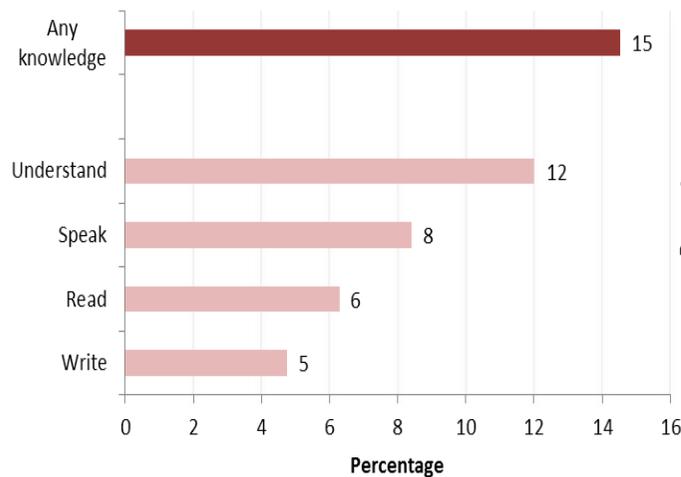


Main stories

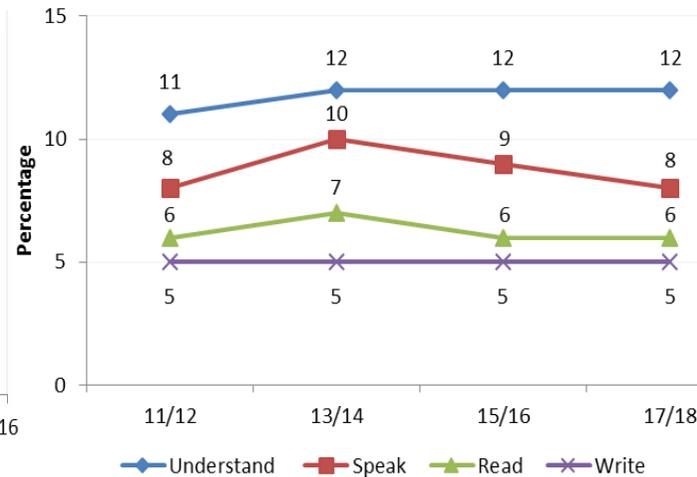
- In 2017/18, 15% of the adult population had some knowledge of Irish which was similar to the figures in 2015/16 and 2013/14 (both 15%).
- A higher proportion of Catholics have knowledge of Irish than both Protestants and those with other or no religion.
- Four out of every hundred adults in Northern Ireland (4%) use Irish at home, conversing with family or housemates, with the same proportion using Irish socially, to converse with friends or acquaintances, either on a daily basis or at least very occasionally.

Knowledge of Irish

No change from previous year's figure

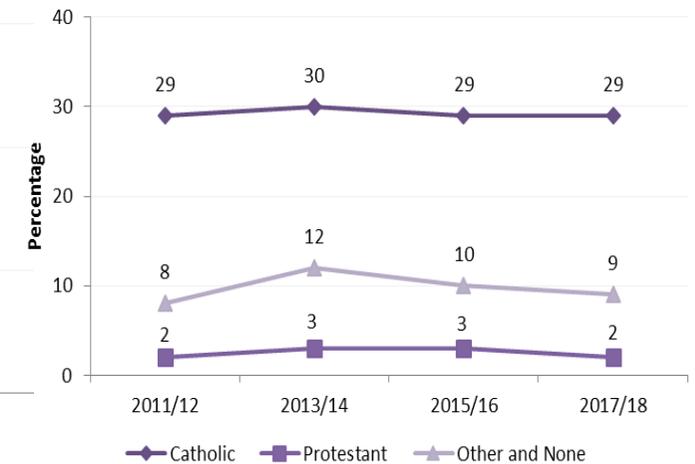


Level of ability in Irish



Knowledge of Irish

Religious background



In 2017/18, 15% of the adult population had some knowledge of Irish, i.e. can understand, speak, read or write Irish. This is similar to the previous two years' figures in 2013/14 and 2015/16 (both 15%).

Throughout the trend period, 2011/12 to 2017/18 the proportions of the adult population who understand, speak, read or write Irish have remained consistent.

In 2017/18, the proportion of Catholics who have some knowledge of Irish remains greater than the proportions of Protestants and those who gave their religious background as other or none.

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Introduction

The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement committed the Government to 'recognise the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland, the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic minorities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland.'

