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The persistence of PUBLICLY: a corpus-assisted historical study

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Speaking *radicly* for the moment, but no doubt *academicly*, *logicly* and *statisticly* soundly (though *tragicly* for traditionalists, I know), I *basicly* think *publically* is a better spelling.



'Top commenters' disagree...



Mitch Powell - ★ Top Commenter - Consultant at Internet Marketing - 171 followers

I agree with Angela. "Publically" is rubbish. I had no idea it was even listed as a variant. When did they let that one slip in?

Reply · Like · 👍 1 · March 17, 2012 at 1:35am



Bill Swears - Technical Writer/Editor at Bureau of Ocean Energy Management

I've used it all my life, and both Word and Websters see publically as correct. According to OED, the earliest use of "publicly" recorded is 1559, while the earliest use of "publically" was much later - 1797. I can see why you'd think it was a Johnny come lately. Well, perhaps a Jonathan-come-lately. :-)

Reply · Like · 👍 1 · April 4, 2012 at 4:14pm

From: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/publically>

Oxford English Dictionary (OED) Online: -ICLY

- 46 headwords, all identified as adverbs
- 35 cross-referred in some way to the corresponding -ICALLY entry
- Of the remaining 11 (ANTICLY, CATHOLICLY, CAUSTICLY, CHICLY, FROLICLY, IMPOLITICLY, POLITICLY, PUBLICLY, RELICLY, RHETORICLY, UNPOLITICLY), 6 are marked as rare or obsolete...
- ...leaving only CATHOLICLY, CHICLY, IMPOLITICLY, POLITICLY, PUBLICLY
- CATHOLICLY, IMPOLITICLY, POLITICLY are derived from 3-syllable adjectives with initial stress
- CHICLY we will come back to...

Linguistic explanations I

- “The word *publical* does not exist so the adverb is *publicly* with one -l “ (*100 Most Commonly Misspelled Words*, 2009)
- Only 6 concordance lines for PUBLICAL in enTenTen13 (and two of these insist that there is no word PUBLICAL).
- In fact, PUBLICAL is attested by the *OED*, as obsolete and rare.
- However, NOSTALGICAL, SIMPLISTICAL, and BASICAL are not attested at all by the *OED* yet NOSTALGIC, SIMPLISTIC, and BASIC all form adverbs in -ICALLY.

Linguistic explanations II

- In PUBLIC, -IC is not a morpheme -> it does not serve to distinguish word classes
- cf. TRAGEDY -> TRAGIC ; DRAMA -> DRAMATIC ;
LEXICOGRAPHY -> LEXICOGRAPHIC
- In this respect, PUBLIC is like CHIC, which simply adds -LY to form its adverb
- However there are many counterexamples where -IC is not obviously morphemic yet leads to adverbs in -ICALLY: eg.
ELASTIC ; CHARACTERISTIC ; CHRONIC ; FRANTIC ; INTRINSIC

Historical explanations

- Claim:

- The adjective PUBLIC (including early spellings), or its corresponding adverb, entered the language at a much earlier stage than other -IC adjectives or their adverbs (Freeman, 2014; O'Conner & Kellerman, 2015)

- Evidence:

- PUBLIC (*adj*) is first attested in 1394 (*OED*)
- 32 -IC adjectives entered the language earlier (eg, AUTHENTIC, 1387; BARBARIC, 1388; PHLEGMATIC, 1340)
- PUBLICLY (in an old spelling) is first attested in 1534 (*OED*)
- 5 earlier -ICLY adverbs and 16 -ICALLY

Early citations (OED)

- 1534 in R. Pitcairn *Criminal Trials Scotl.* (1833) I. 1. 211 The publict ceremonie of recanting..was to beare a faggot of drie sticks and burne it publictlie.
- 1559 in P. F. Tytler *Hist. Scotl.* (1864) III. 391 Their minister shall have full liberty..to ministrare the sacraments, publicly and privately.
- 1569 in Dunlop *Confess.* (1722) II. 637 Thereunto war added secret Prayers publictlie made within the Houses.
- 1610 *True Declar. Estate of Virginia* in P. Force *Tracts* (1844) III. 1. 9 Sir Thomas Gates supposeth himselfe accused publicquely and in print of a treeble defect.
- 1644 *Directory Publique Worship* 7 All the Canonick Books of the Old and New Testament..shall be publicquely read in the vulgar Tongue.
- 1709 R. STEELE *Tatler* No. 6. ¶11 The Soldiers murmured publicly for Want of Pay.
- 1794 W. PALEY *Evidences* (1825) II. 143 It does not appear that any books, other than our present Scriptures were thus publicly read.
- 1564 M. PARKER in A. BACON tr. J. Jewel *Apol. Def. Church. Eng.* Ep. Ded., Ye haue done pleasure to the Author of the Latine boke,..in makinge his good woorke more publikely beneficiall.
- 1585 T. WASHINGTON tr. N. de Nicolay *Nauigations Turkie* III. xxii. f. 112^v, These Sacquas [sc. water carriers]..are waged either publikely [Fr. *ils sont salariés du publicq*], or of som in particular.
- 1804 W. CRUISE *Digest Laws Eng. Real Prop.* IV. 102 Feudal law..was adopted in England for the same reason..that the proprietor of each piece of land should be publicly known.

