



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

General Opinion Survey of the Maltese Population

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General Opinion Survey

Over the years, the Faculty for Social Wellbeing has made extensive effort to produce scientifically rigorous empirical data on a number of issues of relevance to our communities. These efforts have resulted in a multitude of studies, with expert input from various academic disciplines, leading to numerous research findings and recommendations for policy and practice. It therefore seems to be a natural progression that, in addition to engaging in research topics based on existing literature and the needs of particular sociodemographic groups, the Faculty would set out to understand more about what the general population deems to be relevant and worthy of further discussion. This was the primary impetus for the Faculty's commissioning of a general opinion survey of the Maltese adult population. The development of this general opinion survey was shaped by existing findings from international opinion research, whilst also being guided by the researchers' experiences and observations in everyday life and current events of the Maltese Islands. We wanted to gain a better sense of public opinion with reference to a number of topics which have been debated in recent years. However, the subject areas covered in the present study are by no means exhaustive. Nonetheless, this study offers a deeper insight into the opinions of the Maltese citizens towards a broad range of topics which are not only relevant to the local context, but may also offer an enhanced understanding of social attitudes and opinions on a wider, international level.

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi

Dean,
Faculty for Social Wellbeing



Introductory Note

I was engaged by the Faculty for Social Wellbeing to carry out a cross-sectional research survey about several themes related to the Maltese population. The primary purpose of this survey research was to obtain information and insights about various themes, namely; migration, governance, politics, social wellbeing and racism amongst other. The people want to feel heard. Hence, valid survey research is a valuable and powerful tool because it enables the general public or public entities to solicit opinions from community members they may not otherwise communicate with regularly. The use of quantitative research methods such as surveys help to collect such data about the above themes from pre-defined populations. In this case, to ensure representativeness of the study, the sample was stratified based on districts, age and gender. These three demographics are key to ensure better reliability of results. I am passionate about statistics and believe that the knowledge of a country is necessary to administer the country well and guide its people. Many people may doubt the results of a survey, unless they feel confident the survey was carried out scientifically. It is my responsibility as a research and statistician to carry out surveys meticulously using thought out questions following a deep understanding of the topic in question. Collecting the opinions, perceptions and observations of a representative subset of a population in order to generalize to the whole population. I also ensure that the methodological approach is carried out without my own biased opinion or interference as this could influence the outcome of the research. A survey that has gone through the steps of the scientific process poses a higher percentage of validity and reliability of the results. The analysis of participants' responses aims to understand the relationship between participants' sociodemographic factors and the different variables and constructs under investigation. The findings found in this report are interpreted across different demographics. One may notice several interesting results especially when responses are compared across different age groups. One of the most significant messages from the survey is that when people are faced with direct questions about their beliefs, they might answer in one way, but when the same topic is presented in a different manner that will directly affect their wellbeing, the replies are found to be different. This is well noted when it comes to the topic of racism. I have to date been involved in various surveys, research projects and strategic committees on a national and international level and my aim shall remain to provide a real picture of the sentiments of the citizens and the true beliefs of people. I take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the Faculty for Social Wellbeing led by the Dean Prof. Andrew Azzopardi for this initiative. This is a step in the right direction where various academics collaborate together in a multidisciplinary approach with the aim to improve the knowledge of policy makers to take the right decisions for the best interest of the citizens.

Dr Vincent Marmarà

Lecturer and Statistician

Faculty of Economics, Management & Accountancy

Understanding through numbers

The results obtained from this general opinion survey provide ample room for discussion and further research. They also clearly indicate that the present social situation in Malta presents much room for improvement, if we hope to work towards a better society, where people feel comfortable to celebrate their differences and unite as a cohesive community.

Although times have indeed changed, due to various factors such as economic development, intercultural relations, and changing values, the results of this study indicate that many people are not necessarily satisfied with the present reality of the country; The Maltese Islands have witnessed increasing growth in cultural diversity, and yet a majority do not feel that migrants provide more of a contribution to our country than they do to burden it. We have also experienced high rates of economic success, but this has been coupled with growing social and economic inequalities, which might explain the finding that more than 80% of respondents consider the fight against corruption to be very important.

Ultimately, it is only by bringing these opinions to the forefront that we are able to begin to delve deeper into the realities that shape them. From this starting point, we are better equipped to work towards improving those realities, whilst taking into consideration the interests and needs of all those involved in a particular issue. This is the hope with which the present study was conceptualised, and with which it will continue to keep an ear to the ground in order to understand what issues matter to society as a whole.

Jamie Bonnici

Research Support Officer



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1. Introduction



The Maltese population has experienced rapid developments in recent years, with political, socio-cultural, and economic changes contributing to increased property construction, rising social inequality and individualistic values, and racial intolerance, amongst others (Baldacchino, 2016; European Commission, 2019). In light of these changes, the Faculty for Social Wellbeing sought to gather data about the general population's opinions on a number of diverse topics, with the aim of gaining insight into prevailing opinions within the public sphere, as well as informing policy development and future research initiatives.

The aim of opinion surveys, also known as opinion polls, is to provide information about how individuals' perceptions and preferences about a particular topic are distributed (Fertig & Schmidt, 2011). Opinion polls may commonly be connotated with research that seeks to gather information, which is focussed on political issues or marketing, which aim to understand voters' intentions in general elections or consumers' purchasing habits. The landmark opinion polls designed by George Gallup to understand political attitudes are credited with establishing the use of random systematic sampling in order to generalise results to an entire population. However, academic opinion research - particularly cross-national comparison initiatives such as the Eurobarometer or World Values Survey - provides unique advantages in that it is independent of economic or governmental influence, in addition to being guided by rigorous and ethical principles of social science research (Heath et al., 2005). Furthermore, opinion research is crucial in order to construct an "accurate picture of our diverse and changing population" that can inform decision-making at higher levels with information which would otherwise not be readily available (Office for National Statistics, 2020, para. 7).

The present study sought to expand on existing public opinion survey research which has previously been carried out by a number of entities such as the Eurobarometer. Such existing surveys, whilst being methodologically sound and representative of the population in the majority of cases, do not offer the necessary in-depth level of analysis according to individual countries. As noted by a spokesperson on behalf of the Eurobarometer surveys, "Eurobarometer is not a tool to collect statistics, it rather provides a snapshot of public opinion perceptions at a given time" (Spinant, 2019). Therefore, the present study aimed to conduct a more detailed survey of Maltese individuals' opinions about a number of topics, whilst gathering relevant sociodemographic data and ensuring that the sample was equally representative of the general population in terms of age, gender, and residential district.



2. Methodology



Table 1 provides a summary of the methodology adopted in the present study.

Table 1 | Summary of Study Methodology

Method	Telephone survey (Maltese and English)
Population	Maltese residents aged 16 years and older
Number of respondents	600
Data collection period	October 2020
Confidence level	95%; confidence interval of +/- 4%

2.1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main objective of the study was to assess participants' opinions regarding a number of culturally relevant topics. A literature review of existing opinion survey research was carried out in order to inform the development of the final survey questions. Seven overarching areas were used as a guide for the selection of individual items on the survey, specifically:

- Migration
- Crime
- Gender equality
- Good governance
- Morality & Values
- Life satisfaction
- Politics

The final questionnaire included 43 questions, 35 of which gathered information about participants' opinions, whilst the remaining eight questions related to sociodemographic details. Sociodemographic data included details about participants' age, gender, district, marital status, education level, employment status, number of children, and income tax bracket. Participants were given the option of responding to either an English or Maltese version of the questionnaire. The questionnaire items were initially developed, based on the literature review, in English. It was subsequently translated to Maltese by an independent researcher and back-translated by another independent researcher, in order to ensure that the translated version was identical to the original version.

2.2. SAMPLING METHOD

The data collection process was carried out with assistance from Dr. Vincent Marmara. Data collection took place during October 2020, through telephone interviews conducted by qualified interviewers. Potential participants were recruited by means of a random digit dialling sample technique, which uses a random number generator to create randomised telephone numbers (both landline and mobile). This technique is similar to that developed by the TNS Political & Social consortium, used by the Eurobarometer surveys (European Commission, 2017a).

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2.3. THE SAMPLE

The final sample comprised 600 Maltese individuals aged 16 years and older, stratified to ensure equal representation according to age, gender, and residential district (Table 2). The sample was made up of slightly more males (51%) than females (49%). Participants' ages were grouped as: 16-25 (14%), 26-35 (19%), 36-45 (17%), 46-55 (14%), 56-65 (15%), and 66+ (21%). The residential district also closely reflected that found in the entire Maltese population, with the majority hailing from the Northern Harbour district (27%), and the minority from Gozo & Comino (8%).

Table 2 | Sample characteristics and stratification details.

Variable		% of Sample	% of Population
Age range	16-25	14%	15%
	26-35	19%	19%
	36-45	17%	16%
	46-55	14%	14%
	56-65	15%	15%
	66+	21%	21%
Gender	Female	49%	50%
	Male	51%	50%
Residential district	Southern Harbour	18%	18%
	Northern Harbour	27%	29%
	South Eastern	18%	16%
	Western	16%	15%
	Northern	13%	15%
	Gozo & Comino	8%	7%

Table 3 presents a summary of the remaining sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

Table 3 | Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample.

Variable		% of Sample
Marital status	Living with a partner	62.8%
	Not living with a partner	37.2%
Education level	Primary	5.2%
	Secondary	42.3%
	Trade school	18.6%
	Post-secondary	15.9%
	Tertiary	17.9%
Activity status	Inactive*	2.9%
	Working	10.5%
	Fulfilling domestic tasks	66.6%
	Pensioner	20%
Income tax bracket	0%	31.1%
	15%	25.3%
	25%	33.7%
	35%	9.9%
Number of children	0	35.7%
	1	11%
	2	36.3%
	3	13.3%
	4	2.3%
	5+	1.3%

2.4. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained, and subsequently granted, from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta. Potential research participants were informed of the purpose of the study prior to agreeing to take part in the survey, whilst being assured of their anonymity and rights as a research participant.

3. Main Findings

3.1. MIGRATION

The Maltese Islands have experienced significant rates of both emigration and immigration over the course of history. Irregular immigration to Malta underwent a drastic increase in 2002, with the arrival of 1,686 unauthorised migrants and refugees - representing an increase of more than 30 times compared to the previous year's 57 irregular immigrants. Following this increase, the topic of irregular migration continued to be an important political issue, due to continued high numbers of arrivals, which peaked at 2,775 in 2008 (Mainwaring, 2012).