Findings from the Continuous Household Survey

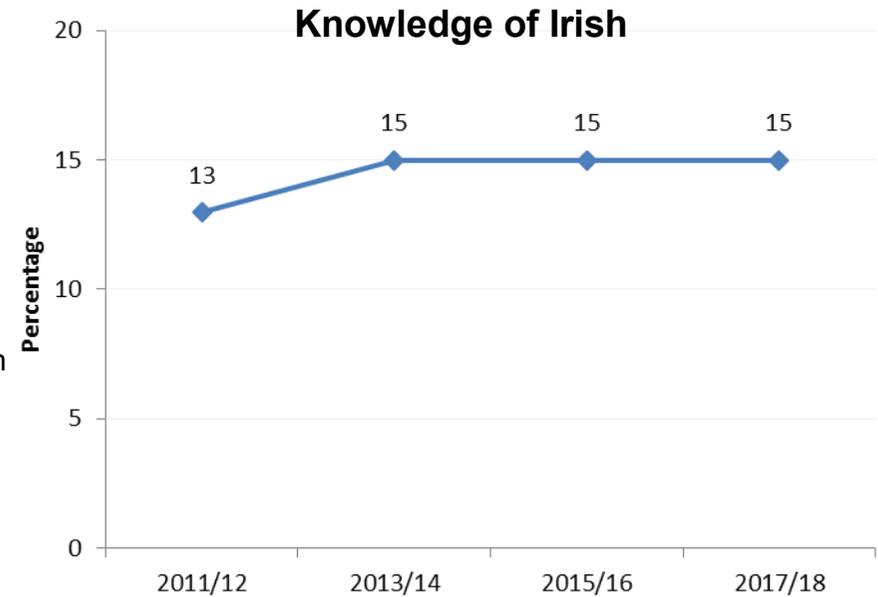
This report presents the findings from the 2017/18 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to the knowledge and use of Irish by the adult population in Northern Ireland. The information will be used to help inform policy making. More information relating to the CHS, methodology, definitions and the interpretation of the figures can be found in the definitions and technical notes section. Data tables are available in [Excel](#) and [ODS](#) format. The questions that were asked in the CHS 2017/18 are available [here](#).

Knowledge of Irish

Trends

In 2017/18, the proportion of adults who have some knowledge of Irish, i.e. can understand, speak, read or write Irish was 15%. This figure shows no change when compared to the previous two years' figures (both 15%), however is higher than the proportion of adults with knowledge in 2011/12 (13%).

Just over one in every ten (11%) adults who live in the least deprived areas in Northern Ireland had some knowledge of Irish in 2017/18. While this is not a statistically significant increase on the 2015/16 figure (9%), it does go some way to reversing the decline in 2015/16.



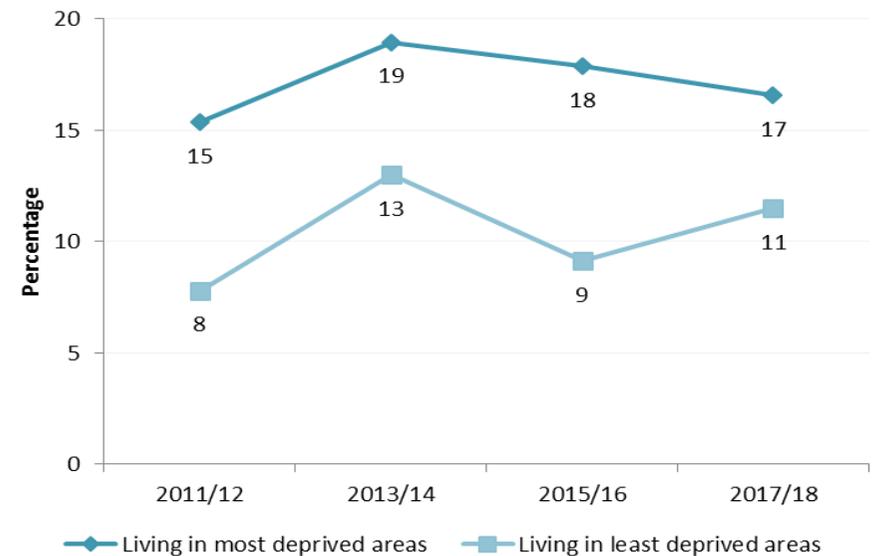
Age

Throughout the four years for which figures are available, people aged 45 years and over are less likely to have knowledge of Irish than those aged 16-44 years. Although, the gap between the two year groups has decreased over the period as more adults aged 45 and over (13%) have knowledge of Irish in 2017/18 than did so in 2011/12 (10%).



Deprivation

In 2017/18, the proportion of adults who have some knowledge of Irish and live in the most deprived areas remains greater than those who live in the least deprived areas, as it has been for each year that figures are available.

