

Gàidhlig (Scottish Gaelic) Local Studies¹

Vol. 14: *Eilean Leòdhais: Am Bac & An Rubha* (Isle of Lewis: Back & Point)

Author: Kurt C. Duwe

2nd 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 19th 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.

This report examines the conditions of Gaelic in rural parts of the parish of Stornoway. In this north-eastern part of the Isle of Lewis the retreat of the language has been especially pronounced in recent decades. The language communities north of Stornoway, however, withstood the anglicisation trends more successfully than those situated on the peninsula of Point. Whereas Gaelic has still a considerable base today in the settlements between Coll and North Tolsta the language has lost substantial ground especially amongst the younger generation in the communities around Aird and Bayble.

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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 20th 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.

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* place-names 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

Kurt C. Duwe



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1 Introduction

The most populous parish on the island of *Leòdhas* is named after the island capital but it encompasses a much larger area than the old harbour town itself. The shores of *Loch a Tuath* (Northbay) north of *Steòrnabhagh* are lined by a long string of crofting settlements which have long remained quite apart from the bustling trade and fishing port nearby. The district of *Am Bac* (Back) stretches from the township of *Tunga* (Tong) over 10 miles northwards until the road ends at *Bail' Ùr Tholastaidh* (New Tolsta). Geographically even more distinctly separated is the peninsula of *An Rubha* (Point) to the east of the town. Until very recently *Gàidhlig* has been the dominant language in these communities where - as in all parts of *Leòdhas* - the Protestant faith in all its manifestations was an important part of everyday life. Crofting is still an economic factor but many of the roughly 4,300 inhabitants commute to *Steòrnabhagh* on a daily basis to earn a living.

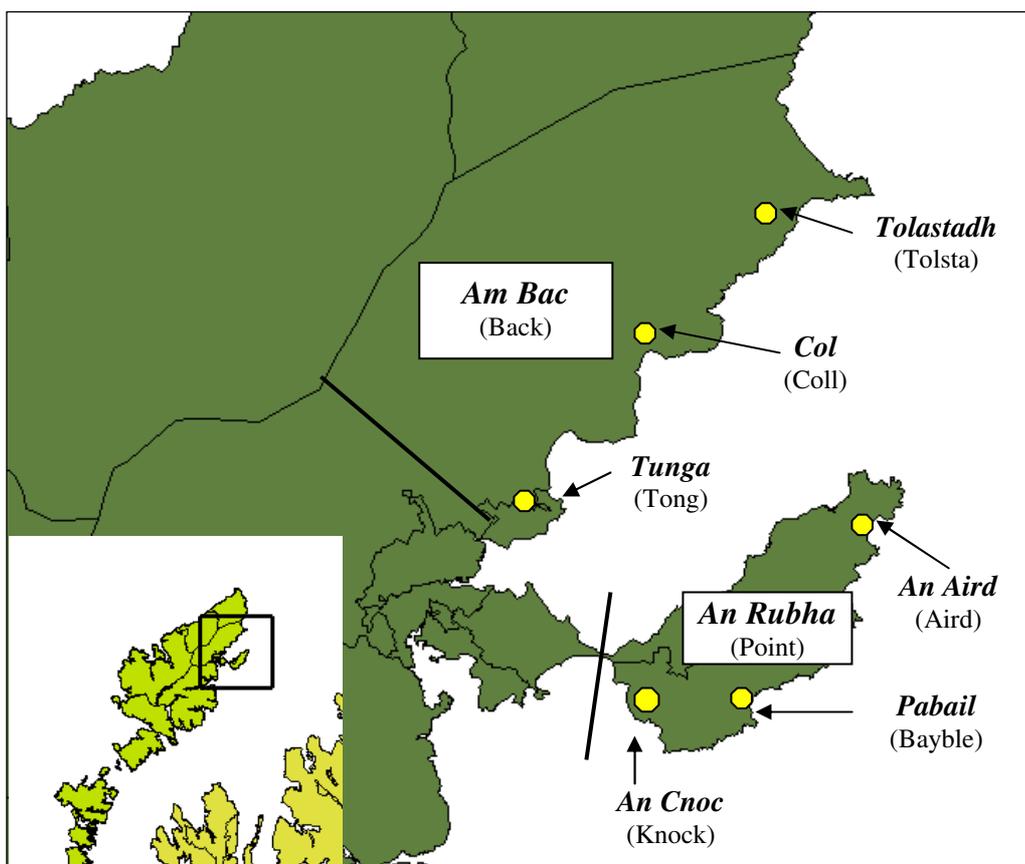


Fig. 1: Overview map of area under investigation²

With this background in mind the following short chapters will look into the historical development of the use of *Gàidhlig* in the area from the end of the 19th century until today – mainly highlighted by references to and analysis of population census results in local detail. Information on additionally available studies of language use and especially educational provision to study *Gàidhlig* (or even being educated through the medium of the language) is used where considered as useful.

² Digital boundaries courtesy of Ordnance Survey are part of Geography Products provided by GROS for the 2001 census.



2 The Historical Background

With the exception of the busy harbour township of *Steòrnabhagh* (Stornoway) with its naturally more affluent population and constant intercourse with the outside world the *Gàidhlig* language was universally and exclusively spoken on all islands of *Innse Gall* (Outer Hebrides). This was also true for the communities adjacent to *Steòrnabhagh* on the north-eastern part of *Leòdhas* (Lewis).

Statistical information before 1881 about language use in Scotland is scarce. However, the New Statistical Account of Scotland (1831-1845) provides a short insight into the state of the language in the parish in the early 19th century: “*Gaelic is the language universally spoken. It has lost ground very little except in Stornoway; and even there, all born in the town speak Gaelic, though the principal inhabitants prefer the English. Throughout the parish, the Gaelic is a good deal corrupted, for many interlard their sentences by introducing English words with the termination ikuk, such as callikuk and meanikuk, viz. calling and meaning, &c.*” Nonetheless the language had its strong place in the church and there were even Gaelic schools which provided some sort of literacy in the language – until in 1872 compulsory education effectively banned *Gàidhlig* from the school system.

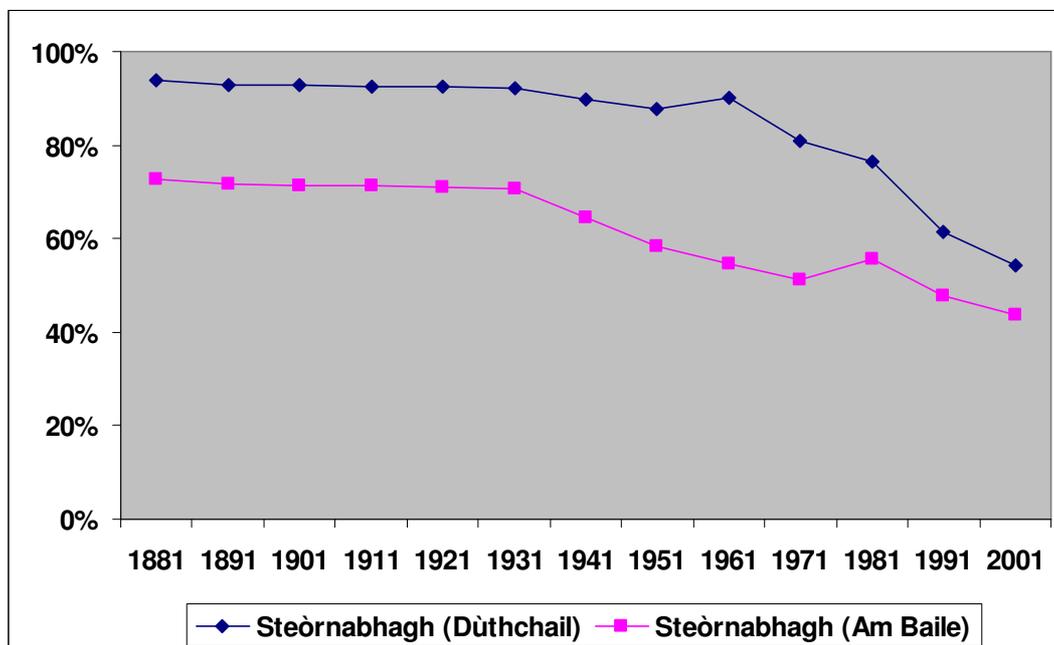


Fig. 2: Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years and over) as percentage of total population between 1881 and 2001 – the landward part of the civil parish and the town of *Steòrnabhagh* (Stornoway) respectively³

Until 1961 the population of the settlements on the peninsula of *An Rubha* (Point) and in the townships between *Tunga* (Tong) and *Tolastaidh* (Tolsta) remained staunchly *Gàidhlig*-speaking. In fig. 2 the overall decrease of *Gàidhlig*-speaking intensity in the following decades is outlined for the landward parts of the parish of *Steòrnabhagh* as well as for the town itself⁴. The situation of the language in the town and its immediate surroundings is described in Vol. 15 of this series.

³ There was no census taken in 1941 because of World War II – values are therefore interpolated between 1931 and 1951.

⁴ For the census enumerations between 1911 and 1951 it is not possible to obtain individual figures for the districts of *Am Bac* and *An Rubha* and the communities adjacent to the town of *Steòrnabhagh* (namely *Lacasdal* and *Sanndabhaig*). It can, how-



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

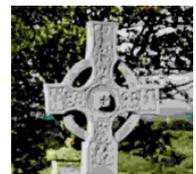
The first census enumeration exercises on “Gaelic-speakers” in 1881 and 1891 (table 10) saw far more than 90 % of inhabitants as *Gàidhlig*-speakers in the rural parts of the parish. In 1891 even the majority of *Gàidhlig*-speakers were recorded as not speaking English (fig. 3). The language community was able to integrate even incoming people in those days as the proportion of English monolingual persons remained on a very low and static level until the Second World War. In this respect the conditions in rural *Steòrnabhagh* were comparable with those in other rural parts of the islands. During the whole period the proportion of *Gàidhlig*-speaking people remained over the 85 % mark for the whole parish (including the harbour town of *Steòrnabhagh* with its comparatively large English monolingual community).

Before addressing the official enumeration district figures for 1881-1901 it is really worthwhile to look more closely at the original 1891 census forms which provide interesting additional information. Generally the census figures were still underestimating the real strength of the language because these statistics looked at the total population present at census night. The population figures included returns from occasional visitors and counted also children aged less than three years although their language preferences were not enumerated at all. The respective “corrected” 1891 details about three communities in this part of the island are cited below⁵ (Duwe, 2006):

1. **Am Bac** (Back): The *Gàidhlig* language was spoken by almost everyone (99.6 %) in this crofting community. Roughly three quarters of the usually resident population did not even speak English at all. This was most pronounced among women in this community. “*Gàidhlig monolingual persons were only in the minority among children aged between 10 and 14. The only adult with “no Gaelic” was the wife of the public school teacher – she had been born in Walls in Orkney. - These figures lead to an “official” share of Gàidhlig speakers of 94.3 %. A comparison with the more realistic statistics of this fact-sheet reveals that this percentage was a considerable under-estimate of 5.3 % mainly caused by the inclusion of under-three olds in the official population base.*”
2. **Seisiadar** (Sheshader): All except one of the inhabitants (99.6 %) in this crofting hamlet in the centre of *An Rubha* (Point) spoke the traditional language. Almost one half of the usually resident population did not speak English at all. Bilingual persons were mainly confined to the age group between 10 and 44 years. Males were more likely than women to be able to converse also in the official language. “*There was just one person who was enumerated as “not speaking Gaelic”. This was the 15 year old Isabella MacAulay daughter of a locally born fisherman. Whether this was an enumeration error could not be ascertained because she could not be traced in the 1901 census. - These figures lead to an “official” share of Gàidhlig speakers of 92.5 %.*” This percentage was – as seen above - 7.1 % below the figure of the usually resident population.
3. **Port nan Giùran & Brocair** (Portnaguran & Broker): All usually resident persons in both settlements on the peninsula of *An Rubha* (Point) were *Gàidhlig* speakers. “*The clear majority did not speak English at the time of the census. Men were far more likely to have some bilingual skills than women. Among age groups only young people aged between 10 and 24 were markedly bilingual.*” The “official” figures of *Gàidhlig* speakers had been only 95.3 % for this enumeration district.

ever, be assumed that the figures for this rural part of the parish are a lower limit for the language strength in the two districts of *Am Bac* and *An Rubha* in those decades.

