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OILTHIGH  
OBAR DHEATHAIN

SOILLSE

“Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn an seo?”

Code-choice and language management initiatives in Stornoway

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RANNSACHADH NA GÀIDHLIG 10

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# Aims of the study

How effective have formal language management initiatives been at 'increasing' and 'expanding' the use of Gaelic and, therefore, contributing to 'securing the status of Gaelic'?



Fàilte  
Welcome

Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn an seo  
Gaelic is spoken here

*'The real language policy of a community is more likely to be found in its practices than in its management. Unless the management is consistent with the language practices and beliefs ... the explicit policy ... is likely to have no effect on how people speak'*

*(Spolsky, 2004: 222)*

# Gaelic speakers



2015/02/26

## *What do we know?*

- 57,375 individuals self-reported to have spoken competences in Gaelic (National Records of Scotland, 2013)
- 24,971 individuals reported to use Gaelic in the home

## But:

‘it is impossible to interrogate the Gaelic data for levels of ability, and actual language use is not tracked, making it impossible to know how, and even if, those that self-report to have Gaelic are actually using Gaelic during those ten years’

(Munro, 2011: 165).

# What do we know?



“runaway language shift”

(MacKinnon, 2006)

‘aside, perhaps, from very small children who are being raised through the medium of Gaelic, all Gaelic speakers are bilingual in Gaelic and English’

(Dunbar, 2011: 152)

English has become the ‘unmarked code-choice’ in public domain interactions (NicAoidh, 2006)

‘Only Gaelic speakers are expected to be bilingual; they expect and are expected to use the dominant language of the community’

(Munro *et al*, 2011: 6).

# Spoken language use

*'Spoken language use is the most natural use of language. It is the most direct kind of linguistic interaction between two or more individuals. Spoken language is also characterised by spontaneous improvisation. The choice of spoken language is often a reflex action rather than a result of reflexion'*  
(Altuna & Basuro, 2013: 28)



Fàilte  
Welcome

Gàidhlig ga bruidhinn an seo  
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Assessment of *de facto* use of spoken Gaelic through

- Linguistic soundscape observations in public domains
- Language use diaries of Gaelic speakers

# Methodology

## Why (covert) observations:

- Years of assimilation might have resulted in limited use of Gaelic in public spaces
- "Reporting bias" or 'phenomenon of misplaced scale' (Urla, 2013: 7)
- Political and social circumstances might influence how speakers report the use of the language (Bourhis & Sachdev, 1984)

Information	
Organisation : _____	Situation : _____
Date : _____	Start time : _____ Finish time : _____
Additional information:	

Language		Participants												Subject	
English	Gaelic	Members of staff (m)			Members of staff (f)			Members of the public (m)			Members of the public (f)			business	private
		<30	30-60	>60	<30	30-60	>60	<30	30-60	>60	<30	30-60	>60		
1															
2															
3															
4															
5															
6															
7															
8															
9															
10															

Language use observation sheet

# Methodology

- Individual linguistic practices of bilinguals
- Same unit of measurement as in the public language use surveys – “conversation”

## Conversation:

Face-to-face spoken interaction between two or more individuals which extends beyond an initial greeting.

