



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

Social Impact Assessment Southern Region

FEBRUARY 2024



GOVERNMENT OF MALTA
MINISTRY FOR THE NATIONAL HERITAGE,
THE ARTS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



Southern
Regional
Council



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing



Southern
Regional
Council



**Social Impact Assessment
Southern Region**

Social Impact Assessment Southern Region

Published at Poulton's Ltd - Printers-Offset, Zejtun - Malta



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing



Southern
Regional
Council



Living together

It is incredible how complex our communities are. No wonder getting people together at times is so complex. This study which has been commissioned by the regional councils is an important loop in helping us conceptualize the nuances that tug on the way we operate and function as a society. The variables are increasingly composite but with the right type of social and political governance we are sure to find a way how to untangle this multiplexity and learn to not only live 'with each other' but 'together'. However, as we know, communities cannot just happen. Having neighbourhoods where people are living side-by-side is not enough. We are at a transition stage which calls for active engagement for people to come together. We hope that this courageous act from the regional councils to take the bull by the horns and try to understand the transformations that are happening in this region are vindicated by a report led by a team of RSOs (Stephanie Bugeja, Maria Giulia Borg and Ruth Mifsud) and an academic (Dr Maria Brown) that will help with understanding the complex dynamics and propose recommendations.

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi

Dean

Faculty for Social Wellbeing

Foreword

Malta's population landscape is changing rapidly with an influx of foreigners making a significant impact, amongst others on the socio-cultural life, rendering the country more cosmopolitan than ever and thereby affecting local communities. Various surveys conducted over the past years have shown that the rapid growth in population of thousands of foreign workers living in local communities tops the concerns of Maltese people. It is also a recurring issue that spills over into the political arena, with politicians at both national and local level, having to answer to the unabating challenges experienced in some of the local communities within the Southern Region.

As part of the new responsibilities that have been assigned to the Southern Regional Council, a social impact assessment was commissioned to the Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta. This assessment delved deeper into various areas that directly impact the lives of residents living in these local communities and set to determine the level of satisfaction with the quality of life currently being experienced. Moreover, the assessment put forward the necessary policy recommendations to enhance the quality of life in various localities through the sterling work conducted by local governments in each community.

Enhancing the quality of life of residents in various areas strongly depends on the consolidation of the community's position towards introducing sound policies and initiatives mainly formulated through the findings presented in this study. This can be achieved, inter alia through the role of the various exponents and stakeholders participating in this study and their willingness to formulate a plan for the locality and effectively put it into practice.

As a regional council, we are confident that the findings presented in this social impact assessment will guide us in formulating our strategy and assist local councils to continue working for the common good of local communities and improve the lives of its citizens.

Jesmond Aquilina
President

Mariella Strout
Executive Secretary

Liveability and Wellbeing in our Regions

Everyone strives for a better quality of life and indeed, one key determinant of improved wellbeing is the liveability of the localities we reside in. Having a voice and contributing to keeping our localities clean, safe and connected enables inclusiveness and a sense of belonging as human beings, who prosper individually whilst being socially invested. This is of utmost importance to live happily and develop in a sustainable manner.

This study has looked at how residents perceive their quality of life in relation to the localities they live in, assessing different, services, amenities and levels of participation within their locality.

By giving a voice to the residents, both Maltese and also non-Maltese (through a dedicated side-study which has resulted in the Annexed document), we have attempted to discern respondents' experiences and concerns in contemporary Malta, with special attention to the Southern region and its high population density, its increasingly diverse and multicultural population as well as its role as a key logistical and economic hub. This will help both the Regional Council and the Local Councils therein, to target the real wants and needs of the residents, whilst understanding which elements are the biggest contributors to the wellbeing of their residents.

It is argued that the empirical findings of this study support the Regional and Local Councils to yield more fruits from their operations and collaborations, including those with their constituents, and find ways to further encourage constructive communication and sustainable participation in the community from all diverse citizens.

As a research team, we are grateful for the privilege and the lessons entailed in working with all the stakeholders involved in this research study. We trust our research expertise and underlying values contribute to a strengthened social fabric which includes all individuals and leaves no one behind.

In conclusion, we would like to thank Annabel Cuff, Dr. Vincent Marmara and the administrative staff of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing for their contribution towards this project.

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi, Project Manager

Dr. Maria Brown, Principal Investigator

Maria Giulia Borg, Research Support Officer

Stephanie Bugeja, Research Support Officer

Ruth Mifsud, Research Support Officer



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	11
1. Introduction	15
1.1 Preamble	16
1.2 Aims and scope of study	16
1.3 Methodology	16
1.4 Structure of the report	17
2. Insights from literature	19
2.1 Liveability and quality of life	20
2.2 Inclusion	21
2.3 Sustainable Development	22
2.4 Assessing liveability and wellbeing	22
2.5 Quality of Life and Local Government's Performance	23
2.6 Chapter conclusion	24
3. Context	25
3.1 Legislative Overview	26
3.1.1 Roles and responsibilities of Local and Regional Councils	27
3.2 Focusing on Rēgjun Nofsinhar	29
3.2.1 Demographics	29
3.2.2 Vulnerabilities	32
3.2.3 Housing	33
3.2.4 Industrial and commercial developments	35
3.2.5 Road infrastructure	35
3.2.6 Natural and Cultural Assets	36
3.2.7 Community spaces and local participation	37
3.2.8 Needs, interests, values and aspirations	38
3.3 Summary of context	38



4. Methodology	39
4.1 Research Agenda	40
4.2 Data-gathering instruments	40
4.3 Sampling and recruitment of participants	41
4.4 Data analysis	41
4.5 Ethical considerations	42
4.6 Strengths and limitations	42
5. Findings and Analysis	45
5.1 Findings from the Quantitative Data	46
5.2 Findings from the Qualitative Data	82
5.2.1 Focus Group - Local councillors	82
5.2.2 Focus Group – Mayors	88
6. Conclusion and recommendations	95
6.1 Summary of main findings	96
6.2 Recommendations for policy and practice	96
6.3 Recommendations for further research	98
6.4 Conclusion	98
References	99
APPENDIX A – Residents' Questionnaire	104
APPENDIX B – Focus group schedule – Local councillors/Mayors	114
APPENDIX C- Consent Form – Focus Groups	116
APPENDIX D – Functions of Local Council	119
Annex on foreigners' population	123



Executive Summary

Local governance plays a key role in shaping and developing localities and in turn shaping and impacting their residents' day-to-day lives and the quality of the lives led within such localities. Therefore, it is important that one understands the residents' subjective perceptions with regards to their quality of life, as well as their awareness of their local governments. This also leads to better accountability of authorities and gives local governments the information and knowledge to maintain and improve their performances.

In December 2022, the Southern Regional Council (Reġjun Nofsinhar) commissioned the Faculty for Social Wellbeing of the University of Malta to carry out this study in fulfilment of the requirements laid out within the Local Councils Act that tasks Regional Councils with “the social aspect, which includes researches [sic] and report of social impact evaluations, which report shall be made within the first year of each legislature” (Laws of Malta, Chapter 363, Art. 37B (B), p. 28).

The study aimed to assess the Southern Region's residents' perceived quality of life, liveability and social integration of their locality and their awareness and knowledge of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof. By applying a multi-method research approach, the study sought to address the following research questions:

1. How do residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar perceive their quality of life and their region's liveability?
2. To what extent are residents' perceptions of the functions of the regional council congruent with the regional council's official remit?
3. What initiatives can boost the resourcefulness of regional councils in enhancing liveability?

At the time of the study, the Southern Region's residents comprised those residing in the region's 12 localities, namely: Birżebbuġa, Ғal Ғhaxaq, Ғal Luqa, Ғal Qormi, Il-Gudja, Il-Ғamrun, Il-Marsa, Iż-Żejtun, Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk, Santa Luċija and Santa Venera. As at November 2021, Reġjun Nofsinhar's total resident population stood at 106,593, c. 18% of which were non-Maltese.

The methodology adopted comprised quantitative and qualitative components. The research team designed and administered the quantitative telephonic questionnaire with a sample of residents of the localities forming part of Reġjun Nofsinhar (420 residents, margin of error \pm 4.9%). The qualitative data collection consisted of a focus group with councillors from local councils of the region and another with mayors of the region. Additionally, in view of the ever-increasing presence of foreigners in the localities mentioned, data collection from representatives of the top 7 nationalities residing in this region, which make up the top 51% of foreign communities in the region (Italy, India, the Philippines, the Syrian Arab Republic, the UK, Serbia, and Somalia) yielded the Annex to this report, which is specifically dedicated to presenting these foreigners' experiences and perceptions of the issues under study in this main report.

QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS

The results of the questionnaire show that, at the time of data collection, more than half of the residents expressed being very or fairly satisfied with their locality (59.5%). 53.8% of residents felt that there was a high sense of community. Residents expressed that integration of elderly people was high (71.4%), however, integration of people with disability seemed to rank quite low with only 39.3% believing that their integration is high.

Residents did not seem to be particularly satisfied with public and green spaces, with only

31.4% stating that they were satisfied. Respondents seemed to be particularly dissatisfied with traffic and parking (74.7% dissatisfaction), noise and air pollution (61.6%) and urban development (51.7%). Factors mentioned which could lead to better quality of life, included, more cleanliness (24 mentions), less construction (16 mentions) and managing better the parking and traffic issues (14 mentions).

When looking at the awareness of the residents in relation to the Local Councils' roles and responsibilities, this was somewhat on the low side, with only 32.1% of the respondents stating that they knew a fair amount or a great deal about local councillors' role. The awareness with regards Regional Councils was also low, with 46.2% of respondents not knowing which Regional Council they pertained to, stating directly 'I do not know' or giving a wrong answer altogether. To possibly increase the level of satisfaction of residents in terms of Local and Regional Councils, many mentioned the need for such entities to listen and act on the public's concerns, improve the infrastructure of the locality and communicate more their role to people.

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

Mayors and local councillors flagged lack of civic pride and community participation in events and activities organised by the local councils. Moreover, the heightened bureaucracy between the Local and Regional Councils and other governmental entities, seem to make it very difficult for such entities to operate efficiently. Other issues related to, lack of awareness in their respect as well as the lack of autonomy and resources, have often left such entities feeling powerless.

FOREIGN ANNEX

Prima facie, foreign representatives mentioned that overall foreigners seemed to be satisfied with their localities, with the major pull-factors being rental rates and the prior presence of other community members in the locality, yet through the semi-structured survey, concerns were raised, such as traffic, parking and garbage issues. The majority of foreign community members were unaware of Local and Regional councils, with only Italians, Filipinos and Indians mentioning that their communities knew, were satisfied and participated in the events of such Councils. Foreigners generally did not seem to feel integrated in the community, unless their language might act as an enabler (UK and Italy).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers have put forward recommendations for policy, practice and further research, in line with the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative research, so as to help both the Regional Council and the Local Councils therein, to bring greater awareness of their roles and responsibilities amongst residents and also recommendations in terms of practices which might help in elevating the quality of life of people residing in such localities.

Such recommendations included, amongst others, i) educational and awareness campaigns for the general public to better comprehend the roles of the local and regional councils, ii) developing a more efficient communication strategy so as to ensure a functional local democracy, with the engagement and participation of citizens as well as iii) providing communal spaces where the local community can meet, celebrate ties and develop a collective identity. Moreover, in terms of research it is highly encouraged that a needs' assessment is



carried out in terms of the different profile of residents in each locality. This will ensure that any policy, process of activity carried out will be in line with the actual needs of the residents. This research, paired up with the on the ground expertise of the Regional and Local Councils, is sure to be an important and valuable tool for such entities to set the policies and change the practices needed to further improve the quality of life of their residents and the liveability of their locality.



1. Introduction

1.1 PREAMBLE

The relationship between people and place is intrinsically linked to the quality of life of individuals and social cohesion at large (Gustafson, 2001). Residential areas are a conglomeration of physical features, economic activity and, most of all, people. The interaction between the physical, economic and social characteristics of a locality determines residents' personal relationship with their locality and which in turn moulds their quality of life (Culora & van Stolk, 2020). Research findings about place value, meaning and identity indicate that positive experiences of places and communities make a positive contribution towards one's quality of life (Carmona, 2019; Ujang & Zakarija, 2015) and residents primarily seek to address their needs within their residential areas (Lee, 2021).

Local governance plays a crucial role in building and shaping localities which, in turn, impacts on residents' subjective quality of life. Diverse empirical studies show that effective local governance positively affects residents' subjective quality of life (Hansen, 2015; Rothstein, 2012; Sirgy et. al., 2008) as local government services and activities are closely related to the daily needs of residents. Therefore, understanding residents' subjective perception regarding the quality of life in their locality and their satisfaction with local governance is a key element of assessing the effectiveness of local governance. Moreover, it also strengthens local accountability and aids local government in improving and managing its own performance.

1.2 AIMS AND SCOPE OF STUDY

This study is being conducted in accordance with the requirements of the Local Councils Act which states that one of the functions of the Regional Councils is "the social aspect, which includes researches [sic] and report of social impact evaluations, which report shall be made within the first year of each legislature" (Laws of Malta, Chapter 363, Art. 37B (B), p. 28).

This study is the first of its kind and is being carried out at the end of the 2019 – 2024 legislature due to the disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The objectives of this research study are to examine the perceptions of residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar regarding the quality of life, liveability and social integration of their locality and their awareness and knowledge of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof. It also aims to examine how regional and local councils can work together more effectively and how local councils can be more effective in meeting the needs of the residents.

1.3 METHODOLOGY

This research study adopted a multi-methods research design to gain an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of residents on how local and regional councils can become more effective in meeting the needs of their residents. A quantitative questionnaire, specifically designed for this project, was carried out with residents of the localities forming part of Reġjun Nofsinhar. The researchers also conducted two focus groups, one with councillors and the other with mayors from the local councils of the region. Quantitative data was analysed through the use of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) while Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the transcripts of the focus groups. The research design was executed with due consideration of research ethics and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report consists of six chapters. This introductory chapter gave an overview of the background to the study, its purpose and significance and the structure of the report. The second chapter delves into theories, concepts, policies and practices that are relevant to the region and population under study while the third chapter presents the contextual framework of the study in legal, demographic and socio-cultural terms. The fourth chapter outlines the research agenda and data gathering instruments (questionnaire, focus group schedule, recruitment and consent forms) and data analysis procedures used in this research study as well as the ethical considerations and strengths and limitations of this study. The following chapter presents the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study while the sixth and concluding chapter outlines the salient findings and puts forward a series of recommendations for practice, policy and future research.





2. Insights from literature

This study will be tackling a variety of concepts with the ultimate aim to understand what makes the Region under study classify as a liveable area which is conducive to the optimal quality of life of its inhabitants. Hence, it is important that a priori, one looks further into the definitions of concepts such as liveability, wellbeing, quality of life, inclusion, and sustainable development. Some of these terms might be used interchangeably, others might be considered as subsets and therefore, this section aims to bring clarity in this regard.

Moreover, such terms can often be felt to be ambiguous and/or intangible. For this reason, a number of international studies are presented so as to illustrate how these terms are assessed in foreign communities and cities, and how such studies have informed the methodology and design of the project at hand.

2.1 LIVEABILITY AND QUALITY OF LIFE

“Liveability reflects the wellbeing of a community and represents the many characteristics that make a location a place where people want to live now and in the future.”
(The Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission, n.d.)

The concept of ‘liveability’ in cities and neighbourhoods, has been tackled by a number of studies over the years. Yet, there seems to be no exact definition, measure or uniquely accepted index to gauge it (Istrate, n.d.; Woolcock, 2009). “Overall, the concept of liveability has different meanings and implications for different people. It is a widely recognized concept, but not defined in a way agreed upon by all.” (Istrate, n.d, p. 2).

Heylen (2006) attributes such diverse literature on the different skills of the respective researchers taking on the feat of studying such concept. Moreover, this term is applied and tackled from a variety of angles, including but not limited to policy, urban planning, transport and infrastructure planning, as well as comparisons between cities.

When focusing on liveability vis-à-vis cities and urban areas, Vuchic (1999) states that liveability usually refers to “elements of home, neighbourhood, and metropolitan area that contribute to safety, economic opportunities and welfare, health, convenience, mobility, and recreation” (p. 7). Qualitative in nature, such a term indicates the extent to which an area is attractive to live, work and develop businesses in.

Various studies tried to outline what elements are required to create ‘good cities’. In 1981, Lynch, introduces five factors namely, vitality, sense, fit, access, and control. Balsas (2004) adds the element of viability. In a different approach, Davern et al. (2019), outlines that the three critical factors required for cities to be considered liveable, are i) residents feeling safe, connected, and included, ii) environmental safeguarding and sustainability, and iii) affordable and accessible housing adequately linked to other activities such as leisure and work.

Despite being intrinsically different, ‘liveability’, ‘quality of life’ (QoL) and ‘wellbeing’ are commonly interrelated and seem to share a two-way relationship. Liveability brings together the various attributes of a city or urban community, uncovering its quality of life (Loewus, 2008). The VCEC (2008), states that “liveability reflects the wellbeing of a community” (p. XXI). Moreover, individual wellbeing, along with environmental quality and neighbourhood amenities, was described as one of the dimensions of liveability by Lennard and Lennard (1995). In support of this, Douglass (2000) outlines that a city can be made liveable if the quality of life of its residents is improved.

On the other hand, Dündar (1998) refers to liveability “as the determinant of quality of life, the citizens expect from their living environments” (p. 1). A city is considered to be liveable, if “the economic, social, environment and aesthetic expectations” (p. 1) of the residents are met. Therefore, the more liveable the place is, the better the quality of life of its residents.

Such a dual relationship is of utmost importance for policy makers. Despite setting policies at a macro-level, they need to also understand the impacts on the individual level, which in turn affect the entire community. “Individual-level characteristics are also important to understand their influence in shaping the collective level decision making” (Paul & Sen, 2017, p. 52).

2.2 INCLUSION

“Throughout history, urban populations of vastly differing social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds have learned to live together, or at least to coexist within a common local economic and institutional system, but with varying degrees of success.”

(Stren & Polèse, 2000)

Another notion which has been studied internationally in relation to creating a happy city, is that of ‘inclusion’ within the urban design and policies. In order to better understand inclusion, one must first look into the concept of ‘diversity’, which Merriam-Webster (n.d) defines as “the condition of having or being composed of differing elements” and “the inclusion of people of different races, cultures, etc. in a group or organizations”. Moreover, diversity covers a variety of other aspects, including age, gender, beliefs (being religious or political), ideologies in general, socio-economic status, and others (El-din Ouf & El- Zafarany, 2018).

As already quoted above, amongst other elements, Davern et al. (2019) outline that for a city to be liveable residents should feel safe, connected, and included. Over the years, various researchers are delving into what such ‘inclusive cities’ might look like. Amongst others, Stren and Polèse (2000) outline how an inclusive city promotes social, economic, health and wellbeing of the community. El-din Ouf & El- Zafarany (2018) mention how an inclusive city must offer social, political, economic and cultural inclusion whereby no one is left-behind and is allowed to participate equally in society. Similarly, the World Bank (n.d) describe inclusive cities as ones which foster spatial, social and economic inclusion of its inhabitants. The UN Habitat report (2012) puts social inclusion and diversity at the centre of what a prosperous city would look like. “The spatial, social and economic dimensions of urban inclusion are tightly intertwined, and tend to reinforce each other” (World Bank, n.d). If such dimensions are not managed well, poverty and marginalisation might increase, eating away at the prosperity and liveability of a locality. Studies have shown that socially excluded people are more prone to mental health problems (VicHealth MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING UNIT, 2005) and higher criminality rates (Grieve & Howard, 2004) amongst other undesirable effects in the locality.

If well managed, inclusive cities should be conducive to greater social cohesion which in turn improves the sense of belonging and civic pride, making the city more liveable. This is particularly pertinent to localities in Malta which are experiencing a demographic overhaul in many instances. An ageing indigenous local population coupled with an unprecedented influx of foreign nationals are making communities more diverse and putting local governments under pressure to ensure that urban planning and policies lead to inclusive communities, whereby people of different ages, races, beliefs, ethnic groups, and cultural backgrounds can co-exist in harmony for an overall good quality of life. Indeed, this factor was tackled through

data collection to understand whether the localities under study are tackling inclusion or otherwise. Moreover, more specifically to the surge in foreign communities, a separate annex was added to give further voice to such individuals in the local communities.

2.3 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

When considering liveable and inclusive cities, one must also look at not only the diverse residents currently inhabiting the locality, but also generations to come. When urban planning policy makers should aim towards the betterment of the quality of life of current and future residents.

This is closely interlinked with the concept of sustainable development. Sustainable development was first introduced through the Brundtland report (1987), being defined as a development that allows for “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

As cities develop and grow and populations expand globally, there is a growing need to ensure that the growth of cities and urban development is sustainable and allows for future growth as well (Cloutier et al., 2014). In terms of urban development and city management, sustainable development looks at improving the quality of life of its residents, through ‘ecological, cultural, political, institutional, social and economic components’, without leaving a burden on future generations (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC), n.d., p.vi). Even the UN, within its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, has included SDG 11, which refers to developing sustainable cities and communities.

Studies have shown that cities working on sustainability seem to have greater levels of happiness amongst their residents (Cloutier et al., 2014). Other studies seem to make little distinction between ‘sustainability’ and ‘liveability’, which are sometimes used interchangeably, or the latter being a subset under the bigger umbrella of ‘sustainability’ (Woolcock, 2009).

2.4 ASSESSING LIVEABILITY AND WELLBEING

Terms such as sustainability, liveability and inclusivity might be difficult to assess since they might not be quantifiable in nature. A number of international studies have tried to gauge such terms and created tools by which to measure liveability in different localities. Such tools were used to inform this study and develop the resident questionnaire, as will be explained in the methodology, as well as the focus group discussion schedule.

Liveability indices

A number of liveability indices have been drawn up and used as a comparison tool amongst different cities. Yet, these are sometimes criticized for their lack of robustness. The subjective nature of the inclusion of factors relating to liveability, the weighting of these factors and the vastly different indicators being included, result in different measures providing different rankings of the liveability of cities. There is a lack of theoretical underpinning for these measures, particularly for composite measures. (Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission (VCEC), n.d. p.16, as cited in VCEC, 2008).

When using such indices, one needs to thread with caution and make sure that variables used are truly reflective of the national and local realities. Some of the most well-known indices being developed in the past years include The Mercer Quality of Living (QoL) Survey, which

ranks the living standards of cities around the world. The Global Liveability Index developed by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Quality of Life Index, publishes an annual report identifying the living standards of a number of cities, based on five factors namely, healthcare, culture, environment, education and infrastructure. Other indices include, The Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey, The Anholt City Brands Index and the GaWC World Cities Index, amongst others. The first two indices are often categorised as 'quality of life surveys'.

Social Impact Assessments

Studying the relationship between QoL and local policy is vital, since from one end, the local governments can gauge the 'social impact' its policies are having on its residents. In order to do this, social impact assessments, are considered to be useful tools to analyse, monitor and manage "the intended and unintended social consequences, both positive and negative, of planned interventions (policies, programs, plans, projects) and any social change processes invoked by those interventions" (Vanclay, 2003, p. 5).

Baseline studies

Another tool which can be applied, a priori to any policy change, is a baseline study. Such a tool is used to understand the current status-quo of cities or localities, prior to making any changes. For instance, The Kenya State of the Cities, used a baseline survey to understand the demographic profile, infrastructure access and economic profiles of 15 towns and cities. This was administered through a questionnaire developed by the World Bank, related to the following topics; Demographics and household composition, Security of housing, land and tenure, Housing and settlement profile, Economic profile, Infrastructure services, Health, Household enterprises and Civil participation and respondent tracking (World Bank, n.d).

Similarly, the South Dublin County Council (SDCC) and Dublin City Council (DCC) also carried out a baseline study through the help of key experts and consultants, as part of its City Edge project and looked into the following factors in terms of understanding the current state scenario, namely; Sustainability, Quality and character, the liveable city, Planning policy, Economy, Transport and Movement, Environment, and Utilities and Contamination.

In the study hereby being presented, both approaches have been adopted to get a better idea of the status quo of the localities and issues therein. A questionnaire was administered to a representative sample of residents to get a wider view of the status quo, whilst experts in the area, namely mayors and local councillors were also consulted to illustrate the steady state scenario.

2.5 QUALITY OF LIFE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE

The above tools are very important for regional and local governments since there is a two-way relationship between quality of life / liveability and good governance.

Studies have shown that there is a relationship between how local governments act and the wellbeing of the residents. For instance, government efficiency (also known as quality of governance), i.e., "the ability of the local government to display an effective and sound management of the finance of the municipality and the provision of public services" (Cárcaba et al., 2022, p. 9), does have a positive significant impact on the residents' subjective wellbeing. Moreover, "the more effective, incorrupt and impartial government institutions [are], the happier and the more satisfied with their lives are the citizens" (Samanni & Holmberg, 2010,

p. 2). Similarly, Wang et al. (2014), mention that “people are more satisfied with their lives in countries with better governance quality”. It is believed that ‘good governance’ will bring about better wellbeing and quality of life, and in turn, greater liveability in the localities (Cárcaba et al., 2022). Moreover, the type of policies put in place might also improve the wellbeing of residents. Over the years, there has been a shift in public policy goals. Whereas before, public policy was more geared towards meeting material goals and key performance indicators, now there seems to be a shift towards targeting overall wellbeing (Atkinson & Joyce, 2011). For instance, urban planning and policy is regarded as a useful tool to improve the local QoL (Blečić & Talu, 2013; Khalil, 2012).

On the other hand, knowing the current state of QoL locally and gathering such data periodically will provide “invaluable information on whether a community and its urban environment is moving in the right direction” (Mostafa, 2012, p. 1) and which areas are lacking to be addressed by future policies. By applying the above-mentioned tools, the local government can understand the current state of its inhabitants and plan ahead to improve their wellbeing.

2.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The discussion of this chapter comprised a review of the concepts of liveability, wellbeing, quality of life, inclusion, and sustainable development, to set the conceptual framework of this study. The discussion shows that such concepts are multi-faceted and complex in nature. Such multi-layered concepts justify the application of a multi-methods research approach to this study, which will allow to take stock of where the community and region stands in terms of current quality of life and liveability and understand what the expectations of the people are and their awareness regarding the local and regional councils. Such a study will allow these councils to shape future policies in an efficient and effective way.

The next chapter will give an overview of the context in which this study is being carried out, to understand the legislation in which the Regional and Local Councils operate and to better comprehend the context of Regjun Nofsinhar.



3. Context

This study is not being carried out in a vacuum and it is imperative that one understands the context in which the Reġjun Nofsinhar (Southern Regional Council) and the Local Councils within, are operating. Further to the discussion of the previous chapter, in which a review of the literature related to the concepts of liveability, wellbeing, quality of life, inclusion, and sustainable development were outlined, this chapter's discussion will construct the contextual framework of the study in legal, demographic and socio-cultural terms.

3.1 LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

The devolution and decentralisation of power from Central to Local Government was introduced in 1993 through the enactment of the Local Councils Act (Laws of Malta, 1993). This law was integrated into the Constitution of Malta in 2001 (Assembly of European Regions, 2010) and incorporated a controlling and regulatory mechanism for 67 (later 68) Local Councils and three regional committees, which in 2011 were divided into five regional councils. Following the Local Government Reform Process and the publication of Act No. XIV in 2019, these regional councils attained specific roles and responsibilities through a set of defined functions in the Local Government Act (DOI, 2019). Through The amendment of this 2019 Act, in November 2021, these regional councils increased to six, namely, Northern Region (Reġjun Tramuntana), Eastern Region (Reġjun Lvant), Western Region (Reġjun Punent), Port Region (Reġjun Port), Southern Region (Reġjun Nofsinhar) and Gozo Region (Reġjun Għawdex) (Local Government Division, 2021). Figure 3.1 below outlines the different Regional Councils and the localities there within.

Figure 3.1
Malta's Regional Council



3.1.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL COUNCILS

Local Councils

What started as a pilot back in 1993, has now become a focal point for the residents of each locality. Local Councils comprised of members elected by the residents of the locality and are presided over by the Mayor who is responsible for the overall adherence to the Local Councils Act. The administration of each Local Council is performed by the Executive Secretary and the Local Council's source of finance is mainly dependent on the financial allocation by Central Government. Table 3.1 outlines the legal functions of the Local Councils.

Table 3.1: Legal Functions of the Local Councils

LEGAL FUNCTION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide for the upkeep and maintenance of, or improvements in, any street or footpath, not being privately owned • To provide for the collection and removal of all refuse from any public or private place, for the maintenance of cleanliness and for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of all public convenience, dustbins and other receptacles for the temporary deposit and collection of waste, and to ensure that these are accessible to all persons, including persons using a wheelchair; • To provide for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of children's playgrounds, public gardens and sport, cultural or other leisure centres, and to ensure that these are, as far as possible, accessible to all persons including persons using wheelchairs; • To provide and maintain proper road signs and road markings, in conformity with national and international standards, to establish and maintain pedestrian and parking areas and to provide for the protection of school children in the vicinity of schools; • To propose to and, where applicable, be consulted by any competent authority prior to the competent authority making any changes in traffic schemes directly affecting the locality; • To make recommendations to any competent authority for or in relation to any planning or building scheme and to be full participant in any decisions on the naming or renaming of streets; within the parameters of any national plan, to issue guidelines to be followed in the upkeep, restoration, design or alteration of the façade of any building or of any building or any part of a building normally visible from a street, including the type of lighting and materials used, advertisements and shop fronts, and in the case of premises which are open to the public, to ensure that such premises are, as far as possible, accessible to all persons, including persons who use wheelchairs; • To assist citizens by providing, where applicable in conjunction with any competent authority, information relating to the rights of citizens in general, including information on consumers' rights, transport, communications, tourist facilities, taxation, social security, public health and other matters of public utility and interest; • To advise any authority empowered to take any decisions directly or indirectly affecting the Council and the residents it is responsible for; as part of a national scheme to provide in conjunction with any competent authority, for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of crèches, kindergartens and other educational services or buildings; as part of a national scheme, to provide in conjunction with any competent authority for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of health and rehabilitation centres, government dispensaries, health district officers and homes for senior citizens;

- To propose to the Minister responsible for education, persons to be appointed as presidents of primary school councils;
- To enter into agreements with any public body or Government Department for the delegation to the Council of any of the functions of that public body or Department: Provided that any such delegation shall only come into effect after the Minister s made the relevant order in the Gazette.

Note: Adapted from the Local Government Act XIV, 2019, p. 20. Full version in Appendix D

Regional Councils

On the other hand, Regional Councils comprise the mayors (or representative of the mayors) of the Local Councils of the respective region, an executive secretary who acts as the head of the council's finance and administration, a Deputy President and a President who is elected by the councillors of the region for a five-year legislature. The Regional President manages the specific functions of the Regional Council as established by the Ministry for the National Heritage, Arts and Local Government in consultation with the Local Councils Association.

Table 3.2 illustrates the legal functions of the Regional Councils.

Table 3.2: Legal Functions of the Regional Councils

LEGAL FUNCTION

- The issuance of a call for tenders for the service to Local Councils within them for waste management and this shall come into effect from the year 2022, and this without prejudice to the functions of the Local Councils in terms of article 33(1)(b);
- The social aspect, which includes researches and report of social impact evaluations, which report shall be made within the first year of each legislature;
- The provision of assistance to Local Councils within the region, which assistance includes the provision of professional services including the environmental sector, social, cultural, touristic and information technology;
- The provision of assistance to Local Councils within the region to benefit and successfully manage programmes which are funded by the European Union;
- The provision of subsidy to students for researches regarding aspects relating to the region
- The coordination with Local Councils of sports and physical activities and initiatives, including those relating to welfare;
- The coordination with ministries, departments and Government entities to facilitate the work of Local Councils, including coordination with the maintaining order sections
- To give an opinion regarding the Local Plan and the same opinion will be attached to the report submitted to the House
- The preparation, on an annual basis, of a Work Plan which includes the Region's financial needs and human resources

Note: Sourced from the Local Government Act XIV, 2019, p. 28

3.2 FOCUSING ON REĠJUN NOFSINHAR

Reġjun Nofsinhar is made up of twelve localities, namely Birżebbuġa, Ғal Ġhaxaq, Ғal Luqa, Ғal Qormi, Il-Gudja, Il-Ғamrun, Il-Marsa, Iż-Żejtun, Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk, Santa Luċija and Santa Venera. According to NSO data, the region covers c. 48km², equivalent to circa 15% of the total surface area of the Maltese Islands (NSO, 2023a).

3.2.1 Demographics

The Maltese Islands have experienced an exponential growth in the population over the past century. Since the last census in 2011, the Maltese population has grown from 417,432 residents to that of 519,562, equalling an increase of 24.5%. Although not at the same rate, the population grew in all Regions. As at November 2021, Reġjun Nofsinhar’s total resident population stood at 106,593, an increase of 16,956 (19%) since 2011. The locality which registered the highest increase in population was that of Marsaskala, with an increase of 5,745 individuals (51.94%), currently registering 16,804 residents. All other localities registered an increase in their population, except for Santa Luċija which registered a decrease of 11.88%. These changes are illustrated in Figure 3.2 and Table 3.3 below. (NSO, 2023a).

Figure 3.2: Population per locality in 2011 and 2021

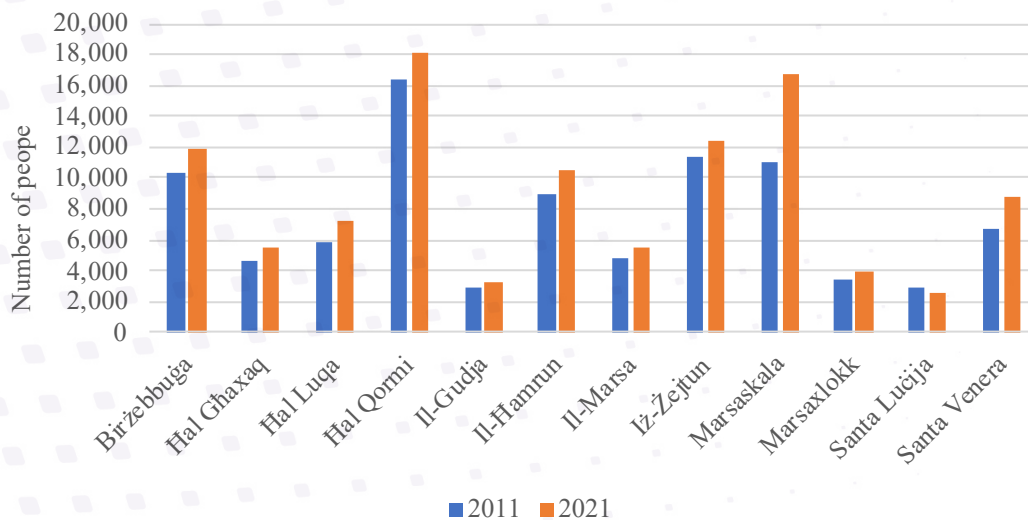


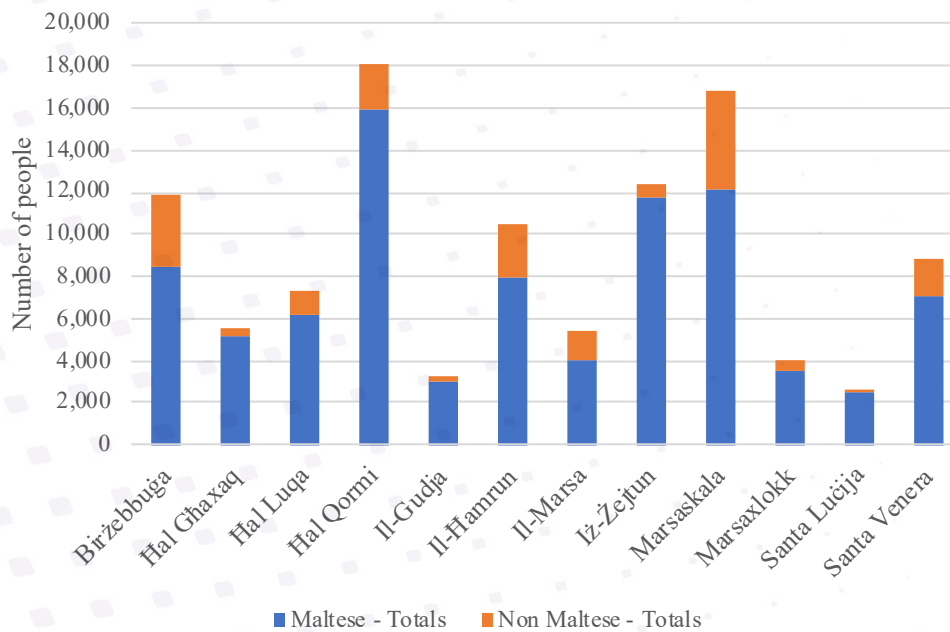
Figure 3.3: Population per locality in 2011 and 2021

Localities	2011	2021
Birżebbuġa	10,412	11,844
Hal Għaxaq	4,577	5,538
Hal Luqa	5,911	7,249
Hal Qormi	16,394	18,099
Il-Gudja	2,994	3,229
Il-Hamrun	9,043	10,514
Il-Marsa	4,788	5,468
Iż-Żejtun	11,334	12,409
Marsaskala	11,059	16,804
Marsaxlokk	3,366	3,988
Santa Luċija	2,970	2,617
Santa Venera	6,789	8,834
Total	89,637	106,593

Note: NSO, 2023, pp. 19-21

The increase in population across all the island has also been due to a large influx of foreign nationals residing and working in Malta. According to the 2021 Census, around 22% of the total population (115,449 individuals out of the total 519,562) is non-Maltese. Around 16.24% of Malta's foreign population (18,757 individuals) reside in Regjun Nofsinhar. This number of non-Maltese nationals amounts to 17.59% of the Region's total resident population. Birżebbuġa has the highest percentage of foreign nationals living in the locality (28.92%) with Marsaskala a close second (27.65%), whilst Santa Luċija has the lowest, where its total foreign resident population stands at 66 individuals (2.52%) (NSO, 2023a), as illustrated in Figure 3.3 and Table 3.4 below. Since the data collection for the 2021 Census figures pertaining to the non-Maltese population have continued to inflate at a national level. Given such socio-demographic change, an Annex has been added to this report, in relation to the non-Maltese residents so as to give further detail to such a shift.