⁵ 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 and 1901.



Detailed local information is available in census reports of 1881, 1891 and 1901 providing a good impression of the geographical strength of the language in the area under scrutiny (see tables 2-3). Despite the shortcomings of the official census figures in terms of percentages – as outlined above – The different geographical distribution and especially the numbers of monolingual *Gàidhlig* speakers are very important indicators of the linguistic balance in those communities at those times.

The district of *Am Bac* (Back) north of *Steòrnabhagh* was still completely *Gàidhlig* speaking during this period. In addition large parts of the population did not speak English at all in crofting hamlets like *Bhatasgair* (Vatisker) and *Col* (Coll). Even in 1901 the vast majority of persons in *Tunga* (Tong) and *Àird Thunga* (Aird Tong) were counted as *Gàidhlig* monolingual speakers. No decline whatsoever could be detected between the three census years near the turn of the century.

Number of persons and percentage of <i>Gàidhlig</i> -speakers in selected districts of <i>Am Bac</i> – 1881 - 1901					
Enumeration district ⁶	All persons speaking <i>Gàidhlig</i> ⁷			Monolingual share of all <i>Gàidhlig</i> -speakers ⁸	
	1881 ⁹	1891	1901	1891	1901
<i>Tolastadh</i> (Tolsta)	559 93.6 %	652 93.3 %	652 90.7 %	431 66.1 %	231 35.4 %
<i>Gleann Tholastaidh</i> (Glen Tolsta)	n/a	20 90.9 %	33 94.3 %	12 60.0 %	5 15.2 %
<i>Am Bac</i> (Back)	505 86.8 %	562 94.3 %	622 96.0 %	412 73.3 %	330 53.1 %
<i>Bhatasgair</i> (Vatisker)	383 96.7 %	414 94.3 %	503 93.7 %	369 89.1 %	218 43.3 %
<i>Griais</i> (Gress)	n/a	25 86.2 %	19 86.4 %	1 4.0 %	4 21.1 %
<i>Col</i> (Coll)	475 96.7 %	498 94.9 %	655 95.5 %	461 92.6 %	168 24.5 %
<i>Tunga</i> (Tong)	432 95.2 %	210 96.8 %	214 91.8 %	127 60.5 %	196 91.6 %
<i>Àird Thunga</i> (Aird Tong)		309 96.0 %	271 91.2 %	173 56.0 %	244 82.2 %

Table 1: Number of persons speaking *Gàidhlig* and all *Gàidhlig*-speakers as share of population in *Am Bac* according to local census data from 1881 to 1901

⁶ The figures relate to individual enumeration districts or villages according to the definition of census terms in this period. Concerning 1881 details were only available for villages therefore results for two small areas outside these villages cannot be provided for this census.

⁷ Percentages of *Gàidhlig*-speakers above 50 % are denoted in bold figures.

⁸ Percentages of persons speaking “Gaelic only” which exceed 10 % are shown in bold figures.

⁹ The census of 1881 was concerned with people speaking “habitually” *Gàidhlig*. Results are therefore not directly comparable with later census figures.



Number of persons and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in selected districts of <i>An Rubha</i> – 1881 - 1901					
Enumeration district	All persons speaking Gàidhlig ¹⁰			Monolingual share of all Gàidhlig-speakers ¹¹	
	1881 ¹²	1891	1901	1891	1901
<i>An Cnoc & Aiginis</i> (Knock & Aignish)	472 95.2 %	300 93.5 %	358 94.2 %	85 28.3 %	123 34.4 %
<i>Suardal</i> (Swordale)		249 91.9 %	295 89.9 %	80 32.1 %	105 35.6 %
<i>Pabail Iarach</i> (Lower Bayble)	409 94.9 %	446 92.7 %	486 96.2 %	254 57.0 %	215 44.2 %
<i>Pabail Uarach</i> (Upper Bayble)	439 91.2 %	492 94.1 %	535 94.5 %	191 38.8 %	252 44.5 %
<i>Gàrrabost</i> (Garrabost)	294 95.1 %	364 94.5 %	447 91.2 %	304 83.5 %	285 63.8 %
<i>Gàrrabost Ùr</i> (New Garrabost)	1,194 93.8 %	153 95.0 %	106 89.1 %	91 68.4 %	82 77.4 %
<i>Siùiliseadar</i> (Shulishader)		248 95.8 %	260 91.9 %	127 51.2 %	113 43.5 %
<i>Seisiadar</i> (Sheshader)		248 92.5 %	284 91.3 %	125 50.4 %	126 44.4 %
<i>Àird Uarach</i> (Upper Aird)		236 94.0 %	251 91.3 %	131 55.5 %	140 55.8 %
<i>Port Mholair</i> (Portvoller)		212 94.6 %	240 91.6 %	127 59.9 %	134 55.8 %
<i>Port nan Giùran</i> (Portnaguran)		244 93.8 %	303 89.1 %	163 66.8 %	203 67.0 %
<i>Brocair</i> (Broker)		39 95.1 %	76 85.4 %	14 35.9 %	50 65.8 %

Table 2: Number of persons speaking Gàidhlig and all Gàidhlig-speakers as share of population in *An Rubha* according to local census data from 1881 to 1901

The position of Gàidhlig on the peninsula of *An Rubha* (Point) was equally unrivalled during this time. A large proportion of the population did not speak English even in 1901. In this respect the crofting townships of *Gàrrabost* (Garrabost) and *Port nan Giùran* (Portnaguran) were the most Gàidhlig communities in the area. Keeping the more realistic statistics of the usually resident population in mind (as mentioned for *Port nan Giùran* on page 6) it has to be realised that only a handful of incomers was unable (or did not want to) speak the traditional language of the island in this period. Until the 1930s (table 3) the dominance of Gàidhlig in the rural parts of the parish of *Steòrnabhagh* remained basically unchallenged. Only the share of monolingual speakers was reduced through the school system and “Gaelic only” speakers became more or confined to pre-school children and older people.

¹⁰ Percentages of Gàidhlig-speakers above 50 % are denoted in bold figures.

¹¹ Percentages of persons speaking “Gaelic only” which exceed 10 % are shown in bold figures.

¹² The census of 1881 was concerned with people speaking “habitually” Gàidhlig. Results are therefore not directly comparable with later census figures.



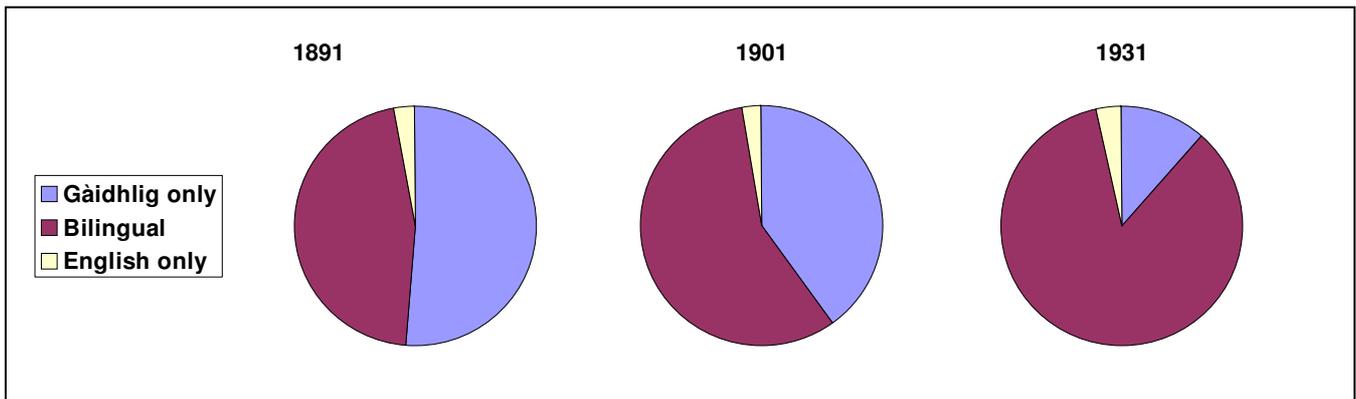


Fig. 3: Share of population speaking Gàidhlig and/or English according to census results in the rural parts of the civil parish of Steòrnabhagh in 1891, 1901 and 1931

Steòrnabhagh (Civil Parish)						
Subject \ Census	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years +)	9,102	10,241	11,337	11,780	11,386	10,360
% of total population	87.6 %	86.8 %	87.3 %	87.7 %	85.2 %	85.5 %

Table 3: Number of Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years and over) in the civil parish of Steòrnabhagh (including Am Bac & An Rubha) and percentage of total population speaking Gàidhlig during 1881-1931

2.2 Developments in the late 20th century (Census 1951–2001)

The interruption by the Second World War had a remarkable influence on the Gàidhlig-speaking intensity of the whole parish with an overall decrease by 9 % (table 2). But this effect was almost totally confined to the town of Steòrnabhagh itself as even in 1961 over 97 % of the population aged three and over spoke Gàidhlig in the County Council Electoral Divisions of Am Bac and An Rubha (table 13). This of course meant that also young children were overwhelmingly Gàidhlig-speaking. The report on Gàidhlig-speaking schoolchildren in Highland schools (Scottish Council for Research in Education, 1961) provided background details for the school year 1957/58. Then the school district of Am Bac (Back) reported 405 out of 489 primary school children (82.8 %) as being first or preferred language speakers. On the peninsula of An Rubha 376 of 542 children (69.4 %) were assessed as first language speakers. This lower percentage could be attributed to the fact that the primary school of Sanndabhaig was at that time part of this school district. Accordingly both areas were thoroughly Gàidhlig-speaking in the strictest sense and educational efforts improved with the introduction of the Ross & Cromarty Education Scheme in 1960.

Steòrnabhagh (Civil Parish)						
Subject \ Census	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years +)	9,751	9,312	8,370	8,625	7,196	6,004
% of total population	76.2 %	73.2 %	68.9 %	67.2 %	55.7 %	50.0 %

Table 4: Number of Gàidhlig-speakers (3 years and over) in the civil parish of Steòrnabhagh (including Am Bac & An Rubha) and percentage of total population speaking Gàidhlig during 1951-2001



From 1971 onwards, however, a slow decline could be detected in both areas (see table 12 for comparison). The new local authority *Comhairle nan Eilean* took over in 1975 to improve at least educational provisions also in the communities in the vicinity of its headquarters.

