

The lack of inclusion and diversity in the National Eisteddfod and how the controversy around bilingual rapper Sagetodz highlights a stagnation in progress for Cymru.

An essay by Mx. Nat Kane

On June 8th, 2023, bilingual rapper Sagetodz announced that he will not be performing at the National Eisteddfod due to the language policy held in place at the yearly event. He had this to say about the decision,

*“for anyone wondering, I won’t be performing at MaesB or Eisteddfod this year due to the Welsh language policy they have in place. * Essentially there’s too much English in my songs”¹.*

Following this, the news outlet the BBC covered the issue², and the public began to leave comments on the social media accounts of Sagetodz and the BBC³. Competing news outlets began to cover the story which lead to more comments on their social media posts. Then Eisteddfod officials began to speak out against the issue with some branding it a ‘Culture War’⁴, and multiple news outlets covered those responses.

When white people in positions of power refer to discourse as Culture wars they are essentially meaning ‘wokeness’. This act is a common gaslighting technique used within white supremacy⁵, it is also a form of cultural appropriation⁶.

In an article for Forbes magazine concerning white and other non-Black people using the term woke, Dana Brownlee explains this;

“However, in more recent months, the term has increasingly traded it’s more positive-intentioned “conscious” connotation for a pejorative, condescending one. Increasingly, influencers (oftentimes but not always White) have latched onto the term “woke” and weaponized it as an easy way to dismiss or discount a racial issue, platform or grievance offhand as extreme or utterly nonsensical.”

This shows that there is a conscious and unconscious bias in the minds of those organizing

¹ Sagetodz twitter post, "SageTodz on Twitter: " 8/06/2023, <<https://twitter.com/SageTodz/status/1666894591956508684>> Accessed 26/07/2023.

² ‘Eisteddfod: SageTodz Will Not Perform over English Lyrics’. 2023. *BBC News*, section Wales, <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-65860534>> [accessed 22 July 2023]

³ NEWS, BBC WALES. 2023. ‘BBC NEWS Social Media Post; “Rapper SageTodz Cannot Play Eisteddfod due to English Lyrics”’, *Www.instagram.com* (BBC WALES NEWS) <<https://www.instagram.com/p/CtTrEKHIX1o/?igshid=MzRlODBiNWFlZA==>> [accessed 26 July 2023]

⁴ Roberts, Ellis. 2023. ‘Welsh Language Now Included in Culture Wars - Academic’, *BBC News* (BBC News) <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-66273842>> [accessed 23 July 2023]

⁵ Brownlee, Dana. 2019. ‘Exhibit a Bill Maher: Why White People Should Stop Using the Term “Woke”...Immediately’, *Forbes.com* (Forbes Magazine) <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/danabrownlee/2021/04/19/why-white-people-should-stop-using-the-term-wokeimmediately/>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

⁶ Cuncic, Arlin. 2022. ‘What Is Cultural Appropriation?’, *Verywell Mind* <<https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-cultural-appropriation-5070458>> [accessed 25 July 2023]

these events, not only is this problematic for the Cymry of Colour who do not feel included in Cymreig culture without being fluent and experiencing uncomfortable situations, but I argue it will also harm the Eisteddfod in its relevancy in generations to come as its aim is to celebrate Cymreig culture, which is modernizing and changing more every day as the people of Cymru do.

