

# Knowledge and use of Ulster-Scots in Northern Ireland

Findings from the Continuous Household Survey 2019/20

Biennial publication

Published: 26 November 2020

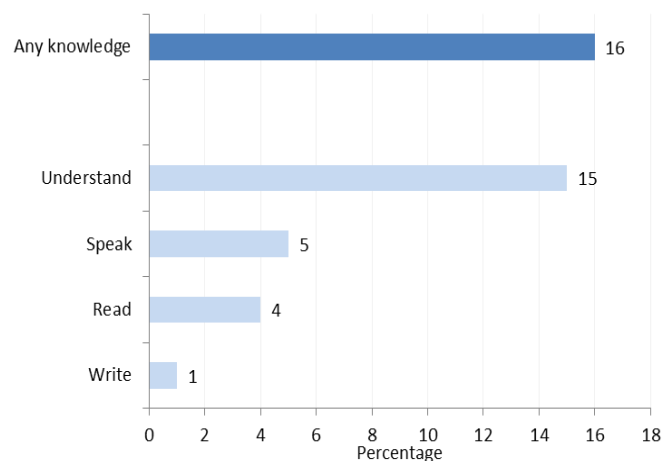
Coverage: Northern Ireland

## Main stories

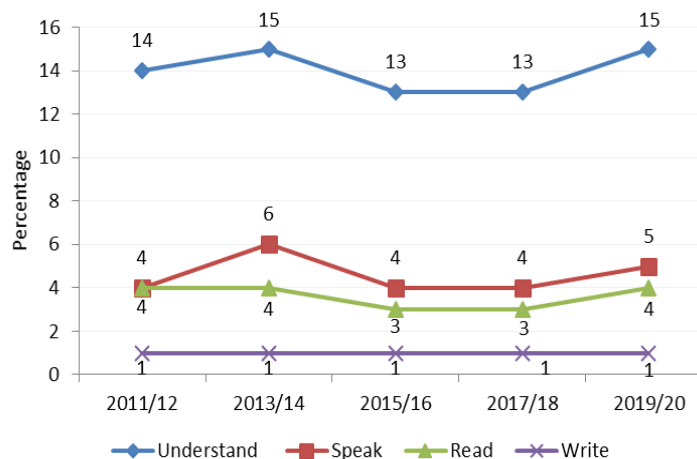
- In 2019/20, 16% of the adult population who have some knowledge of Ulster-Scots, an increase on the proportion who had some knowledge in 2017/18 (14%).
- Gender, age, religious background and where adults live are all related to whether they have knowledge of Ulster-Scots.
- Six out of every hundred adults in Northern Ireland (6%) use Ulster-Scots at home, conversing with family or housemates, or use Ulster-Scots socially, to converse with friends or acquaintances, either on a daily basis or at least very occasionally.

## Knowledge of Ulster-Scots

Increase on previous year's figure

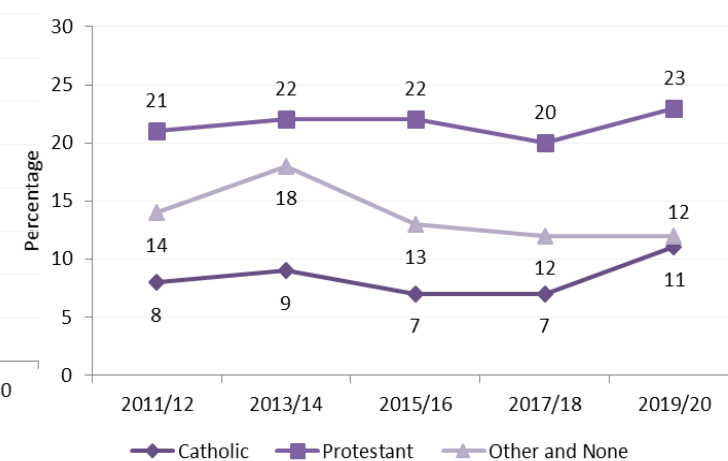


## Level of ability in Ulster-Scots



## Knowledge of Ulster-Scots

Religious background



In 2019/20, 16% of the adult population had some knowledge of Ulster-Scots, i.e. can understand, speak, read or write Ulster-Scots. This is an increase on proportion who had some knowledge in 2017/18 (14%).