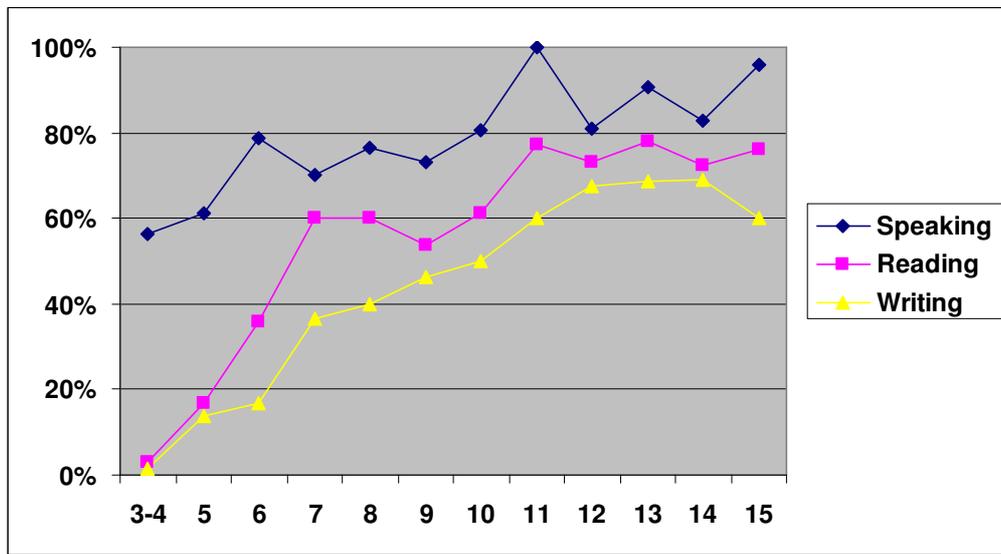


Fig. 4: Percentage of children able to speak, read or write Gàidhlig in different age groups in 1981 – Am Bac (Back)

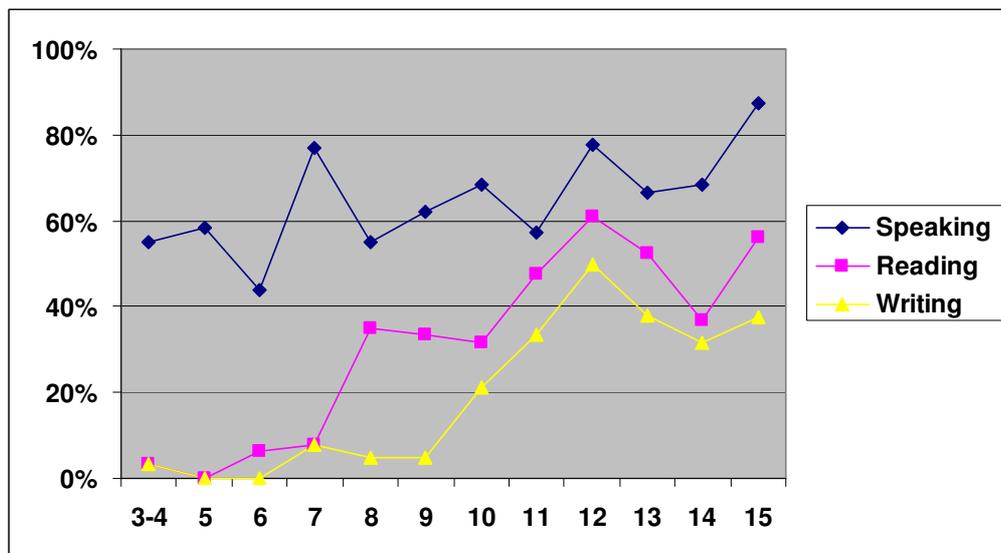


Fig. 5: Percentage of children able to speak, read or write Gàidhlig in different age groups in 1981 – An Rubha (Point)

The Bilingual Project (Murray & Morrison, 1984) was initiated in 1975. In the area considered only the primary school of *Am Bac* took part right from the start. The remaining five primary schools (*Tolastaidh*, *Tunga*, *An Cnoc*, *Pabail* and *An Aird*) were only to follow in the second phase in 1978. Figure 4 explains the positive impact of the bilingual education in the whole district of *Am Bac* which can be compared in contrast with the dismal literacy levels at primary school ages in *An Rubha* during the census of 1981 (fig. 5). Decline in language intensity was markedly stronger on the peninsula than in the communities



around *Am Bac*. In 1981 there were still seven out of 17 output areas which boasted over 90 % Gàidhlig-speaking percentages (tables 13 and 15) all but one situated in the northern and central parts of *Am Bac*. In the census enumerations to follow a further strong decline in language knowledge had to be recorded especially in younger age groups (figures 7 and 8).

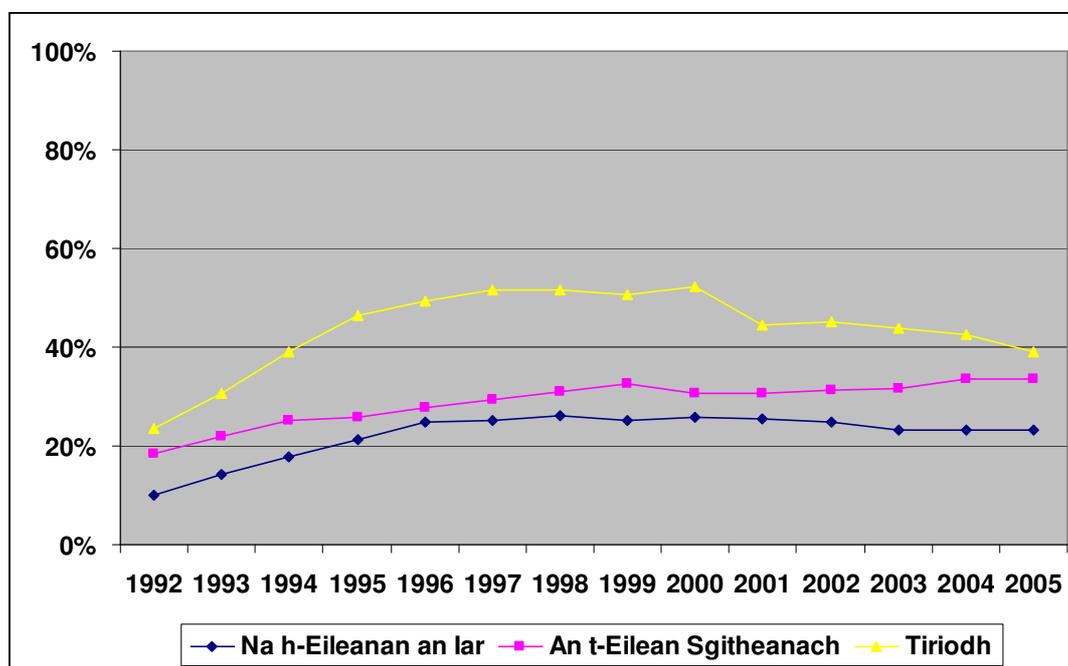


Fig. 6: Primary school children attending Gàidhlig-medium classes in *Na h-Eileanan an Iar* (Western Isles), *An t-Eilean Sgitheanach* (Isle of Skye) and *Tiriodh* (Tiree) (September 1992 – September 2005)

Census 1991: Households with dependent children aged 3 and over						
Household composition	<i>An t-Eilean Sgitheanach & Loch Aillse</i>			<i>Na h-Eileanan an Iar</i>		
	No children speak Gàidhlig	Some ch. speak Gàidhlig	All children speak Gàidhlig	No children speak Gàidhlig	Some ch. speak Gàidhlig	All children speak Gàidhlig
All adults speak G.	56 (21.7 %)	14 (5.4 %)	188 (72.9 %)	253 (15.4 %)	100 (6.1 %)	1,285 (78.4 %)
Some adults speak G.	176 (55.0 %)	39 (12.2 %)	105 (32.8 %)	542 (69.4 %)	69 (8.8 %)	170 (21.8 %)
No adults speak G.	490 (78.3 %)	52 (8.3 %)	84 (13.4 %)	647 (89.4 %)	38 (5.3 %)	38 (5.3 %)
Total	722 (60.0 %)	105 (8.7 %)	377 (31.3 %)	1,442 (45.9 %)	207 (6.6 %)	1,493 (47.5 %)

Table 5: Households according to language abilities of parents and dependent children in 1991 for *Na h-Eileanan an Iar* (Western Isles) and *An t-Eilean Sgitheanach & Loch Aillse* (Skye & Lochalsh)

Developments on pre-school and primary level were slow and comparatively weak to follow after the Bilingual Project lost its steam after 1981. *Cròileagan* were established one each in *Am Bac* (*Loch a Tuath*) and *An Rubha*. GME was introduced in the primary schools of *Am Bac* (1989) and *An Aird* (1990); *sradagan* groups complemented these developments in both areas. Like in the islands as a whole



(fig. 6) the intake into Gàidhlig-medium education was not as enthusiastic as in other areas of what remained of the *Gaidhealtachd*. Surprising or not this was in line with a less successful language transmission rate between generations (table 3). According to the 1991 census language transmission in the Western Isles was less successful in *Innse Gall* (Outer Hebrides) than in the Skye & Lochalsh district of Highland region. In island families where both parents spoke Gàidhlig just 80.7 % of children (aged 3-15) were Gàidhlig-speakers, too. The figure for Skye & Lochalsh was 87.1 %. In families with only one Gàidhlig-speaking parent just 24 % of children spoke the language, too. In Skye & Lochalsh more than 40 % of children with only one Gàidhlig-speaking parent spoke also Gàidhlig (see table 3).

Another reason for the decline in the proportion of Gàidhlig-speakers is of course the migration of people leaving or entering the language communities. The latter was investigated in the 1991 census when considering enumerated people with a different residence one year ago. In *Na h-Eileanan an Iar* 2,252 persons had changed residence during this period, but only 1,077 had lived outside the islands in 1990. Maybe surprisingly 284 (26.4 %) of those persons were able to speak Gàidhlig and most of these were locals returning home from work somewhere else. This means only 793 English monolingual speakers took residence during the year before the 1991 census. These persons were prospectively far more mobile than those born in the islands. In total 1,983 persons had left the islands during the same period to live in other parts of the UK. 1,739 persons stayed in the rest of Scotland and only 821 (47.2 %) were enumerated as Gàidhlig-speakers (General Register Office, 1994). This factor alone therefore could not explain the decrease of language knowledge during the last decades even in areas like *Am Bac* near the more “metropolitan” affluent society of *Steòrnabhagh*. Anyway between 1991 and 2001 the areas both lost another 10 % of Gàidhlig-speaking percentage according to census figures. The most dramatic decline was recorded in younger age groups under 25 (figures 7 and 8).

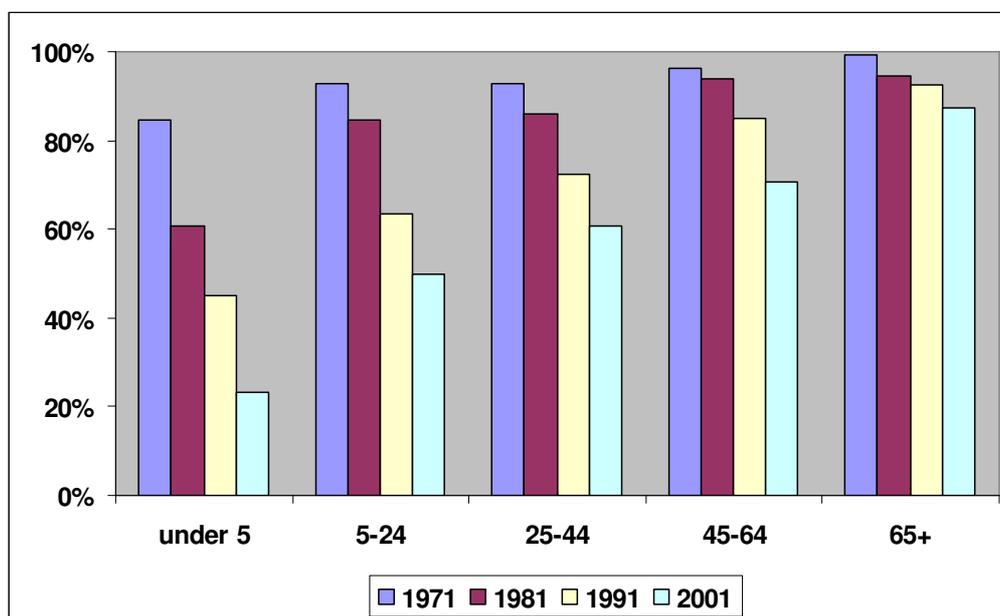


Fig. 7: Percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups between 1971 and 2001 – Area of *Am Bac* (Back)¹³

¹³ Under 5: Gàidhlig abilities in the age group 3-4 until 1991, in 2001 in all age groups 0-4.



