Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Survey of Adult Learners of Gaelic – 2016

Final Report

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Version 1.2

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Geàrr-chunntas – Inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig 2016

Bharantaich Bòrd na Gàidhlig Tkm Consulting sa Ghiblean 2015 gus pròiseact a lìbhrigeadh thairis air trì bliadhna anns am bi iad a' cruinneachadh dàta a thaobh Gàidhlig do dh'inbhich. 'S e as adhbhar don phròiseact: dàta, staitistearachd agus mapaichean a dhèanamh is fhoillseachadh a bhuineas ri inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig, agus a bhuineas ri gnìomhan ionnsachaidh. Thèid feum a dhèanamh den fhiosrachadh, a thèid a chruinneachadh tron phròiseact, gus sealltainn dè na gluasadan a th' ann agus dè tha tachairt le luchd-ionnsachaidh agus cuidichidh sin le bhith dealbh ro-innleachdan is phoileasaidhean san àm ri teachd.

B' e an sgrùdadh a chaidh a dhèanamh ann an 2016 an dàrna sgrùdadh airson a' phròiseict seo, agus chaidh feuchainn cho fad 's a b' urrainnear ri cumail ris an aon seòrsa crutha agus cheistean a bh' ann an-uiridh gus an deigheadh againn air gluasadan no pàtranan a bha tighinn am follais aithneachadh.

A thaobh a' phròiseict seo, 's e a th' ann an inbheach a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig, cuideigin a tha 16 no nas sine agus:
i.   a tha air an àrd-sgoil fhàgail, agus a tha a' dol an sàs, no an dùil a dhol an sàs, ann an gnìomh sam bith gus piseach a thoirt air na sgilean Gàidhlig aca; no
ii.   a tha ann am foghlam àrd-sgoile an-dràsta agus a tha a' dol an sàs ann an gnìomh ionnsachaidh sam bith gus piseach a thoirt air na sgilean Gàidhlig aca, nach eil air a ruith leis an sgoil.

B' e am prìomh mhodh-obrach a chaidh a chleachdadh gus dàta a chruinneachadh, ceisteachan air-loidhne a bha fosgailte airson cola-deug bho 7 Samhain 2016. Bha lùghdachadh follaiseach san àireimh de luchd-freagairt an coimeas ris na sgrùdaidhean eile a chaidh a chumail, ach bha an àireamh luchd-freagairt fhathast air a meas mar àireamh mhath agus bha an àireamh às a' cheud a fhreagair fhathast aig ìre ris am biodh dùil airson na h-àireimh a mheasar a th' ann de luchd-ionnsachaidh. Mar sin, thathar san fharsaingeachd den bheachd gu bheil na toraidhean a' riochdachadh inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig.

Mar a rinneadh an-uiridh, chaidh iarraidh air luchd-solair chùrsaichean pàirt a ghabhail san sgrùdadh le bhith toirt seachad fiosrachadh mu chùrsaichean no tachartasan ionnsachaidh a bha iad a' cumail rè ùine an sgrùdaidh, agus chaidh sin a chleachdadh gus obrachadh a-mach dè an àireamh às a' cheud de luchd-ionnsachaidh a fhreagair an ceisteachan agus gus tuairmse a dhèanamh air an àireimh de dh'inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig. Cuideachd, chaidh dàta bhon sgrùdadh airson luchd-ionnsachaidh a chur a-steach ann an cliath-dhuilleagan a dh'ullaich Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

Chùm an ceisteachan airson luchd-ionnsachaidh na còig earrannan a chleachdadh ann an 2015, agus a' chiad earrann a' cruinneachadh fiosrachadh pearsanta. A dh'aindeoin mar a bha lùghdachadh san àireamh luchd-fhreagairt, bha deagh chunbhalachd a' nochdadh san fhiosrachadh mu inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig nuair a thèid a choimeas ri fiosrachadh an-uiridh. Chaidh aois chuibheasach an luchd-fhreagairt an-àirde beagan bho 2015. Tha seo a' leantainn air a' phàtran a nochd bho thòisich na sgrùdaidhean seo, ach bha aon atharrachadh gealltanach ann, sin àrdachadh sa chuid de luchd-ionnsachaidh a bha aois 30–34. Bha na h-ìrean fileantais am measg luchd-fhreagairt an ìre mhath mar a bha iad sna bliadhnaichean eile, ach bha aon atharrachadh ann air am bu chòir aire a thoirt, sin lùghdachadh sa chuid de luchd-ionnsachaidh a thuirt gun robh iad nam fìor luchd-tòiseachaidh, chaidh e sìos bho 13% ann an 2015 gu 7% am-bliadhna. Bidh na daoine a tha tòiseachadh air Gàidhlig ionnsachadh fìor chudromach don iomairt gus an àireamh de dh'inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh na Gàidhlig a ghleidheadh agus àrdachadh agus bidh e cudromach sùil gheur a chumail air sin sna bliadhnaichean air thoiseach.

B' e an gnìomh ionnsachaidh a bu chumanta a chomharraich luchd-freagairt mar am prìomh ghnìomh ionnsachaidh aca, clas air a stiùireadh le oide le gnìomhan a chaidh a dhealbh ro-làimh (nach robh na chlas còmhraidh). B' e an dàrna freagairt a bu chumanta airson prìomh ghnìomh ionnsachaidh, clas còmhraidh, agus b' iad an dà ghnìomh seo air an robh barrachd fèill sa chumantas.

Bha àrdachadh eile air am bu chòir aire a thoirt, sin àrdachadh san àireimh de dhaoine a bha gam meas fhèin mar luchd-ionnsachaidh, agus a bha air cur romhpa pàirt a ghabhail ann an gnìomh ionnsachaidh uaireigin san àm ri teachd, ged nach robh iad air pàirt a ghabhail ann an gnìomh ionnsachaidh sam bith rè ùine an sgrùdaidh. Chaidh sin suas bho 24% ann am bliadhnaichean eile gu 27% ann an 2016. Ged nach robh an t-atharrachadh seo cho cudromach ris an atharrachadh san àireimh de luchd-tòiseachaidh, dh'fhaodte gu bheil seo a' sealltainn, ged a tha ùidh aig daoine fhathast ann a bhith leasachadh nan sgilean Gàidhlig aca, gu bheil nas lugha dhiubh ri gnìomhan ionnsachaidh aig àm àraidh sam bith.

Bha àrdachadh de 1% gu 59% den luchd-fhreagairt a thuirt gun robh cùisean, duilgheadasan no cnapan-starra air a bhith ann a chuir stad orra bho bhith leasachadh nan sgilean Gàidhlig aca. Bha am pàtran a thaobh nan cùisean a thug buaidh air ionnsachadh an ìre mhath mar a bha e ann an 2015; bha an àireamh dhaoine a thuirt gun robh cion chothroman gus conaltradh ri fileantaich is luchd-ionnsachaidh fileanta a' cur bacadh air an ionnsachadh aca, an cnap-starra a bu chumanta, air a dhol an-àirde bho bhliadhnaichean eile. Bha àrdachaidhean follaiseach eile ann a thaobh na h-àireimh de dhaoine a chomharraich cion chùrsaichean aig an ìre cheart agus a' chosgais mar dhuilgheadasan no cnapan-starra. Dh'fhaodadh gun robh àrdachadh san uiread dhaoine a chomharraich cion chothroman conaltraidh is cion chùrsaichean mar chnap-starra air sàillibh nach do ghabh uiread luchd-tòiseachaidh pàirt san sgrùdadh, agus bidh an dàta bho sgrùdadh na h-ath-bhliadhna cudromach ann a bhith ag innse: a bheil na h-àrdachaidhean seo nam pàtran ùr a tha tighinn am follais no a bheil iad air nochdadh air sàillibh leiteachais san sgrùdadh.

Chaidh aon cheist atharrachadh bhon bhliadhna an-uiridh gus iarraidh air luchd-freagairt comharrachadh dè na goireasan as cudromaiche a bhiodh iad a' cleachdadh gus na sgilean Gàidhlig aca a leasachadh no a dhaingneachadh. Chaidh telebhisean Gàidhlig a chomharrachadh mar an goireas as cudromaiche, an uair sin làraich-lìn le susbaint Ghàidhlig, agus an uair sin leabhraichean-teacsa no leabhraichean-cùrsa air an sgrìobhadh airson inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig. Bha an aon seòrsa pàtrain ann nuair a bhathar a' gabhail ealla ris an dàrna agus an treas roghainn aig daoine, far an robh rèidio Gàidhlig air a chomharrachadh beagan a bharrachd san fharsaingeachd na leabhraichean-teacsa.

