

# **Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Studies<sup>1</sup>**

## **Vol. 05: *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist)**

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**Extended<sup>2</sup> 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition**

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### **Executive Summary**

This publication is part of a series dealing with local communities which were predominantly Gaelic speaking at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Based mainly (but not exclusively) on local population census information the reports strive to examine the state of the language through the ages from 1881 until today. The most relevant information is gathered comprehensively for the smallest geographical unit possible and provided area by area – a very useful reference for people with interest in their own community. Furthermore, the impact of recent developments in education (namely teaching in Gaelic medium and Gaelic as a second language) is analysed for primary school catchments.

The investigations for this part of the Outer Hebrides underline that North Uist is still a community with high incidence of Gaelic-speaking. Intergenerational language viability is healthier than in the island group, but it is nevertheless not totally secured. Strongholds of the language are confined to the westerly communities. Language retreat is strongest on the island of Berneray and in and around Lochmaddy. To prevent further decline in language use intensive improvements especially regarding pre-school and primary school education must be accomplished.

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<sup>2</sup> Tables were extended with more census results of enumeration districts provided for 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911.



## Foreword to the First Edition

Since 1881 every decennial population census in Scotland included a question about the “Gaelic-speaking” population. Despite some difficulty in interpreting this data (what really means to tick a box being able to speak Gaelic) this long-term data set holds a wealth of sociological and historical information. The series highlights the circumstances in which people speaking this Celtic language have lived and still live today. In most cases this data has been used only either for very problem-specific socio-linguistic studies or they were the basis of regional or Scotland wide analysis. However, it proved very difficult for people who were interested in their own local area to have a comprehensive overview of the number and distribution of Gaelic-speaking people right on their doorstep. This series is planned to cover all regions of Scotland where Scottish Gaelic (*A' Ghàidhlig* to be correct in its own words) was still spoken by a substantial part of the population at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Accordingly, besides the main “Highland counties” of Sutherland, Ross & Cromarty, Inverness and Argyll the fringe areas of Bute (including the Isle of Arran), western Caithness, Nairn, North Dunbartonshire and more particularly Highland Perthshire will be covered. It is hoped that these small reports will be of interest not only to science people but also to those who have to cope with opinions like “Gaelic was never spoken here” in their own local community.

## Foreword to the Second Edition

Almost two years have passed since the publication of the first volume of this series. In the meantime, a lot of “new” material has surfaced which merits to be publicised to a wider audience. In addition, two years are sometimes a very long time when looking at the actual state of a dynamic process: the re-animation of Scottish Gaelic in a number of places. Therefore, a second edition of the series is now being elaborated. Hopefully it will prove to be as popular as its predecessor.

## Foreword to the Extended Second Edition

I am very glad to present an extended and actualized edition of the *Gàidhlig* Local Studies after more than two decades since the first publication. Of course, new data and information had been waiting to be incorporated in this compendium of language development in Scotland. Maybe rather unexpectedly, many additional figures from the past became available, too – especially from the 1881, 1911 and 1981 censuses. As always, I wish happy reading – a few surprises wait to be discovered!!!!

**Important note:** Although this text is written in the modern lingua franca for the purpose of maximum readership the object has to take its rightful place. Therefore, *Gàidhlig* placenames or expressions are preferred, and the so-called English version is mentioned in brackets where appropriate. For those unfamiliar with the language: Every Gaelic expression is written in *italics* and the other place names are mainly examples of anglicisation efforts of early cartographers.



## Acknowledgements

The author is indebted to many organisations which have been very kind in providing information about the subject. I am very grateful for this active encouragement. Very special thanks go of course to the General Register Office for Scotland for the opportunity to use the census material in this study. The team at the Demographic Dissemination Branch has been very supportive. Crown Copyright on the census data is acknowledged gratefully. Very worthwhile was also the relentless assistance of Mrs. Melissa Barlow of the University of Texas and Mrs. Liz Mackie of the University of Aberdeen who both proved to be very successful in unearthing rare material of more than a century ago. And last but not least thank is also due to the many individuals with whom I spent endless hours of discussion witnessing true Highland hospitality. *Tapadh leibh a h-uile duine!*

Wedel, *An Dàmhar* 2003  
Hamburg, *An t-Sultain* 2005  
Hamburg, *Am Màirt* 2024

Kurt C. Duwe



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# 1 Introduction

The island of *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) is situated almost exactly in the centre of the Outer Hebrides (see fig. 1). The civil parish of same name incorporates in addition a number of outlying islands including the still inhabited *Griomasaigh* (Grimsay) and *Baile Sear* (Baleshare). For the sake of easy comparability with more recent statistics the more northerly island of *Beàrnaraigh* (Berneray) is also considered in this study although historically it belongs to the neighbouring parish of *Na Hearadh* (Harris).

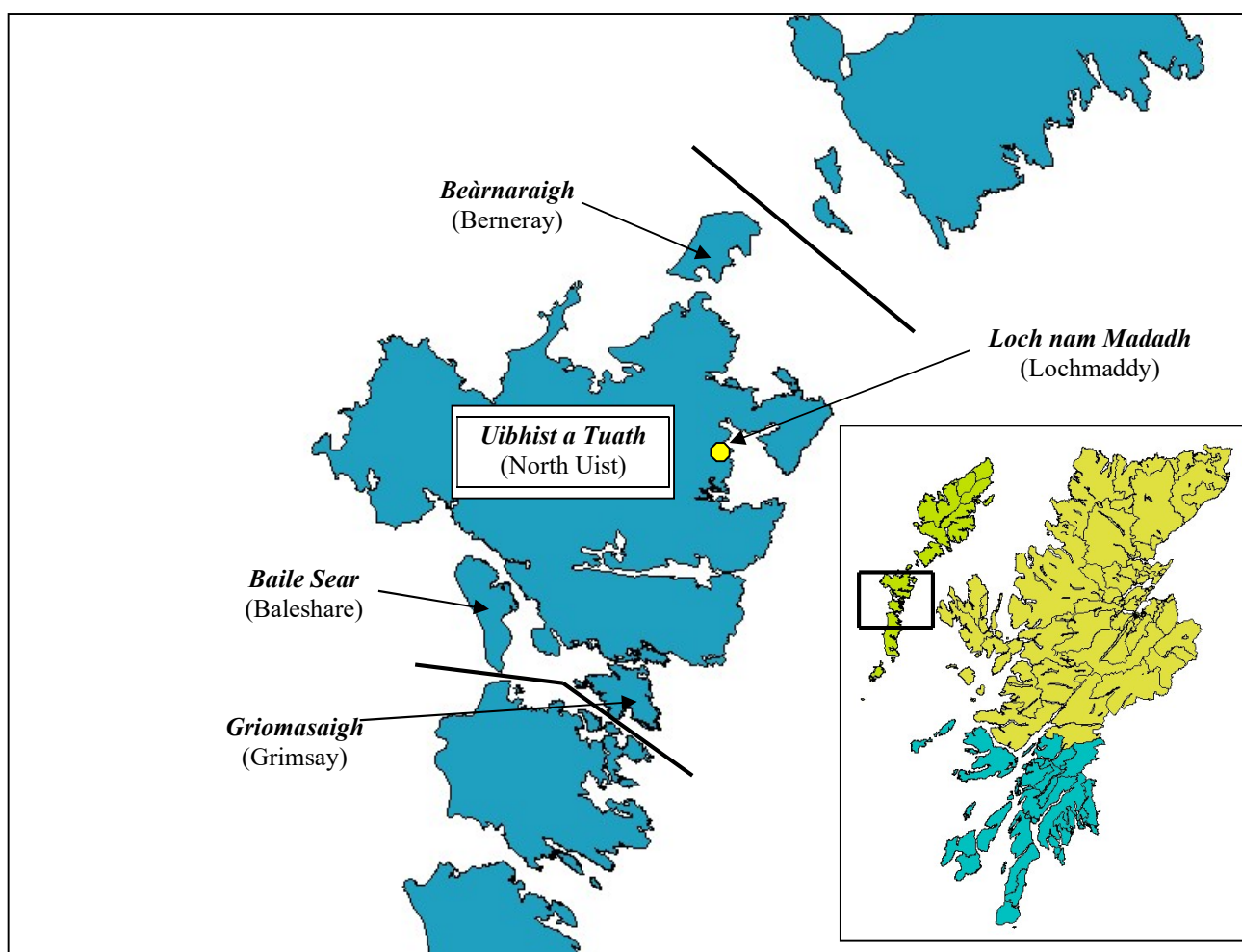


Fig. 1: Overview map of area under investigation<sup>3</sup>

*Gàidhlig* is still the major vernacular on *Uibhist a Tuath* although it has lost some of its strength during recent years. Until 1975 the island was administered as part of Inverness-shire until it became part of the local authority of *Na h-Eileanan an Iar* (Western Isles). Most inhabitants are Protestants in contrast to those islanders living on the more southerly islands of *Uibhist a Deas* and *Barraigh*.

Main settlement on the island is the ferry port of *Loch nam Madadh* (Lochmaddy). Many of the approximately 1,500 inhabitants are still occupied with crofting on a part-time basis although diversification in more lucrative economic spheres like fish farming and tourism has taken place.

<sup>3</sup> Digital boundaries courtesy of Ordnance Survey as part of the Geography Products provided by GROS for the 2001 census.



## 2 The Historical Background

The Gàidhlig language reigned supreme over *Uibhist a Tuath* during many centuries since the Vikings had left these islands. In the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* (1831-45) a minister reported about his own flock: “The language spoken is the Gaelic, which the people speak with uncommon fluency and elegance. One-fifth of the whole population above the age of twelve years understand and speak English. Such of them as are in the habit of going to the south of Scotland for trading or for working, are fond of interlarding some English or Scotch phrases with their own beautiful and expressive language. This bad taste is confined to so limited a number, that it has but slightly affected the general character of their native tongue. There are only five individuals in the parish who do not understand the Gaelic, and some of these have made considerable progress in its attainment.” The minister was a rare exception in the ranks of the Kirk where Gàidhlig was considered by many as a nuisance.