Delineated by change in participants, change in language or change in purpose

Language Diary

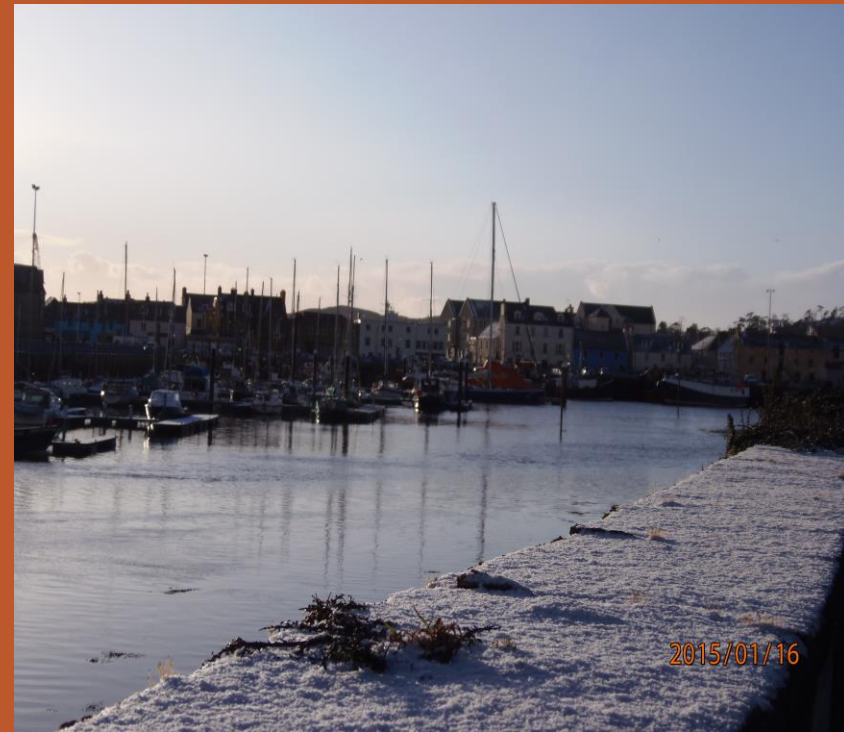
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place or situation	Participants					Subject	Language		
	Relationship	Age			Gender		English	Gàidhlig	
		< 30	30 – 60	> 60	male				Female

Additional information

Language use diary sheet

# Study location



## Parish of Stornoway:

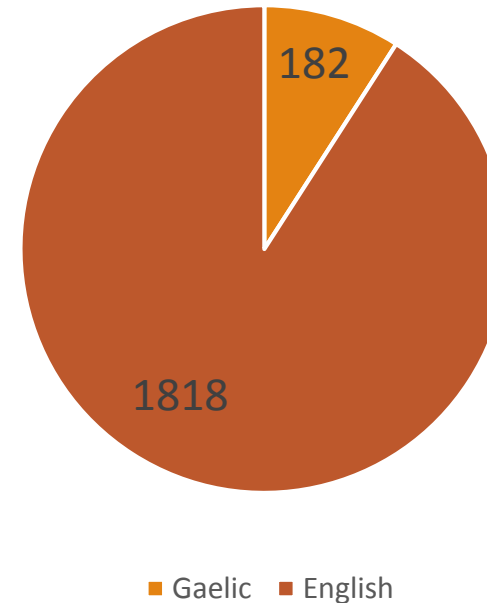
- Population of ~ 12,500 (CnES, 2015)
- 43.4% self-reported to be able to speak the language in the 2011 census (NRoS, 2013)
- Only “urban” settlement in Scotland where a significant proportion of the population can speak Gaelic
- Commercial and administrative centre of the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- Selection of public spaces – both with and without a Gaelic Language Plan (GLP)



# Overall linguistic soundscape

- 2000 conversations recorded across 10 different spaces (5 with and 5 without a GLP)
- Gaelic used in 9.1% of the observed conversations (182 / 2000)
- 405 / 4563 participants in the conversations used Gaelic

