

A5.4 Community Sociolinguistic Survey – Aggregated Language Use Data

The following figures and discussion, building on the material found in Section 5.4 of the book, outline additional aggregated data from the community speaker survey of all districts, beginning with respondents’ language use across all survey districts.

A.5.4.1 Gaelic ability by age

For reference, in Figure A5.1 below, we present data on respondents’ Gaelic ability by age group.

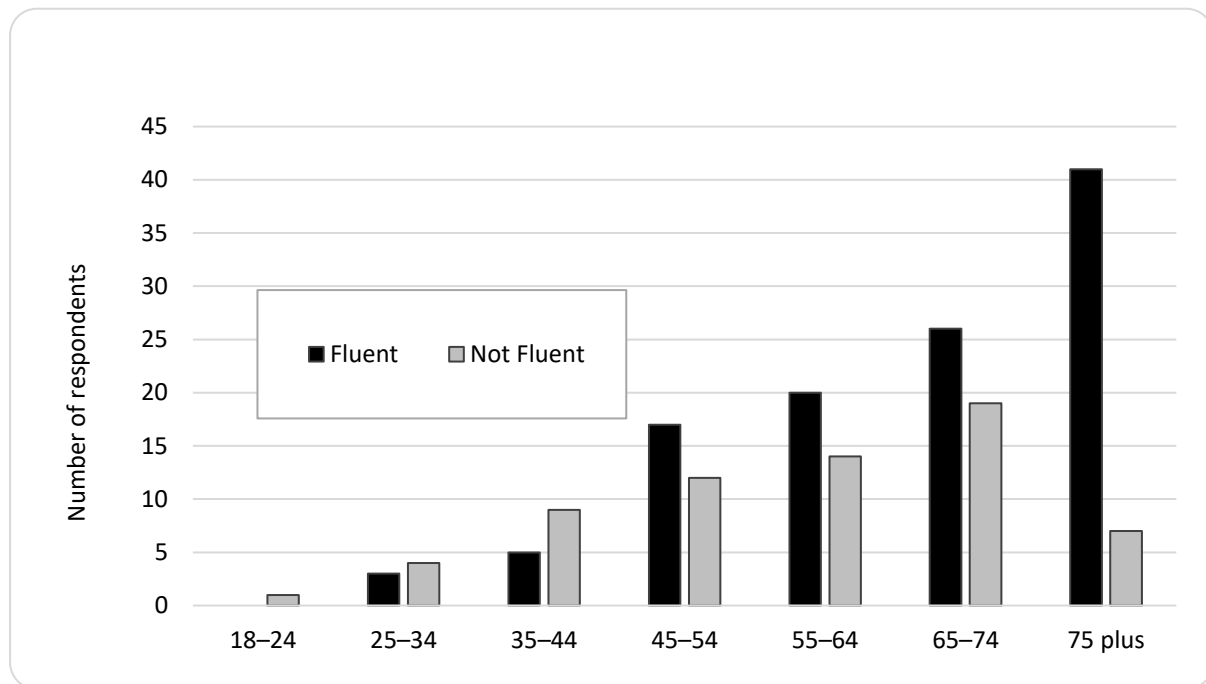


Figure A5.1 Respondents’ ability by age group, all areas (N = 178)

Below, in Table A5.1 we present the data pertaining to respondents’ Gaelic ability by age group.

Number of respondents	Fluent	Not Fluent
18-24	0	1
25-34	3	4
35-44	5	9
45-54	17	12
55-64	20	14
65-74	26	19
75 plus	41	7
Total	112	66

Table A5.1 Respondents’ ability by age group, all areas (N = 178)

62.9% of respondents reported a *Fluent* ability in Gaelic across the three islands. Native speakers of Gaelic are proportionately dominant in the four age cohorts over 45 years of age. 85.4% of the 75+ age cohort have native-like Gaelic, and fluency varies little in the 45–74 age range (57.8%, 58.8%, 58.6% of the 65–74, 55–64 and 45–54 age cohorts, respectively).

This suggests that a generational difference exists between the oldest members in which Gaelic fluency predominates, those born before c. 1970, and the younger members, born after c. 1970 among whom English fluency predominates. For the 35–44 age cohort, the proportion of fluent speakers is 35.7%, and 42.9% in the smaller 25–34 age group.

A5.4.1.1 Language respondents use in social situations

The multi-choice question *What language do you use in the following circumstances?* was asked of the respondents, who were provided with the following range of social circumstances. The total number of respondents (n) is given in parentheses for each setting:

- With primary school-aged children (n=170)
- With teenagers (n=173)
- With people aged 18 to 49 (n=176)
- With people aged 40 to 64 (n=177)
- With people over 65 (n=178)
- In neighbouring areas/townships (n=172)
- At church (n=156)
- At social events (n=161)
- In friends' houses (n=174)
- In the shops (n=174)
- At work (n=118)
- In the local area/neighbourhood (n=175)
- With friends when younger (n=173)
- With friends now (n=176)

Figure A5.2 provides a standardised, comparative overview of the responses for all the above social circumstances.