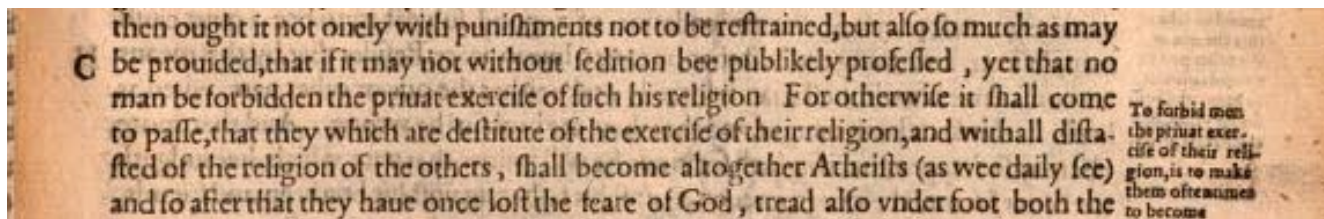
PUBLICALLY:

- 1797 in *Catal. Prints: Polit. & Personal Satires* (Brit. Mus.) (1942) VII. 328, I do not Consider myself accountable for them after thus publically Warning every Person.

Early citations (*other sources*)

That none of them tak upon hand, privatlie or **publicklie**, to make anie alteratioun or innovatioun of the estate of religioun , or attempt anie thing against the same, which her Majestie found **publicklie** and universallie standing at her Majestie's arrival in this her realme under paine of death... *Edict of Toleration* (1561):

<http://www.thereformation.info/maryqos.htm>



Bodin, J & Knolles, R. (1606). *Of the Lawes and Cvstomes of a Common-wealth*.

place, but for more security and certainty
Distinct. 25. Saints some are canonized, that is, **publickly** allowed to be Saints: some are not ca-
nonized and receiued into the Kalendar: the difference is this, *Canonized Saints*, either generally by
the Pope so canonized, for the whole Church, or more specially by a Bishop for his prouince or dio-
cesse, may be **publickly** prayed vnto, Temples built in their names, and their holy daies yeerely re-
membred, their reliques preserued in Churches to be adored: But none of these things **publickly**
may bee exhibited to not *Canonized Saints*, vnlesse priuately onely, *Bellarmin. de sanct. lib. 1. cap. 10.*
Contr. First, that neither canonized nor vncanonized Saints are in any such sort to bee worshipped,
we haue shewed before. Secondly, what an absurd thing is this, it is lawfull to pray to some Saint
priuately, and yet vnlawfull to doe it **publickly**? so men shall haue house saints and Church saints:



Kingston, F. (1614)

**Synopsis Papismi, that is a General View Op Papestrie,
Wherein the Whole Mysterie of Iniquitie, and Summe of
Antichristian Doctrine is Set Down, Wich is Maintained this
Day by the Synagogue of Rome Against the Church of
Christ**

Hypothesis

- ...that PUBLICLY, in its various spellings, became more frequently used in the 16th century in connection with the religious disputes over public/private observance (“I would not open windows into men’s souls”):
 - *The Church Settlement allowed Elizabeth's subjects to honor their own religious convictions privately, provided that they demonstrate their loyalty to Queen and Country by outwardly conforming* (Jensen, 2012).
- Haldén (2013) discusses Tudor England as a key milestone in the historical (re-)emergence of the public/private distinction in legal and political thought

Corpora

- English Historical Book Collection (EHBC)
 - available through www.sketchengine.eu
 - amalgamation of 3 separate corpora
 - covers the period 1470 to 1829, divided into subcorpora for each century & decade
 - 826,296,048 tokens
- Supplemented with Google Books
- BNC + enTenTen series for comparison