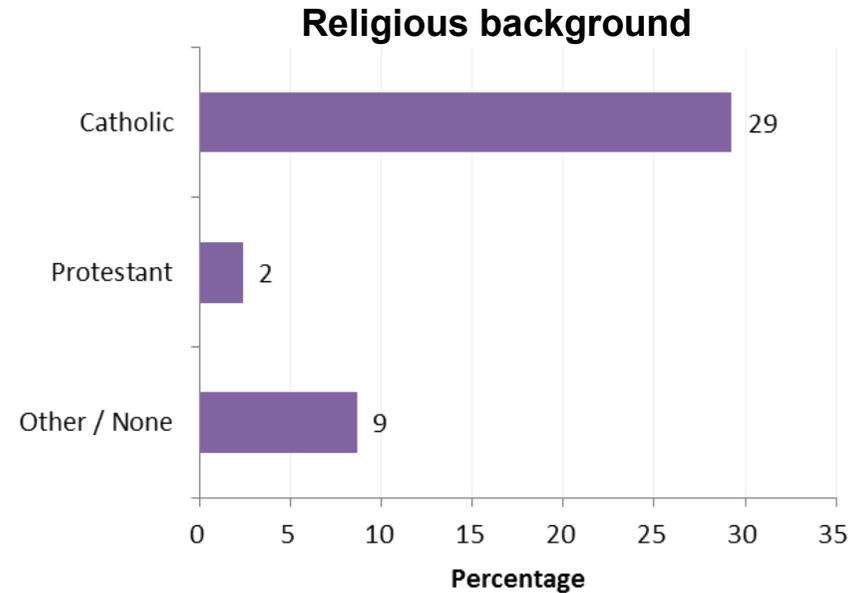


Knowledge of Irish

The proportion of adults in 2017/18 who had some knowledge of Irish, i.e. who can understand, speak, read or write Irish or any combination of these skills was 15%. Age, religious background and where adults live are all related to having knowledge of Irish.

The proportion of females (15%) who have some knowledge of Irish is similar to the proportion of males (14%). However, knowledge of Irish appears to decrease with age with those aged 16-44 years being more likely to have knowledge than those aged 45 years and over (16% and 13% respectively).

The religious background of the population of Northern Ireland relates to whether they have any knowledge of Irish. A higher proportion of Catholics (29%) have knowledge of Irish than both those with other or no religion (9%) and Protestants (2%).



Urban/Rural

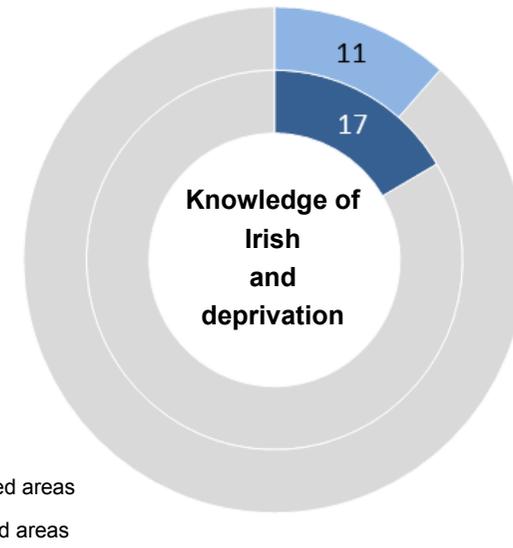
Adults who live in rural areas are more likely to have knowledge of Irish than those who live in urban areas (17% and 13% respectively).



Living in a rural area
Living in an urban area

Deprivation

In 2017/18 adults living in the least deprived areas are less likely to have knowledge of Irish than those living in the most deprived areas (11% and 17% respectively).