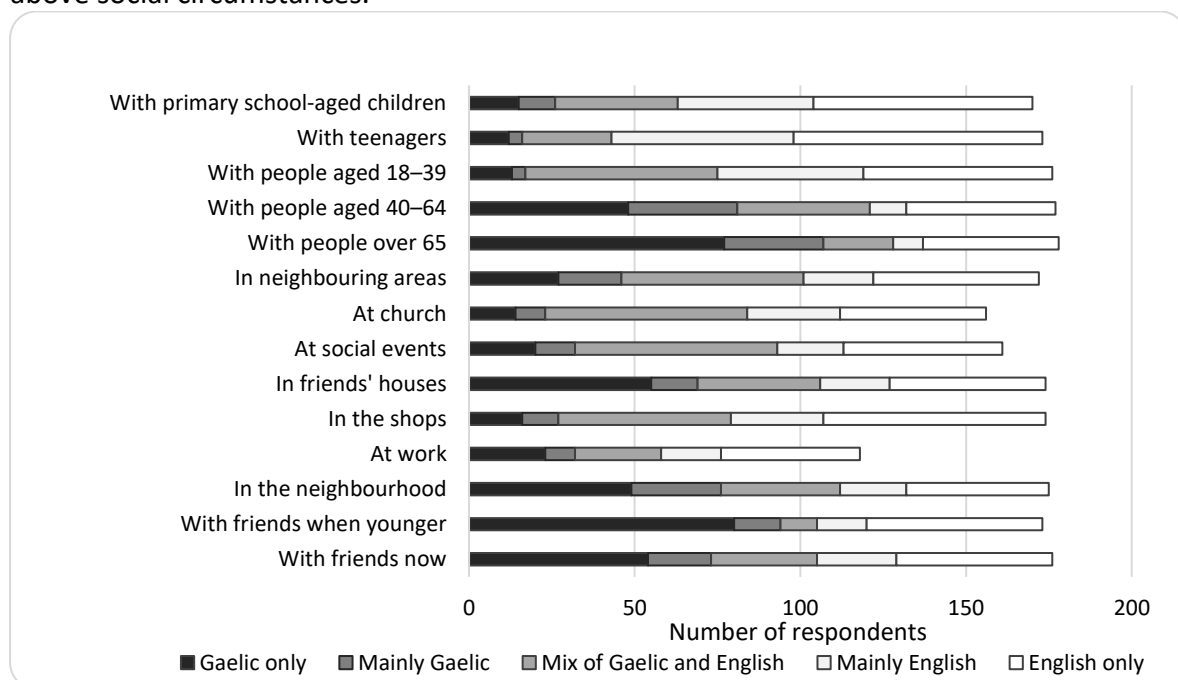


Figure A5.2 Language used by respondents in a variety of social situations, all districts (Ns = 170, 173, 176, 177, 178, 172, 156, 161, 174, 174, 118, 175, 173, 176)

The data here indicate the declining frequency of Gaelic use in certain domains, for example, in friend-group interactions in the present day compared to when respondents were younger, and in settings where it may be more common to encounter non-Gaelic, or English-only, speakers, such as at the local shop, at church or at social events.

Gaelic was a dominant language in speaking *With friends when younger* (46.2%) compared to speaking *With friends now* (30.7%). In speaking to the over-65s, the highest percentage is recorded for *Gaelic only* at 43.3%. Gaelic and English were of roughly equal value in terms of speaking *With friends now*, *In the neighbourhood* and *In friends' houses*. English was a more frequently used language *At work*, *In the shops*, *At social events*, *At church*, and *In neighbouring areas*. A mix of Gaelic and English was marked to be most frequent *At social events*, *At church*, and *In neighbouring areas*.

A5.4.2 Language used with people in different age cohorts

Respondents were asked to indicate which language they used with different age cohorts, in a question designed to examine any difference in language use between younger and older age groups.

The results are displayed in Figure A5.3.

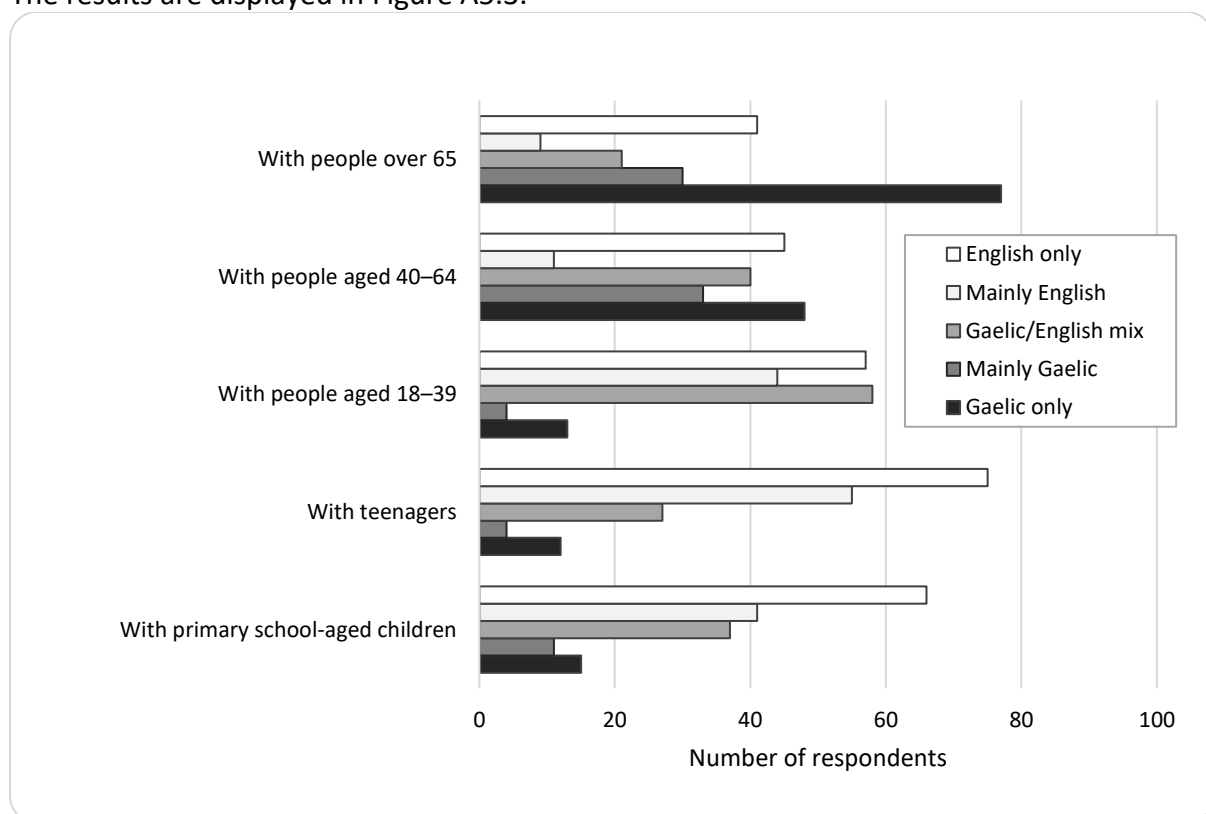


Figure A5.3 Language spoken by respondents to people in a range of age cohorts, all districts (Ns = 178, 177, 176, 173, 170)

The data indicate that use of Gaelic with older age cohorts is replaced with use of English or with bilingual practice with younger age cohorts. With 43.3% of respondents stating that they speak *Gaelic only* to over-65s, the use of Gaelic is clearly biased towards those in that older age cohort.

