L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing

Social Impact Assessment Reġjun Tramuntana

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

REĠJUN TRAMUNTANA

Social Impact Assessment
Reġjun Tramuntana

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

It is with great pleasure and a sense of responsibility that I introduce this Social Impact Assessment for Reġjun Tramuntana, conducted by the esteemed University of Malta. This assessment marks a significant step in understanding and evaluating the potential effects of our initiatives on the communities and individuals within the region.

The University of Malta has a longstanding reputation for academic excellence and a commitment to contributing valuable insights to societal development. This comprehensive Social Impact Assessment aligns seamlessly with our dedication to responsible and sustainable community engagement. By partnering with a reputable institution, we aim to ensure the integrity and objectivity of the assessment, providing an accurate reflection of the social implications associated with local government and private initiatives in Reġjun Tramuntana.

As we venture into projects and endeavors that could shape the future of the region, it is imperative to understand not only the environmental and economic implications but, more importantly, the impact on the lives and well-being of the local residents. This assessment delves into the complex web of social dynamics, seeking to identify both positive and negative outcomes, allowing us to adapt and refine our strategies for maximum positive influence.

I express my sincere gratitude to the University of Malta for their dedication, expertise, and rigorous approach in conducting this assessment. Their commitment to academic rigor and unbiased analysis ensures that the findings presented herein are grounded in empirical evidence, providing a solid foundation for informed decision-making.

I encourage all stakeholders, including community members, local authorities, and project collaborators, to carefully review the insights presented in this Social Impact Assessment. It is our collective responsibility to utilize this information to foster positive social change, preserving the cultural heritage and enhancing the overall quality of life for the residents of Reġjun Tramuntana.

We look forward to incorporating the findings into our ongoing projects and using them as a guide for future initiatives. Together, with a shared commitment to sustainable development, we can create lasting positive impacts on the social fabric of Reġjun Tramuntana.

Clifford Galea Vella
President
Reġjun Tramuntana

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 on 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 Reġjun Tramuntana and its ever growing and very diverse population, the particular, and possibly divergent needs of its urban and rural localities, as well as the rich cultural and ecological assets found within the Region, amongst others.

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

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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, Reġjun Tramuntana 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 Reġjun Tramuntana'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 Tramuntana 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, Reġjun Tramuntana's residents comprised those residing in the region's 9 localities, namely: Ħal Balzan, Ħ'Attard, Il-Mellieħa, Il-Mosta, In-Naxxar, L-Imġarr, L-Imtarfa, San Ġwann and San Pawl Il-Baħar. As at November 2021, Reġjun Tramuntana's total resident population stood at 519,562, 22% of which were non- Maltese.

The methodology adopted comprised quantitative and qualitative components. The research team designed and administered a telephonic questionnaire with a sample of residents of the localities forming part of Reġjun Tramuntana (400 residents, margin of error ± 4.9%.). The research team also conducted two focus groups as a qualitative data collection, one with councillors and the other with mayors from the local councils of the Region and administrative staff of the region. Additionally, in view of the ever-increasing presence of foreigners in the localities mentioned, data collection from 8 representatives of the top 7 nationalities residing in this region, which make up the top 51% of foreign communities in the region (Italy, UK, 2 from Serbia, Philippines, Bulgaria, India and Nepal) 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 study show that, at the time of data collection, most of the residents of the region seemed to be satisfied with their residential localities as a place to live in, with 60.75% being either very satisfied or fairly satisfied of their locality. 52.5% of residents seemed to feel that there was a high sense of community. Residents expressed that integration of elderly people was considered high (68.5%), however, integration of people with disability seemed to rank quite low with only 38.25% believing that their integration is high.

Residents seemed to be somewhat satisfied with the schools in the locality (56.3%), yet, particularly dissatisfied with traffic and parking (70.4%), air and noise pollution (54.3%) as well as the increasing rate of development in the urban areas (53%). Mentioned factors which could lead to better quality of life, included, more cleanliness (21 mentions), lower levels of development (17 mentions) and managing better the parking and traffic issues (40 mentions) present in the localities.

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 29.5% of the respondents stating that they knew a fair amount or a great deal of the local councillor's role. This awareness was even lower when speaking about Reginal Councils. 50.5% of respondents did not know which Regional Council they pertained to, saying 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, give more information, and create more awareness on their roles and responsibilities, but also make sure that there is better maintenance and upkeep of the localities.

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, 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 leave such entities feeling powerless.