Proportions of adults who understand or read Ulster-Scots have increased since 2017/18, whereas the proportions of adults who speak or write Ulster-Scots, figures have remained consistent in 2019/20.

In 2019/20 the proportion of Protestants who have some knowledge of Ulster-Scots remains greater than the proportions of Catholics 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.'

DfC chairs the Interdepartmental Charter Implementation Group and through this group aims to promote the use of Irish and Ulster-Scots and encourage all departments and their agencies to meet their obligations under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

### Findings from the Continuous Household Survey

This report presents the findings from the 2019/20 Continuous Household Survey (CHS) in relation to the knowledge and use of Ulster-Scots by the adult population in Northern Ireland. The information will be used to help inform policy making. More information relating to the CHS methodology 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 which were asked in the CHS 2019/20 are available [here](#).

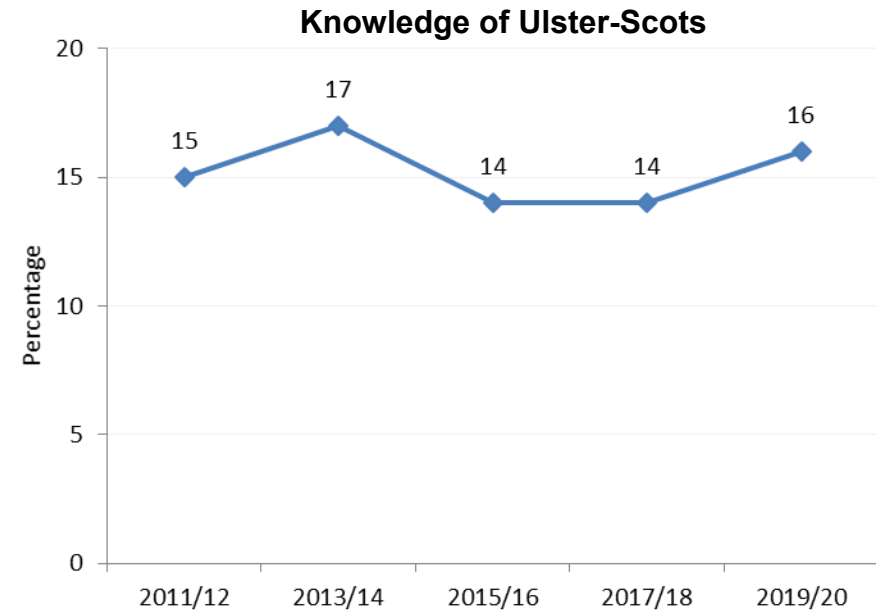
# Knowledge of Ulster-Scots

## Trends

In 2019/20, 16% of the population had some knowledge of Ulster-Scots i.e. can understand, speak, read or write Ulster-Scots. This is an increase on the proportions of adults in 2015/16 and 2017/18 who had some knowledge of Ulster-Scots (14%).

There were also increases on the proportions of males who had some knowledge of Ulster-Scots from 16% in 2017/18 to 19% in 2019/20, this was also the case with Catholic adults (7% in 2017/18 to 11% in 2019/20).

In 2019/20, the proportion of adults with some knowledge of Ulster-Scots living in the most deprived areas (12%) or living in urban areas (14%) has increased when compared with 2017/18 (8% and 11% respectively).



