



Bòrd na Gàidhlig

**Survey of
Adult Learners of Gaelic**

Final Report

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Geàrr-chunntas den Sgrùdadh – Inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh Gàidhlig 2015

Bharantaich Bòrd na Gàidhlig (am Bòrd) Tkm Consulting sa Ghiblean 2015 gus pròiseact a libhrigeadh thairis air trì bliadhna far 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.

Seach gu bheil an aithisg seo a' buntainn ris a' chiad sgrùdadh sa phròiseact seo, tha i a' sealltainn nam modhan-obrach a chaidh a chleachdadh gus an sgrùdadh a dhèanamh agus tha iomradh ann cuideachd air puingeann cudromach bho obair eile a chaidh a dhèanamh ann an 2014 gus cuideachadh le bhith dealbh ro-innleachd ionnsachaidh do dh'inbhich. Thathar an dùil gun seall aithisgean sna bliadhnaichean ri thighinn gluasadan sam bith a bhios anns an dàta.

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.

'S e am prìomh dhòigh a chaidh a chleachdadh gus dàta a thrusadh, ceisteachan air-loidhne a chaidh a ruith bho 9 Samhain 2015 airson dà sheachdain. Ghabh tòrr dhaoine pàirt ann agus thathar den bheachd gu bheil na toraidhean a' toirt dhuinn dealbh math de na tha tachairt a thaobh inbhich a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig. Cuideachd, chaidh iarraidh air luchd-solair chùrsaichean pàirt a ghabhail sa phròiseact le bhith toirt fiosrachadh dhuinn air na cùrsaichean is gnìomhan a bha iad a' tabhann rè ùine an sgrùdaidh. Chaidh am fiosrachadh sin a chleachdadh gus tuairmse a dhèanamh air dè an àireamh de luchd-ionnsachaidh às a' cheud a lion an ceisteachan againn agus gus tuairmse a dhèanamh air dè an àireamh de dh'inbhich a th' ann a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig. Chaidh dàta bho luchd-ionnsachaidh agus bho luchd-solair chùrsaichean a chur a-steach ann an cliath-dhuilleagan a fhuaras bhon Bhòrd.

Bha còig earrainnean sa cheisteachan agus sa chiad earrainn bhathar a' cruinneachadh fiosrachadh pearsanta. Bha dà cheist ann a bha dèiligeadh ri aois agus fileantas, agus mar a fhuaras sa cheisteachan a bh' ann roimhe, bha a' mhòr-chuid den luchd-fhreagairt 45 no nas sine. Chaidh an dòigh san robhar a' faighneachd mu fhileantas atharrachadh bhon sgrùdadh mu dheireadh agus tha barrachd misneachd againn an turas seo gu bheil na toraidhean a' toirt dealbh fìor dhuinn de luchd-ionnsachaidh na Gàidhlig. Bha àireamh an fhìor luchd-tòiseachaidh gu math coltach ris an-uiridh, le 13% de luchd-freagairt gam meas fhèin mar sin. Bha am pàtran airson nam freagairtean eile a thaobh fileantais gu math eadar-dhealaichte seach an-uiridh leis an àireamh as motha de luchd-freagairt a' roghnachadh an ath ìre de dh'fhileantas, os cionn fìor neach-tòiseachaidh, airson sgilean bruidhne ann an Gàidhlig.

Bha an ath earrainn a' faighneachd mu gnìomhan ionnsachaidh a bha an neach ris aig an àm, agus mura robh an neach ri gnìomhan ionnsachaidh aig an àm, chaidh fhaighneachd dhaibh an robh iad an dùil gnìomhan ionnsachaidh a dhèanamh. Chaidh iarraidh air luchd-freagairt suas ri còig seòrsaichean gnìomhan ionnsachaidh a roghnachadh san robh iad an sàs rè ùine an sgrùdaidh, agus sheall na toraidhean gun robh a' mhòr-chuid de dhaoine a' gabhail pàirt ann an clas le structar

(gun a bhith gabhail a-steach clasaichean còmhraidh). B' e an dàrna freagairt as cumanta a fhuaras airson prìomh ghnìomh ionnsachaidh, clas còmhraidh, agus b' iad an dà ghnìomh seo an fheadhainn as cumanta.

Thuir a' mhòr-chuid de luchd-freagairt gun robh duilgheadasan, trioblaidean no cnapan-starra air a bhith ann a thug buaidh air mar a b' urrainn dhaibh sgilean Gàidhlig ionnsachadh. Thuir barrachd is leth den luchd-fhreagairt gun robh e na duilgheadas dhaibh mar a bha cion chothroman aca conaltradh ri fileantaich no luchd-ionnsachaidh fileanta (b' e sin an cnap-starra as motha ann a bhith ag ionnsachadh). B' e an dàrna duilgheadas as motha a bh' aig daoine, mar a bha dleasan an is uallaichean eile aca nam beatha phearsanta, agus b' e an treas cnap-starra as motha nach b' urrainn do dhaoine cùrsa a dhèanamh air diofar adhbharan. Bha na toraidhean seo gu math coltach ris an fheadhainn a fhuaras ann an 2014.