Number of conversations

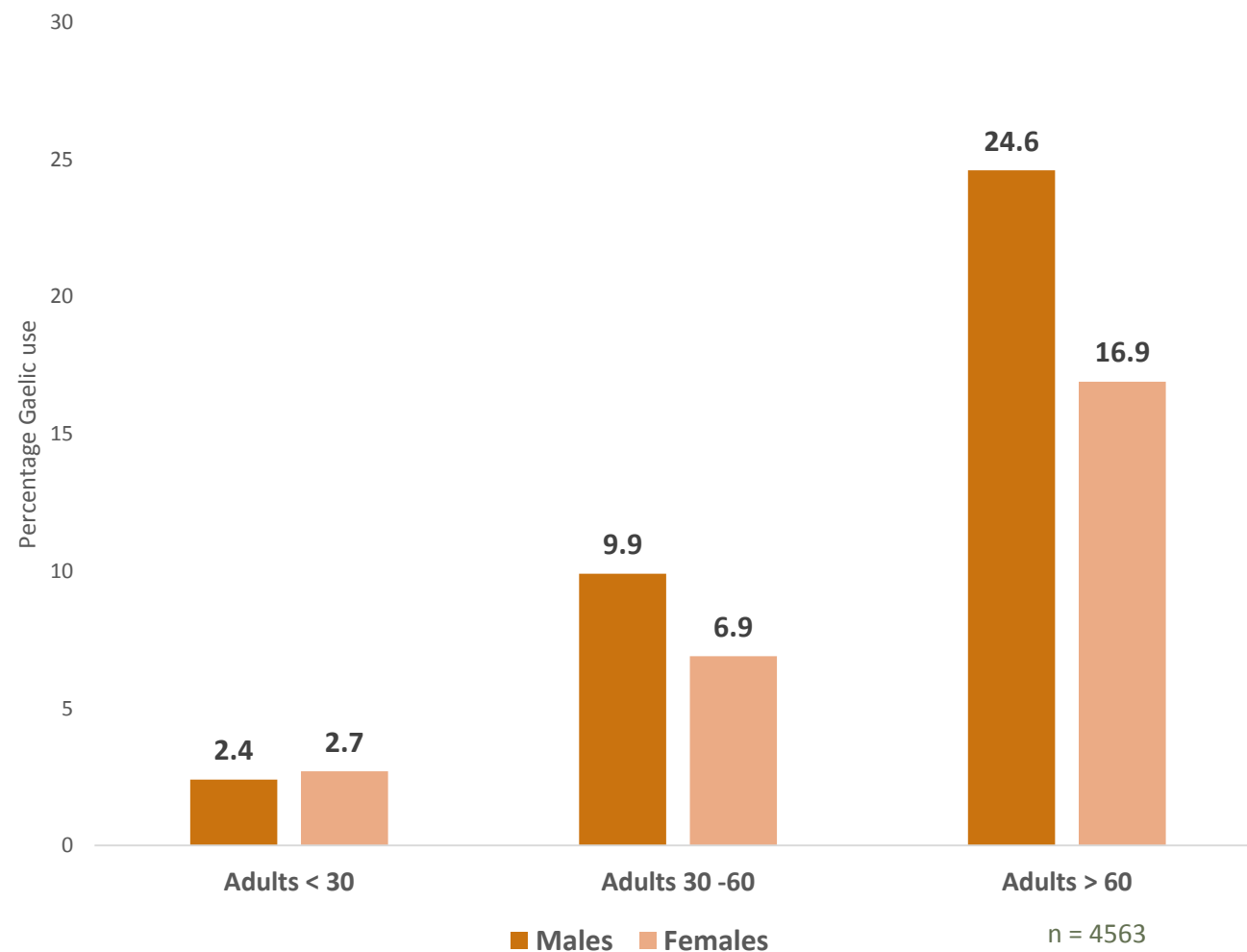


**Linguistic soundscape** (based on the concept of linguistic landscape (Bourhis & Landry, 1997) - the audibility and salience of a spoken language in a given space, with the extent to which a particular language is used as an indication of the vitality of that language.

# Gaelic interactions – participant profile

- Gaelic more frequently used by the > 60 age categories
- Males (except in the < 30 category) more likely to have been observed speaking Gaelic
- Implications for language transmission / language use in public domain???

Percentage Gaelic language use and participant demographic



# Intra-generational language use

- No children included in this study
- Gaelic language use highest in conversations involving adults over 60
- Gaelic language use by adults under 30 8.8 times lower than the over 60 age category

Participants in intra-generational conversations	No. of conversations	No. of English interactions	% English interactions	No. of Gaelic interactions	% of Gaelic interactions
<b>Adults &lt; 30</b>	71	68	95.8 %	3	<b>4.2 %</b>
<b>Adults 30 - 60</b>	328	297	90.5 %	31	<b>9.5 %</b>
<b>Adults &gt; 60</b>	140	88	62.9 %	52	<b>37.1 %</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	539	453	84.0 %	86	16.0 %

# Inter-generational language use

- Levels of inter-generational language use lower than intra-generational language use
- Small sample involving all age groups
- Some use of Gaelic across age-groups