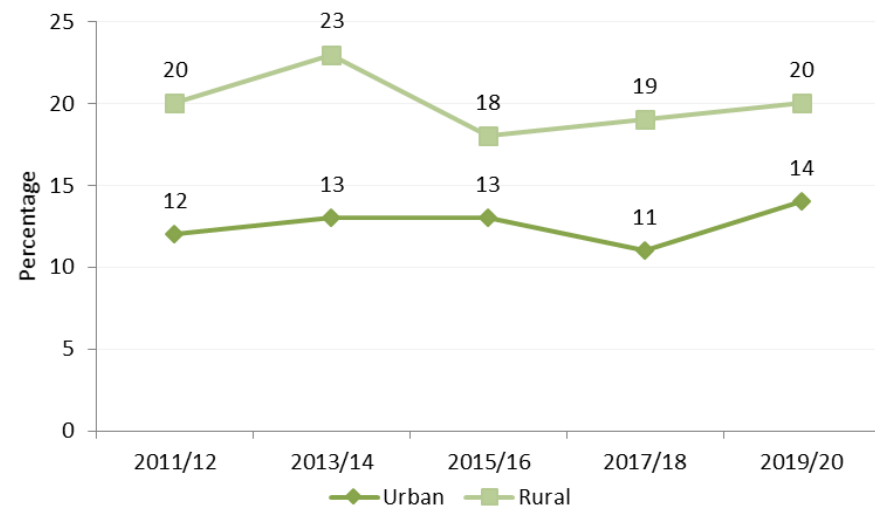
## Age

People aged 45 years and over are more likely to have knowledge of Ulster-Scots than those aged 16-44 years (20% and 12% respectively). A similar trend has been seen for the other years that CHS figures are available.



## Urban/Rural

In 2019/20, a higher proportion of the adult population living in rural areas have knowledge of Ulster-Scots than among those who live in urban areas, as has been the case since 2011/12.



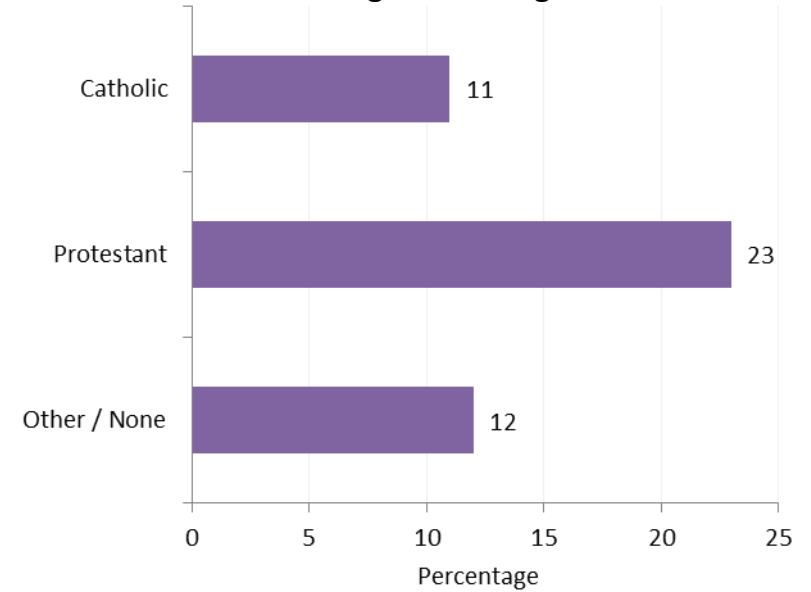
# Knowledge of Ulster-Scots

Gender, age, religious background and where adults live are all related to whether they have any knowledge of Ulster-Scots.

Males (19%) are more likely to have knowledge of Ulster-Scots than females (14%). Similarly, knowledge of Ulster-Scots increases with age, with those aged 45 years and over being more likely to have knowledge of Ulster-Scots than those aged 16-44 years (18% and 9% respectively).

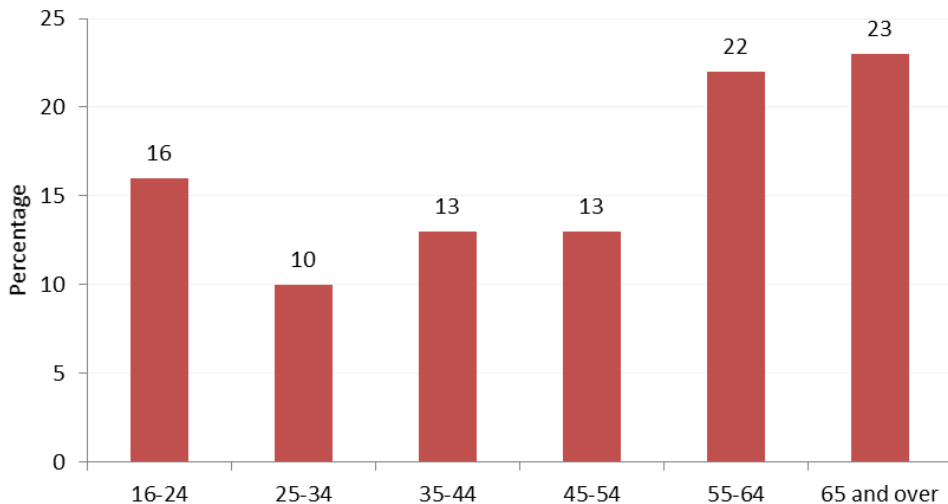
A higher proportion of both Protestants (23%) have knowledge of Ulster-Scots than Catholics (11%) or those with other or no religion (12%). Similar proportions of adults who have a disability (17%) have knowledge of Ulster-Scots as those who do not have a disability (16%).

