

# Scots and Doric Language

According to the 2011 Scottish census, more 1.5 million people (28% of population) reported they could speak Scots. Another 267,000 people (5% of population) said they could understand Scots but not read, write or speak the language. The Shetland Islands, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Orkney Islands had the highest proportions of Scots speakers at home and the map on right shows largest concentration outside of Shetland is in North-East. Referred to as 'Doric' or 'The Mither Tongue', ours is a distinctive variant of Scots with its own words, sounds and rhythm.

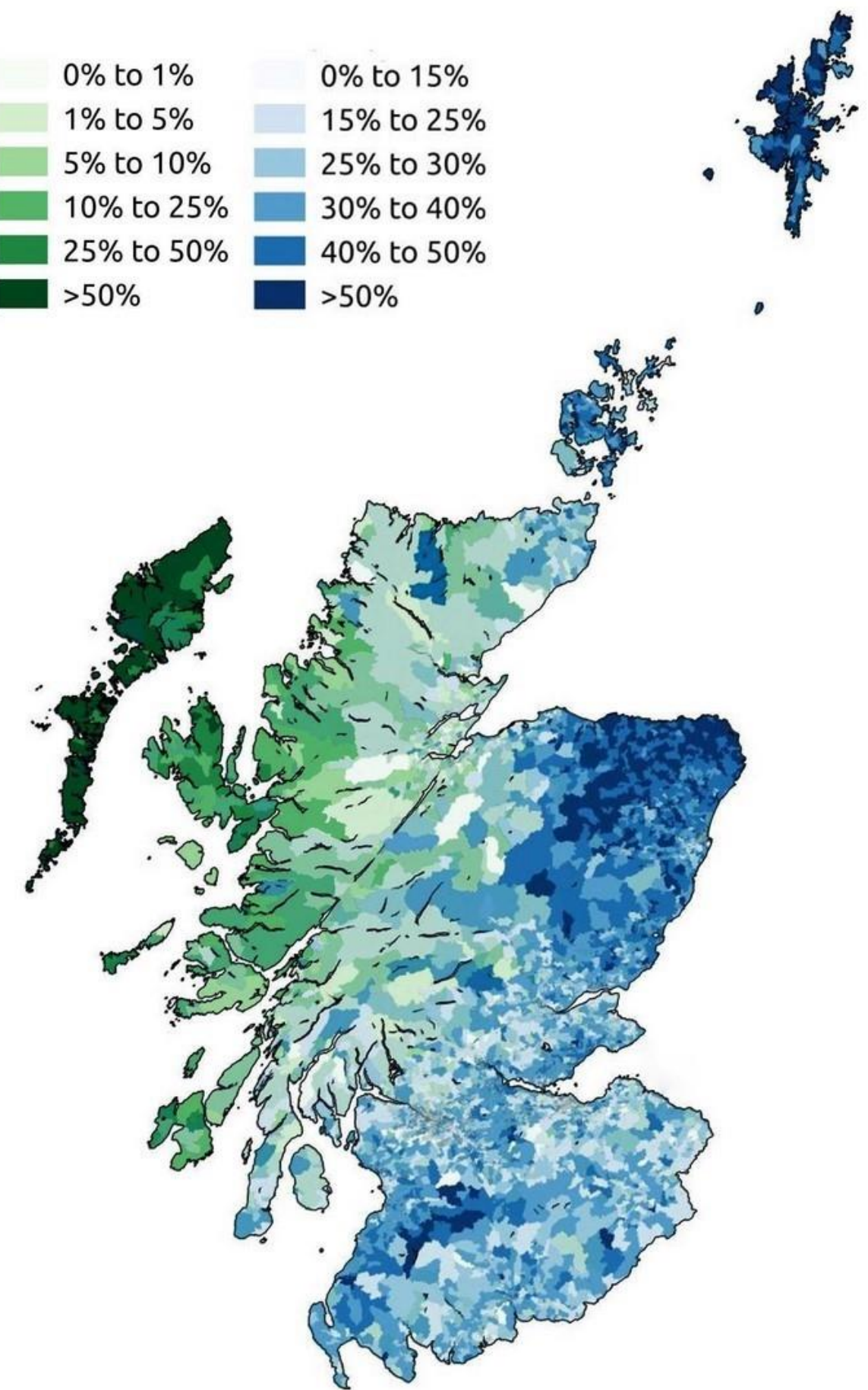
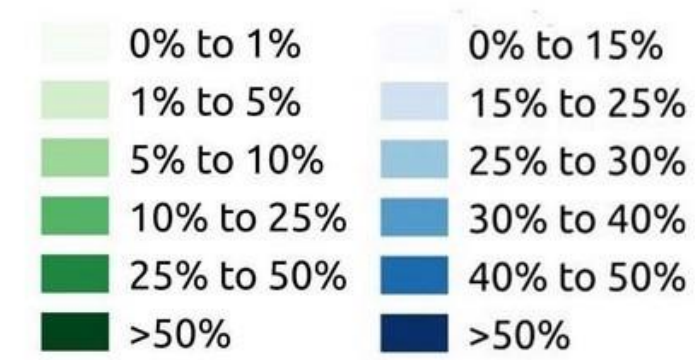
Continuous written records of Early Scots begin in 1376 with John Barbour's poem, *Brus* – an account of the exploits of Robert Brus and James Douglas in the War of Independence.

In 1808 the first *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* by John Jamieson D.D., Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and of the Society of the Antiquaries of Scotland was published.

The digital age has seen many popular novels translated into Scots, with *The Gruffalo* being one of the most popular. There has also been an increase in new published work in Scots, for both adults and children.

In general, Scots is learned at home or in the community, not from books. Unlike Gaelic it is not the language of education, although it is now included in the Curriculum for Excellence. Not only does it vary from region to region, but spoken Doric may vary from town to town over a few miles, and rural, coastal, and Aberdeen city all have distinct variations. For this reason, new writers in Doric may use slightly different spellings for the same words.

Whether local resident or visitor from afar we hope that you will enjoy our examples of the Mither Tongue and will dip into the written examples of Charles Murray and others which you see here.



Map showing % of Scots speakers (blue) and Gaelic speakers (green).

## Further Sources:

Dictionaries of the Scots Language - <https://dsl.ac.uk/>

Jamieson's Dictionary of Scots - <https://jamiesondictionary.com/>

Scots Language Centre - <https://www.scotslanguage.com/>

ScotsLanguage.info - <https://scotslanguage.info/>

The Official Doric Site,  
Elphinstone Institute,  
University of Aberdeen - <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/elphinstone/kist/the-official-doric-site-217.php>