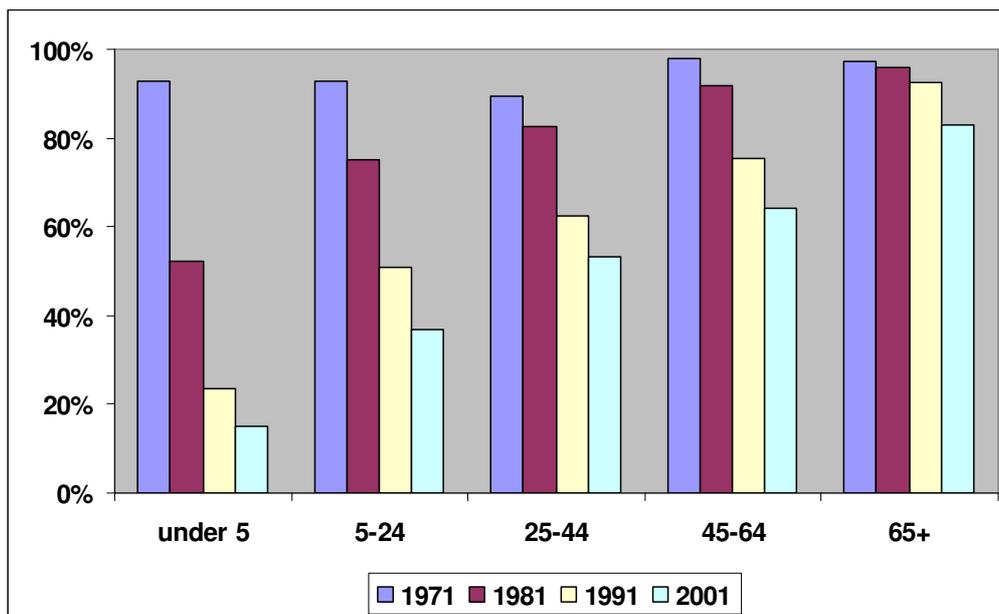


Fig. 8: Percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups between 1971 and 2001 – Area of An Rubha (Point)

2.3 Development of literacy in Gàidhlig between 1971 and 2001

In addition to information about speaking ability data on other aspects 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). Here both areas showed very high intensities in reading and writing capabilities on a comparable level with other rural Protestant areas of the *Gaidhealtachd*. During the decades there has not been much variation in these figures from 1971 to 2001 except for primary school children. Figures 8 and 9 illustrate the very strong improvement in reading ability during this period for both areas.

	Number of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to read Gàidhlig				Percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to read Gàidhlig			
	1971	1981	1991	2001	1971	1981	1991	2001
<i>Am Bac (Back)</i>	1,580	1,691	1,056	1,146	82.5 %	81.3 %	77.4 %	76.9 %
<i>An Rubha (Point)</i>	1,490	1,371	1,020	811	79.5 %	75.2 %	71.0 %	73.1 %

Table 6: Number of people able to read Gàidhlig and Gàidhlig readers as a percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers (1971-2001)

	Number of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to write Gàidhlig				Percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers with ability to write Gàidhlig			
	1971	1981	1991	2001	1971	1981	1991	2001
<i>Am Bac (Back)</i>	865	1,270	833	824	45.2 %	61.1 %	61.0 %	55.3 %
<i>An Rubha (Point)</i>	775	978	746	573	41.3 %	53.7 %	51.9 %	51.6 %

Table 7: Number of people able to write Gàidhlig and Gàidhlig writers as a percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers (1971-2001)



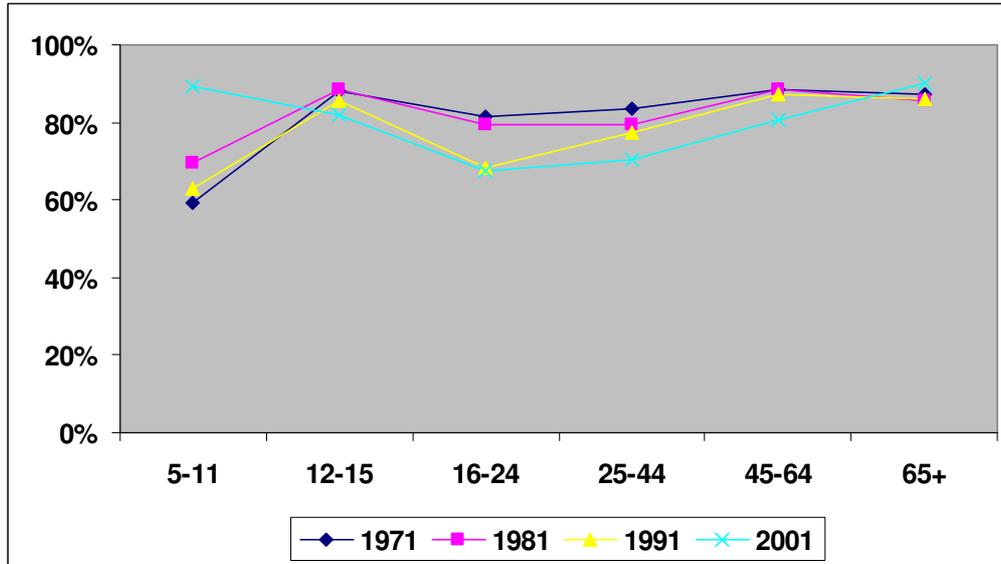


Fig. 9: Persons able to read Gàidhlig as a percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups (1971-2001): Am Bac

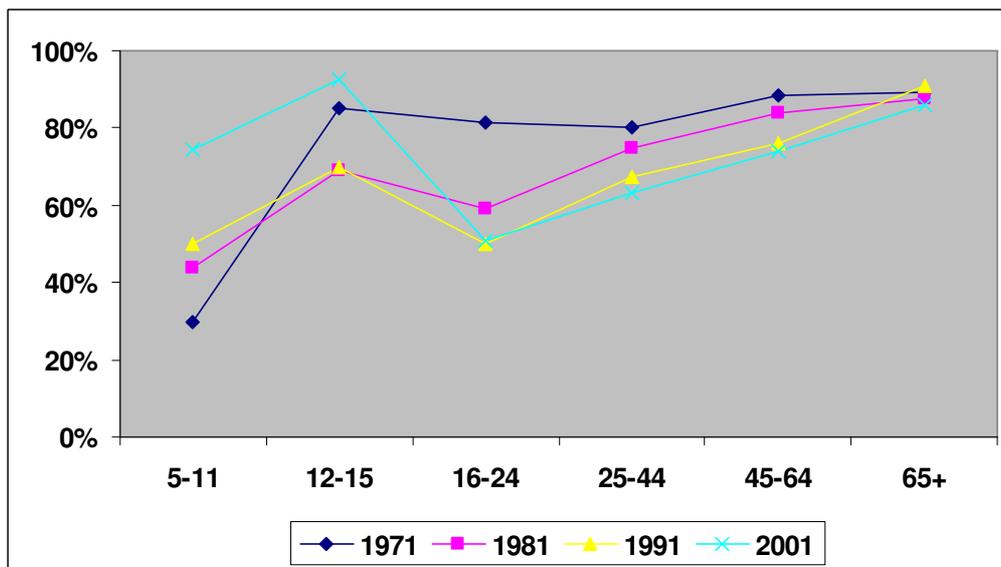


Fig. 10: Persons able to read Gàidhlig as a percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups (1971-2001): An Rubha



3 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.

The following sections will 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

The results for all 30 census output areas can be interpreted in a variety of ways and statistics to look from specific and different angles on the state of *Gàidhlig* in *Am Bac* as well as in *An Rubha*. The preceding chapter has already hinted at the quite different speed and intensity in which anglicisation has influenced these “suburbs” of *Steòrnabhagh*. Special educational aspects are focus of section 3.2 dealing with the young generation in school catchments. In this part the more general conclusions are drawn from the 2001 census information for the two areas in question:

***Am Bac*:** This district remains slightly more *Gàidhlig*-speaking than *An Rubha*. Both understanding and speaking *Gàidhlig* are only gradually decreasing with younger age (fig. 10) and there is a peak emerging in the age groups between 5 and 15. There is nonetheless a marked difference in *Gàidhlig*-speaking percentage between 2001 and 1991 by 8 % for the whole population and a loss of around 6 % at school age (table 6). The new category of understanding spoken *Gàidhlig*, however, still provides a very high proportion of the inhabitants of over 75 %. Inter-generational difference (table 6) in *Gàidhlig* knowledge between those aged 3 to 24 and the total population here is at a comparatively moderate rate of –6 %. Literacy is very high in the area with 77 % of *Gàidhlig*-speakers able to read and 55 % also able to write in the language.

Small area statistics for census output areas (table 13) provide more local detail. Here the share of the population being able to speak the language ranged from roughly 50 % in *Tac Tunga* to some 75 % in *Tolstadh bho Thuath* (North Tolsta). The corresponding figures for the „understands spoken Gaelic” category vary between around 62 % in *Tunga* (Tong) and 83 % in *Tolstadh bho Thuath*. Generally there is a clear distinction between the output areas around *Tunga* and the stronger communities from *Col* northwards. Looking at the overall picture (fig. 11) most of the population live in neighbourhoods where between 65 % and 80 % know at least some *Gàidhlig* and a quarter of the people were located in neighbourhoods with more than 80 % language intensity. The rest of the inhabitants lived in neighbourhoods (mainly around *Tunga*) where at least the majority knew the language. Accordingly *Am Bac* can still be classified as a *Gàidhlig*-speaking community despite the proximity of the very anglocentric town of *Steòrnabhagh*.

Other census data are also not too discouraging: A third of the children under the age of three (35.8 %) were recorded with some knowledge of *Gàidhlig*: These 34 children were distributed quite evenly over the area. The new category of “understanding spoken Gaelic” in 2001 recorded 257 persons (11.4 %) in



addition to the 1,438 (63.7 %) *Gàidhlig* speakers who were at least competent in some aspects of the language.

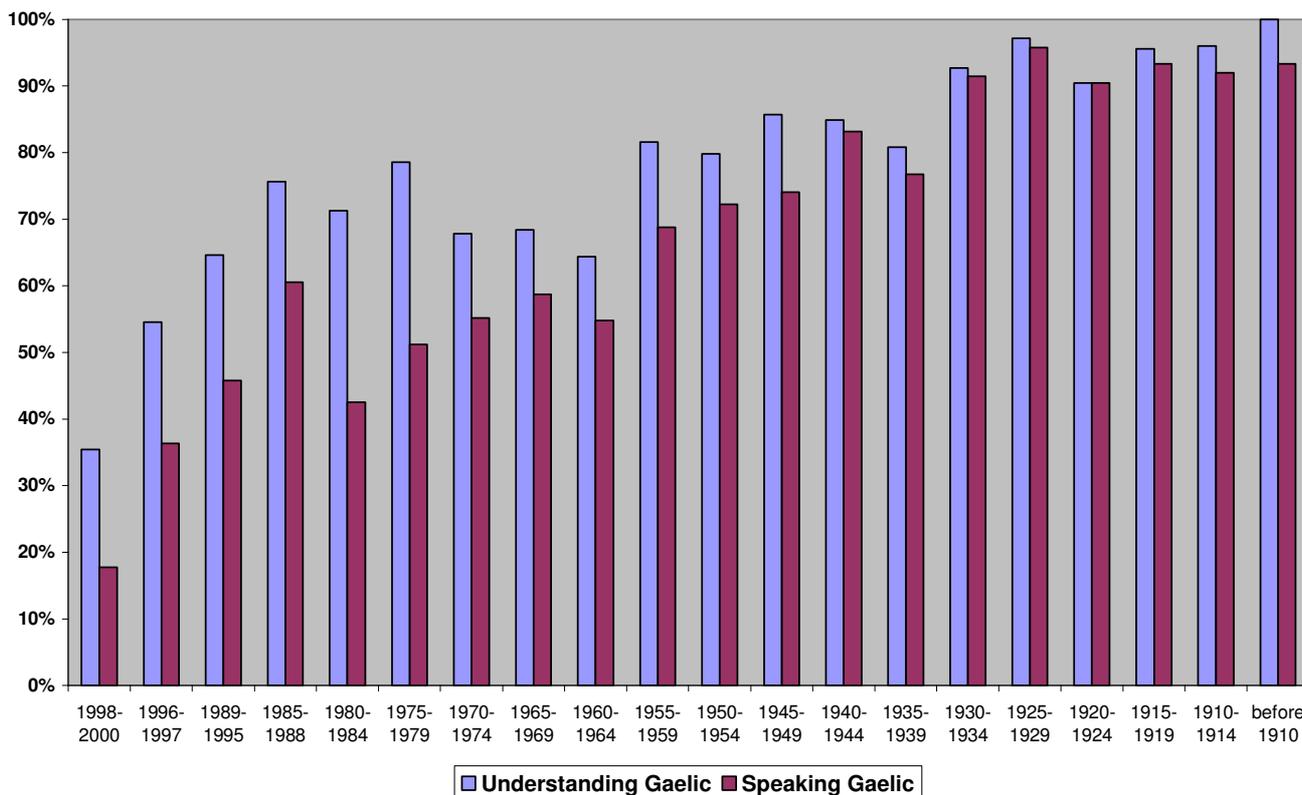


Fig. 11: Percentage of population able to understand or speak *Gàidhlig* and year of birth – Am Bac (Back) according to Census 2001

Age group	2001						1991		Diff. 2001 – 1991
	Knowing ¹⁴ <i>Gàidhlig</i>		Able to speak & read <i>Gàidhlig</i>		Able to speak <i>Gàidhlig</i>		Able to speak <i>Gàidhlig</i>		
0-2	34	33.8 %	1	1.1 %	17	17.9 %	n/a	n/a	n/a
3-4	26	44.8 %	1	1.7 %	18	31.0 %	34	45.0 %	- 14.0 %
5-11	133	66.8 %	84	42.2 %	94	47.2 %	128	53.3 %	- 6.1 %
12-15	99	76.7 %	65	50.4 %	80	62.0 %	112	66.4 %	- 4.4 %
16-24	146	73.4 %	62	31.2 %	92	46.2 %	227	69.5 %	- 23.3 %
3-24	404	69.1 %	212	36.2 %	284	48.6 %	501	61.8 %	- 13.2 %
All ages	1,695	75.1 %	1,106	49.0 %	1,438	63.7 %	1,819	72.1 %	- 8.4 %
Difference		- 6.0 %		- 12.8 %		- 15.1 %		- 10.3 %	

Table 8: Knowledge of *Gàidhlig* in younger age groups in Am Bac (Back) in 2001 and 1991

¹⁴ Persons able to understand spoken *Gàidhlig* and/or able to speak, read or write *Gàidhlig*.