Least deprived areas
Most deprived areas

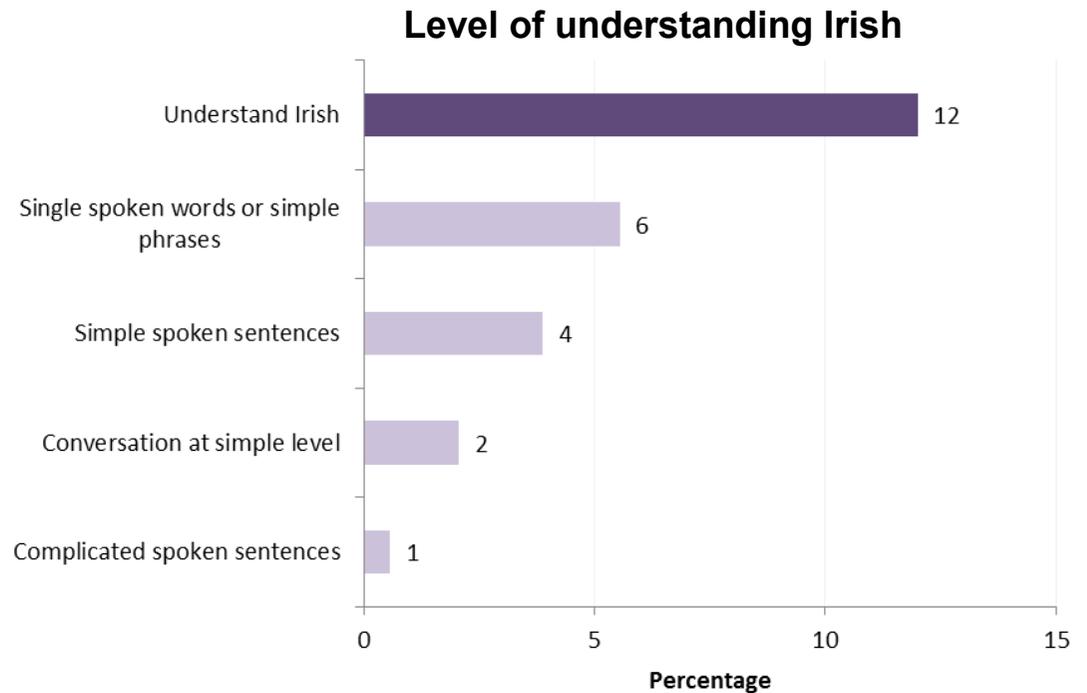
Understanding Irish

More than one in every ten (12%) of the adult population can understand Irish.

One out of every hundred (1%) adults in Northern Ireland can understand complicated spoken sentences, so could understand programmes in Irish on the radio or television.

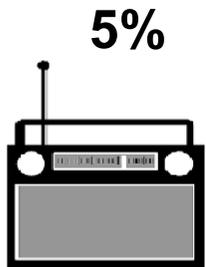
Two out of every hundred (2%) adults can understand a conversation in Irish conducted at a simple level so, for example, could understand directions given in the street.

Four per cent of the population can understand simple spoken sentences or passages, e.g. 'It's half past three', while a further 6% can understand single spoken words or simple phrases, e.g. 'Hello', or 'How are you?'.



Those who can understand Irish

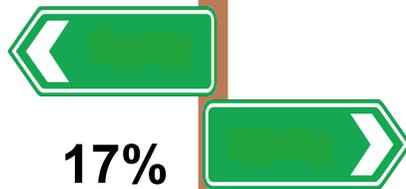
Analysis of those adults in the population who can understand Irish shows that about one in every five (22%) understand a conversation at either a simple or complicated level. The remaining four in every five (78%) understand simple spoken sentences or simple spoken words or phrases.



5%

Complicated spoken sentences

Could understand programmes in Irish on the radio or television.

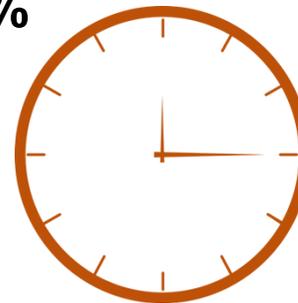


17%

Conversation at simple level

Could understand directions given in the street

32%



Simple spoken sentences

Understand simple spoken sentences or passages e.g. 'It's half past three'

46%



A Hundred Thousand Welcomes

Single spoken words or simple phrases

Understand simple spoken words or phrases e.g. 'Hello' or 'How are you?'

Speaking Irish

Just under one in every ten (8%) of the adult population can speak Irish.

Two out of every hundred people (2%) can carry on a complicated conversation in Irish e.g. talking about any subject, or carry on an everyday conversation, e.g. could describe their day.

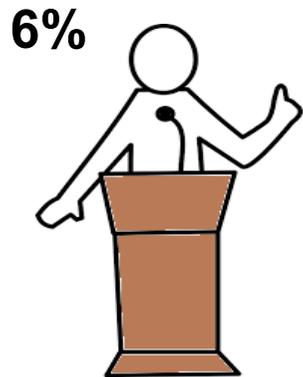
Three out of every hundred (3%) can use simple sentences in Irish e.g. 'Can I have a cup of tea?'

A further 3% can use single words or simple phrases e.g. 'Hello' or 'How are you?'



Those who can speak Irish

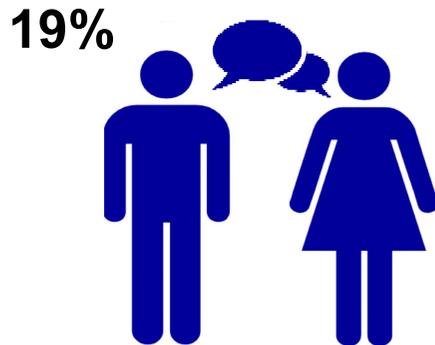
Analysis of those adults in the population who can speak Irish shows that about one in every four (25%) could carry on a conversation at either a simple or complicated level. The remaining three in every four (75%) can use simple sentences or single words or simple phrases.