Fhreagair àireamh mhath de luchd-solair chùrsaichean an ceisteachan, leis an aon seòrsa ìre de luchd-freagairt 's a bh' ann an-uiridh. Le bhith cleachdadh an dàta a thug luchd-solair chùrsaichean seachad, chaidh obrachadh a-mach gun robh 3,261 inbhich ann a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig, sìos bhon iomlan a chaidh a thomhas airson 2015 dhe 3,467.

Executive Summary – Adult Learners of Gaelic 2016

Bòrd na Gàidhlig commissioned Tkm Consulting in April 2015 to deliver a three year project collecting data on Gaelic for adults. The purpose of the project was to produce and publish data, statistics and maps relating to adult learners, as well as adult learning activities, with the information generated by the project being used to establish key facts and trends that will inform future strategies and policies.

The survey conducted in 2016 was the second survey in the project with the format and questions kept as similar as possible to the previous year to enable the identification of any emerging trends.

For the purposes of the project, an adult learner is anyone who is 16 years old or over and has either:
  i.   left secondary school education and is either currently participating, or planning to participate in any type of learning activity to improve their Gaelic language skills; or
  ii.   is currently in secondary school education and participating in any type of learning activity to improve their Gaelic language skills, which is not run by their school.

The primary method of data capture was an on-line survey which ran from 7 November 2016 for two weeks. There was a notable reduction in respondents compared previous surveys although the response rate was still considered good and within the expected percentage for the anticipated number of learners. Therefore the findings are generally considered to be representative of adult learners of Gaelic.

As in the previous year, learning providers were also asked to participate by providing information about activities they were running during the survey period, which was used to calculate a return rate and generate an estimated number of adult learners of Gaelic. Data from the survey for learners was also entered into spreadsheets prepared by Bòrd na Gàidhlig.

The survey for learners retained the five sections used in 2015 with the first section gathering personal information. Despite the reduction in responses, the adult learner profiles showed a high degree of consistency with the previous year. The average age for respondents increased slightly on 2015. This continues the trend seen from the beginning of the survey work although one encouraging change was the increase in proportion of those aged 30–34 years. Levels of fluency were also similar to previous years although one notable change was a significant reduction in the proportion of those indicating they were complete beginners, reducing from 13% in 2015 to 7% this year. Those entering the training pipeline will be critical to sustaining and building on the numbers of adult learners and it will be important to monitor this closely in future years.

The most common learning activity that respondents were undertaking as their primary activity was a class that was tutor led with preplanned activities (excluding conversation classes). The second highest return for primary learning activity was a conversation class, and these two activities remained the most popular overall.

Another notable increase was the relative numbers of those who considered themselves learners, and who planned to participate in an activity at some point in the future, although who were not participating in any activity during the survey period. This had increased from 24% in previous years to 27% in 2016. While not as significant as the change in proportion of beginngers, this also may suggest that while people remain interested in improving their Gaelic language skills, there is a lower proportion of people undertaking learning activities at any given time.

There was a 1% increase to 59% in respondents that indicated that they had encountered issues, difficulties and barriers that had affected their acquisition of Gaelic language skills. The pattern of the

factors influencing learning was broadly the same as in 2015, the numbers reporting against the most common barrier to learning, lack of interaction with native speakers and fluent learners, had increased on previous years. There were also notable increases in those reporting lack of courses at an appropriate level and the cost being a difficulty or barrier. Both the lack of interaction and lack of courses may be as a consequence of have a proportionally lower number of beginners in the survey group and the data from the survey next year will be important to identifying whether these are emerging trends or due to survey bias.

In a change to last year, respondents were asked to rank importance of the types of resource they were using to support or consolidate their learning. Gaelic television was the ranked the most important resource, followed by websites with Gaelic content, and then course or text books specifically written for adult learners of Gaelic. This pattern was similar when taking into account respodents' second and third choices, with Gaelic radio being slightly more popular overall than text books.

There was a good response from some learning providers with a similar level of returns to the previous year. Using the data the learning providers submitted, the number of adult learners was calculated to be 3,261, down from the estimated total for 2015 of 3,467.

1. Introduction

Bòrd na Gàidhlig was established by the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005 as the organisation responsible for securing the status of Gaelic as an official language of Scotland, commanding equal respect to the English language.

As part of their remit, Bòrd na Gàidhlig are required to produce, review and update the National Gaelic Language Plan (NGLP). The current plan is NGLP 2012–2017, which was launched in June 2012. The NGLP defines a number of development areas with some being prioritised for delivery, and post-school education is one of the prioritised areas.

A project to establish the number of adult learners of Gaelic was commissioned by Bòrd na Gàidhlig in 2014, which also informed the development of a strategy for adult learners. Bòrd na Gàidhlig then commissioned a three year project to survey adult learners annually, and establish some general trends and statistics about adult learners of Gaelic. The 2016 survey was the second survey in that project.

To facilitate comparison, the structure and format of this report follows that of the previous year. Following the Introduction, there are four sections in this report:

i. Methodology – provides an overview of the approach taken to deliver the survey, covering the development and distribution of the surveys for both learners and learning providers. It also covers project definitions, survey design, development of question sets, and details how the surveys were distributed;

ii. Survey Data and Analysis – presents the data gathered from learners and a brief overview of data captured from learning providers. For learners, the data gathered in response to each question is analysed and key the facts highlighted. Where appropriate and relevant, a comparison is made with the previous year's data;

iii. Evaluation – discusses the key findings from the data analysis and identifies potential and emerging trends by using comparisons to the previous survey. The section also identifies where changes may need to be made to subsequent surveys and any issues with datasets are highlighted, together with suggestions for improvement;

iv. Number of Adult Learners of Gaelic – using the formula developed previously, an estimated number of adult learners of Gaelic during the survey period is calculated. There are some important assumptions and limitations that must be taken into account for this calculation, which are also documented in this section.

2. Methodology

No changes were made to the definition of key terms. The agreed project definitions were:

i. Adult Learner of Gaelic – a person who is actively seeking to improve any of their Scottish Gaelic language skills (reading, writing, speaking and understanding) through study or experience. The definition provided as part of the survey introductory text was:

An adult learner is anyone who is 16 years old or over and has either:

    a.   left secondary school education and is either currently participating, or planning to participate, in any type of learning activity to improve their Gaelic language skills; or

    b.   is currently in secondary school education and participating in any type of learning activity to improve their Gaelic language skills, which is not run by their school.

ii.   Learning intervention – a specific activity offered by a learning provider with clear start and finish times (whether by calendar dates or by level achieved), that is either:

    a.   aiming to teach a language skill or skills in Scots Gaelic to adult learners, or

    b.   aiming to enable adult learners to achieve a specific standard in such a skill or skills.

iii. Learning resource – a resource that is specifically designed to support adult learners in acquiring Scottish Gaelic language skills or competencies.

2.1. Design of Surveys

The required dataset from the survey of adult learners was based on the spreadsheets developed by Bòrd na Gàidhlig. The survey of learners captured data about those who considered themselves learners of Gaelic regardless of whether they were actively participating in activities, and also those planning learning activities. However, it should be noted that, as with the survey in previous years, the text and promotion of the survey was very much targeting those who were currently participating in a learning activity.

To enable year on year comparisons to be made, any changes made to question sets were kept to a minimum in both surveys. Changes were limited to:

i.   Rewording or reformatting the questions where it was clear the question had in some way been misinterpreted or was not providing the anticipated data;

ii.   Re-ordering the questions, mainly in the learning provider survey, to ensure the critical questions regarding adult learners were responded to earlier in the survey. One question relating to distance travelled by participants was moved from the provider to the learner survey;

iii. The addition of questions where further detail was required about particular topics.

