

Knowledge and Analytical Services briefing on social and economic differences between Wales and rest of UK relevant to decisions on isolation

7th March 2020

Population age distribution

Wales has an older population than the other countries in the UK. The 2018 mid year estimates show that 20.8% of the population is aged over 65 in Wales compared to 18.3% in the UK. Conversely Wales has a smaller proportion of its population aged under 18 (20.1% vs 21.2%, only Scotland is lower at 18.9%).

Source: 2018 mid year estimates

Household composition comparison and carers

The 2011 census and other data show:

- Wales has a slightly higher proportion of single person households compared to the UK (30.8% vs 30.6%) and lone parent households with dependent children (7.5% vs 7.2%)
- Average household size in Wales is smaller than the UK (2.27 vs 2.37)
- Due to its age structure Wales has a higher proportion of households which are occupied by only those aged 65 or over (22.9% vs 20.8%), but it has a lower proportion of households with dependent children (28.2% vs 28.9%)
- Wales has the highest percentage of people providing unpaid care in the UK of the 4 nations (12.1% vs 10.3% for the UK)

Therefore proposals to socially isolate households and then family members could impact on more on those aged 65 or over than other parts of the UK, in particular the provision of unpaid care from relatives and friends may also be affected more in Wales than the UK.

Source: 2011 census, 2018 Household estimates for Wales, ONS families and households (UK)

Trends in GP consultations for influenza-like illness symptoms

One approach for understanding the potential relative likelihood of self-isolation in Wales compared with the rest of the UK would be to understand the different rates of GP consultations on influenza-like symptoms. This information is available from Public Health agencies, but further briefing from Public Health Wales might provide a more robust consideration of these trends.

In week 09 of 2020, the overall weekly influenza-like illness (ILI) GP consultation rate continues to be below baseline threshold in England. In the devolved

administrations, ILI rates continue to be below baseline levels in Scotland and Northern Ireland, however in the low intensity level in Wales for week 09 (i.e slightly above the baseline).

The table below shows the trend over the winter. We are not experts on understanding of these data, and therefore would advise seeking PHW views. But whilst the data are volatile they do suggest that outside of the pressurised weeks in December and January, consultation rates were lower in Wales than England. However during the weeks of high pressure consultation rates in Wales far exceeded England.

These data of course do not capture where people may already be self-isolating or self-managing their symptoms to avoid adding pressure to GPs or mixing with others.

Table 1: GP ILI consultations in the UK for all ages with MEM thresholds applied*

GP ILI consultation rates (all ages)	Week number																	
	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	1	2	3	4	5
England (RCGP)	4.3	5.0	5.5	6.2	4.5	4.6	5.3	6.5	10.6	13.1	16.0	19.4	12.9	16.6	14.7	10.3	9.0	10.3
Wales	1.7	4.0	4.2	6.2	1.7	4.2	3.7	10.1	10.6	8.5	24.4	23.8	37.1	34.5	22.3	14.3	8.6	9.6
Scotland	5.1	6.3	4.4	4.0	8.0	5.0	7.0	11.9	11.9	14.0	19.6	21.3	17.1	13.0	21.8	11.5	11.3	11.4
Northern Ireland	3.9	4.8	4.6	5.1	6.5	7.2	6.9	14.2	28.2	29.2	24.8	21.3	10.4	15.9	13.4	7.6	6.6	7.0

*The Moving Epidemic Method (MEM) has been adopted by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control to calculate thresholds for GP ILI consultations for the start of influenza activity (based on 10 seasons excluding 2009/10), in a standardised approach across Europe. For MEM threshold values for each country, please visit: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/sources-of-uk-flu-data-influenza-surveillance-in-the-uk#clinical-surveillance-through-primary-care>

Source:

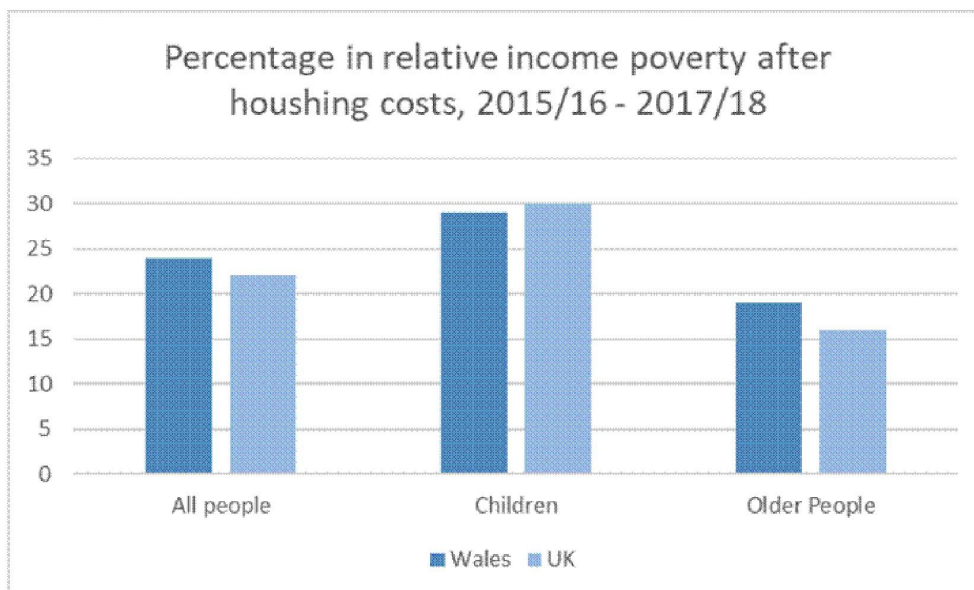
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/870503/Weekly_national_influenza_report_week_10_2020.pdf

Poverty

People in Wales, in particularly people of pension age, are more likely to be in relative income poverty than the UK as a whole. 24 per cent of the Welsh population are in relative income poverty compared with 22 per cent in the UK, and 29 per cent of those in pension age compared with 26 per cent in the UK.

People living in households with 3 or more children were the most likely to be in poverty.

Children living in lone parent families were more likely to be in relative income poverty than those living in households with couples.



Source: <https://gov.wales/relative-income-poverty-april-2017-march-2018>

Employee jobs by sector

Looking only at employees (excluding self-employed), Wales has a higher percentage of employees than in England and Scotland within industries that might be harder to support remote working.

18% of Welsh employee jobs were in production and construction compared with 14% in England and Wales also has a higher percentage involved in Health and Social work activities than England.

Overall public sector employment in Wales represented 9.4% of the population in 2019 Q3, compared with 8.2% across the UK.

(percentages based on rounded data)	England	Wales	Scotland
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	1%	1%	2%
Production and construction industries	14%	18%	15%
All service industries	86%	81%	83%
Selected services:			
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	15%	14%	14%
Transportation and storage	5%	3%	4%
Accommodation and food service activities	7%	8%	8%
Information and communication	4%	2%	3%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	9%	6%	7%

Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	4%	7%	6%
Education	9%	9%	8%
Human health and social work activities	13%	17%	16%
Tourism industries (also included in categories above)	11%	11%	12%

Sources: <https://statswales.gov.wales/v/HYTB>,
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-02/key-economic-statistics-february-2020-439.pdf>

Self-employed and zero hours

Those who are self-employed or on zero hours contracts may be more impacted by isolation, and in particular those in occupations that mean they are unable to work remotely.

At September 2019, 14% of workforce jobs in Wales were self-employed compared with 12.9% in the UK as a whole.

Latest ONS statistics for October-December 2019 estimate that 50,000 people aged 16 or over were on zero-hours contracts, 3.4 per cent of people in employment. This is slightly higher than the UK at 3.0 per cent but is unlikely to be a statistically significant difference (this has not been tested).

Sources: <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2020-02/key-economic-statistics-february-2020-439.pdf>

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/emp17peopleinemploymentonzerohourscontracts>

Skills

Wales has a slightly lower skills distribution than the UK as a whole, with a higher percentage with no qualifications and fewer with degree level qualifications.

Qualification levels of adults 18-retirement age, 2018

	No qualifications	Level 2+ qualifications	Level 3+	Level 4+ (degree level)
UK	7.7	79.7	61.5	41.6
Wales	8.4	78.9	59.1	37.8
England	7.2	79.9	61.6	41.4
Scotland	10	79.2	63	47.6
Northern Ireland	14.1	76	56.6	36.6

Source:

<https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Lifelong-Learning/Qualification-Levels/highestqualificationlevelsofworkingageadults-by-ukcountry-region-qualification>