FOREIGN ANNEX

Prima facie, foreign representatives mentioned that overall foreigners seem to be satisfied with their localities, with the major pull-factor being the low rental rates, yet through the semi-structured survey, concerns were raised. The majority of foreign community members are unaware of Local and Regional councils, with only Italians, Filipinos and Indians mentioning that their communities know, are satisfied and participate in the events of such Councils. Foreigners generally do not seem to feel integrated in the community, unless their language acts as an enabler (UK and Italy). Moreover, issues of racism and discrimination, as well as lack of cleanliness and traffic problems have been highlighted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In line with the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative research, recommendations for policy, practice as well as further research have been put forward 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; 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, impact 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 Tramuntana 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 Tramuntana. The researchers also conducted two focus groups, one with the mayors and the regional council's administrative staff and another with local councillors 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/assent 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 determinator 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 is 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, the 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 Reġjun Tramuntana.

3. Context

This study is not being carried out in a vacuum and it is imperative that one understand the context in which the Reġjun Tramuntana (Northern 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

Mellieħa, St. Paul's Bay, Mġarr, Mtarfa, Mosta, Naxxar, San Ġwann, Balzan, Attard.

Lija, Iklin, Birkirkara, Gzira, St. Julians, Ta' Xbiex, Imsida, Swieqi, Pembroke, Gharghur, Pieta.

Mdina, Siġġiewi, Żebbuġ, Dingli, Rabat, Kirkop, Imqabba, Qrendi, Safi, Żurrieq.

Birgu, Isla, Bormla, Il-Belt, Furjana, Żabbar, Fgura, Kalkara, Raħal il-Ġdid, Tarxien, Xgħajra.

Qormi, Ħamrun, St. Venera, Marsa, Birżebbuġa, Marsaxlokk, Marsascala, Ħal-Għaxaq, Gudja, Żejtun, St. Luċia, Luqa

Rabat, Fontana, Għajnsielem, Għarb, Għasri, Kerċem, Munxar, Nadur, Qala, San Lawrenz, Sannat, Xagħra, Xewkija, Żebbuġ.

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 comprise 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

- 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 TRAMUNTANA

Reġjun Tramuntana is made up of twelve localities, namely Ħal Balzan, Ħ'Attard, Il-Mellieħa, Il-Mosta, In-Naxxar, L-Imġarr, L-Imtarfa, San Ġwann and San Pawl Il-Baħar. According to NSO data, the region covers c. 82.23km2, equivalent to circa 26% 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 Tramuntana's total resident population stood at 123,866 an increase of 33,315 (36.79%) since 2011. The locality which registered the highest increase in population was that of San Pawl Il-Baħar, with an increase of 15,647 individuals (95.44%), currently registering 32,042 residents. All other localities registered an increase in their population, except for L-Imtarfa which registered a negligble decrease of 0.74%. These changes are illustrated in the Figure 3.2 and Table 3.3 below. (NSO, 2023a).

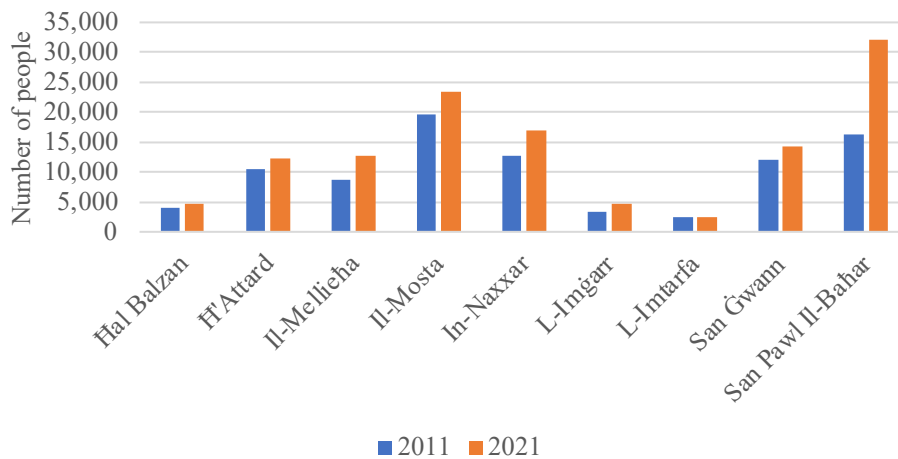*Figure 3.2 | Population per locality in 2011 and 2021*

Figure 3.3 | Population per locality in 2011 and 2021

Localities	2011	2021
Ħal Balzan	4,101	4,774
Ħ'Attard	10,553	12,268
Il-Mellieħa	8,661	12,738
Il-Mosta	19,750	23,482
In-Naxxar	12,875	16,912
L-Imġarr	3,479	4,840
L-Imtarfa	2,585	2,566
San Ġwann	12,152	14,244
San Pawl Il-Baħar	16,395	32,042
Total	90,551	123,866

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 28.17% of Malta's foreign population (32,524 individuals) reside in Reġjun Tramuntana. This number of non-Maltese nationals amounts to 26.26% of the Region's total resident population. San Pawl Il-Baħar has the highest number of foreign nationals living in the locality (53.94%, 17,282) with Il-Mellieħa having 27.69% of its total population as foreign and San Ġwann having 24.48% of its population being non-Maltese. L-Imtarfa only has around 1.99% of its population as foreigners, amounting to circa 51 individuals (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.