2.1.1. Learner Survey

Questions were presented to respondents in five sections:

i.   About the learner – respondents were asked a number of questions relating to their personal circumstances that may influence their learning patterns. There was also a self-assessment of current language skills which was loosely based on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) framework. To help improve accuracy, this question asked respondents to rate each of the four skills (speaking, understanding, reading and writing) separately;

ii.   Learning activities – respondents were asked about how many distinct learning activities they were participating in during the survey period, and asked to rank up to five of these activities in order of importance;

iii. Barriers to learning – this section asked about potential issues, difficulties and barriers to learning that respondents had encountered;

iv.   Resources – the questions from the previous survey were combined with respondents asked to order the types of resources in order of importance to their learning;

v.   Contact details – respondents were asked to provide their name, e-mail and contact telephone number if they would like to participate in future surveys.

The question set for learners can be found at Appendix 1, which also shows possible responses for each question, and the available pathways through the survey. The survey was provided in Gaelic and English languages throughout and respondents were able to respond in either language. The different languages were shown in the final survey in different colours, and the languages were separated with a "/" to facilitate accessibility.

The survey was designed using the on-line survey tool SurveyMonkey.

2.1.2. Learning Provider Survey

Information requested from learning providers was:

i.   Organisation and contact information. This was split into two sections with high level organisational information asked at the beginning of the survey (such as name and location of main office), and information about the total number of staff involved in the delivery of Gaelic language learning activities asked at the end of the survey;

ii.   Learning activities being offered during the survey period, the location, and the number of students participating. Providers were also asked about concessions, and the number of staff involved in individual activity provision.

The learning provider survey allowed respondents to enter information about up to 5 current initiatives and the survey question set can be found at Appendix 2.

This survey was also designed using SurveyMonkey. However, given some learning providers were anticipated to be offering large numbers of initiatives, a spreadsheet asking for the same data was also made available by request to facilitate returns.

2.2. Distribution of Surveys

2.2.1 Learner Survey Distribution

Information about the survey was sent to a range of contacts which included:

i.   Organisations with, or preparing, Gaelic Language Plans;

ii.   Main Gaelic organisations;

iii.   Contact details of organisations that had participated in the survey the previous year or were known to be providing learning opportunities.

A number of people had provided an e-mail address in the previous survey and these people were sent a dedicated link through SurveyMonkey which meant their participation and return rates could be more accurately monitored.

During the survey period, the ongoing promotion of the survey was through e-mail to learning providers and also through Bòrd na Gàidhlig's social media.

The survey was open for responses between 7–20 November 2016.

2.2.2. Learning Provider Survey Distribution

The link to the survey was issued to known learning organisations, those with Gaelic Language Plans, and anyone who had specifically requested the survey link. Learning providers were issued with an e-mail to remind them about both surveys and also to ask them to encourage participation of their learners.

Following feedback from the 2015 survey, the spreadsheet for learning providers was made available two weeks before the survey period, with returns required by 2 December 2016.

2.3. Collection of Results

The data gathered from both surveys was collected through SurveyMonkey, which was also used to do some of the preliminary analysis and presentation of data.

3. Summary and Analysis of Results

This section presents the data gathered from the learner survey and provides some initial analysis of those results, highlighting key facts evident from the data. There is also an overview of results from the learning provider survey.

It should be noted that:

i. Percentages in the text have been rounded to a whole number (shown to 1 decimal place on the figures), and refer to the percentage of those responding to the question;

ii. The presentation of figures shows the data labels in English only. Where the figures are marked with an *, the options that were offered to respondents have been summarised for the purposes of data presentation. The full text of options that were presented to the respondents can be found at Appendix 1.

3.1. Numbers of Survey Respondents

3.1.1. Learner Survey Returns

The number of learner survey returns are shown in Table 1:

Table 1 – Number of Learner Survey Returns

	2015	2016
Total number of returns	751	424
Total number of completed returns	626	383

There were no returns made in hard copy.

3.1.2. Learning Provider Survey Returns

The learning provider returns are shown in Table 2:

Table 2 – Number of Learning Provider Survey Returns

Total number of returns (including nil returns and spreadsheets)	18
Number of returns from learning providers with current learning interventions	16

3.2. Survey Data and Analysis

### 3.2.1. Learner Survey Data and Analysis

Data and a summary of analysis for each survey question is presented below. The sub-headings shown in bold relate to section headings within the survey, and paragraph numbers below each sub-heading relate to question numbers. It should be noted that there were various pathways through the survey and therefore not all respondents would have been given an opportunity to respond to all questions.

Data was also entered into Bòrd na Gàidhlig's spreadsheets.

Section 1 - About the Learner

1. The survey started with a question to check that the respondent considered themselves an adult learner of Gaelic, with 8 respondents stating that they were not learners. There were 383 completed responses for those that considered themselves to be learning.

2. The country in which adult learners of Gaelic currently live is shown in Figure 1:
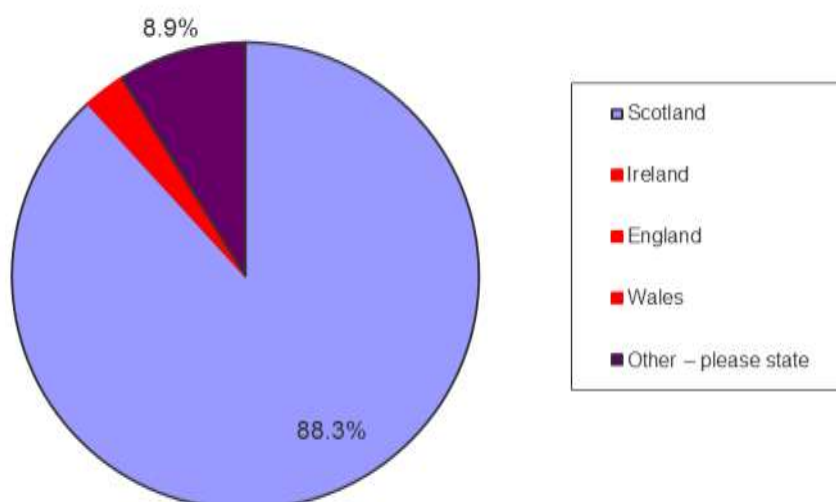
Figure 1 – Country of Current Residence

The percentage of adult learners living in Scotland was almost the same as the previous year (88.5%).

3. Where respondents selected Scotland, they were then asked which local authority area they lived in with the numbers shown in Table 3.

Table 3 – Local Authority Area of Adult Learners

Local Authority Area	Percentage	Number
Aberdeen City	4.7%	16
Aberdeenshire	3.8%	13
Angus		≤5
Argyll: Argyll and Bute Islands	1.8%	6
Argyll: Argyll and Islands		≤5

Argyll: Helensburgh and Lomond		≤5
Clackmannanshire		≤5
Dumfries and Galloway		≤5
Dundee City	2.1%	7
East Ayrshire		≤5
East Dunbartonshire	2.1%	7
East Lothian		≤5
East Renfrewshire	2.4%	8
Edinburgh, City of	20.7%	70
Falkirk		≤5
Fife	2.7%	9
Glasgow City	11.5%	39
Highland: Badenoch and Strathspey		≤5
Highland: Caithness and Sutherland		≤5
Highland: Inverness and Nairn	7.4%	25
Highland: Ross and Cromarty	4.1%	14
Highland: Skye and Lochalsh	4.1%	14
Inverclyde		≤5
Lochaber		≤5
Midlothian	1.8%	6
Moray: North East Moray		≤5
Moray: West Moray		≤5
North Ayrshire mainland	2.4%	8
North Ayrshire: Arran and Cumbrae		≤5
North Lanarkshire		≤5
Orkney Islands		≤5
Perth and Kinross	1.8%	6
Renfrewshire	3.0%	10
Scottish Borders	3.0%	10
Shetland Islands		≤5
South Ayrshire		≤5
South Lanarkshire	3.6%	12
Stirling		≤5
West Dunbartonshire		≤5
West Lothian		≤5
Western Isles		≤5
Don't know		≤5