6%

Complicated conversation

Could carry on a complicated conversation in Irish e.g. Talking about any subject



19%

Everyday conversation

Could carry on an everyday conversation in Irish e.g. Could describe their day



35%

Simple Sentences

Can use simple sentences in Irish e.g. 'Can I have a cup of tea?'



40%

Single words or simple phrases

Can use single words or simple phrases e.g. 'Hello' or 'How are you?'

Reading Irish

More than one out of every twenty adults (6%) can read Irish.

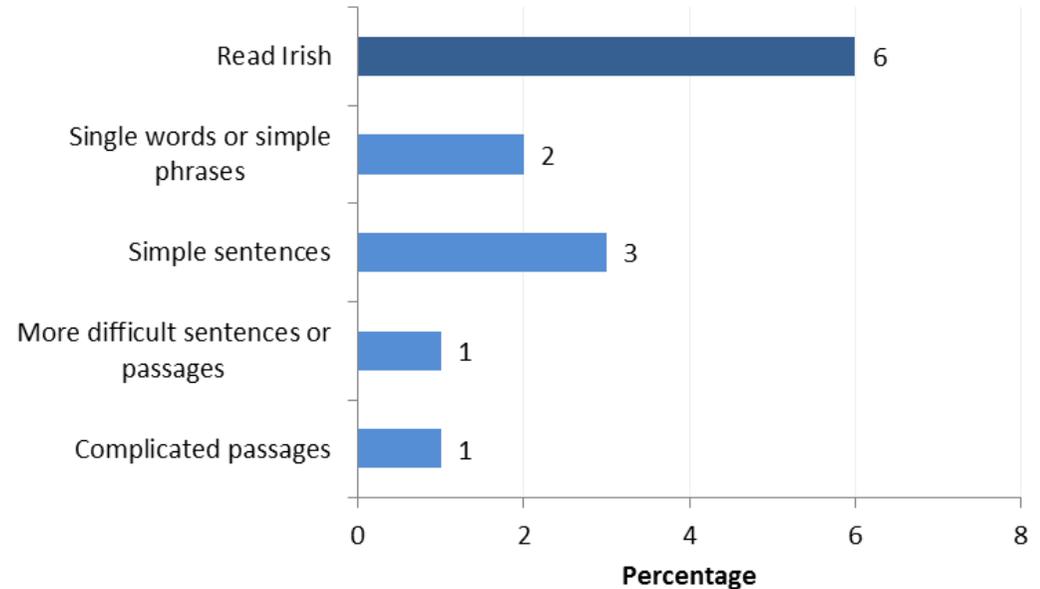
One out of every hundred people (1%) can read and understand complicated passages, so could read a book or newspaper written in Irish.

One per cent of the population can read and understand more difficult sentences or passages, so could read a letter or email written in Irish.

An additional three out of every hundred (3%) of the population can read and understand simple sentences or passages, so could read a postcard written in Irish.

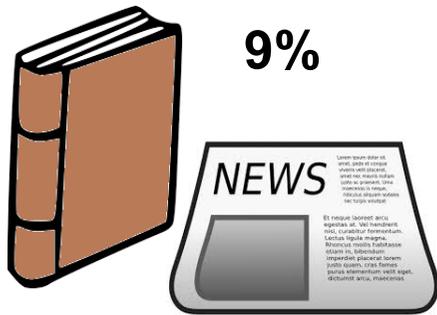
A further 2% can read and understand single words or simple phrases, e.g. 'Entrance' or 'No smoking'.

Level of reading Irish



Those who can read Irish

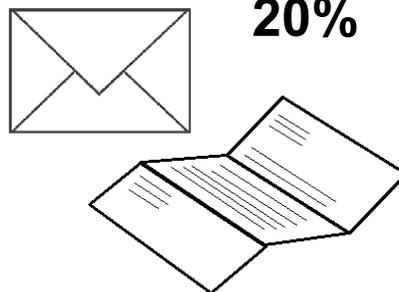
Analysis of those adults in the population who can read Irish shows that almost three in every ten (29%) can read and understand moderately difficult or complicated passages. The remaining seven in every ten (71%) can read and understand simple sentences or single words or simple phrases.