Figure 3.3: Population composition by Maltese and non-Maltese individuals



In terms of gender presence in the region, Regjun Nofsinhar has circa 56,105 male residents (52.63%) and 50,488 (47.37%) females, as indicated in Table 3.4 below (NSO, 2023a).

Table 3.4: Gender and nationality per locality

Localities	Gender		Nationality	
	Male	Females	Maltese	Non- Maltese
Birzebbuga	6,850	4,994	8,419	3,425
Hal Ghaxaq	2,859	2,679	5,190	348
Hal Luqa	3,632	3,617	6,197	1,052
Hal Qormi	9,471	8,628	15,963	2,136
Il-Gudja	1,627	1,602	3,004	225
Il-Hamrun	5,571	4,943	7,970	2,544
Il-Marsa	3,148	2,320	4,035	1,433
Iz-Zejtun	6,288	6,121	11,772	637
Marsaskala	8,759	8,045	12,157	4,647
Marsaxlokk	2,109	1,879	3,484	504
Santa Lucija	1,300	1,317	2,551	66
Santa Venera	4,491	4,343	7,094	1,740
Total	56,105	50,488	87,836	18,757

It is also worth noting that whereas the density in population for the entire Maltese Islands stands at 1,649 people per km², in Reġjun Nofsinhar, in 2021, this stood at around 2,222 people per km², therefore showing a highly densely populated region (NSO, 2023a).

The average age of the population in this region stands at 42.6, slightly higher than the Maltese average of 41.7. Within the region the average age of women (45) is higher than that of men (41.3) overall. Moreover, the average age of Maltese nationals (44.4) is substantially higher than that of non-Maltese (33.5), given that many foreigners who come to Malta are of working age and very few elderly non-Maltese people are present, when compared to the Maltese older-cohorts (NSO, 2023a).

Moreover, when looking at the dependency ratio of Reġjun Nofsinhar, this stands at 54.6% (Vs 46.7% for Malta). Moreover, old age dependency ratio stands at 36.1% (Vs 27.6% for Malta) (NSO, 2023). This indicates that the percentage of elderly in comparison with people of working age is higher in this region, than in Malta overall. This stands to show that the Region has a higher rate of elderly within its community, something to be kept in mind by the Local Councils and Regional Council when developing strategies, policies and activities for its citizens.

When looking at the religious affiliations within the region, 86.02% of individuals aged 15 or over, expressed affiliations with the Roman Catholic religion, c.5% with Islam and 5.79% with other religious groups, including Orthodox, Protestants, Buddhists and Judaists. 3.22% mentioned that they have no affiliation with any religion (NSO, 2023a).

3.2.2 Vulnerabilities

It is worth noting that in Reġjun Nofsinhar there seems to be a higher-than-average vulnerability in terms of people claiming social security benefits. The latest publicly available data disaggregated by locality refers to the year 2020. In 2020, the total beneficiaries of contributory and/or non-contributory benefits amounted to 38,444 individuals (c.23% of all beneficiaries in Malta). At a national level in 2020, around 33% of the population was on benefits, whilst for the Region this rate was equal to 37% of the population. Iż-Żejtun and Ғal Luqa recorded the highest percentage of population on benefits, 44.54% and 44.39% respectively, as indicated in Table 3.5 (NSO, 2022).

Table 3.5 : Number and % of Beneficiaries of Social Services by locality

Localities	Total Beneficiaries	% of population
Birżebbuġa	3564	26.55%
Hal Ghaxaq	1906	38.20%
Hal Luqa	2810	44.39%
Hal Qormi	7074	41.03%
Il-Gudja	1219	37.78%
Il-Hamrun	4223	41.72%
Il-Marsa	2293	40.00%
Iż-Żejtun	5129	44.54%
Marsaskala	4653	29.87%
Marsaxlokk	1322	35.03%
Santa Luċija	1251	42.29%
Santa Venera	3000	37.58%
Total	38444	37.37%
Malta	170259	32.99%

When looking closer at the type of benefits being taken by 9,286 individuals, 9.03% of the population of the Region were on sickness benefits in the year 2020. This was slightly higher than the 6.94% of the total Maltese population receiving sickness benefits. Il-Hamrun recorded 12.34% of its population claiming sickness benefits (NSO, 2022).

In terms of disability benefits 2,318 individuals (2.25% of the Region's population) were receiving such benefits in 2020. Again, this recorded percentage was slightly higher than the 1.83% recorded at a national level. In terms of localities, Iż-Żejtun recorded the highest level of people claiming such disability benefits (3.85%) (NSO, 2022).

When looking at old age benefits such as pensions, 15,611 individuals (i.e., 15.18% of the Region's population) claimed such benefits in 2020. At a national level this percentage stood at 13.83%, possibly indicating that in Reġjun Nofsinhar there are a higher percentage of elderly people. This is especially so in Santa Luċija and Hal Luqa whereby these figures amounted to 21.57% and 20.08% respectively (NSO, 2022).

Finally, when looking at unemployment benefits 1.60% of the total Maltese population were beneficiaries. Similarly, 1.96% of the regional population benefitted from such governmental support. The highest locality with unemployment benefit beneficiaries was that of Marsa at 3.77% (NSO, 2022).

3.2.3 Housing

When looking at the data pertaining to housing and dwellings, it seems that 19% (57,041 dwellings) of the property stock in Malta is found in Reġjun Nofsinhar. 42,978 (75%) of these dwellings are considered to be main residential dwellings and the remaining 14,063 (25%) are considered secondary, seasonally used or vacant dwelling, as illustrated in Figure 3.4 below. In Marsaskala, there seems to be the highest proportion of secondary housing (31.5%). Being a seaside village, Marsaskala has been traditionally known as a locality for summer residences. Nowadays, many of such secondary residences are being rented out to the foreign cohort of the population. In addition, 68.71% of the dwellings in Marsaskala are either flats or penthouses. This percentage is much higher than the percentage at the Regional level (45%), as illustrated in Figure 3.5 below (NSO, 2023b).

Figure 3.4: Dwelling stock by occupancy

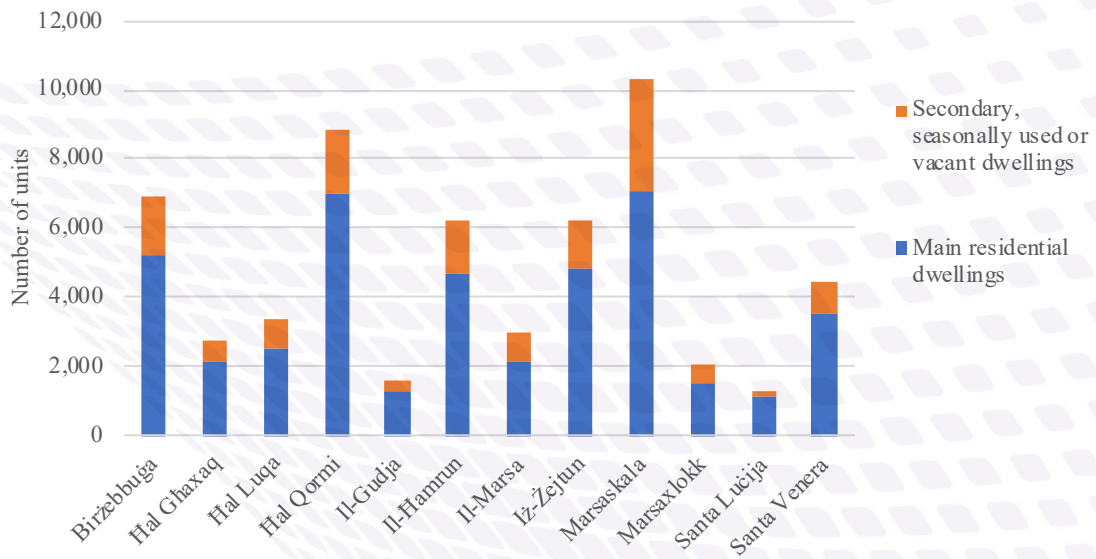
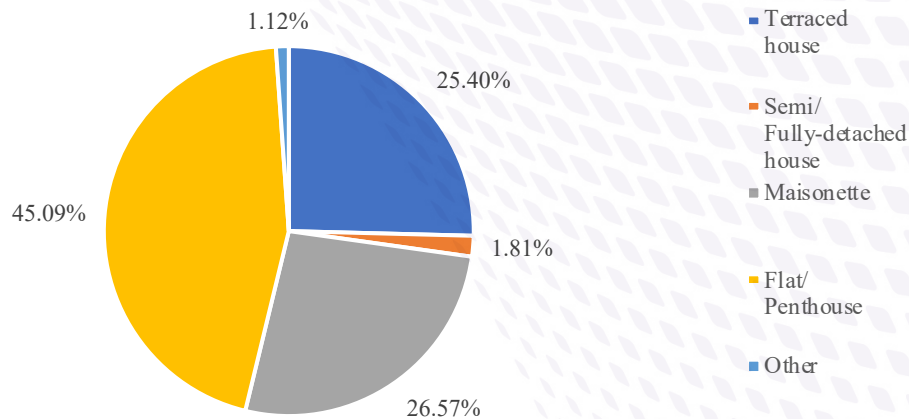


Figure 3.5: Dwelling stock by type



It is also worth noting that within the Region there are also a number of institutional accommodations. These include homes for the elderly, with St Vincent De Paul Long Term Care Facility being one of the largest homes, hosting circa 1,100 elderly residents (DOI, 2020) and around 1,167 carers (761 of which are foreigners) ("1,167 carers in St Vincent de Paul", 2023).

Moreover, Reġjun Nofsinhar is also home to a number of refugee accommodation and open centers. The last publicly available data refers to the year 2021 and indicates the following number of residents per the various centers; 254 individuals in the Ħal Far Tent Village, 238 individuals in the Hangar Open Centre and 102 individuals in the Ħal Far Open Centre (all in Birżebbuġa). Moreover 84 individuals were registered in the Initial Reception Centre in

Marsa (aditus, 2023). One must however keep in mind, that the migrants' precarity and mobility might mean that these figures change substantially and in a short period of time and therefore, since 2021, actual figures of people residing in these centres might have fluctuated.

3.2.4 Industrial and commercial developments

Yet Regjun Nofsinhar is not simply a residential area. Rather, it is a hub of industry and includes a variety of localities which house key infrastructure to the local economy, including power stations, ports and airports.

In Hal Luqa one finds the Maltese International Airport, which is the main airport for Malta, both for passengers and cargo. In 2022, the airport saw a total number of 5,851,079 passengers, 40,355 aircrafts and 17,551,561kgs of cargo (of which 1,1651,836 kgs mail) pass through. This stands to show that this is a hub for business, logistics and one of Malta's biggest industries, namely, tourism (Malta International Airport, 2023)

Furthermore, the Malta Freeport is situated in Birżebbuġa. This serves as the local transshipment hub which has been set up in 1988 and has been privatised in 2004. In 2022, 2.89mln TEUs were recorded (Malta Freeport, n.d.). As the freeport continues to innovate and invest in its equipment, it allows for more operations to occur. For instance, in 2023, it welcomed the largest containership ever berthed in Malta, the size of four football pitches in length ("Freeport welcomes largest-ever containership to visit Malta", 2023). Such increased operations and level of activity inevitably leaves an impact on the surrounding areas and residents, with greater noise, light and air pollution as well as traffic congestion and potentially land usage. For this reason, in April 2023, a deal was made with the private operating company of the Freeport, to lease out 30,000m² of reclaimed land, to allow for further expansions of the Freeport, ensuring future business, whilst reducing the inconvenience to residents of the locality (Ellul, 2023).

Marsaxlokk, traditionally known as a fishing village continues to be an important port for the fishing industry in Malta, being a major berthing port for around 70% of the local fishing fleet (Transport Malta, n.d.). The colourful 'luzzijiet' (traditional fishing boats), the Sunday market and the numerous eateries specialising in fish delicacies have been a pull factor for tourists to discover this village. At the same time, the area is also important for industry and for energy production as a whole, as the nearby Delimara has housed a power station since 1992. The power station was initially that of heavy fuel oil, until this was switched off in 2017 and replaced by an LNG power plant.

Marsa is also another locality which for numerous years was important for the energy sector in Malta, due to another power station present in the area. The power station has however been switched off in 2014 and demolished over the subsequent years. The port remains an important dock for ship repairs and similar marine activities.

These are just some of the focal points of industrial and commercial development in the region, which have been changing and evolving through the years.

3.2.5 Road infrastructure

Malta in general is heavily dependent on vehicles and its road infrastructure, with circa 18,000 vehicles for each km² (Borg, 2023). Even more so, given the nature of the region and its importance in the logistical and commercial sectors in Malta, Regjun Nofsinhar,

including its road networks act as conduits for people, goods, and services on the islands, connecting the various logistical hubs to the rest of the island. This inevitably puts greater pressure on the road system in the area and also results in congestion at various times of the day, especially during rush hours.

Given the importance of such infrastructure, Reġjun Nofsinhar has seen a great number of road infrastructural projects being undertaken over the course of the last few years and months, including the €70 million investment in the Marsa junction which was launched in 2018 and concluded in April 2021 (Infrastructure Malta, 2021). This major project was aimed at decreasing air pollution, cutting down traffic and travelling time and regenerating the area, which had a number of abandoned buildings and derelict structures.

More recently, in September 2023 the Luqa Junction was also completed and the *Ħal Luqa/ Qormi* 60-metres tunnel connection has been opened, thereby resulting into an uninterrupted link from Santa Luċija and Marsa towards Luqa and Qormi (“Luqa underpass to Qormi finally opened”, 2023).

3.2.6 Natural and Cultural Assets

Yet, the region is not only an economic hub. It also boasts of a number of natural assets, especially in terms of the coastal line and coastal areas, with a number of scheduled sites with the Planning Authority, falling under the categories of ecological and geological sites of importance. These include the coastal zones and cliffs around Birżebbuġa, Marsaxlokk and Marsaskala, as well as caves such as *Għar il-Friefet* in Birżebbuġa. Other natural assets such as *Għar Hasan* are also found in this region. Moreover, across the Region, 101 sites are scheduled as Grade 1 and another 216 are scheduled as Grade 2 sites. This clearly indicates the cultural value of such dwelling, buildings, or sites in the various localities.

As outlined in the Regional Cultural Strategy for the South, the region has one of the lowest numbers of scheduled buildings and properties scheduled by the Planning Authority (Arts Council, n.d.). The number of scheduled areas for the Region amount to 379, with the highest percentage being architectural assets (76 %). The highest number of scheduled properties and buildings are found in *Żejtun* (103) followed by Birżebbuġa (86) (Planning Authority, n.d.). Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7 illustrate this.

Figure 3.6: Scheduled property and buildings

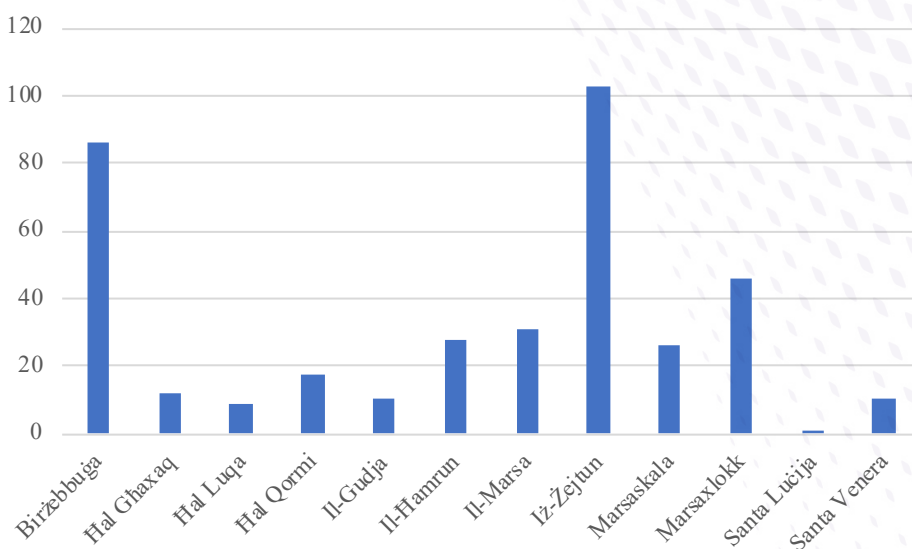
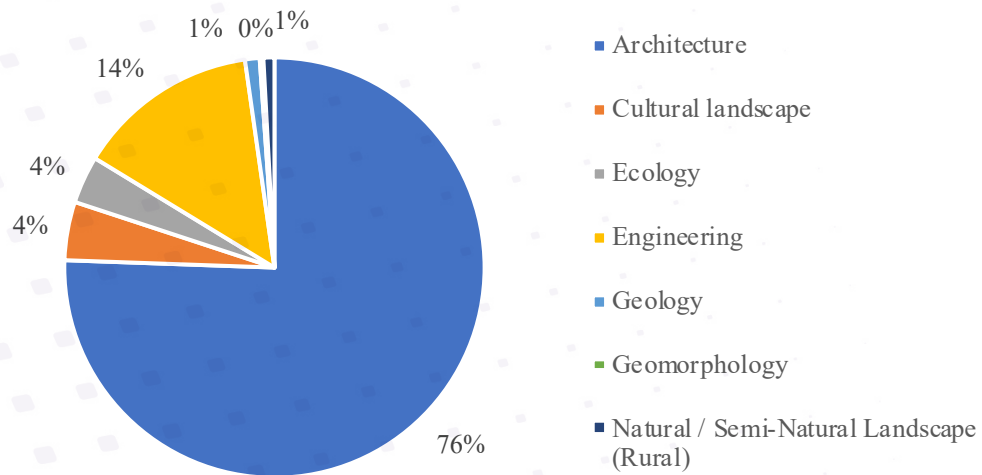


Figure 3.7: Type of scheduled property



In the year 2023, the Region also held the title of Region of Culture 2023 and, in collaboration with its 12 Local Councils, has invested in a series of cultural activities so as to “grow and strengthen cultural diversity by encouraging the involvement of various communities and strengthening the sense of involvement of the localities within the region” (Aquilina Jesmond, Southern Regional President, September 23, 2022). Moreover, Marsa, was also designated as the Locality of Culture for 2022, with a number of events having been organised in this town in an attempt to regenerate the area.

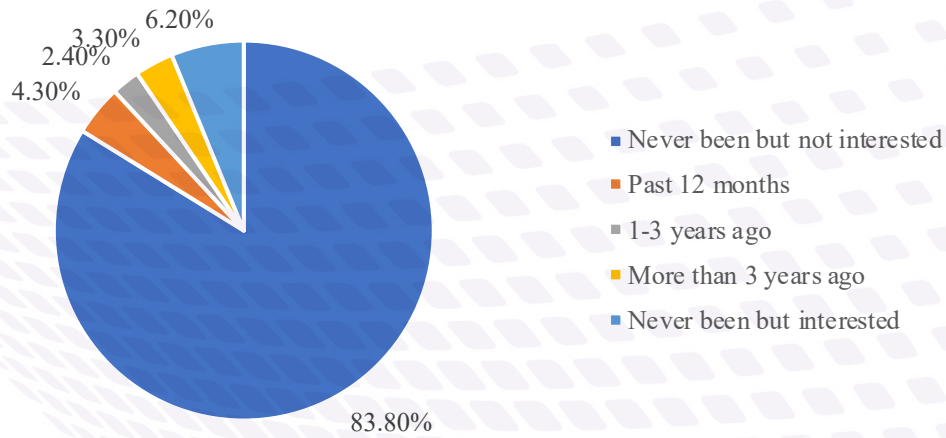
3.2.7 Community spaces and local participation

A variety of community spaces can be found in the various localities in the Region, such as the newly developed Qormi garden in the valley, being the result of a €1mIn investment from the Social and National Development Fund (NDSF), a number of gardens (e.g. Romeo Romano in Santa Venera and Independence Garden in Birżebbuġa), as well as specific spaces whereby NGOs and voluntary organisations can meet (e.g. The Meeting Place in Marsa). More recently, a number of sites such as Santa Venera, Ғal Għaxaq and Gudja were mentioned as areas that will get upgraded as part of a Project Green community greening grants aimed at Local Councils.

Local band clubs, football clubs, political party clubs, as well as the parish, especially during the time of the village feast, also remain important community spots, whereby social cohesion and social interaction is fostered in the Region.

As per the Regional Cultural Strategy, cultural participation in Regjun Nofsinhar seems to be high when compared to the national average. In the same report it is stated that 4.3% of people in the region had been actively involved in the local council festivities in the previous 12 months, as opposed to the 2.4% at a national level (Arts Council Malta, n.d.). Of course, as indicated in Figure 3.8 below, there are still a number of individuals who do not attend and are not interested to do so; 83.8% of the Region’s population (vs 87% Malta). This leaves ample space for the Local Councils and regional councils to consider activities, policies and strategies to engage further their residents in a variety of ways and work towards social engagement and cohesion.

Figure 3.8: % of population actively involved in the Local Council festivities



3.2.8 Needs, interests, values and aspirations

This description of the socio-demographic, economical, and environmental aspects of the Region is just a brief overview and summary of the most salient points and changes happening in the Region. Of course, there are plenty of other projects and activities being carried out in the 12 localities of Reġjun Nofsinhar, but it is not this study's purpose to enlist them all. However, this chapter illustrates the diversity of the localities and how rich in culture and industry this Region is. The diversity also means that the needs and aspirations of each locality might differ. Nevertheless, in general, Reġjun Nofsinhar seems to be aiming towards improving its infrastructure (e.g. roads and public spaces) and regenerating areas such as Marsa, in order to bring further business and vibrancy to the community (Cordina, 2023). Nevertheless, the residents of the Region also seem to value the natural environment and wish to preserve it as much as possible, as it was seen in the case of the proposed yacht marina in Marsaskala, whereby the community protested against such development, after which the government decided to cancel the plans in this regard (Sansone, 2022).

3.3 SUMMARY OF CONTEXT

The discussion of this chapter has shown that salient characteristics of the region under study include, i) a highly dense area with a population slightly more dependent on social benefits, indicating a higher than average degree of vulnerability, ii) a growingly diverse population in terms of foreign residents, which calls for more integration measures and measures to improve social cohesion, iii) a key logistical and economic hub, which activities might put pressure on the surrounding infrastructure and residents as well, and iv) numerous environmental and cultural assets which require to be safeguarded. These correlate to a number of remits which should be covered by the Regional Council, including that of providing assistance to Local Councils, including the provision of professional services in the environmental sector, social, cultural, touristic and information technology, which could assist Local Councils in issues above. The Regional Council is also responsible for the coordination with the local council of sports and physical activities and initiatives, including those relating to welfare. These activities could be used to increase social cohesion and strengthen the social fabric in the localities. Moreover, given that the Regional Council can help Local Councils to tap and manage EU funds, specific activities related to the issues mentioned above can be developed and funded.

Based on this context, the next chapter outlines the methodology adopted in this study.



4. Methodology

This section explains the methodology used for this study. It presents the research questions underpinning the study and the rationale behind the choice of the research design that was applied to address these questions. It also outlines the methods used for data gathering together with the procedures applied for data analysis. Finally, this chapter addresses the ethical considerations and limitations adopted during the process of the study.

4.1 RESEARCH AGENDA

The aim and objectives of this research study was to examine the perceptions of residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar regarding the quality of life, liveability and social integration of their locality and their awareness and knowledge of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof. It also aims to examine how regional and local councils can work together more effectively and how local councils can be more effective in meeting the needs of the residents. Based on these objectives, the research design was informed by the Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of a project (Vanclay et al., 2015) and targeted the “effective engagement of affected communities in participatory processes of identification, assessment and management of social impacts” (p. iv) and liveability matters. Hence, the study sought to address the following general research questions:

1. How do residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar perceive their quality of life and their region's liveability?
2. To what extent are residents' perceptions of the functions of the regional council congruent with the regional council's official remit?
3. What initiatives can boost the resourcefulness of regional councils in enhancing liveability?

4.2 DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

This research study adopted a multi-methods research design to gain a more in-depth understanding of the perceptions of residents on how local and regional councils can become more effective in meeting the needs of their residents. When compared to a single-method research design, a multi-method research approach can prove to be highly effective in acquiring a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). To this end, the research design comprised of a quantitative questionnaire with residents of the localities forming part of the region and two focus groups, one with the mayors and another with local councillors of the various localities in question.

Quantitative Questionnaire

A quantitative questionnaire (Appendix A) was specifically designed for this project. Based on existing literature and similar studies, this questionnaire consisted of twenty six questions. Questions 1-8 dealt with socio-demographic information. Questions 9-12 focused on perceived quality of life, liveability and social integration. Questions 13-18 assessed residents' awareness and knowledge of their respective local council, whilst questions 19-26 assessed the residents' awareness and knowledge of their respective regional council. The questionnaire comprised of a mix of open-ended and close-ended questions such as multiple choice, dichotomous, filter and 5-point Likert scale. This data collection tool was developed in both English and Maltese and was accompanied by an information and consent letter that clearly stated the objectives of the study and contact details of the research team.

Following approval of the content of the questionnaire from the Regional's Executive Secretary, the research team piloted the questionnaire with five residents from Reġjun Nofsinhar. Following their input, the research team made some minor adjustments.

Focus Groups

Apart from a questionnaire held with residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar, the research design included focus groups with councillors and mayors from the local councils of the region. This approach was selected so that findings from the focus groups would be contextualised and complement the findings of the questionnaire. The research team developed a focus group schedule concentrating on topics that fall under the remit of local councils, such as environmental and educational matters, intergenerational dynamics, social cohesion and projects (Appendix B). The schedule also dealt with the existent relationship, cooperation and support between local councils and the regional council/central government. The focus group schedule consisted of semi-structured questions so as to guide the discussion within the parameters of the general research questions and to maximise internal validity by allowing for the exploration of unexpected but relevant areas (Creswell, 2014).

4.3 SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

The questionnaire was administered telephonically to 420 residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar. Participants were randomly selected through the use of a computer programme. This programme randomly generates non-sequential telephone numbers (landline and mobile). The research team made calls to a total of around 5,000 distinct telephone numbers. Out of these 4,580 did not end in a successful interview wherein 916 (20%) did not answer, 2,290 (50%) were not eligible and 1,374 (30%) refused to participate. The remaining 420 completed the survey, a number which produced a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$. Measures were also taken to ensure that the sample was stratified by age, gender and locality, hence ensuring that each locality within Reġjun Nofsinhar was equally represented.

Respondents were given a detailed overview of the study, were asked for their consent and were also invited to choose whether they prefer to have the questionnaire conducted in English or Maltese. Administration of each questionnaire took approximately between 10-15 minutes.

The regional council of Reġjun Nofsinhar accepted to act as gatekeeper and made contact with potential participants of the focus groups. Local councillors and mayors, aged 18 years and over, were asked to opt in and contact the research team to express their interest in participating in the focus groups. The focus groups were held at Reġjun Nofsinhar's office and participants were offered the choice of participating either online or in person. A total number of 5 councillors attended the focus group for local councillors whilst 8 mayors attended the focus group for mayors. Both focus groups took approximately 120 minutes and were audio and video-recorded to facilitate transcription at a later stage.

4.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The research team retrieved the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire and inputted it in Excel. It was then sorted, coded and cleaned and transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 28 whereby statistical tests were run. Researchers made use of the Pearson's chi-square test to test for significant associations

between nominal variables such as age, gender, locality and length of residence. Results were considered statistically significant if the p-value was less or equal to 0.05. When the SPSS returned cells with an expected count of less than 5, the results were considered to be relatively statistically significant, unless the expected cell count was less than or equal to 40%. In such latter case the p-value was considered to be valid and the relationship considered statistically significant.

On the other hand, qualitative data was transcribed ad verbatim, coded and analysed. Thematic Analysis was used to analyse the transcripts as this method is not tied to a specific theoretical framework and presents “a coherent and meaningful pattern in the data relevant to the research questions” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 121).

4.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the study the researcher took into account ethical considerations and employed mitigating actions to ensure that no harm was procured to the research participants, as described below.

When conducting the telephonic questionnaires, the callers informed the participants of the study, asked for their consent, and informed the participants of their rights to stop or withdraw their consent at any point, as well as assured them of their anonymity and confidentiality. They were also assured that all General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) will be adhered to.

On the other hand, focus group participants gave their consent in written format prior to their participation (Appendix C). Voluntary participation was guaranteed and participants could withdraw from the research study at any time without giving any reason and without incurring any penalty. The researcher explained how the participants' data would be coded and pseudonymised for use throughout the study and that no identifying details (names, emails or IP address) would be noted, hence ensuring that their responses would not be identifiable. However, they were asked to give their consent to have their views cited with a reference to their role and locality name (e.g. Councillor 1, Marsa). Participants were also asked to not divulge any details of their participation, included but not limited to, the identity of other participants and matters discussed. Focus group participants were assured that codes that linked data to their identity would be stored securely and separately from the data in an encrypted file on the research team's password-protected computer and only the research team would have access to this information. Data would be stored securely for two years and then destroyed.

Ethical clearance was sought from the ethics committee (FREC) of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, at the University of Malta. Approval to proceed was granted in March 2023 and data was gathered between April and May 2023.

4.6 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS

The research team faced a number of limitations when collecting data, for which a number of mitigation measures were applied to try and minimise the effects as much as possible. The quantitative questionnaire was only available in Maltese and English. Given that Reġjun Nofsinhar's foreign national population amounts to 17.60% of its total resident population, this may have resulted in a lack of representation from foreign nationals who do not communicate

in either Maltese or English. Moreover, this data collection methodology may not have captured a representative sample of foreign nationals as such individuals tend to either not reply to telephonic surveys or opt-out. To mitigate for this limitation, an Annex document to the original report that includes the voice of non-Maltese in the region was added. The original residents' questionnaire was tweaked so as to address issues relevant to non-Maltese residents and was disseminated amongst the top 50% foreign communities in the region. In terms of qualitative data collection through the focus groups a number of limitations were taken into account and mitigated for.

Despite best efforts to secure attendance for both focus groups, aiming for circa 8 to 10 attendees, only five local councillors attended the local councillors' focus group. A number of reminders and chasing was carried out through the gatekeepers. Despite this lower-than-expected turn-out, qualitative data is not solely based on generalisability of the findings but is also based on the validity of data (Leung, 2015). The in-depth data collected from local councillors has added value to this study as it drew out the challenges currently being faced by local councillors.

Moreover, the researcher was aware that focus group participants, both mayors and local councillors, brought to the table their biases and possibly their own agendas. Whilst these were also considered with the data analysis, since they reflect the lived experiences of participants, the research team was also very aware of such possible biases.

In order to ensure that the qualitative data collected was a true reflection of the real issues of the locality, the research team, composed of professional and trained researchers, probed and questioned the participants. They made sure that any blanket statements were contextualised and participants were asked to back up their claims with more detail and/or anecdotal data. At the same time, the researchers made sure that one off instances and anecdotes were not generalised to the entire region.

Such focus groups also posed a danger of recreating possible power struggles and dynamics which might be encountered at the regional and local levels. In order to mitigate such issues, local councillors and mayors were separated into two different groups. On the other hand, the researchers made sure that all participants had an equal time to discuss and share their opinions, thereby minimising the possibility of having one speaker dominating the focus group.

Another risk which is relevant to qualitative data collection methods such as focus groups is that of the 'Hawthorne effect', whereby participants might act differently than they would in reality, due to the fact that they are being observed. In such case the Hawthorne effect could have materialised, in 'textbook' answers from participants, or providing answers they believed the researchers were after. In order to mitigate such risks, the research team asked confirmation questions to truly understand and make sure that the information being shared was the correct and sincere one. The research team also explained how the study was looking for true and honest answers so as to depict a proper picture of the current situations.

A final risk which is often linked to focus groups is that of the 'group think', whereby participants simply conform so as to avoid the discomfort of conflict or of sticking out



amongst a group. Whilst participants did not seem to mind disagreeing in the focus groups, the researchers also probed all participants to retell their own experiences and often asked the question whether anyone had any opposing views.

Hence, despite the various risks and limitations of such studies, the research team made sure to employ the necessary mitigating factors to minimise any negative impacts as much as possible.



5. Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents and examines the quantitative data obtained from the responses to the residents' questionnaire carried out in Reġjun Nofsinhar. It also analyses data collected during focus groups held with local councillors and mayors of the same region. In line with the objectives of this SIA, the chapter's discussion will present data analysis findings that inform on the perceptions of residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar on matters concerning quality of life, liveability and social integration within their locality, and their awareness and knowledge about their local and regional councils, and expectations thereof.

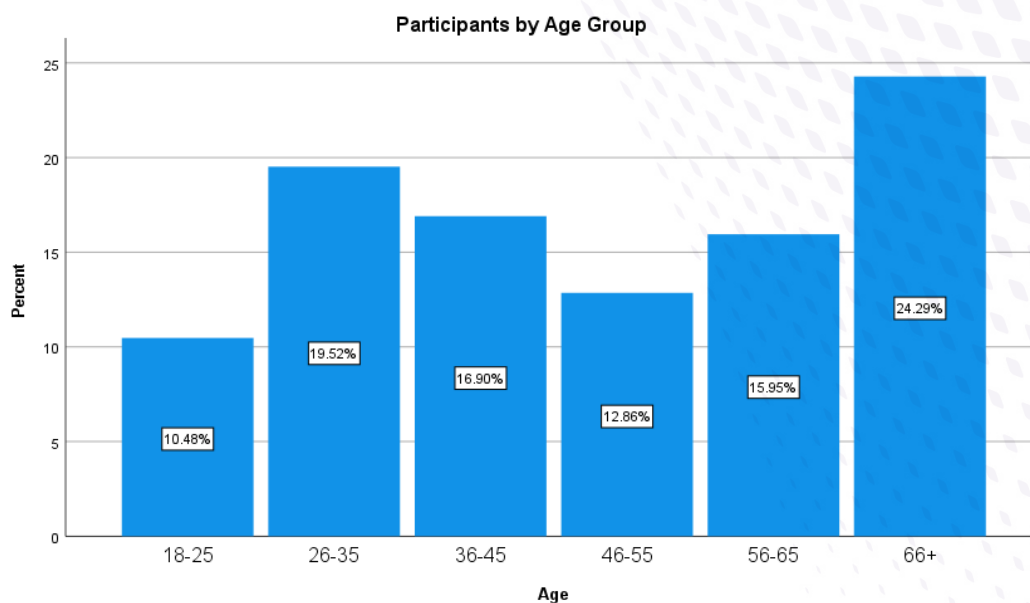
5.1 FINDINGS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

The main objective of this SIA is to examine the perception of residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar regarding their quality of life, liveability and social integration of their locality and their awareness and knowledge of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof. For this purpose, a quantitative questionnaire (Appendix A) comprising of 26 questions split into 4 sections: socio-demographics, quality of life, local council and regional council was developed. Questions 1 to 8 of the questionnaire asked residents of Reġjun Nofsinhar demographic questions regarding their age, gender, level of education, main labour status, number of dependents under 18 years living in their household, place and length of residence and participation in voluntary or community organisations.

Table 5.1: Respondents by age group

Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
18-25	44	10.5
26-35	82	19.5
36-45	71	16.9
46-55	54	12.9
56-65	67	16.0
66+	102	24.3
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.1: Respondents by age group



In total 420 residents responded to the questionnaire. The majority, 24.3% (n=102) were aged 66 and over, 19.5% (n=82) were aged 26-35, while 16.9% (n=71) were aged 36-45. A further 16% of respondents (n=67) were aged 56-65, followed by 12.9% (n=54) aged 46-55 and 10.5% aged 18-25. Such grouping reflects the stratified sample chosen, to mirror the percentages in the total population of Malta (Table and Figure 5.1)

Table 5.2 : Respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	210	50.0
Female	210	50.0
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.2: Respondents by gender

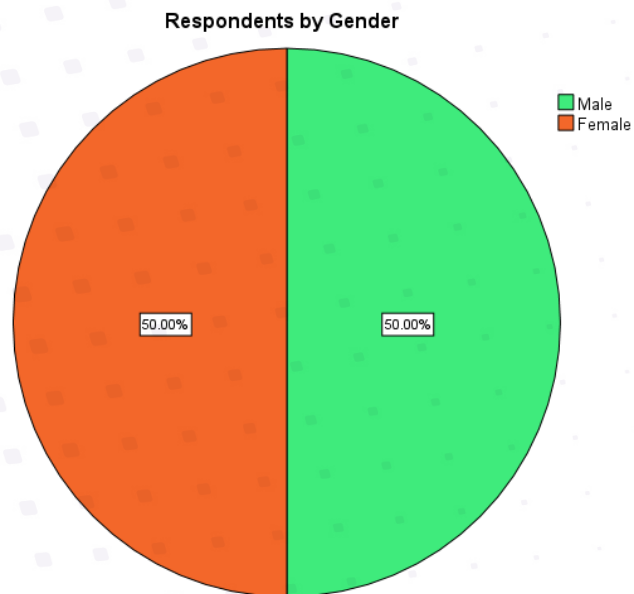
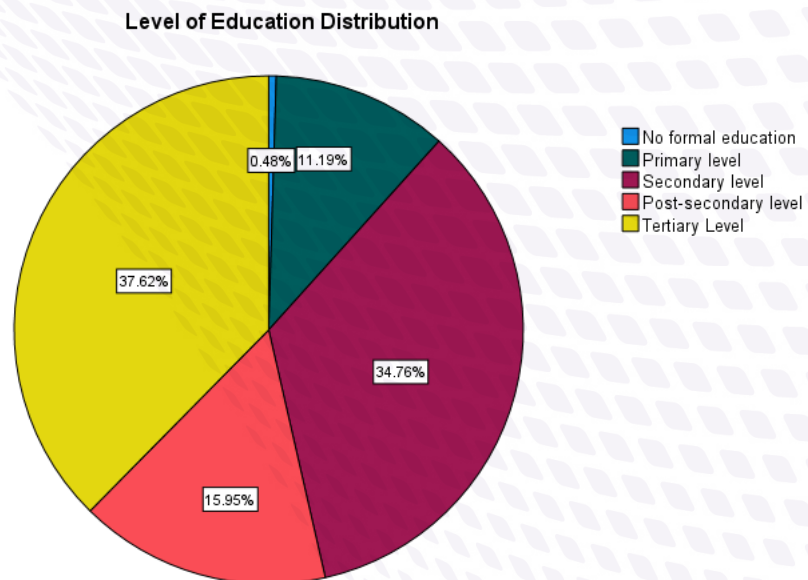


Table and Figure 5.2 show that there was an equal distribution between male and female respondents where 50% (n=210) of males and 50% (n=210) of females responded to the questionnaire.