4. Responses for town and post code of where respondents live and are shown at Appendices 3 and 4 respectively.

6. The age profile for respondents is shown at Figure 2 which shows a comparison with the profile for 2015 (percentages displayed for 2016 data only).
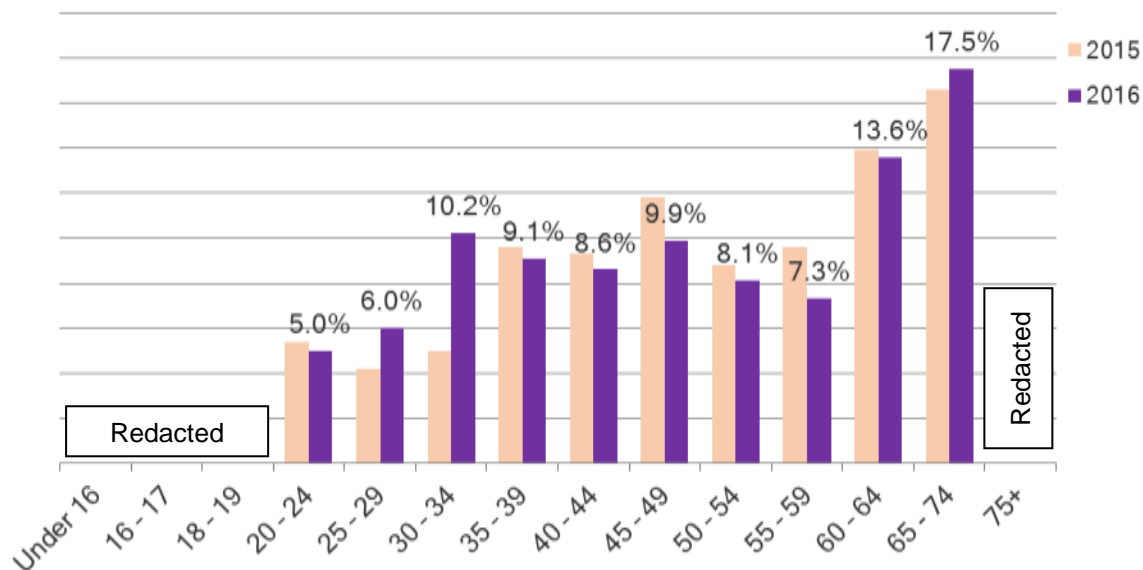
Figure 2 – Learner Age Profile
(Lowest 4 categories redacted)

7. As with the previous year, there was a very small number of returns for anyone aged under 20, which is unlikely to be representative of the number of adult learners in that age group given the number of undergraduate learners reported by learning providers.

9. Respondents were asked if whether, before starting their adult learning activities, they had frequent experience of spoken Gaelic at home, school or in the community, whether or not it was in a Gaelic speaking community. The majority selected no (83%, 319 responses), which was similar to the proportion in 2015 (86%).

10. Respondents were asked to rate their current level of competency on a scale that offered respondents 5 increments from complete beginner to expressing themselves very fluently (full descriptions can be found at Appendix 1).

Responses are shown in Figure 3 and show a comparison to the 2015 data (percentages displayed for 2016 data only).
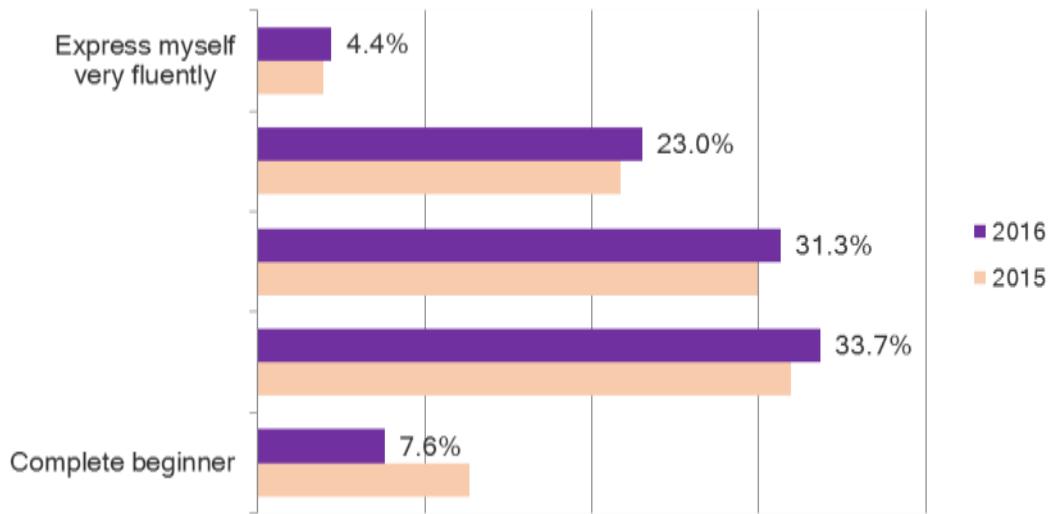
Figure 3 – Current Competency Levels of Learners

11. Respondents were then asked to rate their ability to understand a conversation, their Gaelic language reading ability and their Gaelic language writing ability by comparing them to the level of their Gaelic language speaking skills. The responses are shown in Figures 4 – 6.
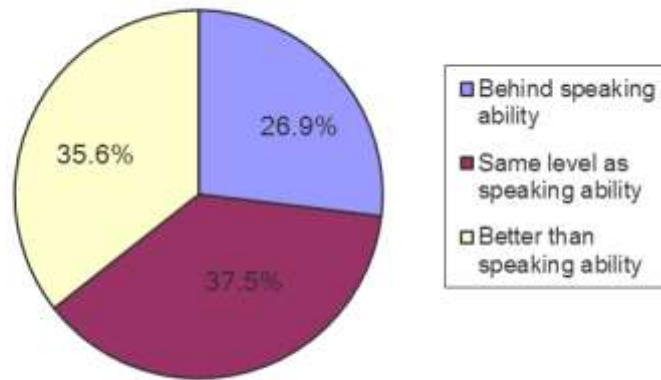
Figure 4 – Ability to Understand a Conversation in Gaelic

Figure 5 – Gaelic Language Reading Ability

Figure 6 – Gaelic Language Writing Ability

14. Respondents were asked their gender with 59% of respondents being female, [redacted]% male and [redacted]% preferring not to say.

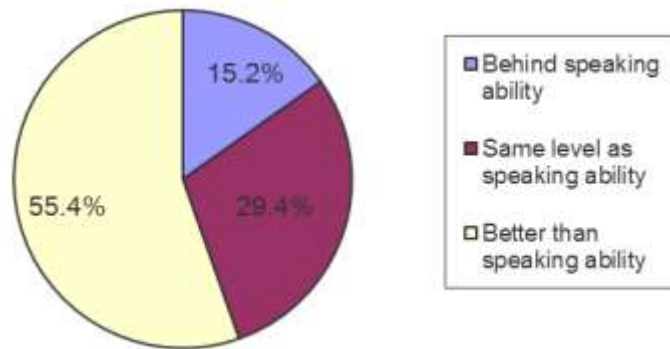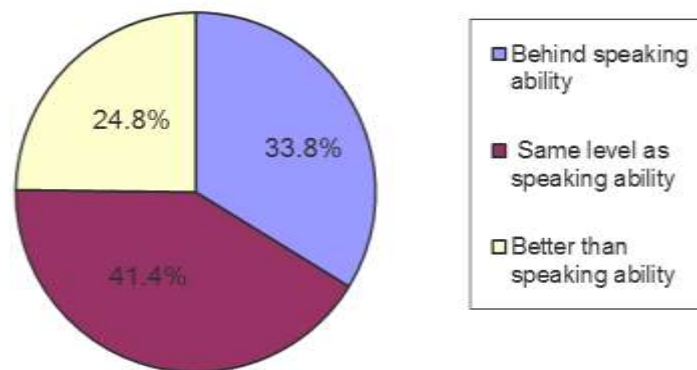15. Respondents were asked if they were in any kind of employment, whether full or part time, working for themselves, a company or any other type of organisation. 63% selected Yes, [redacted]% No, and [redacted]% preferring not to say (the loss of 1% created by rounding).

16. The next question asked about disability with 93% saying they did not consider themselves to be disabled, [redacted]% ([redacted] respondents) considered themselves disabled and [redacted]% preferred to not say. There were no additional questions relating to disability in the survey. One important point arising from the initial survey in 2014 is that some people only reported a disability where they felt it impacted their learning, which is likely to remain the case in the current survey. The figure for those who consider themselves disabled is slightly higher than the Scottish percentage for those disabled and participating in a learning activity, but still much lower than the representation in the general population in Scotland (20%).