Bha earrainn ann an uair sin mu dheidhinn ghoireasan agus chaidh iarraidh air luchd-freagairt fiosrachadh a thoirt seachad air dè seòrsa ghoireasan a bha iad a' cleachdadh gus na sgilean Gàidhlig aca a dhaingneachadh no a neartachadh. Am measg na feadhna a bha a' cleachdadh ghoireasan, b' iad na goireasan as motha a bha daoine a' cleachdadh telebhisean Gàidhlig agus an uair sin goireasan air-loidhne. San earrainn mu dheireadh den sgrùdadh, thug àireamh mhòr den luchd-fhreagairt am fiosrachadh conaltraidh aca seachad agus iad deònach pàirt a ghabhail ann an sgrùdaidhean eile san ùine air thoiseach.

Bha freagairtean gu math mionaideach ann bho chuid a luchd-solair chùrsaichean, ach cha d' fhuaras uiread thoraidhean is freagairtean ris an robhar an dùil, agus bithear a' coimhead ann an 2016 air modhan-obrach a chleachdadh an turas sin feuch gun gabh barrachd bhuidhnean pàirt ann. Le bhith cleachdadh an dàta a thug luchd-solair chùrsaichean seachad, chaidh obrachadh a-mach gun robh 3,467 inbhich ann a tha ag ionnsachadh sgilean Gàidhlig.

Executive Summary – Adult Learners of Gaelic 2015

Bòrd na Gàidhlig (the Bòrd) 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.

As this report documents the first survey of the project, it outlines the approach taken to deliver the survey and also draws any points of note from previous work completed in 2014 to inform the strategy for adult learners. It is anticipated that in future years the report will highlight any trends that are beginning to emerge from the data.

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 was run from 9 November 2015 for two weeks. There was a good level of participation and the findings are generally considered to be representative of adult learners of Gaelic. 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 generated an estimated number of adult learners of Gaelic. Data from both learners and learning providers was entered into spreadsheets prepared by the Bòrd.

The survey for learners had five sections with the first section gathering personal information. Two of the areas examined were age and level of fluency and, as with the previous survey, the majority of survey participants were aged 45 or over. The way in which the survey asked about fluency was altered from the previous survey and there is a higher level of confidence that the results are more representative of the adult learning population. The number of complete beginners was very similar to last year, accounting for 13% of respondents. The pattern of responses for other levels of competence was markedly different with the highest proportion of respondents selecting the next level on the scale from beginner for spoken Gaelic skills.

The next section asked about current learning activities, and for those not currently participating, whether they planned to undertake learning activities. Respondents were asked to select up to five types of learning activity that they were participating in during the survey period, and the results showed that the majority of people were participating in a structured class (excluding conversation classes). The second highest return for primary learning activity was a conversation class, and these two activities were also the most popular overall.

The majority of respondents indicated that they had encountered issues, difficulties and barriers that had affected their acquisition of Gaelic language skills. More than half reported an issue with the lack of interaction with native Gaelic speakers or fluent learners (the highest barrier). The second most commonly reported issue was the impact of other personal commitments, and the third was accessibility of courses. These findings were very similar to the work carried out in 2014.

The survey went on to examine resources and respondents were asked to provide information about which categories of resource they were using to help consolidate or improve their Gaelic language skills. Of those using resources, the most popular categories were Gaelic television followed by on-

line resources. In the final section, a high proportion of respondents provided their contact details for participating in future surveys.

There were very comprehensive responses from some learning providers, although the number of returns was not as high as anticipated, and this is an area that will be revisited in terms of methodology for 2016 with a view to improving engagement. Using the data the learning providers submitted, the number of adult learners was calculated to be 3,467.

1. Introduction

Bòrd na Gàidhlig (the Bòrd) 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, the Bòrd 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 the Bòrd in 2014, which also informed the development of a strategy for adult learners. The Bòrd then commissioned a three year project to survey adult learners annually, and establish some general trends and statistics about adult learners of Gaelic.

Following the Introduction, there are four sections in this report:

- i. Methodology – provides an overview of the approach taken to deliver the survey and statistics, and covers development and distribution of the surveys for both learners and learning providers. It 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;
- 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 in the previous survey work, 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

The first stage of the project was to define a number of key terms. The agreed 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 – the 2015 changed the focus of terminology around learning to more specifically refer to activities, given the evidence from the previous survey that many learners were unclear how to classify their learning. The definition used for the survey was:

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 the Bòrd. 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 the previous year, the text and promotion of the survey was very much targeting those who were currently participating in a learning activity.

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 – respondents were asked to select the types of resources they used to help consolidate or improve their Gaelic language skills, and then asked to name three resources in order of importance;

- vi. 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. A hard copy was also available for anyone who did not have internet access, which could be requested by contacting Tkm.

2.1.2. Learning Provider Survey

Information requested from learning providers was:

- i. Organisation and contact information, which included some basic information about the total number of staff involved in the delivery of Gaelic language learning activities;
- ii. Learning activities being offered during the survey period, the location, and the number of students participating. Providers were also asked about concessions, the number of staff involved in individual activity provision, and the maximum distance that students need to travel.

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 and known to be providing learning opportunities.

Some people contacted Tkm about the survey once the promotional activity had started and asked to be added to the distribution lists, and a number of organisations offered to help promote the survey.

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 the Bòrd's social media. Other organisations assisted with the promotion of the survey through their own communications channels and there was a link to the survey on a web page within Tkm's website.

The survey was open for responses between 9 – 22 November 2015.

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.