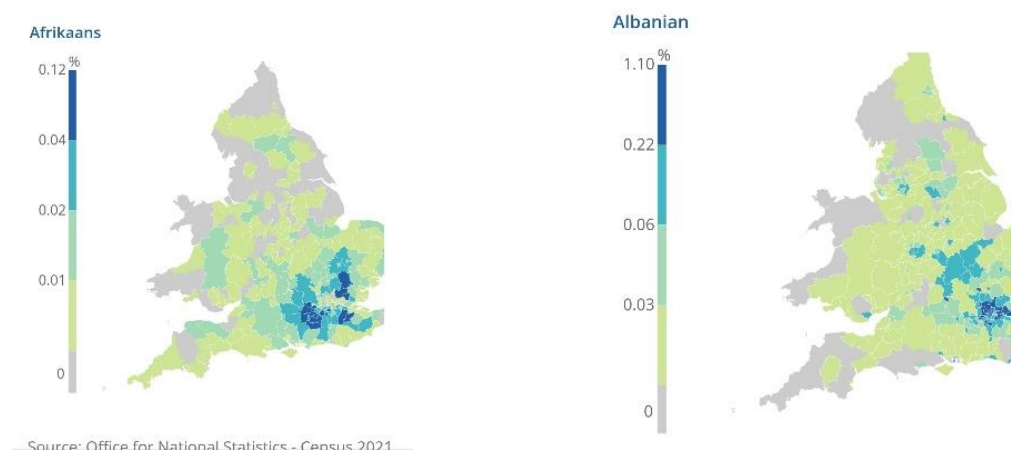
Though not rapping in English seems on the surface like a small disagreement about the use of a language, it is far from this, it is an issue that is acting as a magnifying glass where diversity and inclusivity are in lack at the Eisteddfod, and how this also mirrors systemic and social white supremacy across the country.

There are many areas where the Eisteddfod is lacking in diversity and inclusivity, there is further reading available in the bibliography, this essay will, however, be focusing on the lack of multiculturalism and multilingualism in the Eisteddfod, and Cymru.

Why do we need inclusivity and diversity in National events and institutes?

In Cymru, there is a diverse population, from people who have been on this Island for thousands of years, to people who moved here a month ago. Though the percentages of their spoken languages aren't high like Cymraeg or English, they have a few things in common with Cymraeg and the native people here, and it is clear that if one language is barred in this way, then so are the others, which suppresses progress for the Eisteddfod in diversity and representation of the real Cymru.

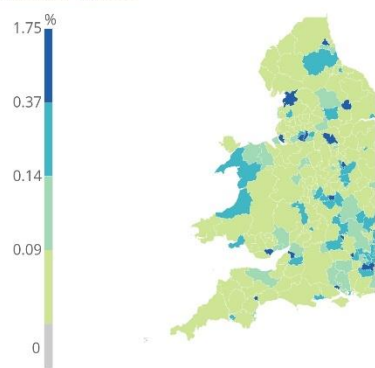
I made a random selection of a few languages spoken at home that are not English or Cymraeg, and this is to give an example of where and at what rate these are spoken in Cymru. These are from the BBC and are sourced from the census 2021⁷.



⁷ 'Welsh Language Use in Wales (Initial Findings): July 2019 to March 2020 (Revised)'. [n.d.]. GOV.WALES

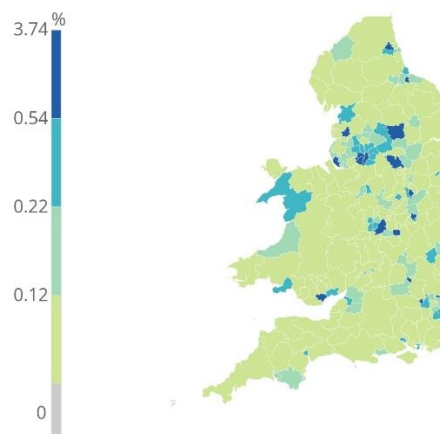
<<https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-use-wales-initial-findings-july-2019-march-2020-revised-html>> [accessed 21 July 2023]