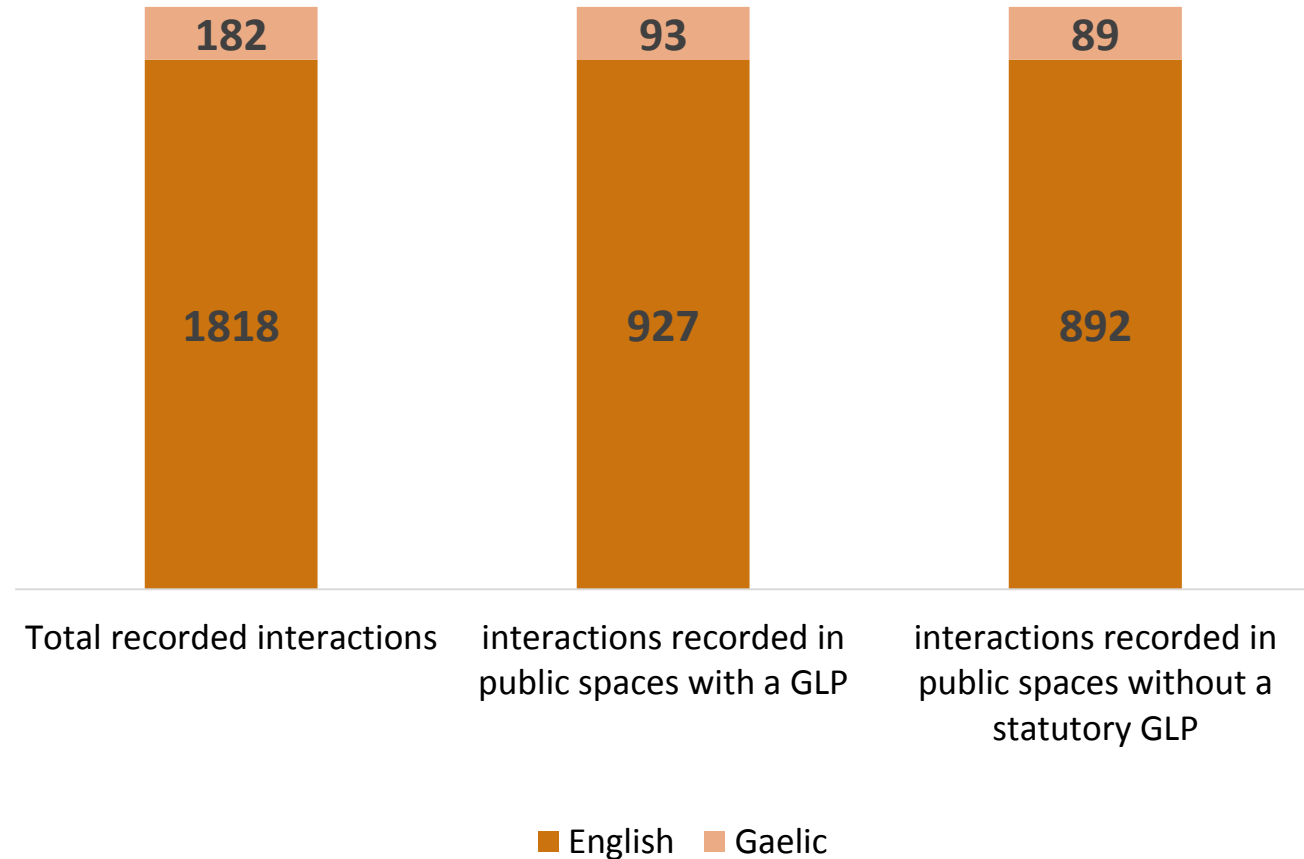
Language shift in action??

Participants in inter-generational conversations	No. of conversations	No. of English interactions	% English interactions	No. of Gaelic interactions	% of Gaelic interactions
Adults < 30 & adults 30 - 60	72	67	93.1 %	5	<b>6.9 %</b>
Adults < 30 and adults > 60	15	15	100.0 %	0	<b>0.0 %</b>
Adults 30 – 60 & adults > 60	147	125	85.0 %	22	<b>15.0 %</b>
All age categories	5	4	80.0 %	1	<b>20.0 %</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>88.3 %</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11.7 %</b>

# Gaelic interactions – Type of location

- 5 spaces with a GLP (1020 conversations)
- 5 spaces without a GLP (980 conversations)
- **Both** types of location recorded a frequency of **9.1%**