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

Total number of returns	751
Total number of completed returns	626

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)	27
Number of returns from learning providers with current learning interventions	12

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

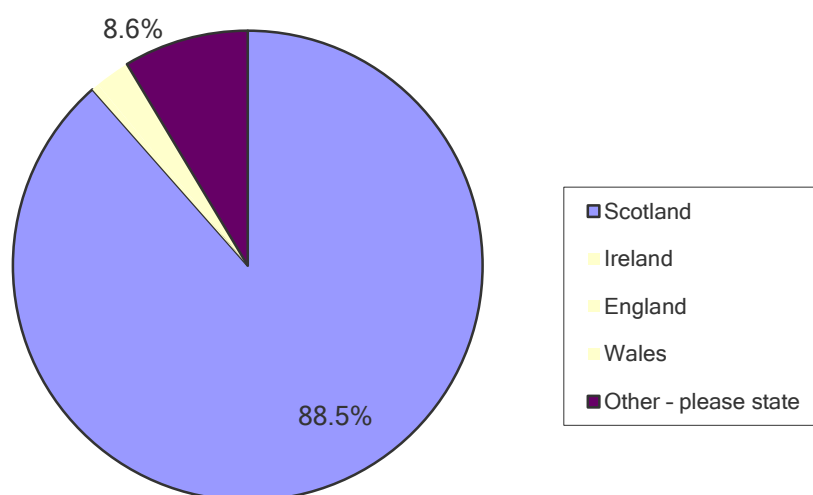
survey and therefore not all respondents would have been given an opportunity to respond to all questions.

Data was also entered into the Bòrd's spreadsheets.

Section 1 - About the Learner

1. For the 2015 survey, the definition of adult learner was changed to have more of a focus on those who were participating in learning activities although, as with the earlier work, those who were not currently participating in a learning activity were not excluded. Additionally, the definition was changed to include those who lived *or* studied in Scotland. The survey started with a question to check that the respondent considered themselves an adult learner of Gaelic, with 41 respondents stating that they were not learners. There were 626 completed responses for those that considered themselves learners.

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



**Figure 1 – Country of Current Residence
[Lowest values redacted]**

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	1.4%	8
Aberdeenshire	2.0%	11
Angus		≤5
Argyll: Argyll and Bute Islands	1.4%	8
Argyll: Argyll and Islands	2.7%	15
Argyll: Helensburgh and Lomond		≤5
Clackmannanshire		≤5
Dumfries and Galloway	2.0%	11

Dundee City	1.1%	6
East Ayrshire	2.0%	11
East Dunbartonshire	1.3%	7
East Lothian		≤5
East Renfrewshire		≤5
Edinburgh, City of	16.2%	90
Falkirk	1.1%	6
Fife	3.4%	19
Glasgow City	9.9%	55
Highland: Badenoch and Strathspey	1.6%	9
Highland: Caithness and Sutherland	2.3%	13
Highland: Inverness and Nairn	9.2%	51
Highland: Ross and Cromarty	4.0%	22
Highland: Skye and Lochalsh	4.9%	27
Inverclyde		≤5
Lochaber	3.6%	20
Midlothian		≤5
Moray: North East Moray		≤5
Moray: West Moray		≤5
North Ayrshire mainland	4.5%	25
North Ayrshire: Arran and Cumbrae	1.8%	10
North Lanarkshire	1.4%	8
Orkney Islands		≤5
Perth and Kinross	1.8%	10
Renfrewshire	3.4%	19
Scottish Borders	1.6%	9
Shetland Islands		≤5
South Ayrshire	1.4%	8
South Lanarkshire	2.2%	12
Stirling	1.3%	7
West Dunbartonshire		≤5
West Lothian		≤5
Western Isles	3.1%	17
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.

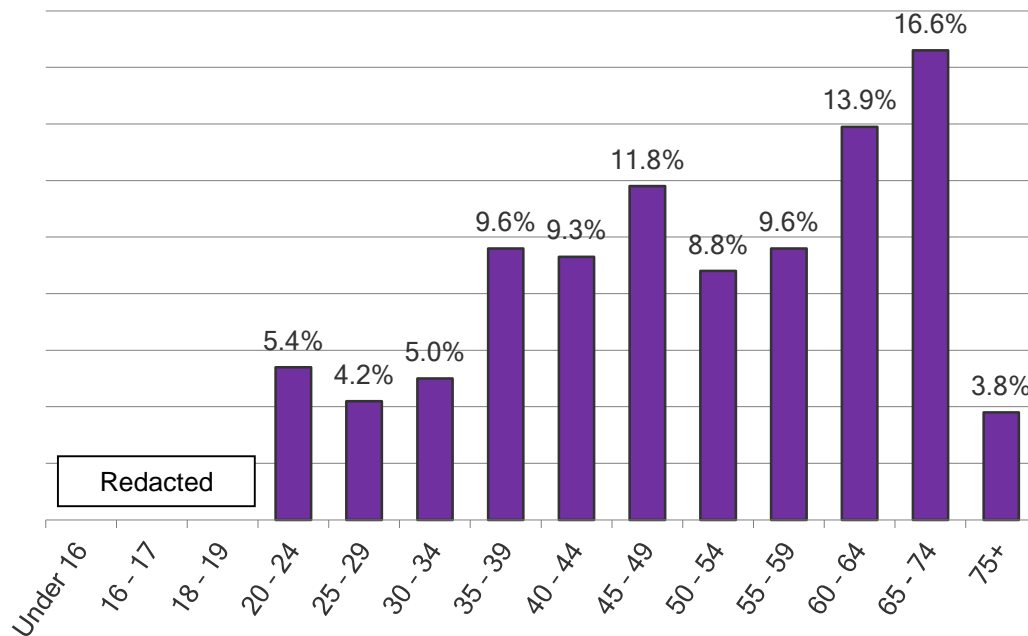


Figure 2 – Learner Age Profile

7. Within the 16 – 18 years bracket, the numbers were very small [redacted]. Of those, [redacted] said they were still in full time secondary education, [redacted] stated that they were participating in activities to improve their Gaelic skills that were not organised by the school. [Redacted] said they had left full time secondary education.