Noticeable, too, is the mixed-language use with the young adult cohort, which may indicate that this cohort is the generation which has seen the most pronounced language conflict in terms of a shift from Gaelic to English. A slightly higher level of Gaelic is used with children of primary school age than with post-primary or young adult cohorts, which could be linked to a growing awareness of the institutional acquisition of Gaelic through Gaelic-medium education. The mature adult cohort, meanwhile, seem to represent something of an interim step in a process of change.

More people claimed to speak *English only* to teenagers (43.4% of respondents) than claimed to speak *Gaelic only* to any other age cohort other than the over-65s, suggesting the future position of Gaelic in the communities is likely to be weakened. One positive note is that more people claimed to speak *Gaelic only* (8.8%) or *Mainly Gaelic* (6.5%) to primary school-aged children than to teenagers for whom the figures stood at 6.9% and 2.3% respectively.

A5.4.3 Respondents’ linguistic background and Gaelic use, by district

A cross-comparison was made of respondents’ linguistic background and their use of Gaelic in certain social situations, across all districts.

The results are depicted in Figure A5.4.

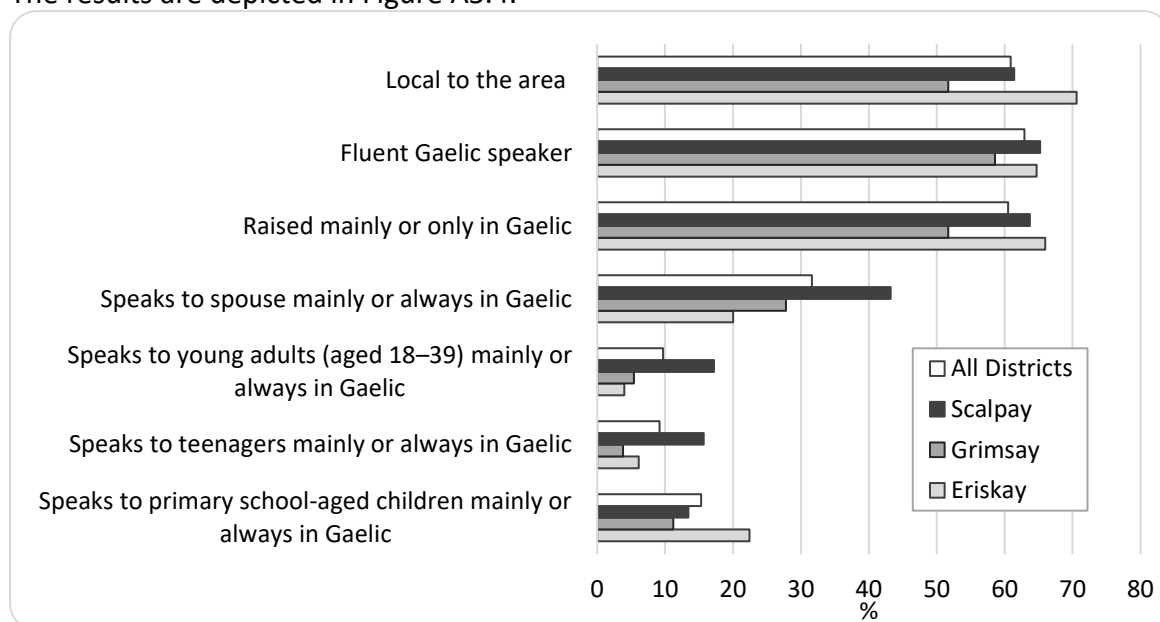


Figure A5.4 Comparison of respondents’ linguistic background and respondents’ Gaelic use by district (N = 179; 70, 58, 51)

The above data representation indicates that there is a clear correlation between a local origin and practice, while there is a weakness in both household transmission of Gaelic and the social practice of Gaelic between older fluent speakers and younger age cohorts. The percentage of respondents who mainly or always speak Gaelic to teenagers and young adults is under 10% in both cases, and at 15.3% for primary school-aged children, despite almost two-thirds of respondents being fluent Gaelic speakers.

This has obvious negative indications for Gaelic’s future viability as a community language in the IGRP Study Districts.

A5.4.4 Opinions on the Gaelic language and its future

The final section of the questionnaire asked respondents to consider their personal feelings about the Gaelic language, and its likely future prospects, in the form of a series of multi-option questions.

A5.4.4.1 Respondents’ attitude to Gaelic

Very clearly, the respondents evinced a very positive attitude towards Gaelic, although there were obvious variations between Study Districts, as shown in Figure A5.5.