Data from a 2012 Eurobarometer survey found that Maltese individuals were significantly less likely to consider migrants as contributing towards the country; Only 32% of Maltese respondents thought that immigration is economically or culturally enriching for Malta, compared to the European average of 53% (European Commission, 2012). The survey also revealed that 41% of Maltese respondents would not like to have an Arab as their neighbour, and 63% would advise their children against marrying an African migrant.

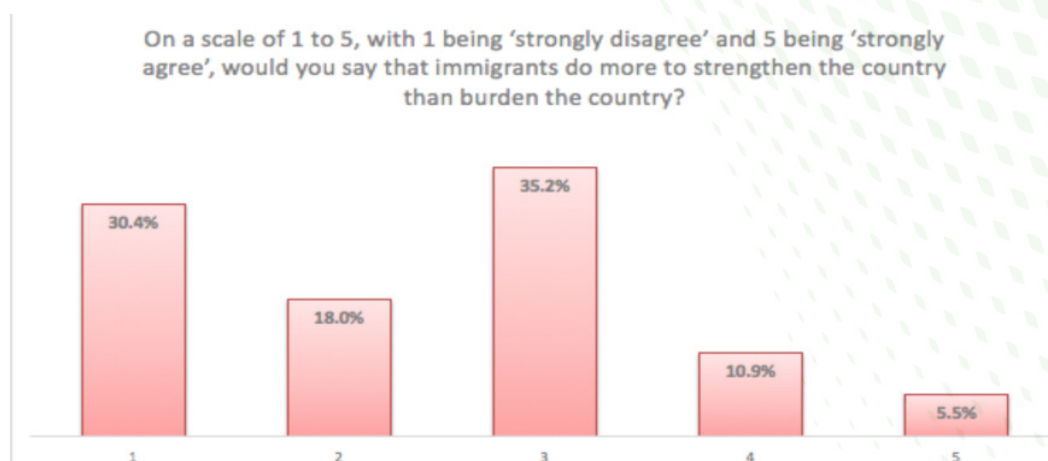
A more recent version of the same Eurobarometer survey revealed that 51% of Maltese respondents feel uncomfortable with at least one type of social relations with immigrants, such as having an immigrant as their friend, neighbour, or manager (European Commission, 2018). Maltese respondents were also among the most likely to consider immigration from outside the EU as more of a problem than an opportunity for the country, with 63% agreeing with this statement, compared to a European average of 38%.

Five questions were included in the survey in order to elicit participants' perceptions on the topic of migration. All but one of the questions utilised indirect measures of obtaining participants' attitudes towards migrants and migration. The remaining question was phrased more directly, asking participants to what degree they consider themselves to be racist (Very racist / A little racist / Not very racist / Not at all racist).

3.1.1. The Contribution of Immigrants to the Country

The first question in this section sought to understand whether participants think that immigrants are more of a strength, or more of a burden, to the country. The distribution of responses is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The contribution of immigrants to the country.



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The majority of respondents (48.4%) responded with 1 or 2, indicating that they either strongly disagree or disagree with this statement. This shows that most Maltese individuals think that immigrants do more to burden, rather than strengthen, the country. Approximately one third (35.2%) held neutral beliefs on the topic, whilst the remaining minority (16.4) believe that immigrants strengthen the country more than they may be considered as a burden.

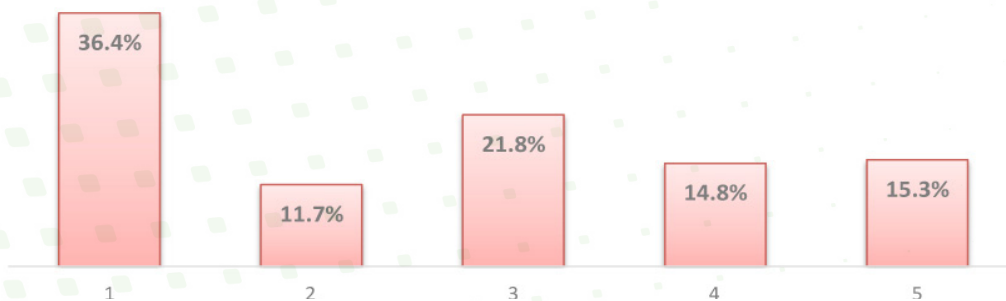
More positive attitudes towards migrants were held by participants earning a higher income, those from younger age groups, those with a higher level of education, as well as those residing in the South Eastern district. Participants whose labour status consists of fulfilling domestic tasks were more likely to hold negative attitudes towards migrants' contribution to the country than those with another labour status.

3.1.2. Acceptance of Immigrants Marrying a Family Member

The next question attempted to uncover participants' acceptance of the notion that an African immigrant were to marry a member of their family. Figure 2 provides a summary of participants' responses.

Figure 2. Acceptability of a family member marrying an immigrant.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not at all acceptable' and 5 being 'very acceptable', how acceptable would it be to you, if an African immigrant married a member of your family?



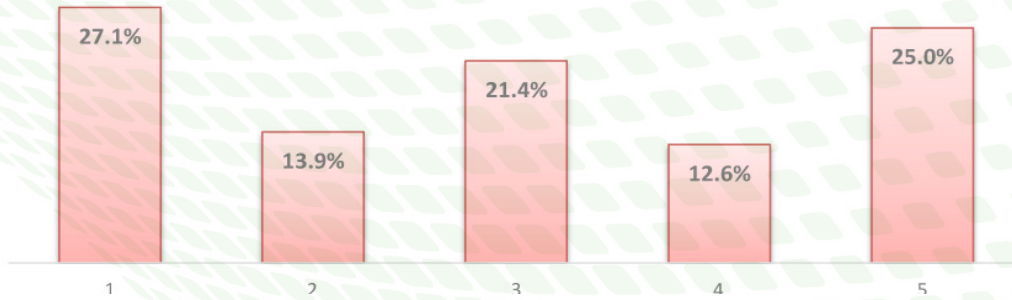
When participants were asked whether it would be acceptable for an African immigrant to marry a member of their family (such as their child), the majority (36.4%) would find this absolutely unacceptable, once again indicating a negative attitude towards migrants integrating in Malta. Positive attitudes to this question were more common among females, younger age groups, those with a higher education level, an inactive labour activity status, higher income levels, having zero or more than four children, and those residing in Gozo.

3.1.3. Attribution of Low Wages to Immigration

Another question asked respondents whether they believe that immigration is the main reason for wages remaining low in Malta. Although 27.1% of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, a quarter of the sample strongly agreed that immigration is to blame for Maltese wages remaining low. However, the majority had a neutral response, indicating a certain degree of uncertainty regarding the effect of immigration on the overall wages in Malta.

Figure 3. Immigration as a reason for low wages in Malta.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree', do you believe that immigration is the main reason for wages remaining low in Malta?



Differences in responses to this question were noted for pensioners, respondents aged 66 and above, and those with a primary level of education - all of whom had a higher mean score than participants from other sociodemographic groups, indicating that greater agreement with the notion that Maltese wages are low due to immigration. On the other hand, those who did not think that immigration is the reason for low wages were respondents with a higher level of education, high income earners, and those residing in the Southern Harbour area.

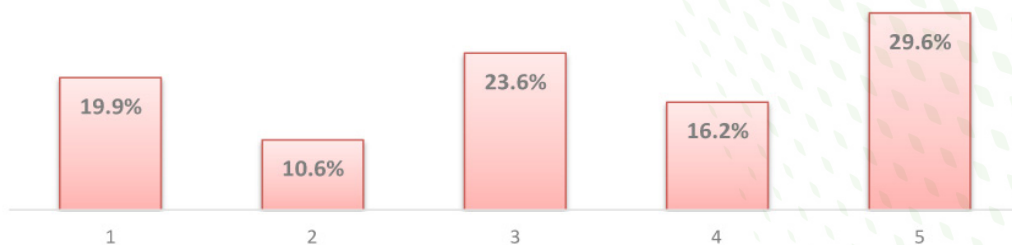
3.1.4. Degree of Comfort with Immigrants Living in One's Neighbourhood

When participants were asked whether they would be comfortable if immigrants were to live close to their home, the majority (29.6%) replied that they 'strongly agree', whilst 23.6% gave a neutral response and almost one fifth (19.9%) said that they 'strongly disagree'.

Figure 4. Degree of comfort with immigrants living close to one's home.

Figure 4. Degree of comfort with immigrants living close to one's home.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree', would you be comfortable if immigrants were to live close to your home?



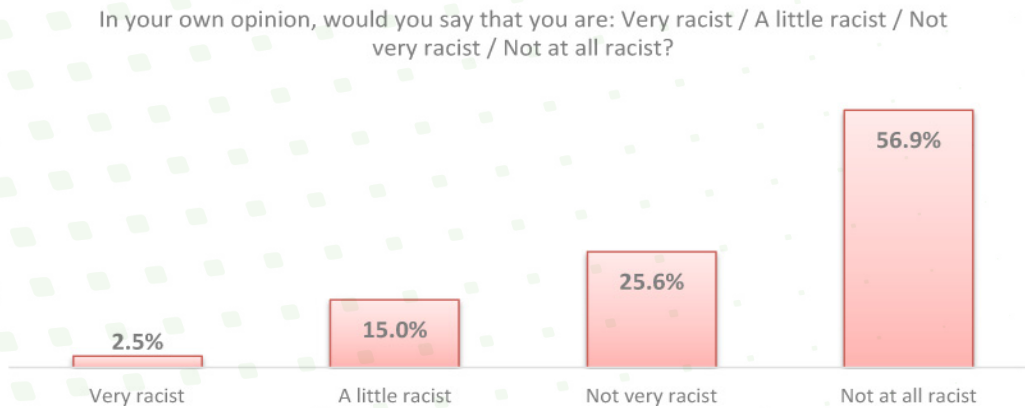
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Female respondents held slightly more positive attitudes towards the idea of immigrants living close to their home, compared to male respondents. Similar to the responses to previously mentioned questions about migration, those participants who would be most uncomfortable with immigrants living close to their home were older than 66 years, as well as participants with a lower level of education. Participants who would be comfortable with immigrants living close to their home tended to be those with an inactive labour status, high income earners, and those residing in the South Eastern district.

3.1.5. Self-rated Degree of Racism

The final question on the topic of migration asked participants to what degree they consider themselves to be racist. The vast majority (56.9%) considered themselves to be 'not at all racist', whilst just over a quarter (25.6%) considered themselves to be 'not very racist'. The remainder of participants considered themselves to be either 'a little racist' (15%) or 'very racist' (2.5%).

Figure 5. Self-rated racism.