9%

Complicated passages

Can read and understand complicated passages, so could read a book or newspaper written in Irish



20%

Moderately difficult sentences or passages

Could read a letter or email written in Irish

42%



Simple Sentences

Can read and understand simple sentences in Irish, so could read a postcard written in Irish

29%



Single words or simple phrases

Can read and understand single words or simple phrases e.g. 'Entrance' or 'No smoking'

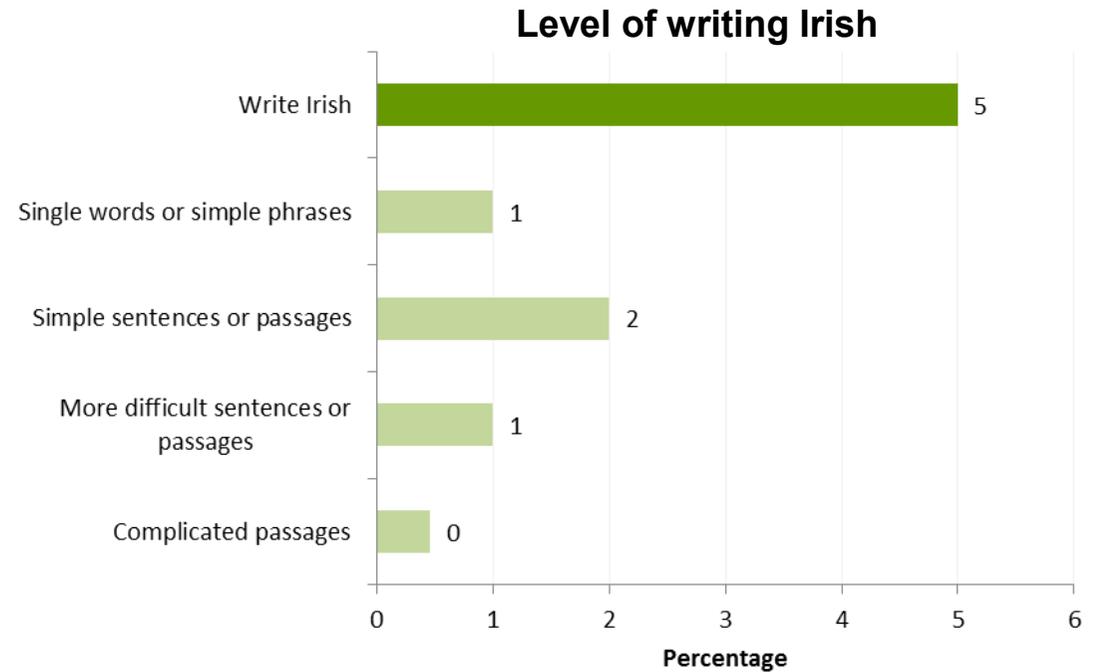
Writing Irish

One in every twenty adults (5%) can write Irish.

One out of every hundred adults (1%) can write complicated passages, e.g. could translate part of a book or report into Irish, or write difficult sentences and moderately difficult passages, e.g. could write a letter or email in Irish.

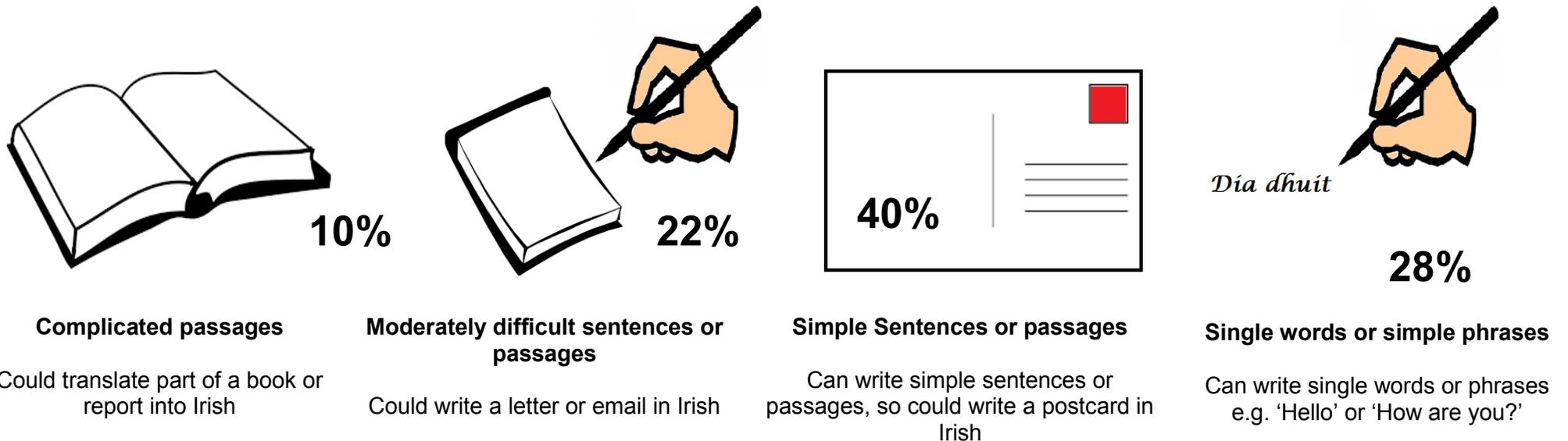
An additional two out of every hundred (2%) of the adult population can write simple sentences or passages, so could write a postcard in Irish.