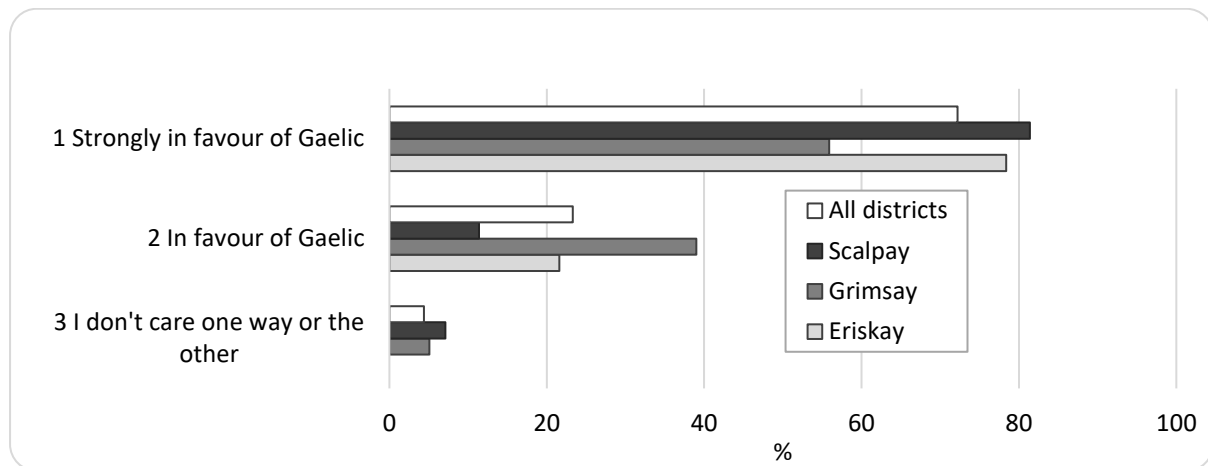


Figure A5.5 Respondents' attitude to Gaelic (multiple response), all districts (Ns = 180; 70, 59, 51)

Respondents expressed a clear and strong support for Gaelic, with 72.2% *Strongly in favour* and 23.3% *In favour* of the language. Fewer than 5% of respondents were ambivalent towards the language. Although the questionnaire presented respondents with five options, there were no representations either *Against* or *Strongly against* Gaelic among the survey respondents.

Scalpay (81.4%) and Eriskay (78.4%) had majorities who were *Strongly in favour of Gaelic*, while just over half of Grimsay respondents held this view (55.9%). On Eriskay, in fact, the questionnaire responses were *Strongly in favour* or *In favour* only.

A5.4.4.2 If respondents were in favour of Gaelic, why was this?

The multi-choice question *If you are in favour of Gaelic, why is this?* provided the respondents with a list of the following ten options:

- Having Gaelic improves my employment opportunities
- There are advantages to being bilingual in both Gaelic and English
- I am committed to my family’s linguistic heritage
- I am committed to my community’s linguistic tradition
- Gaelic is important to the economy of the Western Isles
- I want to play a role in maintaining Gaelic as a community language in the Western Isles

- The Gaelic language is important to me personally
- The Gaelic language is important to Scottish identity
- Other
- I don't know how to explain it

The results are shown in Figure A5.6.

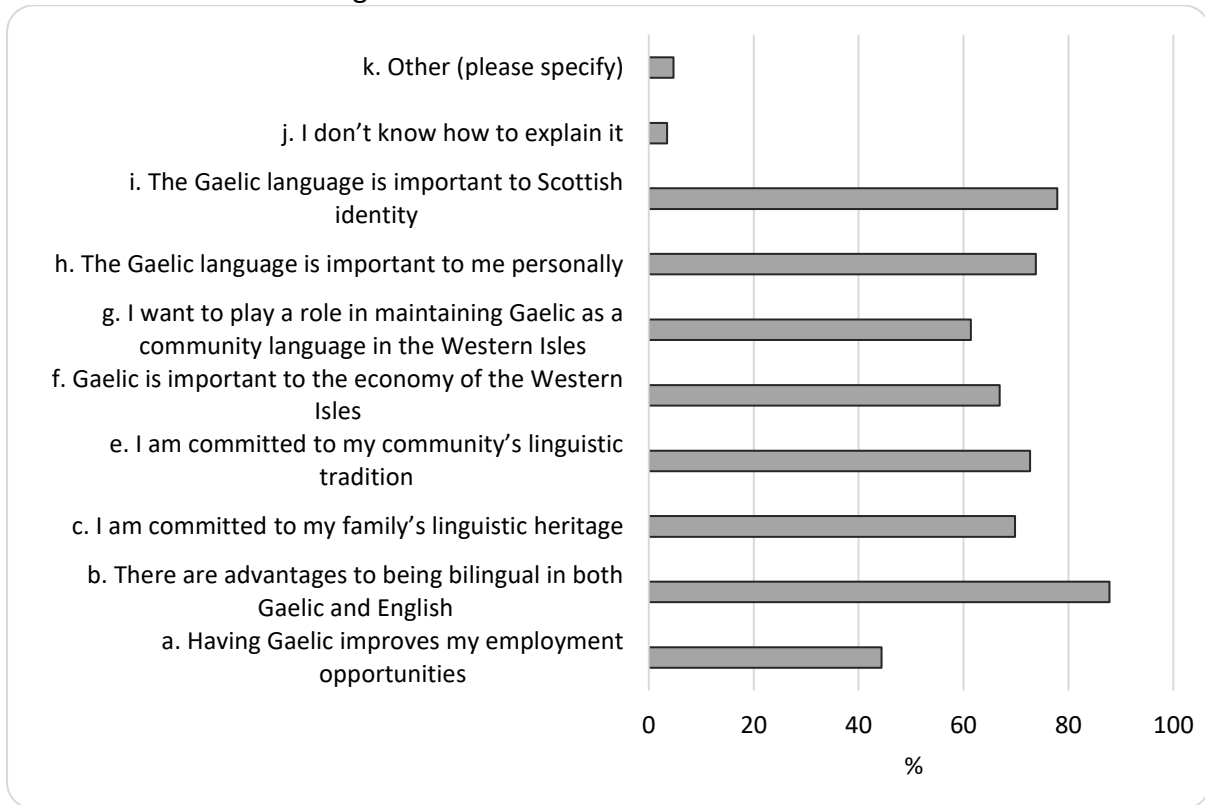


Figure A5.6 Reasons for being in favour of Gaelic (multiple response), all districts (N = 172)

Across all three Study Districts, the most commonly chosen response to this question was *There are advantages to being bilingual in Gaelic and English* which was chosen by 88% of respondents. 78% chose *The Gaelic language is important to Scottish identity*, and 74% of them chose *The Gaelic language is important to me personally*.

