

# Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 026

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**Area:** *Eilean Eige (Isle of Eigg): An Tuilm, Clèadail, Lathaig, Sannda Bheag, Sannda Mhòr, Galmasdal, Grùlainn & Cill Donnain*

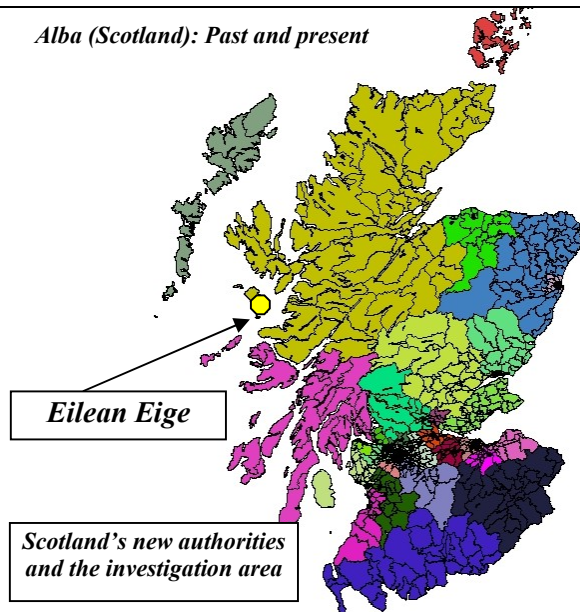
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: Holen, Cleadale, Laig, Sanndaveg, Sanndavore, Galmisdale, Grulin & Kildonan)

**Number of households:** 50      **Population present at census night:** 234

**Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig:** 96.8 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Inverness-shire	Small Isles	Small Isles	1	1 – 10

*Alba (Scotland): Past and present*

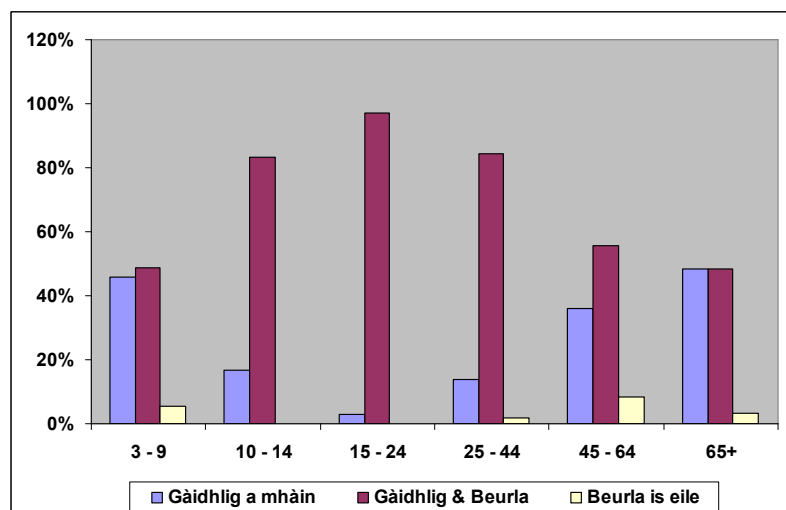


## State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

The small Hebridean island of *Eige* (Eigg) was home of a tightly-knit Gàidhlig speaking community where almost a quarter of its population did not speak English at all. Gàidhlig only speakers were particularly present in the age groups of 3-4 and above 65 years. There were no signs of receding intergenerational language maintenance with all locally born youngsters registered as Gàidhlig speakers. The handful of English monolinguals originated almost completely from outside the *Gaidhealtachd*. Strongest Gàidhlig communities were *Clèadail* (Cleadale) and *Cill Donnain* (Kildonan) with all inhabitants being speakers of the traditional language.

## Area description:

The island of *Eige* (Eigg) is part of the Inner Hebrides. Together with four neighbouring islands (*Rùm, Canaidh, Sanndaigh, Eilean nam Muc*) it forms the civil parish of *Na h-Eileanan Tarsainn* (Small Isles). *Eige* at the time of the 1891 census (and still today) was the most populous island with a strong crofting tradition. The island had a strong self-sustaining community which had nonetheless a good lifeline to the outside world over the waters to the near mainland and adjacent islands.



**Age profile: Share of population speaking (1) Gàidhlig, (2) Gàidhlig & English, or (3) no Gàidhlig at all**

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	Population enumerated				Usually resident population (3+)			
	Total	Aged 0-2	Deaf & dumb	Visitors etc. <sup>3</sup>	Total <sup>4</sup>	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<b>Age</b>								
<b>Total</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>96.8 %</b>
<b>3-4</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>84.6 %</b>
<b>5-9</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>10-14</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>15-24</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>25-44</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>98.3 %</b>
<b>45-64</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>91.7 %</b>
<b>65+</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>96.6 %</b>
<b>Gender</b>								
<b>Female</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>96.5 %</b>
<b>Male</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>97.2 %</b>
<b>Place of birth</b>								
<b>Born in parish</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>99.4 %</b>
<b>In neighbouring parish<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>28</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Gaidhealtachd elsewhere<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>24</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100 %</b>
<b>Other places</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>60.0 %</b>