Religious background



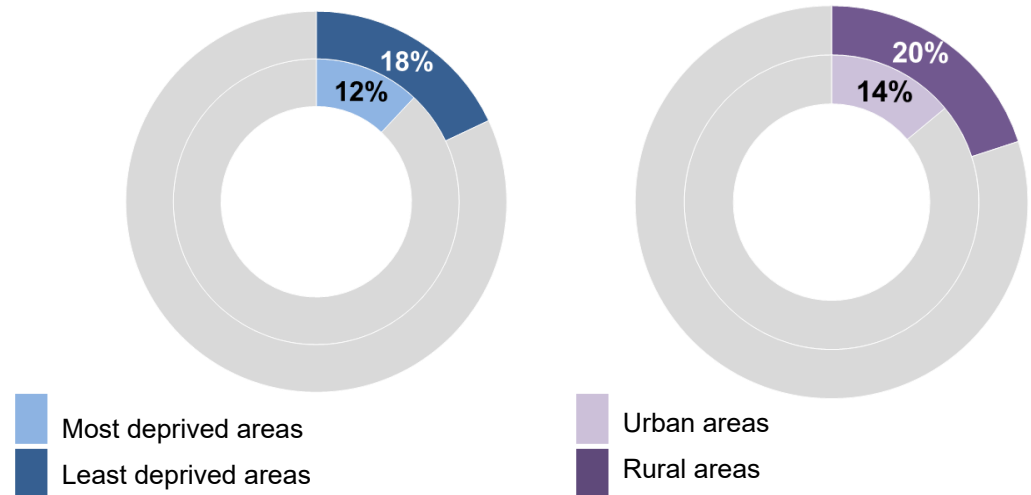
Age

As age increases, so too does knowledge of Ulster-Scots, with adults aged 45 and over more likely to have some knowledge of Ulster-Scots than those aged under 45 years.



Where people live

In 2019/20 adults living in the least deprived areas are more likely to have knowledge of Ulster-Scots than those living in the most deprived areas. Similarly, a higher proportion of adults living in rural areas have knowledge of Ulster-Scots than those living in urban areas.



# Understanding Ulster-Scots

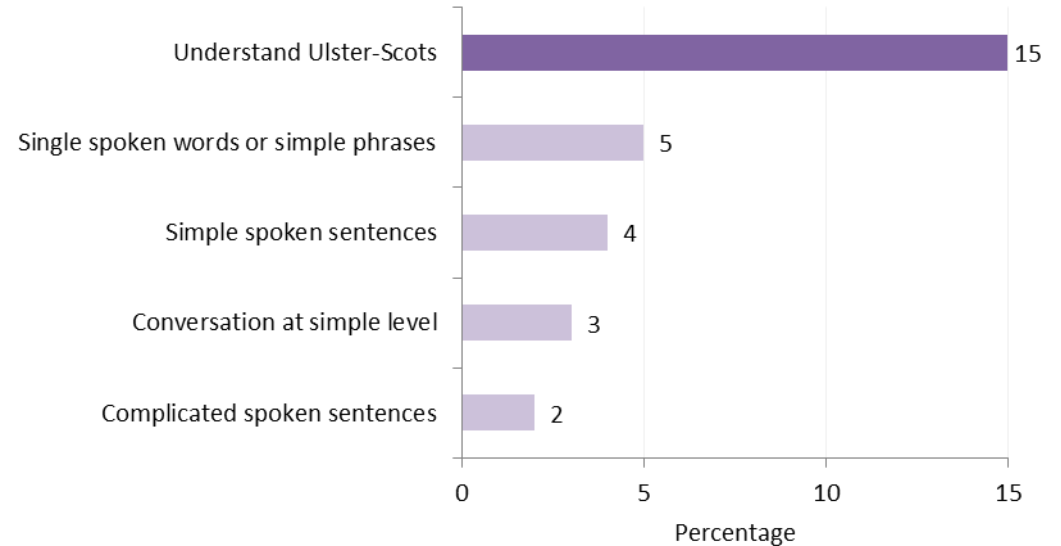
More than one in every ten (15%) of the population can understand Ulster-Scots.