Only 44% of respondents across all Study Districts felt that Gaelic was linked to their current or future employment opportunities (although the age profile of the respondents across the Study Districts needs to be borne in mind when considering this response). Leaving aside the *Other* and *I don't know how to explain it* options, the second least commonly chosen response was to do with having a personal stake in maintaining Gaelic as a community language (61%), suggestive of a lack of community (self-)confidence. Just above that came the response *Gaelic is important to the economy of the Western Isles* (67%), something that may be interpreted as Gaelic's importance being linked to emotional and ideological factors, rather than necessarily instrumental factors.

A5.4.4.3 Feelings about future events related to Gaelic

Respondents were also asked to rate how they would feel if the scenarios were to occur in the future:

- If no children were brought up in Gaelic
- If English was the only language spoken in the Western Isles
- If Gaelic-medium broadcasting was to cease
- If education was no longer available through the medium of Gaelic in the Western Isles
- If public bodies and community groups were to cease supporting Gaelic
- If this area were to lose its identity as a Gaelic area
- If Gaelic ceases to be used as a neighbourhood language throughout the Western Isles

The results are given in Figure A5.7.

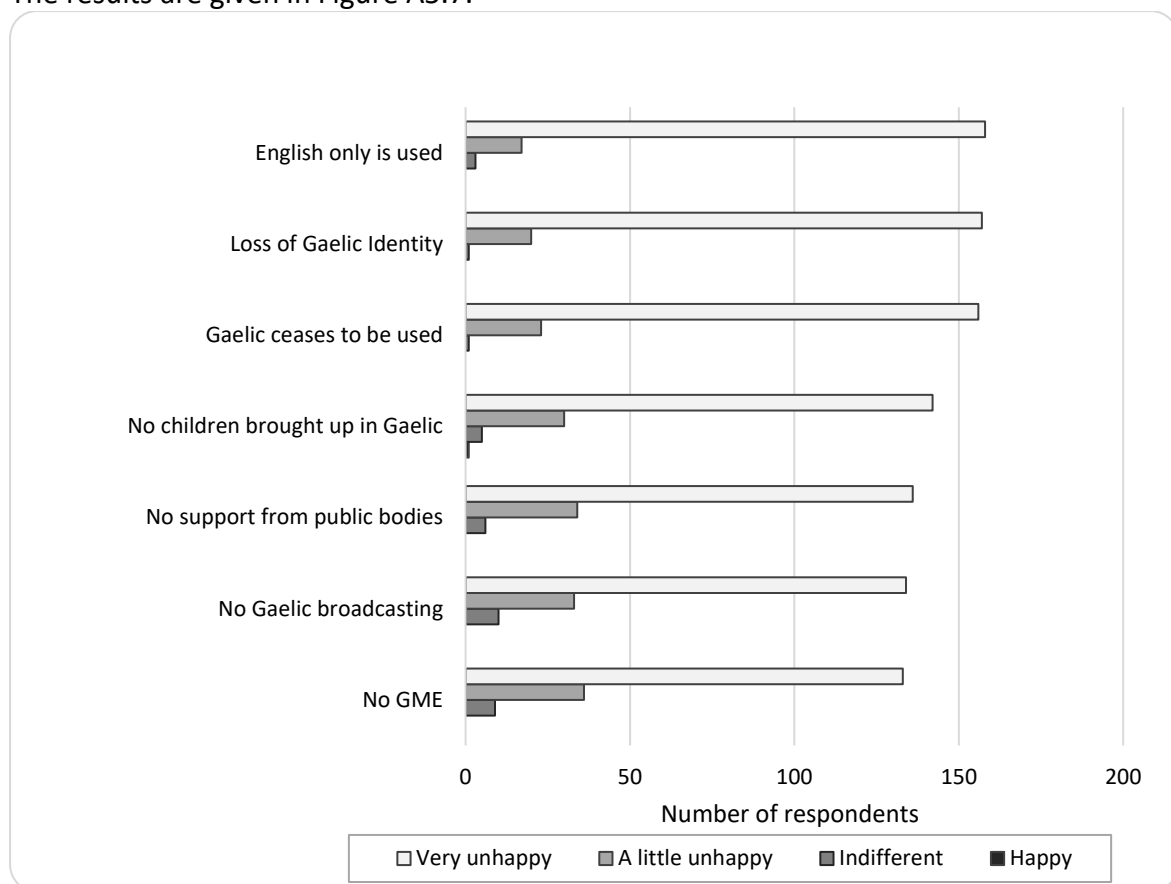


Figure A5.7 Feelings about future events relating to Gaelic, all districts (N = 178)

79.8% of the respondents expressed that they would be *Very unhappy* if *No children were brought up with Gaelic* in future in the Western Isles. 88.8% would be *Very unhappy* if the Western Isles were an *English only* language area in future, with 88.2% of respondents *Very unhappy* if the area suffers a *Loss of Gaelic identity* and 86.7% *Very unhappy* if *Gaelic ceases to be used*. The percentage responses in which respondents expressed themselves as *Very unhappy* were all lower (*No GME*, 74.7%; *No support from public bodies*, 77.3%; *No Gaelic broadcasting*, 75.7%).

The only responses which indicated individuals would be *Happy* if such future scenarios came to pass were where a very low percentage (0.6%) and a very low single-digit number of respondents stated they would be *Happy* if *No children were brought up in Gaelic*. This suggests that even those who do not have fluent Gaelic, and/or who do not have the Western Isles as their place of origin, are sufficiently supportive of the language to wish a positive future for Gaelic.