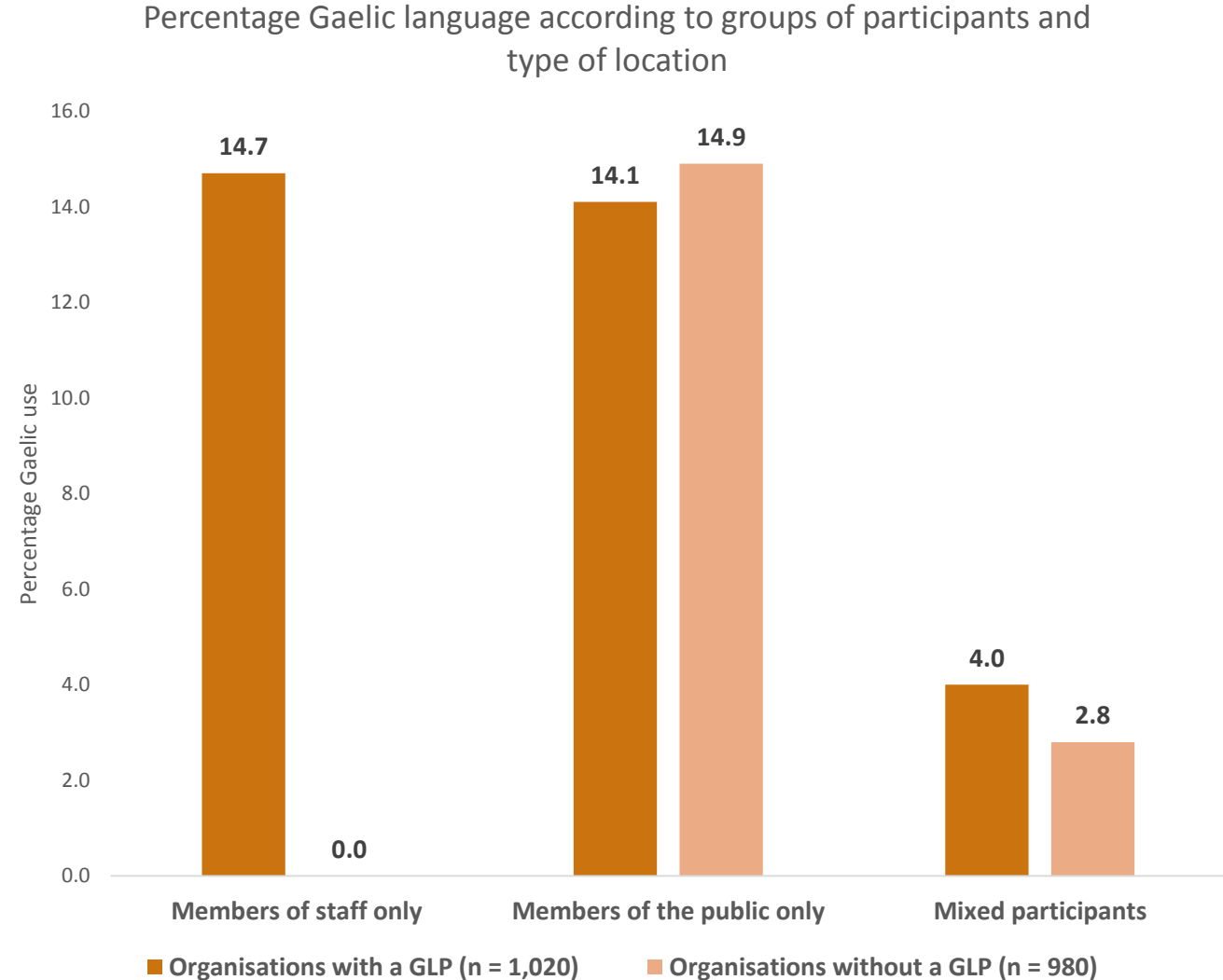
Gaelic language use according to type of locations



Where does this leave GLPs?

