

# What do **YOU** think?

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A report on public perception about  
refugees and migrants in Malta

2012



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## WHAT DO YOU THINK ? - A PUBLIC PERCEPTION REPORT - 2012

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Jon Hoisaeter  
UNHCR Malta Representative

## Beyond assumptions

Over the years much has been said about what people in Malta think about refugees and migrants. Politicians and journalists air their opinions, often with reference to the views of the population. Bloggers and online commentators frequently talk about migration challenges from a ‘Malta perspective’. Some go much further to discredit people sweepingly labelled as ‘illegal migrants’, at times using derogatory and xenophobic language.

How representative are these views? Are we getting the whole picture from hearing mainly the loudest voices? At UNHCR we have felt the need to test some of the assumptions often made.

The only way to find out is to ask the people themselves. Therefore, we have worked with an independent research agency, to reach out to 400 households in Malta – house by house, face to face. People of different ages and backgrounds were approached. Every region, from Gozo to Marsaxlokk, is represented. This report is about the answers we received.

Some outcomes were more or less what we had expected. Other findings were less predictable. Read more about this in the survey summary on the next page.

At UNHCR we take several lessons from this survey. Firstly it is safe to say that, when it comes to attitudes among the Maltese, the picture appears more complex compared with how these views are often portrayed by the media. The survey also shows that the majority are not in fact very concerned that their way of life is under threat from migration. The results do, however, also raise points which illustrate problems within Maltese communities. These issues need to be taken seriously.

The survey shows that many people in this country are conscious of what it takes to promote positive integration in local communities. This is not a bad starting point for increased interaction and dialogue. At the same time almost half of the population in Malta have never spoken to someone they would consider to be a refugee or a migrant.

We are acutely aware that there is still a job to do in Malta, both in terms of listening to local communities and in terms of providing information and support to new residents in this country. We think this needs to be a joint effort by authorities, civil society as well as the general public.

What do you think?

#### Field work:

400 net respondents were interviewed face-to-face across Malta and Gozo in January 2012 by Informa Consultants

#### Report prepared and compiled:

Informa Consultants & UNHCR Malta

#### Provisional version

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“The majority of the Maltese are not in fact worried that their way of life is under threat from migration.”

# In a few words

## Who did the study?

Informa Consultants were commissioned to interview 400 face-to-face respondents across Malta and Gozo during January 2012 in both Maltese and English.

## Who was interviewed?

The survey included randomly selected respondents over 16 years of age that have been living as residents in Malta for at least two years.

## What we asked?

The survey was based on a mix of open choice (OC) and multiple choice (MC) questions. The study has a general margin of error of +/- 4.9%.

## What were the answers?

The survey confirmed that there are many different views and opinions 'out there'. From UNHCR's perspective there were some very interesting findings. Some of these points are highlighted below, while the detailed results from a range of specific questions are presented in the following pages.

**Just over 50%** of the respondents indicate that they think there are **too many migrants and refugees arriving in their locality**. It is interesting to note that less than half of the people asked were in fact aware of any such individuals living in their own communities. Around 20% said that their major concern relating to migration is Malta's limited size. But according to the survey almost half those asked do not in fact consider that there are too many refugees and migrants arriving in their communities.

Concerns about 'too many migrants' do not necessarily translate into worries about threats to local community life. In fact **a majority of 54% do not consider migration to be a threat** to their way of life in the local community. There are, however, significant regional differences on this point. The survey also found that young respondents generally expressed less concern.

Survey respondents who live in **localities close to Hal Far did express a higher degree of concern** about negative impact on the local way of life due to the presence of refugees and migrants. It is perhaps not surprising that in areas dominated by the larger temporary accommodation and detention centres **more than 70%** are concerned about the effect on local communities. By comparison the perception of threat drops very significantly among respondents living in the northern and central areas of Malta as well as in Gozo.

**More than 43%** of the respondents said they had **never had any form of interaction with any refugees or migrants**. On a more positive note, more than half of those surveyed reported to have spoken with a refugee or migrant at least once during the past year, one in four said the same for the last week before the survey. Most of the interaction with refugees and migrants was reported to take place in relation to work, in the street and in shops.

The **words 'refugee' and 'migrant' are frequently in use by various media. But do most people know what they actually mean?** In fact, **more than 51%** of respondents were able to distinguish between the two terms. However, the majority suggested that 'refugees' and 'migrants' originate mainly from the same areas (Africa, Libya and Somalia). After a decade of boat arrivals from Libya, it is perhaps to be expected that the Maltese population thinks of asylum seekers when they encounter the word 'migrant', although there are several other groups of non-EU residents present in Malta.

**A majority of 58%** agreed with the statement that "people coming to Malta should change their ways to be more like other Maltese citizens." **The main elements that could define successful integration**, and ultimately naturalization through citizenship, were identified by the majority as: "clean criminal record", "duration of stay" and "work". Almost half of the respondents said that migrants and refugees can contribute to Maltese society by "working legally" and "paying taxes". Take a look at the back page of this report to read some of the comments made on this question.

According to those surveyed, **people of sub-Saharan African background are considered as the least likely to settle successfully in Malta**, with **around 46%** citing "different culture" as the main obstacle in this regard. Many respondents expressed the view that the Maltese are reserved about mixing with people of different cultures. In fact almost two thirds of respondents think that "only a few" or 'hardly anyone' in Malta accept such differences.

But **more than one third** of the Maltese agree that **a mixture of different lifestyles and cultures, such as those brought about by refugees and migrants, makes Malta a more attractive place to live**. Many of those interviewed also showed understanding as regards the hardship some refugees and migrants are faced with: **approximately 80%** of respondents believe that refugees and migrants are **not treated fairly when looking for jobs**. A large majority also acknowledge that they face discrimination in searching for accommodation. There appears to be strong general awareness about obstacles and discrimination affecting refugees and migrants who try to settle in Malta.

51.0%

said that a refugee is a person fleeing his country, seeking refugee or in need of help.