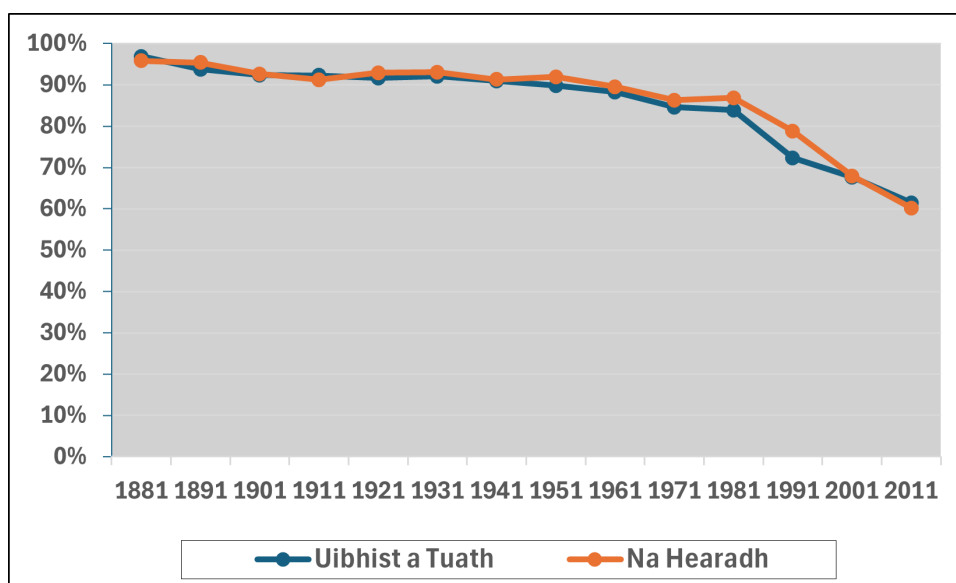


Fig. 2: Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years and over) as percentage of total population between 1881 and 2011 – civil parishes of *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) and neighbouring *Na Hearadh* (Harris)<sup>4</sup>

The Gàidhlig language remained very strong on *Uibhist a Tuath* until the 1980s when a certain decline in language use was observed. This development was experienced generally in the Outer Hebrides and lasted until today. In fig. 2 the overall decrease of Gàidhlig-speaking intensity for the civil parishes of *Na Hearadh* (Harris) and *Uibhist a Tuath* is outlined quite clearly.

### 2.1 From Victorian times until the Second World War (Census 1881-1931)

Generally, the whole Hebrides were overwhelmingly Gàidhlig-speaking at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Uibhist a Tuath* was of course no exception. The first census enumeration exercises to count the number of “Gaelic-speakers” in 1881 and 1891 saw virtually everyone speaking the language. Most islanders did not even speak English (fig. 3). Most of the few respondents who were returned as speaking no Gàidhlig were either visiting the islands or had administrative backgrounds (harbour masters, police constables, teachers, and the like). The outlying smaller isles (notably *Griomasaigh* and *Baile Sear*) were as Gàidhlig as *Uibhist a Tuath* (tables 9 and 10 in the annex).

<sup>4</sup> There was no census taken in 1941 because of World War II – values are therefore interpolated between 1931 and 1951.





Number of persons and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in districts of Uibhist a Tuath – 1881 - 1911							
Area <sup>5</sup>	All persons speaking Gàidhlig <sup>6</sup>				Monolingual share of all Gàidhlig-speakers <sup>7</sup>		
	1881	1891	1901	1911	1891	1901	1911
Dùn Sgealair, Greinetobht & Solas (Dunsellar, Grenitote & Solas)	319 <b>99.4 %</b>	282 <b>96.6 %</b>	382 <b>92.0 %</b>	415 <b>96.1%</b>	173 <b>61.3 %</b>	202 <b>55.8 %</b>	203 <b>48.9%</b>
Truimisgearraidh & Am Baile Ùr <sup>8</sup> (Trumisgarry & Newton)	160 <b>92.0%</b>	143 <b>95.3 %</b>	116 <b>94.3 %</b>	109 <b>95.6%</b>	80 <b>55.9 %</b>	39 <b>33.6 %</b>	35 <b>32.1%</b>
Loch nam Madadh & Loch Portain (Lochmaddy & Lochportan)	223 <b>89.6%</b>	216 <b>85.7 %</b>	216 <b>87.4 %</b>	268 <b>81.2%</b>	61 <b>28.2 %</b>	40 <b>18.5 %</b>	36 <b>13.4%</b>
Griminis & Cille Pheadair (Griminish & Kilpheder)	83 <b>98.8%</b>	69 <b>97.2 %</b>	62 <b>95.4 %</b>	54 <b>91.5%</b>	55 <b>79.7 %</b>	33 <b>53.2 %</b>	32 <b>59.3%</b>
Borghreigh & Lingeigh (Boreray & Lingay)	137 <b>100 %</b>	146 <b>96.1 %</b>	111 <b>94.1 %</b>	89 <b>100%</b>	47 <b>32.2 %</b>	17 <b>18.7 %</b>	7 <b>7.9%</b>
Bhàlaigh (Vallay)	29 <b>100 %</b>	33 <b>97.1 %</b>	32 <b>94.1 %</b>	25 <b>86.2%</b>	25 <b>75.8 %</b>	16 <b>50.0 %</b>	9 <b>36.0%</b>
Eilean Hasgeir & Na h-Eileanan Mònach (Heisker & Monach Isles)	117 <b>94.4 %</b>	125 <b>89.3 %</b>	90 <b>84.9 %</b>	76 <b>93.8%</b>	44 <b>35.2 %</b>	18 <b>20.0 %</b>	17 <b>22.4%</b>
Taigh a'Ghearraidh & Baile Mhàrtainn (Tigharry & Balemartine)	306 <b>98.7 %</b>	299 <b>94.3 %</b>	243 <b>92.0 %</b>	187 <b>92.6%</b>	179 <b>59.9 %</b>	86 <b>35.4 %</b>	42 <b>22.5%</b>
Baile Raghnaill & Hòigearraidh (Balranald & Hogharry)	311 <b>99.4%</b>	311 <b>96.0 %</b>	271 <b>90.9 %</b>	243 <b>95.3%</b>	266 <b>85.5 %</b>	262 <b>96.7 %</b>	85 <b>35.0%</b>
Am Baile Mòr & Cnoc an Torrain (Balemor & Knockintorran)	501 <b>97.1%</b>	419 <b>91.9 %</b>	381 <b>92.0 %</b>	362 <b>95.8%</b>	298 <b>71.1 %</b>	207 <b>54.3 %</b>	133 <b>36.7%</b>
Pabail & Ceann a'Bhàigh (Paible & Ceannabhaigh)	263 <b>97.4%</b>	271 <b>93.4 %</b>	241 <b>89.9 %</b>	205 <b>92.8%</b>	226 <b>83.4 %</b>	101 <b>41.9 %</b>	74 <b>36.1%</b>
Cladach Chirceboist (Claddach Kirkibost)	322 <b>93.9%</b>	308 <b>96.6 %</b>	290 <b>93.5 %</b>	255 <b>90.4%</b>	172 <b>55.8 %</b>	102 <b>35.2 %</b>	92 <b>36.1%</b>
Loch Euphort & Langais (Loch Eport & Langish)	206 <b>95.8%</b>	224 <b>94.9 %</b>	194 <b>99.5 %</b>	182 <b>96.3%</b>	31 <b>13.8 %</b>	67 <b>34.5 %</b>	82 <b>45.1%</b>
Càirinis & Cladach Chàirinis (Carinish & Claddach Carinish)	386 <b>98.0%</b>	356 <b>94.9 %</b>	321 <b>94.7 %</b>	288 <b>95.0%</b>	312 <b>87.6 %</b>	121 <b>37.7 %</b>	57 <b>19.8%</b>
Baile Sear & Eilean Chirceboist (Baleshare & Kirkibost Island)	276 <b>99.3 %</b>	450 <b>92.8 %</b>	369 <b>94.4 %</b>	324 <b>95.3%</b>	174 <b>38.7 %</b>	161 <b>43.6 %</b>	109 <b>33.6%</b>
Griomasaigh & Ronaigh (Grimsay & Ronay)	292 <b>98.0 %</b>	275 <b>93.5 %</b>	275 <b>93.2 %</b>	332 <b>90.2%</b>	205 <b>74.5 %</b>	127 <b>46.2 %</b>	89 <b>26.8%</b>

**Table 1: Number of persons speaking Gàidhlig and all Gàidhlig-speakers as share of population in Uibhist a Tuath and nearby islands according to local census data from 1881 to 1911**

Census information generally is very detailed for the years 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911. Table 1 provides an overview of the individual strength of the language in different parts of the parish (see also tables 9 and 10 in the annex). Keeping in mind that visitors and children aged less than 3 years were all included

<sup>5</sup> Enumeration division or island.

<sup>6</sup> Percentages of Gàidhlig-speakers above 50 % are marked by bold figures.

<sup>7</sup> Percentages of monolingual Gàidhlig-speakers above 10 % are marked by bold figures.

<sup>8</sup> This enumeration division includes the island of Orasaigh (Orinsay).



in the total population base the realistic percentages should read 100 % in almost all places. Even in 1901 *Gàidhlig* monoglot speakers were rather the norm than the exception - especially in the communities on “mainland” *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist). In rural places like *Hòigearraidh* (Hogharry) and *Dùn Sgealair* (Dunskellar) there was seemingly less pressure or desire to know English than on the smaller islands where visiting boats provided a more frequent confrontation with people who were unable (or did not want to) speak the language of the “natives”.

A look at the original census forms of 1891<sup>9</sup> reveals that even the high figures in the census reports were essentially underestimates of the real strength of *Gàidhlig*. Taking the enumeration district of *Loch nam Madadh* (Lochmaddy) as an example the difference is striking. Whereas the official census returns reported 216 persons speaking *Gàidhlig* (85.7 % of the total population) the figures of the usually resident population (aged three years or over) reveal a staggering 93.8 % (Duwe, 2005). Just a handful of residents (13 individuals) had no “G” (Gaelic only) or “G&E” (Gaelic and English speaking) marks on their registration sheets.

Most prominent among these anglophone residents were household members of the poorhouse governor (born himself in Kildrummy, Aberdeenshire) and the family of an advocate from England. Also, the postmaster (from Thurso, Caithness) and of course the public school teacher (from Elgin, Morayshire) confessed to be unable to speak the language of their neighbours. In addition, there were two young children (aged 3 or 4 years) reported as not speaking *Gàidhlig* in 1891. During special checks in the census returns of 1901 both children could be traced at different addresses. After 10 years these grown-ups were returned as “G&E” (speaking *Gàidhlig* and English) then (Duwe, 2005). In essence: The local population was thoroughly (in most cases exclusively) *Gàidhlig*-speaking and inter-generational language transmission was functioning very successfully.

<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i>						
Subject \ Census	1881 <sup>10</sup>	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
<i>Gàidhlig</i> -speakers (3 years +)	4,131	3,927	3,594	3,395	2,954	2,603
% of total population	96.9 %	93.8 %	92.4 %	92.3 %	91.7 %	92.1 %

**Table 2: Number of *Gàidhlig*-speakers (3 years and over) in the civil parish of *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) and percentage of total population speaking *Gàidhlig* during 1881-1931 (excluding *Beàrnaraigh*)**

In those years there was no room for the language in schools or official life. Although only a negligible number of persons on islands like *Uibhist a Tuath* were ignorant of *Gàidhlig* the Scottish Education Act of 1872 did not mention the language at all. Initiatives of many organisations, school boards and individuals to remedy this omission were met with only a few concessions by the Education Department and with severe opposition from the Inspectors of Schools of the Highland Counties (John L. Campbell, 1945).