Spelling variants

- *publicly, publickly, publikely, publiquely, publikly, publickely, publictly, publykely, publykly, publicquely*
- *priuately, priuatly, privatly, priuatelie, priuatlie, priuatelye, privatelie, pryuately, privatlie, pryuately*

Findings

Corpus / Subcorpus	Frequency of PUBLICLY (all spellings) (per million)	Most frequent spelling
all EHBC	24.6	publicly
15 th century (from 1473)	insignificant (3 instances)	publykely
16 th century	10.1	publikely
17 th century	27.9	publicly
18 th century	22.8	publicly
19 th century (to 1829)	18.8	publicly
BNC	14.0	publicly
enTenTen15	19.9	publicly

Earliest EHBC citations

Besye thy self to punysshē malefactours. and thoos that putteth the in daunger or trouble within thy royaume or lordship· make stryke of their hedes **publykely** that other may take example by them. (1477)

Therefore to repentaunce for our felues priuatelye, and for the realme and churche **publikely** eueryone fhoule laboure to ftyrre vp both oure felues & others. (1553)

... that thou woldest engraue in theyr hartes and commaunde them vnder paine of damnation to be carefull ouer me, to doe me good and prouide for me, as they haue done or rather thou by thē **publickly**. (1562)

...who besides his private thankfulnes, maketh here a solemn entri into the Coorts of God; there prostrateth himself **publicly** in thanks and praier to the Almighty. (1615)

Is there a significant connection between PUBLICLY and religion?

- Random selection of 10 'religion' words: *church, god, jesus, christ, christian, worship, gospel, bible, religion, bishop*
- Searched for these words in the context of PUBLICLY (window of ± 10) (all spelling variants included)
- Searched for the same words in the context of *the*
- These words occurred almost twice as frequently in the context of PUBLICLY than with the 'neutral' search term *the*.

PUBLICLY ... PRIVATELY

- In EHBC, I searched for PRIVATELY in the vicinity of PUBLICLY , and vice versa (window of ± 10) (all spelling variants included)
- PUBLICLY attracts PRIVATELY as a collocate in **6.45%** of cases
- PRIVATELY attracts PUBLICLY as a collocate in **11.99%** of cases
- These figures may appear disappointingly small for my purposes, but...

PUBLICLY ... PRIVATELY

Corpus	Node word	Candidate Collocate	% of co-occurrence
all EHBC	publicly (+ <i>variants</i>)	privately (+ <i>variants</i>)	6.45
all EHBC	privately (+ <i>variants</i>)	publicly (+ <i>variants</i>)	11.99
enTenTen08	publicly	privately	2.48
enTenTen08	publically	privately	1.75
enTenTen12	publicly	privately	2.29
enTenTen12	publically	privately	1.88
enTenTen15	publicly	privately	2.08
enTenTen15	publically	privately	1.70

Conclusions

- So why has *publicly* remained the most frequent form and resisted the dominant -IC → -ICALLY pattern of derivation?
- There is an easy answer and a more difficult one
- The easy one...
- At the time when it was becoming established in the language, PUBLICLY was frequently associated with PRIVATELY
- Orthographic parallelism: simply add -LY
- cf. *the ayes and the noes, do's and don'ts*

Dr Johnson's Dictionary (1755)

Only adverb in -ICKLY;
cf. 18 in -ICALLY

No entry for
publical or
publically

but that of others. ways.
PU'BLICK. *adj.* [*public, publique, Fr. publicus, Lat.*]
 1. Belonging to a state or nation; not private.
 By following the law of private reason, where the law of
publick should take place, they breed disturbance. *Hooker.*

where none distinguish. scope.
PU'BLICKLY. *adv.* [from *publick.*]
 1. In the name of the community.
 This has been so sensibly known by trading nations, that
 great rewards are *publicly* offered for its supply. *Addison.*
 2. Openly; without concealment.
 Sometimes also it may be private, communicating to the
 judges some things not fit to be *publicly* delivered. *Bacon.*

SPECI'FICAL. } *adj.* [*specifique, French; species and facio.*]
SPECI'FICK. }
 1. That which makes a thing of the species of which it is.

TRA'GICAL. } *adj.* [*tragicus, Lat. tragique, Fr.*]
TRA'GICK. }

ACADE'MICK. *adj.* [*academicus, Lat.*] Relating to an university.
 While through poetic scenes the genius roves,
 Or wanders wild in *academic* groves. *Dunciad, b. iv. l. 481.*
ACADE'MICAL. *adj.* [*academicus, Lat.*] Belonging to an uni-
 versity.

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