36.4%

said that interaction with refugees and migrants is happening at work

29.8%

said that refugees and migrants can contribute by working legally in Malta

67.8%

do not know any refugees or migrants personally

46.4%

identified "different culture" as the main barrier to integration

78.3%

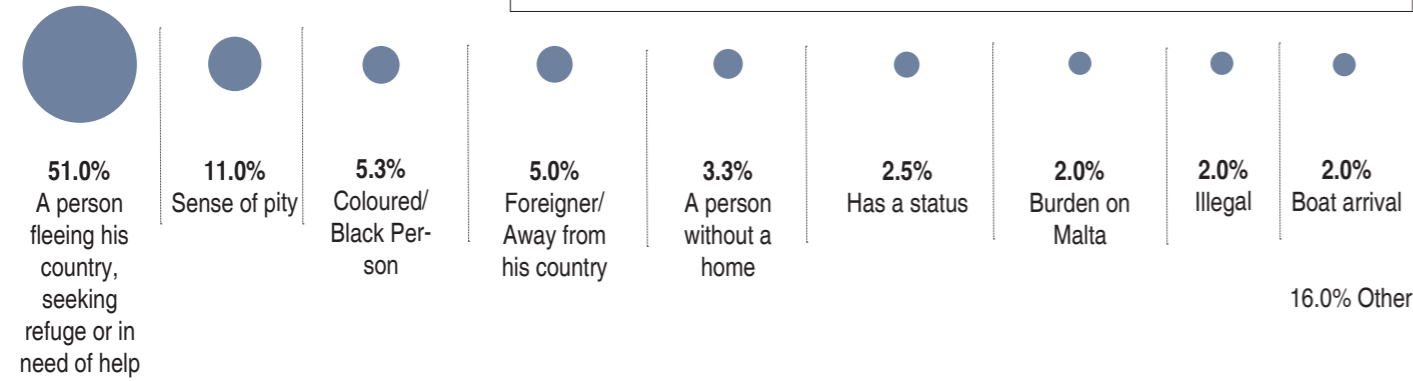
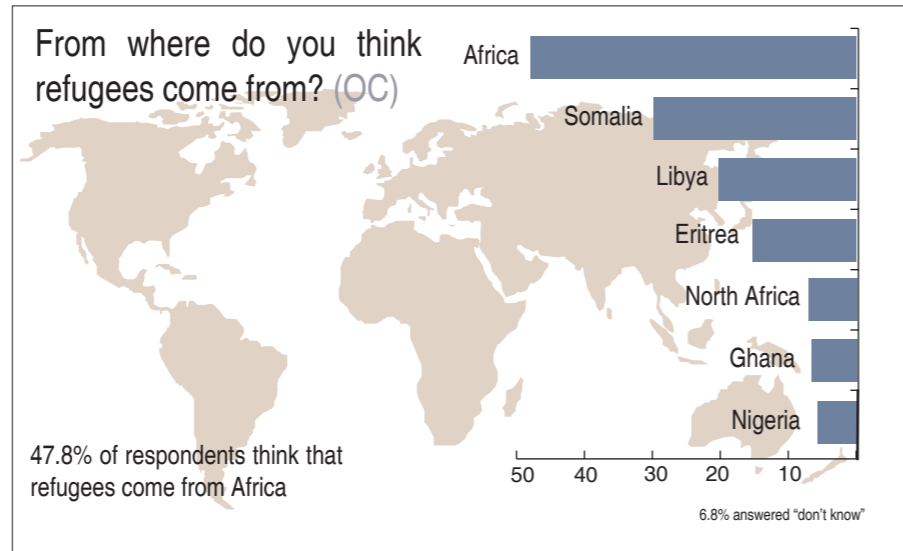
agreed that refugees and migrants would need special programmes of support in Malta.

# What's in a word?

What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear .... ? (OC)

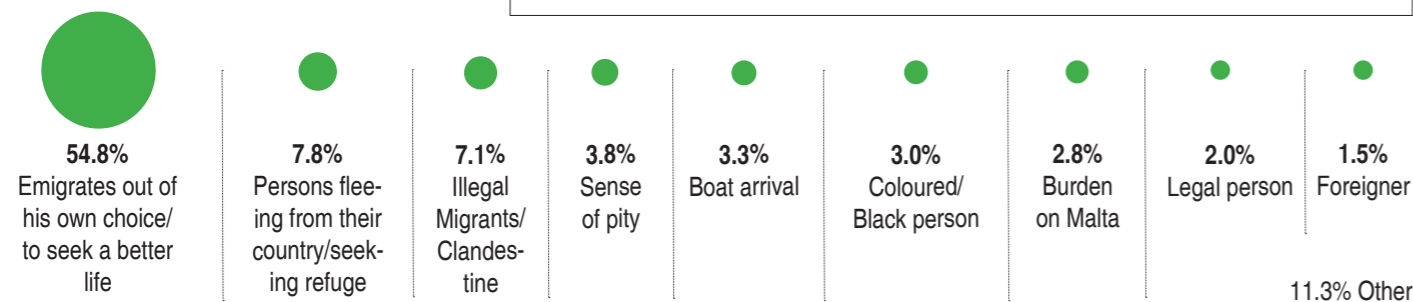
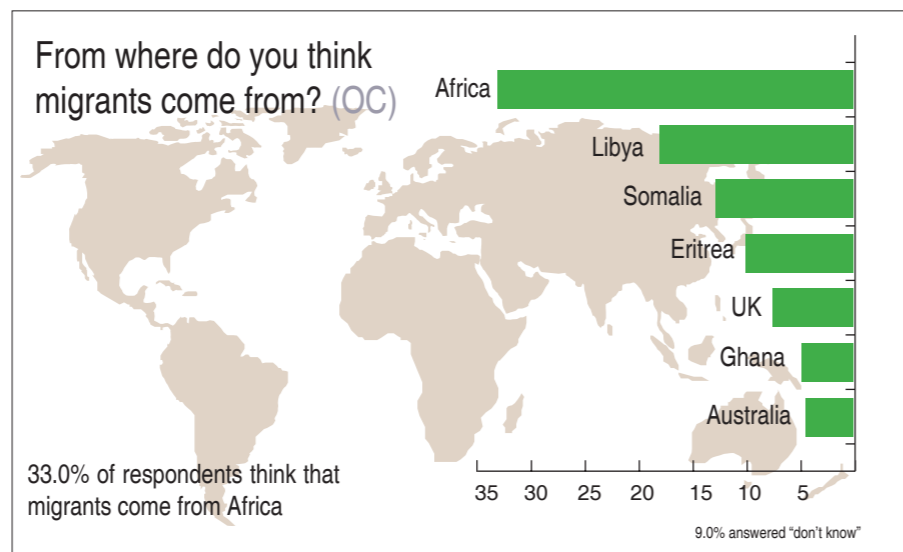
## “Refugee” 51.0%

Said that a refugee is a person fleeing his country, seeking refuge or in need of help.