Two out of every hundred (2%) people in Northern Ireland can understand complicated spoken sentences, so could understand programmes in Ulster-Scots on the radio or television.

An additional three out of every hundred (3%) people can understand a conversation in Ulster-Scots conducted at a simple level so, for example, could understand directions given in the street.

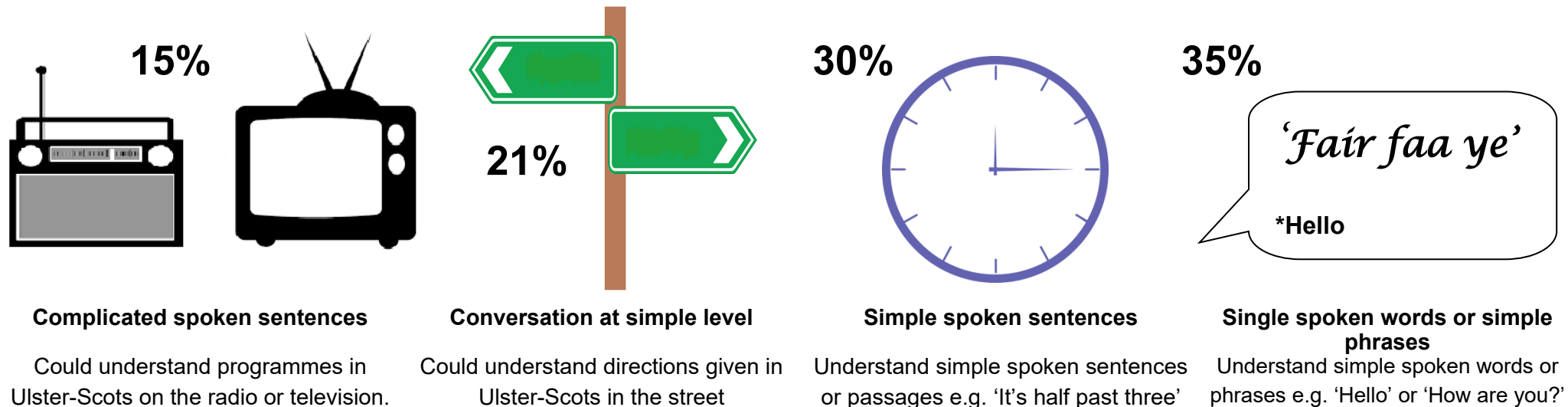
Four per cent of the population can understand simple spoken sentences or passages, e.g. 'It's half past three', while a further 5% can understand single spoken words or simple phrases, e.g. 'Hello' or 'How are you?'.

Level of understanding Ulster-Scots



## Those who can understand Ulster-Scots

Analysis of those adults in the population who can understand Ulster-Scots shows that over one third (36%) understand a conversation at either a simple or complicated level. The remaining two thirds (65%) understand simple spoken sentences or simple spoken words or phrases.