<sup>9</sup> After a period of 100 years information provided on the original census forms is publicly available. At the time of writing this is already the case for census returns of 1881, 1891, 1901 and 1911.

<sup>10</sup> Speaking “habitually” *Gàidhlig*.





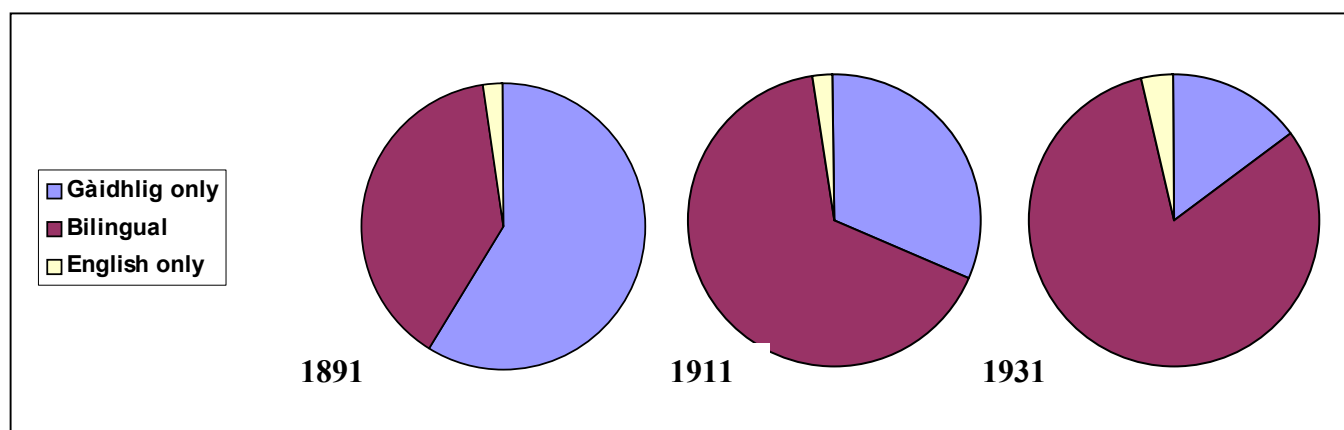


Fig. 3: Share of population speaking Gàidhlig and/or English in the study area according to census results in 1891, 1911 and 1931

Eventually in 1918 the new Education Bill was amended with a so-called “Gaelic Clause”: “*It shall be the duty of every education authority within twelve months after the appointed day to prepare and submit for approval of the Department a scheme for the adequate provision throughout the education area of the authority of all forms of primary, intermediate, and secondary education in day schools (including adequate provision for teaching Gaelic in Gaelic-speaking areas).*” Unfortunately no-one defined the extent of Gaelic-speaking areas and this clause proved to be essentially irrelevant. Children were educated in English from the first day of school and Gàidhlig was considered to be a hindrance rather than an asset in educational progress. This anti-Gàidhlig education policy was to have its most depressing effects, however, only when the first generation which went through this anglocentric education raised their own families. Then some of them started to speak exclusively English to their children in order to spare them the humiliating experience of their own school days. According to census statistics from 1891 to 1931 “Gaelic only” returns were either confined to children below school age or remained pre-dominant in the older generation which had received education before 1872 (see table 11 for census results of all Inverness-shire islands). During the whole period, however, Gàidhlig was universally spoken by almost all islanders.

## 2.2 More Recent Developments (Census 1951–2011)

*Uibhist a Tuath* remained a stronghold of the language in any respect until the 1990s. In table 12 the general development of the proportion of Gàidhlig-speakers can be detected for the northern and southern parts of the islands. Between 1951 and 1971 only a small decrease was noticed mainly caused by the impact of army deployment on neighbouring *Beinn a’ Bhaoghla*.

<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i>							
Subject \ Census	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years +)	1,994	1,700	1,460	1,401	1,211	1,022	887
Percentage of total population	89.8 %	88.3 %	84.6 %	83.9 %	72.3 %	67.2 %	61.5 %

Table 3: Number of Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years and over) in the civil parish of *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) and percentage of total population speaking Gàidhlig during 1951-2011 (excluding *Beàrnaraigh*)

The report on Gàidhlig-speaking schoolchildren (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1961) saw 242 first language speakers out of 276 primary school pupils in 1957. Even 42 of 45 secondary school children (first year) had Gàidhlig as first or preferred language. In nursery stages P1 and P2 there were 77 first language speakers and an additional three pupils had Gàidhlig as second language. In total 84 of 88 primary pupils knew at least some Gàidhlig (95.5 %). The language of home was Gàidhlig for all 77



first language speakers. But out of the 11 pupils who had English as their home language only 7 knew some *Gàidhlig*. In addition, 25 of the first language speakers used only English in conversation with their teacher. Whether this was due to voluntary language shift, or they simply had teachers with no knowledge of *Gàidhlig* is not known, however. Later on, school education improved in the 1960s due to the introduction of the Inverness-shire Education Scheme (see Vol. 03 of this series). In 1975 the bilingual project (Murray & Morrison, 1984) started also on *Uibhist a Tuath* (compare Vol. 02 for details). The primary schools of *Dùn Sgailllear* (Dunskellar) and *Pabail* (Paible) in the north of the island were included in this project right from the start, the remaining schools joined in the second phase in 1978. In fig. 4 the success of this project on the speaking ability and literacy of young people on the island becomes apparent when looking at the census results of 1981.

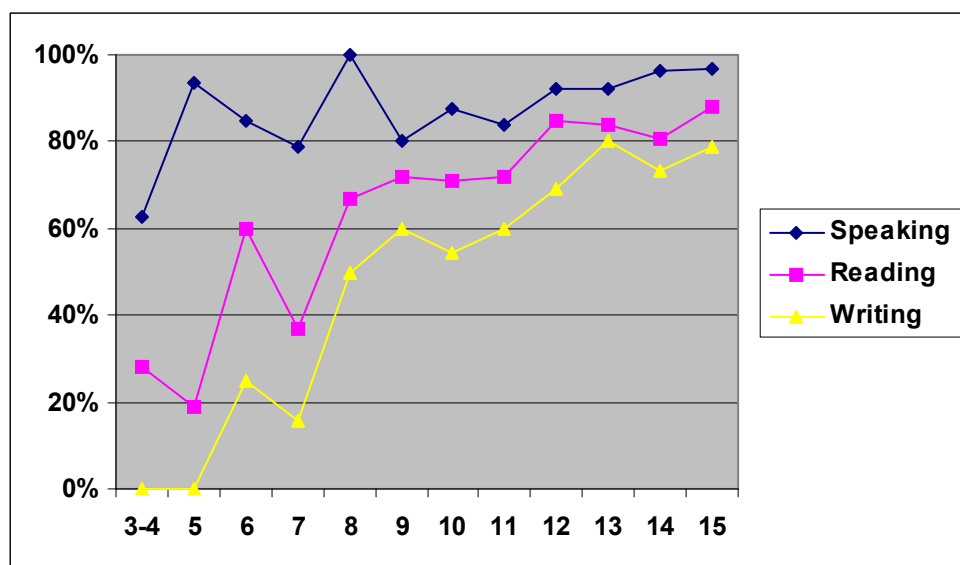


Fig. 4: Percentage of children able to speak, read or write *Gàidhlig* in different age groups in 1981 – *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist)

Until 1981 the percentages of *Gàidhlig*-speakers remained more or less the same on the whole island. Even in 1981 there existed census output areas with over 90 % *Gàidhlig*-speaking intensity: The small island of *Griomasaigh* (Grimsay) and the communities of *Solas* and *Greinetobht* in the north (table 13).

Consulting the speaking abilities according to different age groups (fig. 5) it becomes clear that a significant decrease occurred between 1981 and 2001 especially at young age. This was despite significant efforts to stop this trend by the introduction of *Gàidhlig* playgroups (*cròileagan*) in *Eubhal* (island of *Griomasaigh*), *Pabail* and *Dùn Sgailllear* and associated *Gàidhlig*-medium units (GMU) in the primary schools of *Cairinis* (1989), *Pabail* (1990) and *Dùn Sgailllear* (1995). In the 1990s a *sradagan* group had also been introduced in *Dùn Sgailllear*. But maybe without these initiatives the census results would have been far worse than those experienced since 1981. Incidentally the areas with GME fared far better in 2001 in comparison with the remaining parts of the area, namely *Loch nam Madadh* (Lochmaddy) and the island of *Beàrnaraigh* (Berneray). The recent introduction of *Gàidhlig*-medium day nurseries in *Eubhal* (*Griomasaigh*) and *Dùn Sgailllear* may help to stabilise the situation in pre-school age in future. In 2003/2004 for example 7 children were enrolled at the age of 3 or 4. The overall intake into *Gàidhlig*-medium (fig. 9), however, remained still remarkably low in 2001 after its climax in 1996 with just over 40 % of the total school roll.



2011 saw generally a further decrease of *Gàidhlig* speaking in the area. In table 3 the most recent figures are given. The situation remained slightly more favourable in the most westerly parts around *Griminis* and *Taigh Gearraidh* (Tigharry).

Unfortunately, the local data about the age structure of the language community were not as detailed in 2011 as in previous censuses. In contrast to the previously used small output areas, in 2011 the somewhat larger data zones were used as smallest geographical area for age distribution analysis. Accordingly, a direct comparison with 2001 data is not always possible. However, the figures of *Gàidhlig* knowledge for the 3-15 age group and the total population is provided in table 4 for local selected data zones. The intergenerational viability of these selected census data zones shows that around the ferry port *Loch nam Madadh* (Lochmaddy) language acquisition was lowest.

A new feature in the 2011 census was a question about the language (other than English) used at home. This saw in this area roughly 70 % of *Gàidhlig* speakers living in households where the language was used. This information is also provided in table 4.