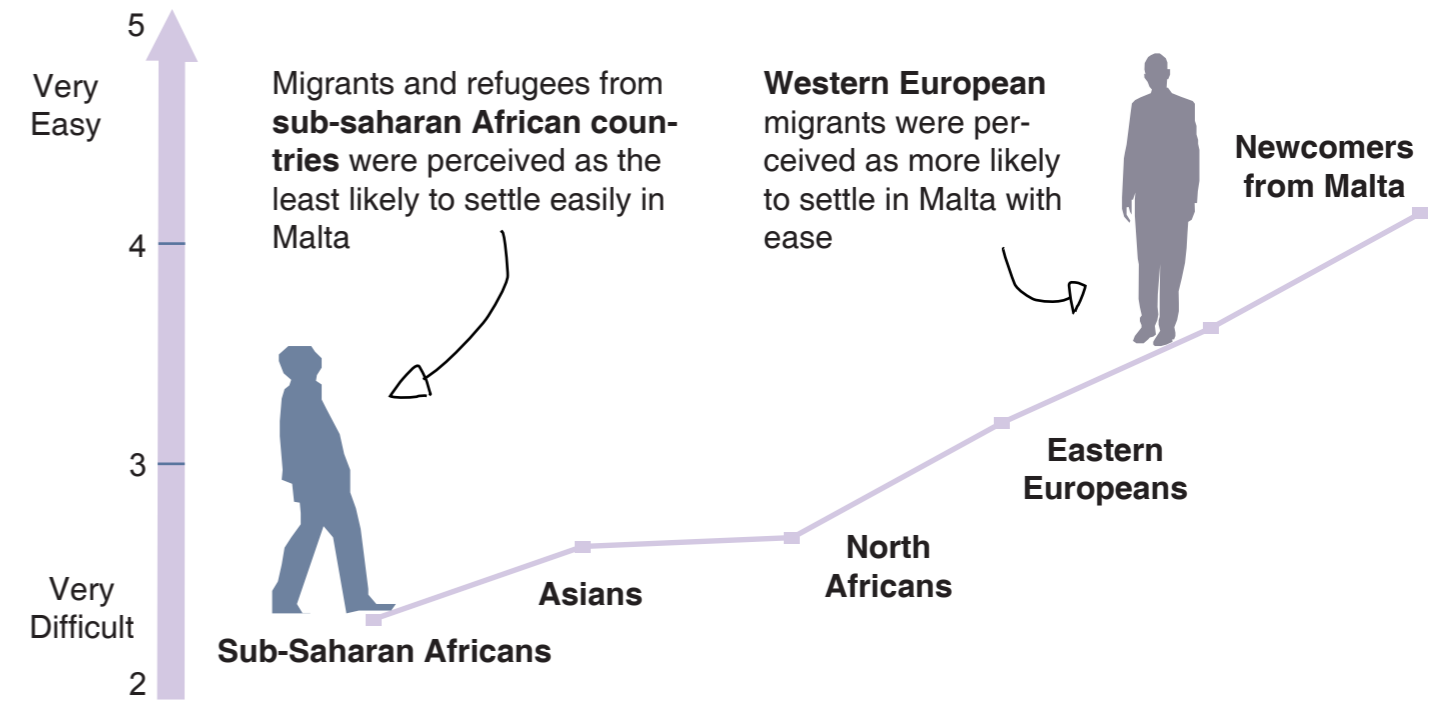


## “Migrant” 54.8%

Said that a migrant is a person who emigrates out of choice and/or to seek a better life.



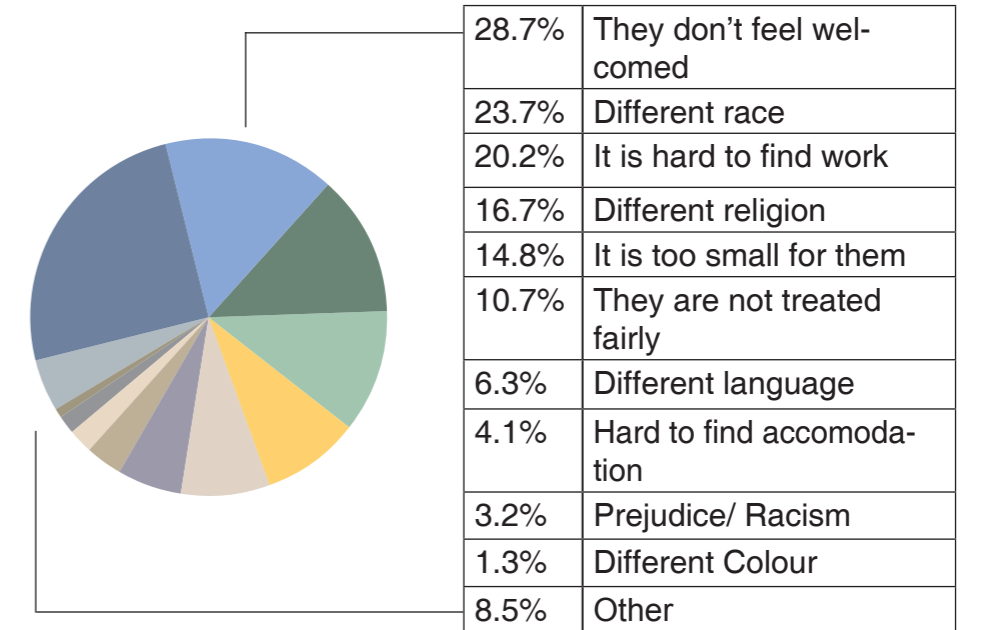
How easily do you think the following groups of people would settle into your community?



What do you think are the obstacles that prevent refugees from integrating in the community? (OC)

## 46.4%

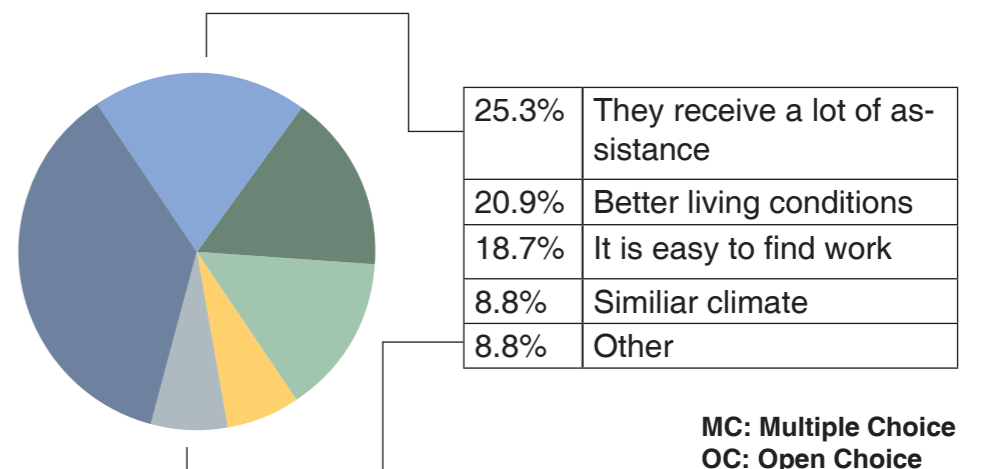
Identified “different culture” as the main barrier to integration



Why do you think refugees and migrants would settle easily in Malta? (OC)

## 47.3%

Identified “They feel welcomed”, as the main reason why they would adjust easily to Malta