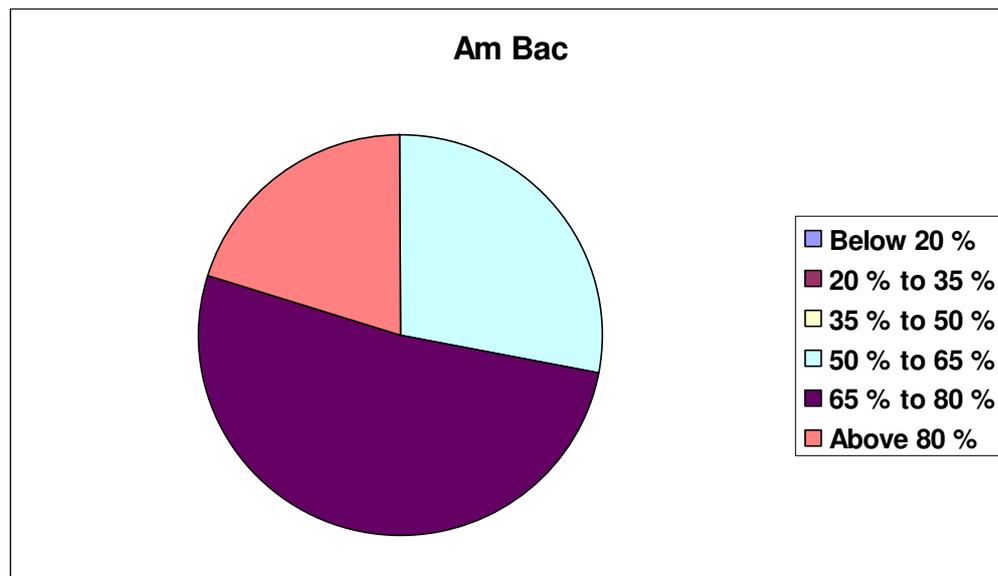


Fig. 12: Share of population living in neighbourhoods (census output areas) with different intensity of language knowledge in *Am Bac* (Back) according to Census 2001

An Rubha: Conditions of the language are far worse than in *Am Bac*. Both understanding and speaking *Gàidhlig* are constantly decreasing with younger age (fig. 12). In addition there was a marked difference in *Gàidhlig*-speaking percentage between 2001 and 1991 by 10 % for the whole population and a loss of around 13 % at school age (table 7). The new category of understanding spoken *Gàidhlig* provides a relatively high proportion of the inhabitants of over 66 %. Inter-generational difference in *Gàidhlig* knowledge between those aged 3 to 24 and the total population is at an alarming rate of –16 %. Literacy is nevertheless very high in the area with 73 % of *Gàidhlig*-speakers able to read and 52 % also able to write in the language.

Small area statistics for census output areas (table 15) show that the share of the population being able to speak the language ranged from roughly 45 % in *Pabail Iarach* (Lower Bayble) to some 71 % in *Pabail Uarach* (Upper Bayble). The corresponding figures for the „understands spoken Gaelic” category vary between around 50 % in *Sulaisiadar* and 79 % in *An Cnoc* (Knock) and *Pabail Uarach*. Generally there is a slightly stronger presence of the language in the output areas around *An Cnoc* than in the language communities from *Pabail* eastwards to *An Aird*. Looking at the overall picture (fig. 12) most of the population live in neighbourhoods where over 65 % know at least some *Gàidhlig* and the rest lived in localities where at least 50 % knew the language.

Only a quarter of the children under the age of three (24.5 %) were recorded in *An Rubha* with some knowledge of *Gàidhlig*: These 13 children were also distributed quite evenly over the area. The new category of “understanding spoken Gaelic” in 2001 recorded additional 205 persons (10.4 %) in the area who were at least competent in some aspects of the language in addition to the 1,109 (56.0 %) *Gàidhlig*-speakers.



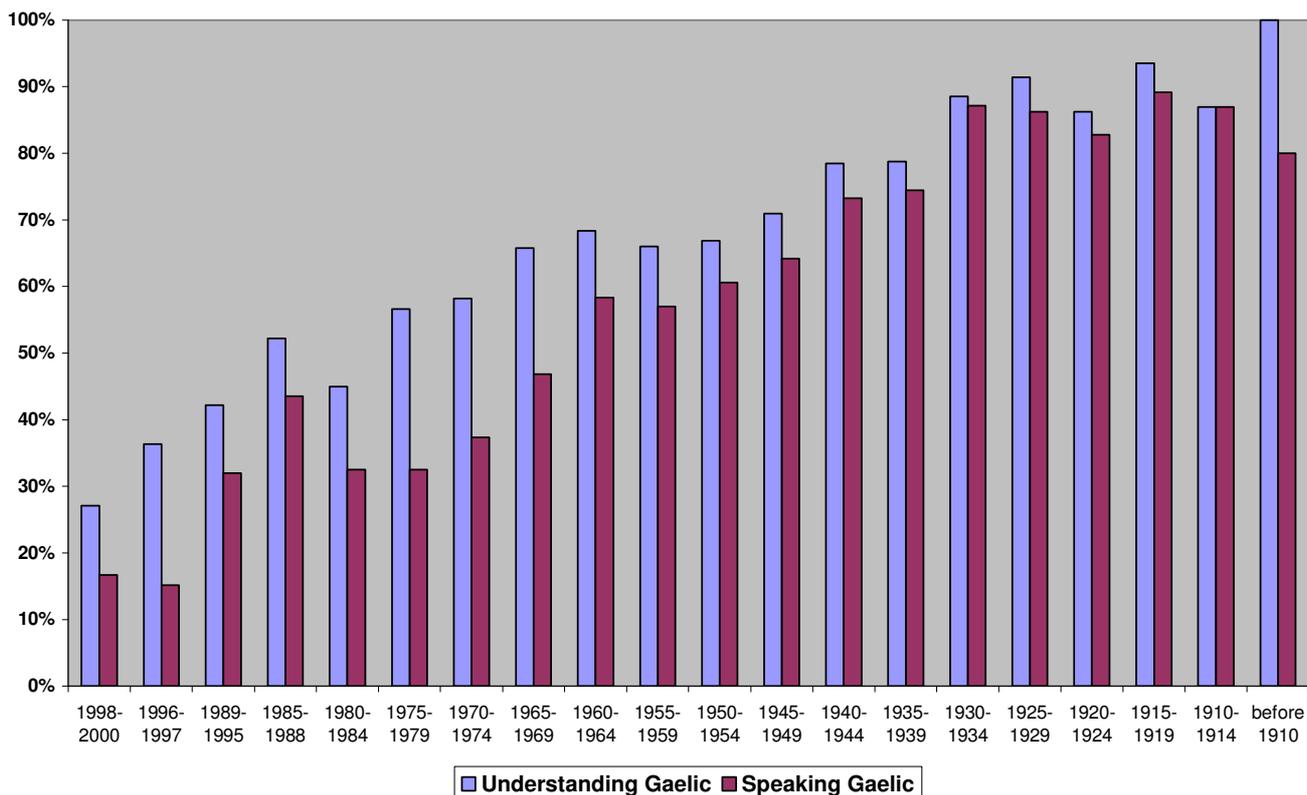


Fig. 13: Percentage of population able to understand or speak Gàidhlig and year of birth – An Rubha (Point) according to Census 2001

Age group	2001						1991		Diff. 2001 – 1991
	Knowing ¹⁵ Gàidhlig		Able to speak & read Gàidhlig		Able to speak Gàidhlig		Able to speak Gàidhlig		
0-2	13	24.5 %	1	1.9 %	8	15.1 %	n/a	n/a	n/a
3-4	13	34.2 %	0	0.0 %	6	15.8 %	14	23.3 %	- 7.5 %
5-11	79	46.2 %	42	24.6 %	58	33.9 %	108	46.6 %	- 12.7 %
12-15	61	56.5 %	47	43.5 %	51	47.2 %	91	61.1 %	- 13.9 %
16-24	107	53.0 %	42	20.8 %	71	35.2 %	140	49.2 %	- 14.1 %
3-24	260	50.1 %	131	25.2 %	186	35.8 %	354	48.6 %	- 12.8 %
All ages	1,314	66.4 %	811	41.0 %	1,109	56.0 %	1,494	66.4 %	- 10.4 %
Difference		- 16.3 %		- 15.8 %		- 20.2 %		- 17.8 %	

Table 9: Knowledge of Gàidhlig in younger age groups in An Rubha (Point) in 2001 and 1991

¹⁵ Persons able to understand spoken Gàidhlig and/or able to speak, read or write Gàidhlig.



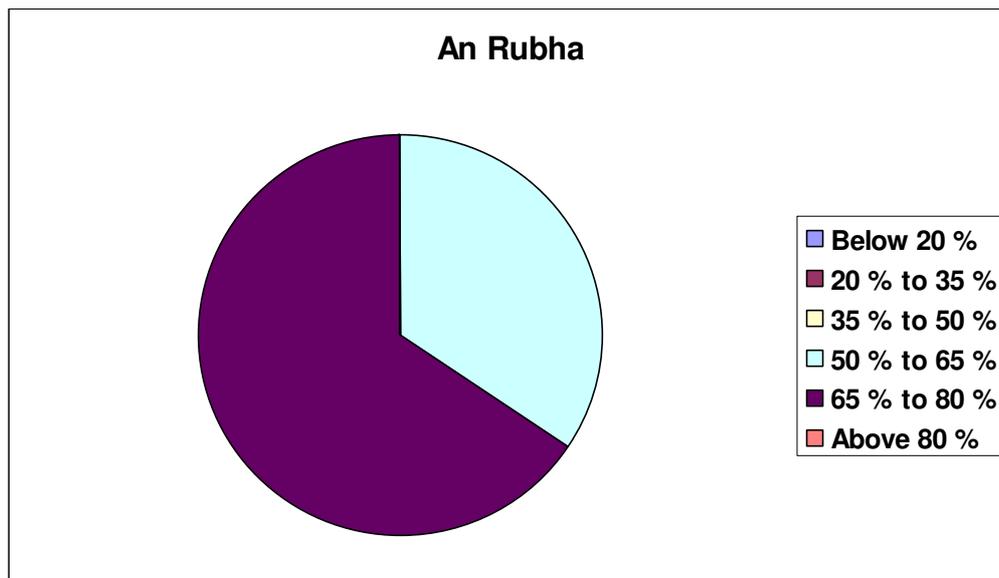


Fig. 14: Share of population living in neighbourhoods (census output areas) with different intensity of language knowledge in *An Rubha* (Point) according to Census 2001

3.2 Children with knowledge of Gàidhlig in primary school catchments

Aggregating the information of the small area statistics for the catchments areas of local primary schools provides an interesting avenue to investigate the influence of local authority and parental attitudes towards *Gàidhlig*. It is possible to calculate numbers and percentages for different age groups and for the purpose of this investigation they 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 8 with the age group of 24-35 which is meant to represent the language abilities of possible parents.

