



L-Università ta' Malta
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“A gender perspective to the evolving Maltese labour market: 1960-2020”

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Using a gender lens, this chapter charts the presence and evolution of women in the Maltese labour market between 1960 and 2020. It discusses the changing economic, social, ideological and political influences at play on women and work across this period. The research shows that the first three decades were marked with slow progress in a context of national political instability, a weak economy, state-induced artificial obstacles and social and religious mores which normalised the subordinated position of women in the Maltese labour market. During the 1990s, increasing awareness of women’s rights, the opening up of tertiary education, and the introduction of fiscal measures to incentive paid work for women, started a small wave of change. The period between 2010 and 2020 saw the most rapid increases in female employment in a thriving economy faced with escalating property costs and consumerist values. Targeted ‘make work pay’ incentives, the tapering of benefits, and free childcare encouraged more low earning and inactive women to join or remain in the labour market. These and related incentives, coupled with an increased presence of foreign female workers in Malta, bolstered the female participation rates in the last ten years.