Table 5.3: Respondents by level of education

Type of Education	Frequency	Percent (%)
No formal education	2	0.5
Primary level	47	11.2
Secondary level	146	34.8
Post-secondary level	67	16.0
Tertiary Level	158	37.6
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.3: Respondents by level of education



More than a third of respondents have achieved a high level of education with 37.6% (n=156) having a tertiary level of education. 34.8% (n=146) of respondents have a secondary level of education, while 16% (n=67) have a post-secondary level of education and 11.2% (n=42) having a primary level of education. Only 0.5% (n=2) have no formal education. (Table and Figure 5.3)

Table 5.4: Respondents by employment status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Student	35	8.3
Pensioner	112	26.7
Employed	196	46.7
Self-employed	22	5.2
Unemployed	5	1.2
Homemaker	49	11.7
Did not specify	1	0.2
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.4: Respondents by employment status

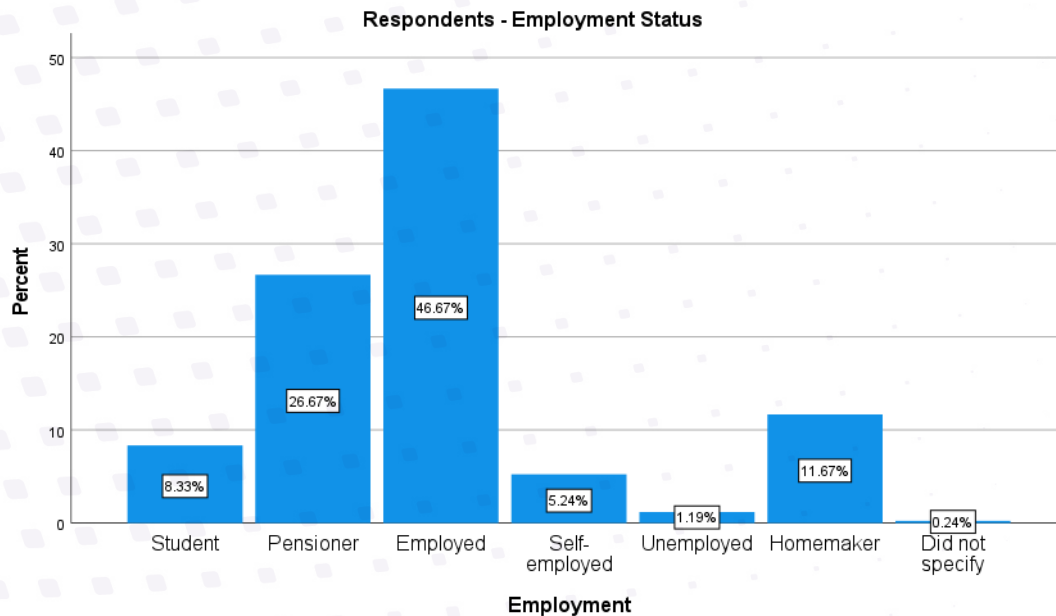


Table and Figure 5.4 illustrate that out of 420 respondents, 46.7% (n=196) were employed while 26.7% (n=112) were pensioners. Homemakers totalled 11.7% (n=49), while 8.3% (n=35) were students, 5.2% (n=22) were self-employed and 1.2% (n=5) were unemployed. Only 0.2% (n=1) opted not to state the type of employment status.

Table 5.5: Respondents by locality

Locality	Frequency	Percent (%)
Oormi	72	17.1
Ħamrun	41	9.8
St. Venera	34	8.1
Marsa	17	4.0
Birżebbuġa	46	11.0
Marsaxlokk	19	4.5
Marsaskala	47	11.2
Ħal Għaxaq	28	6.7
Gudja	21	5.0
Żejtun	61	14.5
St. Luċia	13	3.1
Ħal Luqa	21	5.0
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.5: Respondents by locality

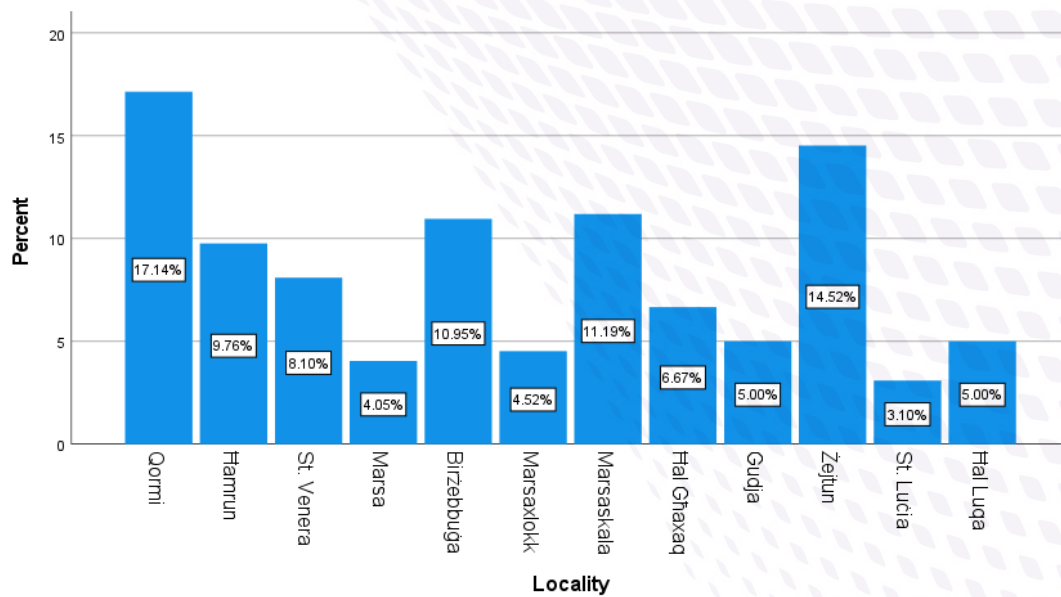
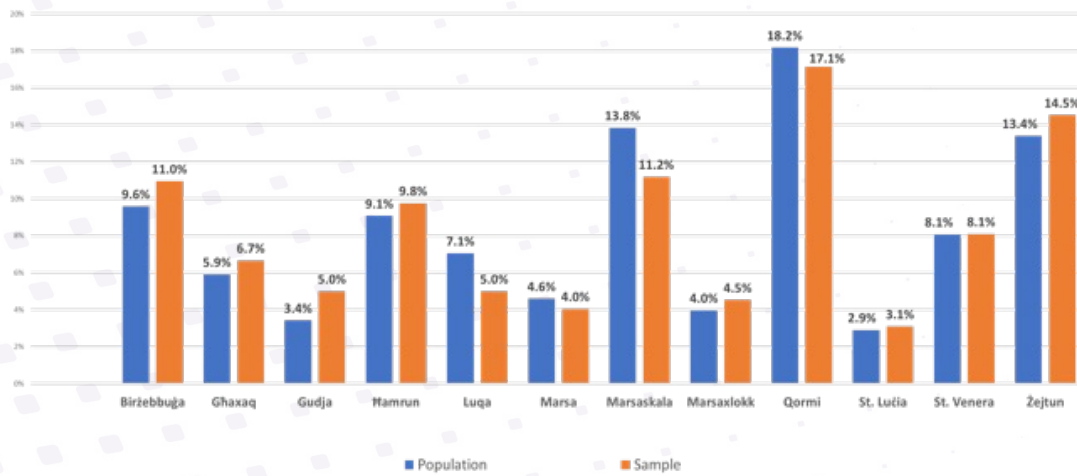


Figure 5.6: Comparison of locality distribution of respondents – Population vs Sample*



(*) Data provided by statistician. Range of discrepancies varies between +1.6% and -2.6% with margin of error being \pm 4.9%. Percentages might not add up to 100% due to decimal places.

Out of the 12 localities that form part of Regjun Nofsinhar, Qormi had the highest number of respondents (17.1%, n=72), followed by Żejtun (14.5%, n=61) and Marsaskala (11.2%, n=47) (Table and Figure 5.5). Figure 5.6 shows that each locality's share of individuals who responded to the questionnaire reflected closely the share of population living in each locality. Hence, one can conclude that the questionnaire is representative to the whole population and is a valid indicator of how residents of Regjun Nofsinhar perceive their quality of life and their knowledge and awareness of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof.

Table 5.6: Respondents by dependents living in the same household

No of children under 18 years of age	Frequency	Percent (%)
0	285	67.9
1	66	15.7
2	55	13.1
3	11	2.6
4	3	0.7
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.7: Respondents by dependents living in the same household

No. of years	Frequency	Percent (%)
1-9	72	17.1
10-19	50	11.9
20+	298	71.0
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.8: Respondents by length of residence

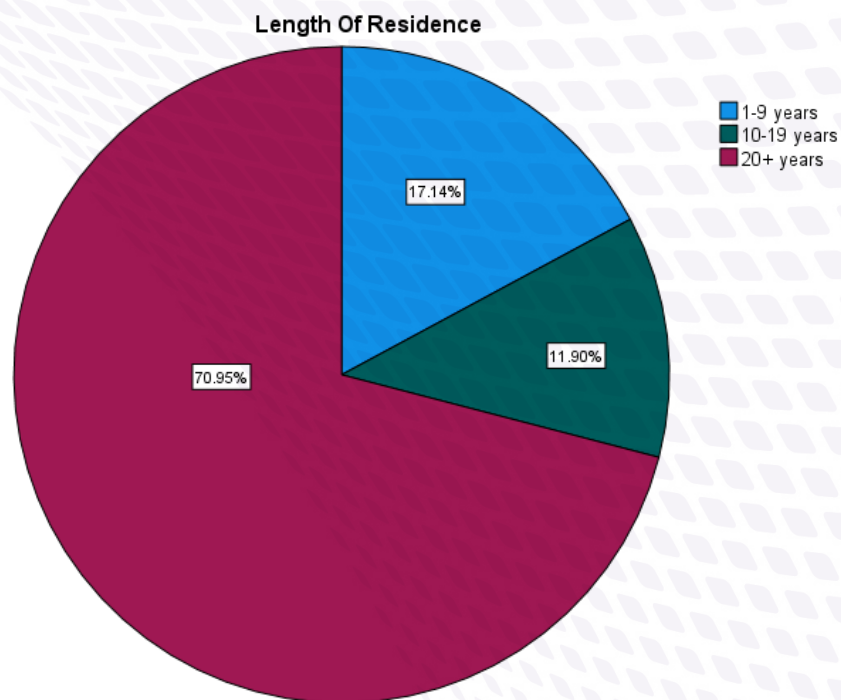
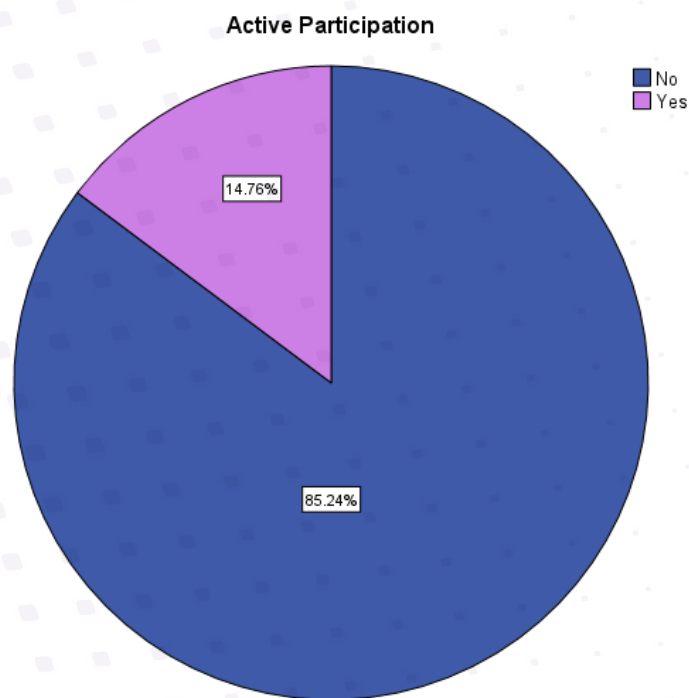


Table 5.7 and Figure 5.8 show that 71% (n=298) of respondents had been living in the same locality for more than 20 years, while 17.1% (n=72) had been living there for 9 years or less. Respondents that had been living in the same locality between 10-19 years amounted to 11.9% (n=50).

Table 5.8: Active participation in voluntary or community organisations

Active Participation	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	358	85.2
Yes	62	14.8
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.9: Active Participation in Voluntary or Community Organisations



Out of 420 respondents, 85.2% (n=358) were not active in any voluntary or community organisations. On the other hand, 14.8% (n=62) were actively involved in diverse voluntary and community organisations (Table 5.8 and Figure 5.9). Out of these 62 respondents, 17 stated that they were actively involved in religious organisations, 12 in the band club and 4 in the football club.

Quality of Life

Questions 9 and 10 aimed to gauge the level of quality of life of respondents, in relation to their locality. These two questions asked respondents to rank their satisfaction about certain factors which affect their quality of life. Replies were based on a 5-Likert Scale that ranged from Very Dissatisfied, Fairly Dissatisfied, Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, Fairly Satisfied through to Very Satisfied.

Table 5.9: Residents' level of satisfaction with their locality

Satisfaction scale	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	37	8.8
Fairly dissatisfied	31	7.4
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	102	24.3
Fairly satisfied	110	26.2
Very satisfied	140	33.3
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.10: Residents' level of satisfaction with their locality

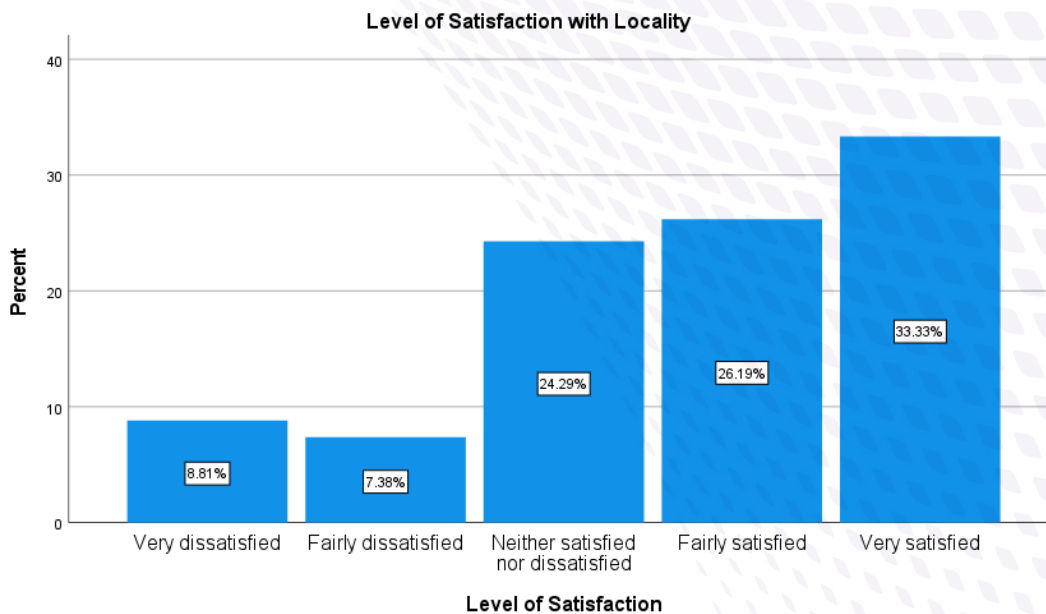


Table 5.9 and Figure 5.10 illustrate that the majority of respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live. 59.5% (n=250) of respondents stated that they are satisfied (33.3% Very Satisfied and 26.2% Fairly Satisfied), 16.2% (n = 68) were dissatisfied (8.8% Very Dissatisfied and 7.4% Fairly Dissatisfied), while 24.3% (n= 102) were neutral.

A Pearson's Chi square test, carried out to identify whether any statistically significant relationship existed between age, gender and locality and the level of satisfaction with locality,

showed no statistically significant relationship with age with the p-value ($p=0.24$) being greater than the 0.05 level of significance. On the other hand, testing yielded a statistically significant association with gender ($p=0.02$) (Table 5.10) and a relatively statistically significant association with locality as the p-value of 0.04 was below the 0.05 level of significance (Table and Figure 5.11).

Table 5.10: 'Level of satisfaction of one's locality' by gender

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	23	11.0%	8	3.8%	54	25.7%	60	28.6%	65	31.0%
	14	6.7%	23	11.0%	48	22.9%	50	23.8%	75	35.7%

$$\chi^2(4, N = 420) = 11.424, p = 0.022$$

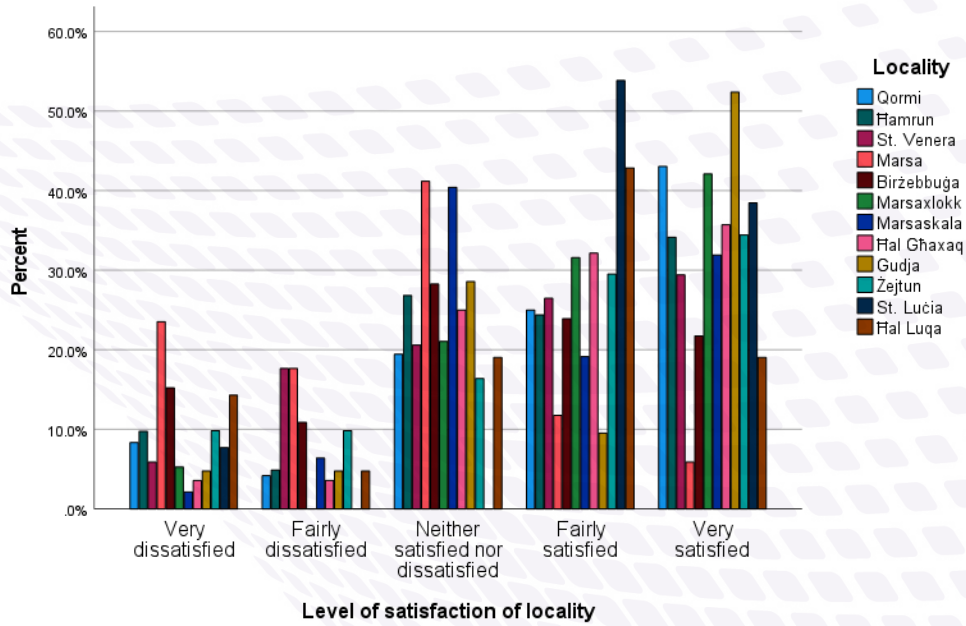
Table 5.10 shows that a higher percentage of males (11.0%) than females (6.7%) tended to be very dissatisfied with their locality whilst a higher percentage of females (11.0%) than males (3.8%) tended to be fairly dissatisfied

Table 5.11: 'Level of satisfaction of one's locality' by locality of residence

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Qormi	6	8.3%	3	5%	14	19.4%	18	25.0%	31	43.1%
Ħamrun	4	9.8%	2	4.9%	11	26.8%	10	24.4%	14	35%
St. Venera	2	5.9%	6	17.6%	7	20.6%	9	26.5%	10	29.4%
Marsa	4	23.5%	3	17.6%	7	41.2%	2	11.8%	1	5.9%
Birżebbuġa	7	15.2%	5	10.9%	13	28.3%	11	23.9%	10	21.7%
	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	4	21.1%	6	31.6%	8	42.1%
	1	2.1%	3	6.4%	19		9	19.1%	15	31.9%
Ħal Għaxaq	1	3.6%	1	3.6%	7	25.0%	9	32.1%	10	35.7%
Gudja	1	4.8%	1	4.8%	6	28.6%	2	9.5%	11	52.4%
Żejtun	6	9.8%	6	9.8%	10	16.4%	18		21	
St. Luċia	1	7.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7		5	38.5%
Ħal Luqa	3		1	4.8%	4	19.0%	9		4	19.0%

$$\chi^2(44, N = 420) = 61.872, p = 0.039$$

Figure 5.11: 'Level of satisfaction of one's locality' by locality of residence



As indicated in Table and Figure 5.11 above St. Luċija residents exhibited the highest percentage of satisfaction at 92.3% (Fairly satisfied = 53.8% and Very satisfied = 38.5%). On the other hand, Marsa residents were found to be the least satisfied with 23.5% stating that they were Very dissatisfied and 17.6% Fairly dissatisfied. Only 17.7% of Marsa residents reported that they were satisfied with their locality as a place to live.

Subsequently, Question 10 asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with regards to diverse factors in their locality which are associated with having an impact on their quality of life. Table and Figure 5.12 illustrate the results.

Table 5.12: Level of satisfaction of diverse factors impacting quality of life

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Public and green spaces	78	18.6	85	20.2	125	29.8	80	19.0	52	12.4
Urban development	130	31.0	87	20.7	114	27.1	45	10.7	44	10.5
Sport and leisure facilities	54	12.9	73	17.4	180	42.9	62	14.8	51	12.1
Air and noise pollution	164	39.0	95	22.6	75	17.9	54	12.9	32	7.6
Cultural activities	32	7.6	72	17.1	163	38.8	97	23.1	56	13.3
Public Transport	41	9.8	28	6.7	174	41.4	113	26.9	64	15.2
Traffic and parking	232	55.2	82	19.5	64	15.2	23	5.5	19	4.5
Schools in the locality	9	2.1	9	2.1	143	34.0	132	31.4	127	30.2
Accessibility	19	4.5	31	7.4	136	32.4	141	33.6	93	22.1
Level of safety	43	10.2	49	11.7	138	32.9	130	31.0	60	14.3
Religious activities	19	4.5	30	7.1	133	31.7	134	31.9	104	24.8

Figure 5.12: Level of satisfaction for diverse factors impacting quality of life

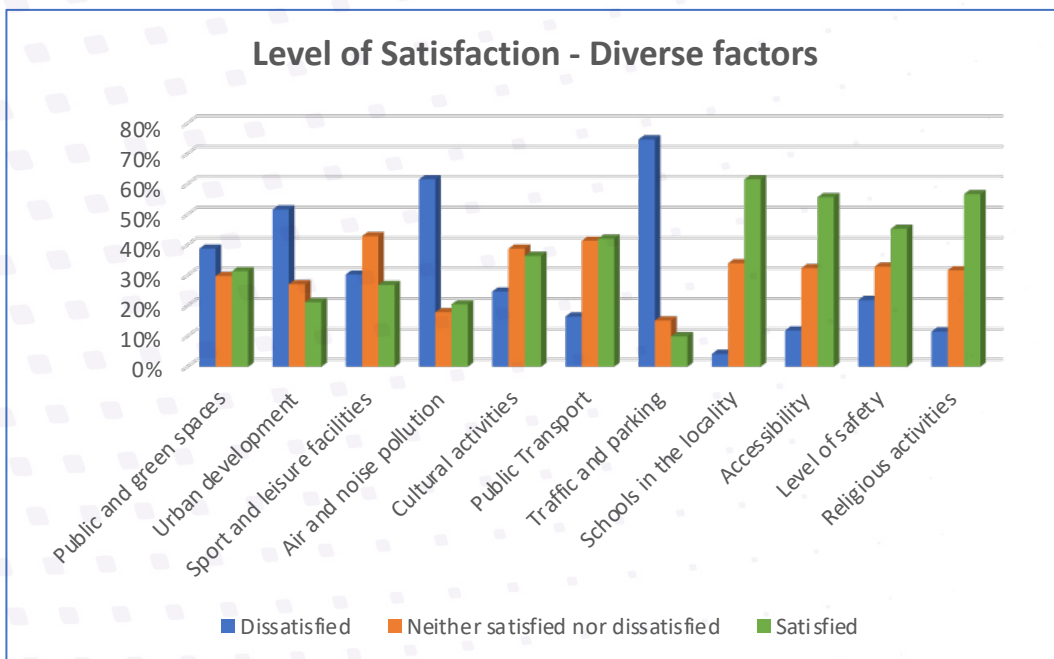


Table and Figure 5.12 show that most respondents were mostly dissatisfied with Traffic and Parking (74.7%, n=314) where 55.2% (n= 232) were Very Dissatisfied and 19.5% (n=82) were Fairly Dissatisfied. 61.6% (n=259) were dissatisfied with Air and Noise Pollution (39%, n=164 Very Dissatisfied, 22.6%, n=95 Fairly Dissatisfied) while 51.7% (n=217) were dissatisfied with Urban Development (31%, n=130 Very Dissatisfied, 20.7%, n=87 Fairly Dissatisfied).

A Chi Square test was carried out to test for a significantly statistical association between the above-mentioned diverse factors and age, gender, and locality. Testing found that public and green spaces had a significantly statistically association to age with a p-value of 0.016, which is smaller than the 0.05 level of significance (Table and Figure 5.13)

Table 5.13: Level of satisfaction of public and green spaces by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	8	18.2%	14	31.8%	13	29.5%	8	18.2%	1	2.3%
26-35	18	22.0%	19	23.2%	24	29.3%	16	19.5%	5	6.1%
36-45	16	22.5%	22	31.0%	16	22.5%	8	11.3%	9	12.7%
46-55	13	25%	4	7.4%	17	31.5%	13	25%	7	13.0%
56-65	11	16.4%	10	14.9%	21	31.3%	16	23.9%	9	13.4%
66+	12	11.8%	16	15.7%	34	33.3%	19	18.6%	21	20.6%

Figure 5.13: Level of satisfaction of public and green spaces by age

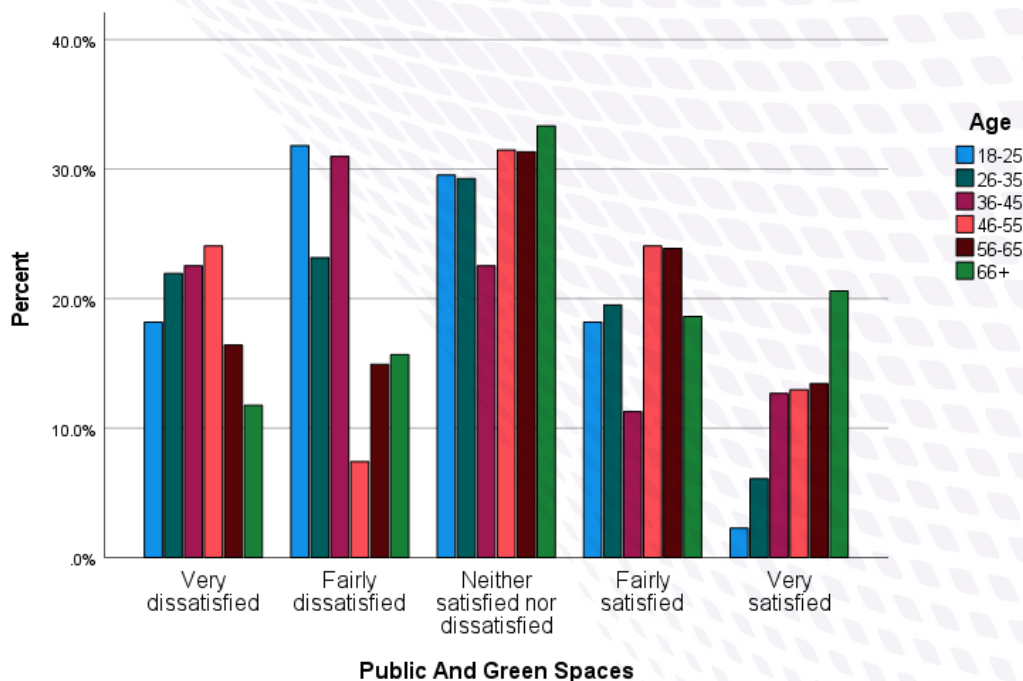


Table and Figure 5.13 indicate that residents in the lower age groups were the least satisfied with public and green spaces with the 36-45 age bracket tending to be the most dissatisfied (53.5%). On the other hand, residents in the higher age groups tended to be the most satisfied with 39.2% of the 66+ bracket mentioning that they were either fairly or very satisfied.

The Pearson's Chi-square test also found a statistically significant association for public and green spaces when cross tabulated to locality, with the p-value of 0.019 being below the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the findings per locality could be generalisable to the entire population of the Region (Table and Figure 5.14).

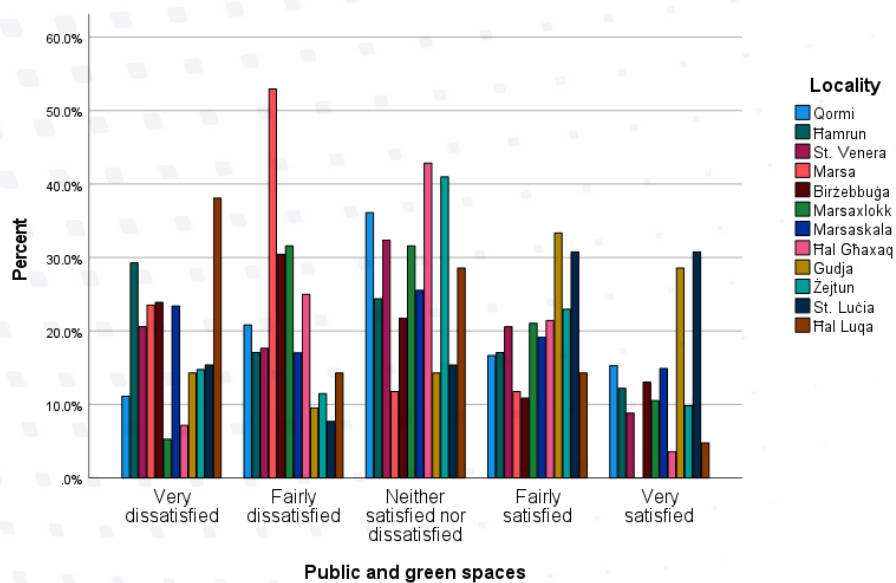
Table and Figure 5.14 below show that a significant majority of Marsa residents tend to be dissatisfied with public and green spaces in their locality (Very dissatisfied = 23.5% and Fairly dissatisfied = 52.9%). On the other hand, Gudja residents emerged as the most satisfied (61.9%), closely followed by St. Luċia residents at 61.6%.

Table 5.14: Level of satisfaction of public and green spaces by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Qormi	8	11.1%	15	20.8%	26	36.1%	12	16.7%	11	15.3%
Hamrun	12	29.3%	7	17.1%	10	24.4%	7	17.1%	5	12.2%
St. Venera	7	20.6%	6	17.6%	11	32.4%	7	20.6%	3	8.8%
Marsa	4	23.5%	9	52.9%	2	11.8%	2	11.8%	0	0.0%
Birżebbuġa	11	23.9%	14	30.4%	10	21.7%	5	10.9%	6	13.0%
Marsaxlokk	1	5.3%	6	31.6%	6	31.6%	4	21.1%	2	10.5%
Marsaskala	11	23.4%	8	17.0%	12	25.5%	9	19.1%	7	14.9%
Hal Ghaxaq	2	7.1%	7	25.0%	12	42.9%	6	21.4%	1	3.6%
Gudja	3	14.3%	2	9.5%	3	14.3%	7	33.3%	6	28.6%
Żejtun	9	14.8%	7	11.5%	25	41.0%	14	23.0%	6	9.8%
St. Lucia	2	15.4%	1	7.7%	2	15.4%	4	30.8%	4	30.8%
Hal Luqa	8	38.1%	3	14.3%	6	28.6%	3	14.3%	1	4.8%

$\chi^2 (44, N=420) = 65.630, p = 0.019$

Figure 5.14: Level of satisfaction of public and green spaces by locality



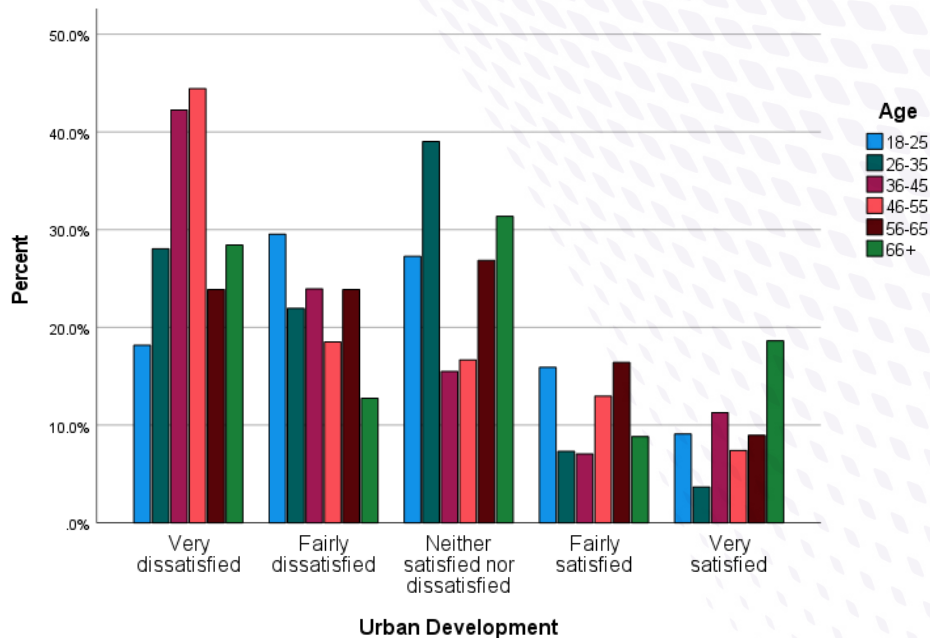
Testing also found urban development to have a significantly statistical association to age with a p-value of 0.002. Table and Figure 5.15 below illustrate that 66.2% of residents between the ages of 36-45 were most unsatisfied with urban development. On the other hand, only 11% of residents between the ages of 26-35 were satisfied, whilst more than one third of the same age bracket were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Table 5.15: Level of satisfaction of urban development by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	8	18.2%	13	29.5%	12	27.3%	7	15.9%	4	9.1%
26-35	23	28.0%	18	22.0%	32	39.0%	6	7.3%	3	3.7%
36-45	30	42.3%	17	23.9%	11	15.5%	5	7.0%	8	11.3%
46-55	24	44.4%	10	18.5%	9	16.7%	7	13.0%	4	7.4%
56-65	16	23.9%	16	23.9%	18	26.9%	11	16.4%	6	9.0%
66+	29	28.4%	13	12.7%	32	31.4%	9	8.8%	19	18.6%

$\chi^2(20, N=420) = 42.642, p = 0.002$

Figure 5.15: Level of satisfaction of urban development by age



The Pearson's Chi-square test found no significantly statistical association between all the other factors when cross-tabulated to age, gender, and locality.

Question 11 asked respondents to rank their perception about the level of integration in their locality, sense of community and level of civic participation. Replies were based on a Likert scale that ranged from Very High, High, Neither High or Low, Low through to Very Low.

Table 5.16: Level of integration of different groups

	Very Low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
People with a disability	20	4.8%	34	8.1%	201	47.9%	102	24.3%	63	15%
People of different sexual orientation	13	3.1%	23	5.5%	195	46.4%	120	28.6%	69	16.4%
People of different religious beliefs	31	7.4%	48	11.4%	174	41.4%	116	27.6%	51	12.1%
People of different culture	32	7.6%	37	8.8%	165	39.3%	121	28.8%	65	15.5%
Elderly	3	0.7%	14	3.3%	103	24.5%	165	39.3%	135	32.1%

Figure 5.16: Level of integration of different groups

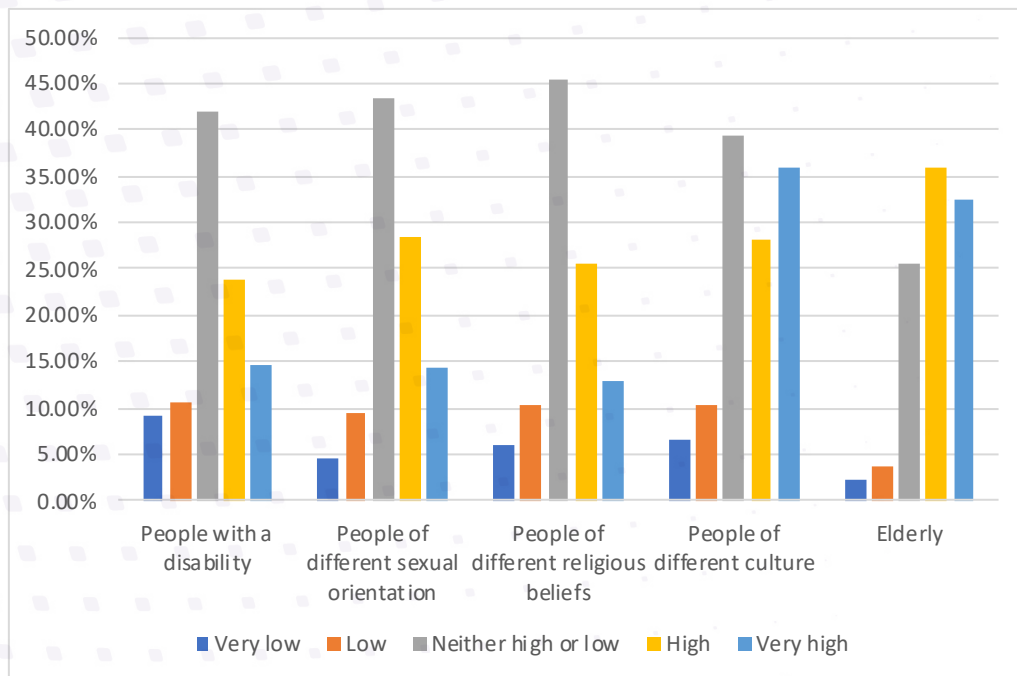


Table and Figure 5.16 illustrate the perception of respondents regarding the level of integration in their locality. Most respondents (71.4%, n=300) view the level of integration of the elderly as being high, followed by that of people with different cultures (44.3%, n=186). People with a disability were perceived to be the least integrated where 39.3% (n=117) considered their integration to be high, 47.9% (n=201) considered it to be neither low or high and 12.9% (n=54) considered it to be low.

The Pearson Chi-square test showed no statistically significant relationship between the perceived level of integration of the said different groups when cross-tabulated with age, gender and locality, except for a relatively significant statistical relationship between level of integration of people with disability and locality ($p = 0.020$).

