

Alba 1891: Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Profile

No. 065

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Area: *Uibhist a Deas (South Uist): Ceann a Tuath Loch Baghasdail, An Àird Bhuidhe, Am Maol Dubh, An Cidhe & Lasgair*

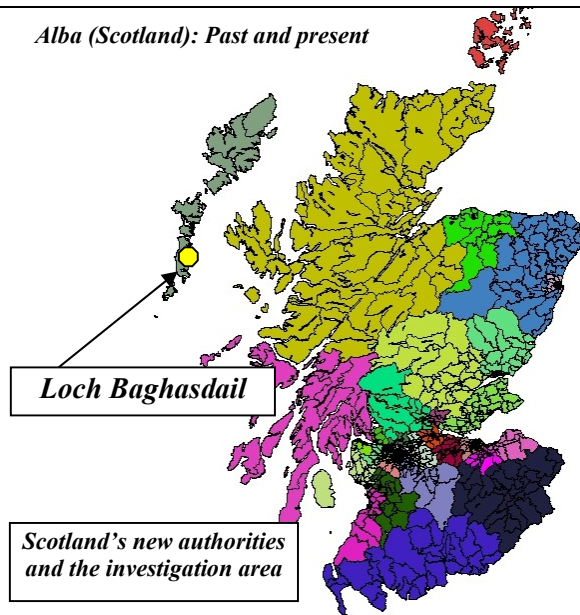
(Names of enumeration locations used on census forms: North Lochboisdale, Airdvuie, Mauldu, Pier Village, Laskir)

Number of households: 73 **Population present at census night:** 311

Share of resident population (aged three years or over) speaking Gàidhlig: 93.5 %

County	Civil parish	Registration district	Enumeration district number	Census form pages
Inverness-shire	South Uist	Boisdale	8	1 - 16

Alba (Scotland): Past and present

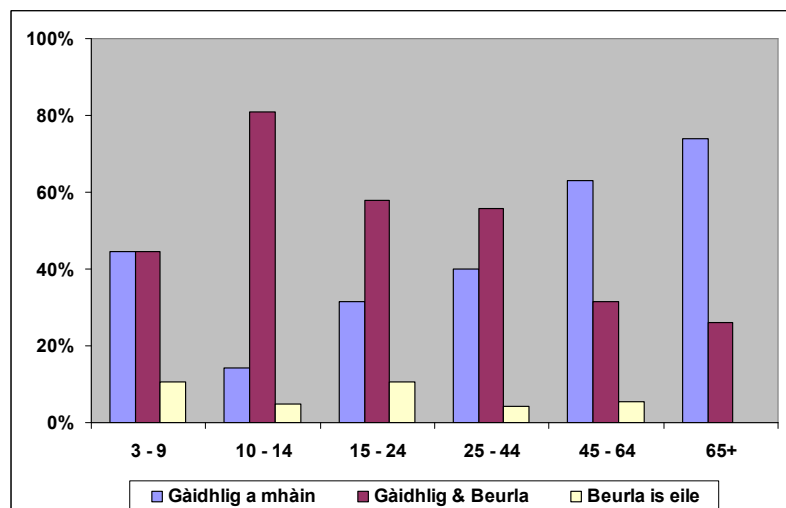


State of Gàidhlig in 1891:

Apart from a small English-speaking community living around the main harbour of the island the whole community was entirely Gàidhlig-speaking. Almost 50 % of speakers were still monolingual with a clear majority among children and residents older than 45 years. Language maintenance within Gàidhlig-speaking families was universally ensured. All communities were almost totally Gàidhlig-speaking apart from the “notables” living in the few houses around the pier at *Loch Baghasdail* (Lochboisdale).

Area description:

The community described lived on the northern shores of *Loch Baghasdail* (Loch Boisdale) on the Hebridean island of *Uibhist a Deas* (South Uist). The natural harbour was the main economic focus of the island. The remaining area was occupied by small self-sustaining crofting townships which relied also on near-shore fishing for their survival.



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. ³	Total ⁴	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
Age								
Total	311	24	0	11	276	124	134	93.5 %
3-4	20	0	0	0	20	11	5	80.0 %
5-9	27	0	0	0	27	10	16	96.3 %
10-14	22	0	0	1	21	3	17	95.2 %
15-24	61	0	0	4	57	18	33	89.5 %
25-44	75	0	0	5	70	28	39	95.7 %
45-64	54	0	0	0	54	34	17	94.4 %
65+	28	0	0	1	27	20	7	100 %
Gender								
Female	162	10	0	3	149	73	68	94.6 %
Male	149	14	0	8	127	51	66	92.1 %
Place of birth								
Born in parish	263	24	0	4	235	121	113	99.6 %
In neighbouring parish¹	2	0	0	0	2	1	1	100 %
Gaidhealtachd elsewhere²	23	0	0	1	22	2	16	81.8 %
Other places	23	0	0	6	17	0	4	23.5 %