A further 1% can write single words or phrases, e.g. 'Hello', or 'How are you?'.



Those who can write Irish

Analysis of those adults in the population who can write Irish shows that about one in every three (32%) can write moderately difficult or complicated passages. The remaining two out of three (68%) can write simple sentences or single words or simple phrases.



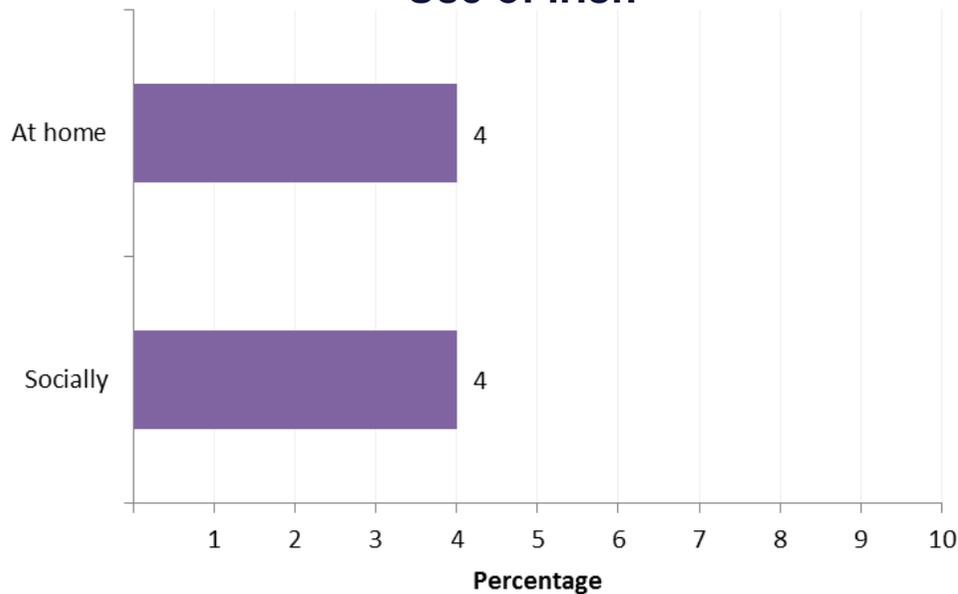
Use of Irish

Four out of every hundred adults in Northern Ireland (4%) use Irish at home, conversing with family or housemates, either on a daily basis or at least very occasionally (less often than once a week).

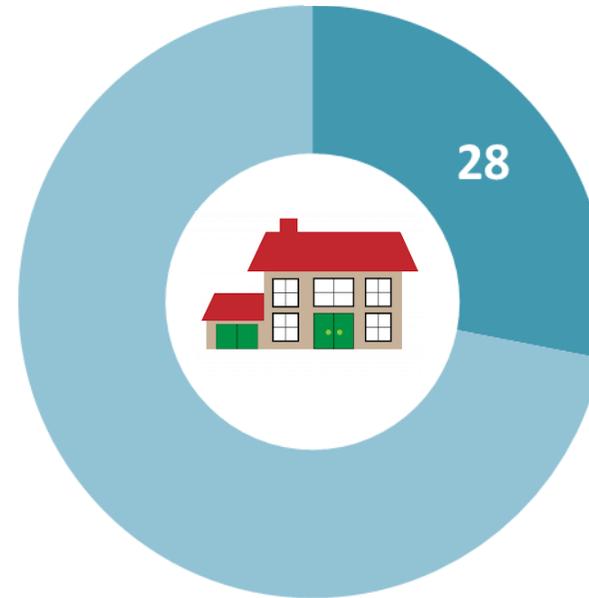
A similar proportion (4%) use Irish socially, either on a daily basis or at least very occasionally, to converse with friends or acquaintances.

The proportions of adults using Irish at home and using Irish socially have remained similar to the figures reported in 2015/16, each also 4%.