As indicated in Table and Figure 5.17 below only 4.9% of Żejtun residents and 4.8% of Qormi residents perceive the level of integration of people with disability in their locality to be low. On the other hand, Hamrun was the locality with the highest percentage of residents who feel that the integration of people with a disability is high (51.3%). Worth noting is that a high percentage of residents throughout all localities, with Marsa at 64.7% being the highest, felt that the level of integration is neither high nor low.

Table 5.17: Perceived level of integration of people with disability by locality

	Very low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Qormi	4	5.6%	6	8.3%	27	37.5%	26	36.1%	9	12.5%
Hamrun	0	0.0%	4	9.8%	16	39.0%	9	22.0%	12	29.3%
St. Venera	4	11.8%	4	11.8%	14	41.2%	6	17.6%	6	17.6%
Marsa	1	5.9%	0	0.0%	11	64.7%	3	17.6%	2	11.8%
Birżebbuġa	6	13.0%	4	8.7%	24	52.2%	8	17.4%	4	8.7%
Marsaxlokk	0	0.0%	1	5.3%	11	57.9%	6	31.6%	1	5.3%
Marsaskala	1	2.1%	3	6.4%	22	46.8%	16	34.0%	5	10.6%
Hal Ghaxaq	2	7.1%	3	10.7%	18	64.3%	4	14.3%	1	3.6%
Gudja	0	0.0%	1	4.8%	13	61.9%	5	23.8%	2	9.5%
Żejtun	1	1.6%	2	3.3%	27	44.3%	14	23.0%	17	27.9%
St. Luċia	0	0.0%	3	23.1%	8	61.5%	2	15.4%	0	0.0%
Hal Luqa	1	4.8%	3	14.3%	10	47.6%	3	14.3%	4	19.0%

$\chi^2 (44, N=420) = 65.404, p = 0.020$

Figure 5.17: Perceived level of integration of people with disability by locality

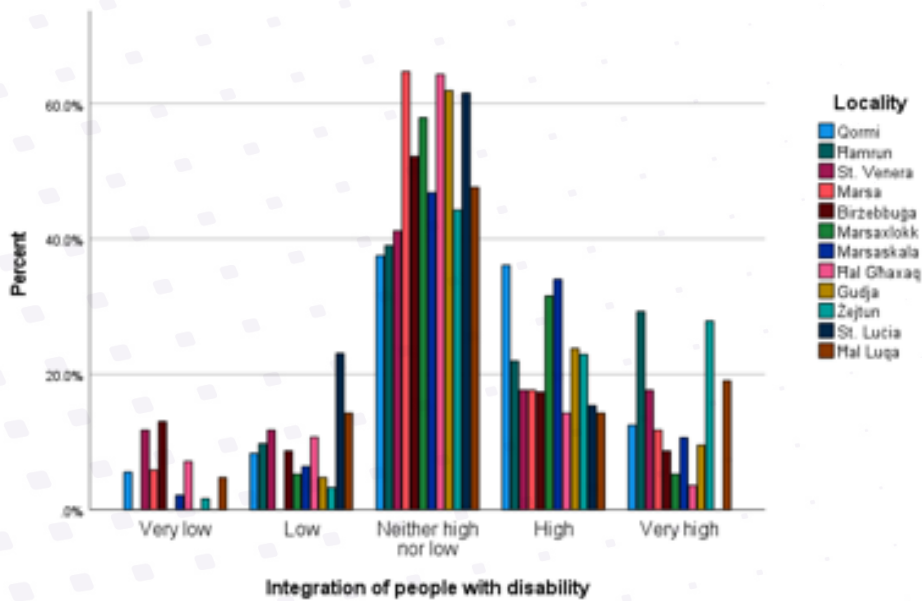


Table 5.18: Sense of community and participation in civic life

	Very Low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	Sense of community	14	3.3%	27	6.4%	153	36.4%	136	32.4%	90
Participation in civic life	15	3.6%	59	14%	198	47.1%	93	22.1%	55	13.1%

A sense of community was perceived to be highly prevalent by most respondents (53.8%, n=226) (Table and Figure 5.18) while 35.2% (n=148) considered participation by residents in civic life to be high (Table 5.18 and Figure 5.19). Further testing revealed no statistically significant association between sense of community and participation in civic life and age, gender, and locality.

Figure 5.18: Perception of sense of community

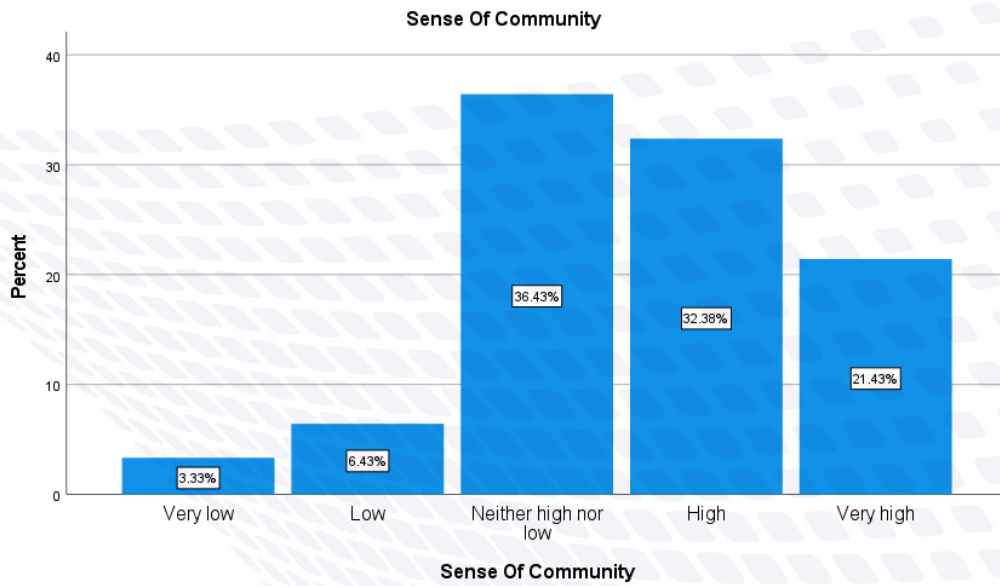
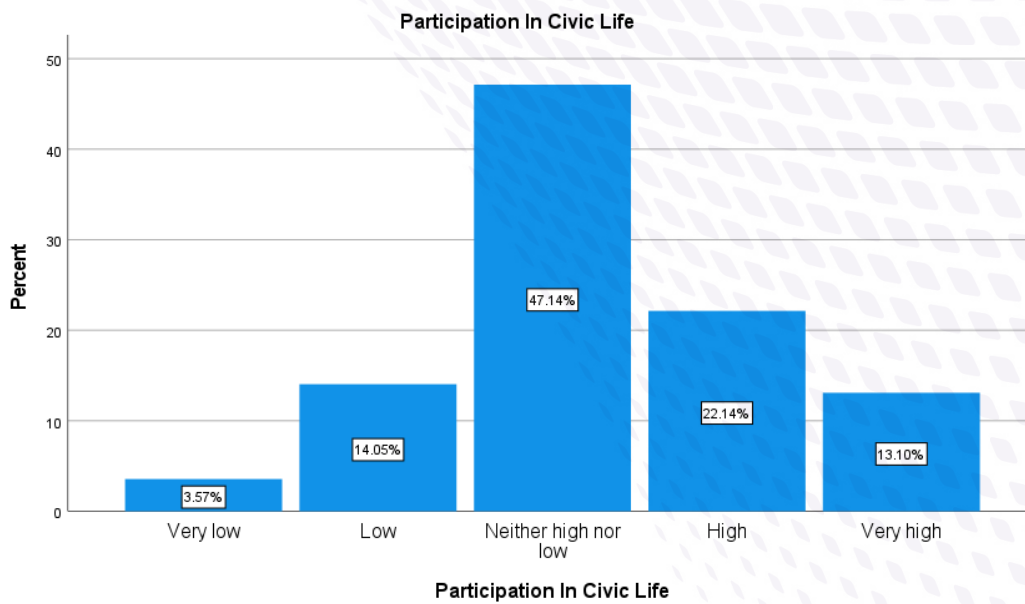


Figure 5.19: Perception of participation of residents in civic life



Subsequently, an open-ended question asked respondents whether they would like to add anything else with regards to the quality of life in their locality. 70.7% (n=297) opted not to reply to this question or stated that they had nothing else to add. The remaining 29.3% (n=123) gave diverse views as regards to how the quality of life in their locality could be improved. The top six mentions were the need of a cleaner locality, less construction, better parking and traffic management, more recreation and green spaces, better road and pavement infrastructure and more law enforcement (Figure 5.20)

Figure 5.20: Top mentions for a better quality of life



Local Council

Questions 13 to 18 delved into the respondents' knowledge, awareness, satisfaction, and expectations with regards to their local councils. The first question (Q13) asked respondents to rank their level of satisfaction with their local council using a 5- Likert Scale ranging from Very Satisfied (5) through to Very Dissatisfied (1).

Table 5.19: Respondents' level of satisfaction with their local council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	78	18.6
Fairly dissatisfied	42	10.0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	144	34.3
Fairly satisfied	108	25.7
Very satisfied	48	11.4
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.21: Respondents' level of satisfaction with their local council

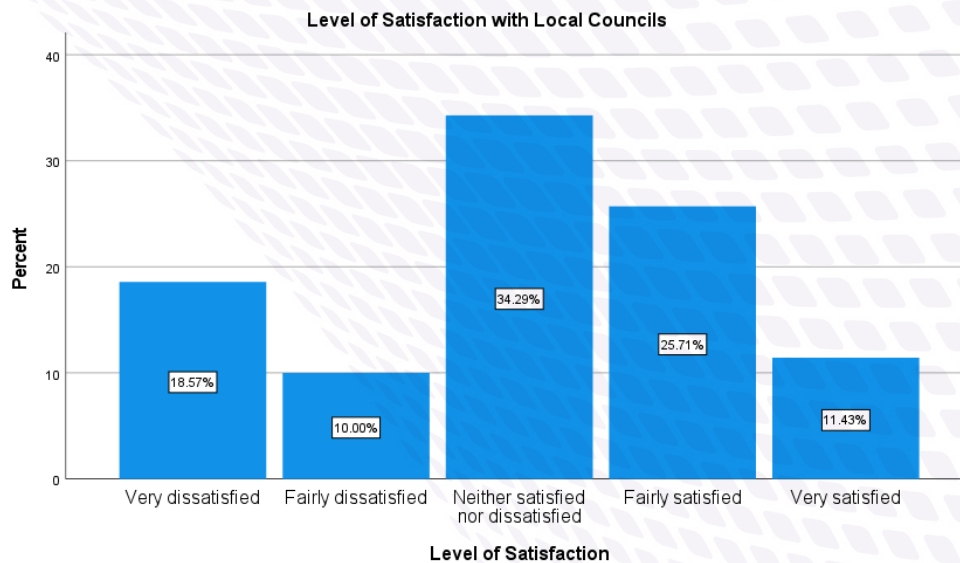


Table 5.19 and Figure 5.21 show that 37.14% (n= 156) are Satisfied with their local council while 28.6% (n= 120) are Dissatisfied. A relatively high percentage of 34.3% (n=144) were Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.

The Pearson Chi-square test returned a p-value above the 0.05 level of significance for age (p = 0.314), gender (p = 0.156), locality (p = 0.163) and level of education (p=0.066), meaning that level of satisfaction with local councils is not statistically significantly associated with either age, gender, locality, or level of education.

Question 14 asked respondents to rate the extent to which they perceive that their local council acts on the concerns of residents and the extent to which it involves the community. A 5-Likert Scale ranging from Not at all, Little, Somewhat, A Fair Amount through to A Great Deal was used.

Table 5.20: Perception on responsiveness of local council to the needs of residents and community involvement

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Acts on concerns of residents	81	19.3%	54	12.9%	148	35.2%	90	21.4%	47	11.2%
Involves the community	66	15.7%	51	12.1%	162	38.6%	97	23.1%	44	10.5%

Figure 5.22: Perception on responsiveness of local council to the needs of residents and community involvement

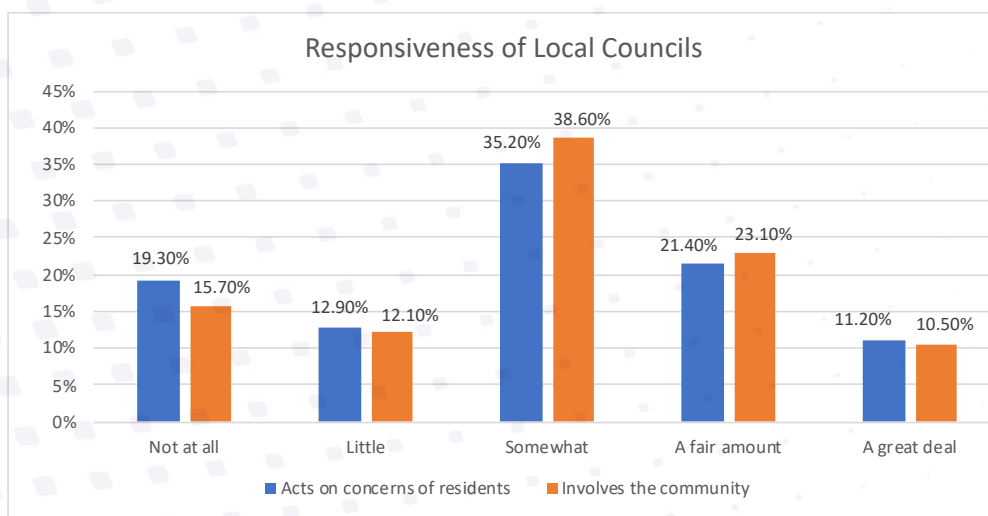


Table 5.20 and Figure 5.22 show that slightly more than one-tenth of respondents consider their local council to greatly involve the community (10.5%, n= 44) and act on the concerns of residents (11.2%, n= 47). On the other hand, 15.7% (n=66) and 19.3% (n=81) view the local council as not involving at all the residents and not acting at all on their concerns. More than one-third of respondents view the local council as somewhat involving the community (38.6%, n=162) and somewhat acting on the concerns of residents (35.2%, n=148).

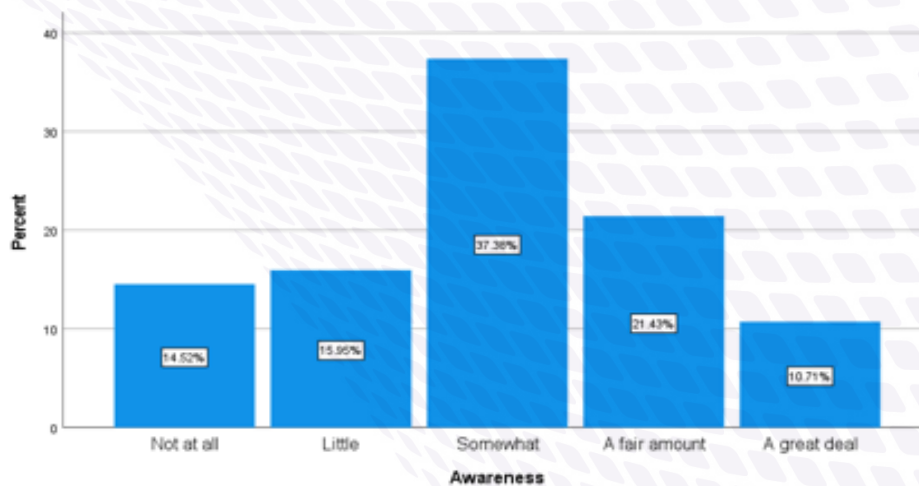
A Pearson Chi-square test run to identify any potential statistically significant relationships of these two factors ('Acting on concerns of residents' and 'Involves the community') with age, gender and locality did not yield statistically significant outcomes as the p-values were all above the 0.05 level of significance.

Question 15 gauged the level of awareness of residents on the role of local councillors in their locality. This was gauged through the same 5 level Likert scale utilised in the previous question. 14.5% (n=61) were not at all aware of their local councillors' role, 16.0% (n=67) replied as being slightly aware, 21.4% (n=90) were fairly aware while 10.7% (n=45) were greatly aware. A substantial percentage 37.4% (n=157) replied that they were somewhat aware. (Table 5.21 and Figure 5.23)

Table 5.21: Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all	61	14.5
Little	67	16.0
Somewhat	157	37.4
A fair amount	90	21.4
A great deal	45	10.7
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.23: Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role



The Pearson's Chi-square test yielded a significantly statistical association between respondents' awareness of local councillors' role and age (p-value = 0.020). On the other hand, testing revealed no significantly statistical relationship for gender (p-value = 0.603), locality (p-value = 0.164) and length of residence (p-value = 0.385).

Table 5.22: Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role to age

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	6	13.6%	15	35%	11	25.0%	7	15.9%	5	11.4%
26-35	6	7.3%	7	8.5%	33	40.2%	26	31.7%	10	12.2%
36-45	11	15.5%	12	16.9%	24	33.8%	18	25.4%	6	8.5%
46-55	6	11.1%	8	14.8%	25	46.3%	8	14.8%	7	13.0%
56-65	14	20.9%	10	14.9%	21	31.3%	11	16.4%	11	16.4%
66+	18	17.6%	15	14.7%	43	42.2%	20	19.6%	6	5.9%

$\chi^2 (20, N=420) = 35.034, p = 0.020$

Figure 5.24: Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role to age

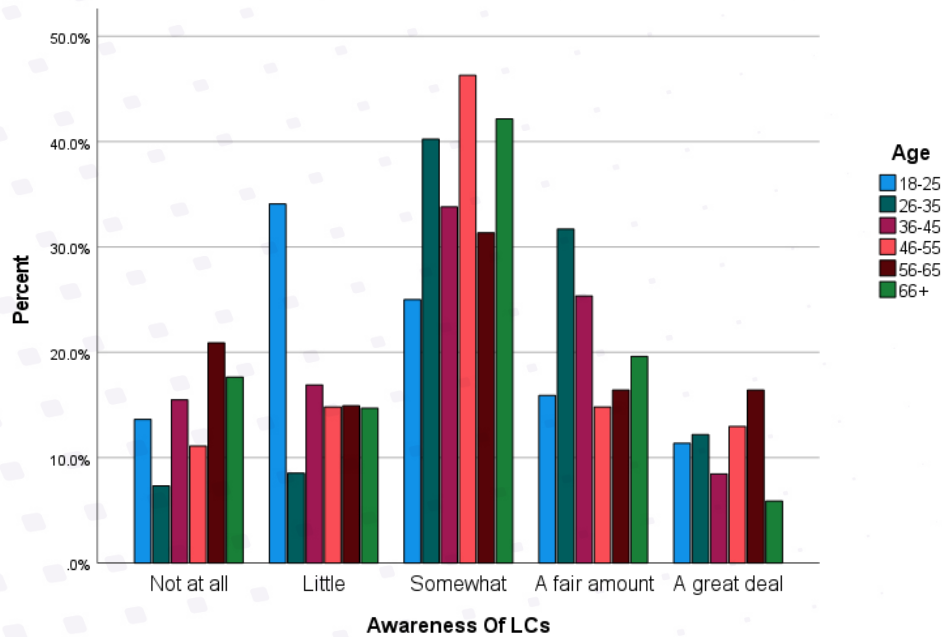


Table 5.22 and Figure 5.24 show that the largest percentage of the listed age groups who had little or no idea of the role of local councillors was 47.7% of residents aged 18-25. On the other hand, 43.7% of residents aged 26-35 felt that they knew a fair amount or a great deal about local councillors' role, but a substantial large percentage (40.2%) of residents stated that they were somewhat aware. These results can help the regional council in targeting awareness campaigns per age group.

Question 16 presented respondents with 12 different public services, 5 of which do not fall under the remit of local councils (waste management, road infrastructure, traffic enforcement, building permits and project administration), whilst the remaining 7 (education matters such as cultural events, parking permits, street cleaning, upkeep and maintenance of parks and gardens, social integration, welfare of children, youth and elderly, and protection of animals) fall within the local councils' remit. This question asked respondents to identify the services which they believed fell within the remit of local councils.

Table 5.23 outlines the public services which do not fall under the remit of the local council. The table clearly demonstrates that many respondents are unaware that these services are provided by other entities and not by local councils. A relatively high percentage incorrectly believed that waste management (79.3%, n = 333), road infrastructure (57.6%, n= 242) and projects administration (65.5%, n = 275) were responsibilities of local councils. Such results clearly indicate that many individuals believe that the remits of local councils are much wider than they actually are, possible skewing unrealistically the expectations of residents in terms of local councils.

Table 5.23: Awareness of local councils' role – public services falling outside the LCs' remit

	Waste		Road Infrastructure		Traffic		Building Permits		Projects	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	22	5.2%	40	9.5%	46	11.0%	58	13.8%	74	17.6%
Correct (No)	65	15.5%	138	32.9%	224	53.3%	278	66.2%	71	16.9%
Incorrect (Yes)	333	79.3%	242	57.6%	150	35.7%	84	20.0%	275	65.5%

On the other hand, Table 5.24 outlines the public services which fall within the remit of local councils. It seems that a high percentage of respondents are aware that street cleaning (86.4%), upkeep and maintenance of parks and gardens (80.7%) and parking permits (74.5%) fall under local councils' remit. Slightly more than half of respondents were also aware that the welfare of children, youth and the elderly (59.8%) and education matters such as cultural events (50.2%) were responsibilities of local councils. However, a substantial number of respondents (43.8%) seemed to be unaware that animal protection also fall under the local councils' remit. Moreover, when asked to mention any other local council remits, 93.09% (n = 391) stated that they did not know of any other remits.

Table 5.24: Awareness of local councils' role – public service falling within LCs' remit

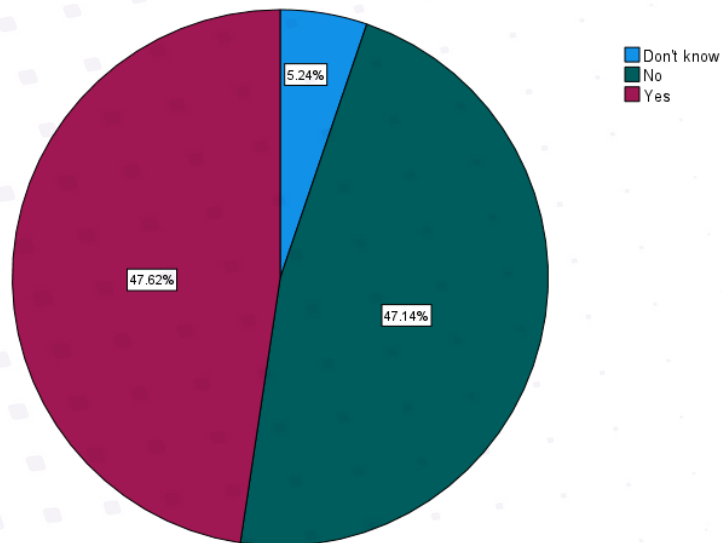
	Education matters		Parking permits		Street cleaning		Upkeep & maintenance of parks & gardens		Integration		Welfare of children, youth & elderly		Protection of animals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	69	16.4%	47	11.2%	33	7.9%	39	9.3%	73	17.4%	79	18.8%	69	16.4%
Incorrect (No)	140	33.3%	60	14.3%	24	5.7%	42	10.0%	104	24.8%	90	21.4%	167	39.8%
Correct (Yes)	211	50.2%	313	74.5%	363	86.4%	339	80.7%	243	57.9%	251	59.8%	184	43.8%

Subsequently, Question 17 asked respondents to state whether their local council met their expectations. Table 5.24 and Figure 5.25 illustrate that there was an equal distribution between negative and positive responses where 47.1% (n=198) stated that their expectations had not been met whilst 47.6% (n=200) felt that they had been met. Only 5.2% of respondents were neutral.

Table 5.24: Local council meets respondents' expectations

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	22	5.2
No	198	47.1
Yes	200	47.6
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.25: Local council meets respondents' expectations



Testing yielded a relatively statistical association between respondents' expectations from local councils and age as the Chi square test returned a p-value well below the 0.05 level of significance ($p < 0.001$). Table 5.25 and Figure 5.26 indicate that people aged 18-25 (63.6%) and those aged 36-45 (63.4%) feel that their expectations from the local council have not been met, as opposed to those aged 66+ (57.8%).

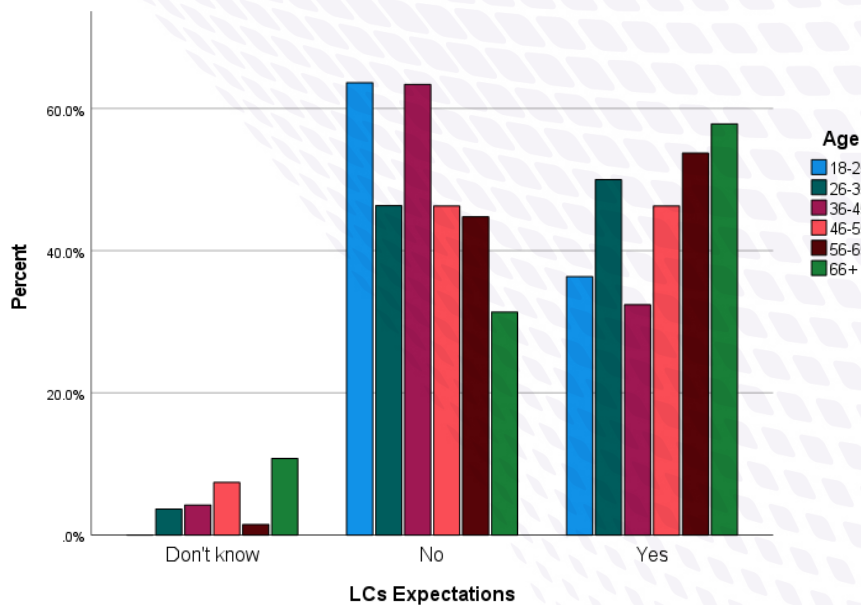
The Pearson's Chi-square test found no statistically significant association with gender and locality.

Table 5.25: Respondents' expectations from local councils to age

	Don't know		No		Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	0	0.0%	28	63.6%	16	36.4%
26-35	3	3.7%	38	46.3%	41	50.0%
36-45	3	5%	45	63.4%	23	32.4%
46-55	4	7.4%	25	46.3%	25	46.3%
56-65	1	1.5%	30	44.8%	36	53.7%
66+	11	10.8%	32	31.4%	59	57.8%

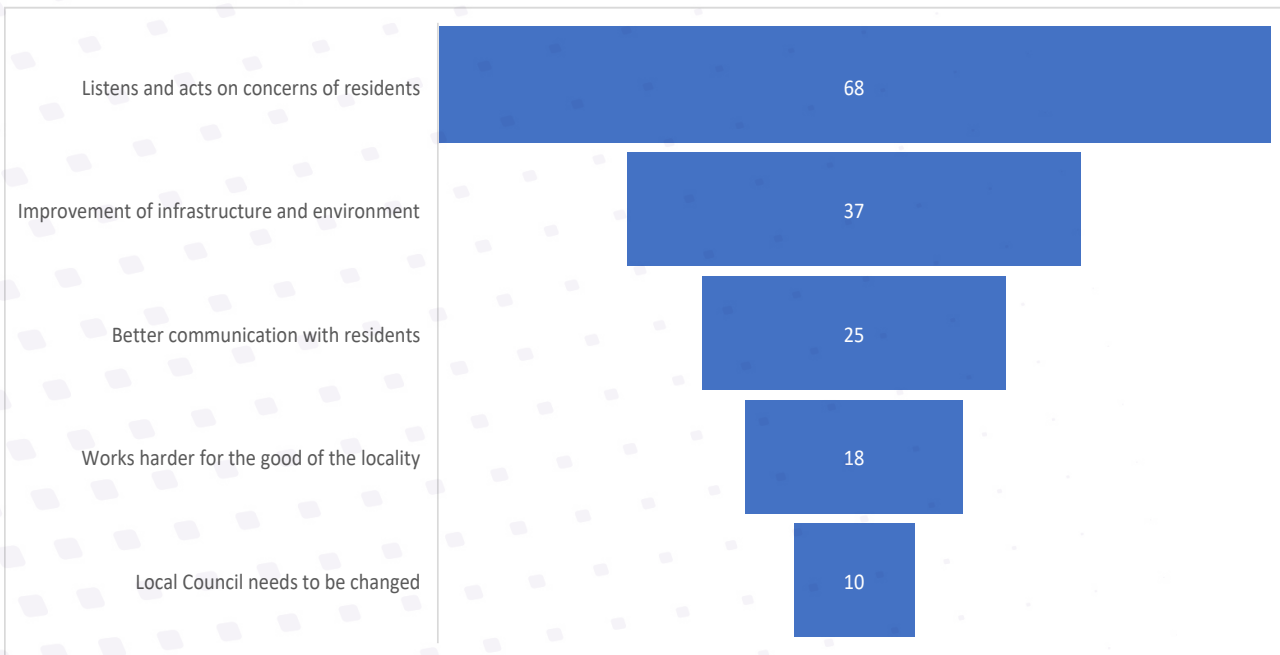
$\chi^2(10, N = 420) = 30.602, p = < 0.001$

Figure 5.26: Respondents' expectations from local councils to age



Those respondents who replied that their expectations were not met by local councils were asked what the local council could do to meet such expectations. The top mentions were that of listening and acting on the concerns of residents, ensuring that there is the proper infrastructure in the locality (e.g., streets and pavements) and better communication with residents (Figure 5.27).

Figure 5.27: How can the local council meet residents' expectations?



Subsequently, Question 18 asked respondents whether they would like to add anything else with regards to their Local Council whereby 84.04% (n=353) of respondents had nothing else to add. Of interest, 6.19% (n=26) repeatedly stated that their local council needs to listen and act on the concerns of its residents, just as was mentioned in the previous question.

Regional Council

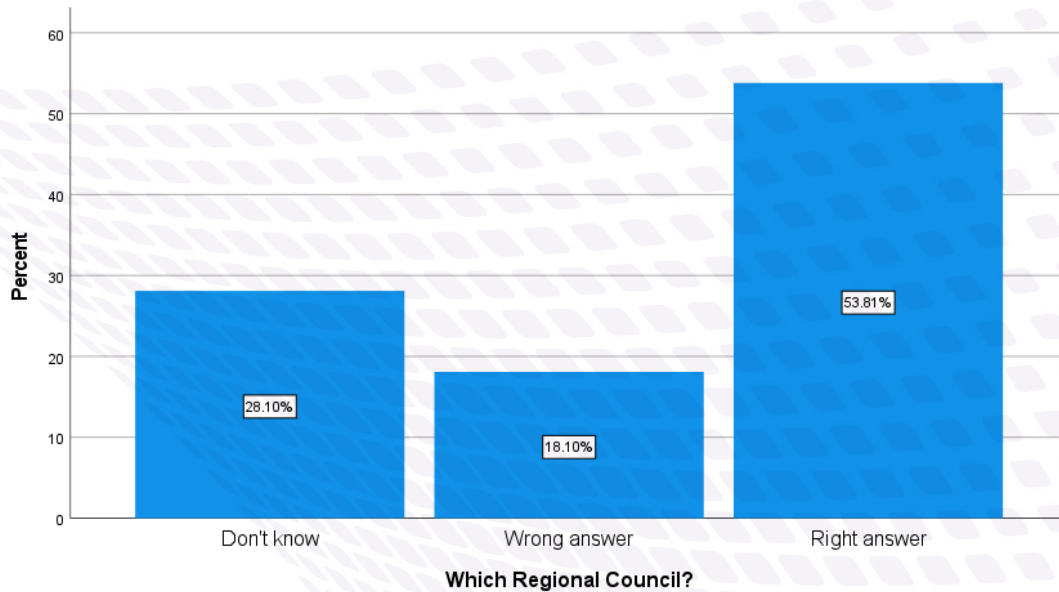
The final section of the questionnaire related to awareness with regards to the regional council.

Question 19 asked respondents to state which regional council does their locality form part of. Most respondents (53.8%, n=226) stated Regjun Nofsinhar while 28.1% (n= 118) stated Don't know. 18.1% (n=76) gave the wrong answer with 42 out of these 76 respondents stating that their regional council is Regjun Ċentrali (Table 5.26 and Figure 5.28)

Table 5.26: Respondents' awareness of regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	118	28.1
Wrong answer	76	18.1
Right answer	226	53.8
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.28: Respondents' awareness of regional council



A Pearson's Chi-Square test carried out to test for a significant association with age, gender, locality and length of residence found a significantly statistical relationship for locality where the p-value gave a result of 0.005. On the other hand, testing found no significant statistical relationship for age ($p=0.484$), gender ($p=0.076$) and length of residence ($p=0.436$), whose p-values were all above the 0.05 level of significance.

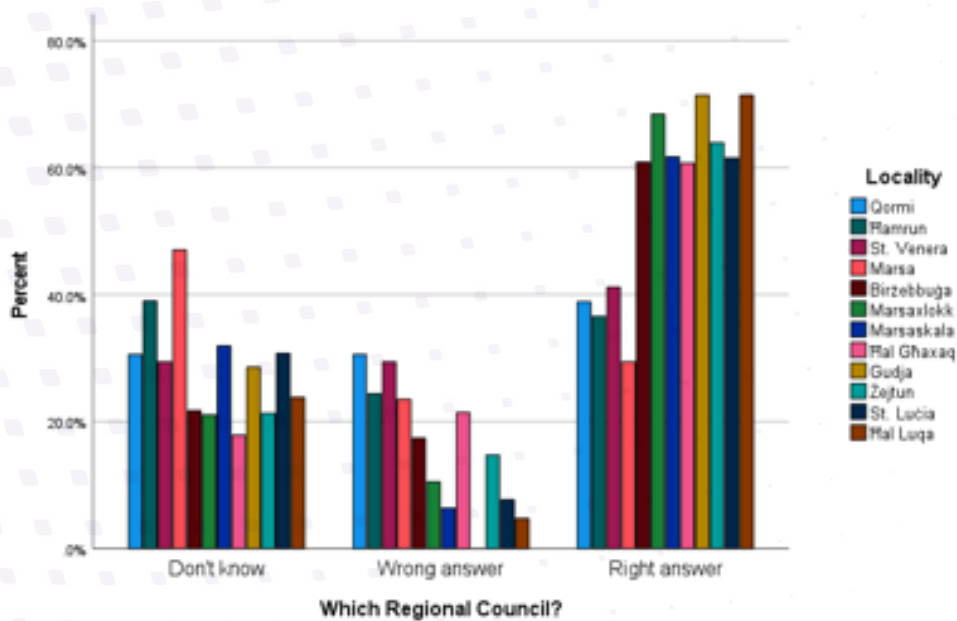
As indicated in Table 5.27 and Figure 5.29 below Żejtun residents had the highest proportion of respondents who quoted a wrong answer (51.1%). Ħal Luqa had the highest proportion of respondents who didn't know which regional council they pertained to (47.6%), whilst Marsaxlokk residents seem to be the ones who are most aware of which regional council they pertain to (57.9%).

Table 5.27: Respondents' awareness of which regional council their locality pertains by locality

	Don't know		No		Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Qormi	33	45.8%	8	11.1%	31	43.1%
Ħamrun	12	29.3%	10	24.4%	19	46.3%
St. Venera	13	38.2%	4	11.8%	17	50.0%
Marsa	6	35.3%	3	17.6%	8	47.1%
Birżebbuġa	15	32.6%	7	15.2%	24	52.2%
Marsaxlokk	8	42.1%	0	0.0%	11	57.9%
Marsaskala	21	44.7%	6	12.8%	20	42.6%
Ħal Għaxaq	9	32.1%	4	14.3%	15	53.6%
Gudja	9	42.9%	5	23.8%	7	33.3%
Żejtun	18	29.5%	19	31.1%	24	39.3%
St. Luċia	3	23.1%	4	30.8%	6	46.2%
Ħal Luqa	10	47.6%	1	4.8%	10	47.6%

$\chi^2(22, N = 420) = 42.507, p = 0.005$

Figure 5.29: Respondents' awareness of which regional council their locality pertains by locality



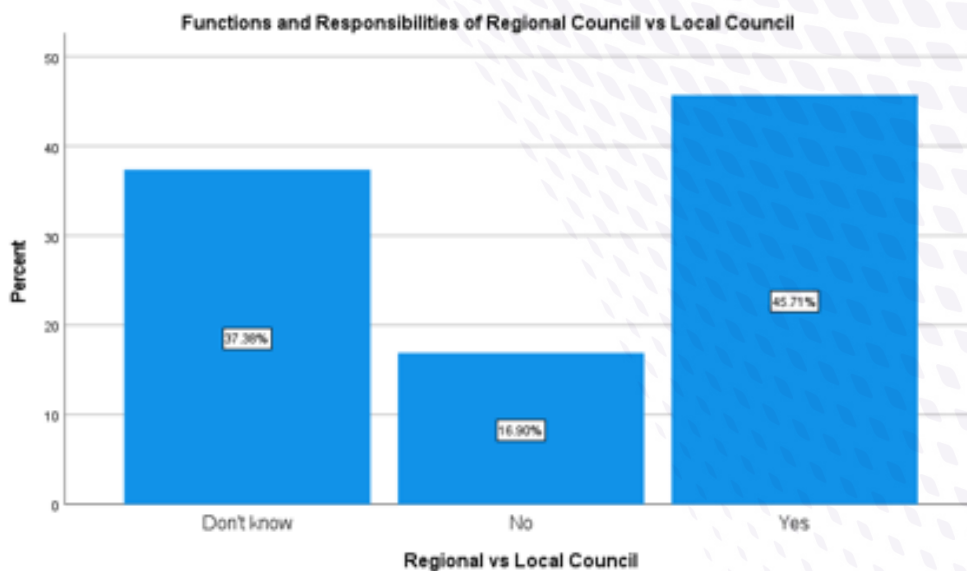
Question 20, asked respondents whether the responsibilities of the regional council differed from those of the local council or otherwise. Table 5.28 and Figure 5.30 illustrate that 45.7% (n=192) stated that the functions and responsibilities of regional councils differed from those of local councils. More than one-third (37.4%, n=157) did not know whether there was any difference while 16.9% (n=71) stated that the responsibilities and functions were the same.