All other Chinese

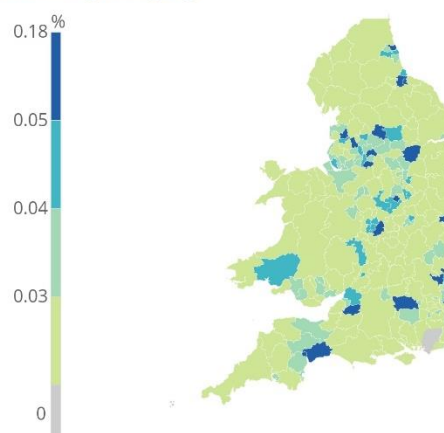


Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

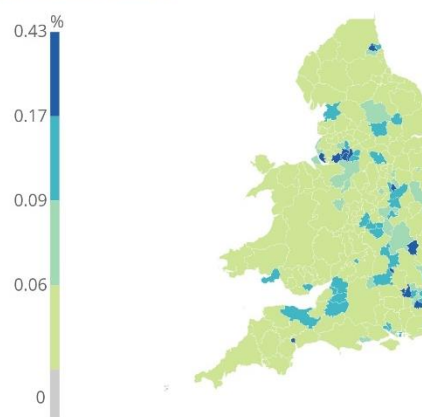
Arabic



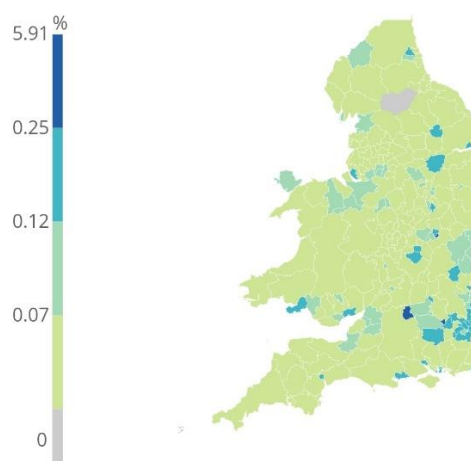
British Sign Language



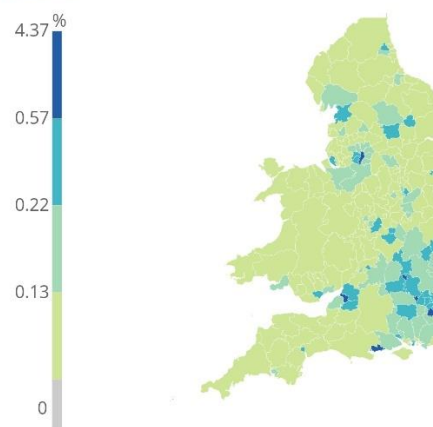
Cantonese Chinese



Turkish

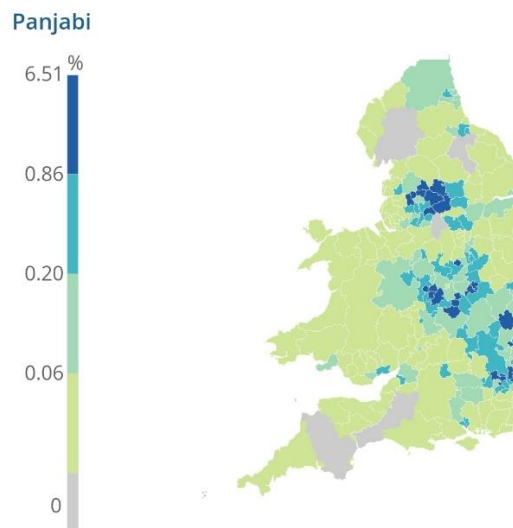


Spanish



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

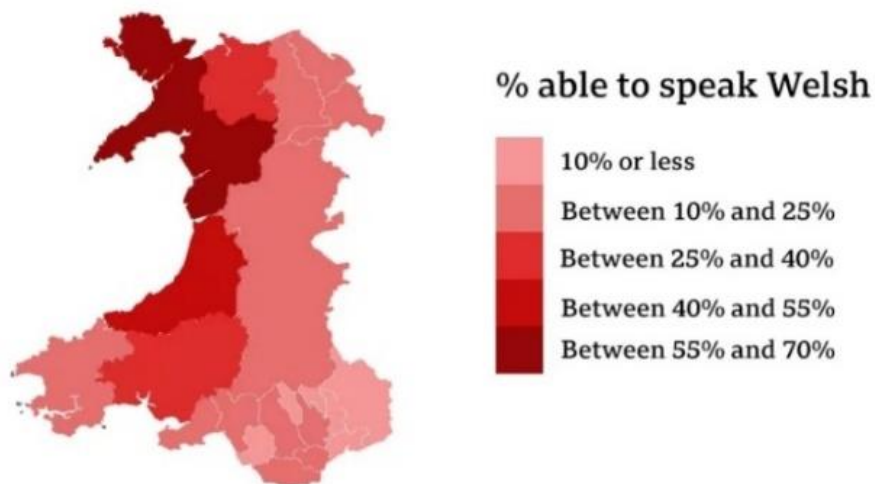
Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021