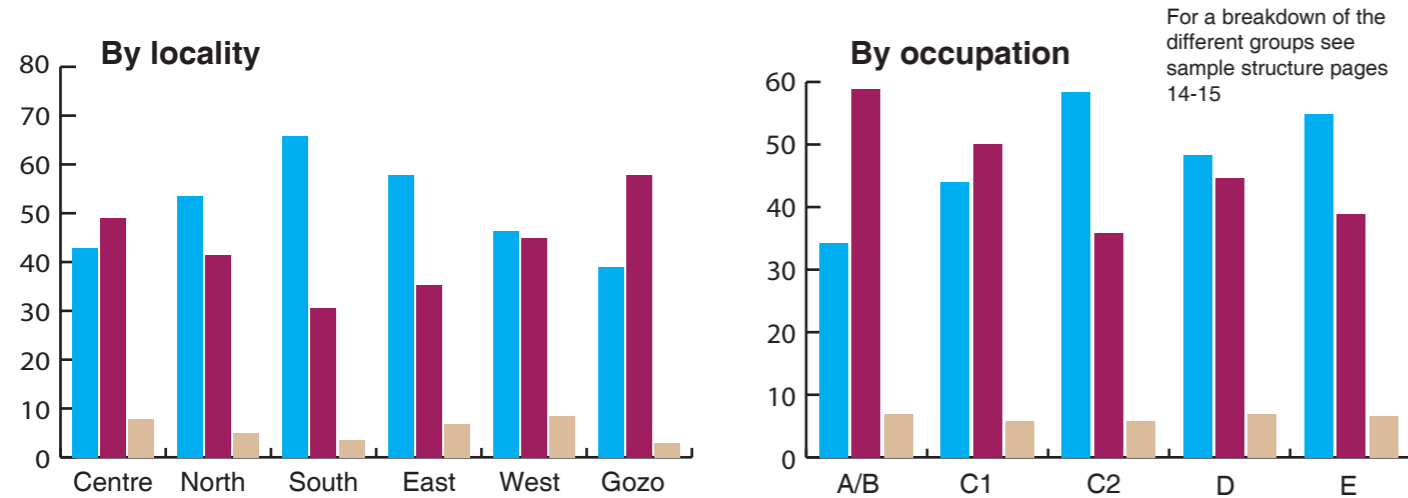


MC: Multiple Choice  
OC: Open Choice

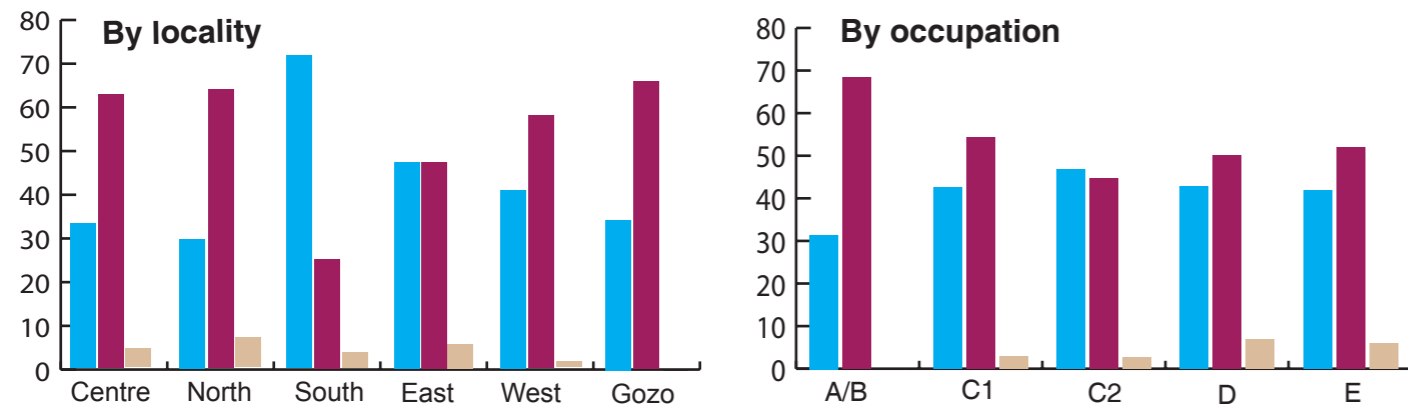
# Living in the community

Do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

“I feel there are too many refugees and migrants coming to my locality”



“I worry that the way of life in my locality is being threatened by high levels of immigration”



**Gender:** The survey revealed no significant differences when it came to gender. 50.0% of females and 51.0% of males agree that “there are too many” refugees and migrants living in their locality; while 40.6% of females and 42.9% of males were concerned about high levels of migration.

**Age:** The study revealed that concern over migration increased with age. 48.4% of the 16-44 of age said “there are too many” refugees and migrants, this increased to 52.4% when it came to the 45-65+ of age group. 39.1% of the 16-44 age group perceived migration as a threat, this again increased to 44.2% to the 45-66+ age group.

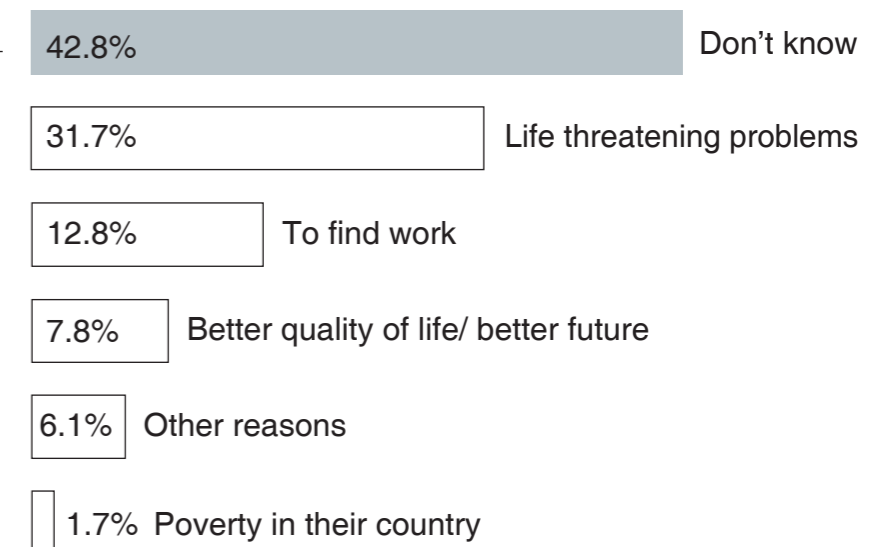
Respondents were asked to rate using a scale from 1 to 5 (1 meaning 'totally agree' and 5 meaning 'totally disagree'). The percentage for vote number 3 was equally divided between those who agreed and disagreed.

Do you know of any refugees/ migrants living in your locality? (MC)

**45.0%**

Are aware of refugees and/or migrants living in their locality. The majority (55.0%) would not know if there are any refugees and migrants living in their community.

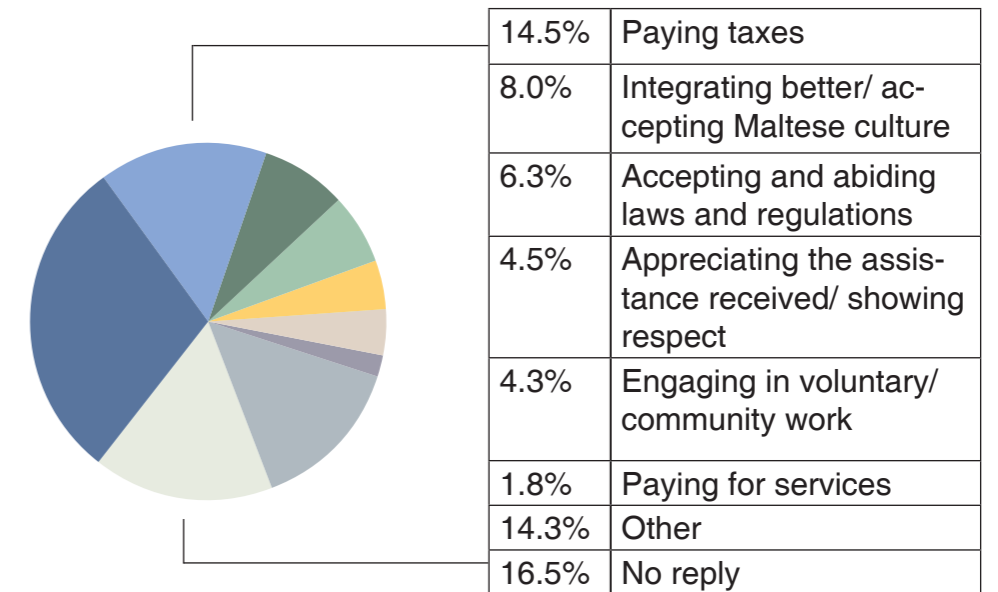
Do you know why they were admitted to Malta? (OC)