Census Data Zones	Uibhist a Tuath – Census 2011					Gàidhlig as home language (% of speakers)
	Knowledge of Gàidhlig					
	Young age (3-15)		All ages		Difference (Language viability indicator)	
<b>Griminis &amp; Taigh Gearraidh</b> (Griminish & Tigharry)	53	68.8%	509	71.6%	- 2.8 %	82.6 %
<b>Loch nam Madadh</b> (Lochmaddy)	45	56.3%	568	65.4%	- 9.2 %	76.4 %
<i>In comparison:</i> <b>Na h- Eileanan an Iar</b> (Western Isles)	48.8 %		61.2 %		- 12.4 %	76.8 %

**Table 4: Intergenerational viability and *Gàidhlig* as home language in selected census data zones in comparison with the whole *Na h-Eileanan an Iar* (Western Isles) according to census data of 2011**



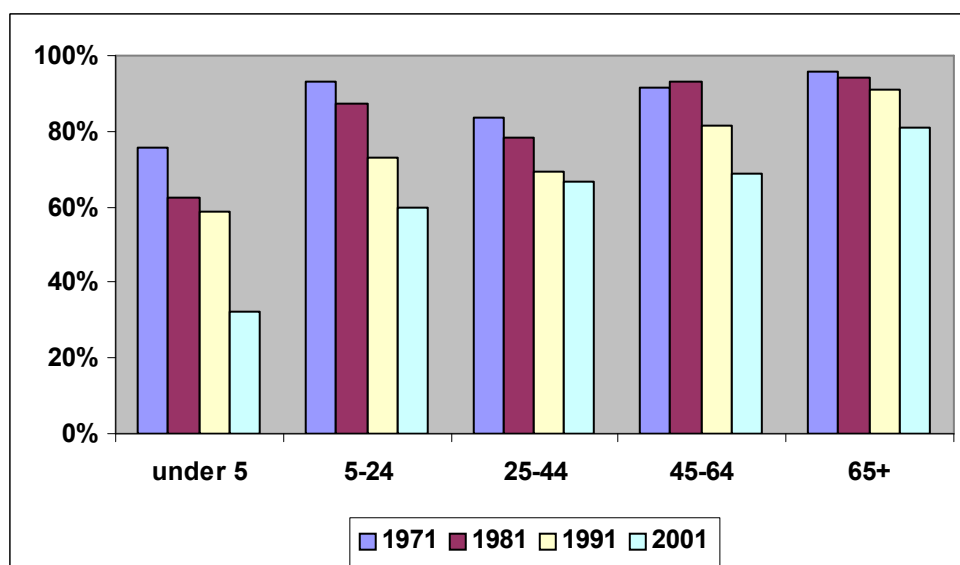


Fig. 5: Percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups between 1971 and 2001 – Area of Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist)<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3 Development of literacy in Gàidhlig between 1971 and 2011

A positive note can be provided when investigating the literacy of the Gàidhlig-speakers in the area. Information on this aspect of language use became available from 1971 onwards. Census questions were then introduced on the ability to read or write Gàidhlig (see tables 4 and 5 below).

	Number of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to read Gàidhlig					Percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to read Gàidhlig				
	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist)</b>	1278	1242	1063	872	738	81.6%	82.0%	79.1%	78.2%	76.9%

Table 5: Persons able to read Gàidhlig and Gàidhlig readers as share of Gàidhlig-speakers (1971-2011)

	Number of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to write Gàidhlig					Percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to write Gàidhlig				
	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011
<b>Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist)</b>	816	994	848	734	628	52.1%	65.6%	63.1%	65.8%	65.4%

Table 6: Persons able to write Gàidhlig and Gàidhlig writers as share of Gàidhlig-speakers (1971-2011)

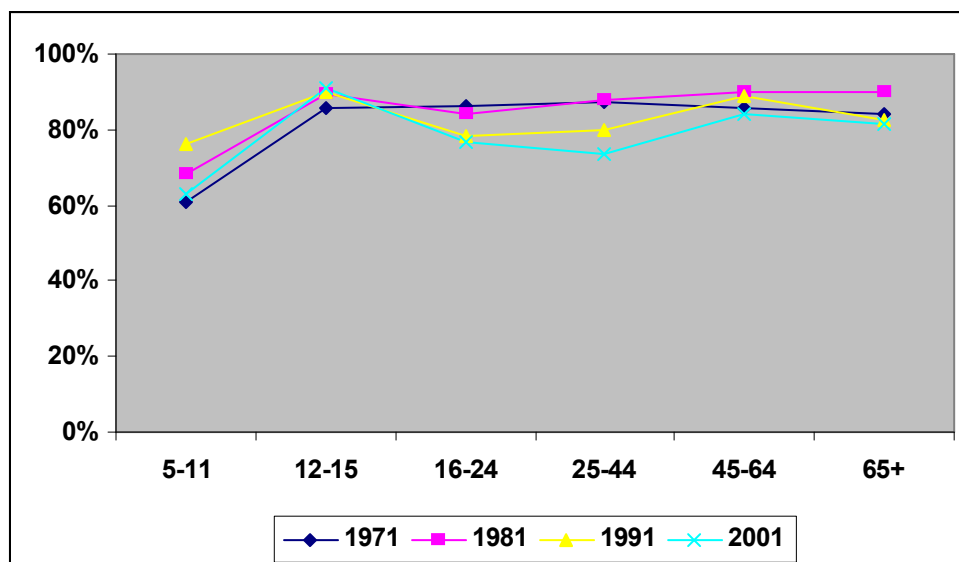
Generally, literacy in the language was higher than in pre-dominantly Catholic areas of the Outer Hebrides. Four fifths of Gàidhlig-speakers can read the language and roughly two thirds can speak the language. Writing ability increased between 1971 and 1981 considerably. The high values in the share of

<sup>11</sup> Under 5: Gàidhlig abilities in the age group 3-4 until 1991, in 2001 in all age groups 0-4.



the language community which could read the language are typical of all age groups. This is demonstrated quite clearly in fig. 6.

A comparison between 1971 and 2001 for the school age population (5 to 14 and 5 to 15-year-olds respectively) underlines this fact. In 1971 190 of 255 children at the age between 5 and 14 could read Gàidhlig (74.5 %) and in 2001 the corresponding figure was 121 out of 159 children and remained with 76.1 % on the same level. In 2011 the literacy rates remained comparable with the previous census figures of 2001.



**Fig. 6: Persons able to read Gàidhlig as a percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups on Uibhist a Tuath (1971-2001)**



### 3 Digression: The Situation of 2001 in Focus

Census results for 2001 were the most comprehensive and detailed information base ever provided for Scotland. This was also true for the inclusion of questions on *Gàidhlig* language knowledge. Two new aspects were introduced:

1. Persons were asked whether they were “able to understand spoken Gaelic”.
2. Children under the age of 3 were enumerated regarding their language abilities.

IMPORTANT NOTICE: The more recent census data of 2011 were not as detailed as 2001 regarding generational differences in language use. Therefore 2001 is used here as baseline for research purposes. The following sections describe generally the distribution of language abilities (inter-generational and community by community) and the specific conditions of the younger age groups in local primary school catchments.

#### 3.1 General overview: *Gàidhlig* language capabilities in 2001

Special consideration is given to educational aspects in section 3.2. In general, however, the following conclusions regarding *Uibhist a Tuath* may be drawn from the 2001 census information:

- The language could still be spoken by the majority of the population (fig. 7) through all generations except in pre-school age.
- There had been a considerable decrease in *Gàidhlig*-speaking in younger age groups since 1991 (apart from secondary school age) as shown in table 6. The difference in language intensity between younger people and the population as a whole was still negative and slightly worse than in 1991 (table 6). However, language maintenance in the “knowing Gaelic” category was almost achieved with 71.8 % at least understanding the language compared with 75.9 % for the population as a whole.
- Consulting the small area statistics language knowledge was distributed quite uneven over the island (tables 13 and 15). The lowest values for speaking and understanding *Gàidhlig* were found around *Loch nam Madadh* with roughly 46 % and 58 % intensity respectively. In contrast areas mainly in the north provide far higher percentages with a maximum at *Lochportain* with 84 % and 85 % in speaking and understanding categories.
- Almost all inhabitants lived in neighbourhoods where more than two-thirds of the population at least could understand *Gàidhlig*. Approximately one-fourth of islanders lived in neighbourhoods with more than 80 % understanding the language.
- Literacy values were traditionally very high due to the high profile of Protestant congregations in the past. Around 80 % of speakers could also read the language and roughly 66 % could also write *Gàidhlig*. The only unsatisfactory census result was concerned with the reading ability of primary school children: Only 31.7 % of speakers could also read *Gàidhlig*. This means that only a small part (20 %) of the whole primary school roll could read *Gàidhlig* although in theory they all should have experienced either “bilingual” or *Gàidhlig*-medium education.
- Children under 3 years of age did show language intensities of 25.6 % (speaking) and 40.6 % (understanding). The new category of understanding *Gàidhlig* recorded 142 respondents (8.5 %) on *Uibhist a Tuath* in addition to those 1,116 (67.4 %) able to speak the language.