Knowledge of <i>Gàidhlig</i> (Census 2001) in Selected Primary School Catchment Areas ¹⁶								
Primary School(s)	“Pre-School” Age 0-4		“Primary” Age 5-11		“Secondary” Age 12-15		“Parents” Age 25-34	
	<i>Tolastadh</i> (Tolsta)	13	40.6 %	18	58.1 %	16	80.0 %	35
<i>Am Bac</i> (Back)	38	46.3 %	84	73.7 %	68	77.3 %	97	69.3 %
<i>Tunga</i> (Tong)	10	20.8 %	35	48.0 %	21	65.6 %	56	56.6 %
<i>Cnoc</i> (Knock)	11	29.0 %	48	62.3 %	37	75.5 %	57	68.7 %
<i>Pabail</i> (Bayble)	7	35.0 %	19	47.5 %	10	41.7 %	26	52.0 %
<i>An Aird</i> (Aird)	8	24.2 %	12	22.2 %	14	40.0 %	61	63.5 %

Table 10: Number and percentage of persons with knowledge of *Gàidhlig* in selected age groups for primary school catchment areas according to the census 2001

¹⁶ Percentages above 50% are given in bold figures.



Generally the following conclusions may be drawn for the six school catchments involved:

- **Pre-school children:** Influenced by the existence of *cròileagan* in *Loch a Tuath* and *An Aird* almost 50 % understood spoken *Gàidhlig*. Compared with *Steòrnabhagh* the number and percentage of *Gàidhlig*-speaking pre-school children this is an achievement of its own.
- **Primary school children:** Only two of the six primary schools provided GME: *Am Bac* (54 pupils in 2000/2001) and *An Aird* (23). These figures meant a share of the total school populations of 25.2 % and 14.1 % respectively. The remaining pupils experienced “bilingual” mainstream education. Comparatively high levels were obtained in *Am Bac* and *An Cnoc* and a very low figure of 22 % for the primary school of *An Aird*. Taking into account that GME pupils came also from neighbouring schools it has to be suspected that bilingual education in *An Aird* and *Pabail* primary schools was almost totally unsuccessful in reaching its goals.
- **Secondary school children:** A similar picture is seen at secondary school level. Whereas figures are fairly acceptable in the whole of *Am Bac* and also around *An Cnoc*; language knowledge further east is deplorable. In school year 2000/2001 16 out of 61 pupils (26.2 %) were learning *Gàidhlig* as “fluent speakers”, the rest as “learners” in the secondary department of *Am Bac*. The figures for the secondary department of *Pabail* (Bayble) were 8 out of 33 (24.2 %). 11 and 4 pupils respectively had gone through GME before entering secondary education.
- **Parents:** The correlation between language knowledge of the parental and child generations is not very pronounced with a negative highlight in the *An Aird* catchment area.

As a conclusion it has to be stated that educational efforts especially on the *An Rubha* peninsula have not had the desired effect according to 2001 census figures.

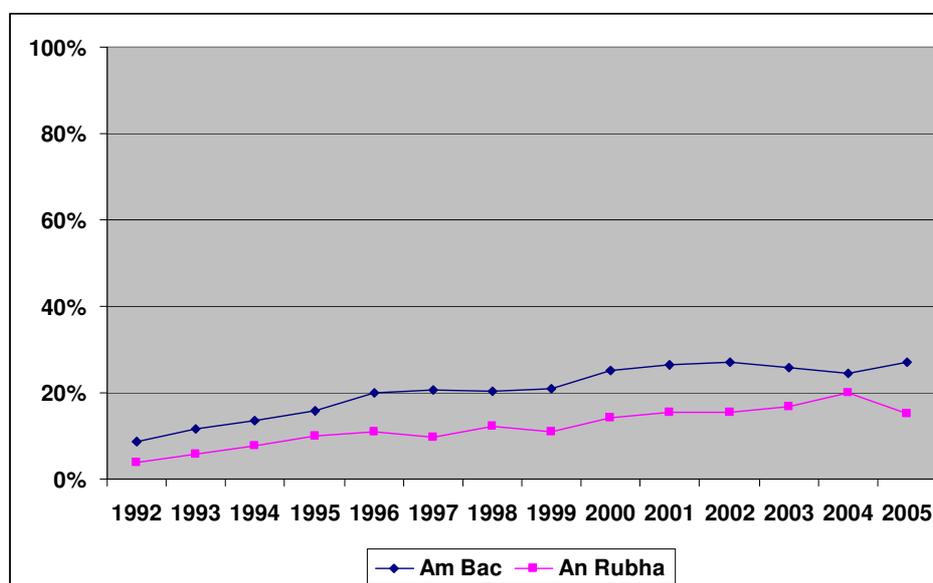


Fig. 15: Share of primary school children attending *Gàidhlig*-medium classes in *Am Bac* and *An Rubha* (September 1992 – September 2005)



4 Future Perspectives

The 2001 census results can be used to predict future developments because underlying facts cannot change within a time span of a few years. The areas show quite different perspectives regarding possible language development. Whereas the language community indicator LCI¹⁷ is on a considerable level above the 70 % mark both in *Am Bac* and *An Rubha* the language viability indicator LVI¹⁸ is distinctly more negative on the peninsula. There only a minority of young people understands spoken Gàidhlig (table 9).

Area	Knowledge of Gàidhlig in 2001					
	Young age (0-24)		All ages		Difference (Language viability indicator)	Born in Scotland (Language community indicator)
<i>Am Bac</i> (Back)	438	64.4 %	1,695	75.1 %	- 10.7 %	78.4 %
<i>An Rubha</i> (Point)	273	47.7 %	1,314	66.4 %	- 18.7 %	72.2 %
<i>In comparison: Na h-Eileanan an Iar</i>	57.2 %		70.4 %		- 13.2 %	75.8 %

Table 11: Intergenerational viability and Gàidhlig-speakers born in Scotland in *Am Bac* and *An Rubha* compared with *Na h-Eileanan an Iar* (Western Isles) according to census data of 2001

The strength of the language in the individual communities varies considerably (tables 18 and 19). Census output areas generally show strong LCI values of well over 80 % in *Am Bac* except in the more southern settlements around *Tunga* (65.9 %). On the contrary in *An Rubha* relatively strong language communities with a LCI of over 70 % are scattered and far between. Strongest language communities are found in *Tolstadh bho Thuath* (North Tolsta) with 90.7 % and *Col* (Coll) with 86.6 %. Intergenerational viability is generally poorly maintained with the positive exception of the LVI value for *Griais* (+ 3.9 %). This value contrasts sharply with negative figures in other areas (with an extreme LVI value at - 35.9 % in *Cnoc Amhlaigh* on *An Rubha*).

Since 2001 the general picture has not changed significantly. The new Gàidhlig-medium day nurseries in *Bàgh a Tuath* and *An Rubha* registered in 2003/2004 for example 26 children of which the vast majority originated from *Am Bac*. An audit by the Western Isles Childcare Partnership (2004) saw that a majority of parents preferred Gàidhlig or bilingual childcare/pre-school services in the area (62.7 %). Maybe this will come to fruition in years to come.

In conclusion: The language communities north of *Steòrnabhagh* withstood the anglicisation trends more successfully than those situated on the peninsula of *An Rubha*. Whereas Gàidhlig has still a considerable base in the settlements between *Col* and *Tolstadh bho Thuath*, the language has lost substantial ground especially in the younger generation around *An Aird* and *Pabail*.

¹⁷ LCI: The “Language Community Indicator” is a measure of the relative strength of the language in the “local” population. It is calculated here by taking the values for Gàidhlig knowledge only for those who were born in Scotland. This is a rough estimation as many who are born in Scotland come from English speaking homes but nevertheless it is a better approximation of language strength than looking simply at the resident population.

¹⁸ 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.



I. Supplementary Tables

Gaelic and Gaelic only in 1881 and 1891: <i>Steòrnabhagh (Civil Parish)</i> ¹⁹	Total Popula- tion	<i>Gàidhlig</i> and Eng- lish	<i>Gàidhlig</i> but no English
Census/Selected Area			
1881 (Speaking “habitually” Gaelic)	10,299	9,102	
----- Villages and burgh (included in the above) ---			
<i>Baile Steòrnabhaigh</i> (Stornoway Burgh)	2,693	1,956	
<i>Am Bac</i> (Back) <i>Vi</i>	582	505	
<i>Pabail Iarach</i> (Lower Bayble) <i>Vi</i>	431	409	
<i>Pabail Uarach</i> (Upper Bayble) <i>Vi</i>	481	439	
<i>Col</i> (Coll) <i>Vi</i>	491	475	
<i>Gàrrabost</i> (Garrabost) <i>Vi</i>	309	294	
<i>Lacasdail & Beinn na Saighde</i> (Laxdale & Newmarket) <i>Vi</i>	569	520	
<i>Sanndabhaig</i> (Sandwick) <i>Vi</i>	525	489	
<i>Suardail & An Cnoc</i> (Swordale & Knock) <i>Vi</i>	496	472	
<i>Tolastadh</i> (Tolsta) <i>Vi</i>	597	559	
<i>Tunga</i> (Tong) <i>Vi</i>	454	432	
<i>Bhatasgeir</i> (Vatisker) <i>Vi</i>	396	383	
----- Ecclesiastic parishes (included in the above) ---			
<i>Steòrnabhagh</i> (Stornoway)	7,399	6,294	
<i>An Cnoc</i> (Knock) neo/or <i>An Aoidh</i> (Eye)	2,900	2,808	
1891 <i>Steòrnabhagh</i> (Stornoway) CP	11,799	5,871	4,370
----- Villages and burgh (included in the above) ---			
<i>Baile Steòrnabhaigh</i> (Stornoway Burgh)	3,386	2,161	264
<i>Am Bac</i> (Back) <i>Vi</i>	596	150	412
<i>Pabail Iarach</i> (Lower Bayble) <i>Vi</i>	481	192	254
<i>Pabail Uarach</i> (Upper Bayble) <i>Vi</i>	523	301	191
<i>Col</i> (Coll) <i>Vi</i>	525	37	461
<i>Gàrrabost</i> (Garrabost) <i>Vi</i>	385	60	304
<i>Lacasdail & Beinn na Saighde</i> (Laxdale & Newmarket) <i>Vi</i>	548	390	103
<i>Sanndabhaig</i> (Sandwick) <i>Vi</i>	491	374	60
<i>Suardail & An Cnoc</i> (Swordale & Knock) <i>Vi</i>	579	377	162
<i>Tolastadh</i> (Tolsta) <i>Vi</i>	699	221	431
<i>Tunga</i> (Tong) <i>Vi</i>	539	219	300
<i>Bhatasgeir</i> (Vatisker) <i>Vi</i>	439	45	369
----- Ecclesiastic parishes (included in the above) ---			
<i>Steòrnabhagh</i> (Stornoway)	8,375	4,352	2,678
<i>An Cnoc</i> (Knock) neo/or <i>An Aoidh</i> (Eye)	3,424	1,519	1,692

Table 12: Number of persons speaking *Gàidhlig* in 1881 and 1891 – selected areas (civil parish, ecclesiastic parishes, villages and burgh)

¹⁹ Figures include returns from the town of *Steòrnabhagh* and neighbouring townships like *Sanndabhaig* and *Lacasdail* (see volume no. 15 of this series for details).