Source: Office for National Statistics - Census 2021

The following map graphs will concern the usage of Cymraeg in Cymru from the BBC covering the census results⁸,

Welsh speakers in Wales



Source: Census of population, 2021

BBC

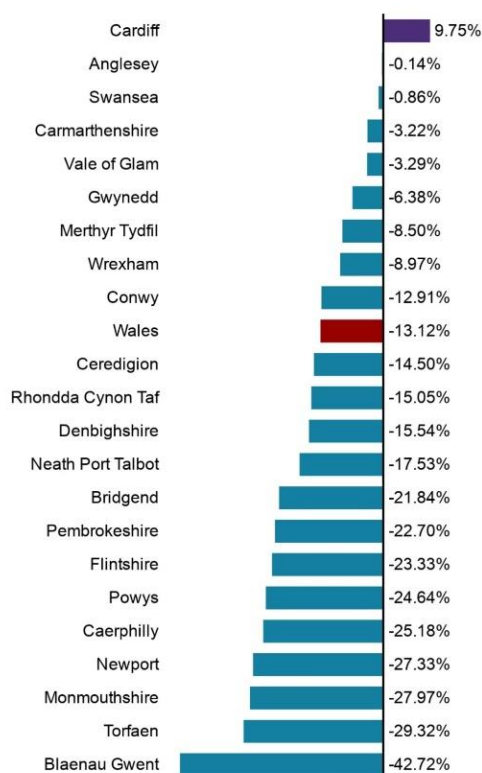
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⁸ 'Ethnic Group, National Identity, Language and Religion in Wales (Census 2021)'. 2022. *GOV.WALES* <<https://www.gov.wales/ethnic-group-national-identity-language-and-religion-wales-census-2021.html>> [accessed 21 July 2023]

⁹ 'Welsh Language Use Falls over Past Decade - Census'. 2022. *BBC News* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-63860772.amp>> [accessed 18 July 2023]

Changes in children speaking Welsh

% change in numbers aged 3 to 15 able to speak Welsh between 2011 and 2021



Source: Census 2021/ONS, December 2022



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3. Main languages varied across England and Wales

English (English or Welsh in Wales) as a main language

The percentage of people who spoke English (English or Welsh in Wales) as their main language was higher in Wales (96.7%, 2.9 million out of 3.0 million) than it was in England (90.8%, 49.7 million out of 54.7 million).

In Wales, people were asked if their main language was anything other than English or Welsh. Therefore, it is not possible to determine how many people in Wales consider Welsh to be their main language. There was a separate question for people in Wales asking them about their Welsh language ability. On 6 December 2022, the Welsh Government will be publishing information on Welsh language skills in Wales.

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Main languages, other than English (English or Welsh in Wales)

Polish remained the most common main language accounting for 1.1% (612,000) of usual residents, for those who do not have English (English or Welsh in Wales) as a main language.

In 2021, Romanian moved into the top 10 main languages, excluding English (English or Welsh in Wales). This was the largest increase over the decade. In total, 0.8% of people (472,000) listed Romanian as their main language, up from 0.1% (68,000) in 2011. This mirrors a similar increase in the number of people who listed Romania as their country of birth between 2011 and 2021 (an increase between censuses of 459,000, or a 0.8 percentage point change). It also mirrors an increase in the number who chose only a Romanian national identity (an increase between censuses of 405,000, or a 0.7 percentage point change).

