 9, 10 and 11 of the questionnaire), these figures for the use of Welsh on social networks, especially on Facebook and Twitter, are relatively low.

Moreover, this information regarding the use of Welsh on the two main social networks, Facebook and Twitter, echoes the anecdotal information received in the focus groups which stated that the use of Welsh on social networks was very low. If language use for Welsh speakers, who have high Welsh usage in other fields of their everyday lives, is relatively low on social networks, we need to consider further research work to investigate the language use of those who do not consider themselves to be fluent, and possibly those who, as a result of low usage and a lack of opportunities, have no confidence in their Welsh language abilities.

Language Use by Other Welsh Speakers
Participants were asked about this for main three main reasons: in order to create a wider picture of Welsh language use from other people the participants knew; to avoid the bias of social appropriateness that may influence replies to self-assessment questionnaires; and finally to gather more qualitative, anecdotal information regarding the language use of Welsh speakers on social networks in general.

We asked the question "Do you know any Welsh speakers who do not use Welsh on social networks?" as a closed question. The majority of participants (76.1%) responding "Yes".

Ydych chi'n adnabod unrhyw siaradwyr Cymraeg sy ddim yn defnyddio'r Gymraeg ar y rhwydweithiau cymdeithasol?

■ Ydw
■ Nac ydw
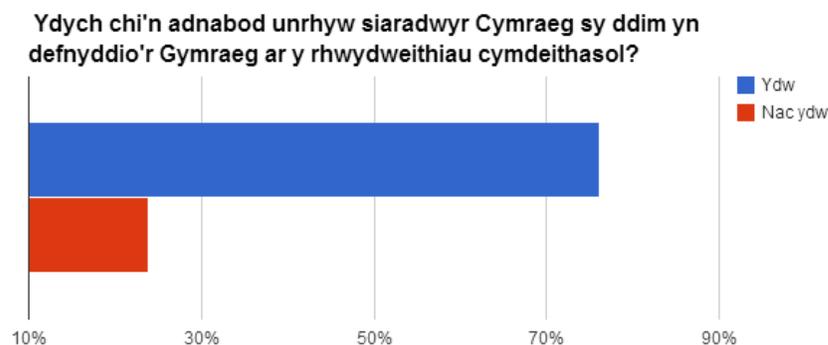
As part of this question, participants were given the option of expanding on approximately how many Welsh speakers they knew who did not use Welsh on social networks, by giving further descriptive comments. Of the 156 people who chose this option, around half of them noted that "a large number", "too many" or "many" of their friends and contacts who could speak Welsh did not use any Welsh at all on social networks:

> *"Methu cyfri - y rheini sy'n siarad Cymraeg ond yn dewis peidio gyda*

theulu/ffrindiau" / "Lost count - those that speak Welsh but choose not to with family/friends"
*"Gormod o lawer" / "Far to many"*
"Llawer iawn o Gymry Cymraeg yn gosod sylwadau uniaith Saesneg ar eu tudalennau Facebook. Dros hanner fy ffrindiau sy'n medru'r Gymraeg!" / "Very many Welsh speakers who place English-only comments on their Facebook pages. Over half of my friends who can speak Welsh!"
"Rhan fwyaf o fy ffrindiau" / "Most of my friends"

Considering the feedback and responses regarding language use by others, and comparing these with participants' personal use, it would seem that the data supports the anecdotal and descriptive information received from the focus groups, as well as the findings from other studies, that there is a large number of people able to speak Welsh who do not use Welsh on social networks.

4.2.4 The Importance of Increasing the Use of Welsh on Social Networks

This question was asked for two main reasons: firstly, in order to assess the extent to which participants considered the increase of Welsh language use to be important; secondly, as an additional opportunity to gather qualitative feedback regarding ways of increasing the use of Welsh on the networks in future.

Yn eich barn chi pa mor bwysig yw cynyddu'r defnydd ar y rhwydweithiau cymdeithasol yn y dyfodol?

Legend:
- Pwysig iawn
- Eitha pwysig
- Ddim yn bwysig iawn
- Ddim yn bwysig o gwbl
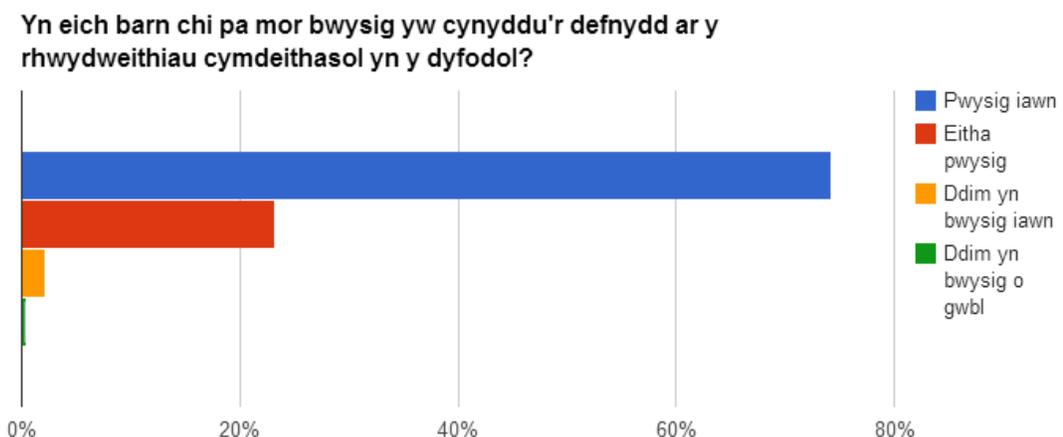
In reply to the question *"In your opinion how important is it to increase the use of Welsh?"* the vast majority of people (74.2%) stated it was "very important", with a substantial percentage (23.2%) saying it was "quite important". This means that 97.5% of the people questioned consider increasing the use of Welsh to be either important or very important.

"Mae'r cyfrwng mor ddylanwadol" / "The medium is so influential"

> *"Mae pobl yn treulio llawer iawn o'u bywydau ar-lein ac felly mae'n parth bwysig iawn ar gyfer sicrhau defnydd ymarferol yr iaith." / "People spend a large amount of their lives online and so it's a very important sector for ensuring practical use of the language."*

The responses given reflect individuals' awareness of the importance and influence of social networks as a modern means of communication.

4.2.5 Changing Language Habits on the Networks: Factors and Opportunities to Intervene

A Desire to Change Welsh Language Use
We asked the direct question: *"Would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks in future?"* Although the majority stated they would not change, this was not a substantial majority, with 40.2% stating they would change their use of Welsh on the networks in future.

Participants were given the opportunity to add to their replies with comments. Of the 40.2% that replied "Yes", 60 people left comments, with the majority of these - 40 comments from 60 - referring to individuals' wish to see an increase in the use of Welsh on the networks, either personally or on the part of others. The comments below reflect the kind of remarks given in relation to increasing the use of Welsh:

> *"Dw i eisiau defnyddio mwy o Gymraeg - gyda mwy o bobl" / "I want to use more Welsh - with more people"*
> *"Hoffwn wneud mwy o ddefnydd o'r Gymraeg" / "I'd like to use Welsh more"*
> *"Eisiau darganfod mwy o ffrindie sy'n siarad Cymraeg yn gyson" / "Want to discover more friends who speak Welsh regularly"*
> *"Hoffwn allu [cynyddu'r defnydd o'r Gymraeg] ond ffrindiau yn dewis Saesneg" / "I'd like to be able to [increase the use of Welsh] but friends choose English"*

The word-cloud below illustrates the words which came up most often in the replies to this question about changing Welsh language use. We can see that the words "mwy" (*"more"*), "cynyddu" (*"increase"*), "defnydd" (*"usage"*), "defnyddio" (*"use"*) were among the most popular, reflecting the mood of the qualitative replies.