Gaelic and Gaelic only between 1901 and 1971: Steòrnabhagh (Civil Parish)	Total Popula- tion	Gàidhlig and Eng- lish	Gàidhlig but no English
Census/Selected Area			
1901 Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway) CP	12,983	7,696	3,641
----- Villages and burgh (included in the above) ---	9,131	4,994	3,474
Baile Steòrnabhaigh (Stornoway Burgh)	3,852	2,702	167
Am Bac (Back) Vi	648	292	330
Pabail Iarach (Lower Bayble) Vi	505	271	215
Pabail Uarach (Upper Bayble) Vi	566	283	255
Col (Coll) Vi	686	487	168
Gàrrabost (Garrabost) Vi	490	162	285
Lacasdail & Beinn na Saighde (Laxdale & Newmarket) Vi	434	349	57
Port nan Giùran (Portnaguran) Vi	340	100	203
Sannabhaig (Sandwick) Vi	438	365	44
Seisiadar (Sheshader) Vi	311	158	126
Suardail & An Cnoc (Swordale & Knock) Vi	704	421	228
Tolastadh (Tolsta) Vi	719	421	231
Tunga (Tong) Vi	530	45	440
Bhatasgeir (Vatisker) Vi	537	285	218
----- Ecclesiastic parishes (included in the above) ---			
Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway)	9,035	5,863	1,813
An Cnoc (Knock) neo/or An Aoidh (Eye)	3,948	1,813	1,828
----- Electoral areas (included in the above) ---			
Am Bac (Back)	3,177	1,573	1,396
An Rubha (Point)	3,948	1,813	1,828
Steòrnabhagh Meadhonach (Stornoway Central)	2,006	1,008	250
Baile Steòrnabhaigh – Tuath (Stornoway Burgh - North)	2,392	1,749	123
Baile Steòrnabhaigh – Deas (Stornoway Burgh - South)	1,319	914	44
1911 Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway) CP	13,438	9,094	2,686
1921 Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway) CP	13,366	9,919	1,467
1931	12,116	9,293	1,067
Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway Landward)	8,346	6,768	927
Baile Steòrnabhaigh (Stornoway Small Burgh)	3,770	2,525	140
1951	12,791	9,301	450
Steòrnabhagh (Stornoway Landward)	7,837	6,450	412
Baile Steòrnabhaigh (Stornoway Small Burgh)	4,954	2,851	38
1961	12,717	9,139	173
Steòrnabhagh (Am Bac) (Stornoway (Back)) CCED	2,334	2,094	72
Steòrnabhagh (Meadhonach) (Stornoway (Central)) CCED	2,756	2,078	6
Steòrnabhagh (An Rubha) (Stornoway (Point)) CCED	2,398	2,144	70
Baile Steòrnabhaigh (Stornoway Small Burgh)	5,229	2,823	25
1971 ²⁰	12,232	8,275	~95
Baile Steòrnabhaigh (Stornoway Small Burgh)	5,150	2,620	~20
Steòrnabhagh (Am Bac) (Stornoway (Back)) CCED	2,170	1,915	*
Steòrnabhagh (Meadhonach) (Stornoway (Central)) CCED	2,770	1,865	*
Steòrnabhagh (An Rubha) (Stornoway (Point)) CCED	2,120	1,875	*

Table 13: Number of persons speaking Gàidhlig between 1901 and 1971 – selected areas (civil parish, ecclesiastic parishes, electoral areas, burgh or villages)

²⁰ The figures in the table should be read as “between 8,259 and 8,291” and “between 79 and 111” respectively.



District Council of <i>Leòdhas</i> (Census 1961)					
Age	Population	Speaking Gàidhlig only		Speaking both Gàidhlig and English	
3-4	488	203	41.6 %	203	41.6 %
5 – 9	1,252	37	3.0 %	1,079	86.2 %
10 – 14	1,554	-	-	1,451	93.4 %
15 – 24	1,579	3	0.2 %	1,384	87.7 %
25 – 44	3,461	15	0.4 %	3,176	91.8 %
45 – 64	4,776	18	0.4 %	4,618	96.7 %
65 and over	2,867	139	4.8 %	2,682	93.5 %
3 and over	15,977	415	2.6 %	14,593	91.3 %

Table 14: Number of persons speaking Gàidhlig for the area of the former Lewis District Council in 1961 – results are exclusive of returns from the Small Burgh of Stornoway

Percentage of population speaking Gàidhlig but no English in island parishes of former Ross & Cromarty ²¹					
Age group	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
3-4	74.4 %	73.2 %	76.8 %	65.5 %	63.0 %
5-9	56.1 %	44.5 %	43.8 %	24.6 %	16.7 %
10-14	32.5 %	17.4 %	9.2 %	3.6 %	1.6 %
15-19	34.4 %	11.8 %	4.6 %	0.8 %	0.4 %
20-24	38.1 %	15.0 %	4.2 %	0.8 %	0.5 %
25-29	46.6 %	17.7 %	5.7 %	1.3 %	0.8 %
30-34	48.9 %	24.4 %	11.8 %	2.0 %	1.3 %
35-39	49.4 %	33.8 %	16.1 %	3.4 %	1.3 %
40-44	57.2 %	39.8 %	25.9 %	5.7 %	2.5 %
45-49	61.0 %	38.2 %	34.2 %	11.1 %	3.8 %
50-54	68.2 %	50.5 %	40.8 %	17.1 %	8.3 %
55-59	65.7 %	52.9 %	41.4 %	26.8 %	14.0 %
60-64	73.9 %	61.5 %	51.9 %	35.3 %	23.6 %
65-69	71.8 %	65.3 %	57.7 %	37.9 %	34.9 %
70-74	72.1 %	67.2 %	66.3 %	51.9 %	43.5 %
75-79	77.5 %	69.4 %	70.2 %	61.2 %	44.0 %
80 and over	83.0 %	72.9 %	76.9 %	65.6 %	57.4 %
Total “Gaelic only”	52.2 %	35.6 %	28.3 %	15.5 %	12.8 %

Table 15: Percentage of persons speaking Gàidhlig but no English (aged three years and over) for different age groups in island parishes of former Ross & Cromarty according to census data from 1891 to 1931

²¹ Island of *Leòdhas* (Lewis) with civil parishes of *Barabhais* (Barvas), *Na Lochan* (Lochs), *Steòrnabhagh* (Stornoway) and *Uig* (Scotland Census Office, 1932).



Number of persons and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in former County Council Electoral Divisions (Ross & Cromarty) (Population aged 3 years and over)						
Area	1961/71 Code	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001
<i>Steòrnabhagh (Am Baile)</i> (Stornoway Small Burgh)	ST	2,848 57.3 %	2,640 54.0 %	3,084 58.2 %	2,576 46.2 %	2,280 44.1 %
<i>Steòrnabhagh (Meadhonach)</i> (Stornoway (Central) CCED)	SC	2,084 79.5 %	1,868 71.1 %	1,693 68.3 %	1,307 50.4 %	1,171 48.9 %
<i>Steòrnabhagh (Am Bac)</i> (Stornoway (Back) CCED)	SB	2,166 97.6 %	1,951 94.4 %	2,075 88.3 %	1,819 75.0 %	1,421 65.7 %
<i>Steòrnabhagh (An Rubha)</i> (Stornoway (Point) CCED)	SP	2,214 97.1 %	1,911 94.3 %	1,813 84.2 %	1,494 66.4 %	1,101 57.1 %

Table 16: 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

Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers ²² <i>Am Bac</i>							
Map No	Census output area ²³	1981		1991		2001	
01	<i>Bail' Ùr Tholastaidh</i>	243	93.6 %	238	81.5 %	178	68.2 %
02	<i>Tolstadh bho Thuath</i>	256	91.4 %	100	74.6 %	88	74.6 %
03	<i>Tolstadh bho Thuath</i>			74	66.1 %	59	67.8 %
04	<i>Griais</i>	163	91.1 %	142	73.6 %	126	70.8 %
05	<i>Am Bac</i>	329	94.0 %	176	82.2 %	131	65.8 %
06	<i>Cnoc an t-Soluis</i>			106	63.5 %	71	64.0 %
07	<i>Col 1</i>	192	97.0 %	168	82.0 %	140	69.7 %
08	<i>Col 2</i>	309	88.0%	128	69.2 %	105	59.7 %
09	<i>Bhatasgeir</i>			128	68.8 %	110	61.1 %
10	<i>Col Uarach</i>			148	90.2 %	152	77.2 %
11	<i>Tunga 1</i>	233	76.6 %	120	62.5 %	102	52.0 %
12	<i>Tac Thunga</i>			133	60.4 %	76	50.0 %
13	<i>Aird Thunga</i>			207	78.7 %	59	50.4 %
14	<i>Tunga 2</i>			65	69.9 %	38	54.3 %

Table 17: Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers for the census output areas in *Am Bac* (Back) according to data from 1981 to 2001

²² Statistical base is the population aged 3 years and over for 1981 and 1991 and the total population in 2001.

²³ 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.



<i>Am Bac: Gàidhlig-speaking in Age Groups (1971-2001)</i>								
Age group	1971 ²⁴		1981		1991		2001	
0-2²⁵	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	17	17.9 %
3-4	35 (+20)	84.6 %	43	60.6 %	34	45.0 %	18	31.0 %
5-24	570 (+6)	92.9 %	619	84.5 %	467	63.5 %	266	50.5 %
25-44	365 (+1)	92.7 %	513	85.9 %	496	72.4 %	362	61.5 %
45-64	560 (+2)	96.1 %	478	93.7 %	427	85.1 %	416	71.7 %
65 +	390 (+7)	99.3 %	422	94.4 %	395	92.5 %	359	87.8 %
Total (3 years and over)	1,915 (+36)	94.5 %	2,075	88.3 %	1,819	75.0 %	1,421	65.7 %
Born in Scotland	n/a	n/a	2,045	92.0 %	1,783	79.5 %	1,382	70.3 %

Table 18: Number and percentage of *Gàidhlig*-speakers in different age groups in *Am Bac* (Back) according to data from 1971 to 2001

²⁴ 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).

²⁵ Information only available since 2001.



Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers ²⁶							
An Rubha							
Map No	Census output area ²⁷	1981		1991		2001	
51	Aiginis	219	81.4 %	73	54.1 %	71	50.0 %
52	Cnoc 1			90	52.0 %	53	55.2 %
53	Cnoc 2	262	84.2 %	125	71.4 %	114	69.5 %
54	Suardail			89	71.8 %	78	63.9 %
55	Pabail Iarach 1	205	84.0 %	81	63.8 %	49	44.6 %
56	Pabail Iarach 2			81	64.3 %	60	51.7 %
57	Pabail Uarach 1	234	89.0 %	180	72.6 %	48	50.5 %
58	Pabail Uarach 2					98	71.0 %
59	Garrabost 1	257	91.1 %	118	68.2 %	69	53.9 %
60	Garrabost 2			104	59.8 %	102	62.6 %
61	Sulaisiadar	210	89.0 %	100	53.8 %	70	43.2 %
62	Seisiadar			67	65.0 %	58	57.4 %
63	An Aird 1	197	79.1 %	93	66.9 %	67	60.9 %
64	An Aird 2			57	53.8 %	39	45.5 %
65	Port nan Giùran	238	79.6 %	96	57.8 %	65	51.6 %
66	Cnoc Amhlaigh			83	59.7 %	68	56.2 %

Table 19: Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers for the census output areas in An Rubha (Point) according to data from 1981 to 2001

An Rubha: Gàidhlig-speaking in Age Groups (1971-2001)								
Age group	1971 ²⁸		1981		1991		2001	
0-2²⁹	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	8	15.1 %
3-4	45 (+20)	92.9 %	34	52.3 %	14	23.6 %	6	15.8 %
5-24	510 (+6)	93.0 %	478	75.2 %	340	50.9 %	180	37.4 %
25-44	330 (+1)	89.5 %	454	82.7 %	391	62.4 %	281	53.4 %
45-64	565 (+2)	97.8 %	399	91.7 %	354	75.5 %	353	64.7 %
65 +	425 (+7)	97.1 %	448	95.9 %	395	92.5 %	281	83.6 %
Total (3 years and over)	1,875 (+36)	94.4 %	1,813	84.2 %	1,494	66.4 %	1,101	57.1 %
Born in Scotland	n/a	n/a	1,794	87.6 %	1,427	72.3 %	1,072	62.9 %

Table 20: Number and percentage of Gàidhlig-speakers in different age groups in An Rubha (Point) according to data from 1971 to 2001

²⁶ Statistical base is the population aged 3 years and over for 1981 and 1991 and the total population in 2001.

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ 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).