The Pearson Chi-square test yielded no statistically significant association for the awareness in terms of functions and responsibilities of the regional council vs local council when cross-tabulated with age, gender, locality and length of residence.

Table 5.28: Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council

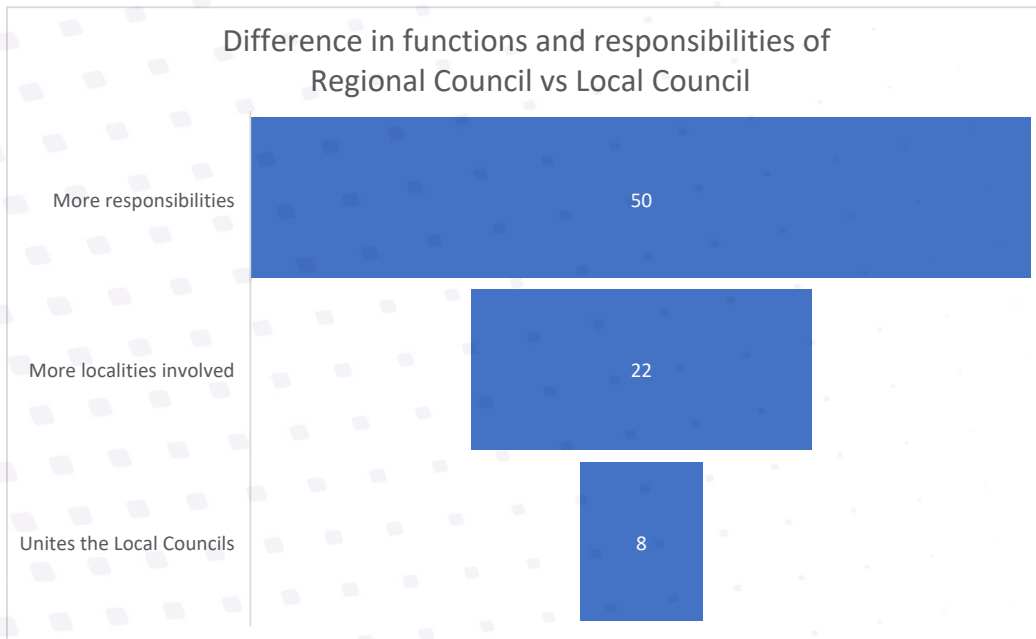
	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	157	37.4
No	71	16.9
Yes	192	45.7
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.30: Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council



Moreover, Question 20 asked those respondents who replied in the affirmative to state how they think the functions and responsibilities of the regional council differ from those of the local council. The top three mentions were that the regional council has more responsibilities, that the regional council takes care of more than just one locality and that the regional council is there to unite the local councils (Figure 5.31)

Figure 5.31: Difference in functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council



Subsequently, Question 22 presented respondents with 10 different roles/services, 4 of which do not fall under the remit of the regional councils (road infrastructure, traffic enforcement, upkeep and maintenance of street lighting and street cleaning), whilst the remaining 6 (waste management and issuing of relevant tenders, administration of the Regional Tribunal, protection of the natural and urban environment, assistance to local councils, co-ordination with central government entities and administration of the region) fall within the regional council's remit. The question then asked respondents to identify the roles which they believed fell within the remit of the regional council.

Table 5.29 outlines the roles which do not fall under the remit of the regional councils. As the table demonstrates, many respondents are not aware that such roles are not to be carried out by the regional council. For instance, 42.9% believe that the regional council is responsible for street cleaning and 40.0% believe that the upkeep and maintenance of street lighting fall under the regional council's remit. Of interest is that for every role there were more than 38% of respondents who stated that they did not know whether that particular role fell under the remit of the regional council.

Table 5.29: Awareness of regional council's roles – Roles falling outside the RC's remit

	Road		Traffic enforcement		Upkeep & maintenance of street lighting		Street Cleaning	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	176	41.9%	184	43.8%	176	41.9%	163	38.8%
Correct (No)	90	21.4%	108	25.7%	76	18.1%	77	18.3%
Incorrect (Yes)	154	36.7%	128	30.5%	168	40.0%	180	42.9%

On the other hand, Table 5.30 outlines the roles which fall under the remit of the regional council. When compared with the awareness of the local council remits, whereby for some roles of the local council respondents were 70-80% aware, for regional council roles, the awareness is much lower. The highest awareness was that the regional council co-ordinates with central government entities, whilst similarly to Table 5.29 (roles not falling under the RC's remit) a high percentage of respondents stated don't know. Moreover, when asked whether they could mention other remits, 93.6% (n=393) of respondents did not state any other remit. Interesting to note that 4.3% (n=18) of respondents mentioned that they had never heard of the regional council.

Table 5.30: Awareness of regional council's roles – Roles falling under the RC's remit

	Waste management and issuing of relevant tenders		Regional Tribunal		Protection of natural and urban environment		Assist Local Councils		Co-ordinate with Central Govt.		Administration of region	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	169	40.2%	194	46.2%	169	40.2%	182	43.3%	172	41.0%	191	45.5%
Incorrect (No)	36	8.6%	27	6.4%	54	12.9%	20	4.8%	16	3.8%	18	4.3%
Correct (Yes)	215	51.2%	199	47.4%	197	46.9%	218	51.9%	232	55.2%	211	50.2%

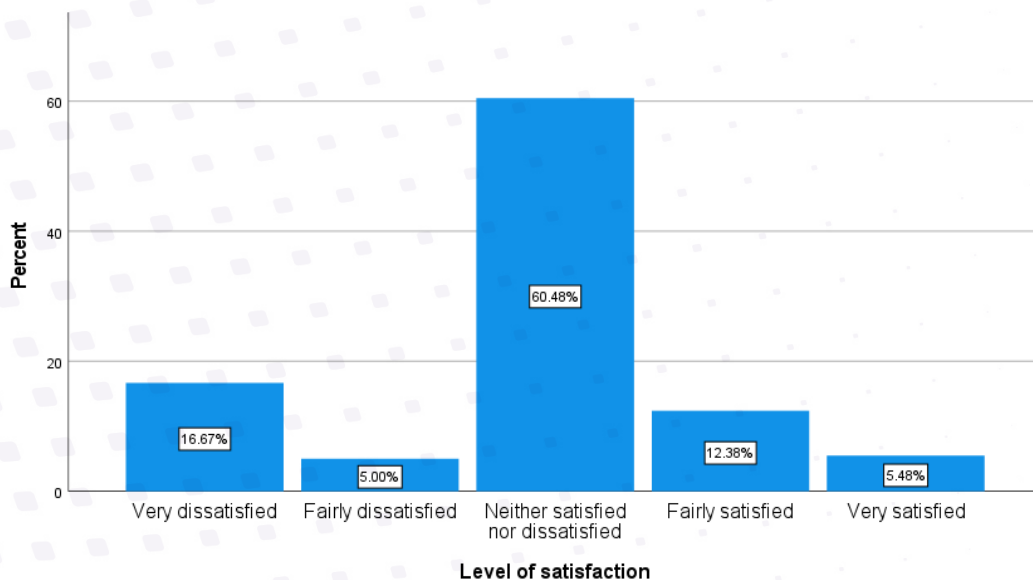
Through the use of a 5-Likert Scale ranging from Very Satisfied through to Very Dissatisfied, Question 23 asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with their regional council. A very high percentage (60.5%, n = 254) were Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, while 21.7% (n = 91) were Dissatisfied. Less than one-fifth of respondents (17.9%, n = 75) were satisfied with their regional council (Table 5.31 and Figure 5.32 refer).

Testing found no significantly statistical association for age (p = 0.326), gender (p = 0.517), locality (p = 0.548) and length of residence (p = 0.658).

Table 5.31: Respondents' level of satisfaction with their regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	70	16.7
Fairly dissatisfied	21	5.0
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	254	60.5
Fairly satisfied	52	12.4
Very satisfied	23	5.5
Total	420	100.0

Figure 5.32: Respondents' level of satisfaction with their regional council



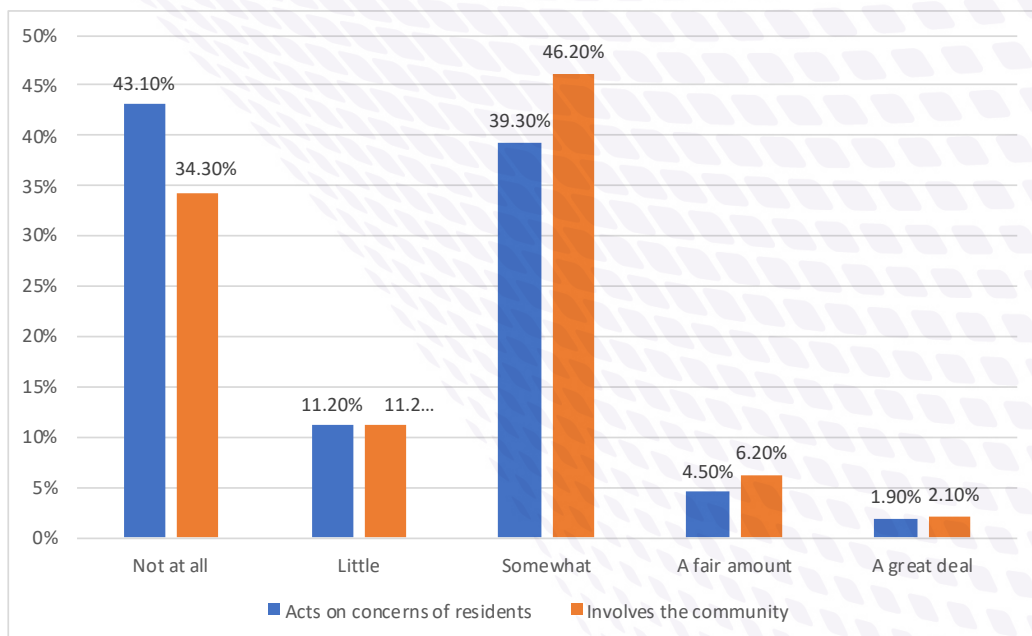
Question 24 asked respondents to comment on the extent to which they feel the regional council (i) reaches out and communicates with them and (ii) involves the community. This was gauged through the use of a Likert Scale ranging from Not at all, Little, Somewhat, A Fair Amount through to a A Great Deal.

Table 5.32 and Figure 5.33 show the perception of respondents with regards to the level of communication of the regional council with the community. More than a third of respondents (39.3%, n = 165) perceive the regional council to somewhat communicate with them with 4.5% (n=19) stating 'A Fair Amount'. Only 1.9% (n=8) perceive their regional council as greatly communicating with them. Furthermore, Table 5.32 and Figure 5.33 illustrate the perception of respondents on the level of involvement of the community by the regional council. 34.3% (n=141) feel that their regional council does not involve the community, with 11.2% (n=47) stating 'A Little'. A relatively high percentage (46.2%, n=194) perceive their regional council as somewhat involving the community while a very low percentage (2.1%, n= 9) view their regional council as greatly involving the community.

Table 5.32: Perception on the extent to which regional council reaches out, communicates with and involves the community

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reaches out and communicates with respondents	181	43.1%	47	11.2%	165	39.3%	19	4.5%	8	1.9%
Involves the community	141	34.3%	47	11.2%	194		26	6.2%	9	2.1%

Figure 5.33 : Perception on the extent to which regional council reaches out, communicates with and involves the community



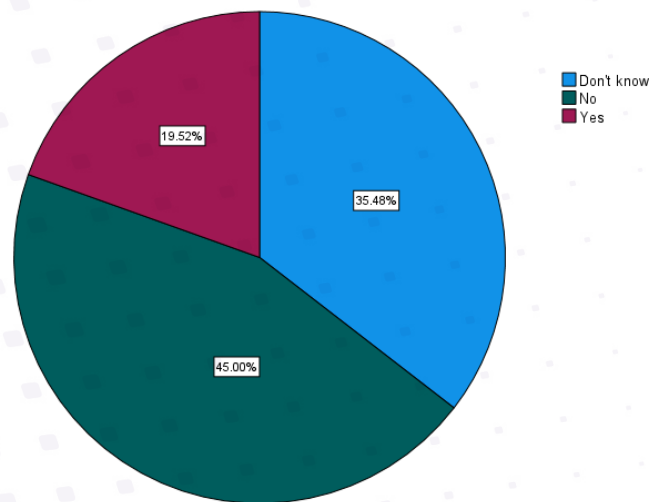
A Pearson Chi-Square test yielded no significantly statistical association for both 'reaches out and communicates with respondents' and 'involves the community' when tested against age, gender, locality and length of residence .

Question 25 then asked respondents whether their expectations are being met by the regional council. Table 5.33 and Figure 5.34 show that only 19.5% (n=82) of respondents felt that the regional council had met their expectations. More than one third of respondents (35.5%, n = 149) were neutral, while nearly half of respondents (45%, n=189) stated that their level of expectation from regional council had not been met.

Table 5.33: Respondents' expectations met by regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	149	35.5
No	189	45.0
Yes	82	19.5
Total	420	100.0

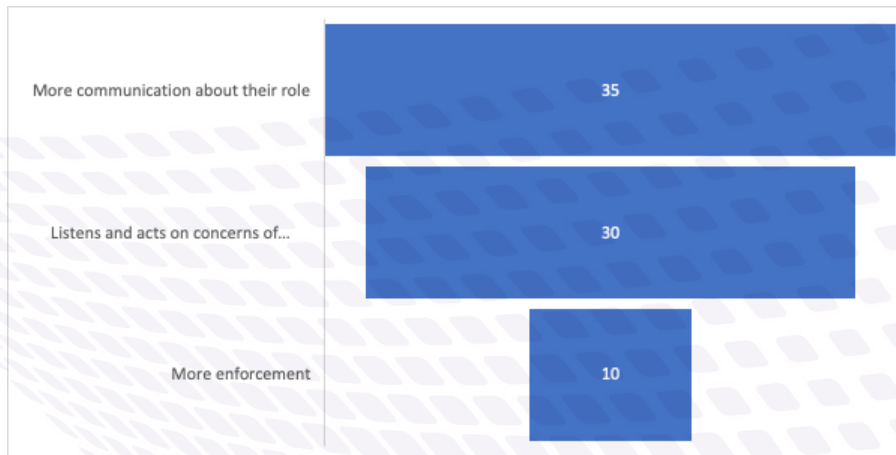
Figure 5.34: Respondents' expectations met by regional council



The Pearson's Chi-square test yielded no statistically significant relationship between the level of expectation from regional council and age ($p=0.080$), gender ($p=0.545$), locality ($p=0.541$) and length of residence ($p=0.464$).

Furthermore, Question 25 asked those respondents who stated that their expectations had not been met to state what the regional council needs to do to meet their expectations. As indicated in Figure 5.35, the top 3 mentions were that the regional council needs to better communicate their role, listen and acts on the concerns of residents and to carry out more enforcement.

Figure 5.35: Expectations from regional council – Top 3 mentions



When asked whether they would like to add anything else with regards to their regional council, 85.47% (n=359) of respondents had nothing else to add whilst 8.10% (n=34) reiterated that the regional council needs to communicate and create more awareness with regards to its role, functions and responsibilities. Interestingly, the remaining 6.43% (n=27) mentioned that they had never heard of the regional council, indicating that more information and awareness needs to be created in this regard.

5.2 FINDINGS FROM THE QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative data was gathered through two focus groups, one with local councillors and one with mayors. This was done so as to give a holistic perspective to the social impact assessment, rather than simply gathering data only from residents.

5.2.1 Focus Group - Local councillors

Four overarching themes were identified that capture most of the local councillors' experiences expressed during the focus group. The themes, namely civic pride, community participation, red tape and future concerns are interlinked and occasionally overlap, thus indicating the complexity of issues which are faced by local and regional councils.

Theme 1: Civic pride

Local councillors present for the focus group stated that, on a daily basis, they encounter diverse problems related to the lack of civic pride present in their locality. They stated that they feel that there is a great lack of cooperation from residents and that they consider this to be of great concern. This contrasts to the fact that 53.8% of respondents to the questionnaire perceived a high sense of community.

“Għandna diversi problemi min-naħa tar-residenti. Fis-sens li l-kooperazzjoni tar-residenti hija mixtieqa li tkun aktar. Dak is-sens ċiviku naraħ li mhux qiegħed hemm”
(Kunsillier – St. Venera).

[We encounter diverse problems from residents. In the sense that we would like that residents cooperate more. The sense of civic pride is lacking] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

“Hawn ħafna egoismu u n-nies ma tantx jikkoperaw.” (Kunsillier – Birżebbuġa)
[There is a lot of egoism and people do not cooperate that much] (Local councillor – Birżebbuġa)

As an example of this lack of civic pride and cooperation, local councillors brought up the current waste management system, which they feel is a clear example of the level of egoism.

“Joħorġu l-borża l-ħażina, joħorġuha tard jew wara li jgħaddi l-kuntrattur. Ġieli l-kuntrattur ma jġborhomx. Jiġifieri kultant miż-żewġ naħat. Pero biex ngħida sewwa naħseb li aktar ġejja minn naħa tar-resident. Għax l-aqwa li ħareġ il-borża u ma jimpurtahx.”(Kunsillier- St. Venera)

[They take out the garbage bag, they take it out late or after the contractor has already collected them. Sometimes the contractor does not collect them. That means that sometimes the problem is from both sides. However, I truly think that the problem is more from the residents' side. Because all they care about is that they have taken out the garbage bag.] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

“Per eżempju il-borża tar-recycle mill-Ħamis sa Ħamis. Imma dawn biex joħorġuha jumejn jew tlett jjiem qabel daqshekk jimpurtahom. Problema kbira għandna qed tifhem.”(Kunsillier – Għaxaq)

[For example, the recycle bag is collected every Thursday. But they easily put it outside, two or even three days before, that is how much they care. We have a great problem do you understand] (Local councillor – Għaxaq)

Local councillors lamented that this is a cause of great frustration as they have invested a lot of money in the system and feel that they are not reaping the desired results. Moreover, this problem is being aggravated by commercial entities, most of which do not have any ties with the locality. These entities generate a substantial amount of garbage and tend to not abide with the rules and regulations of the current system. This is having a great impact on the locality's environment as a large amount of black or grey garbage bags are left lying around on pavements for a number of hours and sometimes days.

“Problema ħafna akbar hija tal-ħwienet li tarahom iħallu il-boroż fuq il-bankina għal ammont twil ta' ħin u jġibu kullimkien miżbla” (Kunsillier – Għaxaq)

[A bigger problem are the shops that leave their garbage bags on the pavement for a substantial amount of time and which results in the locality becoming a rubbish dump] (Local councillor – Għaxaq)

“Għandna problema ambjentali għax allavolja aħna żgħar imma hemm ħafna ristoranti li jġġeneraw ċertu ammont ta' skart” (Kunsillier – Marsaxlokk)

[We have an environmental problem, as even though we are small, we have a lot of restaurants and they generate a substantial amount of garbage] (Local councillor – Marsaxlokk)

All local councillors maintained that the only solution to the lack of cooperation as regards to the environmental upkeep of their localities is to have more enforcement. They stated that, even though there was an extensive educational campaign prior to the change in the waste management system and many local councils organise clean

ups and diverse environmental awareness campaigns, many residents and commercial entities do not cooperate.

"Aħna norganizzaw clean ups fil-lokalita' u nippruvaw insibu għaqdiet biex jiġu jipparteċipaw. Kien hemm ukoll kampanja edukattiva qabel il-bdil fis-sistema tal-iskart. Pero naħseb li issa wasal iż-żmien li jkun hemm xi forma ta' infurzar" (Kunsillier – St. Venera)

[We organise clean ups in our locality and we try to find organisations that are willing to participate. There was also an extensive educational campaign prior to the change in the waste management system. However, I think that there has now come the time to have some type of enforcement] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

Theme 2: Community participation

Apart from lack of civic pride, community participation also seems to be on the low side. This seems to sustain the quantitative findings whereby only 13.1% of respondents perceived a very high participation of residents in civic life.

Although community activities organised by local councils for children or the elderly are generally very well attended, local councillors claimed that there is a lack of participation from other sectors of the population, most especially young people.

"Aħna nagħmlu summer school għat-tfal. U jkollna ħafna konkorenza." (Kunsillier – Għaxaq)

[We organise a summer school for children. And a lot of children attend] (Local councillor – Għaxaq)

"Aħna fil-Milied u fil-Karnival nagħmlu attivitajiet għat-tfal u nsibu ħafna konkorenza. Dawn hemm ħafna bżonnhom." (Kunsillier – Luqa)

[During Christmas and Carnival we organise activities for children and a lot of children attend. There is a great need for these activities.] (Local councillor – Luqa)

"Aħna bħala Kunsill għat-tfal tirnexxi imma meta tgħamilha għal-kbar ma tirnexxi daqs kemm nixtiequ." (Kunsillier – St. Venera)

[As a Council whenever we organise an activity for children it is always successful, but if we do it for adults it is not as successful as we would like it to be.] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

On the other hand, community activities organised by local councils in collaboration with other organisations from the locality, such as the band or football club, are generally very well attended by all sectors of the population. All local councillors maintained that many residents are either affiliated with one band club or the other, a church organisation or a political party and it is only through collaboration with these organisations that community activities can have a successful outcome. Interestingly, only 14.8% (n=62) of respondents of the questionnaire stated that they were actively involved in diverse voluntary and community organisations.

“Aħna meta norganizzaw dejjem indaħħlu l-għaqdiet għax dik tagħmillek differenza kbira.” (Kunsillier – Birżebbuġa)

[Whenever we organise any activity we always include organisations from the locality as this makes a great difference.] (Local councillor – Birżebbuġa)

Apart from collaborating with other organisations, one local councillor highlighted the importance of always working around the needs and lifestyle of one's community.

“Ċertu affarijiet waħidhom jiġbru n-nies bħal San Ġirgor li norganizzawha mal-Kumsill taż- Żejtun jew Jum Marsaxlokk. Imma nerga ngħid li biex iġġibhom lin-nies mhux faċli. Aħna per eżempju minħabba li s-sajjieda jibdedw il ġurnata kmieni u jispiċċawha kmieni ma tistax torganizza affarijiet filgħaxija fit-tard. Iġifieri you have to work around that.” (Kunsillier – Marsaxlokk)

[Certain activities automatically attract people, like San Ġirgor that we organise together with the Żejtun Local Council or Jum Marsaxlokk. But I stress again that to get people to participate is not easy. For example, because most of our residents are fishermen they start their day early and finish early. So you cannot organise activities late in the evening. That means that you have to work around that.] (Local councillor – Marsaxlokk)

“Aħna bħala komunita’ ma hemmx xi għaqda speċjali għax kif diġa għidt qabel ħafna minn nies mhumiex minn St. Venera. Għandna ħafna Ħamruniżi jgħixu St. Venera u huma ma jħossuhomx minn St. Venera. Jgħixu fil-post imma ma jħossuhomx mill-post.” (Kunsillier – St. Venera)

[As a community there is no particular unity. As I stated before many residents are not from St. Venera. We have a lot of people from Ħamrun living in St. Venera and they do not feel that they are from St. Venera. They live in the locality but do not feel that they are from there] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

“Aħna għandna problemi bin-nies barranin. Il-barranin they just do not care. Aħna għandna problema għax għandna barranin minn pajjiżi oħra, minn postijiet oħra f’Malta u għandna ukoll il-velliġatura. Aħna issa malli jiġi is-sajf aħna nirduppjaw.” (Kunsillier – Birżebbuġa)

[We have a problem with foreigners. They just do not care. We have a problem as we have foreign nationals, Maltese nationals from other localities and people who have a summer residence. During summer our population doubles.] (Local councillor – Birżebbuġa)

Moreover, local councillors lamented that when they try to organise activities to integrate foreign nationals or Maltese nationals from outside the locality they do not find the necessary support. They claimed that it is useless organising activities that are geared towards integration and social cohesion when people do not believe in the importance of such activities.

“Aħna ippruvajna nagħmlu xi ħaġa biex daww li ma jtkellmex bil-Malti nintegrawhom imma ma tantx sibna appoġġ. Ma wasalniex. Għax jekk ma jkollokx nies li jemmu fil-problema għalxejn.” (Kunsillier – St. Venera)

[We tried to organise something so that those residents who do not speak Maltese are integrated but we did not find any support. We did not succeed. Because if you do not have people who believe in the cause it is useless.] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

“Bħala barranin iġifieri barranin mhux Maltin dawn joħorgulek il-barra mill-lokal meta jkun hemm l-attività.” (Kunsillier – Luqa)

[With regards to foreign nationals they generally leave the locality when there is an activity.] (Local councillor – Luqa)

Theme 3: Red Tape

Another challenge mentioned by all local councillors is the red tape they face whenever they require anything from central government, governmental departments, and entities. This is a cause of great frustration as they often waste a lot of time and energy on chasing the relevant and responsible authorities, with many residents blaming them for things which are not within their control.

“Anki semplicament bozza. In-nies fina jwaħħlu. Ma jkunux jafu li aħna nkunu ilna ħafna li rraportajnihom u għalxejn.” (Kunsillier – St. Venera)

[Even if it is just a simple light bulb. We get the blame. Residents would not know that we would have reported it a long time ago but nothing would have been done.] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

“Aħna bħala Kunsill Lokali naħseb l-aktar li ma nsibux appoġġ huwa mir-requests li nagħmlu lill-Ministeri u lill-entitajiet. Bozza iddum tlett gimgħat, ħofra ddum ma nafx kemm. Biex tagħmel appuntament tibki. Jekk triq għamlulna nofsha irridu nigru l-hemm u l-hawn biex forsi jkompluha. Dan id-dewmien fix-xogħol huwa frustranti ħafna.” (Kunsillier – Birżebbuġa)

[As a local council I think that we mostly lack support from Ministries and entities whenever we request something. A light bulb takes three weeks, a pot hole takes ages to be fixed. To make an appointment takes very long. If they fix a road and leave it half done we need to call here and there so that maybe they finish it. This all causes us a lot of frustration.] (Local councillor – Birżebbuġa)

Subtheme 1: Gap in communication

Local councillors also lamented that they are rarely consulted or advised by central authorities with regards to certain projects within their locality, often making them feel useless and powerless. Nevertheless, they often end up facing complaints from residents even when the said projects do not fall within their remit and they would not have even been advised about the project plans beforehand.

“Aħna bħalissa għaddej il-proġett ta’ Triq il-Kbira, San Ġużepp. U l-isfortuna hija li l-Kunsill ma ġiex ikkonsultat qabel ma beda l-proġett. U dan ara kemm hu proġett kbir. Aħna konna nafu meta beda x-xogħol. Il-Kunsill allura veru ma għandux say. Imbagħad kulħadd jitfa lis-Sindku u lill-Kunsillieri fin-nofs u m’għandniex x’naqsmu.” (Kunsillier – St. Venera)

[At the moment there is the St. Joseph High Road project. Unfortunately the local council was not consulted before the project started. And this is a big project. We got to know about it after the work started. Therefore the council has no say. Yet everyone blames the mayor and councillors and we do not have anything to do with it.] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

*“Kultant inkunu nafu minn fuq Facebook jew inkella nibdew nirċevu it-telefonati bl-
ilmenti u aħna ma nkunu nafu b’xejn. U in-nies fiena iwaħħlu.” (Kunsillier – Birżebbuġa)*
[Sometimes we get to know from Facebook or we start getting calls with complaints
and we would not know anything. And people put the blame on us.] (Local councillor –
Birżebbuġa]

This gap in communication sometimes seems to be also present between the regional council and local councils. While some local councillors stated that they always receive the minutes of all regional council meetings and other relevant correspondence, other councillors stated that they never receive them. However, the majority admitted that many times it is practically impossible to deal with all the correspondence they receive due to lack of time and resources. They also acknowledged that the person who is informed is generally the mayor.

*“Lilna jibatulna il-minuti tal-meetings Reġjonali kollha. Pero ma nafx kemm ċertu
kunsilliera jarawhom.” (Kunsillier – Birżebbuġa)*
[They send us all the minutes. However, I doubt how much certain local councillors go
through them.] (Local councillor – Birżebbuġa)

*“Aħna ma jibatilna xejn. Aħna nirċevu ħafna emails u kultant impossibli tleħħaq
magħhom.” (Kunsillier – St. Venera)*
[We do not receive them. We receive a lot of emails and sometimes it is impossible to deal
with all of them.] (Local councillor – St. Venera)

*“L-aktar li ha jkun jaf x’qed jiġri huwa is-sindku. Ġeneralment il-messaġġ jasal u jekk
hemm xi haġa partikolari għad-dekasterju tiegħek il-maġġoranza jasal il-messaġġ.
U s-sindku is very available u ċertu affarijiet jiddealja magħhom mill-ewwel huwa.”
(Kunsillier – Marsaxlokk)*
[The person that mostly knows what is happening is the mayor. Generally the message
gets through and in particular if it has something to do with your dicastery. And the
Mayor is very available and certain things he deals with them immediately.] (Local
councillor – Marsaxlokk)

Theme 4 – Future concerns

All local councillors expressed great concern that there are practically no young people who are interested in becoming councillors putting the future of local councils in doubt. They mentioned that there is a great need for young blood, most especially young graduates, who would be more able to deal with the complexities of today’s society and give a new impetus to the locality. However, they all acknowledged that since the role is demanding and the pay is low, younger potential candidates prefer not to get involved. Even more so, the majority of young people seem to be particularly disinterested in what goes on in their locality.

*“Jien nixtieq nara aktar żgħażaġħ gradwati li jiħajjru jidħlu fil-kunsill. Għax hija diffiċli li
aħna nleħħqu magħhom lir-residenti għax aħna issa kbar.” (Kunsillier – St. Venera)*
[I would like to see more young graduates that become councillors. As it is difficult that
we manage to continue giving a good service to residents as we are now quite old.] (Local
councillor – St. Venera)

"Jien naħseb iż-żgħażaġħ tal-lum min jiggradwa ifittex biex jitlaq barra minn Malta. Għax min hu dak iż-żagħżuġħ gradwat li jsir kunsillier biex jaħdem 24 siegħa, il-mowbajl ma jieqafx u mbad ħlas kważi ta' xejn. Aħna għax veru nħobbu lill-lokal imma iż-żgħażaġħ dan iż-żmien mhux lesti li jagħmlu bħalna. Għax min huma dawk iż-żgħar li ħa jiġu jieħdu din il-kariga għal €150. Jien għax I love doing it imma iż-żgħażaġħ!"
(Kunsillier – Birżebbuġa)

[I think that nowadays young graduates look for opportunities outside of Malta. Because who is that young graduate who is willing to become a councillor and works for 24 hours with the mobile constantly ringing and then get paid pittance?. It is because we really love the locality but nowadays young people are not ready to do like us. As who is that young person who is ready to take on this role for €150? I do it because I love it but young people!!] (Local councillor – Birżebbuġa)

"U anki iż-żgħażaġħ jekk ma jkollomx xi ħaġa kulturali fihom kemm ifiċċuħ il-lokal? Taħseb li iż-żgħażaġħ tal-lum jimporthom għax hemm il-bozza mhux mitfieha fit-triq? Jien naħseb li iż-żgħażaġħ tal-lum ma jimpurtahomx." (Kunsillier – Luqa)

[And even if young people do not have that innate cultural feeling how much do you think they are willing to work for the locality? Do you think that nowadays young people care whether there is a street bulb that is not working? I think that nowadays young people do not care.] (Local councillor – Luqa)

"U din mhux biss il-kunsill. Aħna l-għaqdjet kollha għandhom din il-problema. Li mhux qed isibu żgħażaġħ li jinteressaw ruħhom. U min wara l-Covid ħafna agħar." (Kunsillier – Għaxaq)

[And this is not only the local council. All organisations have this same problem. That they are not finding young people who are interested. And since Covid it has become much worse] (Local councillor – Għaxaq)

5.2.2 Focus Group – Mayors

Three interlinked and occasionally overlapping themes, namely dearth of awareness, clipped wings and regionalisation were elicited during the focus group for mayors which encapsulate the majority of views expressed during the process of this focus group.

Theme 1 – Dearth of awareness

All mayors present unanimously agreed that there is a great dearth of awareness regarding the role and responsibilities of local councils, regional council and central government. They claimed that the majority of residents lack knowledge about the division of competencies and areas of responsibility between the different levels (local, regional and central) and that for most residents only the local council exists. This resonates with the quantitative findings whereby 70-80% of respondents were aware of a number of roles of local councils, whilst awareness of regional council's role was much lower with 38 – 45% unable to state whether certain roles were part of the regional council's remit.

"In-nies għada ma tafx x'inhuma ir-responsabilitajiet tar-regjun, tal-kunsill lokali u wisq aktar tal-gvern ċentrali. Għalihom kollox kunsill lokali." (Sindku 4)

[People do not yet know which are the responsibilities of the regional council, the local council and more so those of central government. For them the local council is everything.] (Mayor 4)

"In-nies ma humiex infurmati. Per eżempju, din il-ġimgħa kelli grupp fuq social media jikkumentaw fuq l-iskart. U tara kif in-nies il-linja fejn taqsam bejn il-kunsill u r-reġjun ma għandhomx idea. La għandhom idea li tender ħariġa il-gvern u r-reġjun lanqas kellu say u la għandhom idea dwar dawk li hu tal-kunsill jew dak li hu tar-reġjun. U min qed jidher ikrah fl-aħħar mill-aħħar? Kollha kemm aħna is-Sindki." (Sindku 2)

[People are not informed. For example, this week there was a group on social media who were commenting about waste management. And you realise that people do not have an idea about the dividing line between the local council and the regional council. They do not have an idea that the waste management tender was issued by central government and that the regional council did not have a say and they do not have an idea what falls under the local council and what falls under the regional council. And who is getting the blame? All of us mayors] (Mayor 2)

Moreover, notwithstanding that local councils comprise of the mayor and local councillors, residents tend to resort only to the mayor for any issue they might have and expect him/her to be available at all times.

"In-nies ma jafuhx r-rwol tal-kunsill lokali u aktar u aktar tar-reġjun. In nies taf x'jafu li jekk jiġu il-kunsill u ma jsibux is-sindku jibdew igergru. Lanqas il-kunsilliera. Lis-sindku ikunu iridu. F'kelma oħra għan-nies 'il-kunsill is-sindku u s-sindku il-kunsill'" (Sindku 7)

[People do not know what is the role of the local council and more so that of the regional council. Whenever people go to the local council and they do not find the mayor they start grumbling. They always want the mayor. In other words for the people "The council is the mayor and the mayor is the council"] (Mayor 7)

All mayors stressed the need for more education so that residents become more aware of the remits of local and regional councils as well as those of central government. They maintained that educational programmes, similar to those that used to be held before, are needed as these programmes had borne fruit. Mayor 1 also stressed that nowadays one can create educational clips on social media which can be specifically targeted towards the younger generation.

"Għandna bżonn edukazzjoni aktar. Illum daħal il-Facebook u n-nies għadhom ma jafux ir-responsabilitajiet tal-kunsill lokali u aktar u aktar tal-gvern centrali Qabel kienu jsiru programmi fuq il-kunsilli lokali. U tgħidx kemm kienu jitgħallmu n-nies. Imma dawn ma baqgħux isiru u n-nies tilfu d-direzzjoni." (Sindku 7)

[We need more education. Today there is Facebook and people are still not aware of the responsibilities of local councils and more so of central government. Before programmes used to be held regarding the roles of local councils. And people had really learnt. But these are no longer being held and people have lost their direction.] (Mayor 7)

"Jistgħu jagħmlu clips fuq Youtube u b'hekk tilħaq anki liż-żgħażaġh. Dik li hemm bżonn issir. Hemm bżonn ta' aktar informazzjoni." (Sindku 1)

[Clips on Youtube can be carried out and in that way young people are also targeted. That is what is needed. There is a need for more information.] (Mayor 1)

Nevertheless, although agreeing that education is of extreme importance, Mayor 6 lamented that sometimes education is not getting them anywhere and there has now

come a time for enforcement. He maintained that unfortunately people seem to only learn when they receive a hefty fine. This ties in with the quantitative findings whereby more enforcement was one of the top three mentions when respondents were asked to state what they feel the regional council needs to do to meet their expectations.

"L-edukazzjoni hija veru importanti. Imma marija kemm tiflañ tgħidilhom u tgħidilhom imma għalxejn. Edukajnik u għidnilek isma tħammigx barra. Ġbajt ngħidlek li l-borża s-sewda hija nhar ta' Tlieta u s Sibb u li toħroġha ftit qabel ma jiġi l-kollektur. Il-problema hija li ma hemmx enforzar. U l-fines iridu jkun kbar. Għax jekk tmissilhom il-but in-nies jitgħallmu." (Sindku 5)

[Education is very important. However there is a limit how much one can educate and educate for nothing. We educated them and told them not to dirty outer areas. I have had enough informing people that the black waste bag goes out on Tuesdays and Saturdays and that they need to take it out a bit before the waste collector arrives. The problem is that there is no enforcement. And the enforcement fines need to be hefty. Because it is only then that people will learn] (Mayor 5)

Theme 2 – Clipped wings

Mayors stated that they feel that their wings are being clipped as many times they do not have the required power to perform their role to the best of their abilities. They claimed that they are not being given their due importance from central government and that there is a lot of red tape involved in the process of their duties. This results in residents blaming the local council, generally the mayor, for things that the local council has no control over. Mayors lamented that this situation creates a lot of frustration as it makes them look incompetent and gives them a sense of powerlessness. This red tape and sense of powerlessness ties in with what local councillors stated during their focus group.

