What do YOU think?

A report on public perception about refugees and migrants in Malta

2012
Foreword

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?

Jon Hoisaeter
UNHCR Malta Representative

Beyond assumptions

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%.

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.

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.

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

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%.

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.

47.8% of respondents think that refugees come from Africa

From where do you think refugees come? (OC)

“Africa”
"Somalia"
“Libya”
"Eritrea"
"North Africa"
"Ghana"
"Nigeria"

51.0% A person fleeing his country, seeking refuge or in need of help
11.0% Sense of pity
5.3% Coloured/Black Person
5.0% Foreign/ Away from his country
3.3% A person without a home
3.3% Has a status
2.5% Burden on Malta
2.0% Illegal
2.0% Boat arrival
16.0% Other

“Migrant”
54.8%
Said that a migrant is a person who emigrates out of choice and/or to seek a better life.

33.0% of respondents think that migrants come from Africa

From where do you think migrants come from? (OC)

“Africa”
"Libya"
"Somalia"
"Eritrea"
"UK"
"Ghana"
"Australia"

54.8% Emigrates out of his own choice/ to seek a better life
7.8% Persons fleeing from their country/seeking refuge
7.1% Illegal Migrants/ Clandestine
3.8% Sense of pity
3.3% Boat arrival
3.0% Coloured/Black person
2.8% Burden on Malta
2.0% Legal person
1.5% Foreigner
11.3% Other

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

Very Easy
Very Difficult

28.7% They don’t feel welcomed
23.7% Different race
20.2% It is hard to find work
16.7% Different religion
14.8% It is too small for them
10.7% They are not treated fairly
6.3% Different language
4.1% Hard to find accommodation
3.2% Prejudice/Racism
1.3% Different Colour
8.5% Other

(MC: Multiple Choice OC: Open Choice)

Newcomers from Malta
Sub-Saharan Africans
North Africans
Asians
Eastern Europeans
Western European migrants were perceived as more likely to settle in Malta with ease

From where do you think refugees come from?

Africa
Somalia
Libya
Eritrea
North Africa
Ghana
Nigeria

6.8% answered “don’t know”

47.8% of respondents think that refugees come from Africa

From where do you think migrants come from?

Africa
Libya
Somalia
Eritrea
UK
Ghana
Australia

6.8% answered “don’t know”

47.8% of respondents think that migrants come from Africa

From where do you think refugees come from?

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

28.7% They don’t feel welcomed
23.7% Different race
20.2% It is hard to find work
16.7% Different religion
14.8% It is too small for them
10.7% They are not treated fairly
6.3% Different language
4.1% Hard to find accommodation
3.2% Prejudice/Racism
1.3% Different Colour
8.5% Other

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

25.3% They receive a lot of assistance
20.9% Better living conditions
18.7% It is easy to find work
8.8% Similar climate
8.8% Other

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5.0% Foreign/ Away from his country
3.3% A person without a home
3.3% Has a status
2.5% Burden on Malta
2.0% Illegal
2.0% Boat arrival
16.0% Other

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7.1% Illegal Migrants/ Clandestine
3.8% Sense of pity
3.3% Boat arrival
3.0% Coloured/Black person
2.8% Burden on Malta
2.0% Legal person
1.5% Foreigner
11.3% Other

(OC)
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”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>43.1%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By locality

- Centre: Agree 51.2%, Disagree 49.8%
- North: Agree 49.4%, Disagree 50.6%
- South: Agree 49.2%, Disagree 50.8%
- East: Agree 51.5%, Disagree 48.5%
- West: Agree 49.3%, Disagree 50.7%
- Gozo: Agree 50.0%, Disagree 50.0%

By occupation

- A/B: Agree 50.4%, Disagree 49.6%
- C1: Agree 49.6%, Disagree 50.4%
- C2: Agree 50.0%, Disagree 50.0%
- D: Agree 51.2%, Disagree 48.8%
- E: Agree 49.2%, Disagree 50.8%

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>54.3%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By locality

- Centre: Agree 50.0%, Disagree 49.0%
- North: Agree 48.4%, Disagree 51.6%
- South: Agree 48.8%, Disagree 51.2%
- East: Agree 50.6%, Disagree 49.4%
- West: Agree 49.2%, Disagree 50.8%
- Gozo: Agree 49.6%, Disagree 50.4%

By occupation

- A/B: Agree 49.6%, Disagree 50.4%
- C1: Agree 50.4%, Disagree 49.6%
- C2: Agree 50.8%, Disagree 49.2%
- D: Agree 51.6%, Disagree 48.4%
- E: Agree 49.2%, Disagree 50.8%

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 living in their locality; 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)

55.0%

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)

45.0%

- Life threatening problems: 31.7%
- To find work: 12.8%
- Better quality of life/ better future: 7.8%
- Other reasons: 6.1%
- Don’t know: 1.7%