What do Participants Want to Change

Those who replied "Yes" to the question *"Would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks?"* were referred automatically to another question, *"How would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks?"* The vast majority of participants - 95.2% - that they would increase their use of Welsh, a response which once again matches the qualitative comments received.
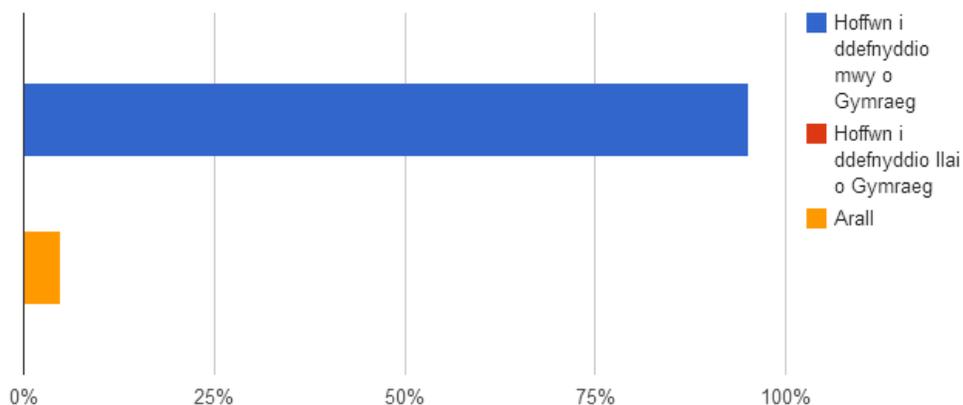
Those who who answered this question were then referred to an open question which required a qualitative answer: *"What are you reasons for your answer to question 18?"* As may be

expected, these replies varied widely in terms of length and detail, although it was possible to categorise a large number of responses according to the following themes:

Increasing Use, Language Choice, and Participation
Of all the comments, those which referred to increasing use, participating in the language around them and respecting the language choice of individuals were the most common. Participants often stated increasing use and the choice to participate bilingually, or in Welsh only:

> *"Dw i'n meddwl ei bod yn bwysig i arfer eu defnyddio fwy" / "I think it's important to get used to using them more"*
> *"Cymraeg yw fy mhrif iaith/fy newis iaith - a'r iaith dw i eisiau cyfranogi fwyaf ynddi ac iddi. Ac mae cyfranogi yn rhan allweddol o'r we a'r rhwydweithiau cymdeithasol." / "Welsh is my main language/language of choice - and the language I want to participate in - and contribute to - mostly. And participation is an essential part of the internet and social networks."*

Other comments warned that promoting the use of Welsh on the networks is essential because of the influence of English:
> *"Mae Saesneg yn bodoli ym mhob man - os nad ydym yn gallu defnyddio rhwydweithiau yn y Gymraeg mae'n golygu nad ydym yn gallu defnyddio'r iaith yn naturiol ac yn ddyddiol" / "English is everywhere - if we can't use networks in Welsh it means we can't use the language naturally and daily."*
> *"I want to be a part of a living Welsh language and not just a theoretical one."*

Improving Skills and Increasing Confidence
Another relatively popular response given by participants was that they wanted to increase or maintain their use of Welsh on the networks in order to increase or maintain their Welsh language skills. The comments suggest that some people are aware of the importance of using their Welsh in order to maintain proficiency, and that less use of Welsh would lead to a loss of skills, confidence or fluency in future:
> *"Mae [defnyddio'r rhwydweithiau] yn helpu fi dysgu a chodi hyder i ddefnyddio fy Cymraeg" / "[Using the networks] helps me to learn and increase my confidence to use my Welsh."*
> *"Dw i'n defnyddio'r iaith er mwyn cadw fy Nghymraeg" / "I use the language so that I can keep my Welsh"*
> *"Nawr fy mod yn mynychu coleg yn lle'r chweched dosbarth yn Ysgol Gymraeg, mae llawer llai o bobl yma yn medru siarad Cymraeg. Nid wyf am golli'r iaith, felly rydw i'n eisiau ei defnyddio mwy." / "Now that I attend university instead of the sixth form, a lot fewer people can speak Welsh. I don't want to lose the language so I want to use it more."*
> *"It would help me learn idioms, and feel more comfortable using the language [...] I have very little opportunity to practice Welsh except with my husband some evenings."*

It's worth noting once again that other research by Beaufort (2013) and Cunliffe, Prys and Morris (2012) which also consider the use of Welsh on social networks, also note confidence as a factor influencing individuals' online language use.

Other People's Influence

Another factor given by a number of participants was the influence of other people, or of considering other people as a non-Welsh speaking "audience". As well as being a reason participants gave for increasing their use of Welsh in order to normalise its use, the language use of other people, and their ability or inability to speak Welsh, is also an obstacle, as the comments below suggest:

> *"Allai ddim â deall pam bod Cymry Cymraeg yn mynnu dweud pethau cyffredinol yn Saesneg yn unig wrth y byd" / "I don't understand why Welsh speakers insist on saying general things to the world in English only"*
> *"Hoffwn i ddefnyddio mwy o Gymraeg ond mae'n anodd, yn enwedig ar Facebook, gan fod cyn lleied o'n ffrindiau/teulu yn siarad Cymraeg" / "I'd like to use more Welsh but it's difficult, especially on Facebook, since so few of my friends/family speak Welsh."*

Considering the influence of English in Wales and on the use of Welsh socially within the real world, these remarks and feedback were not surprising. Moreover, when we consider the participative and public nature of social networks in general, it's very likely that the influence of English and other languages have an even greater influence on the use of Welsh as a minority language, as people *"want everyone to understand"*, as one participant remarked.

Technology and the Welsh Language

A field which very often came up in participants' responses in both the questionnaire and the focus groups was technology, and technological developments in the Welsh language. In response to question 17, *"Would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks?"* 14 from 60 participants stated the importance of the availability of Welsh medium technology, including Welsh language interfaces, with many participants specifically naming Twitter and other networks:

"Hoffwn i gael rhyngwynebau Cymraeg ar y rhai [y rhwydweithiau] dw i'n eu defnyddio" / "I'd like to have Welsh interfaces on the ones [the networks] I use"
"Sa fo'n braf gweld fwy o gefnogaeth dechnegol i'r iaith gan lwyfannau fel Twitter a YouTube" / "It would be good to see more technical support for the language from platforms like Twitter and YouTube"
"Mwy o Gymraeg ar LinkedIn ac Internet Dating" / "More Welsh on LinkedIn and Internet Dating"

Most of the participant who referred specifically to technology were of the opinion that the lack of technological development in Welsh was currently an obstacle:
> *"[Mae] gormod o lefydd ar y we yn hanner ymateb i'r angen am ddwyieithrwydd felly*

does gen i ddim cyfle i wneud popeth yn Gymraeg" / "Too many places on the internet [are] half-responding to the need for bilingualism so there's no opportunity to do everything in Welsh"

"Dydy'r dechnoleg ddim yn ei le ar gyfer rhyngwyneb Cymraeg i Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Myspace, a.y.b" / "The technology isn't there for a Welsh interface for Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Myspace, etc."

