

# Multiculturalism today

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Dr JosAnn Cutajar

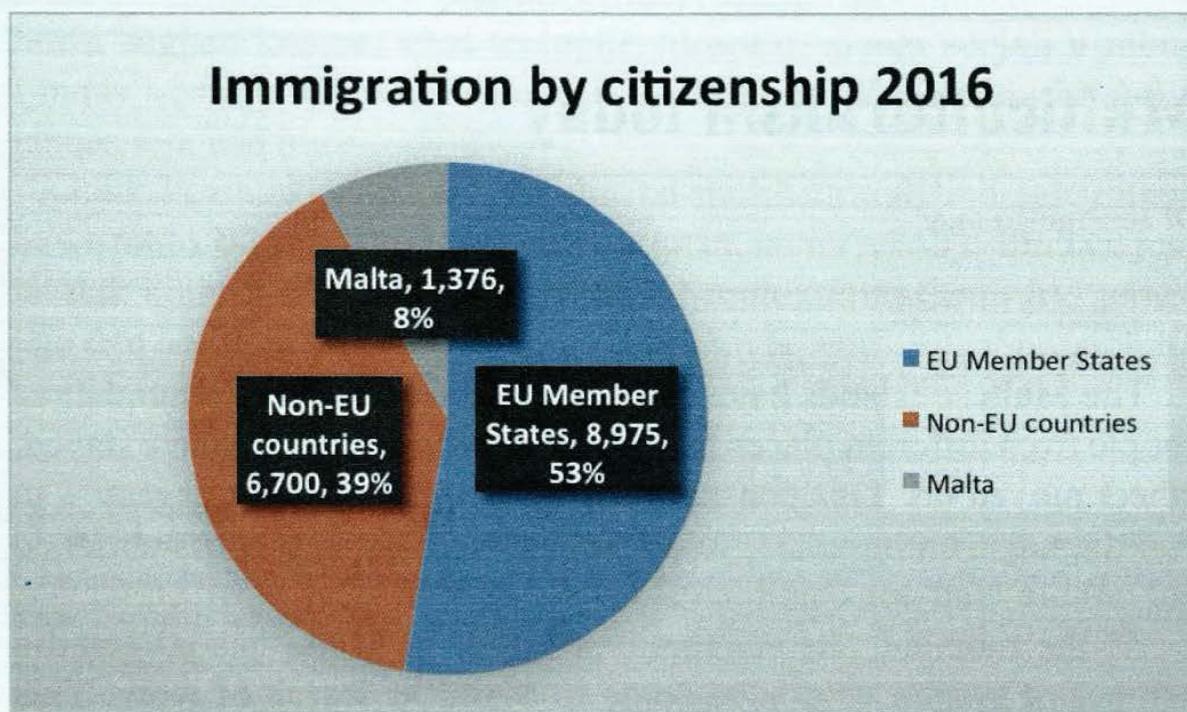
The Maltese Islands have over time been the hosts of a number of people from different places from around the world. Some have stayed, others moved on. This constant flow of people has left a legacy – in our language, architecture, food, surnames, and more. It has enriched our culture, and our communities.

At the moment, the economic situation in Malta has attracted a number of people who have come to Malta in search of work. This is not the first time that people from different countries and cultural backgrounds have made the Maltese Islands their home for a temporary or long term period.

Let us take a look at the statistics available for 2016 (NSO, 2018a). Figure 1 demonstrates that the people who have immigrated into Malta came from Malta, EU Member States and non-EU countries. Non-EU nationals account for 39 per cent of all immigrants, while EU nationals account for 53 per cent of total immigration in 2016. Maltese who came back to Malta were those who had lived abroad for the 12 months prior to the data collection for recreation, business, medical treatment, study, and religious reasons.

Table 1 gives a more detailed picture of the flow of people into and out of Malta for the years 2012-16. As these statistics demonstrate, the immigration flow surpassed the out migratory one during these four years.