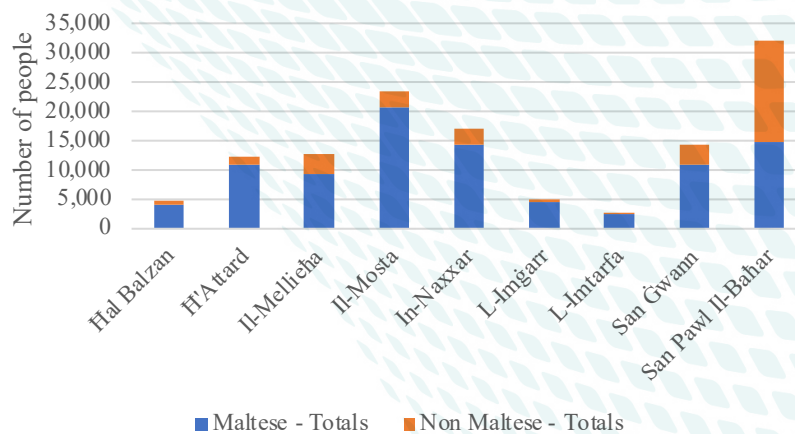**Figure 3.3 | Population composition by Maltese and non-Maltese individuals**

Table 3.4 | Gender and nationality per locality

Localities	Gender		Nationality	
	Male	Females	Maltese	Non- Maltese
Ħal Balzan	2,344	2,430	3,949	825
Ħ'Attard	6,193	6,075	10,885	1,383
Il-Mellieħa	6,561	6,177	9,211	3,527
Il-Mosta	11,748	11,734	20,632	2,850
In-Naxxar	8,459	8,453	14,251	2,661
L-Imġarr	2,484	2,356	4,382	458
L-Imtarfa	1,248	1,318	2,515	51
San Ġwann	7,355	6,889	10,757	3,487
San Pawl Il-Baħar	17,482	14,560	14,760	17,282
Total	63,874	59,992	91,342	32,524

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 Tramuntana, in 2021, this stood at around 1,506 people per Km2. Despite the fact that areas like Ħal Balzan are very densely populated, with around 7,998 people per Km2 due to the very limited area (0.6 Km2), other localities such as L-Imġarr and Il-Mellieħa, still have a relatively low density, recording 300 and 563 people per Km2 respectively. This is due to the fact that these localities still have a number of open and green spaces and country side which is not inhabited. These localities decrease the average population density of the entire region (NSO, 2023a).

The average age of the population in this region stands at 40.9, slightly lower than the Maltese average of 41.7. Within the region the average age of women (41.4) is higher than that of men (40.3) overall. Moreover, the average age of Maltese nationals (42.1) is substantially higher than that of non-Maltese (36.5), 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 Tramuntana, this stands at 44.9% (Vs 46.7% for Malta). The old age dependency ratio stands at 24.8% (Vs 27.6% for Malta) (NSO, 2022). This indicates that the percentage of elderly in comparison with people of working age is lower in this region, than in Malta overall. This stands to show that the Region has a lower rate of elderly within its community when compared to Malta as a whole, something to be kept in mind by the Local Councils and Regional Council when developing strategies, policies and activities for its citizens.

3.2.2 Vulnerabilities

It is worth noting that in Reġjun Tramuntana there seems to be a lower-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 in the Region amounted to 35,488 individuals (c.20.84% of all beneficiaries in Malta). At a national level in 2020, around 33% of the population was on benefits (170,259 individuals), whilst for the Region, this rate was equal to 29.93% of the population. Mosta and L-Imġarr recorded the highest percentage of population on benefits, 35.96% and 35.08% respectively, as indicated in Table 3.5 (NSO, 2022).