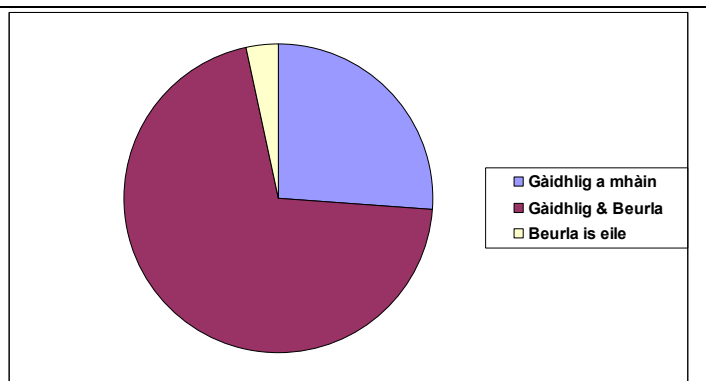
## Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Parishes of Glenelg and Arisaig & Moidart as well as all parishes on the Isle of Skye (all Inverness).

<sup>2</sup> Other parishes in Scotland with more than 50 % Gàidhlig speakers in the 1891 census.

<sup>3</sup> People described as visitors, boarders, lodgers or other similar terms.

<sup>4</sup> Number of enumerated persons who were (1) older than 2 years of age, who were (2) not deaf & dumb and who (3) did not live only temporarily in the area.



Share of population speaking (1) Gàidhlig, (2) Gàidhlig & English, or (3) no Gàidhlig at all

## Background of Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profiles:

The 1891 census was the first such enumeration exercise with an unequivocal language question. After more than 100 years the original census forms are publicly available for detailed analysis. During research concerned with the “Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Studies” a vast number of such local statistics have been gathered about the Gàidhlig speaking population of Scotland in that year. As many of these results could not be included in the reports these concise fact-sheets are a welcome way to publish some of the “local gems”. More information is provided at [http://www.linguae-celticae.de/GLP\\_english.htm](http://www.linguae-celticae.de/GLP_english.htm).

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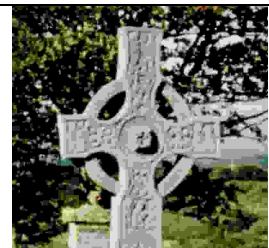
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	Households	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
<i>Eilean Eige</i>	50	219	57	155	96.8 %
<b>Individual communities</b>					
<i>An Tuilm</i> (Holen)	3	15	1	12	86.7 %
<i>Clèadail</i> (Cleadaile)	20	80	28	52	100 %
<i>Lathaig</i> (Laig)	5	16	1	13	87.5 %
<i>Sannda Bheag &amp; Sannda Mhòr</i> (Sanndaveg & Sanndavore)	6	29	4	23	93.1 %
<i>Galmasdal &amp; Grùlainn</i> (Galmisdale & Grulin)	11	49	22	26	98.0 %
<i>Cill Donnain</i> (Kildonan)	5	30	1	29	100 %
<b>Language of parents</b>					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	14	94	33	61	100 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	6	28	7	19	92.9 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	0	0	0	0	-
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	1	4	0	3	75.0 %
Households with no children (0-14)	29	93	17	72	95.7 %
<b>Occupation of head of household</b>					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	26	135	48	85	98.5 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	3	17	0	16	94.1 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	4	21	0	19	90.5 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	3	11	2	9	100 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	0	0	0	0	-
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	14	35	7	26	94.3 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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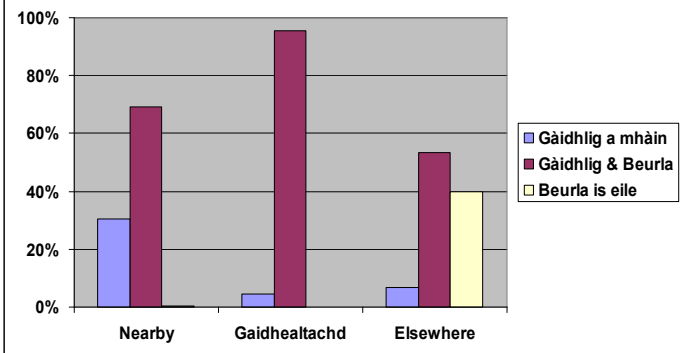
## Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

All except one person born nearby or in other *Gaidhealtachd* parishes spoke Gàidhlig. Six of the seven English monolinguals originated from the Lowlands. Gàidhlig monolinguals were most prominent amongst those born locally.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Born either in the Small Isles or in the adjacent parishes of Glenelg, Arisaig & Moidart or on the Isle of Skye (all Inverness).

<sup>2</sup> Born in other parishes of Scotland with more than 50 % Gàidhlig speakers in the 1891 census.



Speakers according to place of birth (1) nearby<sup>1</sup>  
(2) in remaining *Gaidhealtachd*<sup>2</sup>, or (3) elsewhere

## Remarks:

1. Seven persons were reported as not speaking the Celtic tongue: Two children (three and four years old whose local parents apparently had just resettled on the island after a spell in Renfrewshire), a farmer's wife and her daughter (both born in Ayrshire), the Minister's wife and her lunatic sister (both born in Edinburgh) and a shepherd originating from Dumfriesshire.
2. In original census report terms, the island had a population of 233 persons of all ages. 156 enumerated inhabitants spoke "Gaelic and English" and 59 were counted as monolingual Gàidhlig speakers. This led to an "official" share of Gàidhlig speakers of 92.3 %. This was an under-estimate of 4.5 %!