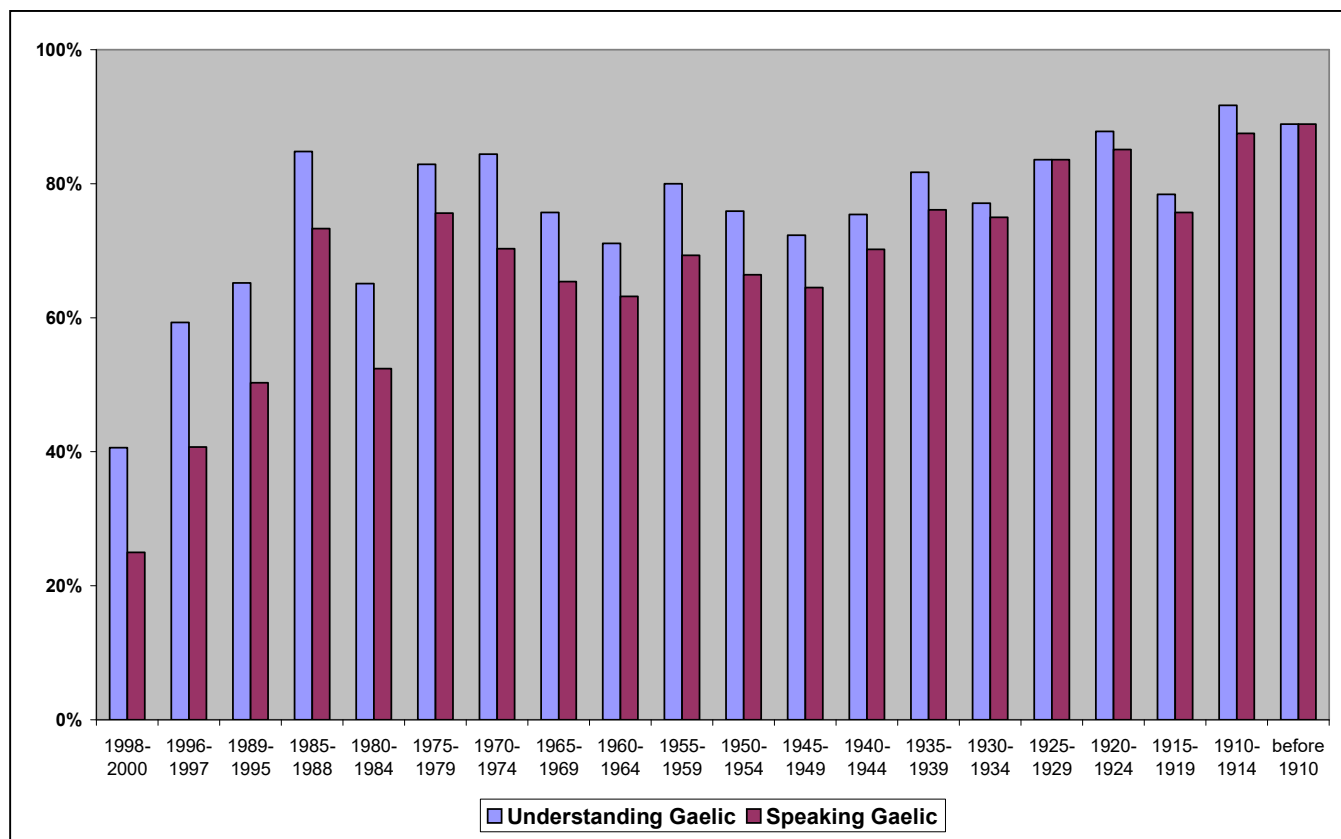


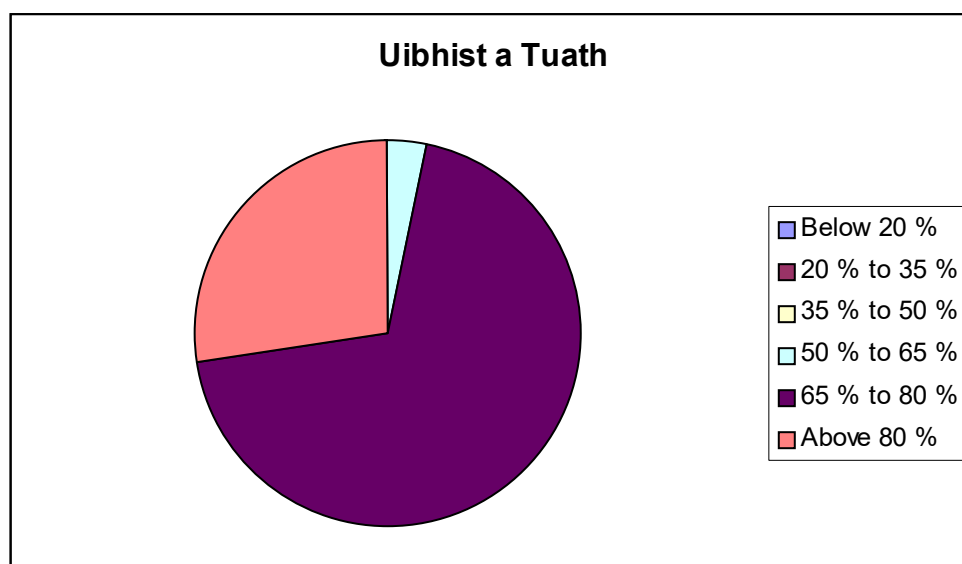
Fig. 7: Percentage of population able to understand or speak Gàidhlig and year of birth – area of Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist) according to Census 2001

Age group	2001						1991		Diff. 2001 – 1991
	Knowing <sup>12</sup> Gàidhlig		Able to speak & read Gàidhlig		Able to speak Gàidhlig		Able to speak Gàidhlig		
0-2	13	40.6 %	-	-	8	25.6 %	n/a	n/a	n/a
3-4	16	59.3 %	2	7.4 %	11	40.7 %	23	60.4 %	- 19.7 %
5-11	105	65.2 %	51	31.7 %	81	50.3 %	90	62.9 %	- 12.6 %
12-15	89	84.8 %	70	66.7 %	78	74.3 %	67	69.8 %	+ 4.5 %
16-24	75	72.1 %	50	48.1 %	64	61.5 %	177	80.5 %	- 19.0 %
3-24	285	71.8 %	173	40.3 %	234	59.0 %	357	71.4 %	- 12.4 %
All ages	1,258	75.9 %	872	52.6 %	1,116	67.4 %	1,335	77.4 %	- 10.0 %
Difference	- 4.1 %		- 12.3 %		- 8.4 %		- 6.0 %		

Table 7: Knowledge of Gàidhlig in younger age groups in Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist) in 2001 and 1991

<sup>12</sup> Persons able to understand spoken Gàidhlig and/or able to speak, read or write Gàidhlig.





**Fig. 8: Share of population living in neighbourhoods (census output areas) with different intensity of language knowledge in Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist) according to Census 2001**

### 3.2 Children with knowledge of Gàidhlig in primary school catchments

Looking at the small area statistics for the catchment areas of local primary schools the influence of local authority and parental attitudes towards Gàidhlig can be investigated. It is possible to calculate numbers and percentages for different age groups and for the purpose of this investigation these groups have been attributed to pre-school age (0-4), primary school age (5-11) and secondary school age (12-15). As an additional indicator a column is provided in table 7 with the age group of 24-35 which is seen as representative of the language abilities of possible parents.

Knowledge of Gàidhlig (Census 2001) in Selected Primary School Catchment Areas								
Primary School(s)	“Pre-School” Age 0-4		“Primary” Age 5-11		“Secondary” Age 12-15		“Parents” Age 25-34	
Cairinis (Carinish)	10	45.5 %	37	66.1 %	35	89.7 %	45	77.6 %
Pabail (Paible)	10	47.6 %	31	63.3 %	28	84.9 %	33	78.6 %
Dùn Sgaillear (Dunskellar)	1	100. %	14	100. %	8	88.9 %	22	88.0 %
Loch nam Madadh (Lochmaddy)	7	62.5 %	18	58.1 %	14	77.8 %	34	85.0 %
Beàrnaraigh (Bernaray)	1	33.3 %	5	45.5 %	4	66.7 %	1	16.7 %

**Table 8: Number and percentage of persons with knowledge of Gàidhlig in selected age groups for primary school catchment areas according to the census 2001**



Looking at the results for the five school catchments it is possible to draw the following conclusions:

- Pre-school children: Almost half of all those children at least understood the language in 2001. *Cròileagan* had been established during the 1990s in *Griomasaigh*, *Pabail* and *Dùn Sgaillear* and this may have increased these numbers locally.
- Primary school children: Three primary schools in the area had *Gàidhlig*-medium units at the time: *Pabail*, *Cairinis* and *Dùn Sgaillear*. This may explain the comparatively higher language intensities in those school catchments. In total 39 children went into GME in the 2000-2001 school year (out of 147 children), this number constituted 26.5 % of the total school roll. The remaining pupils experienced “bilingual” mainstream education in some way or another. The presence of a *sràdagan* group based in *Dùn Sgaillear* underlined the strong presence of the language in this area on the north coast of the island.
- Secondary school children: The 2001 census provided generally high values for understanding the language for secondary school age. All children had to learn the language either as first or second language. In the secondary stages S1 and S2 for example 25 out of 44 pupils were learning *Gàidhlig* as “fluent speakers” at the junior secondary department of *Pabail* (Bayble) school in the 2000/2001 school year. The remainder were categorised as “learners”. 23 pupils had gone through GME in local primary schools before entering secondary education.
- Parents: Language intensities amongst those aged 25 to 34 were generally very high in all school catchments except on the island of *Beàrnaraigh*. The decrease in language intensity on this island therefore might have much to do with the settling of monoglot English speaking incomers. On the other side the deterioration of language knowledge in the community of *Loch nam Madadh* has been caused very probably by lacking language transfer from parents to their children.

The schools in the more rural parts of *Uibhist a Tuath* were more successful in maintaining a considerable proportion of young *Gàidhlig* speakers than the island centre of *Loch nam Madadh* (Lochmaddy).



## 4 Future Perspectives - 2011 and beyond

The 2011 census results can also be used to predict future developments because major underlying facts cannot be changed within a time span of a few years. *Uibhist a Tuath* as a whole had a strong presence of the language in 2011. The language viability indicator LVI<sup>13</sup> is not as negative as in the Outer Hebrides as a whole (table 9) but the value is substantial, nevertheless.

Area	Uibhist a Tuath – Census 2011					Gàidhlig as home language (% of speakers)
	Knowledge of Gàidhlig					
	Young age (3-15)		All ages		Difference (Language viability indicator)	
Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist)	98	62.4%	1077	68.2%	- 5.8 %	79.4 %
In comparison: Na h- Eileanan an Iar (Western Isles)	48.8 %		61.2 %		- 12.4 %	76.8 %

**Table 9: Intergenerational viability and Gàidhlig as home language in *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) in comparison with the whole *Na h-Eileanan an Iar* (Western Isles) according to census data of 2011**

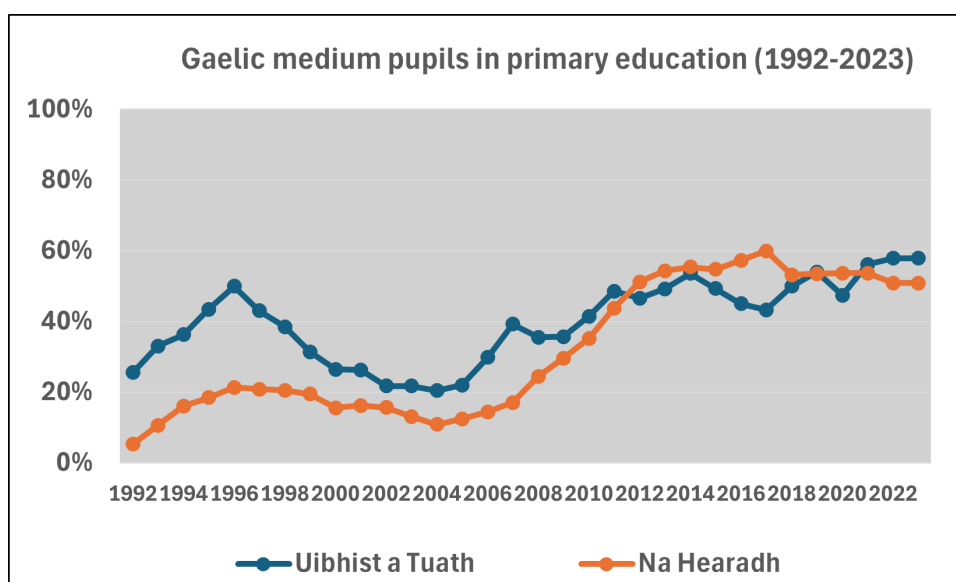
More locally the conditions for language survival are distributed in an uneven manner. Amongst young-aged islanders the language is especially viable in western parts of the main island. The most negative LVI returns expectedly came from *Loch nam Madadh* (table 4).