When observing these responses according to sociodemographic variables, females had a greater tendency to consider themselves slightly racist (18.3%) than males (11.9%). Differences between age groups could also be seen, with a greater proportion (8.7%) of participants aged between 56-65 considering themselves to be very racist, in comparison to the 36-45 and 66+ age groups (2.4% and 2.9%, respectively). On the other hand, none of the participants between the ages of 16-35 considered themselves to be very racist. The greatest proportion of participants who consider themselves as absolutely non-racist was found amongst the following sociodemographic groups:

- Age group: 66+ (81.4%)
- Educational level: Primary school (77.4%)
- Activity status: Pensioner (81.1%)
- Number of children: 4 children (92.9%)
- District: South Eastern (61.6%)
- Income bracket: 0% (60.4%)

3.2. CRIME

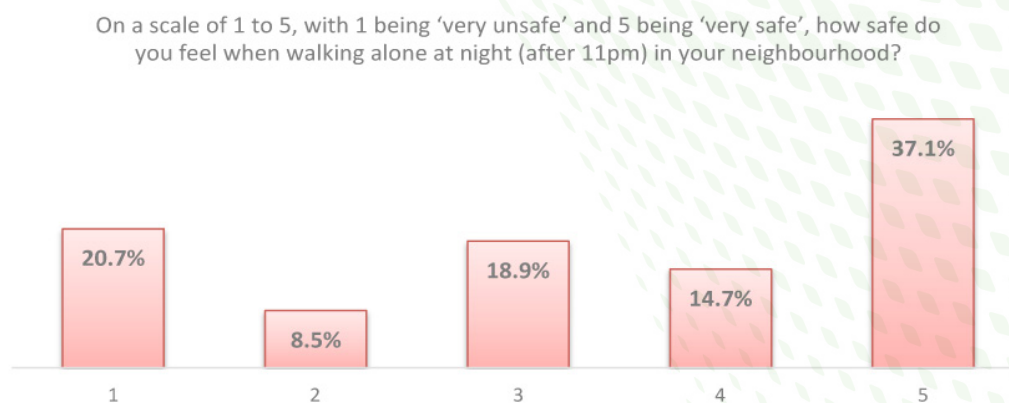
Scholars have been researching crime since the 1960's due to an increasing awareness of the consequences such fears can have, which extend beyond a “deep-seated sense of personal anxiety” (Hale, 1996, p. 1). It is acknowledged in the literature that some awareness of crime may be positive by encouraging individuals to take precautions for their own safety, such as avoiding particularly dangerous situations. However, in its extreme form, fear of crime may lead to significant reductions in overall wellbeing by inducing feelings of vulnerability and isolation (Hale, 1996). This section concerns participants' perceptions of safety from various forms of harm, which may emanate from crime, violence, conflict, or other factors (OECD, 2020). A recent report from the OECD included the same element of safety from crime in its measurement of wellbeing across OECD 37 country members (2020).

3.2.1. Safety When Walking Alone at Night

The OECD report revealed that people's feelings of safety when walking alone at night have increased over the years, from 67% feeling safe in 2010-12 to 71% feeling safe in 2013-18. However, gender gaps continue to persist, with males in all OECD countries feeling safer than females when walking alone at night. Similar research from the United Kingdom delved further into the issue, with findings revealing that most women (61%) regularly take precautions to protect themselves from sexual assault when walking alone at night. The most common precautions consist of maintaining an awareness of their surroundings, having a phone prepared, and avoiding certain areas (YouGov, 2019).

Participants were asked to rate how safe they feel when walking alone at night through their neighbourhood, with possible responses ranging from 1 ('very unsafe') to 5 ('very safe'). The majority (37.1%) reported that they feel very safe, however just over one fifth (20.7%) stated that they consider it 'very unsafe' to walk alone at night in their neighbourhood.

Figure 6. Feelings of safety when walking alone at night.



Male respondents felt safer than females, with an average rating of 3.86 compared to 2.99, respectively. Furthermore, respondents over the age of 66 years felt the least safe than other age groups. Respondents from Gozo felt the safest walking alone at night, compared to those from other districts. Respondents' feelings of safety in their neighbourhood also varied according to their income tax bracket, with average ratings of safety increasing for each tax bracket.

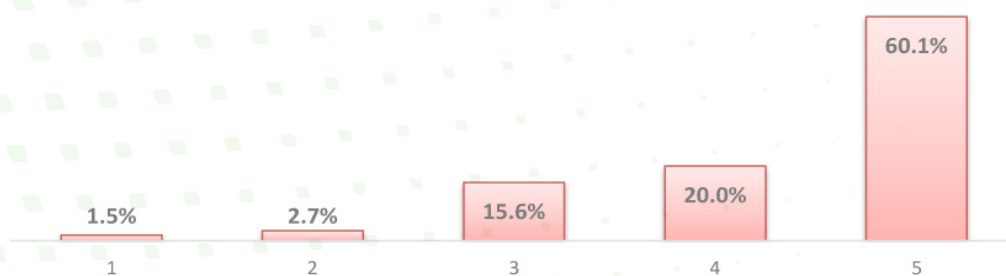
3.2.2. Drug Accessibility for Young People

The Eurobarometer surveys have regularly surveyed individuals from the European Union on various topics, including how easy young people consider it to access drugs in their country. It is important to consider ease of acquisition of drugs, since this is one of the factors which influences young people's exposure to drugs, potentially inciting their decision to use drugs (European Commission, 2002). However, it is important to note that the relationship between the availability of drugs and young people's use of drugs has shown mixed findings. Other factors are also implicated, particularly the age of leaving full-time education; "Persons whose length of education was shortest proved to be the most exposed to the dangers of drugs and to the temptations of tobacco and alcohol" (European Commission, 2002, p. 11).

A 2002 Eurobarometer survey on 'Young people and drugs' shows that young people's ease of obtaining drugs has remained relatively unchanged over the years. Young people were asked whether they tend to agree or disagree with the statement that "It is easy to get drugs". The majority tended to agree that it was easy to obtain drugs from various locations, ranging from "In or near my school/college" (54.9%) to "At parties" (76%). More recent Eurobarometer surveys have asked about young people's access to specific types of drugs, with results showing that, on average, 29% think it would be easy for them to obtain cannabis within 24 hours. However, young people in Malta were among the least likely to find it easy to access cannabis, with 32% agreeing with this statement compared to 70-72% for young people in Ireland, Spain, or Italy (European Commission, 2014). Cocaine was considered to be the second-most easily obtainable illicit drug, with an average of 25% believing that they could obtain the drug within 24 hours. The overall increase in ease of access increased by three percentage points for cocaine compared to cannabis (1% increase), with a quarter of young people in Malta considering it easy to obtain cocaine.

Figure 7. Young people's ease of access to drugs.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not at all easy' and 5 being 'very easy', how easy do you think it is for young people in Malta to access drugs?



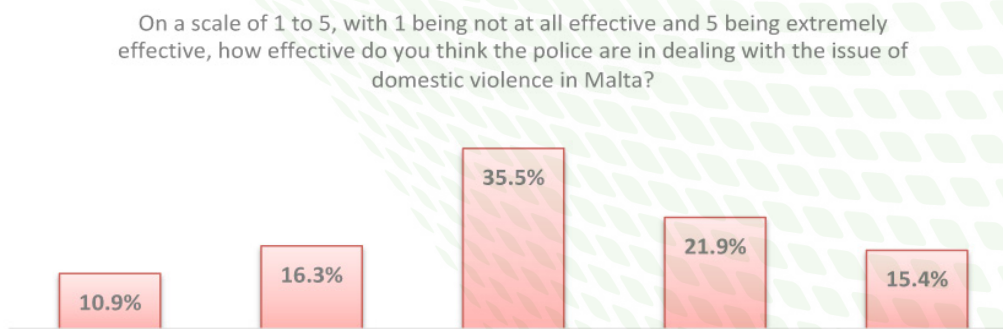
Another question regarding crime asked participants to rate how easy they think it is for young people in Malta to access drugs, with a response of 1 indicating that it is 'not at all easy' and a response of 5 indicating that it is 'very easy' for young people to access drugs. The majority (60.1%) think it is very easy for young people to gain access to drugs, with only 1.5% of respondents believing that it is very difficult. However, younger respondents aged between 16-25 years were the least likely to think that it is easy to access drugs, compared to other age groups.

3.2.3. Police Effectiveness in Dealing with Domestic Violence

The authorities in Malta have recently engaged in a number of measures, intended to implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In a recent assessment of such measures, the Council of Europe Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) reported that several areas for improvement still exist. One such issue was the need for further training of police officers with regard to dealing with domestic violence cases, which could pose a barrier to effectively resolving such cases (GREVIO, 2020).

Participants were asked about how effectively they think the police are dealing with the problem of domestic violence, with possible responses ranging from 1 ('not at all effective') to 5 ('extremely effective'). Over a third of respondents (35.5%) provided a neutral reply, indicating that they are undecided about how effective the police are in dealing with domestic violence.

Figure 8. Perception of police effectiveness in dealing with domestic violence.



Most positive responses came from pensioners respondents aged 66 years and above, whose average score of 3.66 and 3.58 indicate that they believe police are effectively dealing with domestic violence. Respondents with a higher level of education had less favourable responses, with an average score of 2.91 out of 5. Respondents with higher income tax brackets were also less likely to consider that the police are doing an effective job in dealing with domestic violence.

3.3. GENDER EQUALITY

Gender inequality has been noted as having a detrimental impact on the wellbeing of individuals, families, and countries as a whole, posing limitations for individuals of all genders to reach their full potential (Dhiru & Greer, 2017). According to a Special Eurobarometer report, the majority of Europeans (52%) do not think that gender equality has been achieved in leadership positions in companies and organisations in their country, indicating a need for further improvement in this regard. Furthermore, results also revealed that 48% of European participants do not think that gender equality has been achieved in work in their country, with an equal share (48%) believing that gender equality has been achieved in work. Participants' views on whether gender equality have been achieved in politics within their country also show different opinions, with 51% believing that it has been achieved and 45% believing that

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it has not been achieved (European Commission, 2017b). The Eurobarometer results specific to Malta were overall on the positive end of the spectrum, when compared to those of other countries.