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 (86%, 534 responses).

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, in comparison to last year, the average degree of fluency is lower. This is likely to be due, at least in part, to the restructure of the question.

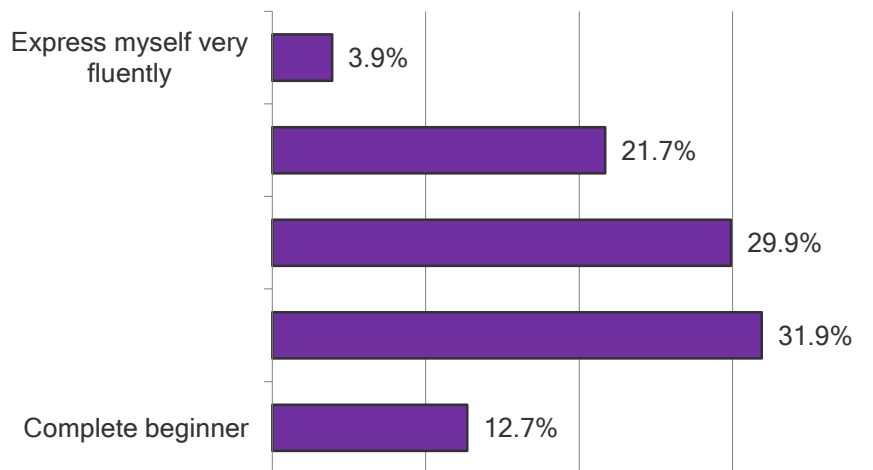


Figure 3 – Current Competency Levels of Learners

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. One interesting point of note is that 48% of respondents felt their reading ability was better than their spoken Gaelic, which may have been an influencing factor in the response in the previous year, where all skills were assessed in one question.

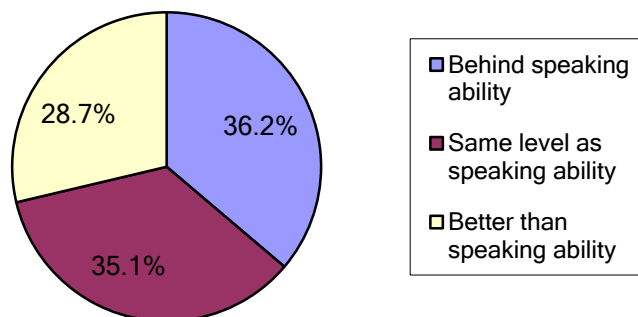


Figure 4 – Ability to Understand a Conversation in Gaelic

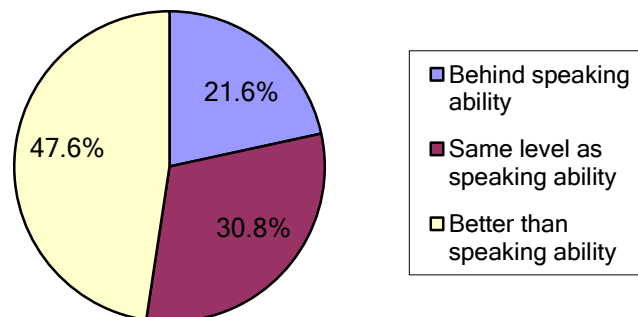


Figure 5 – Gaelic Language Reading Ability

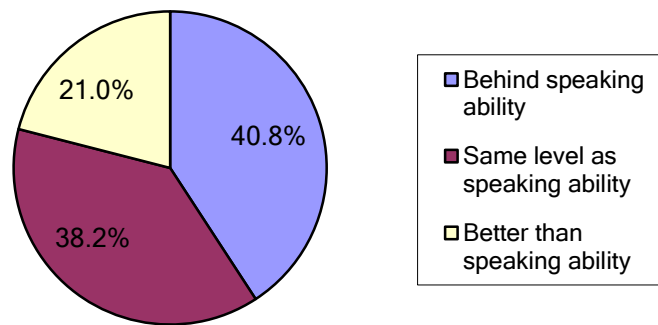


Figure 6 – Gaelic Language Writing Ability

14. Respondents were asked their gender with 63% of respondents being female, 36% male and 1% 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 organisations. 62% selected Yes, 36% No, and 2% preferring not to say.

16. The next question asked about disability with 92% saying they did not consider themselves to be disabled, 6% (38 respondents) considered themselves disabled and 2% preferred to not say. There were no additional questions relating to disability in the survey. One important point arising from the previous survey is that many people only reported a disability where they felt it impacted their learning, which is likely to remain the case in the current survey. There is a small increase (1%) on the percentage representation in the survey sample on the previous year, which 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 13% (84 respondents) indicating they were.

18. Respondents were then asked if there were any children within the household be raised with Gaelic as their prime language and 4% (26 respondents) said that there were.