The overall temporal evolution of Gàidhlig-medium primary education is depicted in fig. 19 for the period 1992-2023. For example, in the 2022-23 session 40 pupils (58.0 %) attended the GMU in *Sgoil Uibhist a Tuath*.

**In conclusion:** *Uibhist a Tuath* is still a community with high incidence of Gàidhlig-speaking. Intergenerational language viability is healthier than in the island group as a whole but it is nevertheless not totally secured. Strongholds of the language are more or less confined to the westerly communities. Language retreat is strongest on the island of *Beàrnaraigh* and in and around *Loch nam Madadh*. But intensive improvements in the educational sector regarding pre-school and primary school education have to be accomplished to prevent further decline in language use.

<sup>13</sup> LVI: The „Language Viability Indicator“ is a measure of the prospective reproductivity of language speakers in a community. It is here defined on the basis of knowledge of Gàidhlig in the census and is calculated by the difference of percentages between the age group below 25 years of age and the total population.





**Fig. 9: Share of primary school children attending Gàidhlig-medium classes on *Uibhist a Tuath* and *Na Hearadh* (September 1992 – September 2023) <sup>14</sup>**

<sup>14</sup> Gaelic Dept, University of Strathclyde.



## I. Supplementary Tables

Gaelic and Gaelic only in 1881 and 1891: <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> <sup>15</sup>	Total Popula- tion	Gàidhlig and Eng- lish	Gàidhlig but no English
Census/Selected Area			
<b>1881 (Speaking “habitually” Gaelic)</b>	<b>4,261</b>	<b>4,131</b>	
----- Inhabited island (included in the above) ---			
<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist) – island proper only	3,371	3,258	
<i>Baile Sear &amp; Iolaraigh</i> (Baleshare & Hieray)	266	264	
<i>Borghreigh</i> (Boveray)	137	137	
<i>Griomasaigh</i> (Grimsay)	292	286	
<i>Eilean Hasgeir</i> (Heisker)	111	111	
<i>Eilean nam Bothan</i> (Hut Island)	10	8	
<i>Eilean Chirceabost</i> (Kirkibost)	12	12	
<i>Eilean Leireabhagh</i> (Lereva Island)	11	11	
<i>Maragaidh</i> (Mhorgay)	6	6	
<i>Na h-Eileanan Monach</i> (Monach Islands Lighthouse)	13	6	
<i>Ronaigh</i> (Ronay)	6	6	
<i>Bhàlaigh</i> (Vallay)	29	29	
----- Ecclesiastic parishes (differing from areas above) ---			
<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist)	3,383	3,295	
<i>Truimisgearraidh</i> (Trumisgarry)	881	839	
<b>1891</b>	<b>4,187</b>	<b>1,570</b>	<b>2,348</b>
----- Inhabited island (included in the above) ---			
<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist) – island proper only	3,231	1,126	1,911
<i>Baile Sear &amp; Iolaraigh</i> (Baleshare & Hieray)	318	181	111
<i>Borghreigh</i> (Boveray)	152	99	47
<i>Griomasaigh</i> (Grimsay)	281	63	199
<i>Eilean Hasgeir</i> (Heisker)	135	81	44
<i>Eilean nam Bothan</i> (Hut Island)	7	2	5
<i>Eilean Chirceabost</i> (Kirkibost)	6	5	1
<i>Eilean Leireabhagh</i> (Lereva Island)	12	6	4
<i>Na h-Eileanan Monach</i> (Monach Islands Lighthouse)	5	-	-
<i>Ronaigh</i> (Ronay)	6	5	1
<i>Bhàlaigh</i> (Vallay)	34	8	25
----- Ecclesiastic parishes (differing from areas above) ---			
<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist)	3,341	1,152	1,987
<i>Truimisgearraidh</i> (Trumisgarry)	846	426	361

**Table 10: Number of persons speaking Gàidhlig in 1881 and 1891 – selected areas (ecclesiastic parishes or inhabited islands) in *Uibhist a Tuath***

<sup>15</sup> Civil parish of *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) only. These figures therefore exclude the inhabitants of *Beàrnaraigh* which is part of the civil parish of *Na Hearadh* (Harris).





<b>Gaelic and Gaelic only between 1901 and 1971: <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i></b>	<b>Total Popula- tion</b>	<b>Gàidhlig and Eng- lish</b>	<b>Gàidhlig but no English</b>
<b>Census/Selected Area</b>			
<b>1901</b>	<b>3,891</b>	<b>1,975</b>	<b>1,619</b>
----- Inhabited island (included in the above) ---			
<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist) – island proper only	2,936	1,429	1,277
<i>Baile Sear &amp; Iolaraigh</i> (Baleshare & Hieray)	383	203	159
<i>Borghreigh</i> (Boveray)	118	94	17
<i>Griomasaigh</i> (Grimsay)	290	143	127
<i>Eilean Hasgeir</i> (Heisker)	98	72	18
<i>Eilean Chirceabost</i> (Kirkibost)	8	5	2
<i>Eilean Leireabhagh</i> (Lereva Island)	11	8	3
<i>Na h-Eileanan Monach</i> (Monach Islands Lighthouse)	8	-	-
<i>Ronaigh</i> (Ronay)	5	5	-
<i>Bhàlaigh</i> (Vallay)	34	16	16
----- Ecclesiastic parishes (differing from areas above) ---			
<i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist)	2,988	1,468	1,301
<i>Truimisgearraidh</i> (Trumisgarry)	903	507	318
----- Electoral areas (differing from areas above) ---			
<i>Uibhist a Tuath – Tuath</i> (North Uist - North)	1,746	1,017	608
<i>Uibhist a Tuath – Deas</i> (North Uist - South)	2,145	958	1,011
<b>1911</b> <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist) CP	<b>3,677</b>	<b>2,293</b>	<b>1,102</b>
<b>1921</b> <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist) CP	<b>3,223</b>	<b>2,379</b>	<b>575</b>
<b>1931</b> <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist) CP	<b>2,827</b>	<b>2,201</b>	<b>402</b>
<b>1951</b> <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist) CP	<b>2,221</b>	<b>1,865</b>	<b>129</b>
<b>1961</b>	<b>1,925</b>	<b>1,628</b>	<b>72</b>
<i>Uibhist a Tuath - Tuath</i> (North Uist - North) CCED	868	768	30
<i>Uibhist a Tuath - Deas</i> (North Uist - South) CCED	1,056	860	42
<b>1971</b> <sup>16</sup>	<b>1,722</b>	<b>1,440</b>	<b>20</b>
<i>Uibhist a Tuath - Tuath</i> (North Uist - North) CCED	755	630	*
<i>Uibhist a Tuath - Deas</i> (North Uist - South) CCED	975	810	*

**Table 11: Number of persons speaking *Gàidhlig* between 1901 and 1971 – selected areas (ecclesiastic parishes, electoral areas, county council electoral divisions or inhabited islands) in *Uibhist a Tuath***

<sup>16</sup> Due to rounding of figures to the nearest 0 and 5 it is impossible to provide exact “Gaelic only” numbers in 1971. The figures in the table should be read as “between 1,436 and 1,444” and “between 16 and 24” respectively.



Percentage of population speaking Gàidhlig but no English in island parishes of former Inverness-shire <sup>17</sup>					
Age group	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
3-4	78.6 %	76.2 %	78.9 %	69.2 %	73.9 %
5-9	52.2 %	46.6 %	39.2 %	22.9 %	21.6 %
10-14	21.6 %	13.8 %	4.8 %	1.8 %	1.1 %
15-19	25.2 %	9.5 %	2.3 %	0.7 %	0.7 %
20-24	31.1 %	10.9 %	3.3 %	1.1 %	0.6 %
25-29	34.7 %	16.2 %	3.7 %	2.2 %	0.6 %
30-34	37.6 %	25.4 %	7.0 %	1.9 %	1.9 %
35-39	38.0 %	31.8 %	11.8 %	2.8 %	1.8 %
40-44	47.2 %	34.0 %	19.2 %	5.3 %	1.6 %
45-49	47.0 %	33.6 %	24.5 %	9.0 %	2.8 %
50-54	54.4 %	43.5 %	30.1 %	16.9 %	5.3 %
55-59	56.5 %	43.7 %	32.3 %	24.7 %	9.5 %
60-64	66.4 %	53.5 %	39.2 %	29.8 %	16.9 %
65-69	66.1 %	52.8 %	43.4 %	32.6 %	24.8 %
70-74	60.6 %	56.5 %	48.5 %	40.1 %	33.7 %
75-79	67.2 %	67.5 %	55.7 %	46.8 %	36.4 %
80 and over	74.1 %	71.5 %	65.4 %	58.7 %	47.2 %
Total “Gaelic only”	43.9 %	33.3 %	24.0 %	16.0 %	12.5 %

Table 12: Percentage of persons speaking Gàidhlig but no English (aged three years and over) for different age groups in island parishes of former Inverness-shire according to census data from 1891 to 1931

Number of persons and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in former County Council Electoral Divisions (Inverness-shire) (Population aged 3 years and over)						
Area	1961/71 Code	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Uibhist a Tuath (Tuath) (North Uist (North) CCED)	NN	798 97.1 %	640 90.8 %	654 91.5 %	536 77.9 %	453 72.1 %
Uibhist a Tuath (Deas) (North Uist (South) CCED)	NS	902 90.2 %	820 89.6 %	747 82.7 %	675 74.2 %	569 63.7 %

Table 13: Number of persons speaking Gàidhlig and all Gàidhlig-speakers as a percentage of the population (aged three years and over) for pre-1975 county council electoral divisions (CCED) according to census data from 1961 to 2001

<sup>17</sup> Islands of Barraigh (Barra), Uibhist a Deas (South Uist), Beinn a’ Bhaoghla (Benbecula), Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist), Na Hearadh (Harris), An t-Eilean Sgitheanach (Skye) and some smaller outlying islands (Scotland Census Office, 1932).