How can refugees and migrants contribute to Maltese society? (OC)

**29.8%**

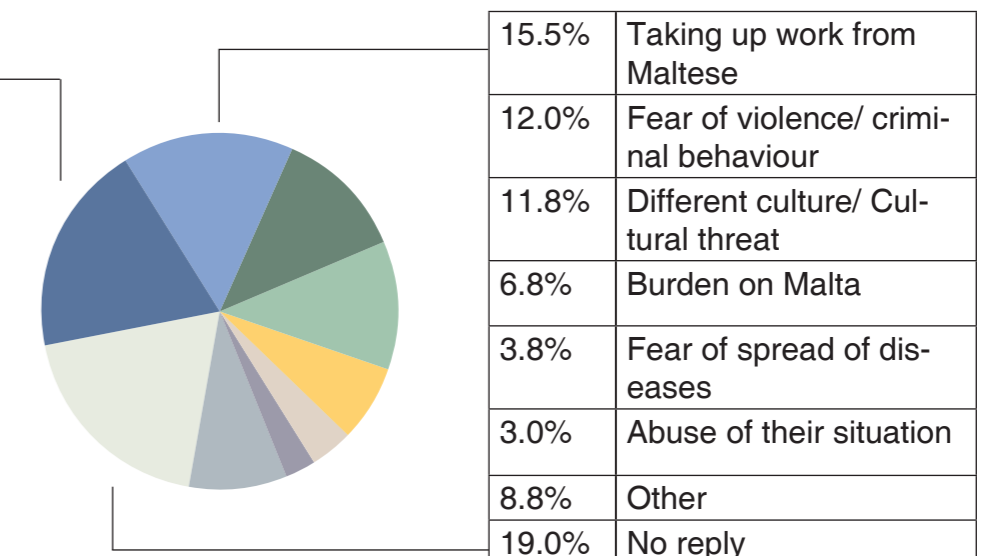
Said that refugees and migrants can contribute by working legally



What is your biggest concern regarding refugees and migrants? (OC)

**19.3%**

Identified Malta's geographical size as the main source of concern

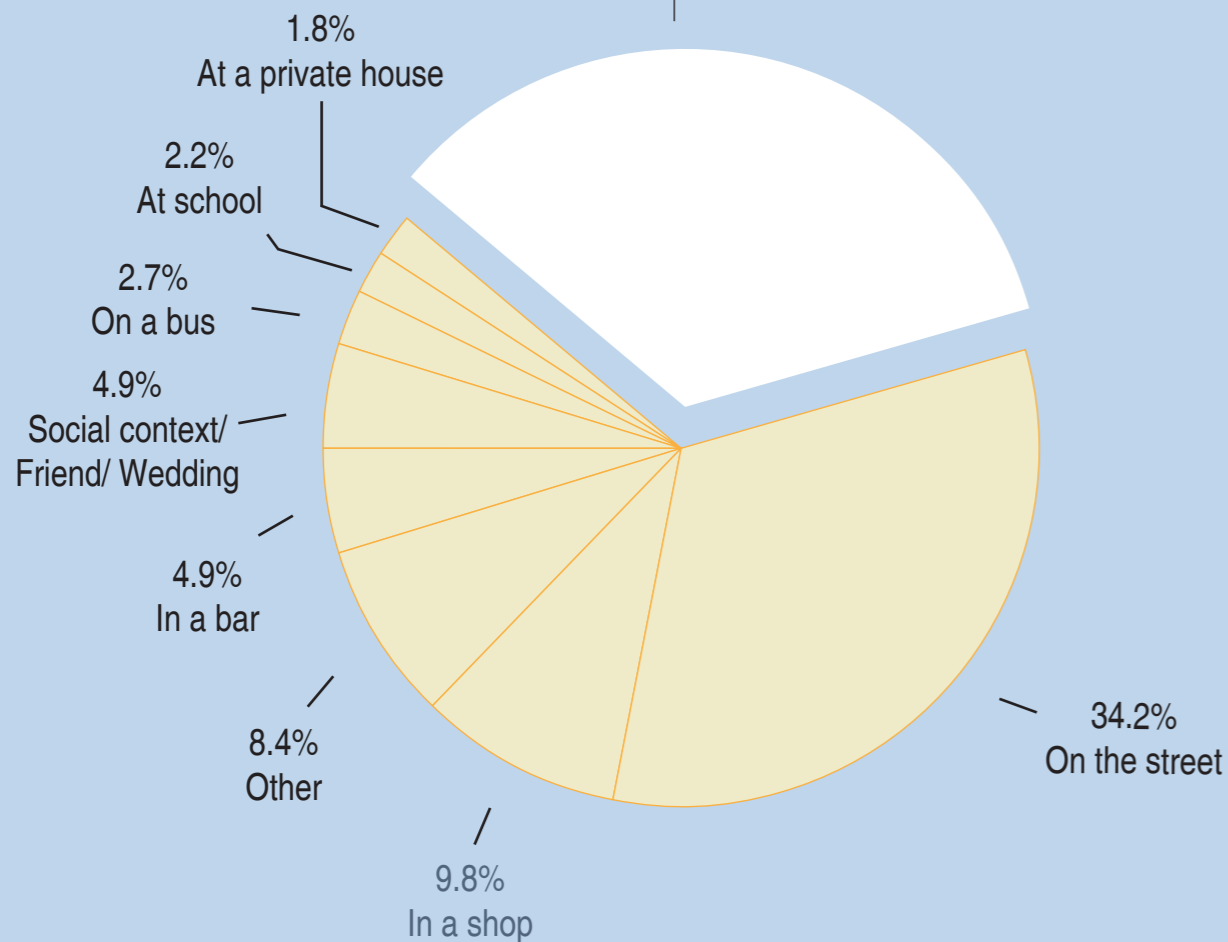


# Meet the other

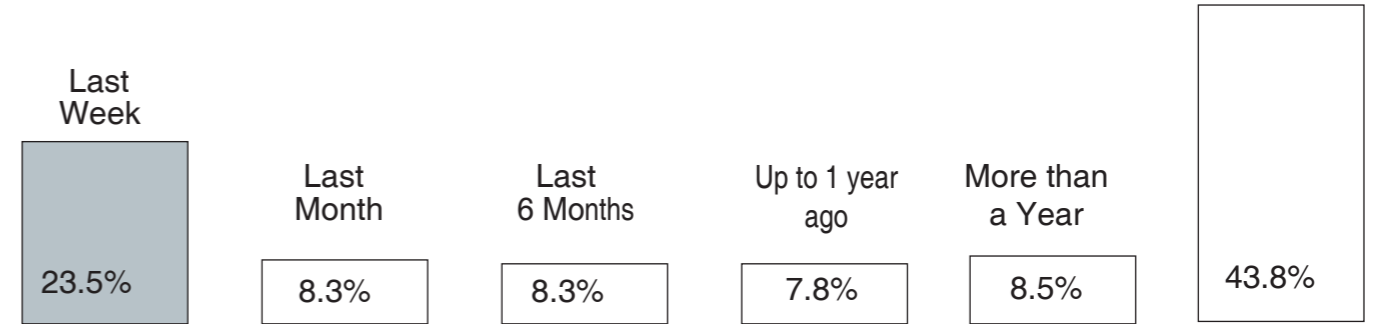
If you have spoken to a refugee or migrant in what context did the interaction take place? (OC)