Use of Irish



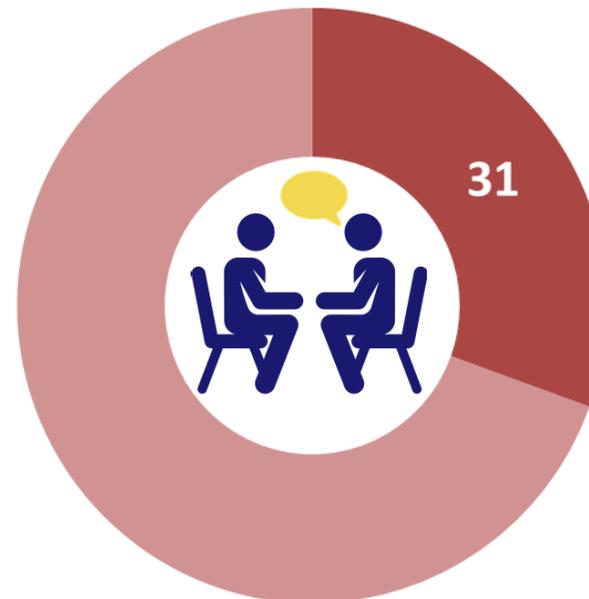
Using Irish at home



Those with some knowledge of Irish

Over one quarter (28%) of those who have some knowledge of Irish use Irish at home at least very occasionally

Using Irish socially



Those with some knowledge of Irish

Nearly a third (31%) of those who have some knowledge of Irish use Irish socially.

Definitions and technical notes

The Continuous Household Survey (CHS) is a Northern Ireland wide household survey administered by Central Survey Unit, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency. The sample for this survey consists of a systematic random sample of 9,000 addresses selected from the Land and Property Service's list of private addresses. The findings reported for 2017/18 are based on 5,677 respondents, aged 16 and over, who answered the key questions required to measure progress against the draft Programme for Government indicator (arts, libraries, museums and PRONI questions) as well as the sport participation question on the survey. For the remaining questions (volunteering and places of historic interest as well as questions on the experience of engagement), the findings are based on 2,824 respondents.

Weighting the Continuous Household Survey

Analysis of the culture, arts and sport modules of the CHS have been weighted for non-response. A chi square goodness-of-fit test showed that neither the larger CHS sample (5,677) nor the smaller sample (2,824) were representative of the population by age and sex when compared with the Population and Migration Estimates Northern Ireland 2016 (NISRA). As a result, six separate weights were produced for age, sex and age and sex combined three for each sample.

Non-response weighting sometimes increases standard errors, although the impact tends to be fairly small, i.e. the adjustment may be less or greater than 1, but will generally be reasonably close to 1. In the case of the culture, arts and sport modules of the CHS, the values of the adjustment for all three weighting system are so close to one, it is not necessary to take account of this in the calculation of standard error and confidence intervals.

While weighting for non-response (also called post-stratification) should reduce bias, it must be acknowledged that it will not eliminate bias. The reasons individuals choose to take part in surveys are complex and depend on lots of factors specific to the individual. As a result, the non-response biases in surveys are likely to be complex. Post-stratification works on the assumption that, by aligning the survey to the population along a small number of dimensions such as age and gender, many of these complex biases will reduce. However, it would be misleading to suggest that they will be eliminated.

Knowledge of Irish— Can understand, speak, read or write Irish or any combination of these skills

Deprivation— The data have been analysed by whether respondents are living in the 20% most deprived Super Output Area (SOAs) or in the 20% least deprived SOAs. This is estimated using the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure 2017¹ which is a weighted combination of seven domains of deprivation. Rank 1 indicates the most deprived SOA, while rank 890 denotes the least deprived SOA.

¹ [Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Report 2017](#)

Urban / rural— The data have also been analysed by whether respondents are living in SOAs than have been categorised as either urban or rural as set out in the Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements report (2015)². This report classified each settlement in Northern Ireland into one of eight bands (A-H) and recommended that Government and other users should consider defining 'urban' and 'rural' areas in ways which are appropriate for different programmes and projects. In the absence of a programme-specific definition, Bands A-E can be defined as urban and Bands F-H as rural. This definition was applied in the analysis in this bulletin.

² [Statistical Classification and Delineation of Settlements 2015 Report](#)

Statistical significance in this report— Any statements in this report regarding differences between groups such as males and females, different age groups, religion etc., are statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. This means that we can be 95% confident that the differences between groups are actual differences and have not just arisen by chance. Both the base numbers and the size of the percentages have an effect on statistical significance. Therefore on occasion, a difference between two groups may be statistically significant while the same difference in percentage points between two other groups may not be statistically significant. The reason for this is because the larger the base numbers or the closer the percentages are to 0 or 100, the smaller the standard errors. This leads to increased precision of the estimates which increases the likelihood that the difference between the proportions is actually significant and did not just arise by chance.

Other notes

The following should be noted when interpreting figures and tables:

- Percentages less than 0.5% are denoted by '0' and where there are no responses, they are denoted by '-'.
- Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- Percentages may not add up to 100% for questions where multiple responses are allowed.
- Detailed tabulations are not provided where the number of respondents is too small to allow meaningful analysis.