²⁹ 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>Bail' Ùr Tholastaidh</i>	52	64.2 %	205	78.5 %	- 14.3 %	84.2 %
02	<i>Tolstadh bho Thuath</i>	17	65.4 %	98	83.1 %	- 17.7 %	90.7 %
03	<i>Tolstadh bho Thuath</i>	14	73.7 %	70	80.5 %	- 6.8 %	87.4 %
04	<i>Griais</i>	36	83.7 %	142	79.8 %	+ 3.9 %	82.4 %
05	<i>Am Bac</i>	36	69.2 %	158	79.4 %	- 10.2 %	83.6 %
06	<i>Cnoc an t-Soluis</i>	32	74.4 %	89	80.2 %	- 5.8 %	82.9 %
07	<i>Col 1</i>	42	72.4 %	166	82.6 %	- 10.2 %	86.6 %
08	<i>Col 2</i>	43	64.2 %	126	71.6 %	- 7.4 %	74.3 %
09	<i>Bhatasgeir</i>	28	52.8 %	129	71.7 %	- 18.9 %	81.2 %
10	<i>Col Uarach</i>	58	71.6 %	166	75.5 %	- 3.9 %	80.9 %
11	<i>Tunga 1</i>	24	45.3 %	122	62.2 %	- 16.9 %	67.0 %
12	<i>Tac Thunga</i>	24	54.6 %	95	62.5 %	- 7.9 %	63.8 %
13	<i>Aird Thunga</i>	25	65.8 %	86	78.9 %	- 13.1 %	79.2 %
14	<i>Tunga 2</i>	7	31.8 %	43	61.4 %	- 29.6 %	63.6 %

Table 21: Intergenerational viability and Gàidhlig-speakers born in Scotland in Am Bac (Back) according to census data of 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)
51	<i>Aiginis</i>	26	61.9 %	95	66.9 %	- 5.0 %	72.0 %
52	<i>Cnoc 1 (Knock)</i>	9	30.0 %	64	66.7 %	- 36.7 %	70.0 %
53	<i>Cnoc 2 (Knock)</i>	33	66.0 %	130	79.3 %	- 13.3 %	83.9 %
54	<i>Suardail</i>	25	69.4 %	92	75.4 %	- 6.0 %	80.0 %
55	<i>Pabail Iarach 1</i>	11	31.4 %	59	53.6 %	- 22.2 %	59.0 %
56	<i>Pabail Iarach 2</i>	15	53.6 %	77	66.4 %	- 14.8 %	76.0 %
57	<i>Pabail Uarach 1</i>	16	41.0 %	55	57.9 %	- 16.9 %	63.4 %
58	<i>Pabail Uarach 2</i>	20	66.7 %	109	79.0 %	- 12.3 %	82.6 %
59	<i>Garrabost 1</i>	29	61.7 %	119	73.0 %	- 11.3 %	79.2 %
60	<i>Garrabost 2</i>	15	42.9 %	81	63.3 %	- 20.4 %	71.3 %
61	<i>Sulaisiadar</i>	16	26.7 %	82	50.6 %	- 23.9 %	58.8 %
62	<i>Seisiadar</i>	15	45.5 %	63	62.4 %	- 16.9 %	68.2 %
63	<i>An Aird 1</i>	10	35.7 %	73	66.4 %	- 30.7 %	70.6 %
64	<i>An Aird 2</i>	9	45.0 %	50	58.1 %	- 13.1 %	63.5 %
65	<i>Port nan Giùran</i>	14	56.0 %	86	68.3 %	- 12.3 %	76.1 %
66	<i>Cnoc Amhlaigh</i>	10	29.4 %	79	65.3 %	- 35.9 %	67.6 %

Table 22: Intergenerational viability and Gàidhlig-speakers born in Scotland in *An Rubha* (Point) 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 2nd 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>Am Bac</i>				
Map No.	Census output area ³⁰	Area Codes		
		1961 1971	1981 1991	2001
01	<i>Tolstadh bho Thuath</i> (North Tolsta) & <i>Bail' Ùr Tholastaidh</i> (New Tolsta)	SB	56AH30	60RJ000214
02	<i>Tolstadh bho Thuath</i> (North Tolsta)	SB	56AH29A	60RJ000178
03	<i>Tolstadh bho Thuath</i> (North Tolsta)	SB	56AH29B	60RJ000179
04	<i>Griais</i> (Gress), <i>Buaile na h-Ochd</i> , <i>Drochaid Ghriais</i> & <i>Gleann Tholastaidh</i>	SB	56AH34	60RJ000092
05	<i>Am Bac</i> (Back)	SB	56AH18A	60RJ000160
06	<i>Col</i> (Coll) & <i>Cnoc an t-Soluis</i>	SB	56AH18A	60RJ000189
07	<i>Col</i> (Coll)	SB	56AH16	60RJ000157
08	<i>Col</i> (Coll)	SB	56AH17A	60RJ000158
09	<i>Bhatasgeir</i> & <i>Col</i> (Coll)	SB	56AH17B	60RJ000159
10	<i>Col Uarach</i> (Upper Coll) & <i>Gearraidh Ghuirm</i>	SB	56AH35	60RJ000161
11	<i>Tunga</i> (Tong)	SB	56AH31A	60RJ000162
12	<i>Tac Thunga</i> & <i>Tunga</i>	SB	56AH31B	60RJ000163
13	<i>Aird Thunga</i>	SB	56AH32A	60RJ000164
14	<i>Tunga</i> (Tong)	SB	56AH32B	60RJ000165

Table A-1: List of locations within individual census output areas and official numbers for different census dates for *Am Bac* (Back) – 1961-2001

³⁰ 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 tables A-1 and A-2 for a few prominent locations only.



Census Output Areas in <i>An Rubha</i>				
Map No.	Census output area	Area Codes		
		1961 1971	1981 1991	2001
51	<i>Aiginis, Rubha a'Chnuic & Rubha Aiginis</i>	SP	56AH20B	60RJ000104
52	<i>An Cnoc (Knock)</i>	SP	56AH20A	60RJ000103
53	<i>An Cnoc (Knock)</i>	SP	56AH19B	60RJ000102
54	<i>Suardail (Swordale)</i>	SP	56AH19A	60RJ000088
55	<i>Pabail Iarach (Lower Bayble)</i>	SP	56AH14A	60RJ000086
56	<i>Pabail Iarach (Lower Bayble)</i>	SP	56AH14B	60RJ000087
57	<i>Pabail Uarach (Upper Bayble)</i>	SP	56AH15	60RJ000212
58	<i>Pabail Uarach (Upper Bayble)</i>	SP	56AH15	60RJ000213
59	<i>Garrabost, Garrabost Nuadh & Rathad a'Chnuic</i>	SP	56AH21B	60RJ000090
60	<i>Garrabost</i>	SP	56AH21A	60RJ000089
61	<i>Sulaisiadar</i>	SP	56AH36A	60RJ000093
62	<i>Seisiadar</i>	SP	56AH36B	60RJ000094
63	<i>An Aird</i>	SP	56AH12A	60RJ000166
64	<i>An Aird</i>	SP	56AH12B	60RJ000167
65	<i>Port nan Giùran, Brocair, Port Mholair & Rubha an t-Siumpain</i>	SP	56AH13A	60RJ000168
66	<i>Cnoc Amhlaigh & Brocair</i>	SP	56AH13B	60RJ000169

Table A-2: List of locations within individual census output areas and official numbers for different census dates for *An Rubha* (Point) – 1961-2001



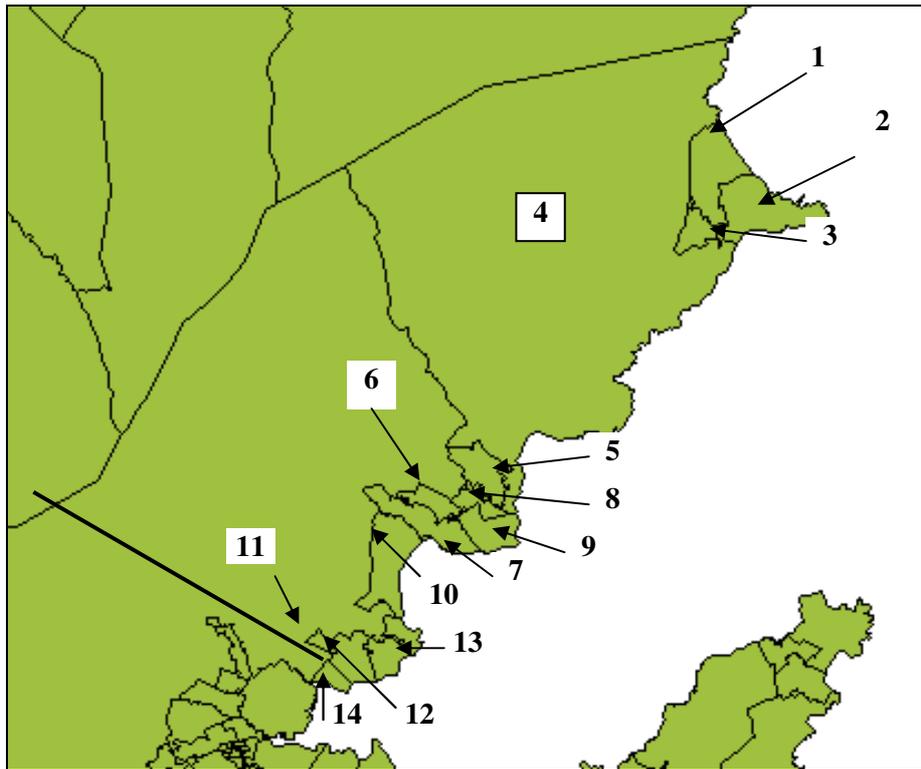


Fig. 16: Overview map of census output areas for *Am Bac* (Back) - numbers are provided in table A-1³¹

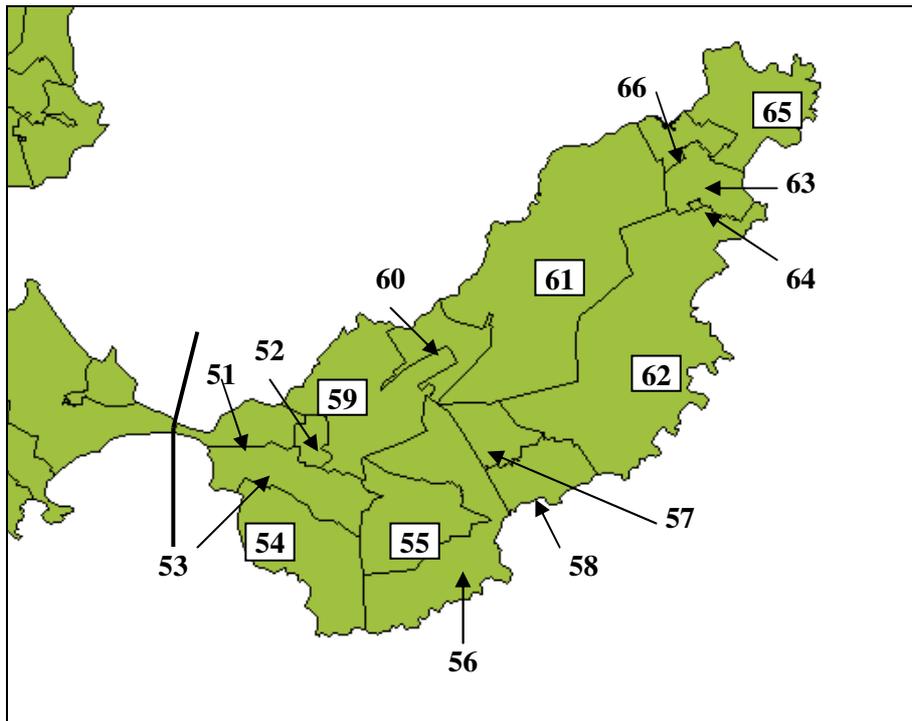


Fig. 17: Overview map of census output areas for *An Rubha* (Point) - numbers are provided in table A-2

³¹ 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	Gaelic medium education
GMU	Gaelic medium unit: Class(es) with Gaelic 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
<i>Vi</i>	Village according to census definition in 1881, 1891 and 1901



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