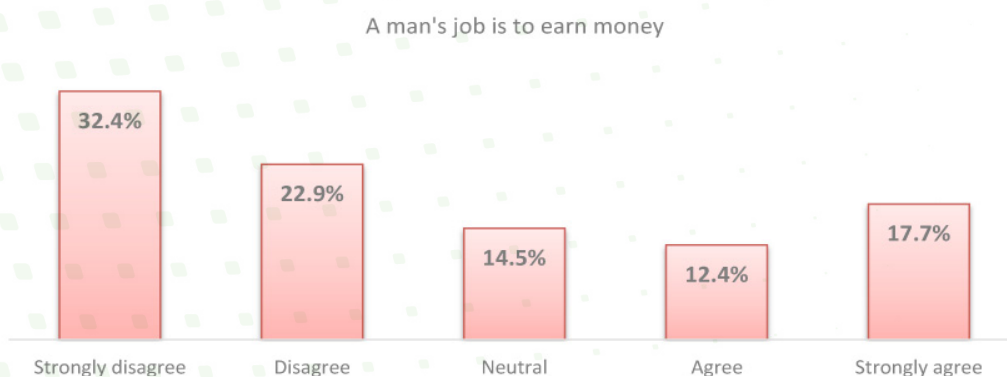
Investigating individuals' perceptions of general gender stereotypes also offers further insight into the topic of gender equality. The Special Eurobarometer report found that certain stereotypes are still prevalent to a significant extent. For example, although the majority of participants (54%) disagreed with the statement that 'the most important role of a woman is to take care of her home and family', more than four in ten (44%) agreed with the statement. Another related statement, that 'the most important role of a man is to earn money', revealed varied opinions across EU countries. For Maltese respondents, whilst 61% agreed with this statement, 36% agreed, demonstrating that such gender stereotypes are still prevalent.

This section of the present study's survey asked participants to rate their level of agreement with a number of statements on the topic of gender equality, with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'. These statements and their associated responses will be detailed below.

3.3.1. 'A man's main duty is to earn money'

The majority (32.4%) of respondents strongly disagreed with this statement, whilst males had a greater tendency to agree than females. Participants aged 66 years and over were the most likely to agree with the statement. In contrast, participants with the highest level of education (Tertiary) were the least likely to agree with the statement, with an average score of 1.64 out of 5, compared to participants with a primary level of education (average of 3.81 out of 5). Respondents whose labour status consists of fulfilling domestic tasks were most likely to agree with this statement. Low income earners were more likely to agree that a man's main duty is to earn money, whereas high income earners held opposing views.

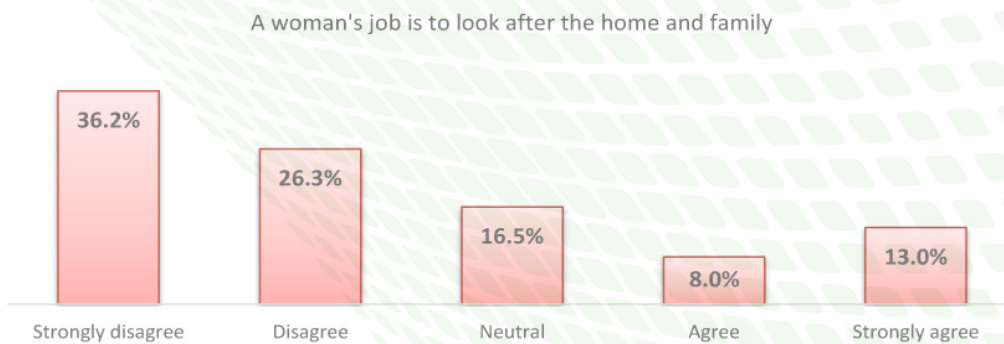
Figure 9. Expectations of men to be financial providers.



3.3.2. 'A woman's main duty is to take care of the home and family'

As with the previous statement, close to a third of respondents (36.2%) strongly disagreed with this statement. Male respondents had a higher average score (2.53) than females (2.19), meaning that males held more agreeable attitudes towards this statement than did females. Younger participants were more likely to disagree with this statement compared to older age groups, as were respondents from the South Eastern district, as well as those with a higher education level and higher income tax bracket. Those who agreed the most with this statement consisted of respondents with a primary education level (average rating of 3.77), followed by respondents fulfilling domestic tasks (average rating of 3.31 out of 5).

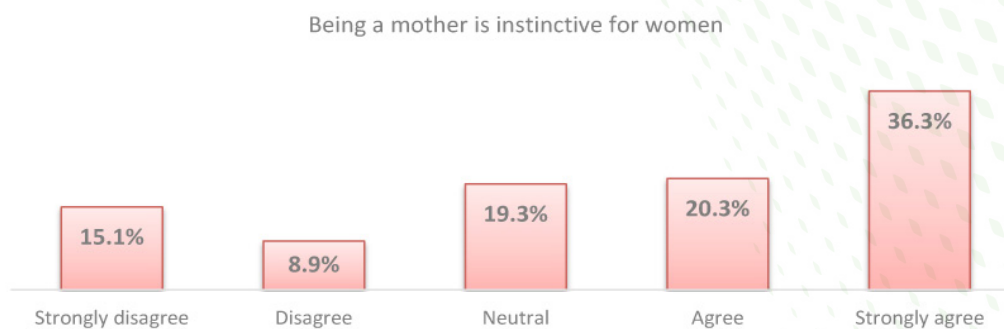
Figure 10. Expectations of women to take care of the home and family.



3.3.3. 'Being a mother is an instinct for women'

The majority of respondents (36.3%) strongly agreed with this statement, with males agreeing more than women (average rating of 3.76 compared to 3.31). Those participants who mostly agreed with this statement were: participants with four or more children, 66+ years old, those fulfilling domestic tasks, and those with a primary level of education. Accordingly, the least agreement with this statement was found amongst respondents with an inactive labour status and those with a tertiary level of education. Agreement with this statement also increased with participants' age group.

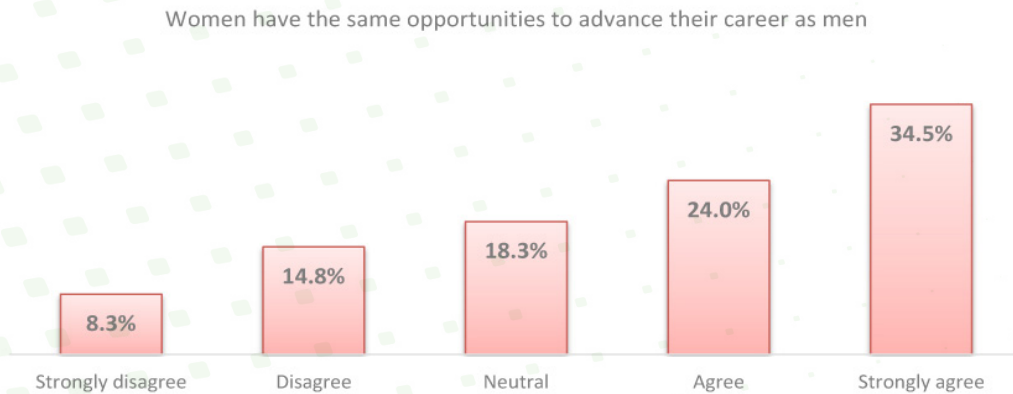
Figure 11. Perceptions of women's motherhood instincts.



3.3.4. 'Women and men have equal opportunities to advance in their careers'

More than a third of participants (34.5%) strongly agreed with this statement, with males agreeing more than females. Gozitans and pensioners were the most likely to strongly agree with this statement, whereas high income earners and those with the highest level of education were those who mostly disagreed that women and men have equal opportunities to advance in their careers.

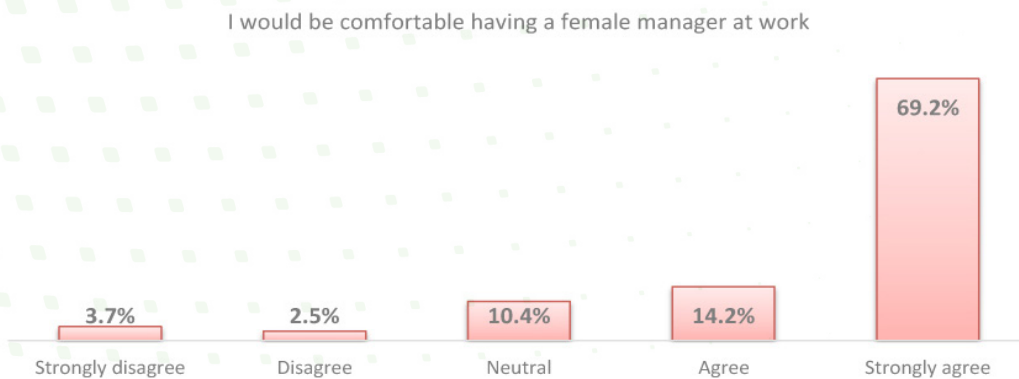
Figure 12. Perceptions of equal opportunities for career advancement.



3.3.5. 'I would be comfortable having a female manager at work'

Most participants (69.2%) strongly agreed with this statement, with males tending to agree more than females. Younger respondents between the ages of 16-25 were less likely to agree with this statement compared to other age groups. Other groups who mostly agreed with this statement were those with the lowest level of education, low income earners, and Gozitans. On the other hand, respondents who are currently working were less likely to agree with this statement, compared to those fulfilling domestic tasks, pensioners, and inactive participants.

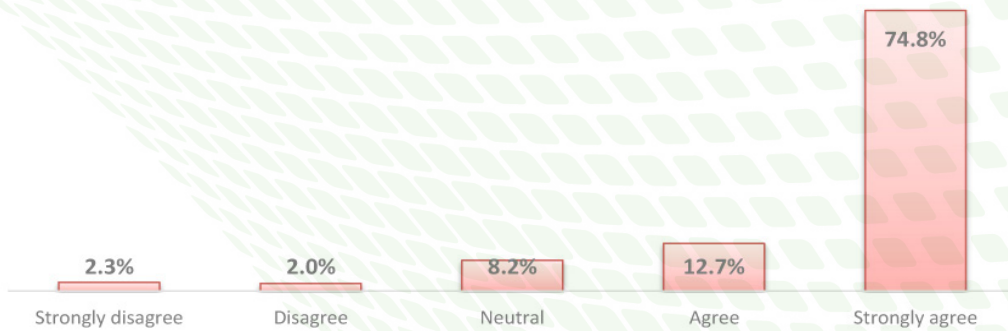
Figure 13. Degree of comfort with a female work manager.



3.3.6. 'I would be comfortable if the Prime Minister is a woman'

Almost three quarters of respondents (74.8%) strongly agreed with this statement, showing that the majority of Maltese individuals would be very comfortable with a female Prime Minister. A small percentage (2.3%) strongly disagreed with this statement. Average response ratings did not show a great deal of variability across different sociodemographic groups, with the lowest average rating being 4.22 out of 5 for participants with a post-secondary education level.