This has led to a population increase as Figure 2 demonstrates. As this figure also shows, the increase was due to the incoming migrants, rather than natural birth.

**Figure 1 – Immigration by citizenship in 2016**

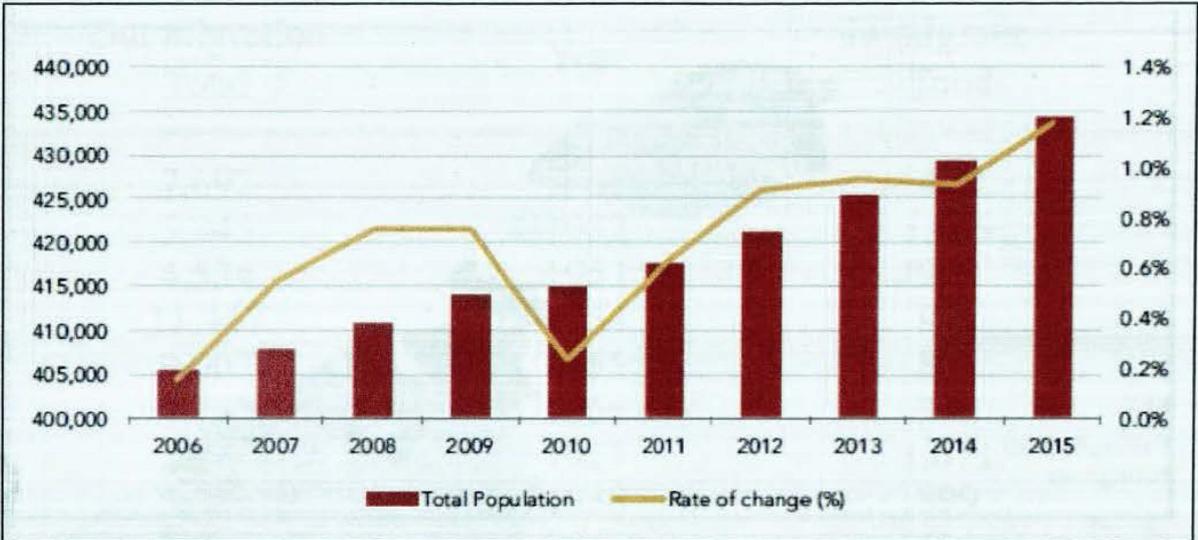
Source: own estimates using NSO, 2018a data

**Table 1: Annual estimates of migration flows: 2012-2016**

Year	Total Immigration	Males	Females
2012	8,256	4,639	3,617
2013	10,897	6,355	4,542
2014	14,454	8,409	6,045
2015	16,936	9,594	7,342
2016	17,051	9,585	7,466
<b>Emigration</b>			
2012	4,005	2,346	1,659
2013	4,778	2,678	2,100
2014	5,108	3,022	2,100
2015	7,095	4,162	2,933
2016	8,303	5,039	3,264

Source: NSO, 2018a

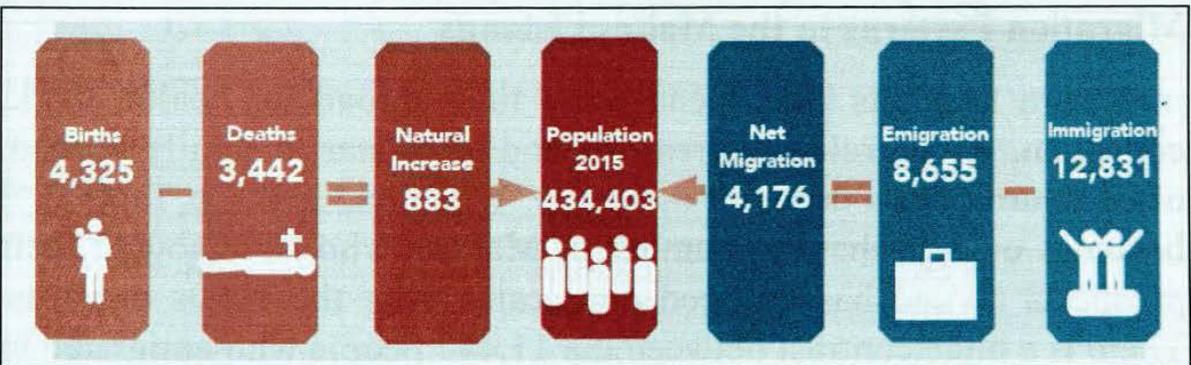
**Figure 2 – Total population at the end of December 2015 and percentage gain**