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¹⁰ 'Welsh Language Use in Wales (Initial Findings): July 2019 to March 2020 (Revised)'. [n.d.]. GOV.WALES <<https://www.gov.wales/welsh-language-use-wales-initial-findings-july-2019-march-2020-revised.html>> [accessed 21 July 2023]

Though in the Northwest the percentages are a lot higher for Cymraeg than the other languages, and not every language is listed here, most of these languages have a few things in common, neither Cymraeg nor the other languages can be spoken in a court setting without an interpreter, English was a colonial language that oppressed Cymraeg and the other languages, Cymraeg has also been ridiculed, as have its users while speaking English too, a striking similarity to the other languages. Cymraeg also carries generational trauma, so I would argue its users should consider the similarities, and relatability, and then reconsider Cymraeg's role as a formally endangered language when it comes to fostering change to decolonize from a colonial past. It would be far more beneficial to the country to reflect warmth and celebrate the cultures that have come here to stay. The Senedd government has sworn to be a place of 'sanctuary' for everybody that needs sanctuary, this should not just refer to food and shelter, but to also spiritual, cultural, and social support. We see in the controversy around SageTodz, and other issues around Cymru where racism, the lack of tolerance, and abuse are rife amongst the white non-migrant residents of Cymru¹³. In Llanelli, there are protesters that want the local hotel to not house asylum seekers, though it is understandable to assume it is over safety fears for the refugees, unfortunately, and not shockingly, it is not, it is concerning keeping 'illegal immigrants' out¹⁴. I would argue this is a direct result of Brexit conditioning that was harnessed in the psyche of white residents across the UK by the white supremacist lobbyists, and members of politics¹⁵.

In the newspapers, there is news coverage of young refugees from Ukraine learning Cymraeg quickly and accurately¹⁶, and there are many migrants and refugees that have become fluent in Cymraeg after moving here, more so in the North of Cymru. Not every family in Cymru can or want to learn Cymraeg no matter what their ethnic or family background is. Though younger generations are being supported to learn the language, it is not supported in the same way for adults and is certainly rarely free, so English is still the predominant language in Cymru. Formal settings and social settings online and in person call for the use of English for those who are not native to Cymru, and in many families, a younger family member will interpret for them.

English is also used to help new residents of Cymru learn Cymraeg, this occurs elsewhere and

¹¹ 'Welsh Language Use Falls over Past Decade - Census'. 2022. *BBC News* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-63860772.amp>> [accessed 18 July 2023]

¹² 2022. *BBC News* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-63860772.amp>> [accessed 18 July 2023]

¹³ Evans, Harri. 2023. 'Welsh Artists "Racially Abused" in "Toxic" Twist to Eisteddfod Language Debate', *North Wales Live* <<https://www.dailypost.co.uk/news/north-wales-news/welsh-artists-racially-abused-toxic-27208132>> [accessed 19 July 2023]

¹⁴ Scourfield, Aled, and Paul Pigott. 2023. 'Stradey Park Hotel: Llanelli Asylum Seeker Venue Seeks Protest Limit', *BBC News*, section Wales <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-66292345>> [accessed 26 July 2023]

¹⁵ 'Brexit "Major Influence" in Racism Rise'. 2019. *BBC News*, section Wales <<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-48692863>> [accessed 26 July 2023]

¹⁶ Jones, Branwen. 2022. 'Ukrainian Children Have Learned Nearly Fluent Welsh in Just a Few Months', *WalesOnline* (Wales Online) <<https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/ukrainian-children-learned-nearly-fluent-25766440>> [accessed 24 July 2023]

helps people across the globe to connect in meaningful ways, as do other languages. English is of course a language created by Germanic people that has also caused distress and trauma to many other language users, however it is apparent that barring any language from a government-sponsored event like the Eisteddfod means all other languages are barred as a consequence of being fair, and this you would assume also applies to other Celtic languages. It would be wise to acknowledge that the role of English across the globe is changing, and has had a different meaning to many for some time. English is now known to many as a 'bridge', or 'link' language¹⁷. Though not every citizen on Earth speaks it or understands it, it is still the most largely known language due to its colonial past. For example on the YouTube platform 'TEDx Talks', Grant Cho gave a talk about how he as a Korean-American, learning Chinese and already knowing English helped him to help another person in need, whereas not learning that third language would of blocked him from being able to give assistance¹⁸. Bilingualism and Multilingualism are active parts of modern multicultural communities and often can lead to better opportunities in a person's career or passions. The author of the video states that Grant Cho utilizes music and conversation to do this,

"Through hard work and making connections with others via music and conversation, he believes that he can make a great impact on people's lives and health"¹⁹.