19. 48% of respondents (298) said they were able to use their Gaelic skills when they are at home or work, of which 22% said they used Gaelic both at work and at home although not with anyone who uses Gaelic as their primary or main language. This question will require some review for subsequent surveys as 43% said that none of the options offered apply to them, which was considerably higher than anticipated and will require further investigation.

Section 2 - Learning Activities

21. Respondents were asked about participation in learning activities and the majority (68%, 423 respondents) were participating in one or more learning activities during the survey period. Approximately the same percentage of respondents as in the previous survey (8%) considered themselves a learner although not currently participating, nor planning to participate in a learning activity in the foreseeable future. 12% planned to start an activity within the next 6 months, and the same proportion 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 1.8.

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 7. The full text of the options available can be found at Appendix 1.

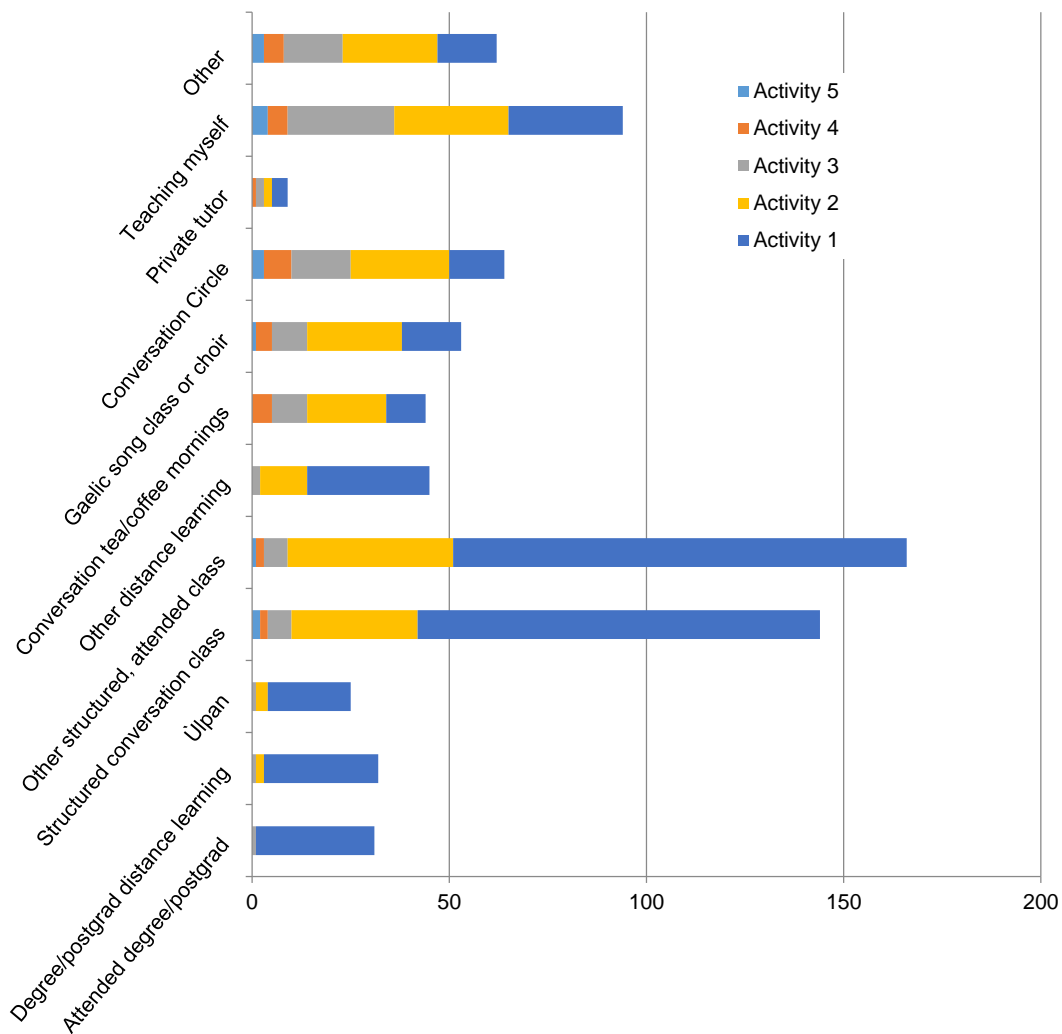


Figure 7 – Learning Activities*

As shown in Figure 7, structured classes (excluding conversation classes) were the most common form of learning activity, with structured conversation classes being the second highest type of activity. There were also a significant number of respondents (94, 23%) 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 nearly a third (31%, 132 respondents) stating it was a local authority. A similar number selected university, college or other HE/FE institution (also 31%). Community groups accounted for 12% and any other Gaelic organisations 10%.