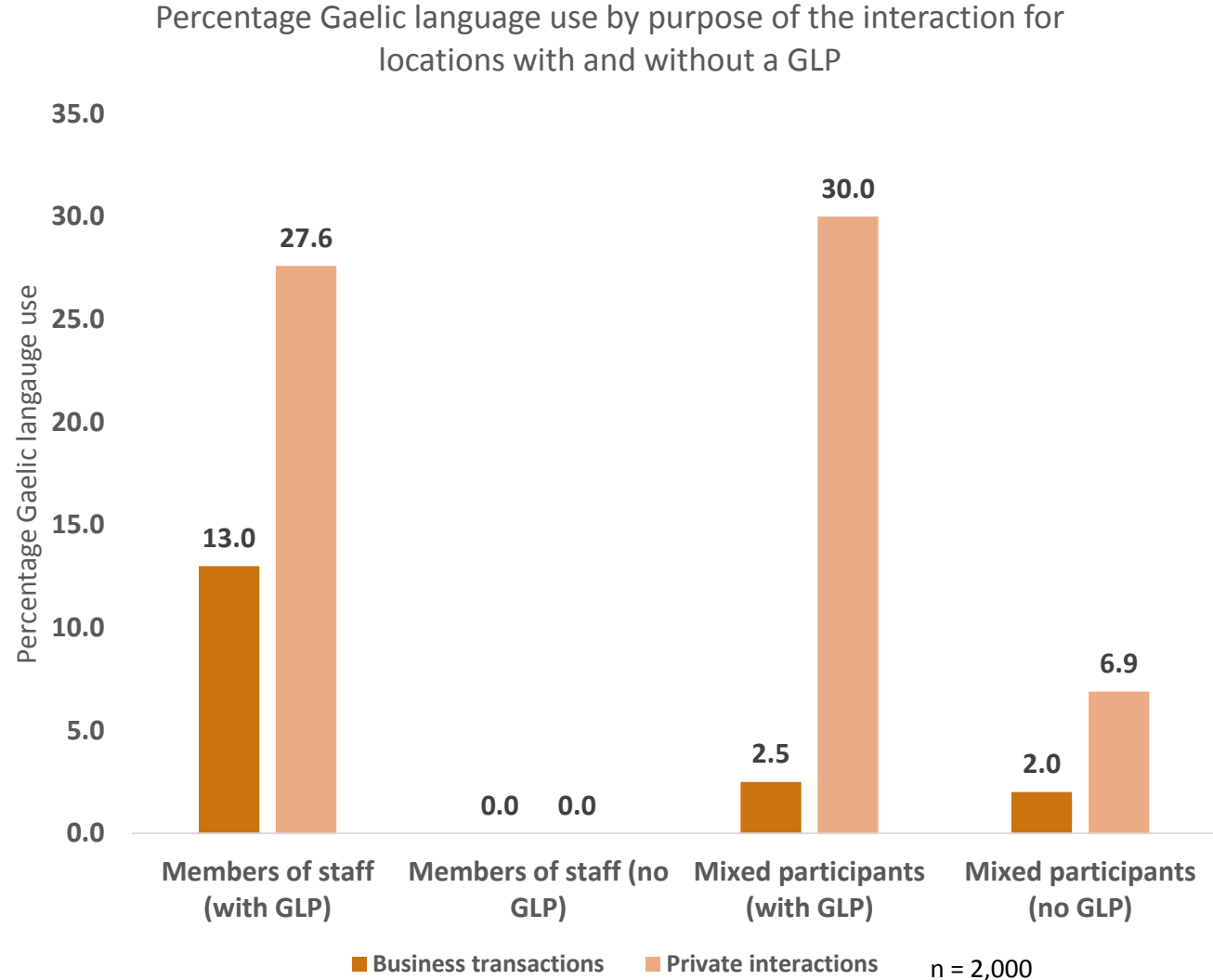
# Gaelic interactions – type of location & groups of participants

- Level of Gaelic in interactions involving members of the public did not vary significantly according to type of location
- No Gaelic used by members of staff in locations without a GLP
- Gaelic used in mixed participant interactions



