



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Did You Know? Languages

As the world's population grows and globalisation increases, it is becoming more important for people to be able to communicate with each other across different countries, cultures and communities. Having an ability to speak more than one language has many benefits and can also improve your chances of securing a job, as many employers value recruits who are able to communicate in other languages. We have set out some interesting information about languages and provided links for you to follow these up.

1. Did you know that there are around 7,000 different languages spoken around the world?

It's estimated that **around 7,000 different languages** are spoken across the globe. However, many of these languages are used by relatively small numbers of people. For example, 90 per cent of these languages are used by less than 100,000 people and a few languages only have one speaker left. Some languages such as Latin, which was the language of the Roman Empire, are no longer in widespread use, but are only used in a limited circumstances - this is an example of a 'dead language'. Other languages have ceased to be used at all and are known as 'extinct languages'.

Source: BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/languages/guide/languages.shtml>

2. Did you know that people with foreign language skills are highly sought after by employers in the UK?

The 2013 Education and Skills Survey from the CBI showed that seven in ten (70 per cent) businesses value foreign language skills amongst their employees. However, a study commissioned by the British Academy concluded that there is strong evidence that the UK is suffering from a language skills deficit. This study also highlighted that Wales has the lowest uptake of foreign languages in the UK, accounting for just 3 per cent of all GCSE subject entries.

Sources: CBI and the British Academy

www.cbi.org.uk/media/2119176/education_and_skills_survey_2013.pdf

www.britac.ac.uk/policy/State_of_the_Nation_2013.cfm

3. Did you know that the 26th of September every year is the European Day of Languages?



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The European Day of Languages is an initiative that began in 2001 from the Council of Europe, based in Strasbourg. The Council of Europe promotes plurilingualism (the ability to speak and switch between more than one language) and believes that linguistic diversity can help people develop greater inter-cultural understanding and bring people closer together.

Source: The Council of Europe

<http://edl.ecml.at/>

4. Did you know that the United Nations has six official languages?

The six official languages used at the United Nations, these are:

- Arabic
- Chinese
- English
- French
- Russian
- Spanish

A delegate may speak in any of the official languages, and the speech is interpreted simultaneously into the other official languages. Most UN documents are also issued in all six official languages. At times, a delegate may choose to make a statement using a non-official language. In such cases, the delegation must provide either an interpretation or a written text of the statement in one of the official languages.

Source: The United Nations

<https://www.un.org/en/aboutun/languages.shtml>

5. Did you know that English is currently the most common language used on the Internet?

Around 565 million internet users use English, representing over a quarter of all users across the globe. Chinese is the second most widely used language on the internet, followed by Spanish.

Source: Internet World Statistics

<http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats7.htm>



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6. Did you know that English is spoken as a first language by around 375 million people?

In addition, a further 375 million speakers in the world speak English as a second language. Indeed one out of four of the world's population speak English to some extent.

Source: The British Council

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-faq-the-english-language.htm>

7. Did you know that around one in five people in Wales can speak Welsh?

According to the latest Census of Population (2011) 19 per cent of the Welsh population aged over three said they were able to speak the language. This equates to over 560,000 people. The ability to speak Welsh varied by age group with the highest percentage (40 per cent) of those reporting they could speak Welsh aged between 5 and 15 years old. However, the ability to speak Welsh varies across Wales. Gwynedd has the highest percentage of residents who can speak Welsh (65,900 people, 56 per cent). Conversely around 11 per cent of the population of Cardiff are able to speak Welsh. There are also small populations of Welsh speakers living in the Patagonia region of Argentina, as well as in parts of Canada and Australia. In addition, it is thought that over 100,000 people living in England can speak Welsh.

Source: BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-20677528>

8. Did you know that 75 per cent of adults in the UK were unable to speak any of the world's top ten foreign 10 languages well enough to hold a conversation?

A recent survey found that three-quarters cent of adults in the UK were unable to speak any of the world's top ten foreign 10 languages well enough to hold a conversation. The survey showed that 15 per cent of the UK population said they could hold a conversation in French, but only 6 per cent said the same of their German skills, 4 per cent could converse in Spanish and 2 per cent in Italian.

Source: Languages for the Future Report from the British Council

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/britishcouncil.uk2/files/languages-for-the-future-report.pdf>

9. Did you know that English is an official language in 69 countries around the world?

English is an official language of the UK and one of the official languages of Wales (along with Welsh) and Scotland (along with Gaelic). English is also an official language in Ireland, Canada the USA, Australia and New Zealand. But it is also an



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official language in many other countries too. Some countries, including Wales, have more than one official language. For example, English is an official language in Pakistan along with Urdu.

Source: The British Council

http://www.britishcouncil.org/map_of_countries_where_english_is_an_official_language.pdf

10. Did you know that Mandarin Chinese is the most widely spoken language in the world, followed by English?

Over one billion people speak Chinese Mandarin. It is the official language of the People's Republic of China, Taiwan and one of the official languages of Singapore. Across China there are many dialects including Cantonese, which is spoken in Hong Kong. Mandarin is commonly referred to as "Chinese", but in fact it is just one of several Chinese languages.

Source: ListVerse

<http://listverse.com/2008/06/26/top-10-most-spoken-languages-in-the-world/>

The Welsh Government is seeking to expand and broaden the use of Labour Market Intelligence (LMI) across Wales. This is part of a regular series of newsletters and articles which are available on the Learning and Skills Observatory website www.learningobservatory.com. If you have any comments about the sort of LMI that you'd like to receive or how LMI has been of benefit to you, we'd like to hear from you. For further information about the Welsh Government LMI project contact lmi@wales.gsi.gov.uk.