A5.4.5 Measures of those felt to strengthen or weaken Gaelic

Respondents were then asked how the following list of individuals or groups would strengthen or weaken the Gaelic language in their local area. The number of respondents is given in parentheses for each of the options:

- You (the respondent) (n=173)
- Your spouse (n=91)
- Your friends (n=149)
- Your parents (n=45)
- Your sibling(s) (n=93)
- Local people who speak Gaelic (n=166)
- Local people who don't speak Gaelic (n=156)
- People who have moved to the area and speak Gaelic (n=159)
- People who have moved to the area and don't speak Gaelic (n=156)
- The younger generation (n=160)
- The older generation (n=169)
- Local businesses (n=156)
- Gaelic bodies (n=155)
- Public bodies (n=155)
- Local community groups (n=155)
- Churches (n=154)

The respondents were asked to evaluate the influence of these individuals or groups on five-point Likert scales ranging from -2 to 2 (with 0 indicating a neutral position). The responses were evaluated by providing a standardised score for each item on the list.

This score was calculated by multiplying the percentage values of respondents according to their corresponding scale value (-2, -1, 0, 1, 2).

The sum of these values for each item was divided by 100 in order to ensure score values between -2 and 2.

Figure A5.8 shows the results.

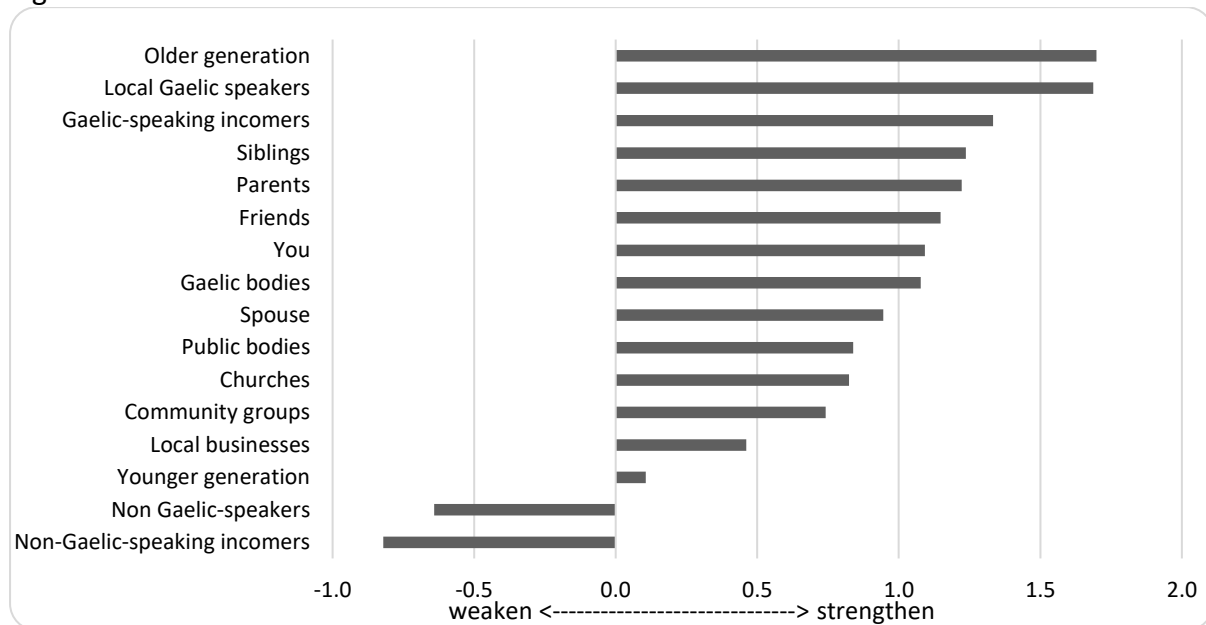


Figure A5.8 List of score values relating to whether respondents felt that the individuals or groups listed strengthened or weakened the Gaelic language, all districts (N = 173)

The standardised scores indicated that *The older generation* (+1.70) and *Local people who speak Gaelic* (+1.69) were thought to strengthen Gaelic the most. *Local people who don't speak Gaelic* (-0.64) and *People who have moved to the area and don't speak Gaelic* (-0.82) were thought to weaken the Gaelic language in the local area the most. Also of interest in the responses to this question was the relatively low level of agreement that the *Younger generation* (+0.11) helped to strengthen Gaelic; it may be that this response is connected to perceptions of Gaelic-medium education among children rather than looking at the influence of the 18–24 and 25–34 age cohorts, but this requires further investigation.

Gaelic bodies, Public agencies, Community groups, Local businesses and *Churches* all scored lower than *Family, Friends, Older generations* and *Local Gaelic speakers*, which suggests that the perception of the effectiveness of such organisations is low, regardless of how effective they may be in practice, and that there is possibly great(er) scope for institutional support on a local scale.

A5.4.6 Levels of agreement with statements about Gaelic

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements about Gaelic. The number of respondents is given in parentheses for each of the options:

- Fluent Gaelic-speaking parents should raise their children in Gaelic (n=180)
- Gaelic classes should be provided for anyone living in the Gaelic areas of the Western Isles (n=179)
- Economic development that would support the Gaelic language in the Western Isles should be encouraged (n=178)
- Everyone living in the Gaelic communities of the Western Isles should have good Gaelic (n=179)

- Community groups should be enabled to conduct their activities through Gaelic (n=177)
- Every public servant working in the Gaelic communities of the Western Isles should speak Gaelic (n=178)
- All school teachers in the area should teach through Gaelic medium (n=176)
- Youth clubs, etc., should be run through Gaelic only (n=176)

The responses are given in Table A5.2.