"Mae'r spellcheck ar yr iphone / ipad yn gwneud defnyddio'r Gymraeg yn fwy o ymdrech, o lawer" / "The spellcheck on the i-phone / i-pad makes using Welsh more of an effort, by far"

"I wish my devices wouldn't auto correct Welsh words all the time"

However, it is interesting to note that in another question which asks after the importance of network interfaces for language use, a substantial share of participants (34.6%) said that social network interfaces did not affect their language use at all. Although this is a high percentage of people who do not feel that interface language influences their language use, the rest, 65.4%, feel that the language of an interface affects their use of Welsh to a degree.

On the whole, the qualitative feedback suggests that interface language and the development of Welsh medium technology are important factors which affect an individual's use of language. This also suggests that while a lack of development is in some ways an obstacle, the potential to develop Welsh language technology further, and the current attempts to do so by organisations and institutions with responsibility for promoting the Welsh language, are reassuring.

4.3 Focus Groups

In addition to the online questionnaire, we also held focus groups with 30 Mentrau Iaith Field Officers in February 2014. The focus groups concentrated on the following questions:

- What are your personal and professional experiences of Twitter/Facebook and other social networks?
- What would be the incentives for change regarding the use of Welsh?
- Examples of good practice?

4.3.1 Personal Experiences

Officers were first given the opportunity to discuss openly their experiences of Welsh language use on social networks. Their personal experiences as individuals were discussed, along with their professional experiences while working in the field with the Mentrau Iaith. Although there was much discussion regarding personal experiences, many of the Officers also raised some themes which are described below. A number of these themes and points were similar to those which arose in the participants' questionnaires, such as:

- **The language use and habits of others** - there is a tendency on the part of the vast majority to use only English when they have an "English" audience in mind.
- **Confidence** - anecdotal evidence points to lack of confidence being a negative factor affecting the use of Welsh by learners and those who have received a Welsh-medium education.

The Media

Many of the Officers noted that social networks provide a challenging media for minority language or bilingual communication. It was noted that many institutions (some County Councils, The Millennium Centre) have separate Welsh and English Twitter and Facebook streams, with the individual choosing which stream to follow. Most Officers believed this form of communication was ineffective in terms of promoting the Welsh language and increasing its use for a number of reasons:

- It does not integrate Welsh and English
- Not everybody is aware of the existence of a Welsh language medium
- The majority of people in Wales have some understanding of Welsh - albeit the odd word or expression - so why force non-Welsh speakers to see English messages only?
- In some cases it would seem that English medium accounts are prioritised by organisations and companies which sometimes have to release messages at short notice, without having time to translate them.

It was agreed that bilingual communication from a single account was good practice on social networks, and that organisations, institutions and companies should be encouraged to follow it.

Technology

Another topic raised by Officers was Welsh language technology. The main points raised closely reflect the feedback and comments received from participants' questionnaires. These were:

- the lack of development regarding Welsh language interfaces for some of the social media, especially Twitter
- that "autocorrect" causes difficulties when trying to write messages quickly

Another thing noted by the focus groups was that individuals, organisations and companies that wish to communicate in Welsh on Twitter have to be even more concise, as some letters of the Welsh alphabet - such as ch, dd, ff, ng, ll, ph, rh, th - count as more than one letter. At first sight, this may not seem a major problem, but we must remember that those who use Twitter in Welsh have fewer characters with which to communicate their messages. For instance, the message below from one Menter Iaith, asking for volunteers at the local Ffiliffest festival, uses 126 letters in Welsh, but Twitter counts them as being 139:

*A hoffech **ch**i wirfo**dd**oli yn ŵyl **Ff**ili**ff**est eleni? Cysy**ll**tw**ch** â
ffionrees@mentercaerffili.org os oes genny**ch dd**i**dd**ordeb bod yn **rh**an o'r tîm!*

Although the difference between the number of letters that Twitter counts is not very large, this could quite possibly be an obstacle for communicating on Twitter in Welsh, especially for those individuals who use the networks for personal communication.

Criticism and Correct Language
Many Officers stated that they had received criticism in the past for not using standard Welsh, or for mis-using mutations on social networks. They were also aware of others locally who'd had the same experience. There was unanimous support for the idea that any use of Welsh on social networks by people of all ages and ability was to be welcomed and encouraged, especially if this comes from Welsh learners or fairly fluent speakers who need to increase their linguistic confidence. In addition to this, although there was recognition of the importance of correct language on social networks, Officers stated they would prefer people to use the Welsh they have without worrying about making mistakes.

The Influence and Responsibility of Organisations, Companies and Institutions
Several Officers noted the need to make the Welsh language more visible and more audible on the networks, and that that it was the responsibility of bodies in all sectors - not of single individuals - to increase their use of Welsh. It was accepted that this was an essential point, and that comparisons could be drawn between the use of Welsh on social networks and in the real world: if the language is visible and audible in an office or shop, the customer is far more likely to communicate with staff in Welsh and to take advantage of any Welsh language service on offer. The same is true of Welsh in the digital world, and organisations have a responsibility to consider how they communicate with their Welsh speaking customers.

Participants also saw an opportunity for organisations in all sectors to integrate the Welsh language and principles of bilingual communication into their social media training.

4.3.2 What would be our Language Change Incentives for Welsh?

In addition to the experiences described above regarding the fields which require action, the following points were also made by the groups:

Natural Bilingualism
According to many participants in the focus groups the main aim for the future is to increase the use of Welsh by normalising its use, and this means promoting the use of natural Welsh and natural bilingualism. One group noted that translating messages "robotically" is often tiresome for those who can read the messages in both languages. Rather than doing this, it was suggested that communicating in a more natural way would be better, using a combination of Welsh and English according to the nature of the message or the contents the individual wishes to share.

The Influence of Famous People

Every group stated that the use of Welsh by famous people is important and influential, especially considering that social networks make it easier to "follow" and to communicate with celebrities in a public way. Although all groups said that increasing celebrities' use of Welsh was an opportunity that could be acted upon, some participants were disappointed and frustrated that so little Welsh was used by some individuals that have won fame as a result of careers in the Welsh language media or in Welsh sport.

More Welsh Language Content

As in the feedback received in the questionnaires, it was stated again that the lack of Welsh language content was an important factor affecting language use on the networks. It was noted that the nature and language of the messages that individuals share has, quite naturally, an effect on eventual language use when leaving comments.

4.3.3 Examples of Good Practice

Officers noted a number of simple actions and campaigns as examples of good practice which have led in the past to creating greater Welsh language content, such as:

- images, e.g., "Gwenwch mae'n Ddydd Gwener" ("Smile it's Friday") - examples of pictures and slogans of this kind that have come from Pobl Caerdydd, a Welsh language website for Cardiff people, and the "Cymraeg" page run by the Welsh Government.
- using Welsh hashtags (#) for messages and Welsh medium content rather than one English medium hashtag for campaigns or projects
- Videos
  - the video, "atalnodi" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=APfFTP71E2E
  - the BBC's calon lân campaign http://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/0/rugby-union/25870657
  - Irish language videos by TG Lurgan https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hz63M3v11nE&list=PLnSq1mdHpk0aCXO9wL8gzgGagRRXKHCFa
- #yrawrgymraeg
- The "her yr wythnos" or "Gair y dydd" campaigns for Welsh learners - small, regular, cumulative things

Conclusions

By carrying out this research work we have recognised the main factors which affect individuals' use of the Welsh language on social networks, as well as contributing to the information and research studies currently available in relation to language use on the networks in Wales.