Which makes it relevant to the conversation around diversity and inclusivity in events like The Eisteddfod. A way to reflect a truly diverse Nation is for the institutions within those Nations to embody the diversity and include it.

Visitor Figures

	Cardiff 2008	Meirion 2009	Blaenau Gwent 2010	Wrexham 2011	Vale of Glamorgan 2012	Denbigh 2013	Carmarthenshire 2014	Montgomeryshire 2015	Monmouthshire 2016
Friday night	1,634	1,245	3,136	1,586	2,520	2,300	1,440	2,605	1,472
Saturday 1	17,681	18,216	14,702	17,881	18,207	16,571	15,615	15,023	15,286
Sunday	13,072	15,292	25,097	16,794	15,305	16,032	15,484	16,409	15,018
Monday	20,423	19,658	15,461	16,048	16,121	15,754	16,285	17,683	14,092
Tuesday	17,236	18,113	13,363	17,004	13,126	17,813	15,856	16,104	15,009
Wednesday	20,952	24,794	16,126	20,898	19,368	19,626	19,004	17,914	18,019
Thursday	22,659	23,027	18,096	17,902	20,016	19,864	18,740	22,433	18,516
Friday	27,873	24,166	17,294	23,428	19,097	26,237	24,384	24,933	23,801
Saturday 2	15,167	20,178	13,658	17,351	15,007	17,507	16,694	17,672	19,086
Total	156,697	164,689	136,933	148,892	138,767	153,704	143,502	150,776	140,297

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¹⁷ Rao, Parupalli Srinivas. 2019. 'THE ROLE of ENGLISH as a GLOBAL LANGUAGE', *ResearchGate*
<https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334282978_THE_ROLE_OF_ENGLISH_AS_A_GLOBAL_LANGUAGE>
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¹⁸ talks, TEDx. 2016. 'Language: The Bridge between Cultures | Grant Cho | TEDxYouth@Conejo', *Www.youtube.com* (TEDx talks)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J99j_no7WF0> [accessed 24 July 2023]

¹⁹ 'Language: The Bridge between Cultures, Grant Cho, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J99j_no7WF0> [accessed 24 July 2023]

²⁰ 'Visitor Figures 2016 | National Eisteddfod'. [n.d.]. *Eisteddfod.wales* <<https://eisteddfod.wales/visitor-figures-2016>> [accessed 23 July 2023]

Another point that needs to be made is that even though these numbers fluctuate for a number of different reasons, and these numbers are not low for niche festivals, this is a National festival. The opportunity to boost these numbers and create more awareness for Cymraeg is being missed through the lack of openness towards other languages that the language statistics prove is not as in danger within Cymru as the other languages are

Conclusion

It is a well-known fact amongst civilian and academic circles that representation of diverse communities is essential to making change, acceptance, celebration, and normalcy a part of our society's reality.

It is also apparent that Cymraeg and its relevancy in a modern and diverse Cymru are under threat, and I would argue this is due to the bias that is conscious and unconscious, self-ego, and conservative ideologies amongst the leaders, those of influence and civilians alike.

By closing the gap between language and culture, there is an opportunity to make a great and positive impact on the psyche of Cymreig residents, which directly impacts the promise of sanctuary for all and begins to make that a reality.

A celebration of culture within Cymreig that is diverse could create a far more substantial and infamous festival experience for all of those that reside in and visit Cymru, a sanctuary for all aspects of multiculturalism.

Without normalizing differences, celebrating those differences, and giving space for those differences, I argue that events such as the Eisteddfod will continue to bring controversy, Cymreig culture and language will draw fewer people in a social setting, and government promises will continue to be half empty. To put it in the clearest way possible, I argue that Cymru is doomed to be stuck in the mind frame of the Victorians if action, awareness, and open-mindedness are not accessed and utilized now. The Eisteddfod is perfect for this to manifest, and I argue the most needed place for this to materialize. For progress to succeed, there is a need to hold diverse conversations armed with statistics and trustworthy sources, and it is imperative to listen to the people these matters directly and negatively impact. Without giving space to all these aspects, progress cannot be made.

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