"Jien nħoss li allavolja naqbel li nedukaw in-nies pero inħoss li l-problema ġejja minn ta' fuqna. Jekk aħna ma nkunux ikkalkulati minn fuq, miċ-ċentral, kif jistgħu jikkalkulawna in-nies. Kif jistgħu iħarsu lejna in-nies b'lenti tajjeb? Jien dejjem ngħid din l-espressjoni – "Aħna ħalq bla snin". Lilna in-nies jadduna biż-żufjett. Il-kunsilli mhux qed jibqu relevanti. Jekk hemm xi hadd qed jabbuża inċemplu lill LESA u jgħidulek ċempel lill ERA u l ERA tgħidlek ċempel lill-ieħor u aħna nagħqdu fin-nofs. U min ħa jidher ikraħ mhux is-sindku li mhux kapaċi ineħħi l-iskart abbużiv." (Mayor 3)

[Even though I agree that we need to educate people I think that the problem is coming from above. If we are not calculated from above, from central government, how can we be calculated by the people. How can people look at us from a good lense? I always use this expression – "We are a toothless mouth". People make fun of us. The local council is no longer relevant. If there is somebody who is abusing we call LESA and they tell you to call ERA and ERA tells you to call someone else and we end up in the middle. And who will end up looking incompetent? The mayor as it would seem that he is not able to remove the abusive waste.] (Mayor 3)

"Għandi jien nirraporta bozza tlett xhur ijlu u il-bozza għada ma saritx? Tlett xhur ta!!! Għandi jkolli bankina maqluġha mill-Enemalta disa xhur ijlu u għaddew disa xhur fi triq prinċipali u għada ma saritx. U ma nafx fejn tkellim u Kastilja u l hemm u l hawn u hekk għada." (Sindku 6)

[Why should a faulty street bulb that I reported three months ago not have been seen to yet? 3 months!!! Why should a pavement in a main road that was uprooted by Enemalta is not yet ready? And I do not know to whom I have not spoken, even Castille, and here and there and it is still not ready!!] (Mayor 6)

Mayor 4 claimed that the powers of local councils are continuously being undermined and over these past 25 years there have been great changes, which unfortunately he perceives as being negative. Mayor 5 also claimed that as powers have been undermined local councils are now at the mercy of either a Minister or someone else in power.

“Illum il-ġurnata il-kunsilli lokali pjuttost il-poteri qed jiġu imminati. L-affarijiet f’dan l-aħħar ħamsa u għoxrin sena jien rajthom jinbiddu. U jinbiddu għall-għar. Jien personali fit tlett snin ta’ qabel din il-legislatura wettaqt ħafna aktar milli wettaqt f’dawn il-kwazi ħames snin ta’ din il-legislatura.” (Sindku 4)

[Nowadays the powers of local councils are being rather undermined. I have seen many changes over the past 25 years. And they have been changes for the worse. In the three years before this legislature I personally performed much better than I have done over the past five years of this legislature] (Mayor 4)

“Kull darba li l-affarijiet ittieħdu min idejn il-kunsilli aħna ġejna jew at the mercy tal-Ministru jew ta’ ħaddieħor. Per eżempju meta ittieħdu it-toroq jekk mintiex fiż-żona tal-Ministru huwa minnu li mhux se tgawdi. Fejn qabel il-kunsill seta jagħmel it-toroq li jrid u jippjana issa jekk il-Ministru ma jamillikx it-triq ma ssirx it triq. L-istess tal-iskart. Taparsi f’idejna u ma huwa f’idejna xejn. Mela jien is-segretarju tiegħi jibat lir-reġjun u jgħidlu fejn ma ngabarx u mbad ir-reġjun jibat lill-kuntrattur. Din mhux burokrazija zejda? Il-burokrazija dejjem tiżdied milli tonqos.” (Sindku 2)

[Every time that certain things no longer remained under the remit of local councils we became under the mercy of the Minister or someone else. For example, once roads were no longer under the local council's remit, you would not benefit unless you fall under the area of the Minister concerned. Before the local council had the power to plan and carry out the road works himself but now unless the Minister decides to do the road works the roadworks are not carried out. The same for waste management. They pretend that it is still our responsibility but it is definitely not. So my executive secretary has to call the regional council to tell him which waste has not been collected and the regional council sends the contractor to collect it. Isn't this extra bureaucracy? Bureaucracy is always increasing instead of decreasing.] (Mayor 2)

Mayors also claimed that another reason why they feel that their wings are clipped is because they have a great lack of resources. Although their work is very interesting, they maintained that it is impossible to meet the needs of their residents when they do not have the necessary resources and support.

“Bħala kunsilli hemm ħafna nuqqas ta riżorsi. Allura kif trid taħdem. Hemm ħafma kunsilli lanqas għandhom segretarju eżekuttiv. Ara kif tista taħdem.” (Sindku 5)

[As a council there is a great lack of resources. So how can you work. There are a lot of local councils that do not even have an executive secretary. So how can you work.] (Mayor 5)

“Ix-xogħol huwa interessanti imma dejjem jekk għandek ir-rizorsi biex taħdem u li għandek is- support.” (Sindku 6)

[Our work is interesting but always if you have the necessary resources and support] (Mayor 6)

Furthermore, all mayors vociferously stated that given the amount of responsibilities, coupled with the daily exigencies of residents, the post of mayor needs to be on a full-time basis. Both Mayor 6 and Mayor 7 stressed that they are now pensioners and perform their role practically on a full-time basis but still find it difficult to cope with the amount of work involved. Mayor 2 stated that the role of mayor is very time consuming and when you also have a profession it is impossible to give your 100% whilst Mayor 1 maintained that being a full-time mayor needs to be a career and carry with it a decent salary as with €800 per month nobody would be willing to fulfil that role. The low pay and the amount of work involved was also a main concern brought up during the focus group with local councillors.

“Bir-responsabilitajiet li għandna u bl-esiġenzi tan-nies ma jistax ma jkunx full time is sindku. Jien li qiegħed hemm ġurnata full-time għax pensjonant ukoll ma nleħhaqx aħseb u ara dawk li għandhom professjoni” (Sindku 6)

[With the responsibilities we have and the daily exigencies of the people it is impossible that the mayor is not there full time. I am there full time as I am a pensioner and still do not manage let alone those who have a profession] (Mayor 6)

“Jien li għandi professjoni ma nista qatt nagħti 100% tiegħi. Mhux għax ma nixtieqx imma jien ma nistax ngħix b'€800. Ejja ngħidu li jien lesta li nieħu brejk mill-karriera u nagħti l-ħin tiegħi full time lill-kunsill. Imma nista nagħmilha din? It-tajba hi li bħala Sindku joħodlok il-hin ta' dak li huwa full time għax xorta għandek lis-staff li jiddependi fuqek 8 siegħat kuljum, xorta waħda l-emails irridu jitwiegħbu, l-ilmenti iridu jitwiegħbu, xorta trid tirispondi lill-ministru u lis-segretarju parlamentari u xorta waħda l-aspettativa tan-nies li jċemplulek fi x'ħin iċemplulek inti trid tkun available.” (Sindku 2)

[I have a profession and I can never give my 100%. Not because I do not wish to do so but I cannot live on €800. Let us say that I decide to take a break from my career and I dedicate my full time to the council. But can I do this? The thing is that as a Mayor I still need to dedicate the time of a full timer as you still have the staff that depend on you 8 hours a day, emails still need to be answered, complaints have to be dealt with, you still need to reply to the Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary and the expectations of people is still that you have to be available whenever they call you] (Mayor 2)

“Ir-residenti għandhom bżonn sindku full time biex jieħu ħsieb il-lokal. Għax il-kunsill qiegħed hemm għar-residenti. Jien aħjar ma nkunx basta s-sindku jkun full time ħalli jkun jista' jaqdi l-esiġenzi tar-residenti. Ir-residenti ma għandhomx bżonn sindku bejn il 5 – 8pm imma wieħed li jkun hemm anki filgħodu għal kull ma jista' jinqala. Imma il-problema min ħa jkun lest li jkun full time għal €800 fix-xahar. Is-sindku għaliya irid ikun karriera u jkollu salarju diċenti.” (Sindku 1)

[Residents need a full-time mayor to take care of the locality. Because the local council is there for the residents. I prefer not to be a mayor myself as long as there is a full-time mayor that is able to deal with the exigencies of the residents. Residents do not need a mayor between 5-8pm but a mayor that is there even in the morning for whatever may crop up. But the problem is that nobody would be willing to become a full-time mayor for €800 a month. The role of a mayor needs to be a career with a decent salary.] (Mayor 1)

“Din tal-full time ijli nisħaq fuqha mit-2013 imma ma jidhirx li hemm rieda. Punto e basta. Jekk is-sindku mhux full time ma jistax jieħduħ bis-serjeta ...jgħidulek ijli nċempillek ġurnata...ħeqq jien mhux xogħol inkun.” (Sindku 3)

[I have been saying that the mayor needs to be full-time since 2013 but there does not seem to be the willingness to go down this route. That is it. If the mayor is not full-time he/she cannot be taken seriously. They tell you we have been calling you the whole day ... well I will be at work] (Mayor 3)

“In-nies iridu jarawk. Jekk xorta tagħmel ix-xogħol, per eżempju mid-dar tiegħek, jew tkun imsiefer in-nies ma jimpurtaħomx. In-nies iridu jarawk.”(Sindku 7)

[People need to see you. Even if you work, for example, from home or you are abroad, people do not care. People need your presence.] (Mayor 7)

Theme 3 –Regionalisation

The majority of mayors were of the opinion that the way forward should be of a centralised regional council that takes over some of the responsibilities of central government. They maintained that as time goes by the local council's role is becoming irrelevant and they compared the local council to a glorified customer care service. Mayors claimed that if the regional council had to become more centralised this would reduce the red tape currently present as the regional council would become their central point of contact.

“Jien naf li hemm min mhux se jaqbel miegħi imma li l way forward mhux li nkunu gvern lokali imma li r-regjuni ikunu aktar ċentralizzati. Aktar kemm immorru aħna qed nidubitaw ir-relevanza tagħna u r-rwol li għandna u qed issir aktar diffikultuża li nokkupaw din il-kariga u nkunu qed nagħtu 100% tagħna.” (Sindku 2)

[I know that there will be some who will not agree with me but the way forward is not that we are a local council but that the region will be more centralised. The more time passes the more I doubt our relevance and the role we have and it is becoming more difficult that we occupy this role and that we give our 100%] (Mayor 2)

“Jien naqbel 100% li nimxu lejn regjuni ċentralizzati għax ir-rwol tal-kunsill lokali ma għadniex nara aktar li huwa validu. Għax aħna sirna qegħdin hemm biex nirrispondu t-telefon, għal problemi tal-waste management, infrastructure etc. Qiesna customer care sirna.” (Sindku 1)

[I agree 100% that we become a centralised regional council as I do not see that the role of local council is going to remain valid. Because nowadays we are there to answer the telephone, to deal with waste management issues, infrastructure, etc. We have become similar to customer care] (Mayor 1)

“Per eżempju il-Planning Authority – ikun ħafna aħjar li kieku ir-regjun ikollu x’jaqsam magħha u aħna nirreferu għar-regjun.” (Sindku 3)

[For example the Planning Authority – it would be much better if the regional council deals with the Planning Authority and we then refer to the regional council] (Mayor 3)



“Jien naħseb li r-reġjuni għandhom bżonn jieħdu r-responsabilità tal-gvern ċentrali. Għax aħna kieku nirreferu għalihom għal kollox u mhux irridu nigru l'hemm u l'hawn u kwazi qatt ma naslu.” (Sindku 7)

[I think that the regional councils need to take over the responsibilities of central government. Because we would then refer to them for whatever we may need and not we end up running here and there and we practically never get there.] (Mayor 7).

6. Conclusion and recommendations

The telephonic residents' questionnaire conducted for this research study reveal that the majority of Regjun Nofsinhar's residents were satisfied with their locality as a place to live, with 59.5% satisfied with their locality. 53.8% of residents seemed to feel that there is a high sense of community.

Nevertheless, dissatisfaction was noted with regards to Traffic and Parking (74.7%), Noise and Air pollution (61.6%) and Urban Development (51.7% dissatisfied). On the other hand, satisfaction with schools in the locality (61.6%), religious activities (56.7%), and accessibility in the area (55.7%) were also recorded.

Integration of elderly people was perceived as high (71.4%), however, integration of people with disability was perceived as being on the low side, with only 39.3% of respondents thinking their integration is high.

More cleanliness (24 mentions), less construction (16 mentions) and better traffic and parking management (14), emerged as the three most important factors that could contribute to a better quality of life.

This research study also revealed a relatively low satisfaction rate with local councils (37.1%), and a low awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the local councillors (32.1%). On the other hand, 53.8% were aware of the Regional Council they pertained to. Even though only 17.84% were satisfied with this same council.

To possibly increase the level of satisfaction of residents in terms of Regional Councils, respondents mentioned the need for the Regional Council to communicate more their role (45 mentions), listen and act on concerns of the residents (12 mentions) and ensure there is better upkeep of the locality (8 mentions).

Through the focus groups conducted, mayors and local councils flagged lack of civic pride and community participation in events and activities organised by the local councils. Moreover, the heightened bureaucracy between the Local and Regional Councils and other governmental entities, often make it very difficult for such entities to operate efficiently. Other issues related to, lack of awareness in their respect as well as the lack of autonomy and resources, often left such entities feeling powerless.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Educational and awareness campaigns for the general public regarding the functions, roles and responsibilities of local councils, and most especially regional councils through the use of social media, television and radio adverts.
- Local and regional councils need to improve the level of satisfaction of residents with local government and local democracy by improving the quality of local services provided.
- Local and regional councils need to pursue an efficient communication strategy so as to ensure a functional local democracy, with the engagement and participation of citizens.
- Educational workshops oriented towards disseminating practical knowledge of local democracy as a whole and ways in which residents can participate and effect local and national decisions.

- Provision of communal spaces where the local community can meet, celebrate ties and develop a collective identity.
- Events and activities specifically targeted towards the needs and aspirations of young people organised in collaboration with youth organisations.
- Community projects, such as greening of the locality, that will promote a sense of community and a sense of civic pride.
- Collaboration with local entities such as the local band club, football club and religious organisations in the organisation of local events and activities.
- Local councillors to be more in touch with residents, through door-to-door initiatives throughout the whole five-year legislation period, so as to become more aware of the real needs and concerns of their respective community.
- Set up of a migrant office in each locality that caters for the foreign individuals residing in the area.
- Orientation sessions for new community members (both foreigners and Maltese coming from other localities) to facilitate integration within the community.
- Commissioning public opinion surveys when launching new policies or pursuing old ones.
- Information sessions for governmental entities, with regards to the role and duties of the local councils and regional councils, in order to:
 - Create more awareness of the issues and barriers encountered by local and regional councils in their daily dealings with said entities.
 - Understand better the needs of the local councils.
 - Increase respect towards the local councils by these entities.
- Joint events between local and regional councils and government entities so as to foster more collaboration and enhance good practices regarding their daily interactions.
- Strengthening of human resources, operations, and funds of local councils to enable them to carry out their role and responsibilities in a more timely and efficient manner.
- Sufficient funds and resources to be allocated to local councils towards the upkeep of the locality, most especially with regards to cleanliness, greening of the locality and open spaces.
- Increased autonomy given to local councils vis-à-vis local matters through the devolution of certain functions such as local enforcement.
- Consultation with local councils regarding projects that are being undertaken by central government in their localities to ensure that real issues and needs of the locality are taken into consideration.
- Policy reform that enables mayors to hold the office on a full-time basis.
- Regional council skills audit which assesses and ultimately enhances the competencies of the regional council's workforce.
- Regional Council Award Scheme that will be designed to celebrate the success of the most sustainable NGO of the region, the best 2 collaborating councils, the resident of the region. The award scheme will be tied to certain procedures, such as one council nominating prospective awardees from other localities, so as to enhance communication



and knowledge of other localities and their residents/organisations within the same region.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study also recommends that further research is undertaken regarding the following topics:

- A quantitative study that investigates the composition of residents within one's locality, especially the number and origin of foreigners.
- A needs assessment of the different profiles of people living in each locality.
- A qualitative study that investigates the effectiveness of communication and information methods used by local and regional councils.
- A qualitative study that investigates the bureaucracy and red tape of government entities and agencies and their impact on the functions of local and regional councils.

6.4 CONCLUSION

The above are only possible recommendations which the local councils together with the regional council might consider actuating and take on their operations. This would ensure greater awareness about their roles, whilst also improving the quality of life of their residents. Given the expertise and on the ground experience of the local and regional councils, it is encouraged that the findings of this study are thoroughly examined and further actions are considered in light of one's own experience and expertise.

References

- 1,167 carers in St Vincent de Paul, 761 of them are foreign workers (2023, April 26). The Malta Independent. <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2023-04-26/local-news/1-167-carers-in-St-Vincent-de-Paul-761-of-them-are-foreign-workers-6736251374>.
- aditus. (2023, September 21). Types of Accommodation. Asylum Information Database. <https://asylumineurope.org/reports/country/malta/reception-conditions/housing/types-accommodation/>
- Arts Council Malta. (n.d.). Regional Cultural Strategy 2022-2027. South. <https://artscouncilmalta.gov.mt/files/uploads/misc/Arts%20Council%20Malta%20Regional%20Cultural%20Strategy%20Booklet%20South%20EN.pdf>
- Assembly of the European Regions (2010). Malta. https://web.archive.org/20130208122702/http://www.aer.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/MainIssues/Regional_Democracy/AER_Regionalism_Report/Report_by_country/MALTA_2010.pdf
- Atkinson, S., & Joyce, K. E. (2011). The place and practices of well-being in local governance. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 29(1), 133-148.
- Balsas, C. J. (2004). Measuring the livability of an urban centre: an exploratory study of key performance indicators. *Planning, Practice & Research*, 19(1), 101-110.
- Blečić, I., & Talu, V. (2013). The capability approach in urban quality of life and urban policies: Towards a conceptual framework. In *City project and public space* (pp. 269-288) Netherlands: Springer Science+Business Media Dordrech.
- Borg, N. (2023, March 28). Malta has 18,000 vehicles for each square kilometre of road: New national data shows that Malta has 1,500 cars for every 1,000 drivers. *Times of Malta*. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/malta-18000-vehicles-square-kilometre-road.1022017>
- Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners*. London: SAGE.
- Brundtland, G. H. (Ed.). (1987). *Our common future*. Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cárcaba, A., Arrondo, R., & González, E. (2022). Does good local governance improve subjective well-being? *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, 28(2), 100192.
- Carmona, M. (2019). Place value: place quality and its impact on health, social, economic and environmental outcomes. *Journal of Urban Design*, 24(1), 1-48.
- Cloutier, S., Larson, L. & Jambeck, J. (2014). Are sustainable cities “happy” cities? Associations between sustainable development and human well-being in urban areas of the United States. *Environ Dev Sustain* 16, 633–647 (2014). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10668-013-9499-0>
- Cordina, J.P. (2023, November 26). Abela's 'biggest dream': to regenerate Marsa. <https://newsbook.com.mt/en/abelas-biggest-dream-to-regenerate-marsa/>
- Creswell, J.W. (2014). *Research design: qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Culora, A. & Van Stolk, C. (2020). *Conceptualising and measuring quality of life to inform local policy and decision making: A Literature review*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- Davern, M., Giles-Corti, B., Whitzman, C., & Badland, H. (2019). We must address these 3 factors, to make our cities more vibrant and ‘liveable’.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Department of Information. (2019). Press Release by the Parliamentary Secretariat for Local Government and Communities: Local Government Reform Officially launched. <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2019/May/05/pr190946en.aspx>
- Department of Information. (2020). Press Release by the Ministry for the Family, Children’s Rights and Social Solidarity. <https://www.gov.mt/en/Government/DOI/Press%20Releases/Pages/2020/May/22/pr200977en.aspx>

- Douglass, M. (2000). Globalization and the Pacific Asia crisis—toward economic resilience through livable cities. *Asian Geographer*, 19(1-2), 119-137.
- Dündar, O. (1998). Increasing the role of local initiatives in creating liveable cities: Bodrum local habitat.
- El-din Ouf, A. S. E. D., & El-Zafarany, N. A. (2018). Diversity and inclusion in the public space as aspects of happiness and wellbeing. *Journal of Urban Research*, 28(1), 109-129.
- Ellul, D. (2022, Sept. 23). Goodbye 'Capital of Culture' hello 'Region of Culture'. *Times of Malta*. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/malta-capital-culture-scrapped-replaced-region-culture.982646#:~:text=A%20plan%20for%20localities%20to,fireworks%20 displays%20to%20art%20 exhibitions.>
- Ellul, D. (2023, April 27). Land reclamation deal promises to 'future-proof' freeport operations: The deal promises to reduce burdens on Birżebbuġa residents. *Times of Malta*. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/land-reclamation-deal-promises-future-proof-freeport-operations.1028108>
- Freeport welcomes largest-ever containership to visit Malta: The containership spans the length of four football pitches. (2023, October 12). *Times of Malta*. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/freeport-welcomes-largest-ever-containership-visit-malta.1060806>
- Grieve, J., & Howard, R. (2004). *Communities, social exclusion and crime*. Central Books Limited.
- Gustafson, P. (2001). Meanings of Place: Everyday Experience and Theoretical Conceptualizations. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 21, 5–16.
- Hansen, S.W. (2015). The Democratic Costs of Size: How Increasing Size Affects Citizen Satisfaction with Local Government. *Political Studies*, 63, 373–89.
- Heylen, K. (2006). Liveability in social housing: three case studies in Flanders. In ENHR Conference 'Housing in an Expanding Europe: Theory, Policy, Implementation and Participation', Date: 2006/07/02-2006/07/05, Location: Ljubljana (Slovenia).
- Infrastructure Malta (2021, April 21). Infrastructure Malta completes the Marsa Junction Project. <https://www.infrastructuremalta.com/news/infrastructure-malta-completes-marsa-junction-project>
- Istrate, A. L. (n.d). *Problematizing Urban Livability in Non-Western Contexts*.
- Khalil, H. A. E. E. (2012). Enhancing quality of life through strategic urban planning. *Sustainable cities and society*, 5, 77-86.
- Laws of Malta (1993). Local Councils Act (Chapter 363). Malta: Ministry for Justice, Culture and Local Government. <https://legislation.mt/eli/cap/363/eng/pdf>
- Lee, K.Y. (2021). Relationship between Physical Environment Satisfaction, Neighborhood Satisfaction, and Quality of Life in Gyeonggi, Korea. *Land*, 10, 663.
- Leung, L. (2015). Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability in Qualitative Research. *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care*, 4, 324-327.
- Lennard, S. H. C., & Lennard, H. L. (1995). *Livable cities observed: a source book of images and ideas for city officials, community leaders, architects, planners and all other committed to making their cities livable*. Gondolier press.
- Local Government Division (2021), Local and Regional Councils. <https://localgovernment.gov.mt/en/DLG/Department%20for%20Local%20Government/Pages/Commitees.aspx>
- Loewus, S. E. (2008). *Downtown living: for families?: the Vancouver, BC urban livability experience and lessons for other cities* (Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).
- Luqa underpass to Qormi finally opened: Tunnel completes Luqa project, only finishing touches left. (2023, September 22). *Times of Malta*. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/luqa-underpass-qormi-finally-opened.1056751>
- Lynch, K. (1981). *A theory of good city form*.
- Malta Freeport. (n.d.). About Us. <https://www.maltafreeport.com.mt/>
- Malta International Airport. (2023). Annual Summary Report. https://www.maltairport.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Annual-Summary-Report_2022.pdf
- Merriam-Webster (n.d.) Semantics. In Merriam-Webster.com dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com>

com/dictionary/semantics

- Mostafa, A. M. (2012). Quality of life indicators in value urban areas: Kasr Elnile Street in Cairo. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 50, 254-270.
- National Statistics Office. (2022). *Social Protection 2022 Reference Years 2016–2020*
- National Statistics Office. (2023a). *Census of Population and Housing 2021. Final Report. Population, migration & other social characteristics. Vol. 1.*
- National Statistics Office. (2023b). *Census of Population and Housing 2021: Final Report: Dwelling Characteristics. Vol. 2.*
- Paul, A. & Sen, J., (2017). Identifying factors for evaluating livability potential within a metropolis: a case of Kolkata. *Int. J. Civil, Environ., Struct., Constr. Archit. Eng.* 11 (1), 50–55.
- Planning Authority. (n.d.). The Malta Scheduled Property Register. Retrieved December 4, 2023 from <https://www.pa.org.mt/en/scheduled>
- Rothstein, B. (2012). Good Governance. In D. Levi-Faur (Ed.) *In The Oxford Handbook of Governance*, 143-154, Oxford University Press.
- Samanni, M., & Holmberg, S. (2010). Quality of government makes people happy.
- Sansone, K. (2022, February 22). Marsaskala yacht marina plans scrapped, Prime Minister Robert Abela says. *Malta Today*. https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/election-2022/115126/marsaskala_yacht_marina_plans_scrapped_prime_minister_robert_abela_says
- Sirgy, M.J., Tao G., & Young R.F. (2008). How does residents' satisfaction with community services influence quality of life (QOL) outcomes? *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, 3, 81–105.
- Stren, R., & Polèse, M. (2000). Understanding the new sociocultural dynamics of cities: Comparative urban policy in a global context. *The social sustainability of cities: diversity and the management of change*, 3-38.
- Transport Malta. (n.d.). Port of Marsaxlokk. <https://www.transport.gov.mt/maritime/local-waters/ports-in-the-maltese-islands/port-of-marsaxlokk-114>
- Ujang, N., & Zakariya, K. (2015). The Notion of Place, Place Meaning and Identity in Urban Regeneration. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 170, 709–717.
- UN-HABITAT. (2012). *State of the World Cities 2012/2013 - Prosperity of Cities*. Nairobi: UN-HABITAT.
- Vanclay, F. (2003). International principles for social impact assessment. *Impact assessment and project appraisal*, 21(1), 5-12.
- Vanclay, F., Esteves, A.M., Aucamp, I. & Franks, D. (2015). *Social Impact Assessment: Guidance for assessing and managing the social impacts of projects*. Fargo ND: International Association for Impact Assessment.
- Vergunst, P. (2003). Liveability and ecological land use (Vol. 373, No. 373)
- VicHealth MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING UNIT. (2005). *Social Inclusion as a determinant of mental health and wellbeing*. Sydney: VicHealth.
- Victorian Competition & Efficiency Commission. (n.d.). *Inquire Report, as cited in VCEC (2008). A state of liveability: an inquiry into enhancing Victoria's liveability. Final Report October 2008.*
- Vuchic, V. (1999). *Transportation for Livable Cities*. Rutgers, NJ: Center for Urban Policy Research. Wiek, A., & Binder, C. (2005). Solution spaces for decision-making-a sustainability assessment tool for city-regions. *Environmental Impact Assessment Review*, 25, 589–608.
- Wang, S., Helliwell, S., Huang, J., H. & Grover, S. (2014). Good governance and wellbeing. *VOX EU*. CEPR. <https://cepr.org/voxeu/columns/good-governance-and-wellbeing>
- Woolcock, G. (2009). Measuring up? Assessing the liveability of Australian cities. 4th State of Australian Cities National Conference, 24-27 November 2009, Perth, Australia.
- World Bank. (n.d.) Inclusive cities. <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/inclusive-cities>
- World Bank. (n.d.). State of the Cities Baseline Survey 2012-2013. <https://microdata.worldbank.org/index.php/catalog/2796>





APPENDICES



APPENDIX A – Residents' Questionnaire

Social Impact Assessment/ **Assessjar tal-Impatt Soċjali**

[EN: Black font, MT: Blue font]

Socio-demographic Details **Dettalji Soċio-demografici**

1. What is your age?/Kemm għandek żmien? _____
2. Which gender/s do you primarily identify with? **Ma' liema generu tidentifika ruġek?**
(1) Male/Maskil (2) Female/Femminil; (3) Other/Ieħor.
3. What is the highest level of education that you have successfully completed? **X' inhu l-ogħla livell edukattiv milhuq l-aħħar/attwali?**
 - 1) No formal education/Ebda edukazzjoni
 - 2) Primary level/Edukazzjoni Primarja
 - 3) Secondary level/Edukazzjoni Sekondarja
 - 4) Post-secondary level/Post-sekondarja (Eż.: 'Sixth Form' jew 'Teachers Training College')
 - 5) Tertiary Level/Edukazzjoni Terzjarja
4. What is your main labour status/X' inhu l-impjieg tiegħek?
 - 1) Student/Student
 - 2) Pensioner/Pensjonant/a
 - 3) Employed/Impjegat
 - 4) Self-employed/Nahdem għal-rasi
 - 5) Unemployed/Mhux impjegat/a
 - 6) Homemaker/Niehu hsieb id-dar
 - 7) Other (please specify)/Ieħor (jekk jogħġbok speċifika) _____
5. How many children under 18 years live with you?/Kemm għandek tfal taht it-18 il-sena jgħixu miegħek? _____
6. In which locality do you live/F'liema lokalita' toqghod? _____
7. How long have you been living there?/Kemm ijjek toqghod hemm? _____
8. Are you active in any voluntary or community organisation/s? If yes, in which sector is this organisation involved (eg. musical, cultural, historical, social)? /Involut/a f'xi għaqda volontarja jew organizzazzjoni fil-komunita'? Jekk iva, f'liema settur hija involuta din l-organizzazzjoni (eż. mużikali, kulturali, storiku, soċjali)?

Questionnaire



Kwestjonarju

QUALITY OF LIFE

Kwalita' tal-hajja

The next questions will ask about the quality of life in your locality/Il-mistoqsijiet li jmiss jirrigwardjaw il-kwalita' tal-hajja fil-lokalita' fejn tghix.

9. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 5 means very satisfied, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?/Fuq skala minn 1 sa 5, fejn 1 ifisser totalment mhux sodisfatt u 5 li inti sodisfatt hafna, kemm inti sodisfatt jew mhux sodisfatt bil-lokalita' tieghek bhala post biex tghix?

Very satisfied/ Sodisfatt hafna	Fairly satisfied/ Sodisfatt fit	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/La sodisfatt u lanqas mhux sodisfatt	Fairly dissatisfied/ Ma tantx jien sodisfatt	Very dissatisfied/ Totalment mhux sodisfatt
5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Using the same scale, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the following in your locality?/ Billi tuza l-istess skala ta' 1 sa 5 kemm inti sodisfatt jew mhux sodisfatt b'dawn li ghejjien fil-lokalita' tieghek?

	Very satisfied/ Sodisfatt hafna	Fairly satisfied/ Sodisfatt fit	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ La sodisfatt u lanqas mhux sodisfatt	Fairly dissatisfied/ Ma tantx jien sodisfatt	Very dissatisfied/ Totalment mhux sodisfatt
	5	4	3	2	1
Public and green spaces/Spazji hodur u publici	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Urban development/ <i>Żvilupp urban</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sport and leisure facilities/ <i>Facilitajiet sportivi u ta' rikreazzjoni</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Air and noise pollution/ <i>Tniġġiz tal-arja u storbju</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cultural activities/ <i>Attivitajiet kulturali</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public transport/ <i>Trasport pubbliku</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic and parking/ <i>Traffiku u parkeġġ</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Schools in the locality/ <i>Skejjeġ fil-lokalita'</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Accessibility/ <i>Aċċessibilita'</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Level of safety/ <i>Livell ta' sigurta'</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Religious activities/ <i>Attivitajiet religjużi</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



11. On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 is very low and 5 is very high how do you perceive the following within your locality?/Fuq skala minn 1 sa 5, fejn 1 ifisser baxx hafna u 5 tfisser ogħli hafna kif tara dawn l-affarijiet li ġejjin?

	Very high/Għoli hafna	High/Għoli	Neither high not low/La għoli u lanqas baxx	Low/Baxx	Very low/Baxx hafna
	5	4	3	2	1
Integration of people/Integrazzjoni ta' nies:					
- With a disability/B'diżabilita	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- Of different sexual orientation/Ta' orientazzjoni sesswali oħrajn	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- Of different religious beliefs/Ta' twemmin reliġjuż ieħor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- Of different culture/Ta' kultura oħra	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
- Who are elderly/Li huma anzjani	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sense of community/Sens ta' komunita'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Participation of residents in civic life/Partecipazzjoni fil-ħajja ċivika	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Would you like to add anything else with regards to the quality of life in your locality? Tixtieq iżżid xi haġa oħra dwar il-kwalita' tal-ħajja fil-lokalita' tiegħek?



LOCAL COUNCIL
Kunsill Lokali

You will now be asked a few questions regarding your Local Council/*Il-mistoqsijiet li jmiss ha jkunu dwar il-Kunsill Lokali tieghek.*

13. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your Local Council runs things?/*Kemm inti sodisfatt jew mhux sodisfatt bit-tmexxija tal-Kusill Lokali tieghek?*

Very satisfied/ Sodisfatt hafna	Fairly satisfied/ Sodisfatt ftit	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ La sodisfatt u lanqas mhux sodisfatt	Fairly dissatisfied/ Ma tantx jien sodisfatt	Very dissatisfied/ Totalment mhux sodisfatt
5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means Not at all and 5 means A great deal to what extent do you think your Local Council:/*Fuq skala ta 1 sa 5 fejn 1 ifisser Xejn u 5 tfisser Hafna kemm taħseb li l-Kunsill tieghek:*

	A great deal/ Hafna	A fair amount/ Mhux hażin	Somewhat/ Kemmxejn	Little/ Ftit	Not at all/ Xejn
	5	4	3	2	1
Acts on the concerns of its residents/ <i>Jaggixxi fuq l-ilmenti tar-residenti</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involves the community/ <i>Jinvolvi lill-komunita'</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



15. Using the same scale to what extent are you aware of what your local councillors do in your locality? *Billi tuża l-istess skala kemm taf dwar ix-xoghol li jagħmlu il-Kunsilliera fil-lokalita' tieghek?*

A great deal/ <i>Hafna</i>	A fair amount/ <i>Mhux hażin</i>	Somewhat/ <i>Kemmxejn</i>	Little/ <i>Ftit</i>	Not at all/ <i>Xejn</i>
5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. Your Local Council is a key provider of various public services. Which of the following services fall under the remit of your Local Council? *Il-Kunsill tieghek huwa responsabbli għal diversi servizzi pubbliċi. Liema minn dawn is-servizzi jaqgħu taht ir-responsabilita' tiegħu?*

	YES/ <i>IVA</i>	NO/ <i>LE</i>
Waste management/ <i>Maniġġjar tal-iskart</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Road infrastructure/ <i>Infrastruttura tat-toroq</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic enforcement e.g. parking fines/ <i>Infurzar tat-traffiku eż. ċitazzjonijiet</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Education matters (E.g. formal & informal education, cultural activities, sports and leisure)/ <i>Kwistjonijiet edukattivi (Eż. Edukazzjoni formali u informali, attivitajiet kulturali, sports u divertiment)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Issue of parking permits/ <i>Hruġ ta' permessi tal-parkeġġ</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Building permits/ <i>Permessi tal-bini</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Street cleaning/ <i>Tindif ta' toroq</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upkeep and maintenance of parks and gardens/ <i>Manutenzzjoni ta' ġonna u siti pubbliċi</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Social integration (E.g. Integration of people with different culture, religion, language, etc.)/ <i>Integrazzjoni Soċjali (Eż. Integrazzjoni ta' nies b'kultura, reliġjon jew lingwa differenti)</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Welfare of children, youth and elderly/ <i>Il-benesseri tat-tfal, zgħażaġh u anzjani</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Protection of animals/Protezzjoni tal-animali	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Projects Administration/Amministrazzjoni ta' Proġetti	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can you mention any other remits?/Tista' issemmi xi responsabilitajiet oħra?	<hr/>	

17. Does your Local Council meet your expectations? Il-Kunsill Lokali tiegħek qiegħed jilhaq l-aspettativi tiegħek? YES/IVA _____ NO/LE _____

If not, what does the Local Council have to do to meet your expectations? Jekk le, x'irid jagħmel il-Kunsill biex jilhaq l-aspettativi tiegħek? _____

18. Would you like to add anything else with regards to your Local Council? Tixtieq iżżid xi haġa oħra dwar il-Kunsill Lokali tiegħek?



REGIONAL COUNCIL
Kunsill Reġjonali

You will now be asked a few questions regarding your Regional Council/Il-mistoqsijiet li jmiss ha jkunu dwar il-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek.

19. Of which Regional Council does your Local Council form part? F'liema Kunsill Reġjonali taqa' il-lokalità' fejn tgħix? _____
20. Do you think that the functions and responsibilities of the Regional Council differ from those of the Local Council? Tahseb li l-funzjonijiet u r-responsabilitajiet tal-Kunsill Reġjonali huma differenti minn dawk tal-Kunsill Lokali? YES/IVA ____ NO/LE ____
21. If YES, give a reason/s for your answer/Jekk IVA, agħti raġuni għar-risposta tiegħek
- _____
22. Which of the following services fall under the remit of your Regional Council?/Il-Kunsill tiegħek huwa responsabbli għal diversi servizzi pubbliċi. Liema minn dawn is-servizzi jaqgħu taht ir-responsabilità' tiegħu?

	YES/IVA	NO/LE
Waste management and issuing of relevant tenders/ Immaniġġjar tal-iskart u fruġ ta' sejha għall-immaniġġjar tal-iskart	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Road infrastructure/Infrastruttura tat-toroq	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic enforcement e.g. parking fines/Infurzar tat-traffiku eż. ċitazzjonijiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administers the Regional Tribunal/Jamministra it-Tribunal Reġjonali	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upkeep and maintenance of street lighting/Manutenzjoni tad-dawl tat-toroq	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protection of the natural and urban environment/Protezzjoni tal-ambjent naturali u urban	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assists Local Councils re diverse issues (E.g. Environment, culture, IT & EU Funds)/Jassisti lill Kunsilli Lokali dwar diversi kwitstjonijiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Street cleaning/Tindif tat-toroq	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Coordinates with Central Government entities/ <i>Jikkordina mal-entitajiet tal-Gvern Ċentrali</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administration of the Region/ <i>Amministrazzjoni tar-Regjun</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Can you mention any other remits?/ <i>Tista' issemmi xi responsabilitajiet ohra?</i>	<hr/>	

23. On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means very dissatisfied and 5 means very satisfied, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way your Regional Council runs things?/*Fuq skala minn 1 sa 5, fejn 1 ifisser totalment mhux sodisfatt u 5 li inti sodisfatt hafna, kemm inti sodisfatt jew mhux sodisfatt bit-tmexxija tal-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek?*

Very satisfied/ <i>Sodisfatt hafna</i>	Fairly satisfied/ <i>Sodisfatt ftit</i>	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied/ <i>La sodisfatt u lanqas mhux sodisfatt</i>	Fairly dissatisfied/ <i>Ma tantx jien sodisfatt</i>	Very dissatisfied/ <i>Totalment mhux sodisfatt</i>
5	4	3	2	1
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. On a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 means Not at all and 5 means A great deal to what extent do you think your Regional Council:/*Fuq skala ta 1 sa 5 fejn 1 ifisser Xejn u 5 tfisser Hafna kemm taħseb li l-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek:*

	A great deal/ <i>Hafna</i>	A fair amount/ <i>Mhux hażin</i>	Somewhat/ <i>Kemmxejn</i>	Little/ <i>Ftit</i>	Not at all/ <i>Xejn</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
Reaches out and communicating with you/ <i>Qiegħed jikkomunika miegħek</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Involves the community/Jinvolvi lill-komunita'	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
--	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------

25. Does your Regional Council meet your expectations? Il-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek qiegħed jilhaq l-aspettattivi tiegħek? YES/IVA _____ NO/LE _____

If not, what does the Regional Council have to do to meet your expectations? Jekk le, x'irid jagħmel il-Kunsill Reġjonali biex jilhaq l-aspettattivi tiegħek?