**36.4%**

Respondents said that interaction is happening at work



When did you last speak with a refugee or migrant? (MC)



Did you ever visit a home of a refugee or invite a refugee over?

**9.0%**

Of respondents visited a home of a refugee or migrant.

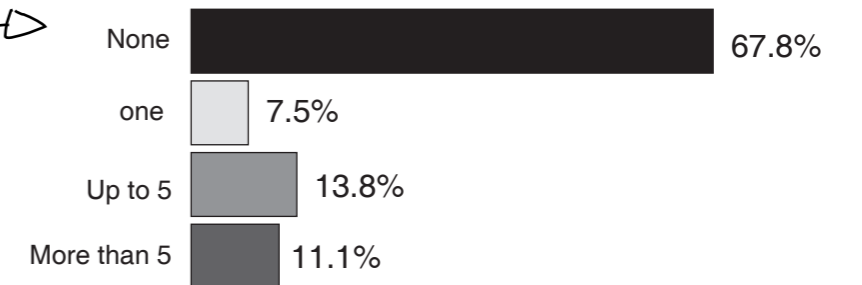
**7.5%**

Of respondents had received a refugee or migrant at home.

How many refugees and migrants would you say you know personally? (MC)

**67.8%**

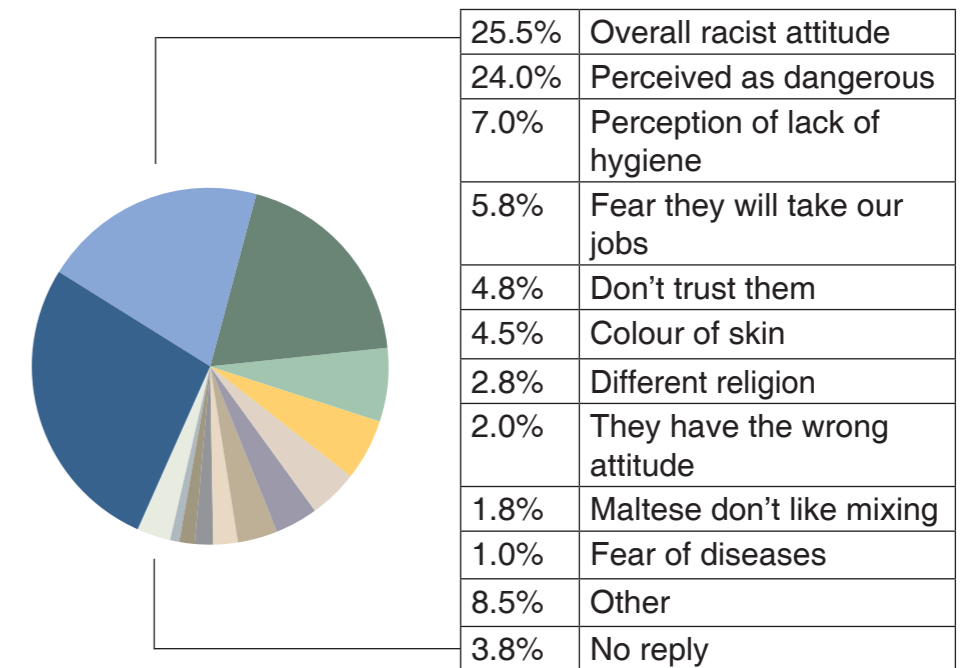
Do not know any refugees or migrants personally



What prevents people from interacting and building meaningful relationships? (OC)

**34.5%**

Of respondents said "no common ground"



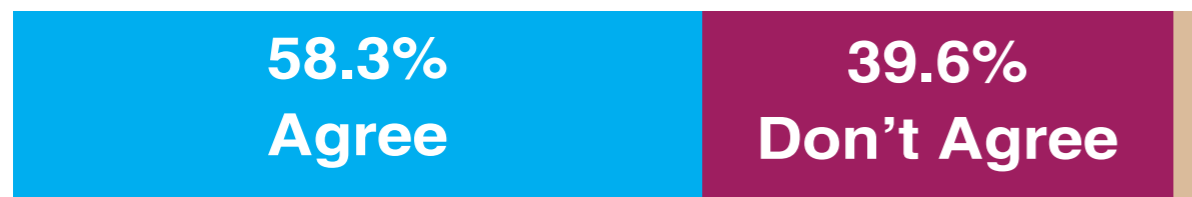
# Integration?

Do you agree/disagree with the following statements?

“A mixture of different lifestyles and cultures such as those brought about by refugees and migrants makes Malta a more attractive place to live”



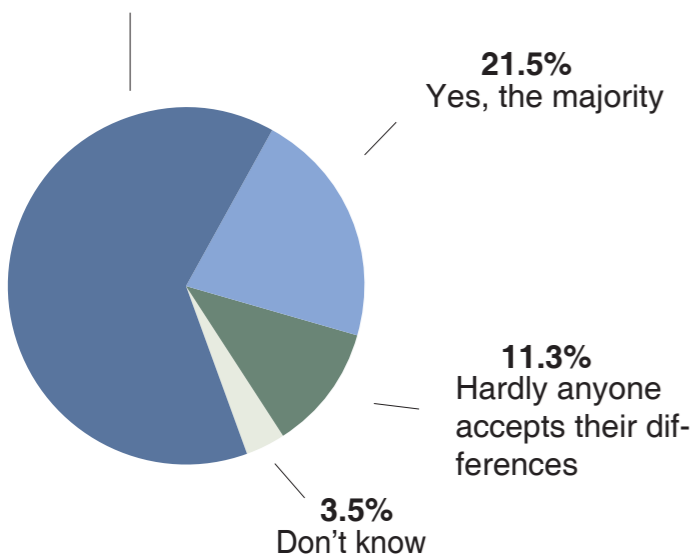
“Refugees and migrants coming to Malta should change their ways to be more like other Maltese citizens”



Do you think that people in Malta accept cultural differences? (MC)