<b>Gaelic knowledge according to age groups and whether born in Scotland</b> <b><i>Census 1981: Uibhist a Tuath</i><sup>18</sup></b>						
Map No	Census output area <sup>19</sup>	Age groups				Born in Scotland <sup>20</sup>
		3 - 24	25 - 44	45 - 64	65+	
01 + 02	<i>Griomasaigh</i> (Grimsay)	64 94.1%	48 94.1%	44 97.8%	32 100.0%	183 94.3%
03 + 04	<i>Cairinis &amp; Cladach Chirceboist</i> (Carinish)	40 83.3%	30 83.3%	17 81.0%	30 93.8%	114 91.2
05	<i>Loch Euphort</i>	34 73.9%	23 62.2%	29 87.9%	28 100.0%	104 84.6%
06	<i>Clachan na Luib</i>	9 64.3%	14 92.3%	4 80.0%	11 78.6%	38 82.6%
	<i>Baile Sear</i> (Baleshare)	22 78.6%	16 94.1%	13 92.9%	5 83.3%	57 86.4%
07 + 08	<i>Cnoc an Torrain &amp; Ceann a' Bhàigh</i> (Kennavey)	76 86.4%	44 71.0%	42 95.5%	46 95.8%	206 88.4%
09	<i>Taigh a' Ghearraidh</i> (Tigharry)	33 86.8%	27 73.0%	34 97.1%	37 100.0%	128 94.8%
10 + 11	<i>Solas &amp; Greinetobht</i> (Solas & Grenitote)	41 100.0%	43 89.6%	35 89.3%	52 92.9%	161 97.6%
12	<i>Lochportain &amp; Port nan Long</i>	62 95.4%	28 96.6%	44 97.8%	16 94.1%	149 98.0%
13 + 14	<i>Beàrnaraigh</i> (Bernaray)	21 95.5%	23 79.6%	37 94.9%	39 97.5%	114 97.4%
15 - 17	<i>Loch nam Madadh</i> (Lochmaddy)	96 81.4%	48 64.9%	54 90.0%	53 88.3%	250 83.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b><i>Uibhist a Tuath</i> (North Uist)</b>	476 87.0%	317 77.7%	307 91.1%	311 95.1%	1,390 90.3%

**Table 14: Population with Gàidhlig knowledge in output areas of *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) according to age group and birthplace in 1981**

<sup>18</sup> Figures may not add up exactly because of measures to keep returns anonymous.

<sup>19</sup> A more detailed list of all locations in each output area is to be found in section IV.

<sup>20</sup> Scottish born population aged 3 years and over.



Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers <sup>21</sup> <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i>							
Map No	Census output area <sup>22</sup>	1981		1991		2001	
01	<i>Griomasaigh a</i> (Grimsay a)	181	91.9 %	89	89.9 %	72	73.5 %
02	<i>Griomasaigh b</i> (Grimsay b)			84	80.0 %	71	68.9 %
03	<i>Cairinis</i> (Carinish)	116	84.7 %	114	70.3 %	117	69.6 %
04	<i>Cladach Chirceboist</i>					53	63.9 %
05	<i>Loch Euphort</i>	113	79.0 %	122	67.7 %	53	62.4 %
06	<i>Clachan na Luib</i>	39	81.3 %	39	77.8 %	88	67.2 %
	<i>Baile Sear</i> (Baleshare)	56	86.2 %	48	92.3 %		
07	<i>Cnoc an Torrain</i>	207	85.5 %	97	67.8 %	103	75.2 %
08	<i>Ceann a'Bhàigh</i>			85	78.7 %	52	61.2 %
09	<i>Taigh a'Ghearraidh</i> (Tigharry)	130	89.7 %	111	73.5 %	99	69.2 %
10	<i>Greinetobht</i>	161	93.6 %	53	80.3 %	50	66.7 %
11	<i>Solas</i>			78	88.7 %	64	78.1 %
12	<i>Lochportain</i>	156	100. %	112	91.8 %	89	84.0 %
13	<i>Beàrnaraigh a</i> (Berneray a)	114	87.7 %	57	89.1 %	47	59.5 %
14	<i>Beàrnaraigh b</i> (Berneray b)			67	93.1 %	39	68.4 %
15	<i>Loch nam Madadh a</i> (Lochmaddy a)	242	77.5 %	47	67.2 %	26	46.4 %
16	<i>Loch nam Madadh b</i> (Lochmaddy b)			46	74.1 %	54	60.0 %
17	<i>Loch nam Madadh c</i> (Lochmaddy c)			86	72.4 %	39	49.4 %

**Table 15: Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers for the census output areas in *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) according to data from 1981 to 2001**

<i>Uibhist a Tuath: Gàidhlig-speaking in Age Groups (1971-2001)</i>								
Age group	1971 <sup>23</sup>		1981		1991		2001	
<b>0-2<sup>24</sup></b>	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	25.0 %
<b>3-4</b>	36 (+11)	68.1 %	25	62.5 %	23	60.4 %	11	40.7 %
<b>5-24</b>	420 (+4)	92.8 %	463	87.2 %	334	75.4 %	222	60.0 %
<b>25-44</b>	329 (+1)	83.3 %	339	78.3 %	343	71.9 %	291	66.9 %
<b>45-64</b>	422 (+1)	92.6 %	342	92.9 %	333	84.5 %	331	69.0 %
<b>65 +</b>	338 (+4)	95.3 %	346	94.0 %	306	94.1 %	253	80.8 %
<b>Total (3 years +)</b>	1,545 (+21)	89.9 %	1,515	87.1 %	1,335	77.4 %	1,108	68.2 %
<b>Born in Scotland</b>	n/a	n/a	1,497	90.4 %	1,307	82.9 %	1,069	75.5 %

**Table 16: Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups in *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) according to data from 1971 to 2001**

<sup>21</sup> Statistical base is the population aged 3 years and over for 1981 and 1991 and the total population in 2001.

<sup>22</sup> Information on data for individual census output areas may not be available for every census to prevent the disclosure of individuals. A more detailed list of locations for each output area is to be found in Annex D.

<sup>23</sup> Speakers of Gàidhlig but not English in 1971 are distributed in age groups according to general distribution for the counties of Inverness-shire and Ross & Cromarty (approximate numbers are given in brackets).

<sup>24</sup> Information only available since 2001.



Map No.	Output Area	Knowledge of Gàidhlig in 2001					
		Young age (0-24)		All ages		Difference (Language viability indicator)	Born in Scotland (Language community indicator)
01	<i>Griomasaigh a</i> (Grimsay a)	18	66.7 %	78	79.6 %	- 12.9 %	81.3 %
02	<i>Griomasaigh b</i> (Grimsay b)	17	70.8 %	79	76.7 %	- 5.9 %	84.1 %
03	<i>Cairinis</i> (Carinish)	32	69.6 %	129	76.8 %	- 7.2 %	84.3 %
04	<i>Cladach Chirceboist</i>	15	60.0 %	59	71.1 %	- 11.1 %	79.2 %
05	<i>Loch Euphort</i>	13	81.3 %	62	72.9 %	+ 8.4 %	75.7 %
06	<i>Clachan na Luib &amp; Baile Sear</i> (Baleshare)	29	72.5 %	102	77.9 %	-7.4 %	81.7 %
07	<i>Cnoc an Torrain</i>	28	80.0 %	111	81.0 %	- 1.0 %	87.7 %
08	<i>Ceann a'Bhàigh</i> (Kennavey)	17	60.7 %	57	67.1 %	- 6.4 %	78.3 %
09	<i>Taigh a'Ghearraidh</i> (Tigharry)	29	67.4 %	108	75.5 %	- 8.1 %	83.5 %
10	<i>Greinetobht</i> (Grenitote)	18	90.0 %	62	82.7 %	+ 7.3 %	90.9 %
11	<i>Solas</i> (Sollas)	13	76.5 %	68	82.9 %	- 6.4 %	89.3 %
12	<i>Lochportain</i>	19	100. %	91	85.9 %	+ 14.1 %	88.2 %
13	<i>Beàrnaraigh a</i> (Berneray a)	11	52.4 %	52	65.8 %	- 13.4 %	77.6 %
14	<i>Beàrnaraigh b</i> (Berneray b)	7	58.3 %	46	80.7 %	- 22.4 %	87.8 %
15	<i>Loch nam Madadh a</i> (Lochmaddy a)	10	58.8 %	33	58.9 %	- 0.1 %	62.5 %
16	<i>Loch nam Madadh b</i> (Lochmaddy b)	10	50.0 %	68	75.6 %	- 25.6 %	76.5 %
17	<i>Loch nam Madadh c</i> (Lochmaddy c)	12	63.2 %	53	67.1 %	- 3.9 %	77.1 %

**Table 17: Intergenerational viability and Gàidhlig-speakers born in Scotland: Uibhist a Tuath (North Uist) according to census data of 2001**



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### III. Some Valuable Comments about Census Information

The interpretation of census figures (derived statistics in particular) is not as straightforward as the pure numbers might suggest. The author has taken great pains to compare like with like and the calculated tables with greatest geographical detail and age group information as possible. But the differences of census questions, enumeration districts and information details between years are quite substantial. It is therefore very important to notice the following facts:

1. Questions on *Gàidhlig* have been raised in census enumerations in Scotland since 1881. In this first instance, however, it was asked whether the person “speaks Gaelic habitually” and the information was provided by the enumerator. From 1891 onwards this wording was changed into “speaks Gaelic” and the information was given by the head of the household. Accordingly direct comparison of the results of 1881 and later years is not possible.
2. Until 1971 it was asked whether the person “speaks Gaelic and English” or “speaks Gaelic but not English” (Gaelic only). Due to the simple necessity to survive in an English dominated society and the considerable impact of the school system in fact all *Gàidhlig*-speaking people were forced to become bilingual – with the notable exceptions of pre-school children and very old people. **These “Gaelic only” persons did not, however, present those who had *Gàidhlig* as their natural and preferred language nor were they the only mother tongue speakers.** This was already highlighted after the census 1911 by comments given by the then registrar general and the superintendent of statistics in the county report on Inverness (Census Office, Scotland, 1912): “*When discussing the statistics of the Gaelic-speakers of Argyll we expressed an opinion that the reduction in the number of persons speaking Gaelic but unable to speak English should not be taken as a proof that the use of the language was being discontinued, and after making a similar study of statistics of the Gaelic-speakers of the islands of Inverness, we are in a position to repeat that opinion. One fact alone seems to justify such an expression, and that is that fully three-fourths of the children of less than school age, more than three but less than five, speak Gaelic exclusively. Such a condition seems possible only when Gaelic is the language habitually spoken in the homes, and this seems conclusive evidence of its wide and habitual use.*” Due to the ever increasing presence of English in the *Gàidhlig* community (mixed language marriages, in-migration of English only speakers, radio and television) more and more children under the age of 5 became bilingual and the census question proved to be irrelevant after the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War. Because of the very small numbers involved and the ambiguity of the question no census enumeration took place after 1971 on persons who spoke *Gàidhlig* but no English.
3. No data are available on persons speaking *Gàidhlig* outside Scotland in the rest of the United Kingdom. Census returns are, however, recorded in Canada where the *Gàidhlig* language survived as a community language in a few locations of the province of *Alba Nuadh* (Nova Scotia) well into the 1940s.
4. During World War II no census was taken. Therefore no figures are available for 1941.
5. In 1971 the wording was changed from “speaks Gaelic” into “is able to speak Gaelic”. This resulted in areas with low density of speakers in a substantial increase of *Gàidhlig*-speakers counted compared with 1961. These were essentially those who could speak *Gàidhlig* but did not have the opportunity to use it. In strongly *Gàidhlig*-speaking areas those who were able to speak *Gàidhlig* were also using the language. So in the islands and on the western seaboard the figures should have remained comparable with previous censuses.
6. In 1981 the population basis was changed from persons present on census night to usually resident persons. In the light of increased mobility of the population this change was inevitable.
7. From 1971 onwards additional questions were asked on the ability of people to read *Gàidhlig* or to write *Gàidhlig*.