26. Would you like to add anything else with regards to your Regional Council? Tixtieq iżżid xi haġa ohra dwar il-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek?

APPENDIX B – Focus group schedule – Local councillors/Mayors

At the start of each Focus Group participants will be asked to introduce themselves by name and surname (if willing), role/designation, locality, years of involvement in locality's local council (and/or local councils in general).

Environmental matters

1. Do your Councils have a strategic plan / road map leading to address environmental matters? If yes, please provide more information. If not, please explain why.
2. What difficulties, if any, were you encountering in the previous domestic waste collection system? Is the current system overcoming these difficulties?
3. How do you rate the infrastructure (streets, pavements, water supply, parking, traffic management, etc.) in your locality?
4. For those infrastructure related matters which are part of your Councils' responsibility, what are your Councils doing?
5. Do residents co-operate with your Councils re environmental issues?(E.g., domestic waste, cleanliness of streets, etc.)

Educational matters

1. Do your Councils have a strategic plan/road map leading to address educational matters? If yes, please provide more information. If not, please explain why.
2. To what extent are children who may not speak Maltese and/or English integrated into the education system? How is the Council addressing this issue?
3. What are your Councils doing to ensure that facilities required for education, sports and leisure (schools, sports and leisure facilities, theatres, etc.) meet residents' expectations?
4. What level of support do you find when organising cultural activities in your locality? Do residents participate? Do you find stakeholders willing to support such initiatives?
5. What is your Council doing regarding the upholding of cultural heritage, traditions and identity within your locality?

Intergenerational Dynamics

1. Do your Councils have a strategic plan / road map leading to address intergenerational dynamics? If yes, please provide more information. If not, please explain why.
2. Do your Councils cater for the various needs of different generations? (E.g., social activities for the elderly, sports activities for young people). If yes, in which way/s; to which extent? If not, why?
3. What activities do your Councils organise which are aimed at bringing together different generations within the community? What is the level of participation? And what difficulties, if any, do you encounter?
4. Do you have any events aimed at specific age groups?



Social cohesion

1. Do your Councils have a strategic plan / road map leading to address social cohesion? If yes, please provide more information. If not, please explain why.
2. How do you describe the communities populating your locality in terms of similarity and diversity (e.g., nationality, language, religion, gender, household composition, lifestyle etc.)?
3. Are you aware of any animosity/cultural dynamics within your locality? How are you managing this - is there a strategic plan in place?
4. Does your Council engage with any diversities and social differences just described? To what extent? In which way/s? Please give examples.

Projects

1. Do your Councils have a strategic plan / road map leading to address project? Give examples of projects.
2. What difficulties, if any, do you encounter when carrying out projects led by your Councils?
3. Do you involve the community when considering what type of projects are to be undertaken? If yes, in what ways?
4. How would you describe the programme of projects you undertake - is it more in reply to situations in your locality or is it more aligned to your vision for the future?

General questions for all Focus Groups

1. What is the level of cooperation between one Council and another within your Region? Please give examples of specific projects, instances, assets, networks, opportunities, limitations, etc.
2. What support do you get from the Regional Council that your Council forms part of? Please give examples of specific projects, instances, assets, networks, opportunities, limitations, etc.
3. Are your expectations from the Regional Council being met? Please give examples of specific projects, instances, assets, networks, opportunities, limitations, etc.
4. What form of support do you get from Local Government? Are your expectations being met? Please give examples of specific projects, instances, assets, networks, opportunities, limitations, etc.

APPENDIX C- Consent Form – Focus Groups



L-Università
ta' Malta

Faculty for
Social Wellbeing
University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 2672
socialwellbeing@um.edu.mt
www.um.edu.mt/socialwellbeing

Consent Form – Focus Group

Project title: Social Impact Assessment – Southern Regional Council

Research Team & Contact Details:

Prof. Andrew Azzopardi, Project Leader (andrew.azzopardi@um.edu.mt)
Dr. Maria Brown, Principal Investigator (maria.brown@um.edu.mt)
Ms Stephanie Bugeja, Research Support Officer II (stephanie.l.bugeja@um.edu.mt)

The Faculty for Social Wellbeing at the University of Malta, on behalf of the Southern Regional Council, is seeking to determine the quality of life and liveability of localities of the Southern Regional Council and provide recommendations for initiatives that can boost the resourcefulness of the Southern Regional Council.

Acceptance to participation in this study implies that, as a research participant:

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I understand that I am free to accept or refuse to participate, or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased, if this is technically possible, unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in a one-time, online focus group, to be held on Zoom, which will be of approximately one to one and a half hours. I understand that the focus group will take place at a time that is convenient to the group. Furthermore, as this is a Focus Group, I understand that other participants will be present and that therefore participants will be identifiable to each other.
4. I understand that my participation does not entail any known or anticipated risks. I also understand that there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study, but that this



research may benefit others, as the results of the study will help us recommend effective ways to boost the resourcefulness of the Southern Regional Council in enhancing the quality of live and liveability in that Region.

5. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
6. I am aware that if I give my consent, this Zoom focus group will be video-recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed), and that extracts of the discussion may be reproduced in the study outputs in a pseudonymised form. The recording will make use of Zoom security features such as end-to-end encryption. The recording will be deleted two years from the date that it was made.
7. I am aware that focus group discussions should be considered confidential and that I should not disclose details of those participating and/or of the nature of discussions to others.
8. I am aware that, by marking the first-tick box below, I am giving my consent for this focus group to be **video recorded** and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

- I agree to this focus group being **video recorded**.
 - I do not agree to this focus group being **video recorded**.
9. I am aware that focus group discussions should be considered confidential and that I should not talk to anyone or give details about those participating and/or what was said in the discussion.
 10. I am aware that excerpts from the data I may provide may be cited in this study's report and associated with my designation e.g. (Councillor 1, Marsa).
 11. I am aware that my identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research. The codes that link my data to my identity will be stored securely and separately from the data, in an encrypted file on the researcher's password-protected computer, and only the researcher/s will have access to this information. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cabinet/drawer. Any material that identifies me as a participant in this study will be stored securely for two years and will be destroyed after two years.
 12. I am aware that, by marking the first tick-box below, I am asking to review extracts from my interview transcript that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs, before these are published. I am also aware that I may ask for changes to be made, if I consider these to be necessary.

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

- I would like to review extracts of my interview transcript that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before these are published.
 - I would not like to review my interview transcript extracts that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before these are published.
13. I understand that all data collected will be stored in an anonymised form and only the research team will have access to the data.



14. I have been provided with the study information and will be given a copy of this consent form, which includes the contact details of the researcher.

I have read and understood the above statements and consent to participate in this study.

Participant name and surname: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name: Stephanie Bugeja

Researcher email address: stephanie.l.bugeja@um.edu.mt

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX D – Functions of Local Council

Functions of Local Council

To provide, with respect to any road, other than any road the responsibility for which vests in Infrastructure Malta in terms of the Agency for Infrastructure Malta Act or any regulations made thereunder, for its upkeep and maintenance, or improvements therein, and to provide and maintain proper road signs and road markings, in conformity with national and international standards: Provided that maintenance in relation to any road referred to under this paragraph includes the patching and resurfacing thereof, but does not include its reconstruction;

To provide for sweeping, cleaning and weed cutting, cleaning of road signs and road lights, the collection and removal of all refuse, for the maintenance of cleanliness and for the upkeep and maintenance of all public conveniences, dustbins and other receptacles for the temporary deposit and collection of waste and to ensure that these are all accessible to all persons, including persons using a wheel-chair;

To provide for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of children's playgrounds, public gardens and sport, cultural or other leisure centres, and as part of a national scheme to administer local libraries and LOCAL GOVERNMENT [CAP. 363. 21 to ensure that these are, as far as possible, accessible to all persons, including persons using a wheel-chair;

To propose measures which relate to the maintenance and repair of local roads, pedestrian areas, parking areas, road signs and road markings within the locality, to provide for the installation and maintenance of bus shelters in accordance with standards and specifications laid down by the competent transport authority, pedestrian and parking areas and provide for the protection of school children in the vicinity of schools;

To propose to and, where applicable be consulted by, any competent authority or agency prior to the competent authority or agency making any changes in traffic schemes directly affecting the locality;

To make recommendations to any competent authority or agency for or in relation to any planning or building scheme and to be a full participant in any decisions on the naming or renaming of roads;

Within the parameters of any national plan, to issue guidelines to be followed in the upkeep, restoration, design or alteration of the facade of any building or of any building or any part of a building normally visible from a road, including the type of lighting and materials used, advertisements and shop fronts, and in the case of premises which are open to the public, to ensure that such premises are, as far as possible, accessible to all persons, including persons who use a wheel-chair;

To assist citizens by providing, where applicable in conjunction with any competent authority, information relating to the rights of citizens in general, including information on consumers' rights, transport, communications, tourist facilities, taxation, social security, public health and other matters of public utility and interest;

(i) to advise and, be consulted by, any authority empowered to take any decisions directly or indirectly affecting the Council and the residents it is responsible for;

(j) as part of a national scheme, to provide in conjunction with any competent authority, for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of Child Care Centres, kindergartens and other educational services or buildings;

(k) as part of a national scheme, to provide in conjunction with any competent authority for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of health and rehabilitation centres, government dispensaries, health district offices and Homes for Senior Citizens, Day Centres for Senior Citizens and Night Care Centres; 22 CAP. 363.] LOCAL GOVERNMENT

(l) to propose to the Minister responsible for education, persons to be appointed as presidents of primary school councils;

(m) within the context of a national action plan, Councils shall promote social policy initiatives within their locality. A Council shall work with people having special needs, with children and young people having literacy problems, with the elderly, persons with mental health problems, in community care as well as initiatives in the area of preventive care;

(n) safeguard local identity and for this purpose take the necessary initiatives to safeguard the local historical and cultural heritage, traditions and folklore;

(o) in the framework of regulations made by the Minister, extend assistance to artists, musicians and sports persons from their locality in order that they may develop their talents;

(p) organise cultural activities that promote the locality in every possible way;

(q) protect the natural and urban environment of the locality and take all necessary measures to ensure the more efficient use of energy, good waste management and climate change initiatives;

(r) in agreement with the education authorities to make the best use of facilities already existing in schools in the locality after normal school hours such as sports facilities, school halls, information technology laboratories, and other public facilities in the locality;

(s) organise sports or physical activities for all residents of all ages, co-operate closely with the sports associations from the locality, to provide good sports facilities and organise such sports activities as are not normally organised by local sports associations;

(t) ensure to give effect to the concept of life long learning with all residents, particularly adults and the elderly, by providing such service within the same locality local library;

(u) provide and maintain the service of a local library

(v) to promote an entrepreneurial policy whereby the interests of shop owners and the needs of the residents and the consumer in the community are catered for. The Council is to encourage activities which promote trade and to facilitate Council procedures to lessen bureaucracy so that commercial activities can improve the services they provide;

(w) to enter into agreements with any agency or public body or Government department for the delegation to the local council of any of the functions of that agency, public body or department: LOCAL GOVERNMENT [CAP. 363. 23 Provided that any such delegation shall only come into effect after the Minister has made the relevant order in the Gazette;

(x) to perform any other function which shall be delegated to it by the Government through the Minister by means of an order published in the Government Gazette;

(z) to provide for all such other works, things, matters and services which are not excluded from a Council's competence by any law for the time being in force nor assigned to any other authority





ANNEX ON FOREIGNERS' POPULATION



Table of Contents

1. Introduction	127
1.1 Aims of study	128
1.2 Foreigners' Presence in Malta	128
1.2.1 Statistics of Foreigners in Malta	128
1.3 Structure of the Report	130
2. Context	131
2.1 Policies and Strategies: Promoting Inclusion and Integration at a local level	132
2.2 Focusing on Reġjun Nofsinhar	133
2.2.1 Reġjun Nofsinhar: An Overview of the Foreigners' Presence	134
2.3 Initiatives for Better Representation and Integration among Foreigners	138
3. Methodology	143
3.1 Sampling and recruitment process	144
3.2 Data Collection Tool	145
3.3 Data Analysis	145
3.4 Ethical considerations	146
3.5 Limitations	146
4. Analysis of Findings	149
4.1 Socio-demographics	150
4.2 Quality of Life	151
4.3 Local Councils	154
4.4 Regional Councils	155
5. Conclusion	157
References	160
APPENDIX A	164
APPENDIX B	165





1. INTRODUCTION

Since becoming a European Union (EU) member, Malta has witnessed a gradual growth in the foreign population, reaching 21,246 individuals, which accounted for 4.81% of the total population of 416,268 in 2011 (Borg, 2023). This trend, however, has reached unprecedented volumes over the past few years, as a steady influx of foreign nationals have been attracted to Malta in order to contribute to our burgeoning economy.

The presence of foreigners in local localities, villages, and cities has significantly impacted the social dynamics and fabric of these communities. For this reason, we believe that gauging foreigners' views on the localities that now serve as their homes and the quality of life therein would add immense value to the study underway.

1.1 AIMS OF STUDY

The aim of this Annex is to examine the unique perspectives of foreign residents regarding the quality of life, liveability, and social integration in their localities. It also seeks to understand their awareness, knowledge, and expectations of Local and Regional Councils. Furthermore, the Annex aims to explore opportunities for more effective collaboration between regional and local councils and identify ways in which local councils can better address the needs of their foreign residents.

1.2 FOREIGNERS' PRESENCE IN MALTA

Over the past two decades, migration patterns have undergone notable transformations, attracting not only Europeans but also individuals from Africa, the Middle East, and Asia seeking refuge from conflict and poverty (Shankar, 2023), as well as economic migrants coming to Malta to find employment. Indeed, Malta has emerged as a destination that draws thousands of contracted migrants who help alleviate labour shortages, particularly in the hospitality, healthcare, and service industries (Shankar, 2023).

This influx has been captured by the Maltese 2021 Census of Population and Housing by the National Statistics Office of Malta (NSO), which provided a comprehensive understanding of the growing presence of foreign individuals in Malta, going beyond just general foreign population statistics and indicating also the country of origin/nationality (NSO, 2023). Indeed, in 2021, the number of foreign nationals stood at 115,449, constituting over one-fifth of the total population (NSO, 2023).

However, the fact that the Census is carried out at particularly lengthy time intervals, paired with the ever-growing increase in foreigners' year-on-year, a Parliamentary Question (PQ) has indicated that as of September 2023¹, the foreign residents living in Malta amounted to 145,910 in total (Minister for the Interior, Security, Reforms, and Equality, 2023). Unfortunately, this latter data set fails to disaggregate data by country of origin or gender. For this reason, the Maltese 2021 Census data was used as a guiding source for this study in order to ascertain the top communities in particular regions, keeping in mind that within the past two years, migrants might have moved and shifted from one place to another.

1.2.1 Statistics of Foreigners in Malta

The Maltese 2021 Census (NSO, 2023) provided an overview of the ten most prominent foreign nationalities in Malta. As shown in Table 1, Italians were the prevailing nationality, exhibiting the most significant increase among the top ten nationalities, with the number of individuals rising from 0.8% (947) in 2011 to 11.99% (13,838) in 2021 (NSO, 2023).

Furthermore, the British, Indians, Filipinos, Serbians, Bulgarians, Libyans, Syrians, Nepalese, and Albanians were included in the top ten population.

Table 1: Top 10 Foreign National Communities in Malta - 2021

Nationality	Number of foreigners	% of total foreigners
Italy	13,838	11.99%
UK and North Ireland	10,614	9.19%
India	7,764	6.73%
Philippines	7,571	6.56%
Serbia	5,533	4.79%
Bulgaria	3,729	3.23%
Libya	3,311	2.87%
Syria	2,861	2.48%
Nepal	2,819	2.44%
Albania	2,714	2.35%
Total foreigners	60,714	52.62%

The 2021 Census further indicated that 19.44% (22,443) individuals originate from other EU Member States, and an additional 7.37% (8,512) came from other European countries. Another 20.42% (23,569) held various other citizenships. Notably, a small population of 0.5% (171) was identified as stateless individuals, with almost half of them being children under the age of nine (NSO, 2023).

An imbalance in gender representation amongst foreigners was observed, with a majority of 59% (68,000) being male (NSO, 2023). Such an imbalance was mostly noticed in the Southern Region, with foreign men being nearly twice as many as women. This gender disproportion extended across different ethnicities in Malta, and the NSO revealed that 79% of individuals of African origin were men, while Asian and Arab men also significantly outnumbered women at 67% and 56%, respectively (Borg, 2023). Foreigners were also typically younger than Maltese residents, with an average age of 34.9 in comparison to 43.6 for Maltese residents (Borg, 2023).

Concerning the geographical distribution of the foreign population, San Pawl il-Baħar, Sliema, and Msida emerged as the most popular residential areas for nearly one-third of all foreigners in Malta (NSO, 2023). These localities were confirmed as the most inhabited by foreigners also through the above mentioned PQ, whereby foreign residents amounted to 21,702, 11,795 and 8,655 respectively.



1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into five chapters. This chapter served as a general introduction to the study, highlighting the presence of foreigners and providing statistics associated with the population. Chapter Two provides an overview of the existing context of the Regional Councils, specifically focusing on Reġjun Nofsinhar and its associated local councils, in relation to foreigners. Chapter Three outlines the methodology employed in this study, including the methods used for data collection and analysis. It also discusses the ethical considerations and limitations encountered during the research process. The main findings that emerged from the data analysis are presented and discussed in Chapter Five. Finally, Chapter Six concludes the study by presenting the key findings and several recommendations.



2 CONTEXT

In view of the great influx of foreigners mentioned above, it is crucial to understand how the Regional Councils, particularly Regjun Nofsinhar (Southern Regional Council) and its associated local councils, function in relation to foreigners. The following sections should serve as a contextual foundation for the study, outlining the profile of the foreign component of the Region's population and their socio-cultural realities, as well as the link they have with the Regional Council and Local Councils, if any.

2.1 POLICIES AND STRATEGIES: PROMOTING INCLUSION AND INTEGRATION AT A LOCAL LEVEL

The Regional Councils in Malta have taken proactive steps in recent years to promote the inclusion of foreigners through various strategies and programmes. One significant initiative is the introduction of the Local Integration Charter in 2019. This charter was implemented following the Government's launch of its first Migrant Integration Strategy and Action Plan. Its purpose was to provide support to local councils in addressing the unique integration needs of residents in response to the increasing diversity in different Maltese localities (European Website on Integration, 2018).

As highlighted in the Local Integration Charter and Action Plan Addendum (2021), the implementation of the charter involves the Human Rights Directorate (HRD) taking responsibility for the accession to the charter and the implementation of the action plan. On the other hand, the Local Councils Association is tasked with monitoring the implementation. To facilitate this collaboration, the Local Councils Association appoints a committee that includes a representative from the HRD. This ensures close collaboration in the implementation of the Action Plan.

Out of the 54 local councils in Malta, 37 are actively participating in the implementation of the charter. The majority of these 37 councils have signed an agreement with the HRD's Intercultural and Anti-Racism Unit, indicating their commitment to promoting intercultural understanding and combating racism (European Website on Integration, 2018).

To ensure effective implementation, several action plans have been included in the charter for the local councils to implement. Some of these plans include:

- A mapping exercise shall be carried out continuously (e.g., by means of mailing shots or other models) so that the Council will have a better picture of the situation, even if it is not the complete reality of the locality. A database shall be set up (with the consent of the residents concerned) with a list of all migrant residents in order to facilitate communication. The Human Rights Directorate (HRD), the migrant communities, and other parties can contribute if the Council so requests.
- Jum il-Lokalita' or another major activity shall be held with the theme of integration (e.g., cultural and/or sport activities, etc.);
- Through the collaboration between local councils, HRD, and migrant communities, important awareness campaigns (e.g., domestic waste disposal, street gatherings, etc.) shall be held and important information translated to the relevant main languages.
- Information and registration for the I BELONG courses (Maltese, English, and Cultural Orientation courses, offered by HRD, free of charge) shall also be provided from the local councils' premises. (Local Integration Charter and Action Plan, 2019, p. 3).

Recognising the ongoing importance of foreigners in Malta, the Regional Cultural Strategy 2022-2027 also emphasises the important role of regional and local councils in designing customised programmes aimed at fostering the integration of non-Maltese residents within their respective regions (Malta Arts Council, n.d). Moreover, the strategy acknowledges the prevalent sense of exclusion experienced by ethnic minority communities in their active participation in various cultural activities. As a result, it emphasises the need to build diverse and engaged audiences that include different cultures and generations. These audiences should feel empowered to contribute to how culture is presented, promoted, and programmed.

2.2 FOCUSING ON REĠJUN NOFSINHAR

For years, a number of particular localities in the region have always been known for their diverse communities, e.g., Birżebbuġa, Marsaskala, Marsa, and Ħamrun, welcoming both Maltese residents and foreigners. With 17.60% of the region's population being non-Maltese, there is a great sense of cultural diversity (Berger, 2022).

Indeed, the 2021 Census recorded a total of 18,757 (17.60%) foreign individuals residing in the Region. Based on the 2021 Census, as per Table 2 below, Birżebbuġa emerges as having the highest percentage of foreign nationals living in the locality (28.92%), with Marsaskala a close second (27.65%). On the other hand, Santa Luċija had the lowest percentage of foreigners, with only 2.52% of individuals in 2021 (NSO, 2023).

Table 2: Total Number of Foreigners in Reġjun Nofsinhar localities

Locality	Maltese - Totals	Non Maltese - Totals	Total Population	% of total Population
Birżebbuġa	8,419	3,425	11,844	28.92%
Ħal Għaxaq	5,190	348	5,538	6.28%
Ħal Luqa	6,197	1,052	7,249	14.51%
Ħal Qormi	15,963	2,136	18,099	11.80%
Il Gudja	3,004	225	3,229	6.97%
Il-Ħamrun	7,970	2,544	10,514	24.20%
Il-Marsa	4,035	1,433	5,468	26.21%
Iż-Żejtun	11,772	637	12,409	5.13%
Marsaskala	12,157	4,647	16,804	27.65%
Marsaxlokk	3,484	504	3,988	12.64%
Santa Luċija	2,551	66	2,617	2.52%
Santa Venera	7,094	1,740	8,834	19.70%
Total	87,836	18,757	106,593	17.60%

It is worth noting that, following the PQ mentioned above, the number of foreigners residing in the Region as of September 2023 seems to have risen by circa 25.41% to 23,524 individuals. The table indicating the difference in foreign nationals between the 2021 Census and the September data can be found in Appendix A in Table 3.

As previously outlined, the PQ does not disclose the country of origin of the foreigners. Hence, the latest publicly available data on foreign nationals by country of origin remains the Census 2021. As illustrated in Table 4 below, among the top ten foreign nationals in 2021, Italians held the highest representation with 2,353 (12.54%) individuals, while Albanians held the tenth place with a total of 539 (2.87%) (NSO, 2023).

Table 4: Top 10 nationalities in Reġjun Nofsinhar

Top 10 Nationalities	Number of foreigners	% of total Foreigners
Italy	2353	12.54%
India	1582	8.43%
Philippines	1552	8.27%
Syrian Arab Republic	1295	6.90%
UK and North Ireland	1000	5.33%
Serbia	703	3.75%
Somalia	587	3.13%
Sudan	585	3.12%
Pakistan	544	2.90%
Albania	539	2.87%
Total foreigners	10,740	57.24%

In terms of gender presence in the region, Table 5 displays that Reġjun Nofsinhar has approximately 12,312 (65.64%) non-Maltese male residents and 6,445 (34.36%) females (NSO, 2023). This contrasts with the 49.86% males and 50.14% females of Maltese nationals in the region.

Table 5: Population of non-Maltese residents by sex and locality in Reġjun Nofsinhar

	Males	Females	Total
Birżebbuġa	2,539	886	3,425
Ħal Għaxaq	250	98	348
Ħal Luqa	688	364	1,052
Ħal Qormi	1,450	686	2,136
Il Gudja	141	84	225
Il-Ħamrun	1,657	887	2,544
Il-Marsa	1,091	342	1,433
Iż-Żejtun	384	253	637
Marsaskala	2,716	1,931	4,647
Marsaxlokk	360	144	504
Santa Luċija	41	25	66
Santa Venera	995	745	1,740

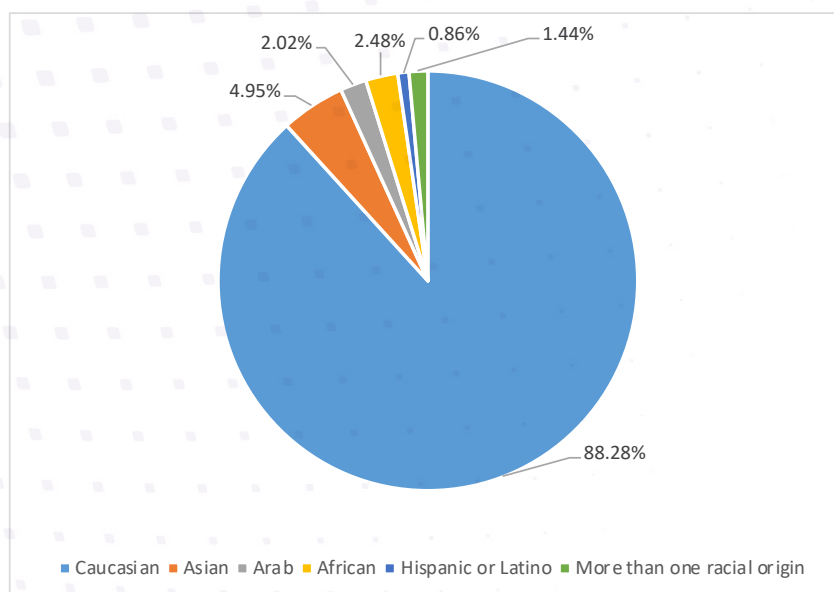
Moreover, the average age of the population of foreigners in this region stands at 33.5, as opposed to 44.4 years for Maltese nationals. Table 6 shows that within the region, foreign men have an overall average age of 33.8 (vs. 43.2 of Maltese male nationals), whilst that of women stands at 33.0 (vs. 45.5 of Maltese female nationals). These figures clearly reflect the region's high proportion of young foreign residents, many of whom would be of working age. This average is possibly pushed downwards in comparison to the Maltese cohort due to the scarcity of foreign elderly in the region (NSO, 2023).

Table 6 Average age of non-Maltese residents by type of sex and locality in Reġjun Nofsinhar

	Males	Females	Total
Birżebbuġa	30.7	31.6	31.0
Ħal Għaxaq	32.1	31.1	31.8
Ħal Luqa	33.3	32.6	33.1
Ħal Qormi	30.7	28.6	30.0
Il Gudja	34.2	30.8	32.9
Il-Ħamrun	33.1	33.1	33.1
Il-Marsa	31.5	30.3	31.2
Iż-Żejtun	35.2	35.5	35.3
Marsaskala	36.2	34.6	35.5
Marsaxlokk	38.3	39.1	38.5
Santa Luċija	38.8	38.0	38.5
Santa Venera	31.9	30.5	31.3

When looking at the racial origin composition of Reġjun Nofsinhar, also including the Maltese population, the highest percentage is Caucasian at 88.28% (94,066 individuals). The second highest race is that of Asians, at 4.95% (5,283 individuals). Figure 1 below shows the racial composition of the residents within the region, which displays that despite the high homogeneity, in terms of Caucasians present, there are still substantial minorities that make up the community (NSO, 2023).

Figure 1: Total population by racial origin in Reġjun Nofsinhar



Birżebbuġa stands out as the locality with the most diverse composition, with 81.19% (9,613) being Caucasian, 4.51% (5,34) Asians, 3.16% (375) Arabs, 7.65% (907) African, 1.38% (163) Hispanic or Latino, and the remaining 2.13% (252) having more than one racial origin. The locality with the most homogeneous race was that of Santa Luċija, with 96.35% of the population (2,522 individuals) being Caucasian (NSO, 2023). This is illustrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Racial Origin of Total Population by Locality in Reġjun Nofsinhar

	Caucasian	Asian	Arab	African	Hispanic or Latino	More than one racial origin
Birżebbuġa	9,613	534	375	907	163	252
Ħal Għaxaq	5,255	112	58	62	18	33
Ħal Luqa	6,535	355	74	180	56	69
Ħal Qormi	16,278	836	396	249	97	243
Il Gudja	3,064	65	15	43	19	23
Il-Ħamrun	8,430	1,173	307	347	97	160
Il-Marsa	4,117	504	224	300	61	262
Iż-Żejtun	11,909	215	88	80	51	66
Marsaskala	15,075	641	284	321	244	239
Marsaxlokk	3,719	90	71	22	14	72
Santa Luċija	2,522	41	19	8	8	19
Santa Venera	7,549	737	239	124	84	101
Total	94,066	5,283	2,150	2,643	912	1,539

Similarly, when one looks at the religions practiced within the region, one can identify clear diversities. Notwithstanding the fact that Roman Catholicism remains the leading religion amongst all population aged 15 and over in Reġjun Nofsinhar, at 86.02% (79,371), 4.96% (4,581) affiliate themselves to Islam, and 2.42% (2,232) to the Orthodox practice. 3.37% (3,113) affiliate themselves with some other religion, such as Hinduism, Church of England, Protestantism, Buddhism, Judaism or others, whilst 3.22% (2,970) do not affiliate themselves to any religion (NSO, 2023).

2.2.1 Reġjun Nofsinhar: An Overview of the Foreigners' Presence

Reġjun Nofsinhar has long been celebrated for its diverse offerings and as a hub of multiculturalism. This traces its roots back to over a decade ago, when the region experienced a notable increase in its foreign population (NSO, 2023).

Reġjun Nofsinhar displays a diverse range of geographical features, encompassing both rural villages and well-developed localities. Villages like Ħamrun, Gudja, Ħal Għaxaq, Marsaxlokk, and Santa Luċija have undergone some degree of urbanisation while still preserving their rural heritage. On the other hand, localities such as Marsaskala, Birżebbuġa, Ħal-Qormi, and Santa Venera have experienced more significant urbanisation and infrastructure development. It is worth noting that even the traditionally rural localities mentioned earlier have observed a noticeable increase in their foreign population (see Appendix A, Table

3), indicating that demographic changes are not limited to the more developed areas alone. Reġjun Nofsinhar is also home to several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that specifically focus on supporting migrant communities. These include the Aditus Foundation and Migrant Women Association Malta in Ħamrun, as well as the Solidarity Overseas Service (SOS) Malta located in Santa Venera.

The presence of foreign students in government schools has also been observed in the region. According to the data gathered for the Parliamentary Question by Nationalist Member of Parliament Ivan Bartolo in 2022 to the the Minister for Education, Clifton Grima, the data showed that the locality with the highest percentage of foreigners is Marsaskala, where they account to 370 students attending the two primary schools. The other high number of foreign students was Ħamrun, where the total of 4 schools (Guardian Angel Education Resource Centre, Ħamrun; Ħamrun GP Primary; Ħamrun Secondary School; and Ħamrun SS Primary) amounted to 184. Birżebbuġa followed, where 156 foreign students attending the primary school were non-Maltese. On the other hand, Marsaxlokk primary school had 21 foreign students, while Gudja primary school had only 6 foreign students (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research, and Innovation, 2022).

While research on the presence and complexity of foreigners in specific localities within the region is limited, Birżebbuġa, Ħamrun, and Marsa have attracted significant attention due to their history with migration, in particular Marsa and Birżebbuġa, as they host the Initial Reception Centre and the Open Centre, respectively.

The attention on Marsa has been going on for years, and back in 2013, former mayor Francis Debono expressed that Marsa was associated with migration, and the media has labelled the locality as a no-go area (Borg, 2015; Bugeja, 2007; Xuereb, 2015). In response to this situation, the current mayor of Marsa, Josef Azzopardi, stated that, back in time, the establishment of the Open Centre led to an increase in the number of immigrants, sometimes exceeding its capacity (The Journal, 2023). As a result, when migrants no longer lived in the Open Centre, they sought shelter in the nearby neighbourhood, causing significant changes within the community. This weakened the traditional connection between where people lived, leading many residents to leave Marsa (The Journal, 2023).

Despite the 2017 plan to close the Marsa center and relocate residents to Hal Far, this plan was not implemented, leading to frustration among former mayors Christian Sammut of Ħamrun and Francis Debono of Marsa (Micallef & Xuereb, 2017). They expressed concerns about poor living conditions, overcrowding, and violations of laws. Migrant communities from Eritrea, Somalia, and Sudan called for dialogue with the local councils, emphasising that Marsa was a place where they felt accepted and expressing their belief that the locality had been neglected for years (Micallef & Xuereb, 2017).

In 2023, the Marsa Open Centre recorded significantly fewer residents compared to previous years, with mostly individuals and a few families remaining. The dormitory of the center was demolished, leading to its discontinuation as an immigrant center. The Marsa Local Council is actively repurposing the open centre for different activities, such as organising a crib-making course (The Journal, 2023).

Ħamrun, located near Marsa, has also seen a mix of nationalities living there. Strolling through St. Joseph High Street in Ħamrun, one can notice a significant number of shops

owned by foreigners from various regions. The Ħamrun local council has worked with different nationalities to address conflicts. Following a violent brawl between Syrians in Ħamrun, the local council and members of the Syrian community reached an agreement to collaborate and prevent similar incidents in the future. Members of the Syrian community volunteered for regeneration projects in Ħamrun, showing solidarity with the locality (Calleja, 2022).

Taking a similar collaborative and positive approach, former mayor Joseph Farrugia of Birżebbuġa stressed the importance of having a positive mindset towards migration. He highlighted the need for improved communication and understanding between the local population and migrants, emphasising mutual listening and recognition of each other's problems. Throughout his tenure as mayor, he had never heard of migrants causing harm to Birżebbuġa residents (Bonnici, 2019).

The Southern Regional Council Charter 2022-2027 recognises the region's diversity and aims to design programmes that integrate all residents, including non-Maltese, within the region (Malta Arts Council, n.d).

2.3 INITIATIVES FOR BETTER REPRESENTATION AND INTEGRATION AMONG FOREIGNERS

To effectively address such needs, Reġjun Nofsinhar has taken various actions in recent years. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, one notable example is the collaboration between Marsa and Ħamrun Local Councils in February 2019. They actively participated in an event called 'Breakfast on Bridge/Kisra ħobż flimkien' held in Marsa. During this event, small-food industry stakeholders and people from different countries came together to share the first meal of the morning through conversations. This initiative aimed to foster community engagement and promote dialogue among diverse groups.

Figure 2: 'Breakfast on Bridge/Kisra ħobż flimkien' event (February, 2019)

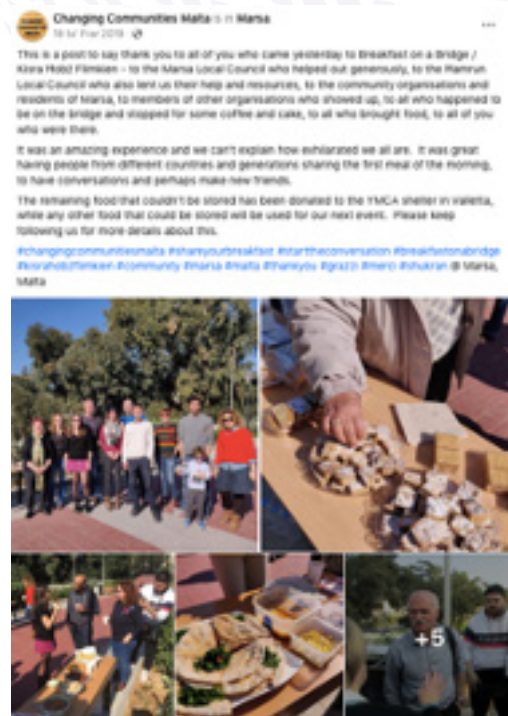


Figure 3 further illustrates that in 2019, the Marsa Local Council also participated in an event organised by the NGO called Kopin. This event was part of the three-year 'Snapshots from the Borders' campaign, which received support from the European Commission. During the event, representatives from Hungary and Bulgaria were present. They recommended that local councils in Malta take responsibility for finding solutions to integrate the asylum-seeking community (Watson, 2019). Following this event, two activities were held in Marsa, mainly engaging residents through a community debate with Marsa-based organisation representatives, migrant community representatives, Local Councils' representatives, and NGOs.

Figure 3: Marsa Local Council's participation in the 'Snapshots from the Borders' event (September 2019)



In addition to these efforts, Figure 4 showcases that in 2021, Mario Calleja, the mayor of Marsascala, was involved in a project known as the town-twinning project. This project included one town from each of the EU's Member States. The primary focus of this project was to engage in discussions about the future of Europe and address issues related to Euroskepticism. One of the key objectives was to find effective solutions for integrating foreign communities into the local community. Throughout a span of four days, participants actively participated in debates, workshops, and presentations that covered various topics, including European identity, EU bureaucracy, the immigration and refugee crisis, and the integration of different cultures within local communities.

**Figure 4: Marsascala Local Council involvement
in the town-twinning project (August 2021)**

The Marsascala Local Council, with the assistance of SEM, implemented successfully a town-twinning project which brought together participants from Malta, Italy, Germany, Poland and The Netherlands.



Moreover, as shown in Figure 5 below, in 2021, Reġjun Nofsinhar had a meeting with President Dr. George Vella. During this meeting, various topics were discussed, including the pressing need for the integration of foreigners. The meeting provided an opportunity for Reġjun Nofsinhar to present their insights and proposals on how to effectively address this issue. By discussing this matter with President Vella, Reġjun Nofsinhar aimed to highlight the significance of this issue and seek support and collaboration from the highest level of government.