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

29.8%

- Said that refugees and migrants can contribute by working legally: 14.5%
- Integrating better/ accepting Maltese culture: 8.0%
- Accepting and abiding laws and regulations: 6.3%
- Appreciating the assistance received/ showing respect: 4.5%
- Engaging in voluntary/ community work: 4.3%
- Paying for services: 1.8%
- Other: 14.3%
- No reply: 16.5%

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

19.3%

- Identified Malta’s geographical size as the main source of concern: 15.5%
- Taking up work from Maltese: 12.0%
- Fear of violence/ criminal behaviour: 11.8%
- Different culture/ Cultural threat: 6.8%
- Burden on Malta: 3.8%
- Fear of spread of diseases: 3.0%
- Abuse of their situation: 8.8%
- Other: 19.0%
- No reply: 15.5%
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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Frame</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Last Week</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last Month</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Last 6 Months</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 1 year ago</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than a Year</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of People</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>67.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up to 5</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 5</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

34.5%
Of respondents said “no common ground”

- Overall racist attitude: 25.5%
- Perceived as dangerous: 24.0%
- Perception of lack of hygiene: 7.0%
- Fear they will take our jobs: 5.8%
- Don’t trust them: 4.8%
- Colour of skin: 4.5%
- Different religion: 2.8%
- They have the wrong attitude: 2.0%
- Maltese don’t like mixing: 1.8%
- Fear of diseases: 1.0%
- Other: 8.5%
- No reply: 3.8%
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”

- 37.6% Agree
- 57.6% Don’t Agree

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

- 58.3% Agree
- 39.6% Don’t Agree

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.

Do you think that refugees or migrants need any special programmes and services to help them adjust to the community? (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

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’).

- Clean criminal record 9.43
- Duration 7.70
- Work 6.72
- Education 6.10
- Language 5.94
- Married to a Maltese citizen 5.38

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

- Employment aid
- Medical assistance/ Education on health issues
- Education (access to the education system)
- Learning the language
- Job skills & training
- Assistance with accommodation
- Learning the Maltese culture/ Maltese legislation
- Lifeskills to help them integrate better into the community

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.

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.

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

- 63.7% Of respondents said that “only a few accept cultural differences”

- 21.5% Yes, the majority
- 11.3% Hardly anyone accepts their differences
- 3.5% Don’t know

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

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

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

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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16-24 yrs</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-34 yrs</td>
<td>17.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-44 yrs</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45-54 yrs</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55-64 yrs</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 &amp; over</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>50.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Level of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Education</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary level</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate level</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary level</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary level vocational</td>
<td>35.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary level</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marital Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Married or living with partner</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced/Separated</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethnic Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maltese</td>
<td>95.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-EU</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Were you born in Malta?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>94.0%</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Socio Economic Status

- **A/B Household**: Heads of these households are successful business persons, senior civil servant or has considerable private means. Young people in these occupations who have not fully established themselves, may still be in grade B.
- **C1 Household**: Heads of these households are “white collars” workers: non-manual workers who carry out administrative, supervisory and clerical jobs, students on a grant.
- **C2 Households**: Heads of these households are mainly skilled manual workers, tradesperson/craftperson who have served an apprenticeship or had more than three years training for their job.
- **D Households**: Heads of these households are manual workers, semi-skilled or unskilled.
- **E Households**: Grade “E” consists of old age pensioners, widows and their families, unemployed and those who through sickness or unemployment are dependent upon social security and/or supplementary benefits.

Financial standing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compared to a year ago</th>
<th>A year ahead</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Reply</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better off</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just about the same</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worse off</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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?

- Always lived here: 88.3%
- Up to 3 years: 0.3%
- Up to 5 years: 0.3%
- More than 5 years: 11.3%

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

- Yes: 20.0%
- No: 80.0%
How do you think refugees & migrants can contribute to the Maltese society?

“Activities that bring us all together”

“By learning about their culture”

“Paying taxes like Maltese citizens”

“Engaging in voluntary & community work”

“Training”

“Working legally”

“Their tragic experience could be an inspiration to us”

“Accepting and abiding to laws and regulations”

“Diversity”

“By being independent”

“To try be independent and respect the laws”

“Paying for services”

“By being independent”

“By learning about their culture”

“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”

“By going back to their country”

“Paying for the things they break”

“Appreciating the assistance received”

“By embracing the same values of the Maltese”

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

“By not coming at all”

“To contribute according to their tradition”

“To help keep maintaining our environment”

“To contribute according to their tradition”

“By understanding that Malta is small”

“By not coming at all”

“Diversity”

“Learning as much as possible”

“By learning about their culture”

“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”

“By going back to their country”

“By being independent”

“By learning about their culture”

“by paying for the things they break”

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“By learning about their culture”

“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”

“By going back to their country”