

# Migration and Changes in the Population of Gozo in the post-war period

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There have been remarkable changes in the population of Gozo over the last half-century. There is no doubt that the most important contributor to these changes was the dramatic shift in the population resulting in migration after the Second World War. The migration movement started in earnest in the late 1940s, gathered momentum in the 1950s, and was all but finished by the end of the 1960s. In fact 1975 has been called a 'watershed-year' because we saw for the first time a reverse in migration trends, with more people returning than leaving.

The following graphs show these changes in the various localities in Gozo. A comparison between the populations in 1969 compared with that of 1948 (Fig 1) show that there was a significant net outflow, with a reduction in population occurring in most localities. Interesting to note that the most marked depletion occurred in Ghasri, Gharb and Xaghra. The population of these three localities was reduced by a third or more in the twenty years between 1948 and 1969. It is curious to note that some localities, particularly St Lawrence, but also to a lesser extent Sannat/Munxar and Nadur did not register a net loss in population, and exceptionally, there was a 25 per cent increase in St Lawrence. The reasons for this are not clear. It is relevant to point out that these changes represent net losses and

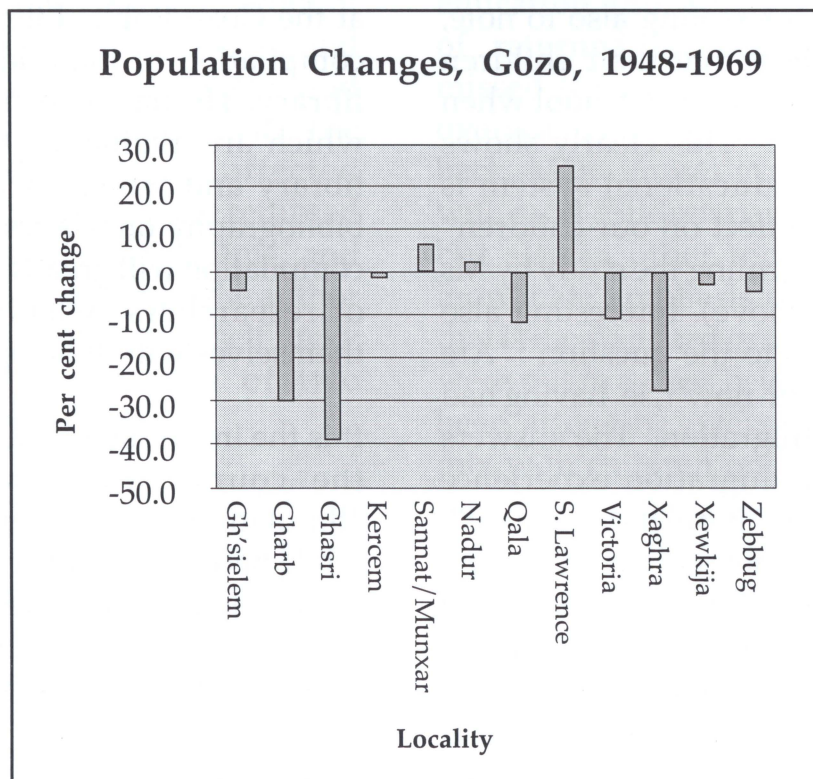


Fig 1: Population changes in Gozo between 1948 and 1969. The results are expressed as 'per cent change' between the population of 1969 and that of 1949. Note the marked (percent) reduction in population in Ghasri, Gharb, Xaghra, and to a lesser extent in Victoria and Qala.

gains, i.e. the balance between the number of those leaving and those coming back or replaced by natural growth.

By the turn of the century, most localities had replaced their losses and regained their former population.(Fig 2). Population growth had exceeded 40 per cent of the 1949 level in Zebbug and Ghajnsielem. Other marked increases in population exceeding 30% are to be found in Nadur, Kercem, Sannat/Munxar, and as mentioned already, in San Lawrence. Perhaps the most significant finding of all is the fact that in three localities, (Ghasri, Gharb and to a lesser extent in Xaghra), there is still a negative balance, even half a century after the initial diaspora. In both Ghasri and Gharb the population at the turn of the century was less than that of 1948 by as much as 25 per cent, while that in Xaghra was around 14 per cent below the 1948 level.

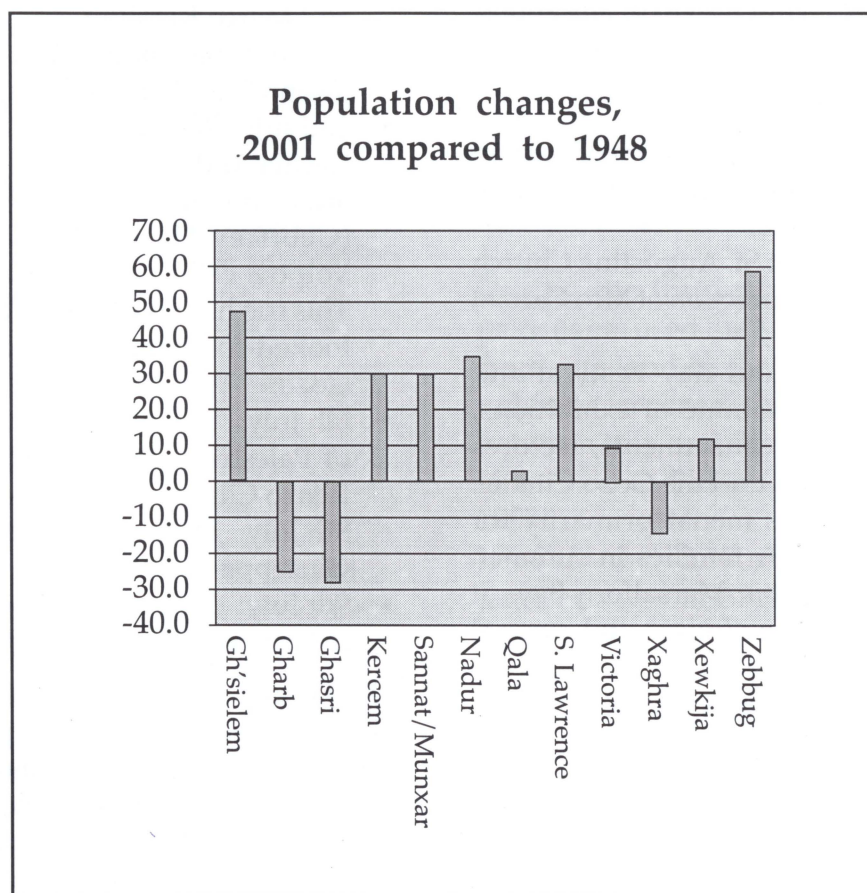


Fig 2: Comparison of population changes in Gozo localities between 2001 and 1948. Negative trends are still seen in Ghasri (-28%), Gharb (-25%) and Xaghra (-14%).