Response to statements, all districts (CSS)	Strongly agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly disagree (%)
Fluent Gaelic-speaking parents should raise their children in Gaelic	63.9	24.4	10.6	1.1	
Gaelic classes should be provided for anyone living in the Gaelic areas of the Western Isles	58.7	35.8	5.0	0.6	
Economic development that would support the Gaelic language in the Western Isles should be encouraged	48.3	40.4	9.6	1.7	
Everyone living in the Gaelic communities of the Western Isles should have good Gaelic	33.0	26.3	14.0	17.3	9.5
Community groups should be enabled to conduct their activities through Gaelic	32.2	37.3	22.0	8.5	
Every public servant working in the Gaelic communities of the Western Isles should speak Gaelic	30.9	25.8	19.7	15.2	8.4
All school teachers in the area should teach through Gaelic-medium	26.1	19.9	23.9	21.0	9.1
Youth clubs, etc., should be run through Gaelic only	15.3	14.2	30.1	27.8	12.5

Table A5.2 Respondents' level of agreement or disagreement with a series of statements about Gaelic, all districts (Ns = 180, 179, 178, 179, 177, 178, 176, 176)

The respondents were asked to score levels of agreement on five-point Likert scale ranging from -2 (*Strongly disagree*) to 2 (*Strongly agree*), with 0 indicating a neutral position. The responses were evaluated by providing a standardised score for each item on the list. This score was calculated by multiplying the percentage values of respondents according to their corresponding scale value (-2, -1, 0, 1, 2). The sum of these values for each item was divided by 100 in order to ensure score values between -2 and 2.

The standardised scores indicated that respondents *Strongly agree* with the statement *Fluent Gaelic-speaking parents should raise their children in Gaelic* (63.9%), and with the statement *Gaelic classes should be provided for anyone living in the Gaelic areas of the Western Isles* (58.7%).

The statement *Every public servant working in the Gaelic communities of the Western Isles should speak Gaelic* received a *strongly agree/agree* response of 56.7%, and the statement *Everyone living in the Gaelic communities of the Western Isles should have good Gaelic* received *strongly agree/agree* response of 59.3%.

The only statement with which respondents disagreed was that *Youth clubs, etc., should be run through Gaelic only* (40.3% recording either *Disagree* or *Strongly disagree* with 30.1% taking a neutral position). The data relating to parental transmission of Gaelic are in stark contrast to the data pertaining to youth club and teacher practice.

Despite the previously-noted weighting towards a parental responsibility to raise children in Gaelic, there is a much lower level of support for service provision (statutory or voluntary) that impacts children's development: as well as the previously-discussed statement about youth clubs, under a third of respondents (30.1%) *Agreed/Strongly disagreed* with the statement that *All teachers in the area should teach through Gaelic medium*.

The answers given suggest that there is an aspirational bent to the thinking around what is needed to help maintain and develop Gaelic in Western Isles communities, rather than any in-group responsibility. Parental responsibility is clearly indicated as a priority area, however results shown elsewhere in this research suggest that this is an area in which Gaelic transmission is not strong.

There appears to be a difference between a philosophical aspiration and both recent and current practice. If Gaelic-speaking parents had been raising their children through Gaelic, it is fair to assume the language would not be in the vulnerable position that it now finds itself in, in terms of demographics and both levels of use and fluency. 88.3% of respondents *Agree* or *Strongly agree* that *Fluent Gaelic-speaking parents should raise their children in Gaelic*.

94.5% of people *Strongly agree/Agree* that Gaelic classes should be provided for anyone living in Gaelic areas of the Western Isles. However, this puts the onus, to an extent, on institutional provision (through the local council, for example) rather than on voluntary or communal mechanisms to self-maintain the language. 88.7% *Agree*, or *Strongly agree*, that *Economic development that would support the Gaelic language in the Western Isles should be encouraged*.

A5.4.7 In 20 years' time, will Gaelic be stronger or weaker as a community language in the Western Isles?

Respondents were asked if, in their opinion, Gaelic will be stronger or weaker as a community language in the Western Isles in 20 years' time.

Results are shown in Figure A5.9.

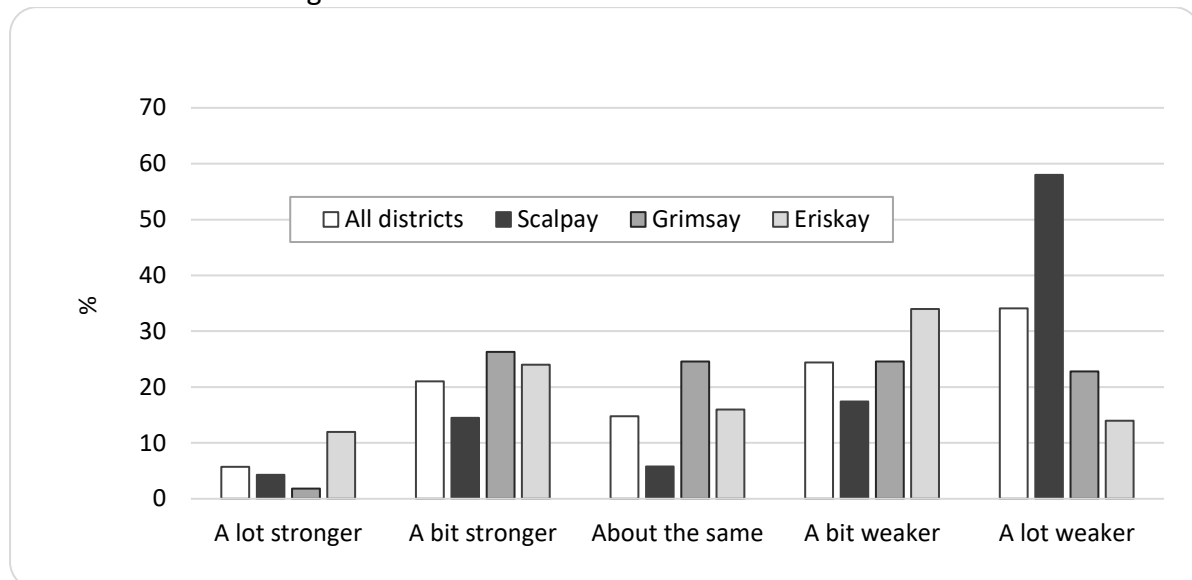


Figure A5.9 Responses to the question ‘Will Gaelic be stronger or weaker as a community language in the Western Isles in 20 years’ time?’, all districts (Ns = 176; 69, 57, 50)

34.1% of those who responded believed that the Gaelic language will be *A lot weaker* in 20 years’ time, with a further 24.4% believing it will be *Weaker* in 2036. This indicates that there may be a level of realism about Gaelic’s current predicament, or even a sense of defeatism within sections of the community as to the future prospects for the language. 21% of respondents thought Gaelic will be *A bit stronger* in 2036, with 5.7% believing it will be *A lot stronger*.