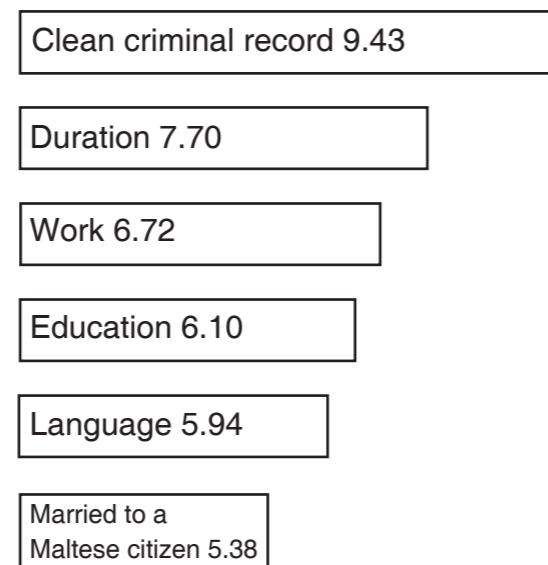
63.7%

Of respondents said that “only a few accept cultural differences”



What criteria should be set to become a Maltese citizen? (MC/OC)

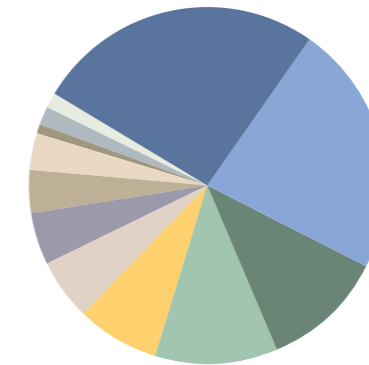
Respondents were asked to rate using a scale from 1 to 10 (1 meaning 'not important at all' and 10 meaning 'very important').



Do you think that refugees or migrants need any special programmes and services to help them adjust to Malta? (MC)

78.3%

Agreed that refugees and migrants would need special programmes of support.



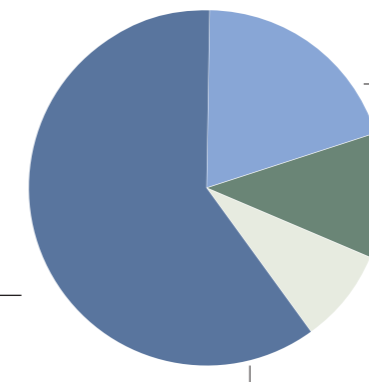
If so, what services would they need? (OC)

43.8%	Lifeskills to help them integrate better into the community
37.7%	Education (access to the education system)
18.8%	Learning the language
18.5%	Job skills & training
12.1%	Assistance with accommodation
9.3%	Learning the Maltese culture/ Maltese legislation
8.0%	Employment aid
6.4%	Medical assistance/ Education on health issues
5.8%	Legal advice
1.3%	Transport assistance
2.9%	Other

Are refugees and migrants treated fairly when they look for work? (MC)

60.5%

Of respondents said that refugees and migrants are “not treated so fairly” when looking for jobs.

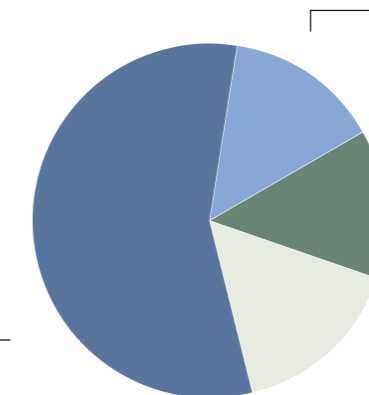


19.5%	Not fairly at all
11.5%	Yes very fairly
8.5%	Don't know

Are refugees and migrants treated fairly when they look for accommodation? (MC)

56.5%

Of respondents said that refugees and migrants are “not treated so fairly” when looking for accommodation.



14.2%	Not fairly at all
13.5%	Yes very fairly
15.8%	Don't know

## Sample structure

The sample was developed using a **Probability Proportional to Size** procedure. Quotas were also determined in order to obtain a representative sample of the Maltese population aged 16 years upwards. The following tables display the demographic distribution obtained in the survey.

400 respondents were interviewed face-to-face by Informa Consultants in the month of January 2012.

### Age

11.3%	16-24 yrs
17.8%	25-34 yrs
19.3%	35-44 yrs
15.3%	45-54 yrs
18.5%	55-64 yrs
18.0%	65 & over

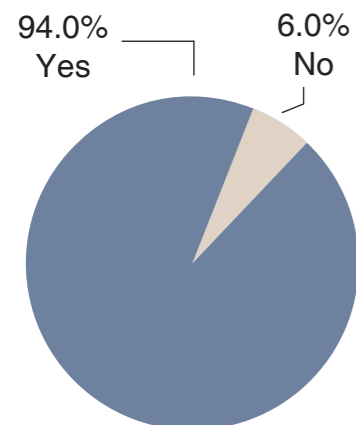
### Marital Status

0.3%	No Reply
68.3%	Married or living with partner
3.5%	Divorced/ Separated
5.3%	Widowed
22.8%	Single

### Ethnic Identity

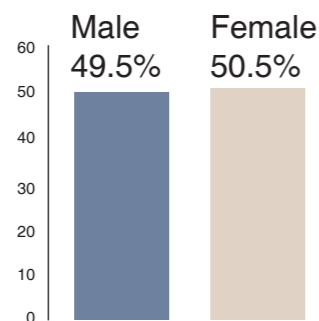
1.5%	No reply
95.3%	Maltese
2.0%	Non-EU
1.3%	EU