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	1.9%	7
Aberdeenshire		≤5
Angus		≤5
Argyll: Argyll and Bute Islands		≤5
Argyll: Argyll and Islands	2.1%	8
Argyll: Helensburgh and Lomond		≤5
Clackmannanshire		≤5
Dumfries and Galloway	2.1%	8
Dundee City		≤5
East Ayrshire	2.9%	11
East Dunbartonshire		≤5
East Lothian		≤5
East Renfrewshire		≤5
Edinburgh, City of	15.3%	58
Falkirk		≤5
Fife		≤5
Glasgow City	10.3%	39
Highland: Badenoch and Strathspey		≤5
Highland: Caithness and Sutherland	1.9%	7
Highland: Inverness and Nairn	7.7%	29
Highland: Ross and Cromarty	2.9%	11
Highland: Skye and Lochalsh	19.6%	74
Inverclyde		≤5
Lochaber	3.4%	13
Midlothian		≤5
Moray: North East Moray		≤5
Moray: West Moray		≤5
North Ayrshire mainland	5.6%	21
North Ayrshire: Arran and Cumbrae	2.1%	8
North Lanarkshire		≤5
Orkney Islands		≤5
Perth and Kinross	1.9%	7
Renfrewshire	4.2%	16
Scottish Borders		≤5
Shetland Islands		≤5
South Ayrshire		≤5
South Lanarkshire		≤5
Stirling		≤5
West Dunbartonshire		≤5
West Lothian		≤5
Western Isles		≤5
Located outwith Scotland	3.4%	13
Don't know		≤5

27. Those who indicated they were teaching themselves as their primary learning activity were asked how they were teaching themselves, and the majority (58%, 19 respondents) indicated they were using a structured learning programme or materials specifically designed for teaching yourself Gaelic.

Section 3 - Potential Barriers to Learning

28. The majority of respondents (58%, 364) indicated that they had encountered issues, difficulties or barrier that had prevented them from improving their Gaelic language skills as they had anticipated, which is a slight increase on representation from the previous survey.

29. The barriers selected by respondents are shown in Figure 8.

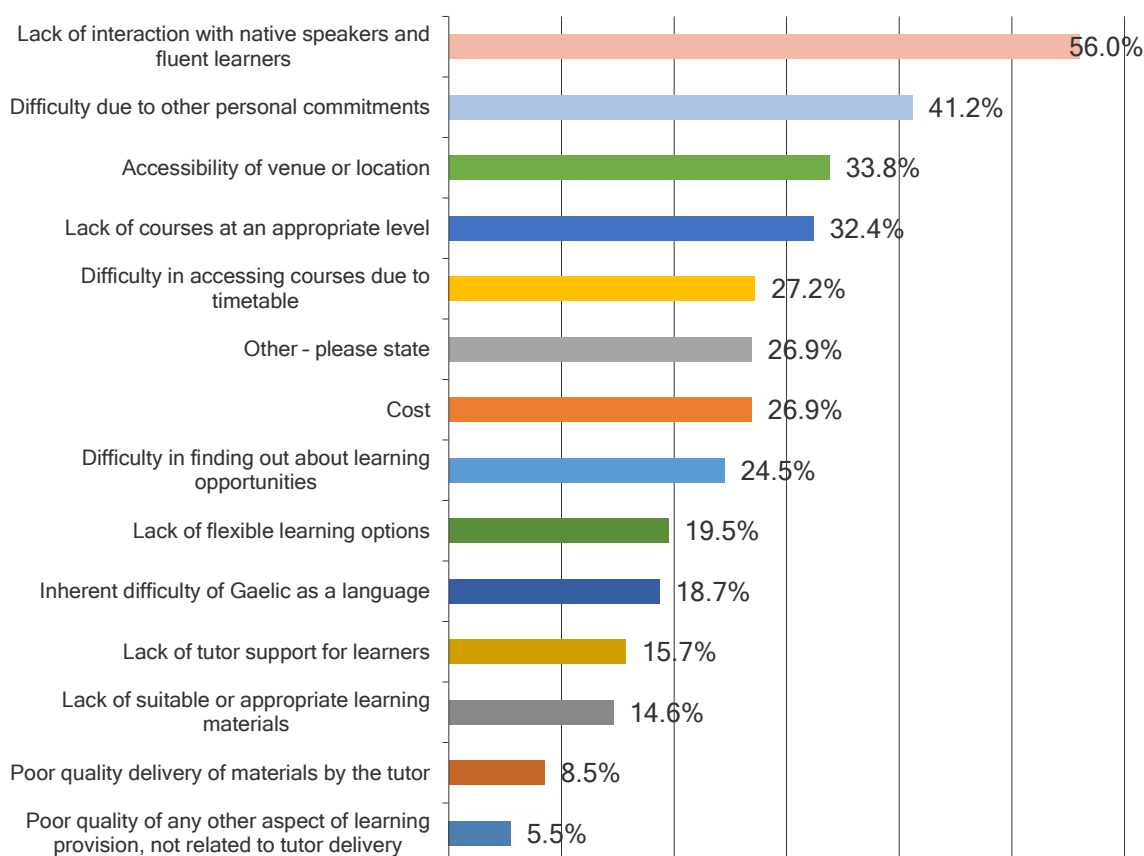


Figure 8 – Barriers to Learning*

The barriers reported by respondents were very similar both in terms of type and the percentage of learners affected to those reported the previous year.

Section 4 - Resources

30. The majority of respondents (91%, 571) indicated that they used resources to help improve or consolidate their Gaelic language skills.