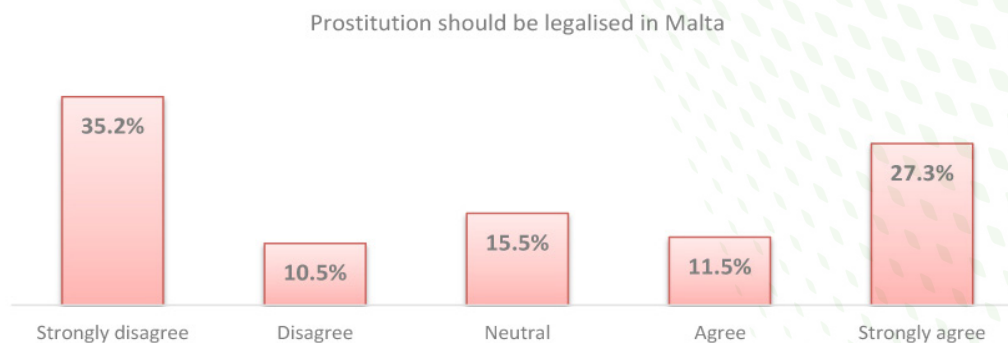
Figure 14. Degree of comfort with a female Prime Minister.



3.3.7. 'Prostitution should be legalised in Malta'

More than a third of participants (35.2%) strongly disagreed with this statement, with males tending to agree more than females that prostitution should be legalised in Malta (average score of 3.14 compared to 2.58, respectively). However, this particular topic revealed divisive opinions, since a large proportion of participants (27.3%) strongly agreed that prostitution should be legalised in Malta. Those respondents who were mostly in favour of legalising prostitution were aged between 35-45, those with an inactive labour status, and those with a higher tax income bracket. On the other hand, participants who agreed least with this statement were those with the lowest level of education, as well as those living in Gozo.

Figure 15. Perceptions on the legalisation of prostitution.



3.4. GOOD GOVERNANCE

A large proportion of European Citizens (69%) consider corruption to be unacceptable, with more than seven in ten believing that corruption is widespread in their country (European Commission, 2020). Empirical research into corruption reveals that it is a complex issue with a variety of causes, as well as having significant consequences for a country's economic development, crime rates, and inequality (Azfar et al., 2001). Countries with high levels of corruption are more likely to suffer a reduction in total investment, leading to lower profitability for investments, and lower inflows of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI).

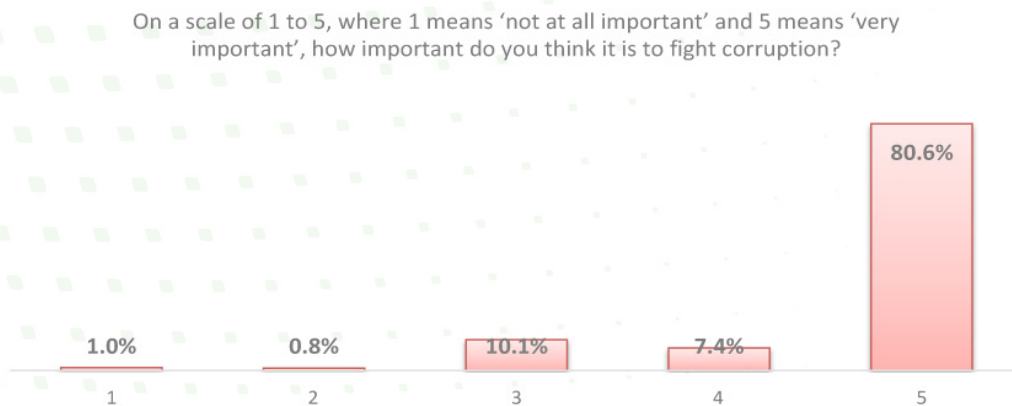
Corruption may also lead to the reinforcement of existing power imbalances and worsening income inequality, in a situation where the rich and powerful benefit from corruption, to the detriment of poorer and less privileged individuals (Enste & Heldman, 2018). It should, however, be noted that debate exists amongst academic experts with regard to the causal relationship between corruption and inequality; Some researchers have argued that high income inequality may lead to a higher level of corruption (Swamy et al., 2001), whereas others have suggested that the correlation between inequality and corruption may indicate that the same cultural determinants are implicated as the driving force behind both issues (Graf Lambsdorff, 2005).

This section provides insights into a number of issues related to good governance of the country. Participants were informed that, for the purposes of this study, corruption refers to an elected official misusing their position for personal or political gain.

3.4.1. The Fight Against Corruption

Participants were asked to rate how important they think the fight against corruption is, with 1 being 'not at all important' and 5 being 'very important'. A vast majority of eight out of ten (80.6%) consider the fight against corruption to be very important. Most remaining participants considered the fight against corruption to be important (7.4% providing a rating of 4 out of 5), whilst 10.1% provided a neutral response. Only 1% of participants considered the fight against corruption to be unimportant, with a further 0.8% leaning towards this end of the scale. Once again, there was little variation in the responses amongst particular sociodemographic variables.

Figure 16. Perceptions on the importance of fighting corruption.

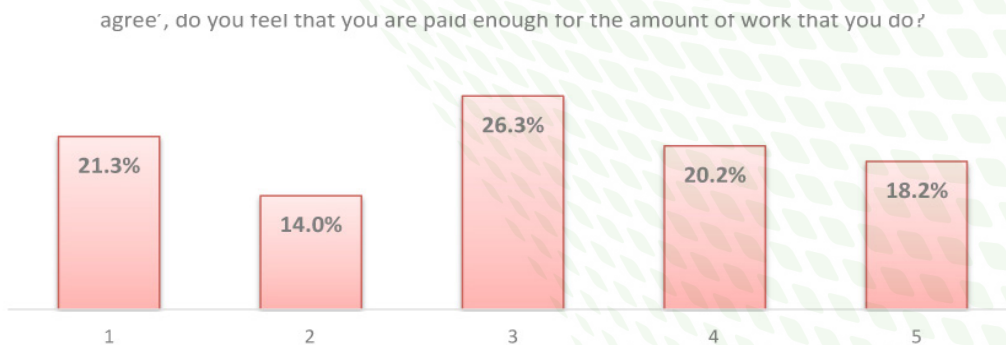


In addition to asking participants about their views on government-facilitated corruption, this section of the survey also included a question about workers' satisfaction with their salaries. A 2019 Europe-wide review showed that Malta's minimum wage increase was among the lowest in the EU (Aumayr-Pintar et al., 2019). Furthermore, a large proportion of Maltese companies have faced mounting pressure to increase workers' salaries due to reasons such as high property prices and an increased cost of living in Malta (Malta Employers' Association, 2019). Recent major local incidents - including allegations of government corruption and questions surrounding large-scale government agreements - have also placed additional international scrutiny on the country's financial institutions (Schembri Orland, 2020).

3.4.2. 'Do you feel that you are paid enough for the amount of work that you do?'

Possible response options for this question ranged from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'). The overall average response to this question was neutral. Male respondents felt that they are more adequately compensated for their work than females. Younger participants aged between 16-25 were those who mostly felt that they are paid enough for their work, whilst respondents who had obtained educational training at a trade school level (i.e. MCAST), low income earners, and Southern Harbour residents were those who least felt that they are paid enough for the work that they do.

Figure 17. Perceived adequacy of wages.

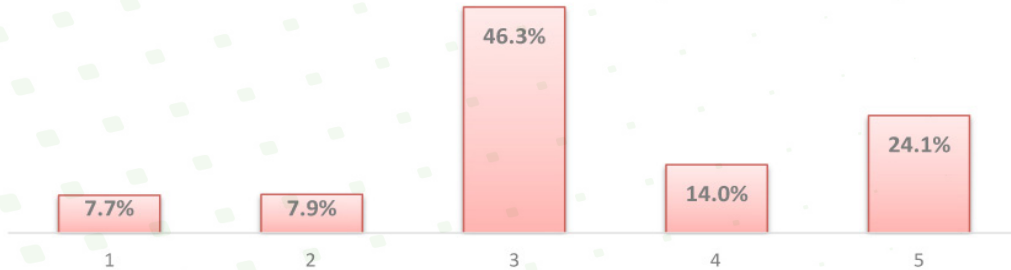


3.4.3. 'Do you think that the elected politicians are corrupt?'

As with the previous question, the overall responses provided by participants were neutral (3.39 out of 5) when they were asked to rate their agreement with this statement. Responses could range from 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'). Male respondents tended to agree more than female respondents that the elected politicians are corrupt (average score of 3.41 compared to 3.35). The participants who tended to disagree with the statement, thus indicating that the elected politicians are not corrupt, were those over the age of 66 and those with the lowest level of education. Elected politicians were considered most corrupt by respondents with an inactive labour status, those currently in employment, and Gozitans.

Figure 18. Perceived corruption of elected politicians.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 5 means 'strongly agree', do you think that the elected politicians are corrupt?

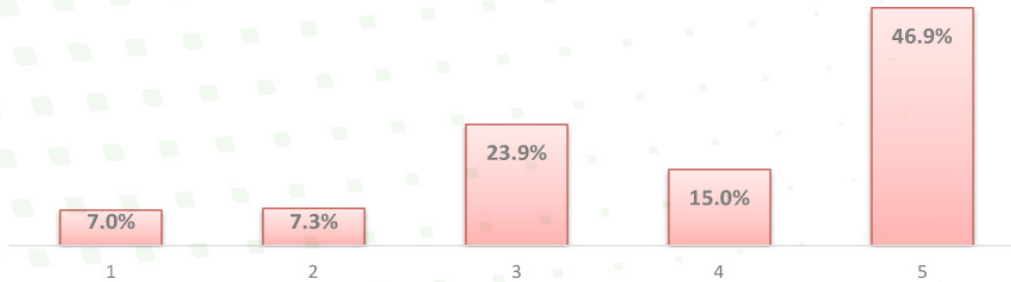


3.4.4. 'Are the Unions still representing the interests of the workers?'

Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with this statement on a scale of 1 ('strongly disagree') to 5 ('strongly agree'). The majority (46.9%) strongly agreed that Unions are still representing the interests of the workers, whilst only 7% strongly disagreed. Those respondents who mostly disagreed with this statement were those falling within the highest income tax bracket, with an average rating of 2.79, compared to those in other tax brackets, whose average ratings were between 4.02 and 4.16.

Figure 19. Perception of Union representation of workers.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 5 means 'strongly agree', do you think that the Unions still represent the interests of the workers?