The main findings of our work, as described in the executive summary and in section 4.1, strongly suggest that the social networks are essential media which language planners must address in the future, while there is further work to be done to change the attitudes and

behaviour of Welsh speakers of all ages and abilities in order to encourage a greater use of Welsh on the networks.

The main finding to be addressed is the lack of Welsh language use in general, including on the part of confident Welsh speakers who make regular use of Welsh in other aspects of their lives, but who rarely, or never, use Welsh on the networks. With it being such a popular and influential mode of communication, increasing the use of Welsh on digital and social networks should and could contribute greatly to the longterm aim of promoting the Welsh language and its use throughout Wales.

Appendix 1 - The Questionnaire

1. Ym mha iaith hoffech chi gwblhau'r holiadur hwn?
In which language would you like to complete this questionnaire?
Welsh / English (refer to English version)

2. What is your post code?

3. What age are you?
Under 12
12 - 16
16 - 24
25 - 40
41 - 60
61 - 80
Over 80

3. Do you own:
A desktop
A laptop
A tablet
A smartphone
None of the above

4.?Are you male / female?

5. Of the people who live with you, who can speak Welsh?
Mother and father
Mother
Father
Guardian
Brother(s)
Sister(s)
Son(s)
Daughter(s)
Husband / wife / partner
No-one

6. Do you consider yourself to be:
A fluent Welsh speaker
A fluent second language speaker
A learner
Someone who doesn't speak Welsh at all

7. State the level of your Welsh language skill for each of the following:
Speaking
Reading

Writing

8. Speaking: How often do you use Welsh…?
With friends at school/work?
With friends outside work/school?
With your family at home?
During activities?

9. Reading: How often do you use Welsh when reading…?
Books
Magazines
Newspapers
The internet (e.g. news, e-mails)
Social networks

10. Writing: How often do you use Welsh when writing…?
E-mails
On social networks
Personal notes
Documents on a computer

11. Do you use any social networks/websites(e.g. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr)?
Yes
No → end questionnaire

12. Below is a list of social networks and websites. Note which one(s) you use and which language you tend to use. "Use" means: looking at or reading content on the network; posting comments, content, or communicating on the networks; any other activity.

13. What do you mostly use these networks for?
Keeping in touch with family/friends
Research
Campaigning and affecting change
Promoting (e.g. events)
Giving an opinion

14. Do you use them for…?
Work
Personal use
Both

15. Do you use the Welsh interface for any social networks/websites?
Yes
No

16. Would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks in the future?
Yes
No

17. How would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks?
I would like to use more Welsh
I would like to use less Welsh
Other

18. What are your reasons for your answer to Question 18?

[Comments]

19. In your opinion, which factors influence your use of Welsh on social networks? (1 = most influential; 5 = least influential; if it has no influence choose "no influence")
The language used by friends
The nature of the message I want to share
Confidence in my Welsh
The language used by the people I want to see the message
The network interface

20. Is there anything that prevents you from using Welsh on social networks?
Yes
No
I'm not sure

21. In your opinion how important is it to increase the use of Welsh on social networks in the future?
Very important
Quite important
Not very important
Not important at all

22. Do you know any Welsh speakers who do not use Welsh on social networks?
Yes
No

23. Is there anything else you'd like to add regarding Welsh and the social networks?
[Comments]

Appendix 2 - Responses to the Questionnaire

## 1. In which language would you like to complete this questionnaire?

Legend:
- Welsh
- English
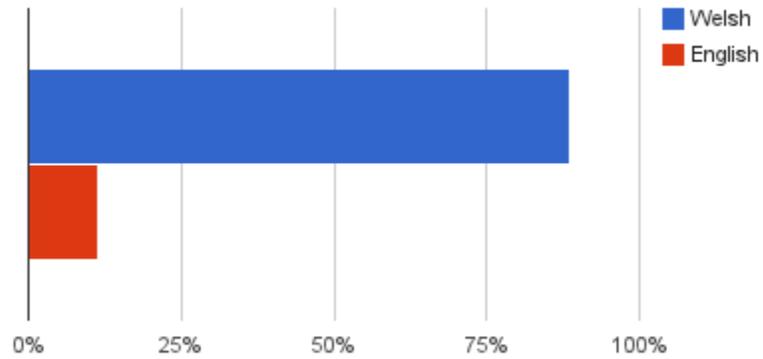
## 2. What is your post code? [No chart]

3. What is your age?

Legend:
- Under 12
- 12 - 15
- 16-24
- 25-40
- 41-60
- 61-80
- Over 80

4. Do you own a:

Legend:
- Desktop Comput...
- Laptop
- Tablet
- Smartp...
- None of the above
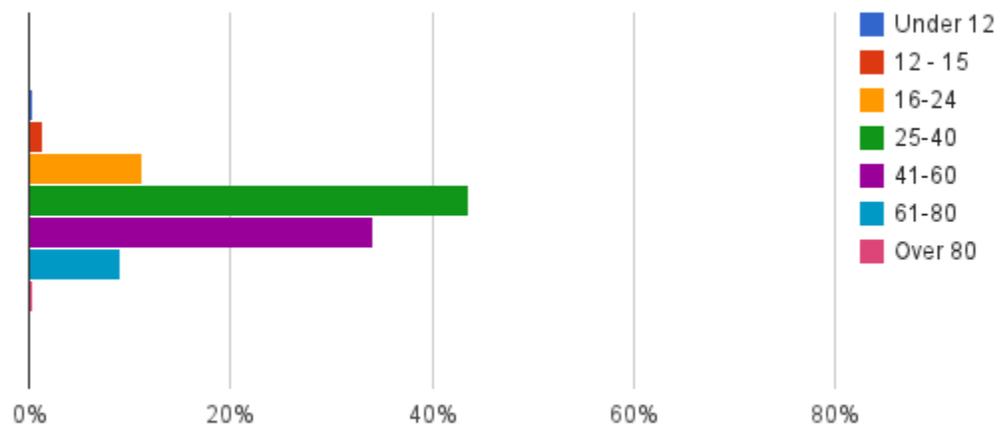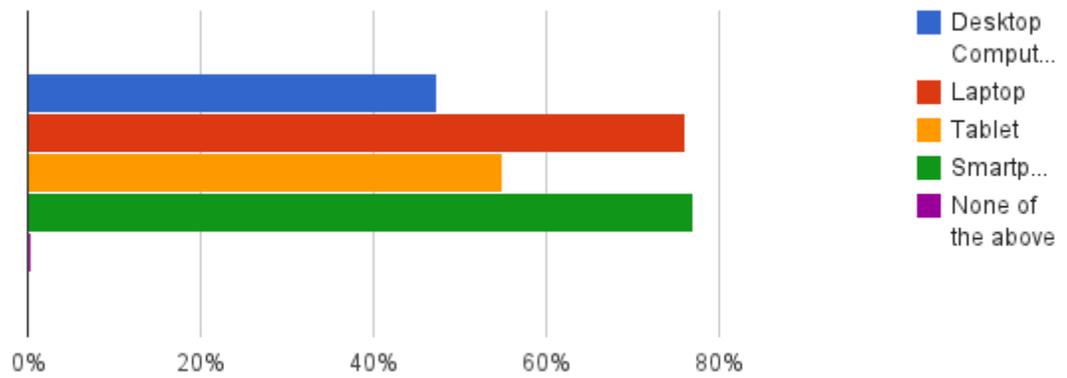
5. Are you Male / Female?