Interestingly, 58% of Scalpay respondents felt Gaelic would be *A lot weaker* in 2036, compared to 22.8% and 14% in Grimsay and Eriskay respectively, which is noteworthy as Scalpay was, according to the Census data of 2011, the most strongly Gaelic-speaking community in terms of percentage of population.

A5.4.8 What would you be willing to do to ensure that the Western Isles remains a Gaelic-speaking area?

Respondents were asked: *What would you personally be willing to do to ensure that the Western Isles remains a Gaelic-speaking area?*

- Speak Gaelic to everyone else who has the language
- Get involved in a local group to support the language in the area
- Contact local representatives demanding services through the medium of Gaelic
- Encourage people without Gaelic who are living locally to learn the language
- Protest against a development that was a threat to the Gaelic language in my area
- Continue living in the area and be active in the community
- Speak Gaelic to my neighbours and friends
- Continue living in the Western Isles and work through the medium of Gaelic
- I am happy to take part in community groups which support the Gaelic language in my area
- I would be willing to learn Gaelic

Results are given in Figure A5.10.

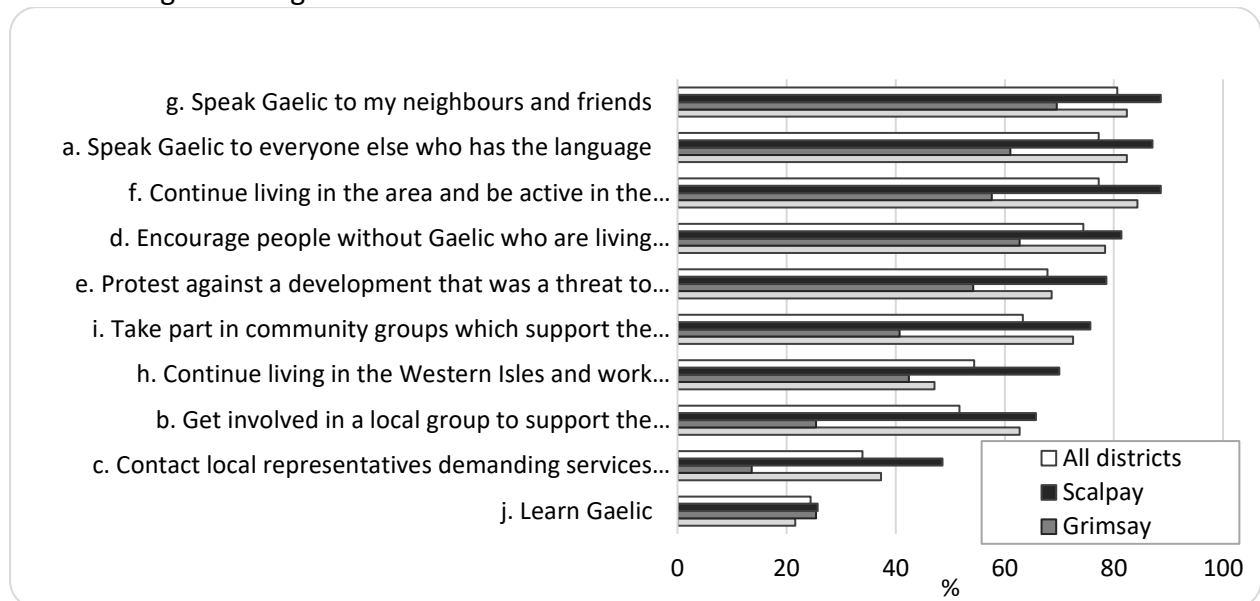


Figure A5.10 Responses to the multi-choice question ‘What would you personally be willing to do to ensure that the Western Isles remains a Gaelic-speaking area?’, all districts (Ns = 179; 70, 58, 51)

The four most supported statements across all Study District respondents involve active participation in the speech community: *Speak Gaelic to my neighbours and friends* (80.6%), *Speak Gaelic to everyone else who has the language* (77.2%), *Continue living in the area and be active in the community* (77.2%) and *Encourage people without Gaelic who are living locally to learn the language* (74.4%). However, it is clear, given previously discussed results and trajectories, that this is indicative of a significant disconnect between aspiration and current local practice. It might also be suggested that these responses tally with what people feel they already do, so may represent easy options.

The item that received the least support was *I would be willing to learn Gaelic* (24.4%). This may be due to the fact that, as has been explained previously in this chapter, all Study Districts currently have relatively high numbers and proportions of Gaelic speakers, with high levels of fluency, who have been fluent from an early age. It may also be the case that not enough of those who are non-Gaelic speakers see a need or feel a desire to learn the language or, as importantly, that those who do wish to learn do not have the opportunities to do so.

It is also noticeable that the second- and third-lowest levels of response were applied to statements that required levels of personal activism, while those statements which were more commonly agreed with were statements which require the lowest levels of personal investment of time and energy, especially if those respondents already speak Gaelic. There is a concern, from the responses to this question, that the necessary drive to safeguard a long-term future for Gaelic as a communal language may not be present.