Figure 5: Meeting with President George Vella (August 2021)



Other ongoing integration meetings are actively being implemented in Reġjun Nofsinar. For instance, as seen in Figure 6, network meetings in Qormi have been taking place. A specific meeting focused on discussing strategies and initiatives to promote integration. Participants had the opportunity to share their experiences and insights, fostering collaboration and synergy among the various organisations present. The session included various stakeholders, including Southern Regional Services, Mr. Matthew Mallia, and the Migrants Learners Unit, Ms. Jane Farrugia.

Figure 6: Hal Qormi Network Meeting with different stakeholders that promote integration (September, 2023)



CONCLUSION

The discussion in this chapter has highlighted the proactive policies and strategies implemented by the Regional Councils in Malta and their associated Local Councils to promote the inclusion and integration of foreigners (Reġjun Nofsinhar, n.d.).

Throughout this chapter, the focus has been on Reġjun Nofsinhar, which has been seen to exemplify diversity and heterogeneity in both its demographics and context. Notably, this region has placed a significant emphasis on initiatives aimed at improving the representation and integration of foreigners.

Building upon this context, the following chapter will delve into the methodology employed in this study to delve deeper into the dynamics of Reġjun Nofsinhar.



3. METHODOLOGY

This section presents an overview of the methodology employed in this part of the study to gauge the voices of the foreign communities residing in the Region. It outlines the methods used for data collection and analysis. It also discusses the ethical considerations and limitations encountered during the research process.

The aim of this additional research piece is to gauge the perspectives and perceptions of the major foreign communities present in Reġjun Nofsinhar regarding the quality of life, liveability, and social integration, as well as their awareness and knowledge of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof. This was done by carrying out semi-structured interviews/surveys with the community leaders and/or representatives of these foreign communities.

3.1 SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Upon discussions with the Regional Councils, it was agreed that the communities making up the top 50% (or approximately) of total foreigners' nationalities residing in the Reġjun Nofsinhar, as identified in the 2021 Census data (NSO, 2023), would be contacted. Out of a total of 18,757 foreigners in the Region, 51.47% belonged to the 8 foreign communities outlined in Table 8 below. The same method of purposeful selection was consistently applied to the other regions (Reġjun Tramuntana, Reġjun Port, Reġjun Lvant, and Reġjun Punent) to maintain a standardised approach throughout the study.

Table 8: Selected foreign communities for this study

	Number of foreigners	% of total foreigners in the Region
Italy	2353	12.54%
India	1582	8.43%
Philippines	1552	8.27%
Syrian Arab Republic	1295	6.90%
UK and North Ireland	1000	5.33%
Serbia	703	3.75%
Somalia	587	3.13%
Sudan	585	3.12%
Total foreigners	16,694	51.47%

Given the fact that the Regional Councils operate within the field, a first attempt to contact foreign representatives was made through the Reġjun Nofsinhar Council, as they agreed to act as gatekeepers and made efforts to reach out to potential community leaders/representatives from foreign communities residing in their own area.

Nevertheless, given the tight time frames and the lower than anticipated response rate that Reġjun Nofsinhar received, the research team adopted an alternative approach. Organisations representing the above-listed foreign communities were sourced from the VO Directory on the Malta Council for the Voluntary Sector (MCVS) portal. This strategic shift was done following discussion and agreement with the Regional Council. In the case whereby more than one organisation is set up for one particular nationality/foreign community, communication was

held with all organisations. The data collection via this alternative route was carried out during the first weeks of December 2023.

The organisations were contacted via email, which was provided on the MCVS portal. The email was addressed to the community leaders/representatives from the above communities, explaining the study's purpose and objectives. The email also included a consent form and the semi-structured survey, which leaders were encouraged to fill out online and send to the research team. The representatives were also offered the option to either meet face-to-face or online if they so preferred. In order to ensure a high response rate, the research team followed up with phone calls and reminder emails. Table 9 below illustrates the number of organisations reached out to, the response rate, and the mode of data collection. It is important to note that the only foreign community from which we did not receive any response was the Sudanese community. Despite our best efforts to establish contact, it proved challenging to reach their representatives.

Table 9 : Responses rate of Organisations reached

	Number of organisations contacted	Number of Responses Received	Mode of Data Collection
Italy	3	1	Email Response
India	2	1	Email Response
Philippines	3	1	Email Response
Syrian Arab Republic	2	1	Email Response
UK and North Ireland	2	1	Email Response
Serbia	2	2	Email Response
Somalia	2	1	Face-to-face meeting
Sudan	1	0	No response
Total	17	8	

3.2 DATA COLLECTION TOOL

The semi-structured interview/survey (Appendix B) was conducted in English and consisted of a mix of 15 open and closed-ended questions. These questions delved into various aspects such as socio-demographics, the quality of life in localities, as well as awareness and satisfaction with Local and Regional councils. By including these dimensions, the researchers aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the foreign residents' experiences, challenges, and perceptions within the given context. The estimated completion time for the questionnaire was approximately 20-30 minutes.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS

The research team retrieved the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire and inputted it into Excel. The data was then sorted, coded, and cleaned for statistical analysis. For the qualitative data, responses from the open-ended questions were coded. The responses were then analysed using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013), which is a method that allows "researchers to draw reasonable and meaningful conclusions" from the participants' responses (Suter 2012, as cited in Rouder et al., 2021, para. 4).

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Throughout the study, the research team gave careful consideration to ethical concerns and implemented measures to ensure the wellbeing of the research participants.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee (FREC) of the Faculty for Social Wellbeing, at the University of Malta on the 30th of October 2023.

To ensure confidentiality of the participants, their identities were kept anonymous during the presentation of the findings. This involved refraining from revealing any personal information, including the names of the foreign community organisations, that could potentially lead to the identification of individuals. Participation in the study was also completely voluntary, allowing all potential and actual participants the freedom to accept or decline the invitation to participate at any time without any consequences or negative impact.

Moreover, a list of free, open-access support services was provided to participants as part of the consent form, so as to be used in the event that participants experienced emotional distress before, during, or after the survey. This ensured access to professional support to address any emotional challenges that may have arisen during their involvement in the study.

3.5 LIMITATIONS

During this data collection process, the research team encountered a number of limitations, and various measures were implemented to mitigate their impact. One significant limitation was the challenge faced by both Reġjun Nofsinhar per se, as well as the research team, in identifying foreign representatives of the major communities who resided specifically in the area of study, that is in localities from Reġjun Nofsinhar. This limitation hindered the ability to target specific individuals or groups within the actual foreign community in the Region.

In order to still gather information to represent such communities, organisations representing these foreign communities at a national level were contacted. This meant that some of the answers might not be specifically related to the Region per se but to the overall national feel of such foreign community in terms of Local and Regional Councils. In order to try and mitigate this limitation, the representatives were asked to specifically answer the questions in relation to their fellow countrymen residing in the Regions, in which they make part of the top 50% of the foreign community (being guided accordingly, specifying such regions and the localities these include). Moreover, the representatives at a national level were also asked to highlight and point out instances whereby their compatriots face different experiences in different areas they reside in, if any.

Another limitation arose when attempting to reach representatives from the foreign population through organisations. As indicated in Table 9 above, not all organisations replied to the researchers' invite. This limitation had a direct impact on the number of participants. However, the team sent emails and made reminder calls to collect as many responses as possible.

Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that, given the small sample size and limited number of responses, the findings cannot be really generalisable. However, they give a preliminary indication of the sentiment of foreign communities in the Region, and can be used as a stepping stone for further research in the future, specifically on the foreign cohorts in the Regions' localities.

Hence, despite the listed limitations, the research team continuously adapted their strategies and made additional efforts to encourage participation and meaningful data collection. By actively addressing these limitations, their efforts helped to strengthen the validity and reliability of the findings.





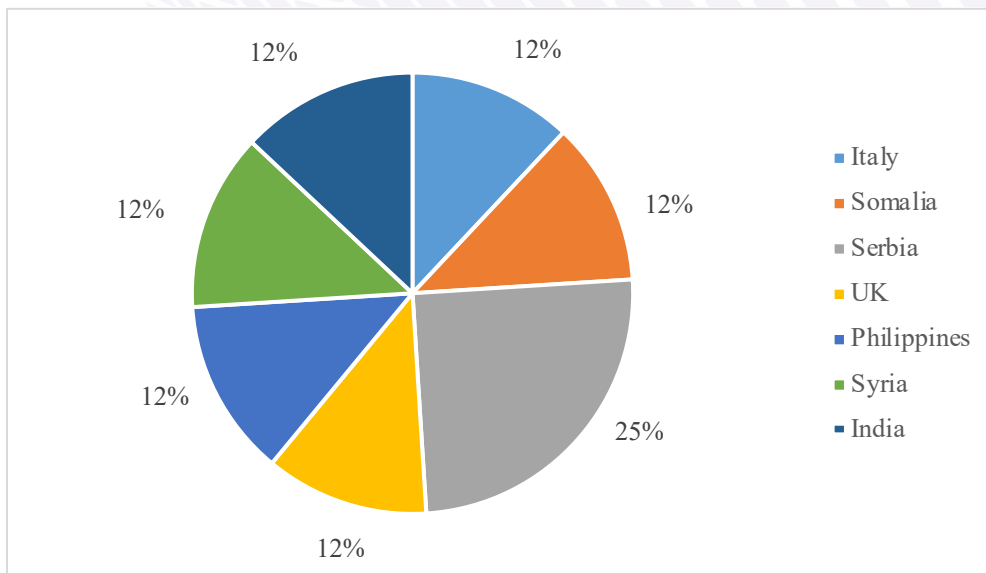
4. ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

The following section outlines the major findings obtained from the semi-structured interview/survey which was conducted with the 8 different community leaders representing the 7 top nationalities, which make up to c. 45% of the foreign communities in the region. These include Italy, India, the Philippines, the Syrian Arab Republic, the UK, Serbia, and Somalia, as outlined in Table 9 in the methodology section above.

4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

When looking at the number of respondents who agreed to answer such a survey, 7 community leaders agreed to participate. These included one from each community and 2 Serbian representatives, as indicated in Figure 7 below.

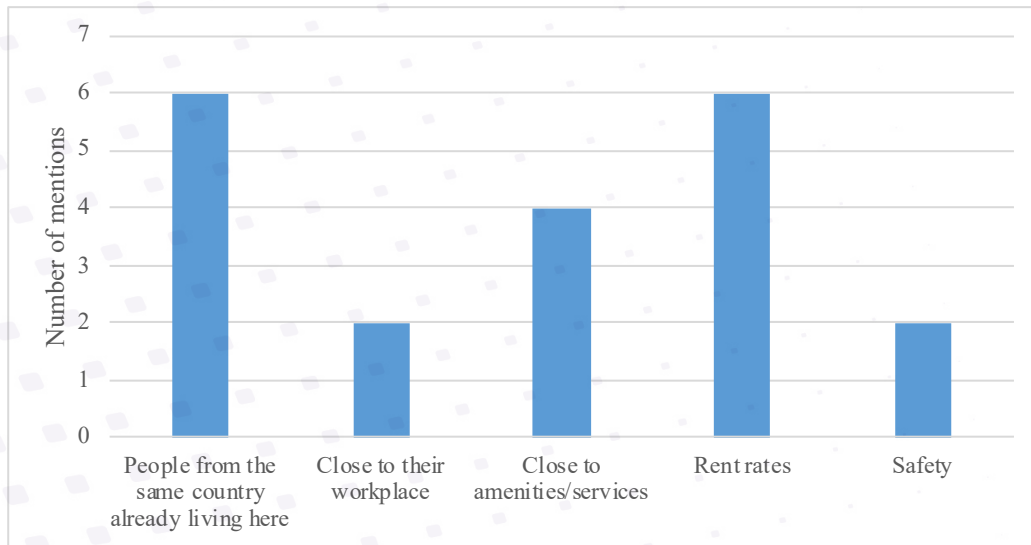
Figure 7: Percentage of respondents per foreign community



The respondents were also asked to disclose for how long they had been acting in the role of their community's representatives. Answers varied from 6 months up to 12 years, with an average of 6.5 years' representation. This indicates the volatile nature of such foreign organisations, whereby, in some instances, the mobile nature of migrants might also lead to turnover of the leadership teams, which are a key element to integration.

The representatives were asked about the major factors that attract their communities to the localities where they reside. The findings revealed that the majority of respondents (88%, 6 mentions) identified 'rental rates' as one of the main pull factors. However, the Somali communities did not select this option. Another 88% of respondents (6 mentions) mentioned that 'people from the same country already living there' was also a significant factor. In this case, the Italian communities did not select this option. Additionally, 'being close to amenities' was mentioned 4 times (50%). Safety, on the other hand, was only chosen by one Serbian representative and the Filipino community (25%, 2 mentions), as indicated in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Major factors that attract the foreign community to reside in the Region



4.2 QUALITY OF LIFE

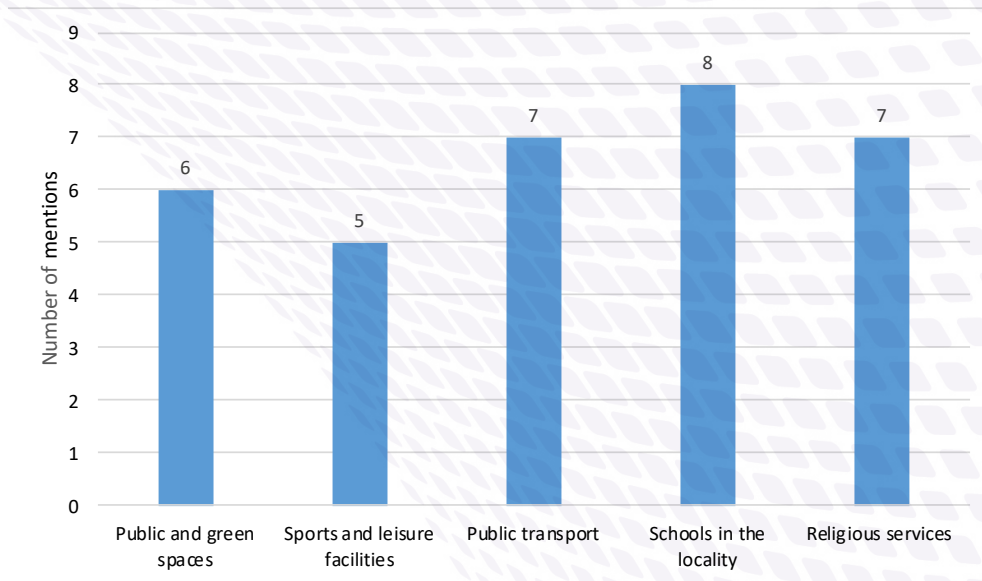
When asked whether their community living in the Region is satisfied or otherwise with the location they live in, all representatives answered satisfied (100% - 8 mentions). When asked specifically what their communities like the most about the areas they reside in, 3 communities (Italians and Indians) mentioned safety, calmness, and quietness as satisfactory factor. Syrians, Serbians, and British mentioned how their community members like their localities since other compatriots live in the area and/or socialising is easier. Another three communities (Serbian, Somali, and Filipino), mentioned that the areas are close to either their work or to amenities such as schools or health care services. Two representatives (Serbia and UK) mentioned that proximity to the sea and beaches is also a plus.

Despite all respondents mentioning that their communities are satisfied with the areas they reside in, when asked if there was anything they were unsatisfied with, many outlined a number of issues. The biggest challenge issued was that of “time in traffic” and/or parking (5 mentions). Garbage and hygiene were also issues outlined by 3 different communities, with one respondent specifying, “Bad hygiene, bad organisation regarding the trash pickup, not enough trash bins on the streets, no covers for the rain or sun on the bus stops.” Other issues which were mentioned only once each included, “lack of safety”, “pollution,” and “not enough buses”. Interestingly, one community complained of “not much involvement with the locals” in the area, whilst another, on the contrary, mentioned having too much of a “mix of nationalities.” This points directly to the tensions that a diverse community might be facing in Regjun Nofsinhar.

The foreign representatives were also asked about which services and/or amenities they make use of in their communities/localities. All respondents mentioned that they make use of ‘schools’. Almost all communities (88% - 7 mentions) referred to using ‘public transport’, with only the Syrian representatives not mentioning this service. Regarding ‘religious services’, all communities make use of the services, except for one of the two Serbian representatives (88% - 7 mentions).

Moreover, 75% (6 mentions), stated that they use 'public and green spaces' (excluding the British and one of the Serbian Representatives), whilst 63% (5 mentions), stated that they use 'sports and leisure facilities' (excluding Syrians, Filipinos, and Indians Representatives). This latter finding is interesting because it appears that the Asian and Syrian representatives in the survey do not use any sporting facilities in the region. This could indicate a lack of amenities available for them to practice their own sports, or they may simply not be aware of them. These answers are illustrated in Figure 9.

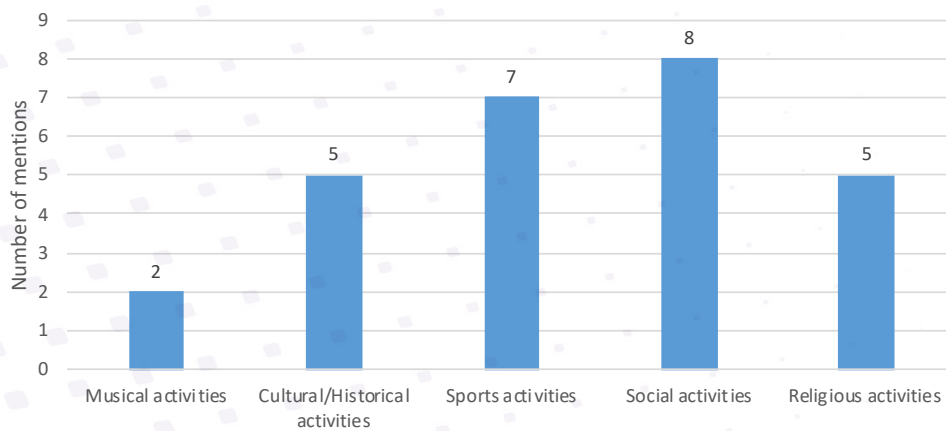
Figure 9: Community services and amenities used by own community members



As highlighted in Figure 10, when asked whether their communities participate in activities as a community level, all representatives mentioned at least two types of activities they would be active in. 88% of respondents (7 mentions, excluding Somalia), mentioned that their communities participate in 'social activities'. Another 88% of respondents (7 mentions, excluding the UK) mentioned participation in religious activities and another 7 mentions (88%) came from 'sports activities' (excluding Syria). Notably, even though the Asian representatives (Indian, and Filipinos) in this survey previously did not mention any sporting facilities in the region, this shows that they are somehow still actively engaged. Furthermore, 50% (4 mentions) of the respondents expressed their community's involvement in 'cultural and historical activities'. Only 25% (2 mentions by Italy and one Serbian representative) mentioned 'musical activities' as something their community attends to.

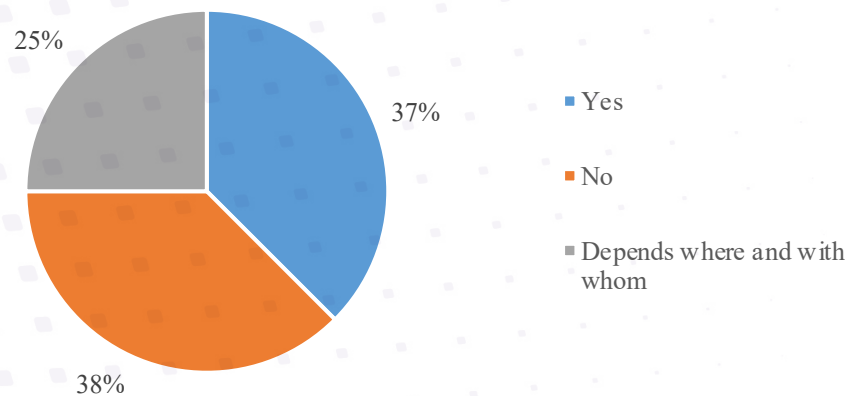
It is worth noting that the Italian representative mentioned that overall, their community members are active in all the different events suggested. On the other hand, the British representatives only mentioned sports and social activities as the main interests of their community, while Syrians mentioned social and religious activities. Somali participants solely engage in sports and religious activities.

Figure 10: Which activities is the community active in



When asked whether they feel that their community is integrated within Maltese society, it became clear that for most communities it was an easy yes or no answer. Nevertheless, for the sake of analysis, they have been recoded as 'yes', 'no', and 'depends where and with whom', as outlined in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Are the people from the community integrated in the Maltese Society?



Italians and British both mentioned that their communities feel very integrated within Malta, both referring to language as an enabling element. Given that Maltese tend to know how to speak both Italian and English, this has helped such communities to integrate.

Italians also mentioned that “Maltese people are very welcoming. There are a lot of Italian restaurants and facilities, a lot of multicultural events where you can meet people from different nationalities.” On the other hand, Indians, mentioned that they feel integrated, but also highlighted that this does not come as a choice, “If they are not integrated, they can’t live as a community”.

The Filipino representative mentioned that they feel integrated, however, delving deeper in their answer sheds light on the fact that they do not feel entirely integrated. This is because the Filipino community mentioned that they feel integrated with “fellow Filipinos and TCNs.” On the other hand, Serbian, Somali, and Syrian representatives answered that they do not feel integrated. On the one hand, there seems to be a lack of interest from the community members themselves: “Serbians like to stay on their own” (Serbian Representative), “For sure they don’t feel that they are integrated because they are always with the same Syrian friend morning & evening” (Syrian Representative). With regards to the Somali community, the representative highlighted the intersection of race, class, and status as hindering integration, stating, “We do not feel integrated with the rest of the society. The problems are because of race, status and class as well. And because of documentation we cannot do much too”. Moreover, when it comes to the Serbian community, there is also a sense of acceptance towards not being accepted and, therefore, not trying to overcome such barriers. One Serbian representative mentioned how Serbians tend to “feel like victims of racism in most cases, however by time [they] learned to accept that”.

When asked what could help integrate people further, Somalis mentioned the importance of community-led initiatives and the better availability of language courses. The Filipino community mentioned the need to “socialise and involve themselves in the communities” they live in, similar to one of the Serbian community leaders who mentioned that possibly “more events by the councils could help”. The British representative also outlined that having more knowledge on who to reach out when needed could help in the integration process since currently it was mentioned that reaching local councils is quite hard. Furthermore, one Serbian community leader emphasised the need to remove any prejudice and embrace respect:

People should get to know others first before deciding to discriminate simply because of a few bad examples they heard of about those nationals. Every country has some bad apples, taking only the bad ones into consideration when so many more good ones exist too, is unfair. (Serbian Representative)

Finally, the Syrian community leader shared a different perspective on the importance of integration, highlighting that the preparedness for integration should come from the Maltese community rather than the foreign one: “Don’t ask for integration if you are not ready for it. Don’t say: “imma Malta żghira” [because Malta is small], I agree that Malta is a small country, so why are you importing more foreigners if you are not ready for it”.

4.3 LOCAL COUNCILS

The foreign representatives were also asked whether they believe that people within their community know about their local councils and what the role of the local councillors is. Only 38% equivalent to 3 community leaders (Italian, Filipino and Indian), mentioned that their communities are aware of Local Councils. All the rest mentioned that their communities are not familiar.

Subsequently, they were asked whether they were satisfied with their local council and whether they are involved in the local councils’ activities. Unsurprisingly, those who were not aware of the local council, mentioned that they were neither satisfied nor participated in the events organised by the local councils. However, the three communities, which seemingly are

aware of their local councils, mentioned that they are indeed satisfied and are involved in the activities and events that are organised by them.

When asked whether they think that their community members feel that they can approach such local councils, despite being foreigners, Italians, Filipinos, Syrians, and Indians mentioned that they feel they can approach if needed. Somalis also answered yes, only for the reason to approach for the social benefits services. Serbians and the British said that given that many of their community members “don’t know they exist” they do not really approach them.

Additionally, representatives were asked whether their concerns as communities were being addressed by the local councils. The Indian representative mentioned that their concerns are seen to. However, it was also mentioned that when renewing the ID cards, they face the issue that local councils do not accept their blue paper (the temporary document). Italians, Serbians, British, and Syrians all mentioned that their concerns are not addressed:

“No, because for example as for a report about a rental scam, Italians don’t receive the right assistance. In the local council the functionaries make questions and give you a document about the query but then they don’t fix the issue.” (Italian Representative)

“No, not at all. First, [there is] no safety nowadays and [there are] a lot of nationalities together. No one cares of the environment and the place where they live in. (Serbian Representative)

“No. Mainly the garbage collection; parking permits for example so difficult to get through and actually get the service requested.” (British Representative)

“No. We had meetings with two of local council Mayors where they were complaining about rubbish collection problems by Syrians & some “dirt” under trees in Raħal Ġdid. We advised the Mayors to start immediately with writing fines. Unfortunately nothing has been done.” (Syrian Representative)

4.4 REGIONAL COUNCILS

Similarly, the same questions were asked with regards to the Regional Councils. The same three representatives (Italian, Filipino, and Indian) mentioned that their communities are aware of Regional Councils, and are satisfied with them. They are also involved in the events organised by such Councils. All the rest mentioned that their communities are not familiar, nor do they participate in events by such Councils.

When asked whether their communities feel they can approach the Regional Council, despite them being foreigners, 4 communities answered in the positive, namely, the Italians, Syrians, Filipinos and Indians. In particular, the Syrian representative highlighted that notwithstanding the fact that much of the effort is not heard or taken seriously, they still approach if needed.

On the other hand, the Somali representative highlighted the challenges faced when trying to approach the Regional Council, stating:

“It is difficult to approach especially when seeing that people who work are not trained to deal with migrants. Mistakes are being done, and because of this lack of knowledge, migrants are being put into situations which can be avoided in the first place.” (Somali Representative)



Additionally, one of the Serbian representatives mentioned that it is difficult to approach them since their opening hours are during the time people work. Moreover, there seems to be a language barrier when approaching such authorities. The British representative, despite not facing such a language barrier, still said that it is “difficult to do so especially if you’re new. [Knowing] whom to reach out and contact it’s not that easy.”

Finally, when asked whether the Regional Council addresses the concerns of the communities, the Italian and Indian communities said yes, four did ‘no’ answer, whilst two said that their concerns were not addressed, with one respondent stating, “If they want to address something they never come to us and communicate”.

4.5 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Comments were made about how the Southern Region is a good place to live, citing the convenient proximity of people they know and various services. However, one respondent specifically pointed out a sense of disconnection between the Maltese and foreigners, particularly in Marsa and Hamrun. Another respondent emphasised the low level of integration in Raħal Ġdid and stressed the importance of: “They should teach the foreigners more about the Maltese Language, better work practise, invite them to cultural meetings. Not just eat and leave, but to sit down and educate them about taxes, renting contract & their legal documents.”



5. CONCLUSION

This Annex is an attempt to give a voice to the foreign residents in the Region, which in Reġjun Nofsinhar are indeed a substantial percentage of the community, 17.60% (18,757) as per the Census 2021 data. And which are year-on-year increasing, as proven in the latest parliamentary question indicating around 23,524 foreign individuals residing in the Region, as at September 2023.

Foreign individuals appear to be primarily drawn to the area because of its proximity to people from their own nationality and to various amenities and services. While having a close-knit community of people from the same nationality can serve as a support system for these individuals, it is crucial for the Local and Regional Councils to ensure proper integration. Failing to do so may result in the formation of isolated groups or the emergence of “ghetto-like” communities.

However, it is evident that other foreign communities, such as Somalis, Syrians, and Serbians, either feel completely excluded and subjected to racism or only partially integrated in certain aspects of their lives. For instance, the Filipino community may feel more integrated within specific groups, such as TCNs (third-country nationals) amongst themselves. It is imperative for the Regional and Local Councils to actively pursue a comprehensive and inclusive integration process.

Despite initially stating that the communities are satisfied with their localities, all respondents mentioned areas of concern or issues with their localities later on in the survey. This might indicate that such communities might not immediately be willing to open up about challenges, possibly internalising the belief that if they are not Maltese, they will either not be heard or no action will be taken, as mentioned by one respondent. However, with some probing, it became evident that the major two issues in terms of localities are i) cleanliness and garbage and ii) parking and traffic. These two issues had also been raised by the respondents of the telephonic survey.

Foreign communities seemingly make use of services in the community, with mostly being schools, public transport, and religious services. Many also participate in some of the activities in the community, with the highest being social activities and sports activities. Such activities can be capitalised on by the Regional and Local Councils to try and integrate foreigners further.

Ultimately, through the semi-structured survey, it became clear that most of the foreign communities might not be aware of the Local nor of the Regional Councils, and only those who were aware of them felt they could approach them. Yet, even those being aware of their existence, sometimes they felt that the Local Councils and Regional Councils did not address their specific needs and concerns.

It is worth noting that this semi-structured survey and this additional part of the study aim to give a general overview of the current situation with regards to foreigners in Reġjun Nofsinhar, however, in no way should it be generalised to all foreigners who are also diverse within their own nationalities and groups. Nevertheless, it should be considered as a first step to understanding the perceptions of quality of life and the awareness of foreigners in terms of the Local and Regional Councils.

The research team would recommend that following such a preliminary study, the Regional Council, together with the support of the Local Councils, would carry out a more in-depth

study specifically on the foreign residents residing in their localities. By further understanding their needs and current challenges, the Regional Council would be able to come up with a needs-based action plan, which could also act as a fulfillment to the Integration Policy obligation that each locality has.

In light of the changing demographics and the increased presence of foreign individuals in the communities, the Local and Regional Councils, might be the best placed entities to find ways to use available spaces (both physical as well as cultural or societal) in which residents are brought together and find practical and tangible ways to transform the notion of 'inclusion' found in policies into actual every-day practices.

References

- Arts Council Malta. (n.d.). Regional Cultural Strategy 2022-2027. North. <https://artscouncilmalta.gov.mt/files/uploads/misc/Arts%20Council%20Malta%20Regional%20Cultural%20Strategy%20Booklet%20North%20EN.pdf>
- Berger, S. (2022, August 21). NSO data does not represent accurate number of St Paul's Bay residents – mayor. Independent. <https://www.independent.com.mt/articles/2022-08-21/local-news/NSO-data-does-not-represent-accurate-number-of-St-Paul-s-Bay-residents-mayor-6736245301>
- Bonnici, J. (2019, November 1). Two Mayors Of Maltese Towns Dealing With Migration Have One Message: Integration Is Way Forward. Lovin Malta. <https://lovinmalta.com/news/two-mayors-of-maltese-towns-dealing-with-migration-have-one-message-integration-is-way-forward/>
- Borg, N. (2023, February 17). Who are the foreign nationals living in Malta? Times of Malta. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/foreign-nationals-living-malta.1014183>
- Calleja, C. (2022, August 27). Hamrun council and Syrian community to work together after brawl. Times of Malta. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/Hamrun-council-syrian-community-work-together-brawl.976886>
- Carabott, S. (2014, July 30). Giving power to the people: Social centre embraces multiculturalism at St Paul's Bay. Times of Malta. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/Giving-power-to-the-people.529821>
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners. *Successful qualitative research*, 1-400.
- European Website on Integration. (2018, December 14). Local Integration Charter launched in Malta. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/local-integration-charter-launched-malta_en
- George Vella. (n.d.). Home. [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/PresidentofMalta>
- Human Rights Directorate (2019). Local Integration Charter and Action Plan.
- Human Rights Directorate (2021). Local Integration Charter and Action Plan Addendum. https://humanrights.gov.mt/en/Documents/Addendum%20to%20LCA_signed.pdf
- Kunsill Lokali San Pawl il-Baħar. (n.d.). Home. [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved December 10, 2023, from
- Malta Housing Authority. (2023). 2023 H1 Update: Registered Rental Contracts in Malta. https://housingauthority.gov.mt/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Update_on_the_Registered_Rental_Contracts_in_Malta_2023.pdf
- Micallef, K., & Xuereb, M. (2017, September 8). Migrant open centre in Marsa will soon close. Times of Malta. <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/migrant-open-centre-in-marsa-will-soon-close.657503>
- National Statistics Office. (2023). Census of Population and Housing 2021. Final Report. Population, migration & other social characteristics. Vol. 1.
- Minister for the Interior, Security, Reforms, and Equality (2023). Parliamentary Question 12732: Persuni residenti f' Malta u Għawdex. <https://pq.gov.mt/PQWeb.nsf/7561f7daddf0609ac1257d1800311f18/c1257d2e0046dfa1c1258a590043bed3!OpenDocument>
- Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation (2022). Parliamentary Question 3923: Skejjel tal-Gvern: Barranin. <https://parlament.mt/en/paper-laid/?id=36837>

- Kunsill Reġjonali tan-Nofsinar. (n.d.). Home. [Facebook page]. Facebook. Retrieved December 18, 2023, from <https://www.facebook.com/regjunnofsinar>
- Rouder, J., Saucier, O., Kinder, R., & Jans, M. (2021). What to do with all those open-ended responses? Data visualization techniques for survey researchers. *Survey Practice*.
- Shankar, P. (2023, December 4). Malta welcomes foreign workers to fill labour shortage, but repels refugees. *Aljazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2023/12/4/malta-welcomes-foreign-workers-to-fill-labour-shortage-but-repels-refugees>
- The Journal. (2023, December 4). Marsa: the future's entertainment destination. <https://thejournal.mt/marsa-the-futures-entertainment-destination/>
- Watson, G. (2019, September 18). Could Malta's local councils lead in the integration of asylum seekers? *Newsbook Malta*. <https://newsbook.com.mt/en/could-maltas-local-councils-lead-the-integration-of-asylum-seekers/>





APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Table 3

Change in foreign nationals per locality from 2021 Census to September 2023 PQ data

Nofsinhar	NSO Census 2021	PQ - Sept 2023	% in foreign population
Birżebbuġa	3,425	2,956	-13.69%
Hal Ghaxaq	348	563	61.78%
Hal Luqa	1,052	1,477	40.40%
Hal Qormi	2,136	3,256	52.43%
Il-Gudja	225	373	65.78%
Il-Hamrun	2,544	3,510	37.97%
Il-Marsa	1,433	1,413	-1.40%
Iż-Żejtun	637	931	46.15%
Marsaskala	4,647	6,121	31.72%
Marsaxlokk	504	624	23.81%
Santa Luċija	66	104	57.58%
Santa Venera	1,740	2,196	26.21%
Total	18,757	23,524	25.41%

APPENDIX B

Social Impact Assessment - Regional Councils

Semi Structured Interviews – with Foreign National Representatives

This semi-structured interview is part of a social impact assessment study in terms of regional councils in Malta and Gozo. As a representative you are kindly asked to answer the below questions in relation to the lived experience of the _____ community members you represent, residing in *the Port, Eastern, Northern, Southern and Western Regions* (with localities in each region outlined in the table below).²

In case you are aware of different lived experiences, depending on the localities of residence it would be greatly appreciated if you could indicate/ mention these in the answers below.

² Port Region includes the following localities: Birgu, Bormla, Fgura, Furjana, Il-Belt, Isla, Kalkara, Paola, Tarxien, Xgħajra, Żabbar
Eastern Region includes the following localities: Birkirkara, Gharghur, Gżira, Hal Lija, Iklin, Msida, Pembroke, Pieta, San Ġiljan, Sliema, Swieqi, Ta' Xbiex
Northern Region includes the following localities: Hal Balzan, H'Attard, Il-Mellieħa, Il-Mosta, In-Naxxar, L-Imġarr, L-Imtarfa , San Ġwann, San Pawl Il-Baħar
Southern Region includes the following localities: Birżebbuġa, Hal Ghaxaq, Hal Qormi, Il-Gudja, Il-Marsa, Iż-Żejtun, Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk, Santa Luċija, Santa Venera, Hal Luqa, Il-Hamrun
Western Region includes the following localities: L-Imdina, Ħaż-Żebbuġ, Is-Siġġiewi, Ħad-Dingli, Ħal-Kirkop, L-Imqabba, Il-Qrendi, Ir-Rabat, Hal-Safi, Iż-Żurrieq

Sociodemographic Details of representative

1. Which foreign community are you representing? _____
2. How long have you been representing this community?

3. What do you think are the major factors which attract the group you represent to reside in localities they currently live in. (Tick all that apply) (Kindly indicate if any of the chosen options is specific to a particular locality/region they reside in)
 - People from the same country already living here _____
 - Close to their workplace _____
 - Close to amenities/ services _____
 - Rent rates _____
 - Safety _____
 - Other (please specify) _____

QUALITY OF LIFE

4. Do you think, the people you are representing, are satisfied or dissatisfied with the regions in which they live? (Tick Satisfied/ Dissatisfied for each Region)

	Port	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
Satisfied					
Dissatisfied					

5. What are they most satisfied with in the locality/ies they reside in? (If particular to a locality, kindly specify which one)

6. What are they most dissatisfied with in the locality/ies they reside in? (If particular to a locality, kindly specify which one)

7. Do the people you are representing make use of any of the below services in the community? (Tick all that apply, for each region).

Region	Port	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
Public and green spaces					
Sports and leisure facilities					
Public transport					
Schools in the locality					

Religious services					
None					

Other (please specify) _____

8. Are the people you are representing active in the life of the community? (Tick all that apply, for each region).

Region	Port	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
Musical activities					
Cultural/ Historical activities					
Sports activities					
Social activities					
Religious activities					
None – not active					

9. Other (please specify) _____

10. Do you think the people you represent feel integrated in the regions they live in?

Region	Port	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
Yes, integrated					
No, not integrated					

- If yes, in what way/s?

- If no, why is this the case? -

11. What could help integrating them (further?)

LOCAL COUNCIL

12. Overall, do you think the people you represent are:
- Familiar with their local council and what local councillors do?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Satisfied with their local council?



- Yes
- No

c. Involved in the activities /events of the local council?

- Yes
- No

13. Do you think they feel that their concerns are addressed by the local council of their area?
(Please give 2 or 3 specific examples of when concerns are or are not addressed that justify your answer)

REGIONAL COUNCIL

14. Overall, do you think the people you represent are:

a. Familiar with their regional council?

- Yes
- No

b. Satisfied with their regional council?

- Yes
- No

c. Involved in the activities /events of the regional council?

- Yes
- No

15. Do you think they feel that their concerns are addressed by the regional council? (Please give 2 or 3 specific examples of when concerns are or are not addressed that justify your answer)

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

16. Would you like to add anything else?