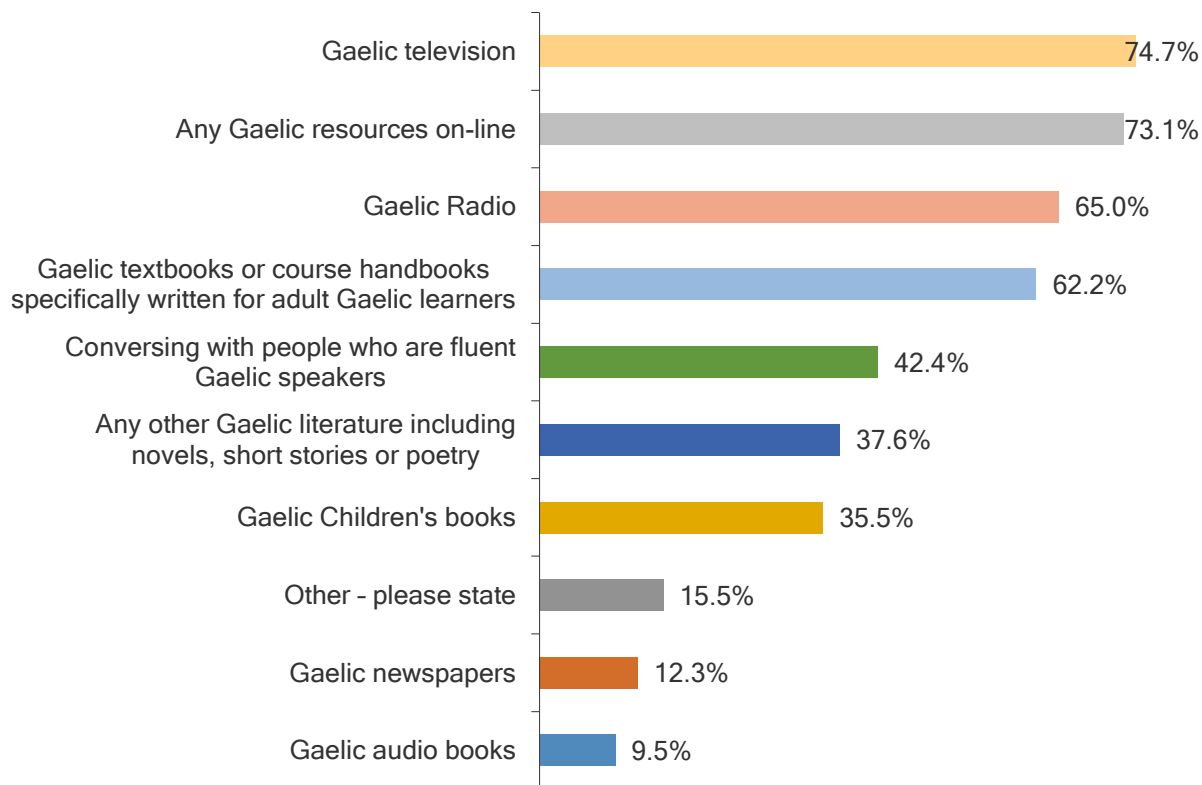


Figure 9 – Resources being Used to Improve or Consolidate Gaelic Language Skills*

Section 5 - Contact Details

33. 480 people (77%) 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 some very comprehensive information which enabled a figure to be calculated for the number of adult learners of Gaelic.

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 learner of Gaelic unless stated otherwise.

4.1 About Learners

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. Highland: Skye and Lochalsh
- v. North Ayrshire mainland

While this was the first time location of learners had been captured, it is likely that the location is at least in part indicative of interactive learning opportunities and activities available. This will be monitored in future years and the relationship between where learners are located and where learning activities are available will be explored further.

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 survey) weighted towards the upper end of the age spectrum, with 65% of learners aged 45 and over, an increase of 5% from 60% representation in the previous survey. The general trend suggests an aging learning population.

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.

It is also worth noting that the survey is designed for those that consider themselves adult learners of Gaelic and it is possible that there are people attending Gaelic language activities that do not consider themselves active learners. This may be a factor affecting lower age brackets, particularly where they are in HE/FE and studying another subject in Gaelic language. This is further considered in the recommendations.

4.1.2. Current Language Competency of Learners

Following concerns about the accuracy of self-assessment of language competency arising from the results in the previous survey, the format of this part of the survey was changed. 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, they were amended to make them more suitable for the survey.

This produced almost the same representation of people who considered themselves beginners (13%) as the previous survey, however, the pattern of competency for the remaining categories was significantly different. The results of this survey are thought to be more likely to be more representative of those involved with formal learning activities. One possible explanation is that people in the survey in the previous year used their best language skill to assess competence, which may suggest the revised structure will provide a more consistent and accurate measure.

One interesting point to note is that nearly half (48%) considered 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.

From the remaining questions in this section, one point of note is the number of respondents who indicated they were able to use their Gaelic skills at home and/or at work (48%). These numbers were much higher than expected; although this may indicate an issue with the questions which will be examined further prior to the next survey.

4.2. About Learning

4.2.1. Learning Interventions

Results from the initial survey indicated that the learning landscape for adult learners was extremely complex and the questions were simplified for this survey. The majority of respondents (68%) were participating in one or more learning activities during the survey period, with an average of 1.8 distinct types of activity.

The activity most commonly reported as a respondent's primary learning activity was an "other structured class" which excluded a structured conversation class, although this was the second most common reported primary activity. Other structured classes were also the most likely option as a second learning activity.

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

- i. Highland: Skye and Lochalsh
- ii. Edinburgh, City of
- iii. Glasgow City
- iv. Highland: Inverness and Nairn
- v. North Ayrshire mainland

There remained a small but significant number (8%) classifying themselves as learners although not undertaking, and not planning to undertake, any activity. The most common types of learning

provider organisations were indicating local authority or a university, college or other HE/FE institution (both 31%).