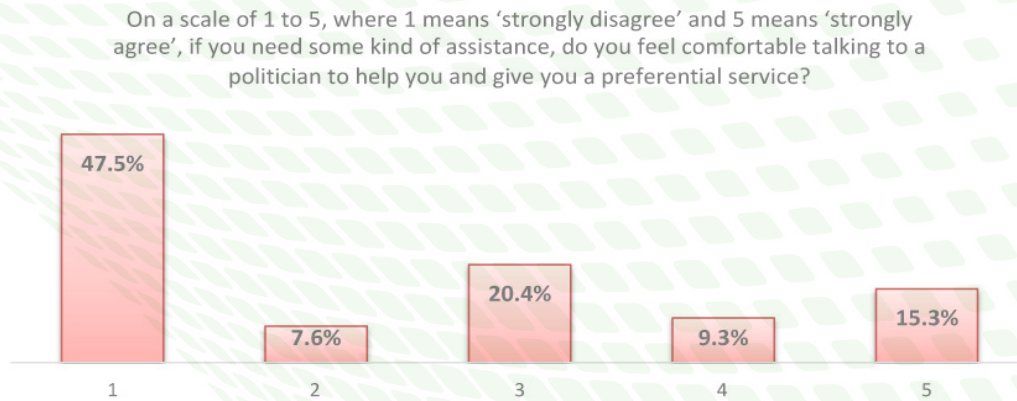


3.4.5. 'If you need some kind of assistance, do you feel comfortable talking to a politician to help you and give you a preferential service?'

When asked to rate how comfortable they would feel with such a scenario (with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'), the majority (47.5%) gave a response of 1, indicating that they would not at all feel comfortable asking a politician for a preferential service. However, the average response to this question was 2.37, with a total of 24.6% having some form of agreement with the statement. Those participants who would feel most comfortable asking a politician for a preferential service were: participants with five or more children and those with a primary level of education. On the other hand, high

income earners and those with the highest level of education would feel least comfortable asking a politician for preferential service.

Figure 20. Level of comfort with requesting preferential service from politicians.



3.5. MORALITY & VALUES

The World Values Survey has provided an understanding of how acceptance of corruption can vary across societies. A certain degree of permissiveness toward corruption exists in most societies, whilst also demonstrating strong negative correlations with support for democracy, and with interpersonal trust (Moreno, 2002). Acceptance of corruption has also been found to vary according to individual-level factors.

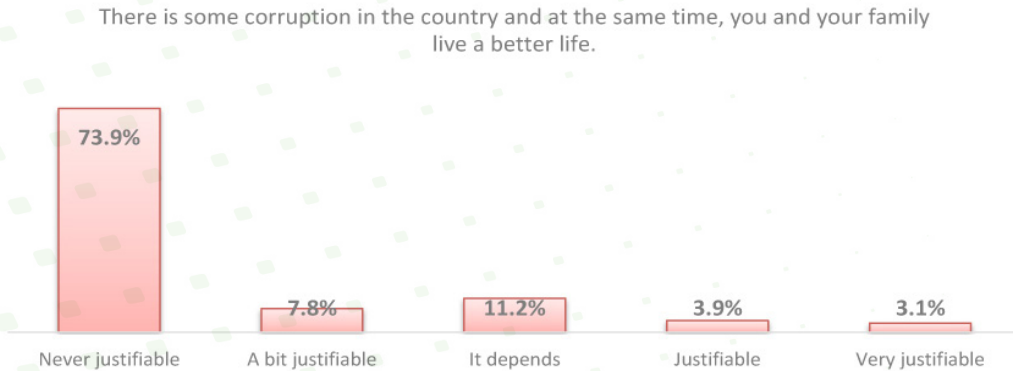
Pop (2012) studied acceptance of corruption in European societies and revealed that this was most strongly affected by gender and religiosity, with women and more religious individuals were less accepting of corrupt acts. Those individuals who did not have an occupation, as well as those with more material resources, were more accepting of corruption. However, individuals who had children, were in a stable relationship, or had a high confidence in the government, were less likely to be accepting of corrupt acts. These results are in line with the notion that “individuals adjust their acceptance of corrupt acts so that when there is more to lose for themselves or for their loved ones, they report less tolerance of corruption” (p. 37).

The present survey asked three questions related to morality and values, asking participants to rate how justifiable they considered the actions (referred to in each statement), on a scale of 1 being 'never justifiable' and 5 being 'always justifiable'. The responses to each statement are summarised below.

3.5.1. 'To have some corruption in the country and at the same time you and your family live a better life'

Most respondents (73.9%) responded that it is never justifiable for corruption to exist in the country, even if this means that they and their family have a better life. Only 3.1% would consider that corruption is always justifiable if it is accompanied by benefits to them and their family. The responses did not show much variation according to different sociodemographic groups.

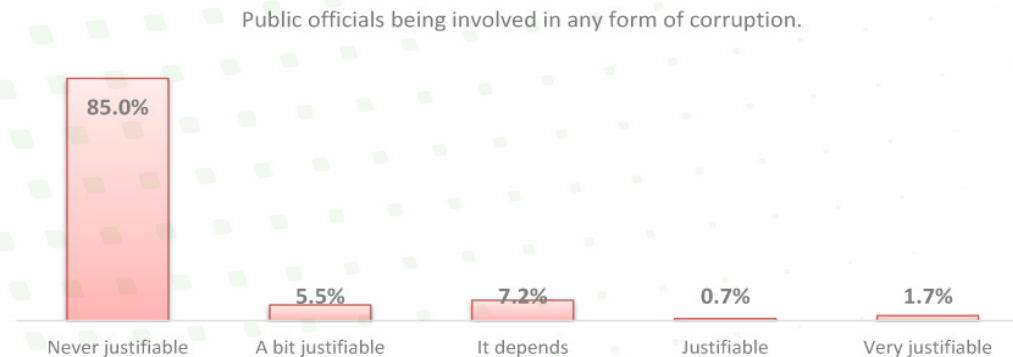
Figure 21. Justifiability of corruption if one's family benefits.



3.5.2. 'Public officials being involved in any form of corruption'

The majority (85%) think that it is never justifiable for public officials to be involved in any form of corruption, with a small minority (1.7%) believing that this is always justifiable. There was also not a great deal of variation in responses according to sociodemographic factors, however, the highest average score (indicating greater acceptance of public officials being involved in corruption) was found amongst persons with an inactive labour status. Nonetheless, this average score was 1.80 out of 5, which is still leaning towards the response of corruption being 'never justifiable'.

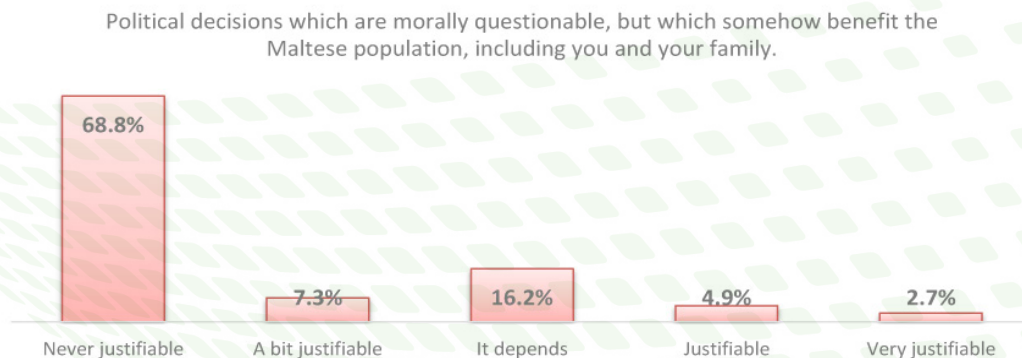
Figure 22. Justifiability of public officials' involvement in corruption.



3.5.3. 'Morally questionable political decisions but at the same time the Maltese population, including you and your family can benefit'

A majority of respondents (68.8%) responded that morally questionable political decisions are never justifiable, even if these decisions provide benefits to the Maltese population and to themselves. Only 2.7% of respondents would consider this to always be justifiable, whilst 16.2% were undecided about how justifiable such a scenario would be. Once again, there was not much variation according to sociodemographic groups.

Figure 23. Justifiability of corruption if it benefits the Maltese population.



3.6. LIFE SATISFACTION

Social scientists frequently recommend that measuring people's subjective wellbeing should be taken into account in conjunction with typical measures of a country's economic prosperity, such as GDP per capita. Such subjective measures of wellbeing, obtained from surveys which ask people about their life satisfaction, have shown to provide reasonable accuracy in measuring wellbeing (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2017).

Surveys measuring life satisfaction across various countries have identified some important socioeconomic factors which are implicated in differences in life satisfaction. Economic success has been found to account for both country- and individual- level differences in life satisfaction. People from richer countries, which have higher average national incomes, tend to report greater life satisfaction than those from poorer countries. The same also holds true for individuals with a higher personal income, who tend to have a higher life satisfaction than those with a lower personal income from the same country (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2017).

However, the broader aspects of culture and history have also proven to be important in understanding differences in self-reported life satisfaction. For example, individuals from ex-communist countries typically have a lower subjective well-being compared to those from countries with comparable levels of economic development (Ortiz-Ospina & Roser, 2017).

A 2016 Eurobarometer survey on quality of life reported that "a large majority of respondents say they are satisfied with the life they lead" (p. 144). However, at least one in five respondents from 16 European cities reported that they are not satisfied with the life they lead. With regard to respondents from Malta, 39% were very satisfied, 47% were fairly satisfied, 9% were not very satisfied, and 3% were not at all satisfied, whilst the remaining 2% were unsure.

This section delved into a number of areas related to participants' satisfaction and quality of life, by looking at aspects such as their physical surroundings as well as community-related factors.

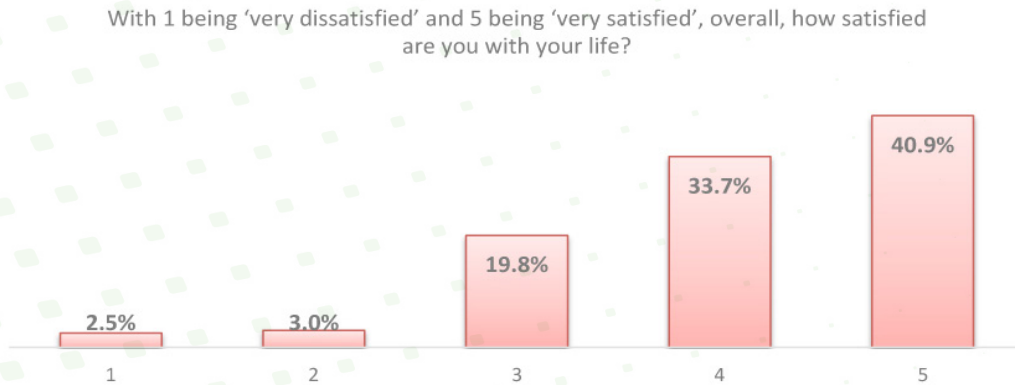
3.6.1. Overall Life Satisfaction

Participants were asked to rate their overall life satisfaction, with 1 being 'very dissatisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied'. The majority of participants (40.9%) responded that they are

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very satisfied with their life, whilst a further large proportion (33.7%) were somewhat satisfied, and only a small percentage (2.5%) were very dissatisfied.