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

Localities	Total Beneficiares	% of population
Ħal Balzan	1,552	32.74%
Ħ'Attard	3,749	31.84%
Il-Mellieħa	3,451	29.51%
Il-Mosta	7,729	35.96%
In-Naxxar	4,922	31.99%
L-Imġarr	1,398	35.08%
L-Imtarfa	845	32.35%
San Ġwann	4,424	29.28%
San Pawl Il-Baħar	7,418	23.34%
Totals	35,488	29.93%
Malta	170,259	32.99%

When looking closer at the type of benefits being taken by 6,235 individuals, being 5.26% of the population of the Region were on sickness benefits in the year 2020. This is lower than the 6.94% of the total Maltese population receiving sickness benefits. However, L-Imtarfa recorded 9.11% of its population claiming sickness benefits (NSO, 2022).

In terms of the disability benefits 1,717 individuals (1.45% of the Region's population) were receiving such benefits in 2020. This was in line with the national percentage of 1.83%. In terms of localities, more or less all localities recorded claimants to be between 1 and 2%, the highest being Il-Mosta at 1.92% (NSO, 2022).

When looking at old age benefits such as pensions, 14,150 individuals (i.e., 11.93% 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 Tramuntana there is a lower-than-average percentage of elderly people, as also indicated from the lower average age of residents. The areas with the highest old age benefits' beneficiaries were that of Ħal Balzan (16.24%), Ħ'Attard (14.4%) and Il-Mosta (14.22%). It is worth noting that the three localities also host elderly care homes, which might skew the average results. The area with the lowest old age benefits' beneficiaries is that of San Pawl Il-Baħar at 7.50%, this is due to the fact that many residents here are mostly foreign-working age individuals (NSO, 2022). Finally, when looking at the unemployment benefits 1.60% of the total Maltese population were beneficiaries. Similarly, 1.46% of the regional population benefitted from such governmental support. The highest locality with unemployment benefit beneficiaries was that of San Pawl Il-Baħar at 2.25% (NSO, 2022).

3.2.3 Housing

When looking at the data pertaining to housing and dwellings, it seems that 24.07% (71, 573 dwellings) of the property stock in Malta is found in Reġjun Tramuntana. 50,786 (71%) of these dwellings are considered to be main residential dwellings and the remaining 20,787 (29%) are considered secondary, seasonally used or vacant dwelling, as illustrated in Figure 3.4 below. In San Pawl Il-Baħar and Il-Mellieħa, there seems to be the highest proportion of secondary housing (37.3% and 36%). Both seaside villages have been traditionally known as localities for summer residences, including the Għadira and Armier areas. Nowadays, many of such secondary residences, especially in San Pawl Il-Baħar are being rented out to the foreign cohort of the population. Indeed 85.07% of dwellings in San Pawl Il-Baħar are either flats or penthouses. This percentage is much higher than the percentage at the Regional level (61.67%), and National level (52.66%), as illustrated in Figure 3.5 below (NSO, 2023b). On the other hand, more residential areas like Ħal Balzan, Ħ'Attard or in-Naxxar, have a higher-than-average proportion of terraced houses, semi/fully detached houses or maisonettes, with the average of the Region being 37.60% of the stock, and such localities amounting to more than 50% of their stock, specifically 55.2%, 63.76% and 54.29% respectively.
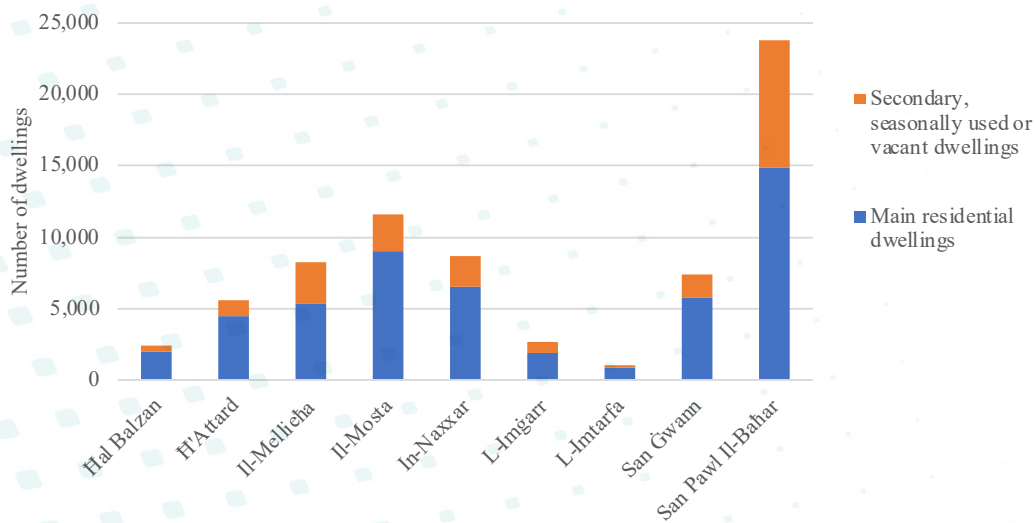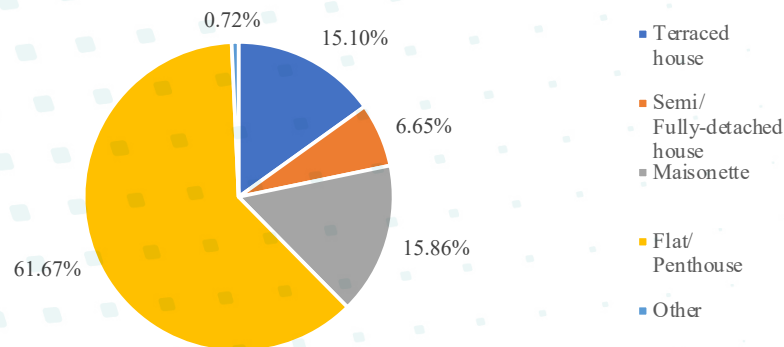
Figure 3.4 | Dwelling stock by occupancy