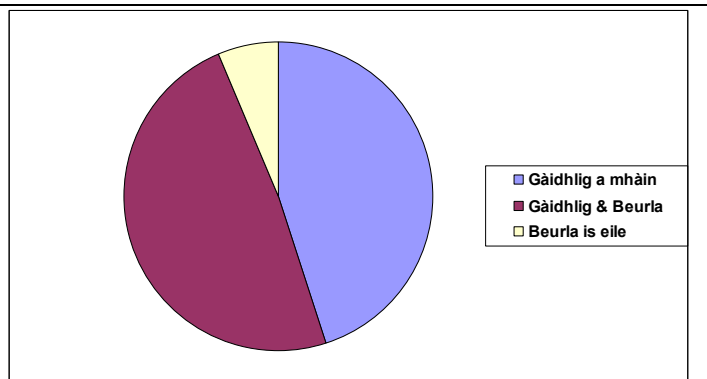
Notes:

¹ Parishes of Barra and North Uist (both Inverness).

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

³ People described as visitors, boarders, lodgers or other similar terms.

⁴ 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.

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	House-holds	Usually resident population (3+)			
		Total	Gàidhlig	Gàidhlig & English	Gàidhlig speakers (%)
Loch Baghasdail	73	276	124	134	93.5 %
Individual communities					
Ceann a Tuath Loch Baghasdail (North Lochboisdale)	8	23	15	8	100 %
An Àird Bhuidhe (Airdvuie)	17	61	36	24	98.4 %
Am Maol Dubh (Mauldu)	15	61	23	37	98.4 %
An Cidhe (Pier Village)	13	67	16	36	77.6 %
Lasgair (Laskir)	20	64	34	29	98.4 %
Language of parents					
Both parents Gàidhlig speaking	20	97	46	50	99.0 %
Single parent Gàidhlig speaking	12	52	20	30	96.2 %
One parent Gàidhlig speaking	2	22	1	19	90.9 %
No Gàidhlig speaking parent	1	6	0	0	0.0 %
Households with no children (0-14)	38	99	57	35	92.9 %
Occupation of head of household					
Crofter, farmer, fisherman, etc.	53	193	105	85	98.4 %
Shepherd, gamekeeper or similar	1	4	0	4	100 %
Clergyman, teacher, physician, etc.	4	20	6	7	65.0 %
Mason, carpenter, merchant, etc.	6	40	6	32	95.0 %
Living on private means	0	0	0	0	-
Manager, coachman, cook, etc.	1	6	0	0	0.0 %
Worker, farm/domestic servant, etc.	8	13	7	6	100 %
Remaining occupations	0	0	0	0	-

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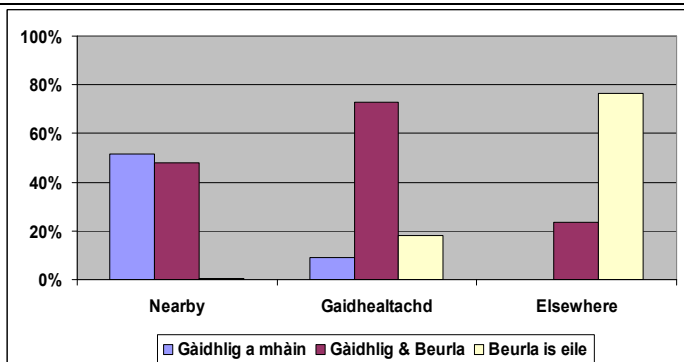
Place of birth and Gàidhlig speaking:

Most residents born on *Uibhist a Deas* (or neighbouring islands) did not speak English. On the other hand, inhabitants born outside the *Gaidhealtachd* were overwhelmingly ignorant of the local language.

Notes:

¹ Born either in South Uist or in the adjacent parishes of Barra and North Uist (all Inverness).

² Born in other parishes of Scotland with more than 50 % *Gàidhlig* speakers in the 1891 census.



Speakers according to place of birth (1) nearby¹
(2) in remaining *Gaidhealtachd*², or (3) elsewhere

Remarks:

1. The vast majority of persons who did not speak *Gàidhlig* lived in the Pier Village or *An Cidhe*. Most prominent were three families of the police sergeant (born in English speaking Avoch), the harbour master (from Aberdeenshire) and the bank agent (from Fife). Also, the baker and the hotel keeper belonged to this small community within the community. Apart from these persons there were three young children (aged 3 or 4 years) reported as not speaking *Gàidhlig*. During special checks in the census returns of 1901 all of them could be traced at different addresses. Two children had stayed on the island and one each was returned as “G” and “G&E” respectively. The boy who was incidentally born in Glasgow had returned to his Lowland birthplace and apparently had remained a monolingual English speaker (although his mother was reported as *Gàidhlig* speaking).
2. In original census report terms, all communities in total had a population of 311 persons of all ages. In all 139 enumerated inhabitants spoke “Gaelic and English” and 131 were counted as monolingual *Gàidhlig* speakers. These figures led to an “official” share of *Gàidhlig* speakers of 86.8 %. A comparison with the more realistic statistics of this factsheet reveals that this percentage was a significant under-estimate of 6.7 % mainly caused by the inclusion of under-three olds and visitors in the official population base.