Legend:
- Male
- Female
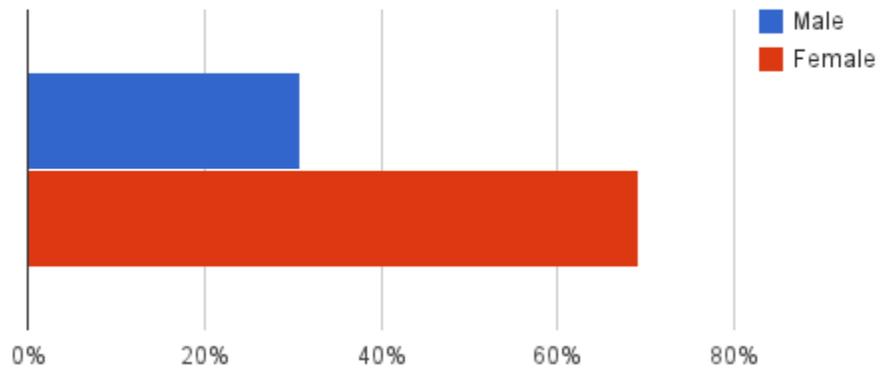
6. Of those who live with you, who can speak Welsh?

Legend:
- Mum and Dad
- Mum
- Dad
- Guardian
- Brother(s)
- Sister(s)
- Son(s)
- Daughter(s)
- Husband /...
- Nobody

7. Do you consider yourself to be:

Legend:
- Fluent Welsh speaker
- Second language fluent
- Learner
- I don't speak Welsh at all
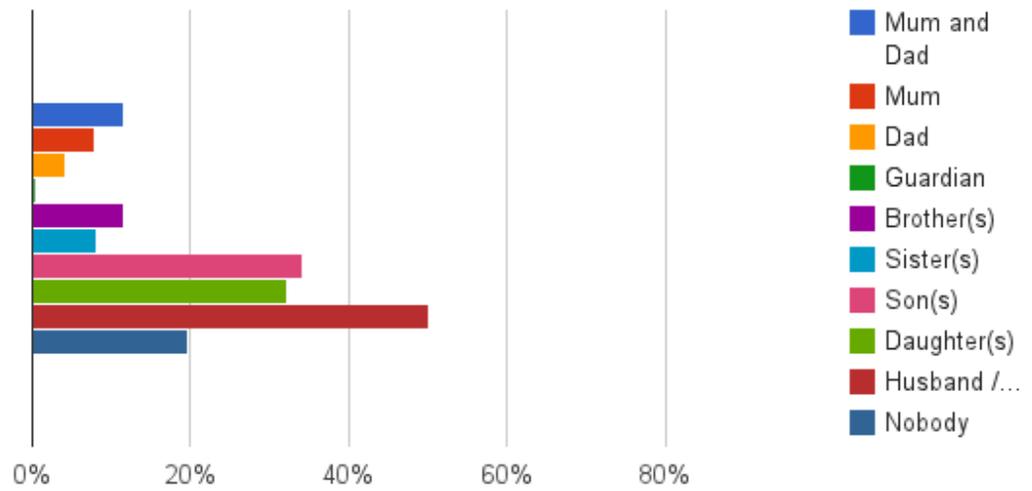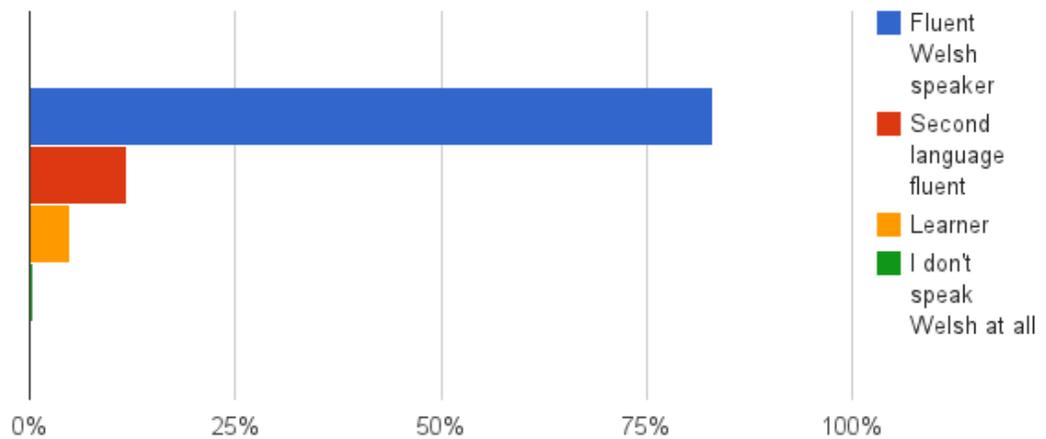
8. Note your skill levels in Welsh below:

Legend:
- Fluent
- Very good
- Fair
- Not good

9. Speaking: how often do you use Welsh?

Legend: Every day | Several times a week | Once a week | Once a fortnight | Once a month | Less than monthly | Never
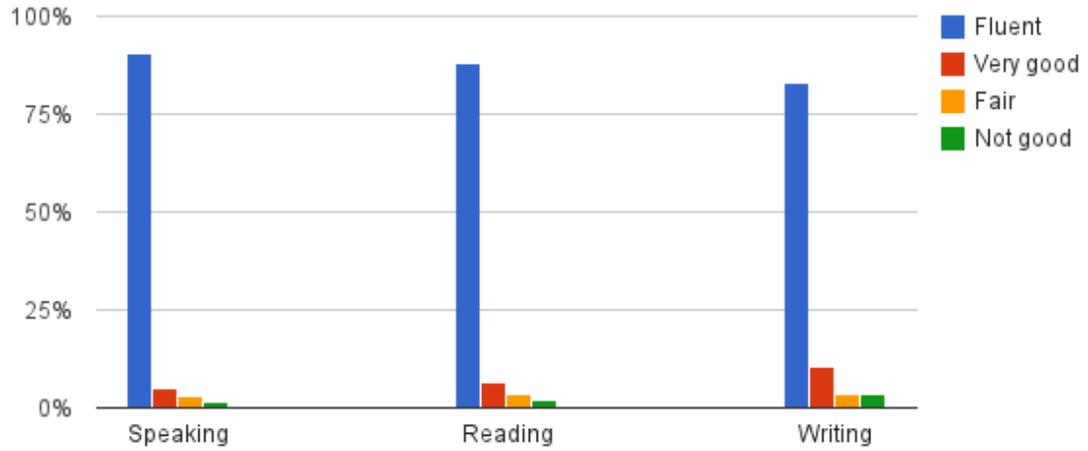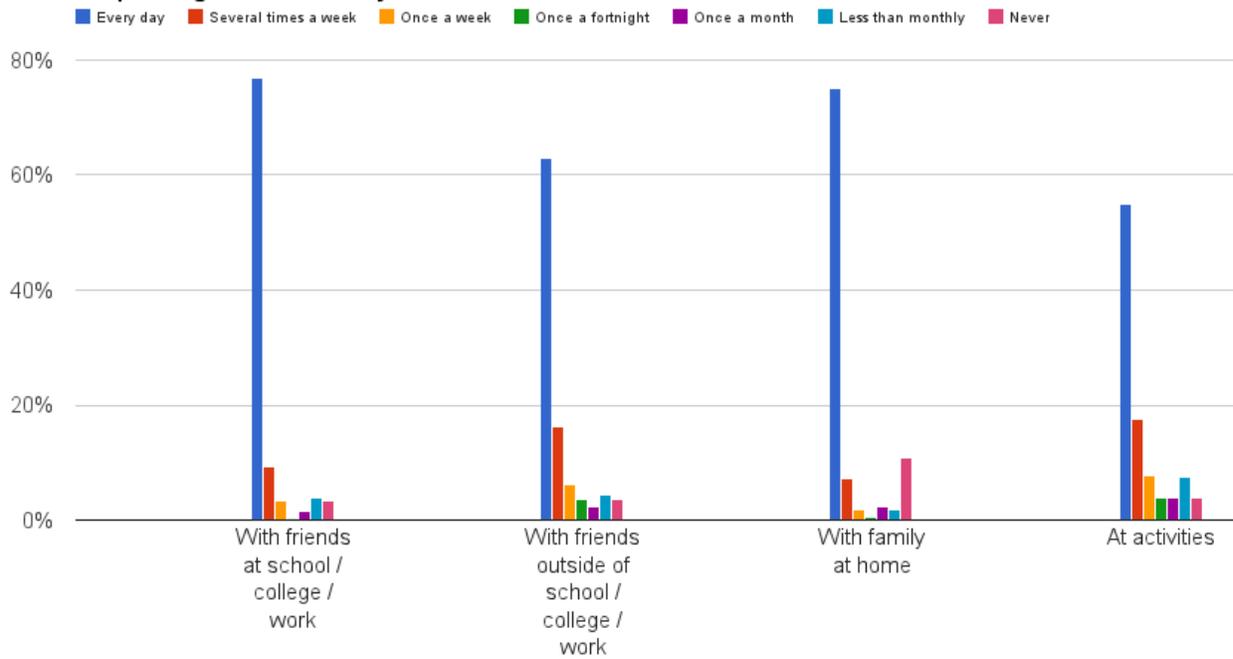
**10. Reading: How often do you read in Welsh?**
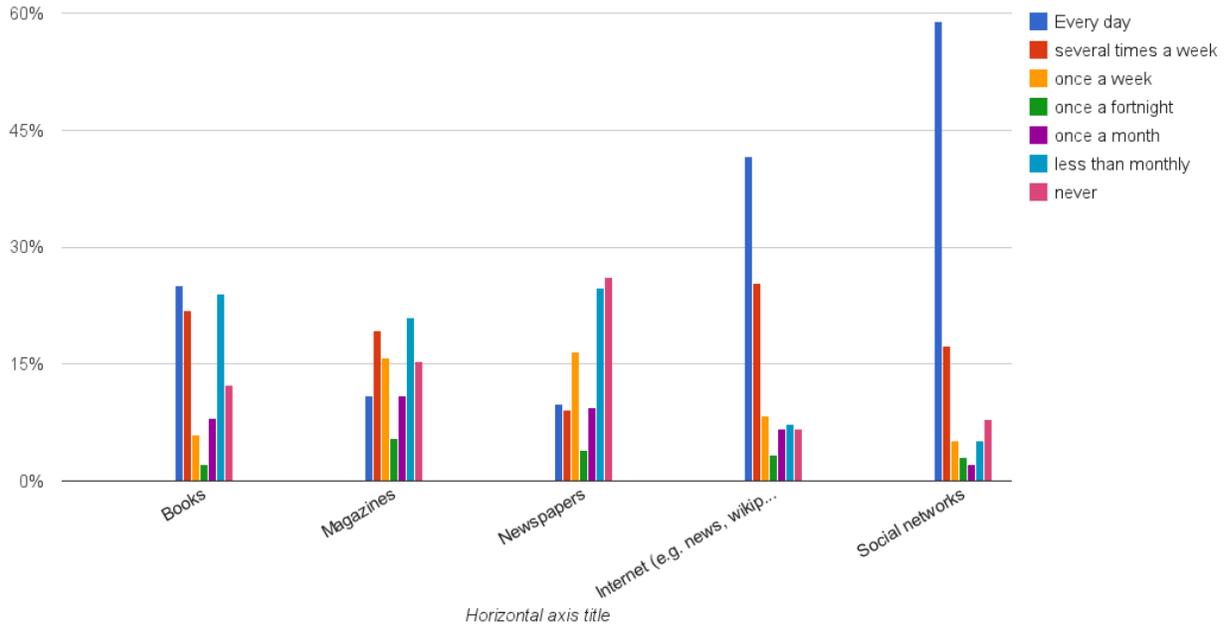
**11. Writing: How often do you write in Welsh?**
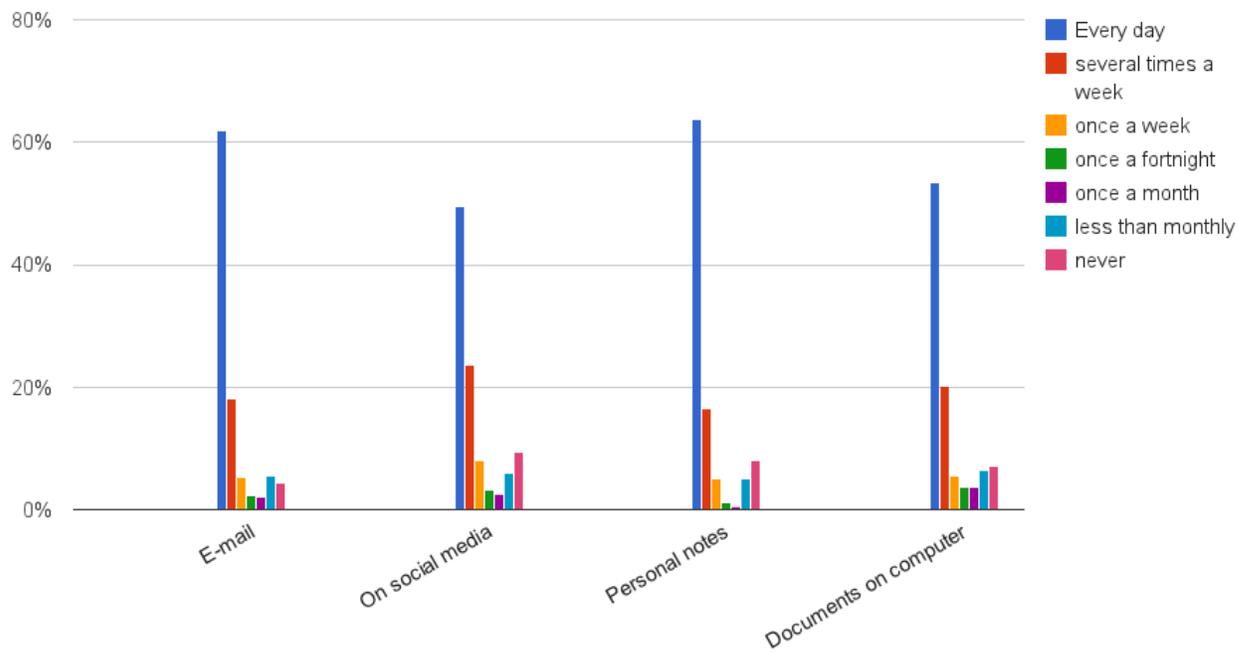
12. Do you use any social networks / websites? (e.g Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Youtube, Google+, Pinterest, Instagram, Flickr, Tumblr)
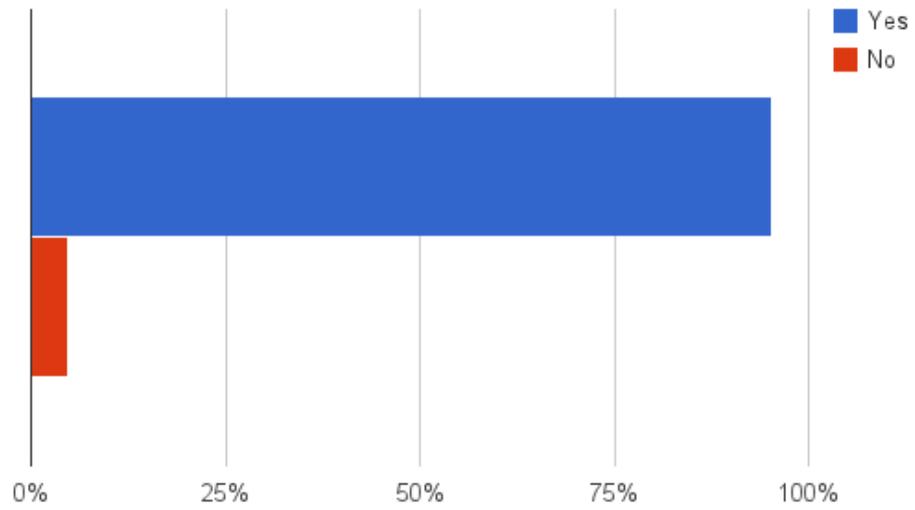
13. The 4 most popular answers