17. Respondents were asked if they were the parent or guardian of a child that is in Gaelic Medium Education with 20% (76 respondents) indicating they were.

18. Respondents were then asked if there were any children within the household being raised with Gaelic as their prime language and 5% (17 respondents) said that there were.

19. The question relating to peoples' ability to practice their speaking Gaelic language skills was amended in 2016 to specifically ask about interactions. Respondents were asked if they normally interacted with people who they considered to have fluent Gaelic language skills for at least one hour each day on 5 days of the week. The results are thought likely to be more representative than the previous year with 26% of learners (99 respondents) indicating they did have this level of interaction, compared with 48% in 2015.

20. Respondents that indicated they did interact with Gaelic speakers they considered fluent were then asked where they interacted with others and the results are shown in Figure 7.
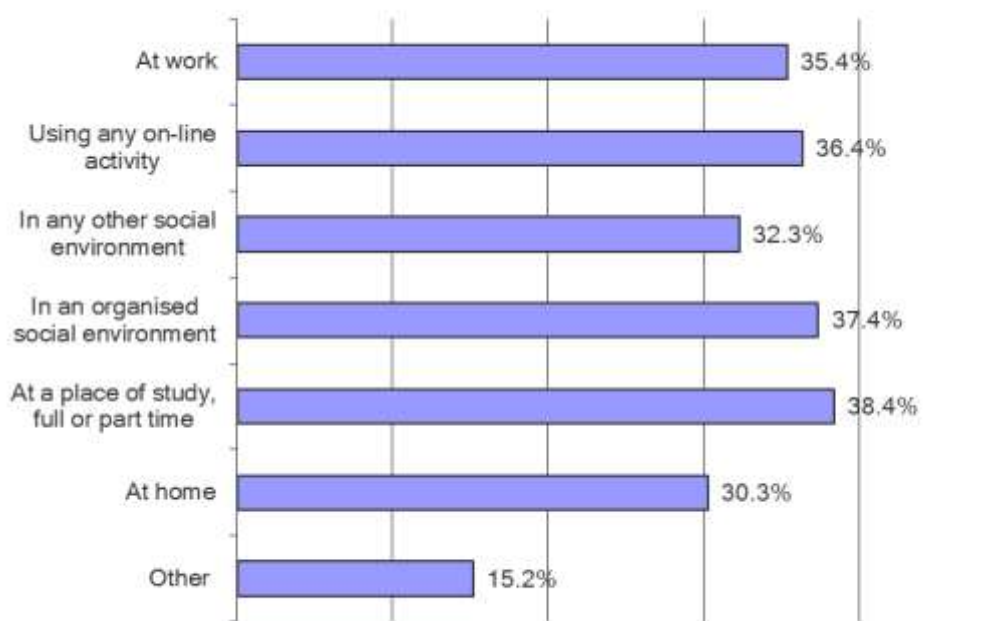

Figure 7 – Where Respondents Interact with Those They Consider to have Fluent Gaelic Language Skills*

Section 2 - Learning Activities

21. Respondents were asked about participation in learning activities and the majority (66%, 254 respondents) were participating in one or more learning activities during the survey period. 7% of respondents considered themselves a learner although not currently participating, nor planning to participate in a learning activity in the foreseeable future. 14% planned to start an activity within the next 6 months, with 13% of respondents planned to participate in a learning activity at some point in the future although it was unlikely to be in the next 6 months.

22. Respondents who indicated they were undertaking learning activities during the survey period were asked how many distinct learning activities they would be participating in during the survey period. The average was 1.9, fractionally higher than 2015 (1.8).

23. Respondents were then asked to rank up to 5 types of learning activity, with activity 1 being their most important activity and 5 being the least important. They were also asked to only select as many activities as they were actually participating in during the survey period, and the results are shown in Figure 8. The full text of the options available can be found at Appendix 1.
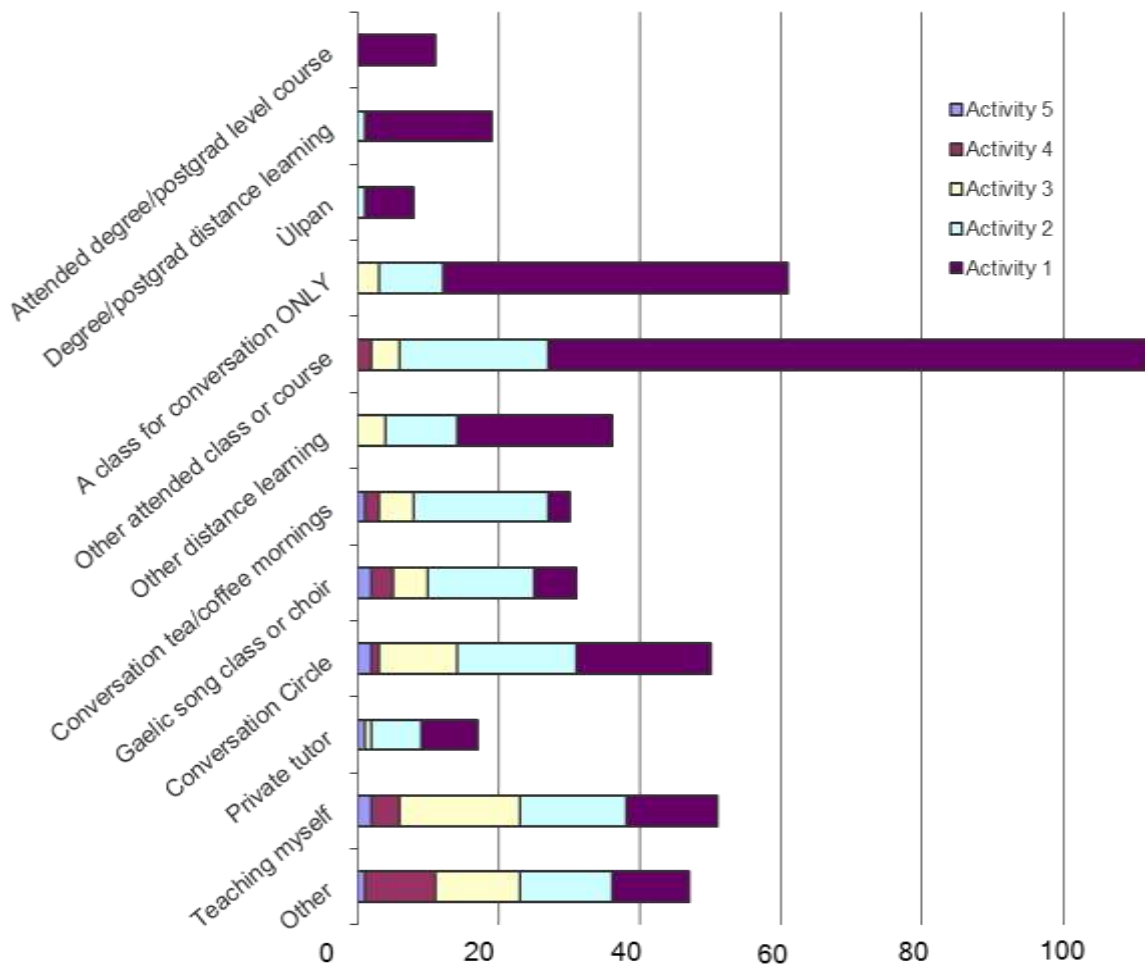
Figure 8 – Learning Activities*

As shown in Figure 8 and following the pattern of activity in 2015, attended classes (excluding conversation classes) were the most common form of learning activity, with conversation classes being the second highest type of activity. Also in common with previous years, a significant number of respondents (51, 20%) who were teaching themselves as one of the five activities.

24. Respondents were then asked which type of organisation was providing the learning activity they had marked as activity 1 in the previous question, with 29% (74 respondents) stating it was a local authority. In a change to the previous year, 25% selected university, college or other HE/FE institution which had a proportionally lower representation. Community group representation was slightly higher than the previous year, accounting for 14%, as were any other Gaelic organisations at 12%.