Source: NSO, 2016

Figure 3 gives a pictorial rendition of how migration has led to this population growth.

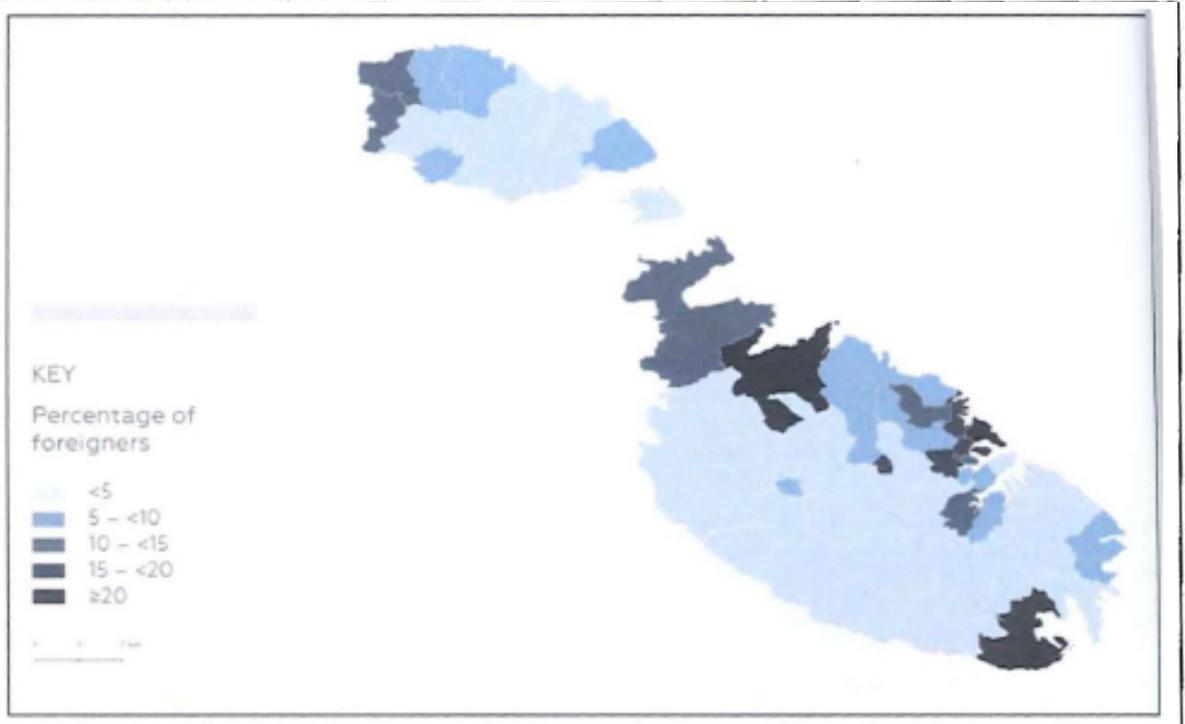
**Figure 3 – National increase computed to Net migration in 2015**



Source: NSO, 2016

In recent years, some areas of Malta and Gozo were more likely to be exposed to this constant movement of people. Figure 4 denotes that 20 per cent and over of the ‘foreign’ migrant population living in Malta have found residence in Birzebbuga, St. Paul’s Bay and Sliema.