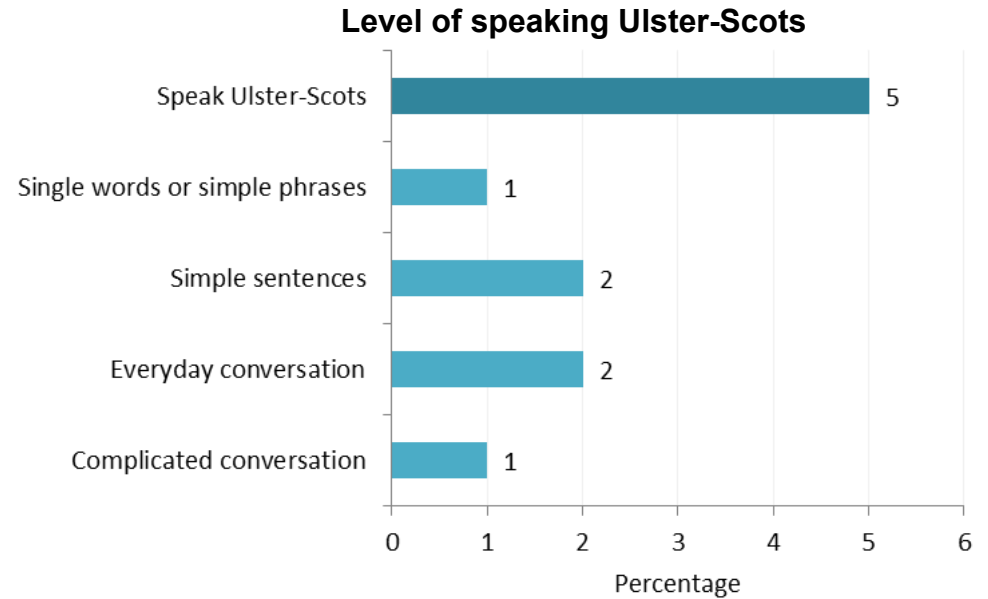
# Speaking Ulster-Scots

Five out of every hundred adults (5%) can speak Ulster-Scots.

One out of every hundred people (1%) can carry on a complicated conversation in Ulster-Scots, e.g. talking about any subject, while a further two percent of adults are able to carry on an everyday conversation, e.g. could describe their day.

Two out of every hundred (2%) can use simple sentences in Ulster-Scots, e.g. 'Can I have a cup of tea?'

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



## Those who can speak Ulster-Scots

Analysis of those adults in the population who can speak Ulster-Scots shows that just under half (45%) could carry on a conversation at either a simple or complicated level. The remaining half (55%) can use simple sentences or single words or simple phrases.

11%



**Complicated conversation**

Could carry on a complicated conversation in Ulster-Scots e.g. Talking about any subject

34%



**Everyday conversation**

Could carry on an everyday conversation in Ulster-Scots e.g. Could describe their day

34%



**Simple Sentences**

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

21%



**Single words or simple phrases**

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

# Reading and writing Ulster-Scots

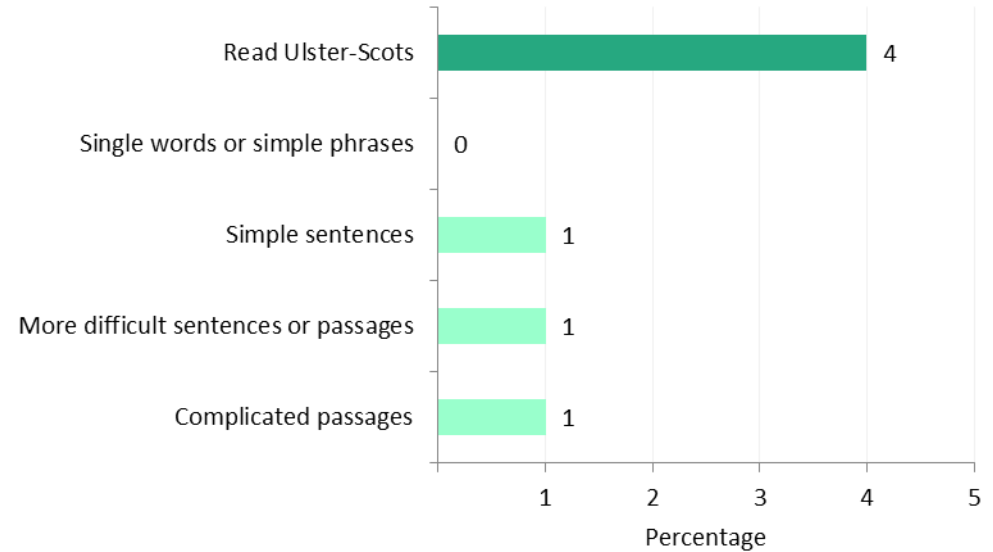
Four out of every hundred adults (4%) can read Ulster-Scots, while 1% can write Ulster-Scots.