Legend:
- I don't use this network
- English every time
- More English than Welsh
- About the same amount of English and Welsh
- More Welsh than English
- Welsh every time

14. What do you mostly use these networks for?

Legend:
- Keep in touch with family / frie...
- Research
- Promoting (e.g. events, services)
- Camaigning and influencing
- Giving opinion

15. Do you use them for...

Legend: Work (blue), Personal (red), Both (orange)

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%
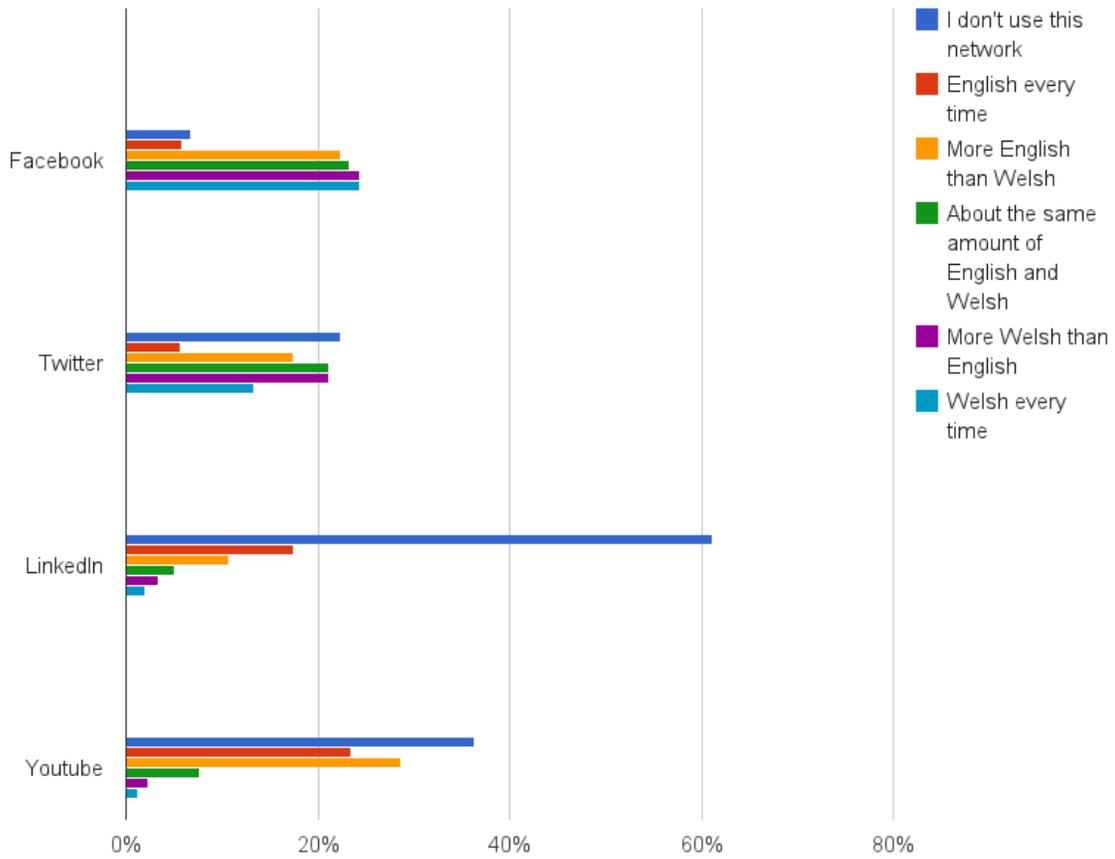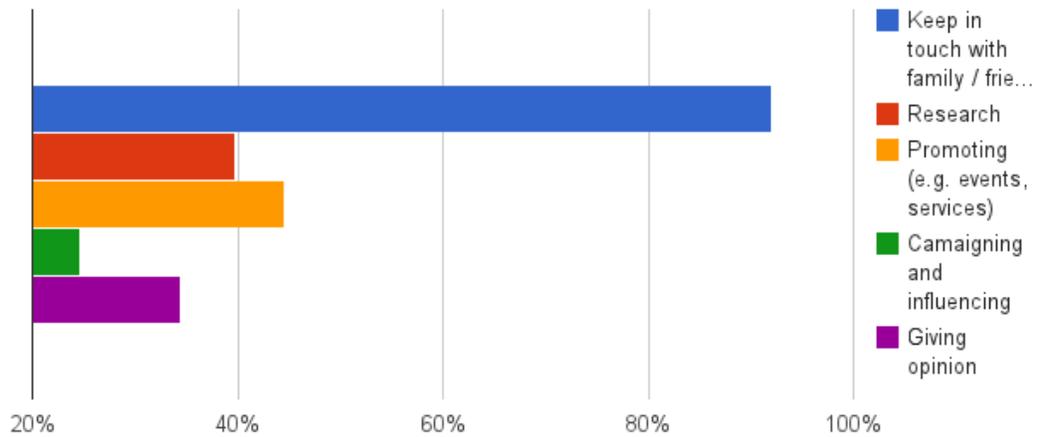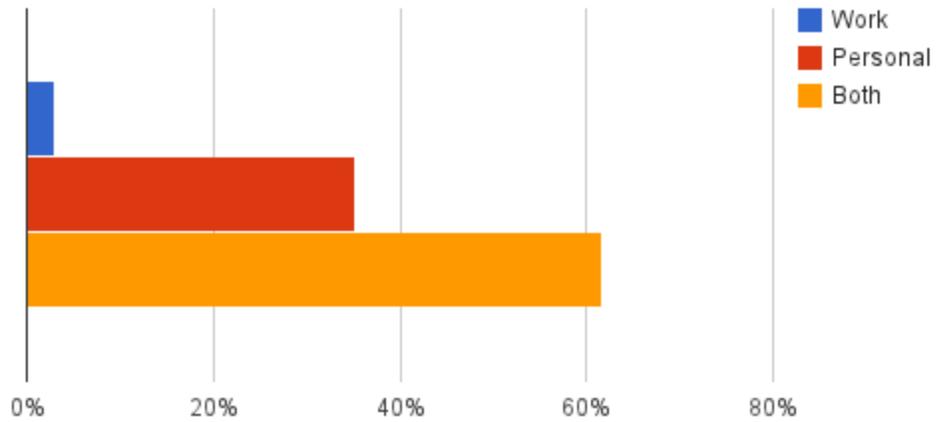
16. Do you use a Welsh language interface for any networks / websites?
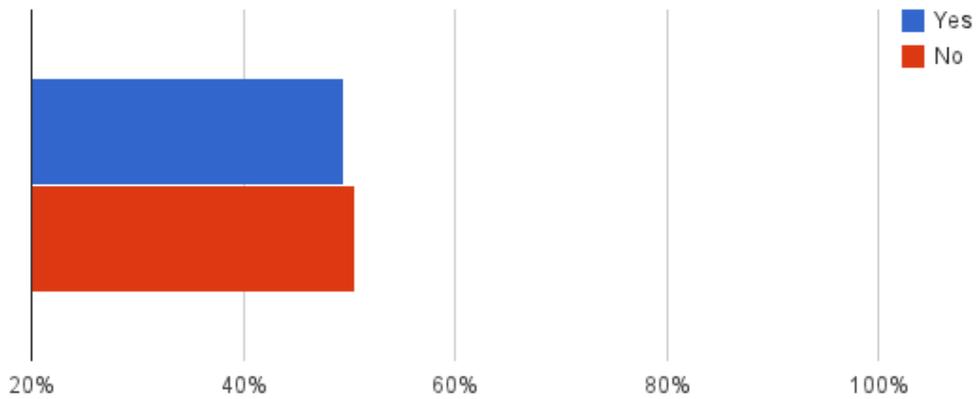
Legend: Yes (blue), No (red)