### Were you born in Malta?



**N.B.** Some of the questions in the report included the possibility of multiple responses by each respondent

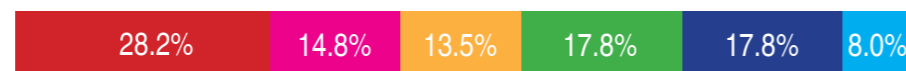
### Gender



### Level of Education

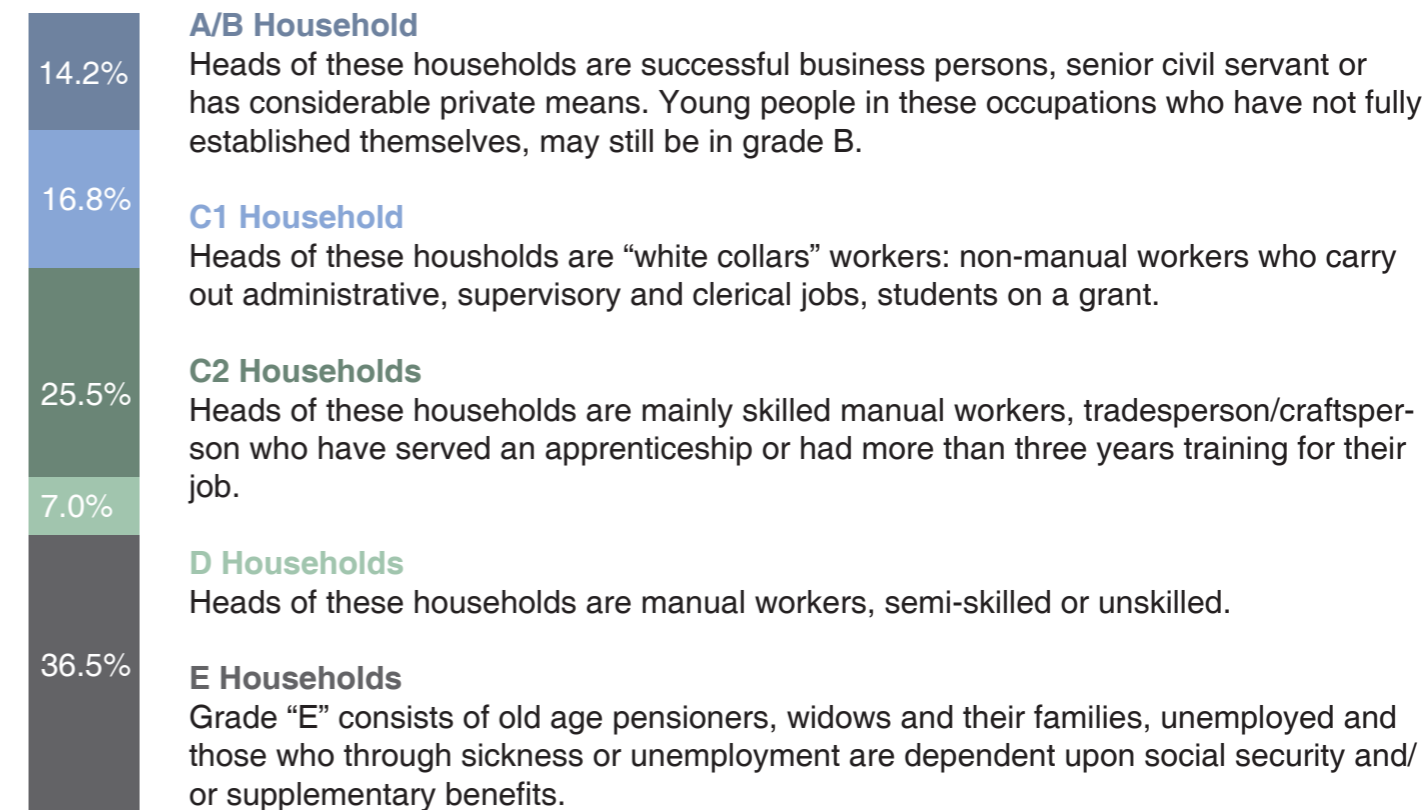
0.8%	No reply
17.5%	Tertiary level
10.8%	Intermediate level
15.8%	Secondary level vocational
35.8%	Secondary level general
19.5%	Primary level

### How Malta and Gozo were divided



Centre	North	South	East	West	Gozo
Msidea	Mellieha	Luqa	Xghajra	Rabat	San Lawrenz
Ta'Xbiex	Mgarr	Gudja	Zabbar	Dingli	Gharb
Pieta	St Paul's Bay	Mqabba	Marsascala	Mdina	Kercem
Valletta	Mosta	Kirkop	Kalkara	Siggiewi	Ghasri
Floriana	Naxxar	Safi	Vittoriosa	Zebbug	Zebbug
Swieqi	Gharghur	Zurrieq	Senglea	St Venera	Rabat
Pembroke	Bahar ic-Caghaq	Qrendi	Cospicua	Hamrun	Fontana
St Julians	Qawra	Zejtun	Paola	Qormi	Munxar
San Gwann	Bugibba	Marsaxlokk	Fgura	Marsa	Sannat
Sliema	Zebbiegh	Birzebbuga	Tarxien	G'Mangia	Xewkija
Gzira	Mtarfa	Ghaxaq	St Lucia	Bahrija	Xaghra
Balzan	Cirkewwa				Ghajnsielem
Attard	Mtarfa				Nadur
Lija	Salina				Qala
Iklin	Ghajn Tuff-ieha				Marsalforn
Birkirkara	Armier				Xlendi
St Andrews	Xemxija				
Paceville	Manikata				
Kappara	Bidnija				
Blata l-Bajda	Burmarrad				
Madliena					
Mriehel					
Ta-Librag					
Fluer de Lys					

## Socio Economic Status



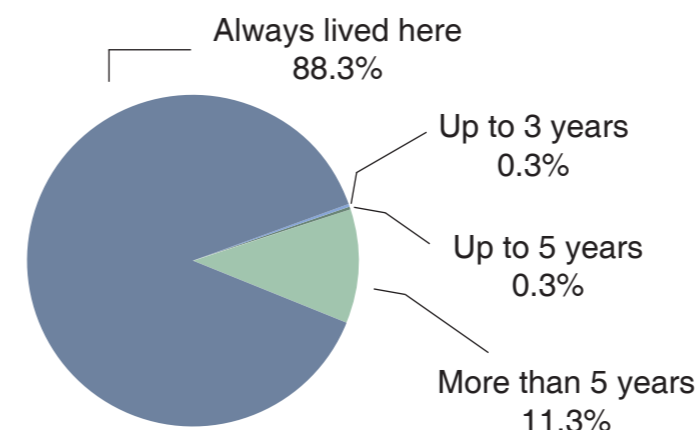
### Financial standing

	Compared to a year ago	A year ahead
No Reply	0%	0.5%
Better off	9.8%	9.8%
Just about the same	46.8%	30.3%
Worse off	39.5%	29.0%
Don't know	4.0%	30.5%

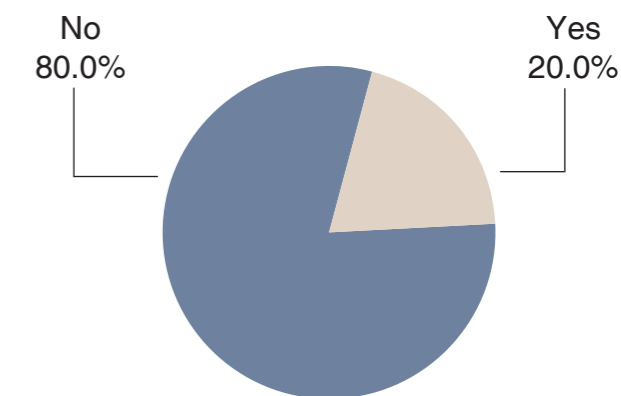
### Duration of stay

An assessment was carried out to find out how long respondents had been living in Malta. People living in Malta for less than 2 years were not eligible to carry out the survey

### How long have you been living in Malta?



### Have you ever lived in another country other than Malta for at least one year?





# How do you think refugees & migrants can contribute to the Maltese society?

“Activities that bring us all together”

“By leaving our land”

“Appreciating the assistance received”

“Their tragic experience could be an inspiration to us”

“Education and work”

“By embracing the same values of the Maltese”

“Paying for services”

“To contribute according to their tradition”

“Integrating better and accepting the Maltese culture”

“Working legally”

“Accepting and abiding to laws and regulations”

“By understanding that Malta is small”

“Paying taxes like Maltese citizens”

“To learn as much as possible”

“By not coming at all”

“Diversity”

“By being independent”

“Engaging in voluntary & community work”

“To try to be independent and respect the laws”

“By learning about their culture”

“Training”

“by paying for the things they break”

“Difficult to say because many of them can only do 'dirty jobs'”

“To bring more skills that are not found in Malta”

“To help keep maintaining our environment”

“By going back to their country”