25. Respondents were asked to name their learning organisation for the activity marked as 1 and this information was used to determine what proportion of adult learners of Gaelic has responded to the

survey. The following question asked them to state in which local authority area their learning provider was located and the results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Local Authority of Learning Provider for Activity 1

Local Authority Area	Percentage	Number
Aberdeen City	9.5%	22
Aberdeenshire		≤5
Angus		≤5
Argyll: Argyll and Bute Islands		≤5
Argyll: Argyll and Islands		≤5
Argyll: Helensburgh and Lomond		≤5
Clackmannanshire		≤5
Dumfries and Galloway		≤5
Dundee City		≤5
East Ayrshire		≤5
East Dunbartonshire		≤5
East Lothian		≤5
East Renfrewshire		≤5
Edinburgh, City of	14.2%	33
Falkirk		≤5
Fife		≤5
Glasgow City	11.2%	26
Highland: Badenoch and Strathspey		≤5
Highland: Caithness and Sutherland		≤5
Highland: Inverness and Nairn	6.0%	14
Highland: Ross and Cromarty	3.0%	7
Highland: Skye and Lochalsh	19.4%	45
Inverclyde		≤5
Lochaber		≤5
Midlothian		≤5
Moray: North East Moray		≤5
Moray: West Moray		≤5
North Ayrshire mainland		≤5
North Ayrshire: Arran and Cumbrae		≤5
North Lanarkshire		≤5
Orkney Islands		≤5
Perth and Kinross		≤5
Renfrewshire		≤5
Scottish Borders		≤5
Shetland Islands		≤5
South Ayrshire		≤5
South Lanarkshire	3.0%	7
Stirling		≤5
West Dunbartonshire		≤5
West Lothian		≤5
Western Isles	2.6%	6
Located outwith Scotland	6.0%	14
Don't know		≤5

27. Respondents were then asked about their furthest one way journey that they would make in order to participate in a learning activity. The majority (64%, 148 respondents) indicated they were travelling 10 miles or less, although 11% (26 respondents) indicated their journey would be in excess of 41 miles.

28. Almost a quarter, (24%, 55 respondents) said that they would use public transport as part of their longest journey to attend a learning activity.

29. Those that stated they were teaching themselves Gaelic as their primary activity were asked how they were teaching themselves Gaelic, and 56% (14 respondents) were using structured learning materials specifically designed for teaching yourself Gaelic.

30. The 2016 survey had additional questions for those who considered themselves learners although were not planning to participate in any learning activities for the foreseeable future. Of those that responded to the question that related to why they considered themselves learners, 44% (11 respondents) said that they felt they are continuously developing their Gaelic language skills and consider themselves to be involved in lifelong learning. 32% said that they were committed to developing their Gaelic language skills but felt there were no suitable learning opportunities available to them, and 12% said they were committed to developing their skills at some point in the future although had no specific plans.

31. 31% of those that considered themselves learners although not participating and not planning to participate stated they were participating in activities to help or support others.

Section 3 - Potential Barriers to Learning

32. The majority of respondents (59%, 225) indicated that they had encountered issues, difficulties or barriers that had prevented them from improving their Gaelic language skills as they had anticipated. Although small, these results do indicate a year on year increase in the proportion of adult learners of Gaelic who feel there are barriers to progressing their development of Gaelic language skills.

33. The barriers selected by respondents are shown in Figure 9, which also shows a comparison with 2015 data (percentages shown for 2016 data only).
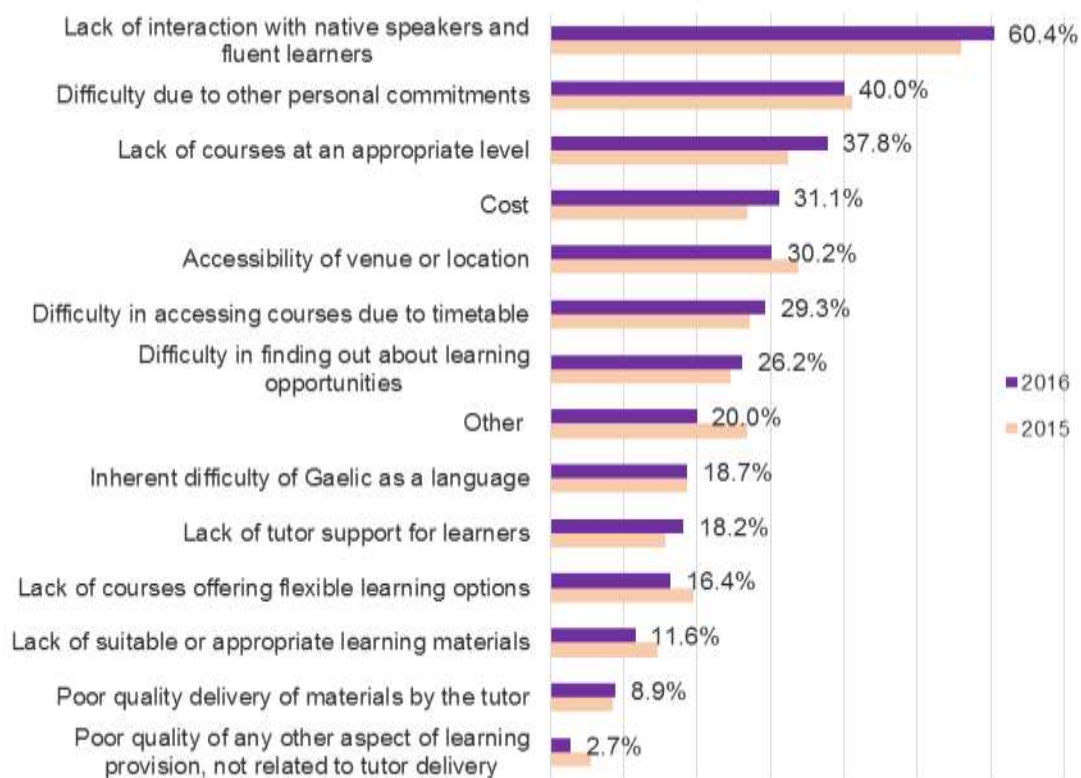
Figure 9 – Barriers to Learning*

The barriers reported by respondents were similar to the previous year although the results suggested the lack of interaction with native speakers and fluent learners was affecting an increasing proportion of learners. Those indicating cost was a barrier had proportionally increased, and it should be noted that some respondents also indicated they felt value for money was an issue when commenting on Other.

Section 4 - Resources

34. The majority of respondents (93%, 356) indicated that they used resources to help improve or consolidate their Gaelic language skills.