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

A further one out of every hundred adults (1%) can read and understand difficult sentences and less complicated passages, so could read a letter or email written in Ulster-Scots.

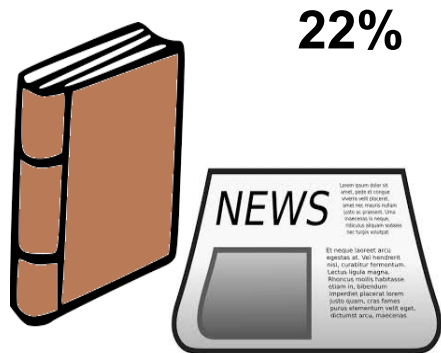
An additional one out of every hundred (1%) of the adult population can read and understand simple sentences or passages, so could read a postcard written in Ulster-Scots.

Level of reading Ulster-Scots



## Those who that can read Ulster-Scots

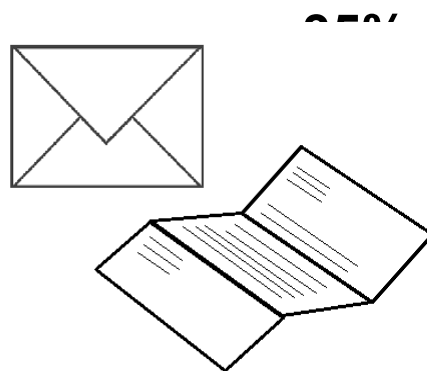
Analysis of those adults in the population who can read Ulster-Scots shows just under three fifths (57%) can read and understand moderately difficult or complicated passages. The two fifths (43%) can read and understand simple sentences or single words or simple phrases.



22%

**Complicated passages**

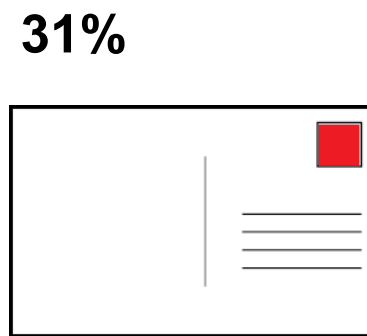
Can read and understand complicated passages, so could read a book or newspaper written in Ulster-Scots



22%

**Moderately difficult sentences or passages**

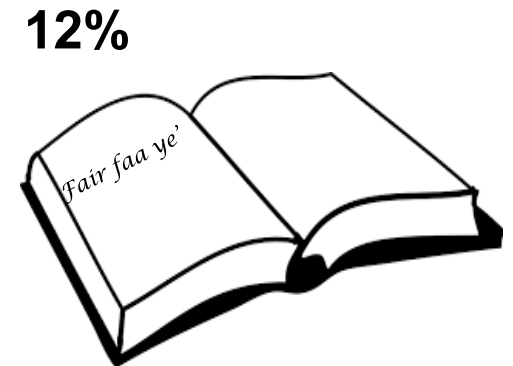
Could read a letter or email written in Ulster-Scots



31%

**Simple Sentences**

Can read and understand simple sentences, so could read a postcard written in Ulster-Scots