8. In 2001 another question was introduced on the ability of a person to understand spoken *Gàidhlig*. This may have had an influence on some people with only a small command of the language to record themselves as being able to understand rather than able to speak the language. Without this choice some of them might have enlisted themselves or their children as *Gàidhlig*-speaking in order to be counted at all. This may explain the small decrease of speakers in the age group of 3 to 4 despite the strong efforts by the *cròileagan* movement in the preceding decade.
9. Additionally in 2001 for the first time all children under the age of 3 were recorded with their knowledge of *Gàidhlig*. In previous enumerations these children were not counted or (in 1891 and 1901) only a few children were enumerated in this age group. In many census publications percentages were calculated by using the enumerated *Gàidhlig*-speaking population (aged 3 years and over) on the basis of the total population. This led to slightly lower percentages than actually existed.
10. Census counts are not strictly exact. Apart from inevitable small enumeration errors the census authorities have introduced measures to keep returns anonymous. For example in 1971 figures in tables were rounded to the nearest 0 or 5. This fact represented a major obstacle in using small area statistics for further evaluation because of the small numbers involved. Comparable measures were taken in later censuses but with smaller overall “uncertainties” of +/- 1 in general.
11. All census material used and reproduced in this study is Crown Copyright. The use of this material in this study has been allowed under the licence no. C02W0003665.
12. Further information may be obtained by contacting the General Register Office for Scotland at <http://www.gro-scotland.gov.uk>.



## IV. List of Census Output Areas with Numbers and Placenames

The following list provides detailed information on all postcode names included in individual census output areas and shows the abbreviations/numbers defining output areas in census statistics between 1961 and 2001.

Census Output Areas in <i>Uibhist a Tuath</i>				
Map No.	Census output area <sup>25</sup>	Area Codes		
		1961 1971	1981 1991	2001
01	<i>Griomasaigh</i> (Grimsay): <i>Ceallan &amp; Bàgh Mòr</i>	NS	56AC01A	60RJ000023
02	<i>Griomasaigh</i> (Grimsay): <i>Aird nan Struban &amp; Gearraidh Dubh</i>	NS	56AC01B	60RJ000024
03	<i>Càirinis</i> (Carinish), <i>Gearraidh Cladach &amp; Cnoc Cuidhein</i>	NS	56AC03	60RJ000025
04	<i>Cladach Chirceboist &amp; Cladach a'Chaolais</i>	NS	56AC04	60RJ000226
05	<i>Loch Euphort</i> (Locheport), <i>Corunna &amp; Saighdinis</i>	NS	56AC04	60RJ000227
06	<i>Clachan na Luib</i> , <i>Cladach Iolaraigh &amp; Am Baile Sear</i> (Baleshare)	NS	56AC05 56AC06	60RJ000225
07	<i>Cnoc an Torrain</i> , <i>Baile Mòr &amp; Paibeilgearraidh</i>	NN	56AC07A	60RJ000026
08	<i>Ceann a'Bhàigh</i> (Kennavay) & <i>Caolas Phaibeil</i>	NN	56AC07B	60RJ000191
09	<i>Taigh a'Ghearraidh</i> (Tigharry), <i>Hòigearraidh &amp; Baile Raghnaill</i>	NN	56AC08	60RJ000027
10	<i>Greinetobht</i> (Grenitote), <i>Malacleit &amp; Botarubha</i>	NN	56AC09A	60RJ000028
11	<i>Solas</i> (Sollas), <i>Malacleit &amp; Ceathramh Meadhonach</i>	NN	56AC09B	60RJ000029
12	<i>Lochportain</i> , <i>Port nan Long &amp; Truimisgearraidh</i>	NN	56AC12	60RJ000031
13	<i>Beàrnaraigh</i> (Berneray): <i>Ruisigearraidh &amp; Rubha Mhanais</i>	HS <sup>26</sup>	56AC11A	60RJ000030
14	<i>Beàrnaraigh</i> (Berneray): <i>Borgh</i>	HS	56AC11B	60RJ000192
15	<i>Loch nam Madadh</i> (Lochmaddy)	NS	56AC13A	60RJ000032
16	<i>Loch nam Madadh bho Dheas</i>	NS	56AC13B	60RJ000033
17	<i>Loch nam Madadh &amp; Srùth Mòr</i>	NS	56AC13C	60RJ000034

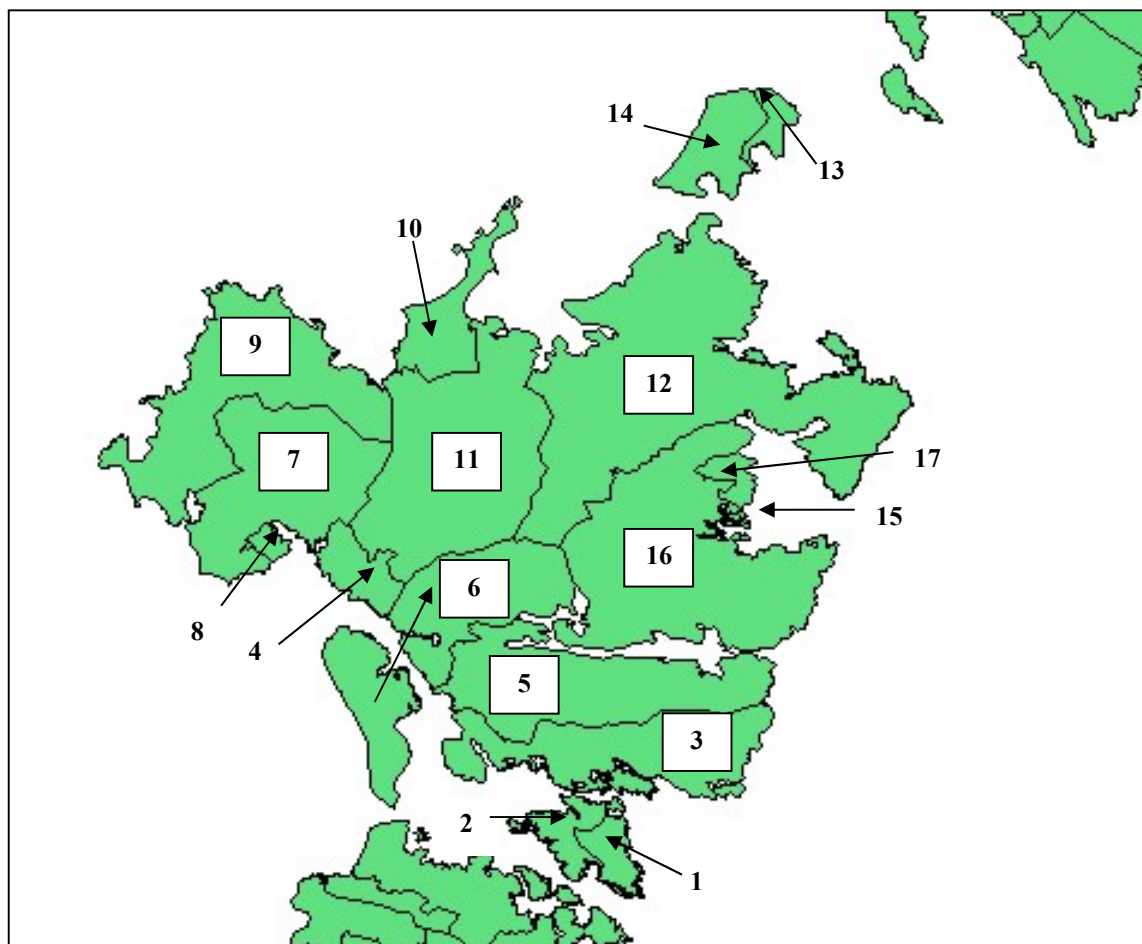
**Table A-1: List of locations within individual census output areas and official numbers for different census dates for *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) – 1961-2001**

<sup>25</sup> Placenames are given according to official information by the Ordnance Survey and used in modern maps. The placenames in the Outer Hebrides do have officially *Gàidhlig* names. „English“ versions are only used in addition for major settlements. Therefore the old anglicised names are provided in table A-1 for a few prominent locations only.

<sup>26</sup> HS = County council electoral division Harris (South) described in Vol. 06 of this series.







**Fig. 10: Overview map of census output areas for *Uibhist a Tuath* (North Uist) - numbers are provided in table A-1<sup>27</sup>**

<sup>27</sup> Digital boundaries courtesy of Ordnance Survey as part of the Geography Products provided by GROS for the 2001 census



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## VII. List of Abbreviations

There are a number of abbreviations used in the text which might not be known by every reader. Therefore this short list intends to facilitate better understanding:

CCED	County council electoral division
CP	Civil parish
CNSA	<i>Comhairle nan Sgoiltean Araich</i> : Gaelic playgroup association
<i>Comhairle nan Eilean</i> (CNE) – later: <i>Comhairle nan Eilean Siar</i> (CNES)	Official name of the Western Isles Council, the local government body of the Outer Hebrides (with abbreviations)
<i>Cròileagan</i>	Gaelic speaking playgroup
Fèis	Local art festival with normally some Gaelic courses
GLPS	“Gaelic Language for the Primary School”: Course as introduction of Gaelic as second language
GME	<i>Gàidhlig</i> -medium education
GMU	<i>Gàidhlig</i> -medium unit: Class(es) with <i>Gàidhlig</i> -medium education but as part of an English medium school
GROS	General Register Office for Scotland
LVI	Language viability indicator
LCI	Language community indicator
<i>Mòd</i>	Gaelic language gathering (conversation, song and music) comparable to the Welsh Eisteddfod
n/a	Information is not available
OA	(Census) output area: the smallest enumeration unit on which census data are available
P1	Primary school year 1
P2	Primary school year 2
S1	Secondary school year 1
S2	Secondary school year 2
<i>Sgoil Araich</i>	Gaelic speaking nursery school
<i>Sràdagan</i>	Gaelic speaking clubs for primary school children



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