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 elderly care homes, most of which are privately owned and run, including Casa Arkati, Age Concern and Pax et Bonum (Il-Mosta), Roseville and St. Catherine's Home (Ħ'Attard), Casa Antonia (Ħal Balzan), Dar Sagra Familja, Golden Care and Simblija Home (Naxxar). Additionally other specific institutions are also present in the Region including, Dar il-Kaptan (L-Imtarfa), which is a respite home for persons with disability and their families; Dar Kenn għal-Saħħtek (L-Imtarfa), a residential, day care and out-patient facility aimed to provide support for people battling with eating disorders, as well as Dar Merħba Bik (Ħal Balzan), offering accommodation and other therapeutic services to females (and their children) being victims of domestic violence.

Moreover, in Reġjun Tramuntana one also finds the Balzan open centre for migrants, run by the Church, open for families and single women. The last publicly available data refers

to the year 2021 and indicates that 150 individuals resided in this centre (aditus, 2023). One must therefore keep in mind that these institutions make part of the social fabric of the localities in question and therefore, both the Local and Regional Councils should be aware of the mutual relationship between the wider society and such institutions

3.2.4 Industrial and commercial developments

Reġjun Tramuntana comprises of a variety of localities which prima facie might be considered as more of residential zones. Yet, many of these localities play a vital role in the commercial aspect of the Islands in different industries. Ħ'Attard for instance houses the 'Pitkalija' in Ta' Qali which is the main fruit and vegetable distribution centre, currently managed by the managing body founded in 2021, the Malta Food Agency (MFA). It is claimed that the majority of the farmers use the Pitaklija as their main place where they sell their products and their main source of income. Statistics shared by the MFA have indicated that the Pitkalija generates around €20million a year (Auditor General, 2023).

Similarly, L-Imġarr, which is one of the villages in Malta which has retained much of its distinct character and rural feel, is the home of many farmers, who have field in the area. Indeed, the locality is well-known for its farming community. Nonetheless, despite a small village, it also attracts tourists due to some sites of historical interest such as the Skorba temple, the Roman Thermal Baths as well as the Towers of Ġnejna and Golden Bay. Indeed, these beaches also attract tourists, especially during the summer months. Similarly, San Pawl Il-Baħar is another touristic area which offers visitors a variety of attractions, such as diving excursions, places of night life, pubs and a number of eateries from which to choose. Another locality synonymous with tourism is Il-Mellieħa. Il-Mellieħa, being the Northest point of the main island of Malta, has a number of beaches which attract tourists, including Għadira, Paradise Bay and Armier. Moreover, the port of Ċirkewwa acts as a link to the smaller island of Comino, a very sought-after spot by tourists and Maltese alike during the summer months. Moreover, the same port is also serves as one of the main links to the island of Gozo, with the alternative being that of Valletta as a new fast ferry was introduced in 2021. However, it is worth noting that Ċirkewwa remains the only port where cars and vehicles are allowed to cross by ferry from one island to the other. This means that not only is this port important for foreign and local tourists wanting to visit Gozo, it is also a central link for commerce between the two islands since it enables the transportation of goods and the also allows for the daily commute of workers. As indicated in 3.6 below, more than 5 million people crossed between Mġarr and Ċirkewwa and nearly 2 million vehicles in 2022.