35. In common with previous surveys, television was the most important resource, followed by websites with Gaelic content, radio and books written specifically for adult learners.
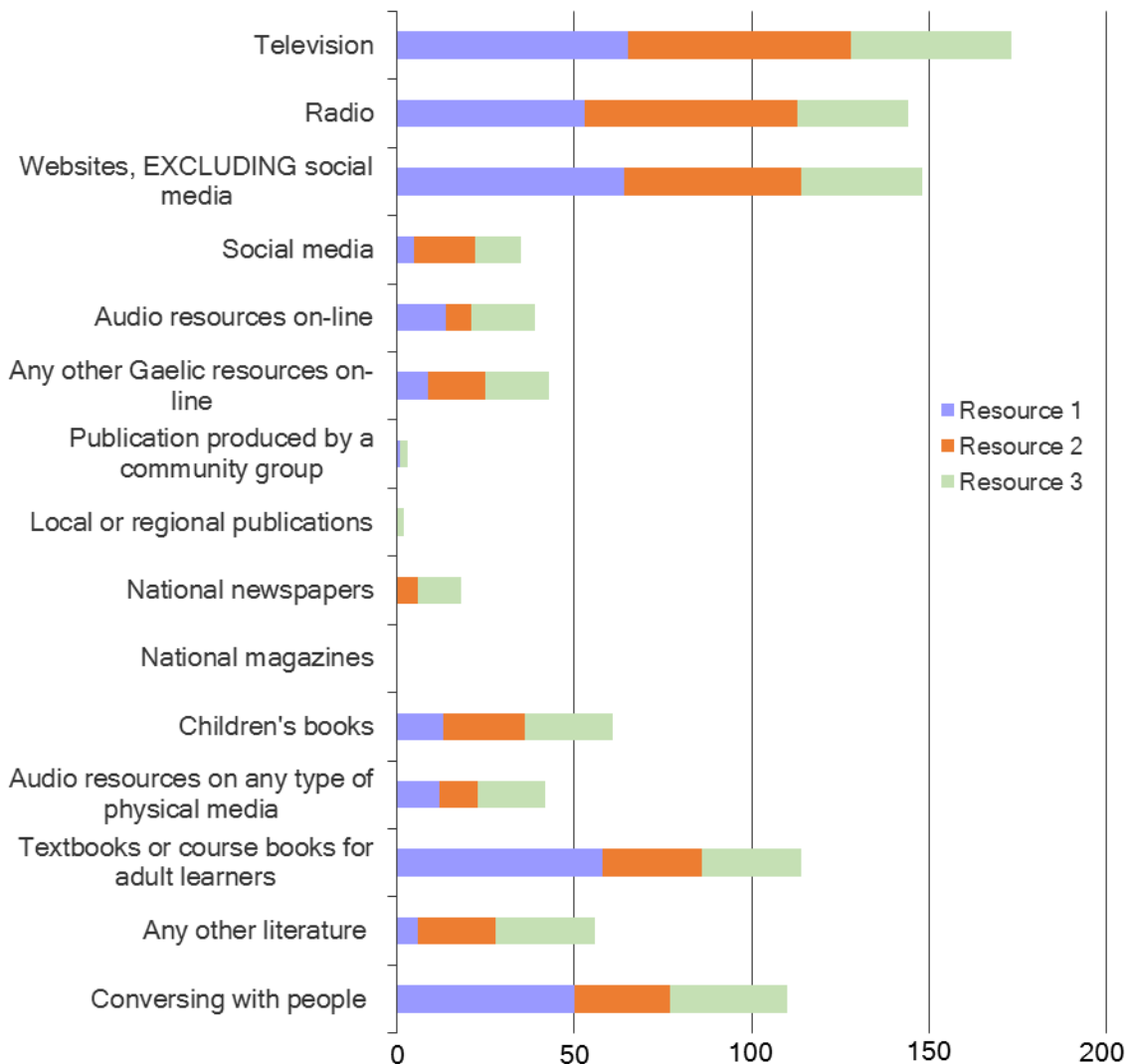
Figure 10 – Resources Used to Improve or Consolidate Gaelic Language Skills*

Section 5 - Contact Details

36. 315 people (82%) provided a contact e-mail address for a follow up survey.

3.2.2. Learning Provider Survey Data and Analysis

Learning providers were asked to submit data primarily to help with the triangulation of learner data and enable the calculation of a return rate for the learner survey. Some of the providers submitted comprehensive information which enabled a figure to be calculated for the number of adult learners of Gaelic. It is worth noting that the quality of returns from learning providers has continually improved during the survey project, with the number of activities reported in 2016 being higher than 2015. The improved quality of learning provider data has, once again, highlighted the issues with learners being able to accurately categorise their learning into appropriate type, which is discussed further in the relevant sections below. Data from the learning providers was entered on to the spreadsheet.

4. Evaluation

This section provides a discussion and evaluation of the findings from the surveys, making some comparisons to previous survey work where relevant.

Each section of the survey is discussed in a separate sub-section with the final sub-section looking at changes to the survey for subsequent years to address issues identified.

Given the number of returns, the results are thought to be generally indicative of adult learners of Gaelic. It should be noted that wherever the term "learner" (or "learners") is used in the text, it is referring to an adult leaner or enhancer of Gaelic language skill(s) unless stated otherwise.

4.1 About Learners

The number of returns was lower than in previous years and will need to be monitored to ensure it does not fall below levels that are thought to be generally representative of learners. There are a number of factors that were likely to have influenced the number of returns in the 2016:

     i.   There were major changes to the operations of Clì Gàidhlig, an organisation that provided support and learning opportunities to a potentially large number of learners. These changes may have affected levels of survey participation and, potentially, numbers of adult learners;

     ii.   A second survey running at the same time, which was investigating digital media content as support for Gaelic skills, that also targeted adult learners. This survey had a number of similar questions at the beginning of the survey and it is possible that some people may not have realised they were two separate surveys.

Additionally, survey fatigue is a possibility, with the survey work now in the third year. In order to establish trends, it is vital to keep the majority of the question base consistent year on year although this creates challenges in maintaining the interest of those participating. This may have been exascerbated by two different surveys running concurrently targeting some of the same population, although it is equally as possible that the second survey assisted with generating interest.

The calculation of the number of learners during the survey period (shown in the next section) shows a slight decrease although this may not necessarily indicate the number of learners is falling and there are a number of other explanations given the issues highlighted above. Using the results of a single survey, survey bias in particular cannot be ruled out and the 2017 survey will be vital to establishing whether there is a downward trend in the number of adult learners of Gaelic, especially in the number of beginners.

4.1.1 Location of Learners

The five areas that had the highest representation (with i being the highest) of where adult learners were currently living were:

     i.   City of Edinburgh
     ii.   Glasgow City
     iii.   Highland: Inverness and Nairn
     iv.   Aberdeen City
     v.   Highland: Ross and Cromarty/Highland: Skye and Lochalsh (joint)

The top three locations of learners remained the same as the previous year although there was proportionally a much higher level of respondents from Aberdeen City (more actual returns were received in 2016 than in 2015). These are likely to be representative to some degree of where opportunities are available for learners, and this is discussed further under Section 4.2.1.

4.1.2. Age Profile of Learners

Respondents were offered age bands from age 16 up to age 75+. The profile of adult learners of Gaelic remained (in comparison to the previous surveys) weighted towards the upper end of the age spectrum although was slightly lower than 2015, with 61% of learners aged 45 and over. It was notable that, despite the reduction in respondents, the profile was very similar to the profile of respondents in 2015. It was encouraging to see a relatively higher proportion of those aged 30–34 although this may be due to survey bias given the reduction in returns acknowledged at Section 4.1.

As referenced in previous reports, work commissioned by the EHRC, Jones (2010)[i], examined participation in adult learning and noted that there was a direct correlation between participation rates and economic activity. Given the current economic situation across the UK, it remains possible that this may be a factor affecting the lower age brackets more than the upper age brackets.

There remains a very low number of returns for those aged 16–19, which are unlikely to be representative of learning activity. This is discussed further at Section 4.7.

4.1.2. Current Language Competency of Learners

The method of assessing language competency of learners was developed in 2015 and was generally thought to be a more accurate representation of language competence. Respondents were asked to assess the level of their spoken Gaelic and then asked to rate their understanding, reading, and writing skills by comparing them to where they had ranked their speaking skills. The categories of spoken skills presented to respondents were loosely based on the CEFR framework although, given the length of many of the category descriptors, were amended to make them more suitable for the survey.

The results show that, relatively, the proportion of beginners has fallen by 40% in comparison to the previous year (7.6% from 12.7%), with the proportion of learners with more developed competencies increasing at every level. This is the first year where a drop in relative number of beginners has been evident and, should these results be indicative of actual numbers of learners, it would suggest that there are fewer learners entering the training pipeline, which will need to be addressed.

Respondents remained more confident with their reading ability with 55% considering their reading skills to be better than their spoken Gaelic skills. The assessments for understanding and writing skills were more evenly split between the options offered.

4.2. About Learning

4.2.1. Learning Interventions

The majority of respondents were participating in an activity during the survey period although the relative number showed signs of decreasing, with 66% of respondents reporting involvement in an activity, down from 68% the previous year. The activity most commonly reported as a respondent's primary learning activity was a class with a planned set of activities led by a tutor, although excluded a

structured conversation class, which was the second most common reported primary activity. The most common second activity was also a class with a planned set of activities, indicating a slight change in pattern of activity from previous years. As referenced above, the improved quality of data from learning providers has highlighted the issues with asking learners to categorise their learning and their ability to consistently assess what type of learning they are undertaking. It is difficult to quantify levels of accuracy within the existing project and therefore it is important to acknowledge this factor when estimating the number of adult learners during the survey period.

The most common locations of learning activity 1 as reported by learners, with i being the highest were:

   i.   Highland: Skye and Lochalsh
   ii.   Edinburgh, City of
   iii.   Glasgow City
   iv.   Aberdeen City
   v.   Highland: Inverness and Nairn

There remained a small but significant number (7%) classifying themselves as learners although not undertaking, and not planning to undertake, any activity. The most common type of learning provider organisation was a local authority.