Figure 24. Self-rated life satisfaction.

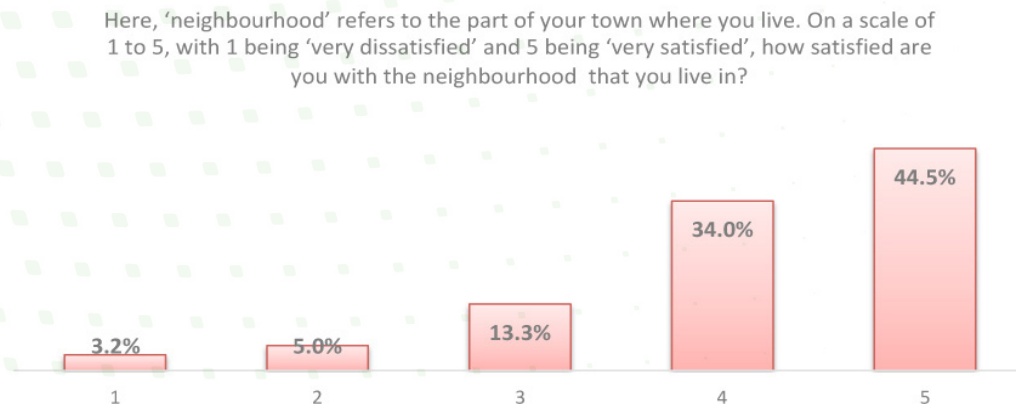


There was no difference in life satisfaction according to gender. Those respondents with the highest average life satisfaction were those aged 66 and above, in contrast with 16-25 year olds who were mostly dissatisfied with their life (average rating of 4.54 for older participants vs 3.74 for younger participants). People living with a partner were also more satisfied with their lives than those not living with their partner. Other participants with the least life satisfaction included those who are not working, as well as persons with five or more children. Greater life satisfaction was found amongst participants with a lower level of education and those living in the Southern Harbour or Gozo.

3.6.2. Satisfaction with One's Neighbourhood

When asked to rate how satisfied they are with the neighbourhood area in which they live, with 1 being 'very dissatisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied', the majority of respondents (44.5%) reported that they are very satisfied with their neighbourhood.

Figure 25. Satisfaction with one's neighbourhood.



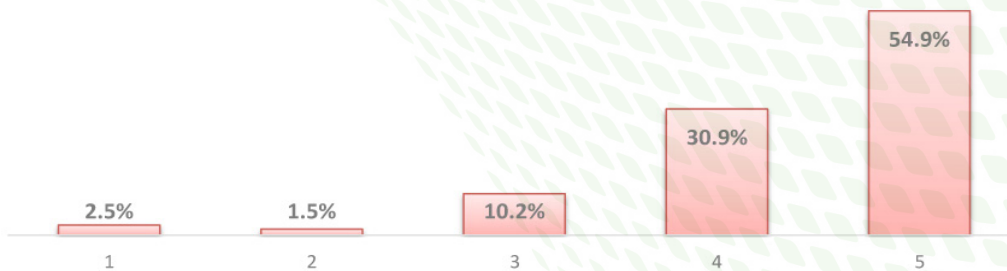
Females had a slightly higher level of satisfaction compared to males (average of 4.13 vs 4.08 out of 5). Similar to the trends seen with life satisfaction, older participants aged 66+ were most satisfied with their neighbourhood compared to younger participants (aged 16-25) who were the most dissatisfied with their neighbourhood area. Another similarity with neighbourhood satisfaction and life satisfaction was found for education level, with participants who had obtained a primary level of education being the most satisfied with their neighbourhood. Participants fulfilling domestic tasks were also more satisfied with their neighbourhood than those belonging to other employment categories. Finally, neighbourhood satisfaction was greatest for Gozitans and lowest among participants who reside in the Southern Harbour district.

3.6.3. Satisfaction with One's Home

Participants were also asked to rate their level of satisfaction with their home, with 1 being 'absolutely dissatisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied'. More than half of the respondents (54.9%) reported that they are very satisfied with their home, followed by 30.9% who were satisfied (rating of 4 out of 5). The average response to this question was 4.34, indicating that participants are mostly satisfied with their homes.

Figure 26. Satisfaction with one's home.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'very dissatisfied' and 5 being 'very satisfied', how satisfied are you with the home that you live in?

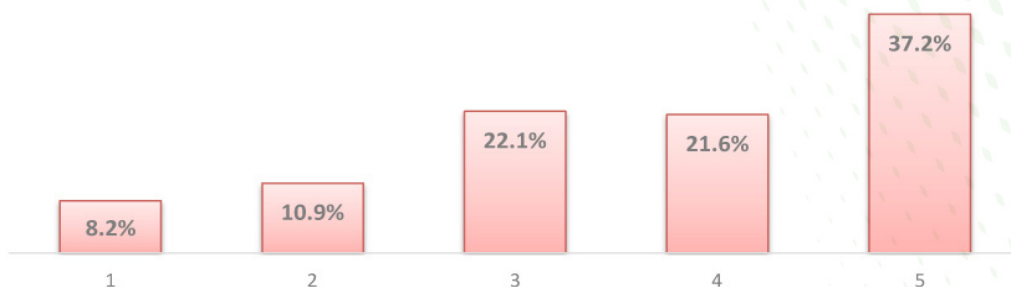


3.6.4. Neighbourhood Relations

Next, the survey attempted to gauge the quality of neighbourhood relations, by asking participants how much they agree that neighbours in their area take care of each other (with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 5 being 'strongly agree'). More than a third of respondents (37.2%) strongly agreed that their neighbours take care of each other, with only 8.2% absolutely disagreeing with the statement.

Figure 27. Extent to which participants feel that neighbours look out for each other.

On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means 'strongly disagree' and 5 means 'strongly agree': Do you feel that neighbours in your area 'look out' for each other?



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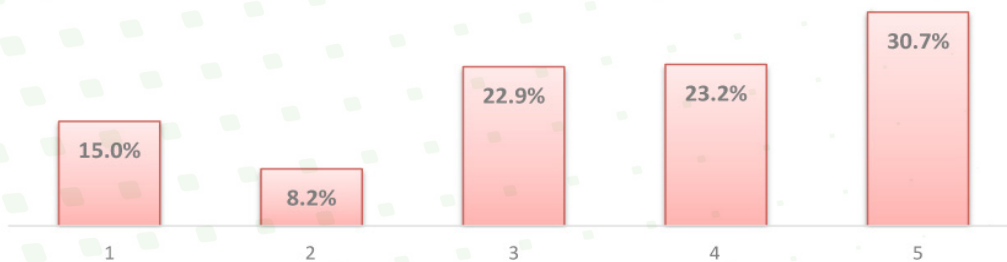
Females were more likely to feel that their neighbours take care of each other compared to males. Greater agreement with this statement was also found amongst respondents over the age of 66 years old, with the lowest level of education, and those residing in Gozo. On the other hand, respondents in the 46-55 age group, those with a post-secondary or tertiary education, and those residing in the Western area had the least agreement with this statement.

3.6.5. Waste Management

Another aspect of neighbourhood satisfaction was measured by asking respondents how problematic they feel that waste management is in their area, with 1 meaning 'not a problem' and 5 being 'a very big problem'. Three out of ten (30.7%) do not consider waste management in their area to be a problem at all. However, 15% of respondents feel that waste management is a very big problem in their area.

Figure 28. Extent of the problem of rubbish/littering in one's area.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'a very big problem' and 5 being 'not a problem', how big of a problem do you feel that rubbish/littering is in your area?



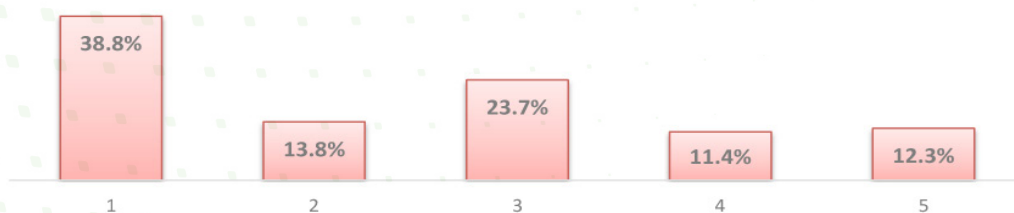
In terms of sociodemographic factors, female respondents consider waste management to be more of a problem compared to males. Waste management in one's area was also considered to be more problematic for participants over the age of 66, those with the lowest level of education, as well as those residing in the Northern Harbour district. Meanwhile, participants fulfilling domestic tasks considered waste management in their area to be less of a problem than persons who are inactive, working, or pensioners.

3.6.6. Traffic

Participants were asked about how problematic they consider traffic to be, in general, with 1 meaning a 'very big problem' and 5 meaning 'not a problem at all'. The majority of respondents (38.8%) consider traffic to be a very big problem, whilst only 12.3% said that they do not consider traffic to be a problem.

Figure 29. Extent of the problem of traffic in general.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'a very big problem' and 5 being 'not a problem at all', how big of a problem do you feel that traffic is in general?



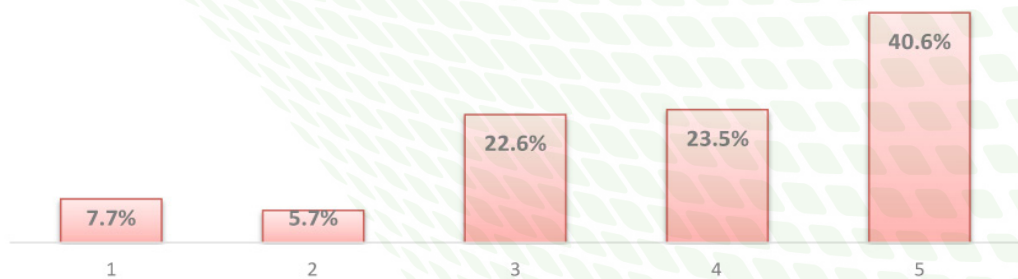
Traffic was considered more problematic for participants who were female, aged between 36-45, persons with a primary level of education, respondents with four or more children, and those residing in the Northern district.

3.6.7. The Necessity of Local Councils

Next, participants were asked to state how necessary they think Local Councils are in the effective management of their locality, with 1 being 'unnecessary' and 5 being 'very necessary'. The majority of respondents (40.6%) consider Local Councils to be very necessary, whereas a small proportion (7.7%) think that Local Councils are not necessary.

Figure 30. Perceived necessity of local councils in effective locality management.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'unnecessary' and 5 being 'very necessary', How useful do you think local councils in the effective management of your locality?