Figure 3.6 | Sea transport between Mġarr and Ċirkewwa
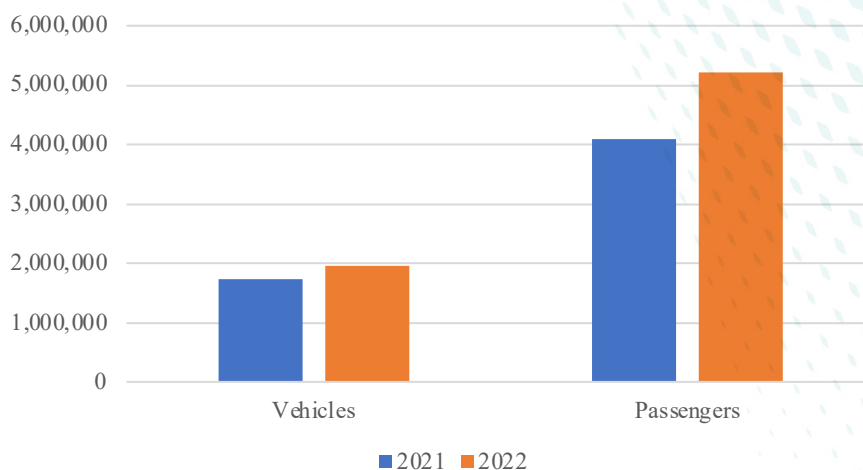
Il- Mosta, a seemingly residential area, is also an important commercial centre. Indeed Il-Mosta hosts two industrial estates, the Mosta Technopark which spans over circa 60,000sqm and hosts a number of ICT and high-end products manufacturing companies ("Mosta Technopark", n.d) and the Mosta Industrial Estate, which is the smallest Industrial Estate in Malta, hosting a number of micro and SME companies ("Mosta Industrial Estate", n.d). Moreover, the village also has a very busy commercial centre, just like In-Naxxar, which prima facie, might seem like simply a residential area, but in reality, has quite a busy retail centre as well.

This stands to show that Reġjun Tramuntana, despite being often seen as majorly related to residential zones, is also important for a number of economic industries in the Maltese Islands, in particular tourism but not only.

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). Within Reġjun Tramuntana, one finds major arterial roads which link various parts of the Northern part of the Island.

In the past couple of years, a number of safety improvements in major arterial roads have been carried out. In 2020, a two-phased safety upgrade costing €3.5million was done in Burmarrad Road, being the major road connecting San Pawl Il-Baħar and Mosta ("€3.5 million safety upgrade of Burmarrad Road", 2020). In 2021, a similar project was carried out in the bypass between L-Imġarr and Mosta, in an attempt to increase the safety of the road, given that this road was notorious for over speeding and head-on collisions ("Crash barriers for Mosta-Mġarr road lanes, in major safety upgrade", 2021).

A major road infrastructural project carried out in part of the Region was the €55million project of the Central Link, which passes through two localities within the Region, namely Ħ'Attard, Ħal Balzan. This partly EU funded project was developed in order to ease the traffic conjection that such arterial roads used to experience, aiming to reduce the travelling time by half and reduce particulate matter by 66% by 2030 (Zammit, 2022).

Another major project being carried out by Infrastructure Malta is the restructuring of Triq Il- Kbira and the main square of Mosta. The plans for the square is that traffic would be diverted more on the outskirts of Mosta, to reduce conjestion in the centre. Still the square will allow traffic to flow through, whilst possibly being pedestrianised for particular periods of time. (Zammit, 2023)

3.2.6 Natural and Cultural Assets
The region also holds a number of great gems in terms of archaeological, architectural and ecological sites. The region is home to a number of historical sites, including, Punic Tombs (Mellieħa), Skorba, Ta' Ħaġrat Temples and Roman Baths (Imġarr), Ta' Bistra Hypogea (Il-Mosta), amongst others. Indeed, across the Region, 82 sites are scheduled as Grade 1 and another 104 are scheduled as Grade 2 sites. This clearly indicates the cultural value of such dwellings, buildings or sites.

 The Region also boasts of a number of natural assets, especially along the coastline of the Northerern side of the island. A number of ecological sites (129) are indeed scheduled sites with the Planning Authority (PA), such as the well-known beaches of the Ramla ta'

Għajn Tuffieħa, L-Għadira and L-Armier, and other not so known places such as Selmunett Islands, Daħlet ix-Xilep and Wied Għomor, just to mention a few.