X-axis: 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%, 100%

17. Would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks in the future?

Legend: Yes (blue), No (red)

X-axis: 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%

18. How would you like to change your use of Welsh on social networks?

Legend:
- I'd like to use more Welsh (blue)
- I'd like to use less Welsh (red)
- Other (orange)
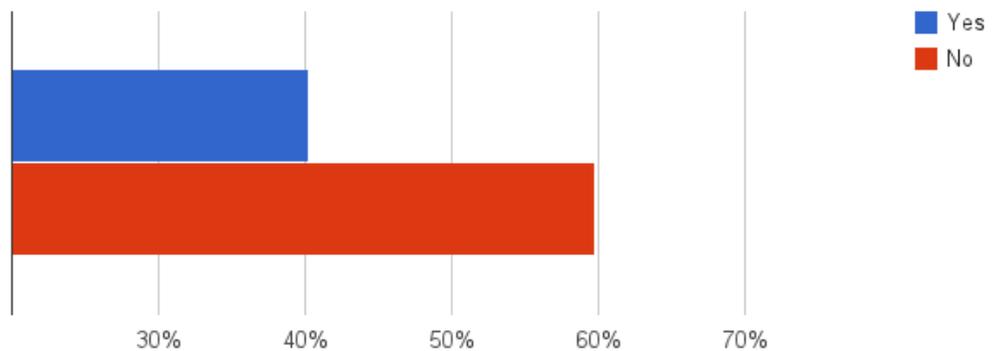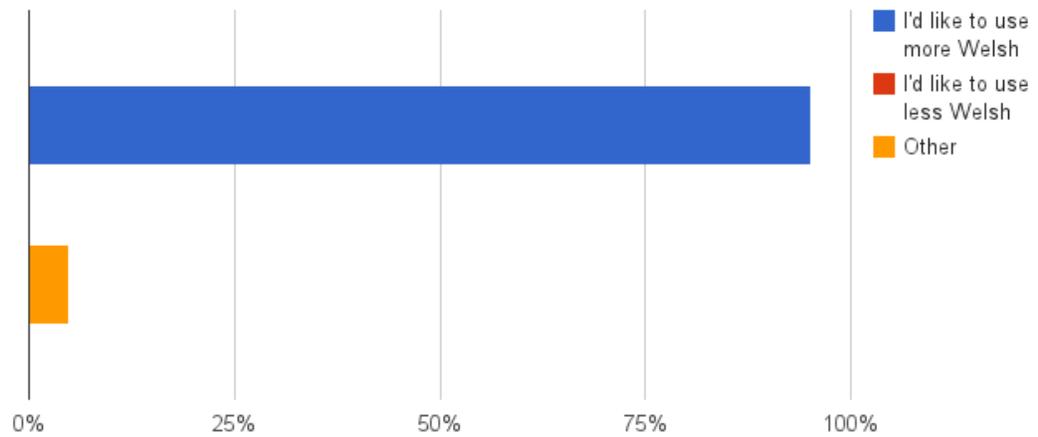
19. What are your reasons for your answer to question 18? [comments – no chart]

20. Which factors do you think most influence your use of Welsh on social networks? (1= most influencial; 5=least influencial; if it does not influence, note ʺdoes not influenceʺ)

	1	2	3	4	5	Does not influence
Language use of friends	25%	20.5%	25%	10.4%	3.1%	15.8%
Nature of the message or content I wish to share	22.4%	30.6%	19.9%	10.1%	3.1%	13.6%
My confidence in Welsh	12.3%	12.9%	12.9%	12.3%	11.3%	37.9%
Language use of those who I want to see the message	27.8%	22.1%	18.9%	15.8%	3.7%	11.3%
The interface of the network	5.3%	3.8%	8.2%	20.8%	27.3%	34.6%

21. Is there anything which restricts your use of Welsh on social networks?

Legend: Yes (blue), No (red), I don't know (orange)

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%
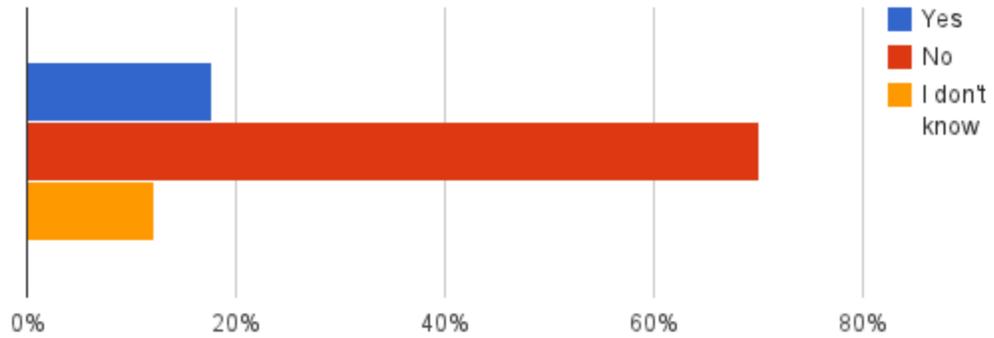
22. In your opinion how important is increasing the use of Welsh on social networks in the future?

Legend: Very important (blue), Quite important (red), Not very important (orange), Not important at all (green)

X-axis: 0%, 20%, 40%, 60%, 80%

23. Do you know any Welsh speakers who do not use Welsh on social networks?

Legend: Yes (blue), No (red)

X-axis: 10%, 30%, 50%, 70%, 90%