Those considering themselves learners that were not currently participating in a learning activity although planned to at some point in the future increased to 27% of the respondents (compared to 24% in 2015). This will require further monitoring as, while it is a positive indication people intend to enter (or re-enter) the training pipeline, it would also suggest that the numbers who are actually participating are potentially showing signs of decreasing as highlighted above.

The representation of those teaching themselves as their primary activity had dropped to 5% from 7%, although 20% reported it as a learning activity in which they would participate during the survey period. Generally, the results would suggest a decreasing number of people are opting to teach themselves Gaelic.

The 2016 survey included questions on respondents' longest journey made in order to attend learning activities. The majority (64%, 148) were travelling a maximum of under 10 miles one way, although it is worth noting that 24% of respondents indicated that they used public transport as part of their journey. This would suggest accessibility and access to public transport is an important factor for the location of learning opportunities.

4.3. Barriers to Learning

The majority of learners reported a potential barrier to learning (59%), which was a similar proportion to that reported in 2015 (58%). The proportion of those reporting that the lack of interaction with native speakers and fluent learners, and lack of appropriate courses had increased. This may be reflective of the trend of an overall increasing competence of learners, as discussed at Section 4.1.2. It should also be noted that cost was reported by a relatively higher number of respondents, with a number of people specifically referencing a perceived lack of value for money for their learning activity. This is discussed further in Section 4.7.

4.4. Resources

Respondents were asked if they used Gaelic resources (7% of respondents said they did not use any resources) and if so, to rank the types of resources provided in order of importance to consolidating or improving their Gaelic language skills. These results were interesting as, with the exception of websites, they seemed to favour what may be considered more traditional types of resources. The top 5 types of resources were:

    i.   Gaelic television
    ii.   Gaelic websites
    iii.   Gaelic radio
    iv.   Gaelic course or textbooks written specifically for adult learners
    v.   Conversing with people

One factor to note is that the resource types were purposely quite simplistic and did not take into account the format in which the resource was provided. Subject to the results of the other survey work conducted by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, this may be a useful area to research further in future projects. For example, conversing with people may be in person, over the telephone or using a technical platform such as Skype, and facilitating these channels is likely to help reduce some of the barriers to learning that have been identified. It is also important to acknowledge that the medium of the survey (an on-line tool) may have created a survey bias in the results. Given the location and age profile of learners, it is likely that some adult learners were unable to access the survey and therefore would be also unlikely to be able to access on-line resources to support their learning. Consequently it is possible that the proportion of learners using on-line content is lower than suggested in this survey.

4.5. Contact Details

A high percentage of respondents (82%) provided their e-mail address in order to participate in other/future surveys.

4.6. Learning Provider Information

There was a sufficient number of returns from learning providers to estimate a participation rate for the learner survey. This was then used to estimate the number of adult learners of Gaelic during the survey period. It was very encouraging to see a larger number of returns from learning providers providing activities during the survey and work will be undertaken to continue to build on this for the final survey in the project.

4.7. Recommended Changes

The recommended changes following the 2015 survey were implemented for the 2016 survey. The communication of the survey continues to be slightly complicated by the scheduling of survey following the half term holidays. While the survey time was purposely chosen as a time that is likely to be the most representative of numbers of learners, many of those who are likely to promote and distribute the survey are often away from their posts at that time. Timings for promotion will be reconsidered for the 2017 survey.

As discussed at 4.1, returns for 2016 were likely to be affected by a second, separate survey commissioned by Bòrd na Gàidhlig and MG Alba. It is thought unlikely that the survey will run again

in 2017 and therefore no action will be taken regarding this particular issue, although this will require further consideration should that survey work continue on a regular basis at the same time of year.

Results data seemed to suggest that changes made to the questions for the 2016 survey had addressed the key issues with interpretation and consistency. The two points identified above were:

i.   Participation of 16–19 year olds – this could be improved and one option may be to highlight that the definition of an adult learner includes this group when issuing survey communications.

ii.   Some respondents raised the issue of value for money for their learning activities. The survey does not specifically cover this although, as cost is being reported as a barrier to learning for a larger proportion of people, it may be worthwhile to look at this particular barrier in more detail in future project work.

5. Number of Adult Learners of Gaelic

Data about the number of people participating in learning activities during the survey period was submitted by 16 learning providers. This allowed a calculation of a participation rate in the survey for learners, which was then used to estimate the number of adult learners of Gaelic during the survey period.

The calculation to estimate the number of adult learners of Gaelic during the survey period is illustrated in the sub-sections below.

5.1. Number of activities reported by learners

Total number of activities reported by learners: 468.

Total number of learners reporting a main activity (activity 1): 252.

5.2. Learning opportunities reported by learning providers

Number of participants in activities during the survey period reported by learning providers: 492.

Number of reported main learning activities of learners matched to learning providers: 52.

Using the data about the first learning activity, and the likelihood of those matched to a learning provider for activity 1 participating in another learning activity during the survey period, a multiplier was deduced and used to generate an estimate of how many people were participating in an activity declared by a learning provider as activities 2, 3, 4 or 5. The multiplier was calculated to be 3.57%.

Deduced percentage of declared learning provider activities reported against by learners: 10.37%.

5.3. Number of learners

Using the figures above, 254 respondents accounted for 10.37% of activities reported as being attended through the survey period.

Estimated number of adult learners of Gaelic participating in a learning during the survey period activity: 2,449.

129 returns reported being a learner but not participating in any activity. Using the same percentage of participation, number of additional learners: 1,244.

Estimated total number of adult learners of Gaelic during the survey period: 3,693.

Estimated total number of adult learners of Gaelic living in Scotland: 3261*

*It should be noted that adult learners of Gaelic in all locations are encouraged to complete the survey, and the number of learners outwith Scotland is difficult to verify within the scope of this survey. The estimate above assumes a linear relationship, using the percentage returns from those outwith Scotland as a multiplying factor.

5.4. Factors Affecting the Calculation of Number of Learners

As in previous years, there are a number of factors that should be acknowledged when using the survey results to estimate the number of adult learners of Gaelic. There are also a number of assumptions that were made when making the calculations as well as limitations, and it is essential to factor these into any decisions based on the data.

5.4.1. Factors Affecting Participation Rate

Various information sources on-line suggest that the return rate for on-line surveys is typically 10–30% although this depends on a large number of variables. The participation rate calculated was within this range and some factors identified previously in the report may provide some explanation of the rate, and help improve return rates for future surveys.

As with the calculation in the previous work, one of the most important considerations is whether people participating in activities reported by learning providers considered themselves adult learners of Gaelic. People may be attending activities for other reasons, particularly some of the informal activities identified such as Gaelic choir and Gaelic song. However, the consideration is as equally important for formal activities, for example, undergraduate and post graduate courses taught through the medium of Gaelic. Some of those attending particular types of courses, for example teacher training, are likely to be more highly skilled in Gaelic language prior to beginning the course. While they may consider themselves currently learning, they may not necessarily consider themselves learners of Gaelic.

There will be other factors affecting the return rate and the promotion of the survey on-line and primarily through on-line tools may have discouraged some to make a return if they are unable to access a computer, or are not familiar with on-line tools.

5.4.2. Key Assumptions and Limitations

The key assumptions and limitations made when calculating the number of adult learners of Gaelic were:

   i.   Learners were able to accurately identify and report their learning provider. As discussed above, this is known to create some difficulty in practice particularly around funded courses;

   ii.   The activities reported by learners were correctly matched to learning providers, and that all activities reported as current by either learners or learning providers were being undertaken during the survey period;

   iii.   The relationship between learners and learning activities is linear. Using the participation rate as a multiplier also assumes all types of learner have the same relationship to learning activities. However, there may be differences for those that consider themselves learners but are not participating in any activities, those teaching themselves, and people using a private tutor. This limitation is particularly important to acknowledge for this work as learners were only asked to provide information about activity 1;

   iv.   The relationships between numbers of learners participating and learning provider, regardless of activity, are directly relational;

   v.   There was no duplication in the returns from learning providers.

6. References

i.   *Equality and Human Rights Commission Triennial Review: Education (Lifelong Learning) Participation in Adult Learning* (May 2010), Jones P, School of Education, University of Southampton.