**Figure 4 – Percentage of foreigners to the total population per locality: 2015**



Source: NSO, 2017

### **Migration Patterns in the Maltese Islands**

Return migrants who spend some time abroad for health, work, education, study, religious reasons and/or to start a family abroad, often return with a different mentality. When one looks at Table 2, it becomes evident that the number of Maltese who have sought their prospects abroad has dropped drastically from the 1990s onwards. There is a huge contrast between the 11,447 people who emigrated in 1954 and the 67 Maltese who migrated in 1999 for example. This table also demonstrates that there were more Maltese who immigrated, that is returned to the Maltese Islands by the end of the millenium, than left the islands.

**Table 2 – Overall Migration Patterns 1951-2001**

Out migration Total	Year	In migration Total
7,692	1951	470
5,345	1952	1,009
4,534	1953	949
11,447	1954	950
9,007	1955	861
4,752	1956	388
3,283	1957	1,671
3,152	1958	899
3,265	1959	466
3,841	1960	362
2,798	1971	143
3,163	1972	202
4,059	1973	230
4,189	1974	535
1,624	1975	2,957
1,107	1976	2,472
1,237	1977	2,258
1,577	1978	1,678
1,303	1979	2,289
1,374	1980	1,753
153	1992	820
66	1993	837
104	1994	761
107	1995	621
94	1996	399
73	1997	453
121	1998	349
67	1999	339
67	2000	450
73	2001	472

Source: adaptation of Cutajar 2004, p. 152

## Inter-cultural marriages

People who live and/or receive an education abroad, have a different mentality to those who have never left the islands. Others are exposed to another culture when they marry people who are citizens of another country. As one can see, from Table 3, Maltese brides were more likely to marry Maltese grooms, followed by grooms from other EU member states and UK. Maltese men on the other hand who marry women from other countries, are more likely to marry women from other European countries, unspecified and Asia.

Research conducted by Maidani (2018) demonstrates that the children of parents coming from different cultures, are exposed to both parents' cultures. Their affinity with these different cultures depends though on the offsprings' emotional attachment to their parents. In this chapter we will not go into 'foreign' children who are adopted by Maltese parents. In the majority of the cases these children are adopted when they are very young, and some would not be that aware of their primary cultural roots.

**Table 3 – Citizenship of spouses who got married in Malta in 2016**

Citizenship of bride	Citizenship of groom									Total
	Malta	United Kingdom	Other EU Member States	Other European countries	America	Africa	Asia	Oceania	Unspecified	
Malta	1,571	33	42	21	7	7	4	1	66	1,752
United Kingdom	20	477	14	3	-	1	-	-	3	518
Other EU Member States	43	29	305	26	2	5	-	4	15	429
Other European countries	55	3	25	23	-	-	1	-	2	109
America	15	3	9	-	23	1	-	-	-	51
Africa	9	2	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	14
Asia	50	5	4	1	2	-	8	-	-	70
Oceania	4	-	1	-	-	-	-	8	-	13
Unspecified	54	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	21	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,821</b>	<b>552</b>	<b>404</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>3,034</b>

Source: NSO 2018b

## Multiculturalism

After having seen how people might be exposed to different cultures, in this section we will focus on multiculturalism, which is the main focus of this chapter.

Eagan (2018) defines multiculturalism as a policy response to cultural pluralism. People who espouse a different culture, cultural viewpoints,

and practices usually face exclusion, discrimination and oppression. Different countries, take different stands on how to deal with diversity. Textbooks usually mention two different examples, namely the stand taken by the United States of America and Canada. Both countries, like Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, are considered as settler countries. White settlers moved there willingly or unwillingly from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, in the process wielding land, resources and power from the native population.

When people from different countries came together, policy makers came up with different ways in enabling these to live together. Two diametrically models are usually mentioned, citing the United States and Canada as examples. America as a country favours assimilation. American policy makers advocated the melting pot approach because they feel that ethnic/racial distinctness detract from cultural homogeneity. Canada on the other hand epitomises the salad bowl model. In Canada ethnic groups retain their cultural distinctiveness, and when different cultures come together, this results in a new culture. Canadians promote multiculturalism and anti-racism. This is because although cultures might appear equal on paper, in reality there are some who discriminate against and exclude people they feel are coming from an 'inferior' culture.