A total of 24% of respondents were not participating in a learning activity during the survey period although planned to at some point in the future (12% within the next 6 months). This was significantly higher than the previous survey, although the timeframes referred to in the questions had been changed and therefore the results from the two surveys are not reliably comparable.

The representation of those teaching themselves had dropped to 7% from 11% for the primary activity. It was, however, still reported as being a learning activity that they would participate in by 23% of respondents.

4.3. Barriers to Learning

The majority of learners reported a potential barrier to learning (58%) with the majority of those (56%) indicating that the lack of interaction with native speakers or fluent learners was an issue. Other issues were potential conflicts with other personal commitments, and the accessibility of the venue or location where learning activities are taking place.

4.4. Resources

The top resources used to improve or consolidate Gaelic language skills were Gaelic television (75%), any Gaelic resources on-line (73%), textbooks and Gaelic radio (65%). A basic text analysis tool within SurveyMonkey was used to determine the most commonly named resources by respondents, with i being the most common. It should be noted that the majority of respondents again provided a type of resource rather than providing the name of a specific resource although the data can still be used to develop the resources list for future surveys.

- i. Conversing with other Gaelic speakers;
- ii. A range of different types of books including literature, text books and a number of people specifically mentioning dictionaries;
- iii. Radio
- iv. Television with Speaking Our Language specifically mentioned by a large number of people;
- v. On-line materials including apps and mobile phone apps.

4.5. Contact Details

A high percentage of respondents (77%) provided their e-mail address in order to participate in other surveys which is very positive, although experience from the survey conducted this year indicates that there is no certainty this group will actually participate in subsequent surveys. However, the survey return rate from those that provided a valid e-mail address was still 43%, significantly higher than an average return rate for surveys of this type, which is generally thought to be in the region of 10 – 30%. Therefore the survey will continue to offer people the opportunity to leave their details.

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. Greater levels of participation by learning providers in future surveys would give better accuracy and confidence in the calculations and this will be revisited next year to look at ways to improve engagement of providers.

4.7. Recommended Changes

The percentage of incomplete returns was much lower than in the previous year which is likely to be due mainly to the survey being restructured and shortened. The overall number of valid returns was lower than last year and there will be a number of factors affecting this:

- i. As the survey has now become part of mainstream research, it did not have the same profile as the previous year;
- ii. Promotion was also much closer to the survey this year which may need some adjustment for next year, particularly for learning providers, which is discussed further below;
- iii. The survey was run slightly later in the year which is likely to mean there are fewer learners given the attrition rates of adult learning participation at the time of year the survey was run. The survey period was also one week shorter than the previous survey;
- iv. The definitions and promotional text were changed slightly to focus more on specific learning activities;
- v. An initial question was introduced to ensure respondents considered themselves adult learners of Gaelic and the number that had entered the survey but then selected that they were not learners was higher than expected at 7%. This is likely to have reduced the number of returns although it is considered that it will have resulted in a more accurate representation of learners. The exact phrasing will be reviewed for subsequent years to ensure it is not excluding people that fall within the definition of adult learner.

In general terms, the quality of the data was superior to the previous year and is thought likely to provide a good base to begin building comparators.

Survey distribution may require more consideration of distribution in hard copy, particularly given the age profile. While a hard copy of the survey was available during the current project, the survey was only promoted on-line and within fairly close proximity to the survey period. This did not give potential respondents much time to request and complete a hard copy of the survey. The survey promotion will begin earlier for 2016, which will include promotion to learning providers.

In addition to those highlighted above, the other considerations that will be made for the 2016 survey are:

- i. The way in which the survey is circulated and promoted both before and during the survey period. The current method is almost totally reliant on people forwarding the relevant information, the success of which is difficult to evaluate. Additional communication channels to complement current methods will be investigated;
- ii. The question on working or living in a Gaelic environment will be reviewed;
- iii. The inclusion of questions about specific Gaelic resources;
- iv. The inclusion of a structured question that investigates why people consider themselves learners but do not intend or anticipate participating in any learning activity;

- v. The learning provider survey will also be reviewed with a view to ensure there is no duplication in the provision of information, and to improve levels of engagement.

5. Number of Adult Learners of Gaelic

Data about the number of people participating in learning activities during the survey period was submitted by 27 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: 769

Total number of learners reporting a main activity (activity 1): 415

5.2. Learning opportunities reported by learning providers

Number of participants in activities during the survey period reported by learning providers: 453

Number of reported main learning activities of learners matched to learning providers: 49

Using the data about the first learning activity, and the likelihood of those matched to a learning provider for activity 1 were 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 6.51%.

Deduced percentage of declared learning provider activities reported against by learners: 15.9%

5.3. Number of learners

Using the figures above, 421 respondents accounted for 15.9% 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: 2,648.

202 returns reported being a learner but not participating in any activity. Using the same percentage of participation, number of additional learners: 1,270.

Estimated total number of adult learners of Gaelic during the survey period: 3,918

Estimated total number of adult learners of Gaelic living in Scotland: 3,467*

*It should be noted that all learning providers that made returns reported that all learners are based in Scotland and therefore the number of learners outwith Scotland and the percentage the responses may represent is difficult to verify. However, their returns were included in calculations of total number of learners.

5.4. Factors Affecting the Calculation of Number of Learners

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 15 – 30% although depend 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. People attending those types of courses generally are 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, which is known to create some difficulty 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.