## Gaelic interactions – type of location, groups of participants & purpose

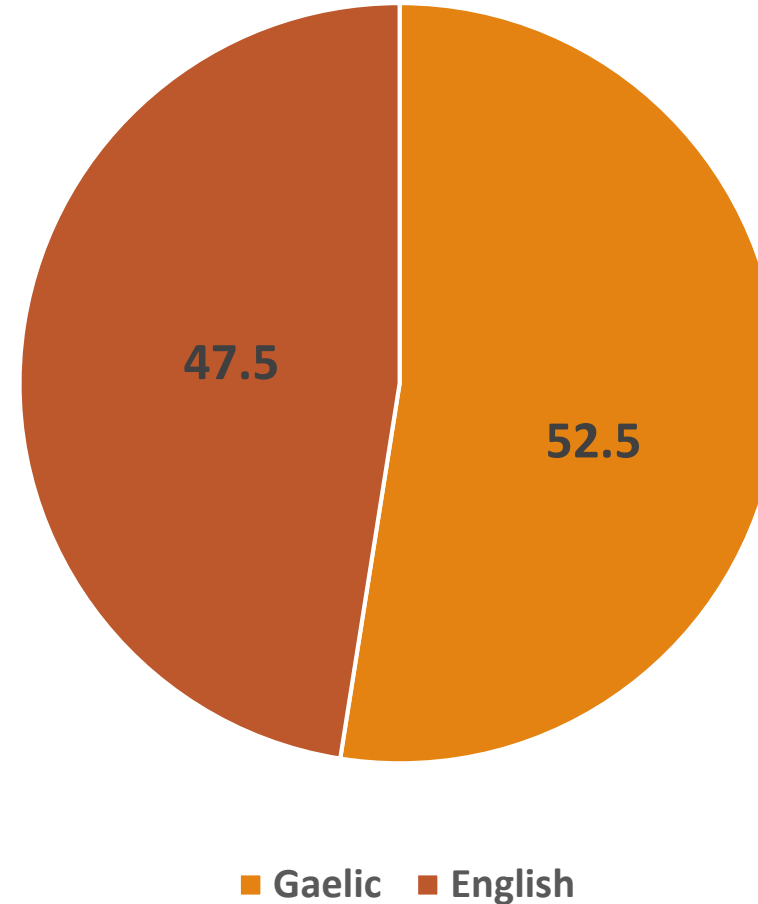
- Gaelic language use was significantly higher in private interactions
- No significant difference in the use of Gaelic in business interactions between locations with and without a GLP



# Language use diaries – overall results

- 12 Informants
  - 6 L1 & 6 L2
  - 7 employed in the Gaelic sector, 2 involved in (Gaelic) education and 1 informant employed in an organisation with a GLP
- 472 eligible conversations
- 242 Gaelic conversations
- No difference in frequency of Gaelic language use between L1 & L2 speakers

Percentage language use





# Language use diaries – overall results

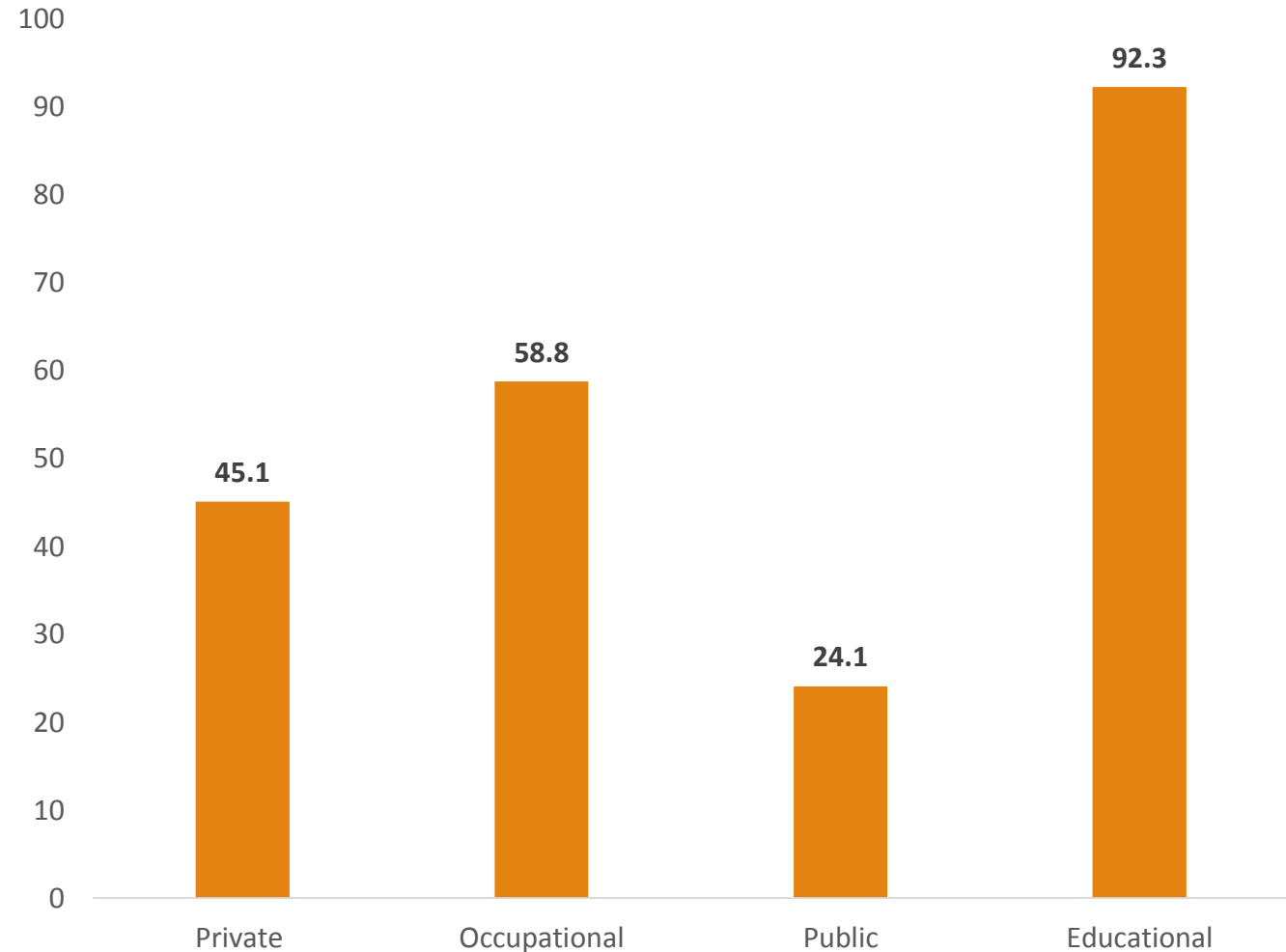
Analysis according to 4 domains:

“ the *public domain* refers to everything connected with ordinary social interactions (business and administrative bodies, public services, cultural and leisure activities of a public nature, relations with the media, etc.). Complementarily, the *private domain* comprises family relations and individual social practices. The *occupational domain* embraces everything concerned with a person’s activities and relations in the exercise of his or her occupation. The *educational domain* is concerned with the learning / training context (generally of an institutional nature is to acquire specific knowledge or skills”

(the Council of Europe, 2001: 15)

(Emphasis and italics by the Council of Europe).

Percentage Gaelic use



# Public domain

- English the unmarked code choice
- Gaelic is a marked code-choice that requires careful negotiation
- Personal confidence & ideology

I won't speak Gaelic really to people in the shops ... I don't know if someone in Tesco or the Coop speaks Gaelic, something like that, so, I don't speak Gaelic to them at all

(Translation of transcript BP10\_03).

You have to ask people "Do you speak Gaelic", so I asked this woman. I thought for a while that perhaps she spoke Gaelic, so, when I was confident, when I was feeling confident enough, I started. I didn't want ... I am not speaking to someone anyway, I don't want to go "Do you speak Gaelic" but she was speaking a bit about the weather, and I thought "ooh this is a chance" because we had a bit of a conversation. Often this woman doesn't say a lot, so, she just gives you change and she doesn't speak, but because we had a wee chat I thought I would ask. We started in English and then I asked, "Do you have Gaelic?", and she said; "Yes plenty", and I asked, "Would you be willing to speak to me in Gaelic?" And she said, "oh yes". I thought that was good... I don't want, I don't put someone in an embarrassing situation

(Translation of Transcript BP01\_02).

## Implications for policy & planning



- Inertia condition of language choice (Spolsky & Cooper, 1991)
- GLPs make Gaelic visible & available but do not *of themselves* result in Gaelic being a code-choice
- Linguistic soundscape created by members of staff in a location appears to be a contributing factor in the use & perception of Gaelic
- (Re-)negotiating language norm is a gradual and sensitive process requiring *an explicit offer on the part of the service provider* (Heller, 1978)

Implications -  
(Or “to GLP or not  
to GLP”?)



Gaelic in public spaces with a GLP:

- visible in the linguistic landscape
- more likely to be used by members of staff – Gaelic included as part of the linguistic soundscape
- identified as ‘places where Gaelic is spoken’

Anecdotal evidence that “active offer” might increase the use of Gaelic (20% of telephone interactions were in Gaelic vs 13.6% of ‘face-to-face’ interactions)

“I don’t know (what I think about Gaelic – IB). I don’t know. To tell the truth I don’t know what I think about Gaelic, although I work here (in a Gaelic sector workplace – IB), I have children in the Gaelic school. I like Gaelic, but I am not ... I am not overly passionate about it. I am not an activist. I don’t think about it, I speak Gaelic, just like I speak English. I don’t think about it”

(Translation of Transcript BP10\_03.

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TAING MHÒR!

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