The European Union (EU) also consists of people deriving from different cultures living together. Multiculturalism, namely the right to preserve and practise one's culture, might lead to people leading separate and parallel lives. For this reason the EU promotes intercultural dialogue, which pushes people to come together to find out what they share and use this as a basis for dialogue to find out more about different cultures, communities and people, so that hopefully this will lead to interaction and eventually understanding. Yuval-Davis (1997) calls this 'transversal' dialogue and according to this academic, the common ground could be the source of oppression and discrimination as a basis for understanding others.

This fear that people from different cultures cannot live together is undermined by Modood et al.'s 1997 study. They found that the different ethnic groups in Britain retained some facets of their culture, but they also shared mainstream British values. They shared more things in common,

than difference. Putnam (2007) argues that diversity may initially lead to social isolation and lower levels of trust between and within ethnic groups. This distrust will disappear over generations. Attitudes will be overcome when there is contact on an equal footing.

### **New racisms**

While businesses regard diversity as an asset, the common person in the street may not. Garner (2010) noted that a new form of racism raised its head in the 1980s when new countries starting forming part of the EU.

Pierre-Andre Taguieff (2001) spoke about 2 parallel forms of racism which started appearing in the 1980s. He differentiated between 'differentialist' racism and 'discriminatory' racism. With regards to differentialist racism, far right groups appropriated anti-racist language. This language promoted respect for difference and cultural diversity – the right to be different. Populist parties such as the French Front National party used this discourse to place white Catholics as the norm, and Islam as the other. This political group argued that Catholics are pure, and will be spoilt with the mixing of cultures. Culture is here seen as the exclusive right of a static group, and that each culture has its own characteristics and location. The idea is that cultures cannot mix without 'damaging' each other. Each group has the right to have a distinct culture, but the proximity of cultures, they believe, will lead to conflict. Taguieff defines discriminatory racism as being based on colonial relations. This occurs when one group of people distinguish between civilised and non-civilised cultures.

Etienne Balibar thought that racism, discrimination and xenophobia emerge during an economic crisis. During this period, migrants tend to be blamed for these economic problems and disorder. The populist parties which are popping up all over Europe are not the fruit of economic crisis though. Galston (2018, n.p.) maintains that "populism draws strength from public opposition to mass immigration, cultural liberalization, and the perceived surrender of national sovereignty to distant and unresponsive international bodies". This author sustains that populism emerges when "immigration raises cultural and security concerns as well as fears of economic displacement, and it weakens the legitimacy of transnational

institutions that are seen as preventing sovereign peoples from using national political means to protect themselves against the threatening developments.”

Populist discourse sustains that ‘native’ people are under threat from other cultures, and in need of defense (Garner, 2010). The ‘new racism’ is based on the belief that ‘white’ Europeans or North American Christian culture is superior to other cultures. Those who believe in this discourse fear that the imagined idea of the nation consisting of a number of people ‘bonding’ together is under threat from contamination from other cultures which they consider as illegitimate. This discourse is based on the idea that cultures are static, and ‘pure’. As we have seen at the beginning of this paper, cultures are constantly evolving for a number of reasons. If they remain static, they would not be able to cope in today’s world. This backlash against multiculturalism at this day and age, seems to be a desperate effort to stop the inevitable – the constant mixing of cultures brought about thanks to globalization.

## Conclusion

Nowadays diversity is not seen as a cause for exclusion or denigration, but a value added in societies which want to establish ties beyond the nation state. While businesses have realized that when they invest in diversity – diversity in identities, orientations, ages and abilities – this leads to an increase in profit, others may not be aware of this. Moore (2010) underlines that companies can turn to “the skills and insights of their employees such as language and cross-cultural skills provided them with an advantage over other organizations”. This issue might not register among those who are blinded by xenophobia.

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