The number of total scheduled sites with the PA for the Region amount to 438, with the highest percentage being architectural assets (43%). The highest number of scheduled sites were found in Mellieħa (147), followed by Imġarr (64). (Planning Authority, n.d.). Figure 3.7 and Figure 3.8 illustrate this.
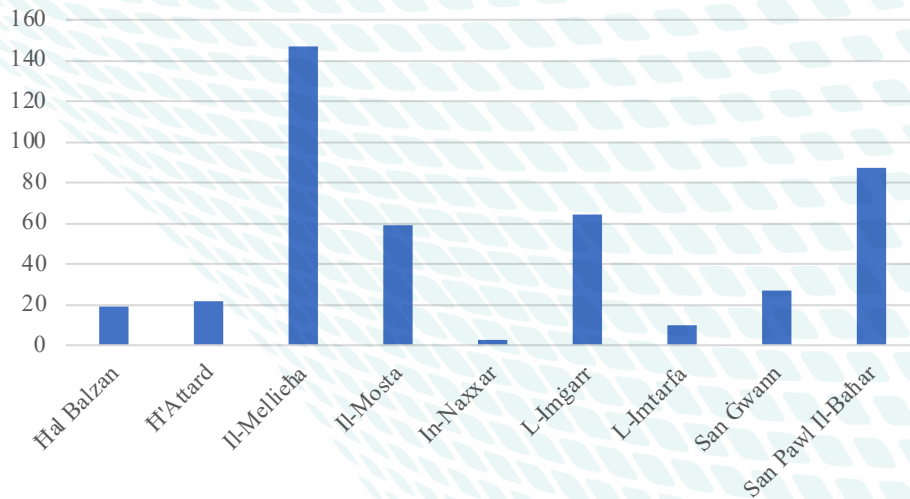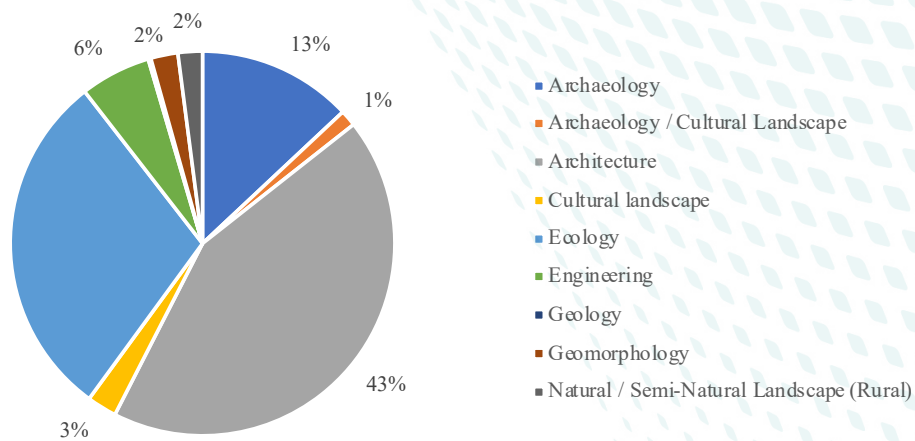
Figure 3.7 | Scheduled property, buildings and sites

Figure 3.8 | Type of scheduled sites

Apart from such physical assets, the Region also holds numerous cultural events on an annual basis, which can be considered to add to the cultural patrimony of the area. Apart from the fact that each locality holds a number of religious feasts annually, displaying both sacred (e.g. processions) and non-sacred (fireworks and street adornments) traditional features, other events are now being marked on the Regions's calendar, with probably one of the most famous one being 'Festa Frawli' (Strawberry feast) in Imġarr, which attracts numerous Maltese as well as tourists to this locality. Other festival and cultural events include the Summer Carnival in San Pawl il-Baħar and the Bonfire of St. John in Mosta. Indeed, a research carried out by Esprimi, back in 2019 had shown that Reġjun Tramuntana placed second amongst the regions in terms of cultural events organised by its own Local Councils (amounting to 29 events in 2018) (Arts Council Malta, n.d).

The Region also holds a crafts village in Ta' Qali, whereby a variety of local craftsmen have their workshops but also shops to exhibit and sell their work. Crafts included in the area, include glass blowing, lace making, filigree as well as pottery. This area is not only a tourist attraction, but also serves to keep the local cultural assets of craftsmanship alive.

3.2.7 Community spaces and local participation
As previously mentioned, the region has a number of ecological and green spaces, which apart from keeping the rural elements to some of the areas, are also used as spaces whereby families, friends and communities in general can gather. Such natural areas include il-Miżieb Woodland, l-Aħrax and the Dwejra lines and surrounding countryside.

Other community spaces, include manmade parks and playing fields such as Kennedy Grove, L-Għarusa tal-Mosta Public Garden, San Anton Gardens, which also holds the winter Presidential Residence and the large playing area set up next to the Malta National Aquarium in San Pawl Il-Baħar.