12%

**Single words or simple phrases**

Can read and understand singles words or simple phrases e.g. Hello

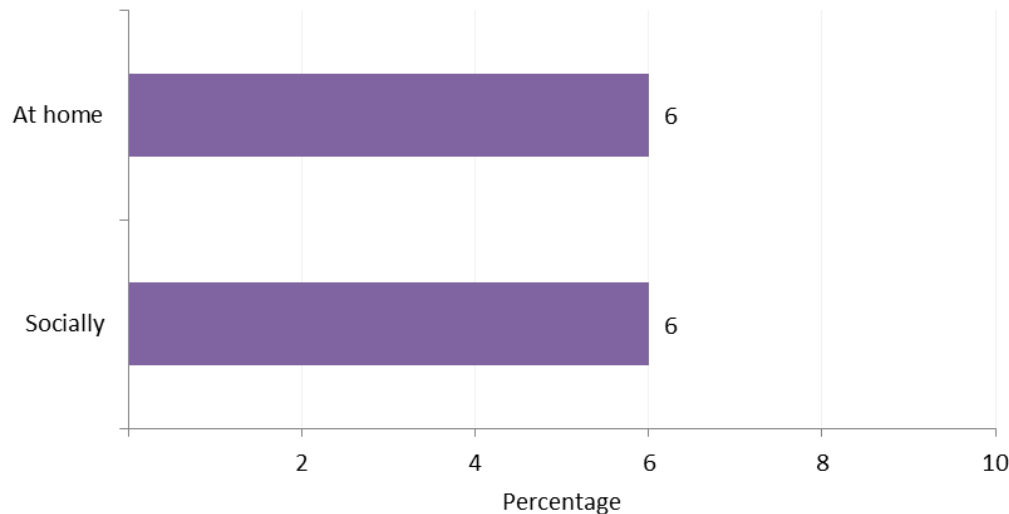
# Use of Ulster-Scots

Six out of every hundred adults (6%) use Ulster-Scots at home, conversing with family or housemates, either on a daily basis or least very occasionally (less often than once a week).

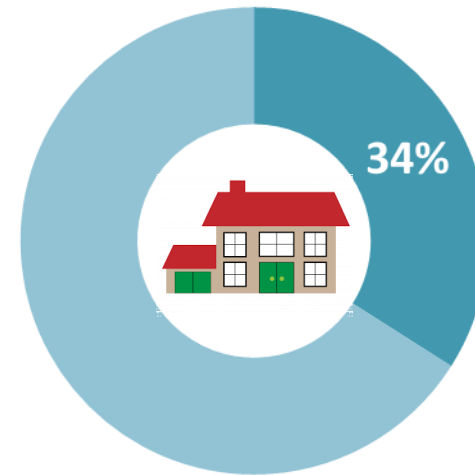
The same proportion (6%) use Ulster-Scots socially, either on a daily basis or at least very occasionally, conversing with friends or acquaintances.

The proportions of adults using Ulster-Scots at home and using Ulster-Scots socially have increased compared to the figures reported in 2017/18, 4% and 5% respectively.

### Use of Ulster-Scots



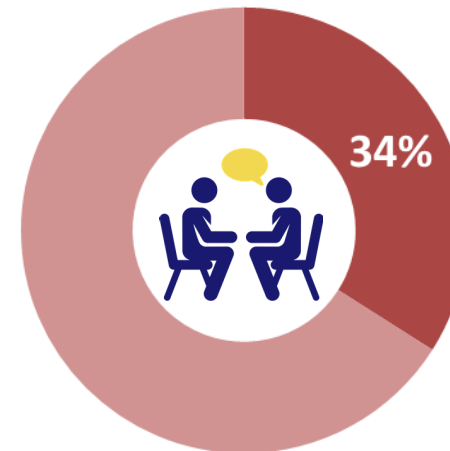
## Using Ulster-Scots at home



### Those with some knowledge of Ulster-Scots

Over one third (34%) of those who have some knowledge of Ulster-Scots use Ulster-Scots at home at least very occasionally

## Using Ulster-Scots socially



### Those with some knowledge of Ulster-Scots

Over one third (34%) of those who have some knowledge of Ulster-Scots use Ulster-Scots socially



# Definitions and technical notes

## Continuous Household Survey

The Continuous Household Survey 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 2019/20 in this report are based on 2,952 respondents, aged 16 and over, who answered the questions relating to knowledge and use of Ulster-Scots.

## 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 CHS sample (2,952) was not representative of the population by age and sex when compared with the 2019 Mid Year Population Estimates for Northern Ireland (NISRA 6 May 2020). As a result, separate weights were produced for age, sex and age and sex combined.

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 Ulster-Scots—** Can understand, speak, read or write Ulster-Scots 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 2017<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>1</sup> [Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Report 2017](#)

**Disability** - The questions used to ascertain whether or not a person has a disability are harmonised with the definition of disability in the Equality Act 2010. This states that a disabled population is classified on the basis of having a long-lasting physical or mental health condition or illness which restricts day-to-day activities. The disabled population in this report are those who have answered yes to both the questions below:

Do you have any physical or mental health conditions or illnesses lasting or expected to last for 12 months or more?

Does your condition or illness /do any of your conditions or illnesses reduce your ability to carry out day to day activities?

**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.