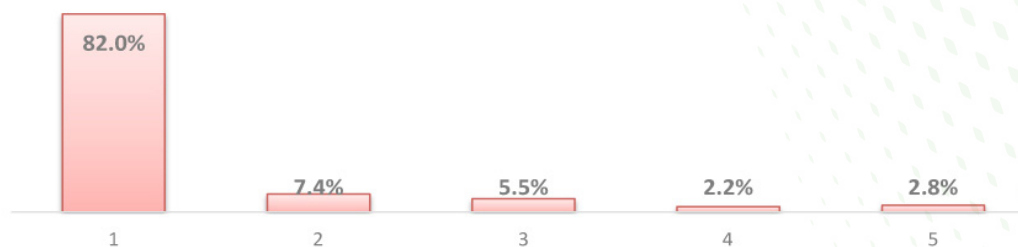
No differences in gender were evident, however differences could be seen depending on other variables; Respondents tended to think that Local Councils are more necessary if they were over 66 years old, have the lowest level of education, or reside in Gozo, whilst respondents who are currently working were less likely to consider Local Councils as necessary in the effective management of their locality.

3.6.8. Involvement in Local Government Activities

Asked to rate their degree of involvement in the activities of their Local Council, with 1 being 'not involved' and 5 being 'very involved', a large majority of participants (82%) consider themselves to not be involved in activities, with only 2.8% stating that they are very involved in their Local Council's activities.

Figure 31. Level of involvement in local council activities.

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being 'not very involved' and 5 being 'very involved', how involved would you say that you are in your local council's activity?



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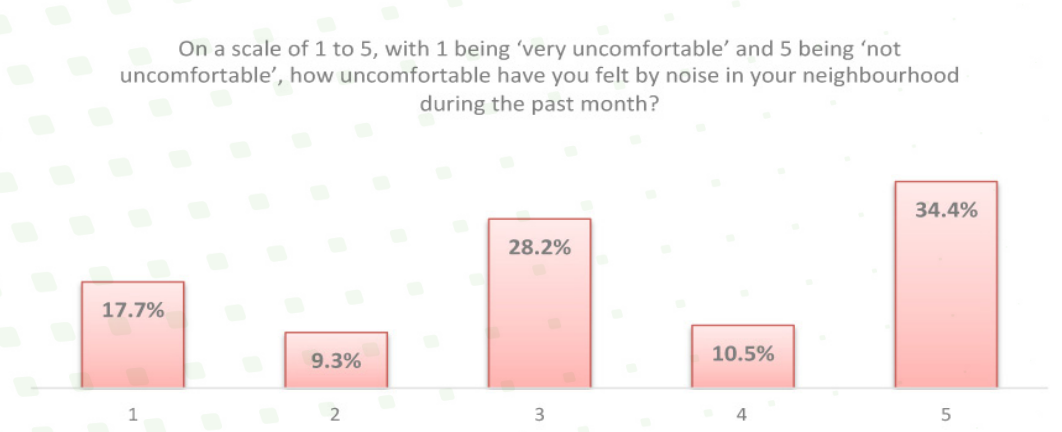
Little variation was seen across sociodemographic factors, given that most responses leaned towards one end of the scale.

3.6.9. Noise in One's Area

Data from the European Commission reported that, in 2015, Malta was among the European Countries where residents were on average more dissatisfied with the noise level in their city, with 54% of Maltese respondents saying that they are not satisfied with the noise level (European Commission, 2016).

Participants in the present survey were asked how uncomfortable they had felt with the noise in their neighbourhood in the past month where 1 means 'very uncomfortable' and 5 means 'not uncomfortable'. Over a third of respondents (34.4%) had not felt uncomfortable with the noise in their neighbourhood, however, 17.7% disclosed that they had been very uncomfortable with the noise in their area, and 28.2% gave a neutral response.

Figure 32. Degree of discomfort with the noise in one's neighbourhood.



No differences in gender were evident, and those participants aged between 46-55 or residing in the Southern Harbour area were most uncomfortable with the noise in their areas.

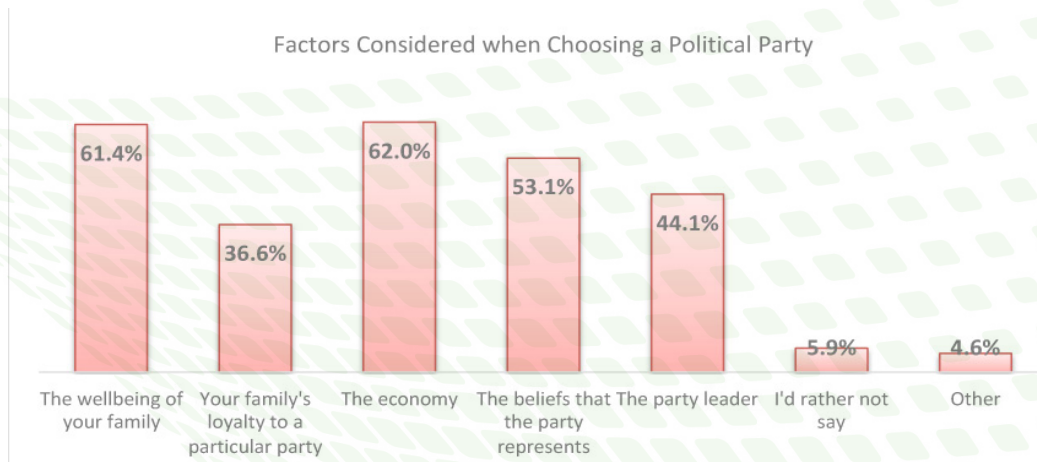
3.7. POLITICS

People's political preferences can be influenced by a variety of factors, such as the overall values that a political party represents, as well as the behaviour of a party's politicians. A recent survey from Norway investigated which factor people considered most important when choosing a political party in the 2017 election. Their results revealed that the ideology and values of the party were considered to be the most important factor, regardless of which party individuals voted for (Statista, 2020).

3.7.1. Factors Considered when Choosing a Political Party

This final section of the survey dealt with participants' opinions regarding political matters. First, participants were provided with a list of potential factors which they take into consideration when choosing which political party to vote for, and asked to indicate the most important factors. The results are detailed in the graph below (N.B. Participants were given the option of selecting more than one response and thus the percentages displayed do not add up to 100%) (Figure 33).

Figure 33. Factors considered when choosing to vote for a political party.



It is evident that the economy was the most commonly chosen factor (62%), followed closely by the wellbeing of participants' families (61.4%). The next most commonly chosen factor was the beliefs that the party represents (53.1%).

3.7.2. Effect of a political party being involved in a corruption scandal

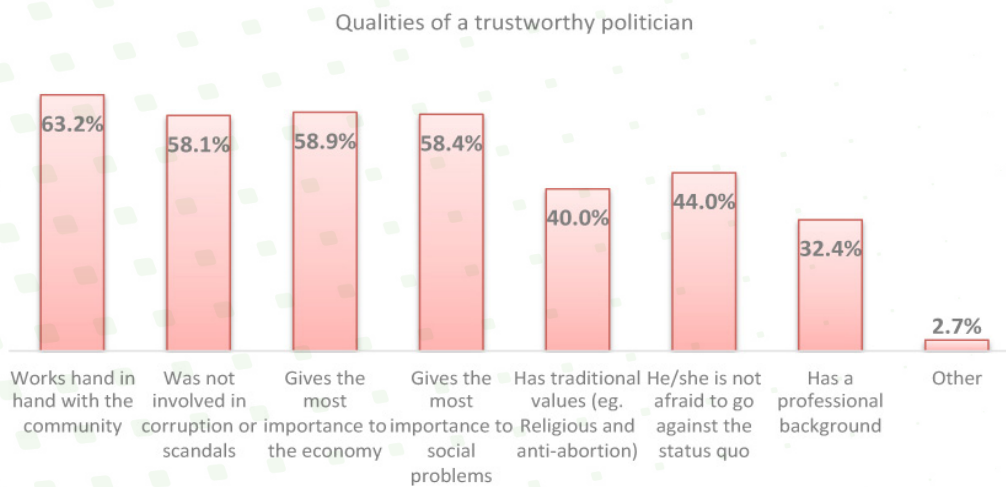
Populism, defined as “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, the pure people versus the corrupt elite” (Mudde, 2004, p. 543), has been on the rise in America and Europe. Although institutional factors such as political polarization have been investigated as the underlying cause of rising populism, research from Italy suggests that voters' exposure to local corruption also helps populist parties gain power, whilst hurting the party involves in corruption scandals (Foresta, 2020).

In the present survey, participants were asked about whether they would vote for their preferred political party if the party was involved in a corruption scandal. The responses from a majority of participants (59.3%) were that they would not vote for their preferred party if it was involved in a corruption scandal (40.8% 'no', 18.5% 'absolutely no'). However, more than a quarter of participants (26.6%) responded that they would 'maybe' still vote for their preferred party. A small proportion responded with 'yes' (10.1%) or 'definitely yes' (4%), indicating a strong degree of party loyalty.

3.7.2. Qualities of a Trustworthy Politician

The final question asked participants to select the qualities which they consider important in their decision of whether a politician is trustworthy. The most commonly chosen responses were that participants consider a politician trustworthy if they 'work hand in hand with the community' (63.2%), followed by a politician who 'gives the most importance to the economy' (58.9%). Participants would also mostly trust a politician who gives the most importance to social problems (58.4%), as well as those who were not involved in corruption or scandals (58.1%). The complete list of possible responses is provided below (N.B. Participants were given the option of selecting more than one response and thus the percentages displayed do not add up to 100%).

Figure 34. Qualities of a trustworthy politician.





4. CONCLUSION



The results provided in this report reveal a number of insights into the opinions of the Maltese population regarding a vast range of socio-political aspects. Whilst these findings are purely descriptive, and thus not attempting to offer claims of statistically significant differences on the basis of sociodemographic factors, they are nonetheless useful in gaining a sense of understanding about possible differences in opinions based on individuals' unique circumstances.

Moreover, the sampling technique of the present study made efforts to include an equal representation of the general population with a large sample size, in order to be informed of the views of various different groups that exist in Malta and Gozo.

Taken together, the data may suggest that differences in opinion are prevalent on important topics of national relevance, with specific areas potentially being greater issues of contention than others. For instance, the attitudes towards statements about traditional versus more modern gender roles indicate that gender, age group, and district of residence may be at play, although further analysis is needed to investigate such potential links.

Participants' age group, level of education, and occupational status were also prominent when observing differences in responses for a number of questions. In sum, the present findings provide an indication that differences in opinion may likely exist within the Maltese population, which should be further explored through statistical analysis and follow-up research.

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