Another major outdoor community space in the Region is Ta' Qali National Park, which apart from being a place, whereby families an gather, have a space for children to play and includes a number of amenities such as 2 dog parks and an outdoor gym, this area is often used for outdoor festivals especially, but not exclusively in the summer months, including events such as Beer Fest, Summer Daze and Earth Garden.

Moreover, in the same area, there is also the Malta Fairs and Conventions Centre (MFCC), which is a 22,000m2 area available for international conferences and exhibitions, whereby a number of events take place, ranging from concerts, televised programmes, commercial fairs and other exhibitions.

Additionally, Ta' Qali is also home to the Malta National Stadium another community space for sportsmen in Malta, whereby major football games are played both at a national and international level.

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 Reġjun Tramuntana seems to be in line with the national average. In the same report it is stated that 2.5% 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 (Malta Arts Council, n.d.). Nevertheless, the number of people who mentioned that they did not attend but are not interested to do so is lower than the national average at 80.9% (Vs 87% Malta). Indeed, the portion of people who did not attend but would be interested to do so is nearly double that of the national average at 13% as opposed to 7.1% at Malta level. 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 3.9 | % of population actively involved in the Local Council festivities

13.00%
2.80%
0.80%
2.50%
80.90%

- Never been but not interested
- Past 12 months
- 1-3 years ago
- More than 3 years ago
- Never been but interested
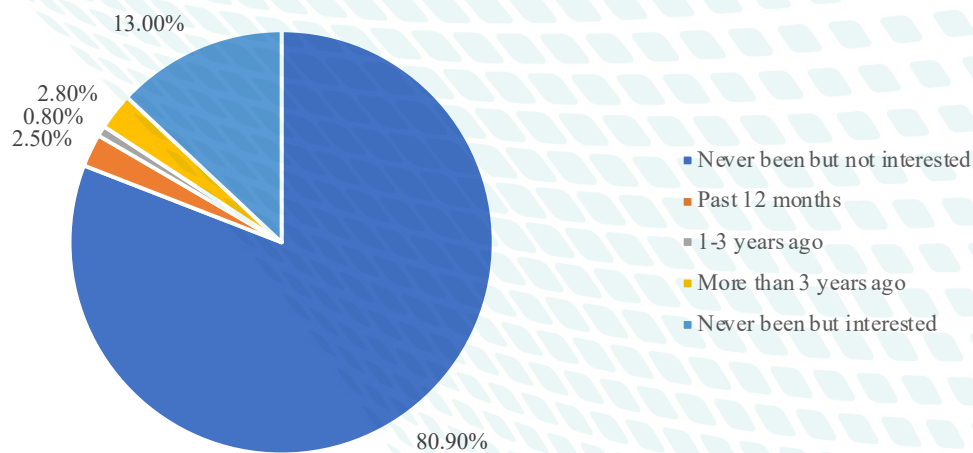
3.2.7 Needs, interests, values and aspirations

This description of the socio-demographic, economical and environmental aspects of the Region are 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 9 localities of Reġjun Tramuntana, 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, natural assets as well as commercial activities this Region is. The diversity also means that the needs and aspirations of each locality might differ.

In general, given the highly diverse population which resides therein, Reġjun Tramuntanata needs to find ways in which to enable integration for more serene and peaceful coexistence of different groups of people.

Moreover, given its varying nature of the rural and urban spaces in the region, the Regional Council has the delicate task of finding a balance between development and conservation. Indeed, as per the Regional Cultural Strategy for the Region "there is a growing concern that urban development within the region is posing a threat to its cultural assets" (Arts Council Malta, n.d., p.23). Therefore, there needs to be a balance between sustaining

large infrastructural projects which can improve the quality of service for commercial uses, especially in touristic areas whereby the number of tourists is growing each year, whilst, making sure that the natural landscapes, ecological assets and rural settings are safeguarded and protected.

3.3 SUMMARY OF CONTEXT

The discussion of this chapter has shown that salient characteristics of the Region under study include, i) an ever growing population, mostly due to the great influx of foreigners in the area, which leads to a number of integration issues, ii) a difference in needs and priorities in relation to rural and urban areas within the same Region, iii) the very rich cultural and ecological assets within the Region, which needs to be safeguarded both for the locals as well as tourists attractions, v) the vital role of the Region in particular industries such as tourism as well as agriculture as well as iv) the willingness of residents to involve themselves in local council activities which might be tapped into.

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, which could be used in favour of integration of different individuals in society, thereby helping social cohesion and strengthening 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 Tramuntana 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 Tramuntana 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 the regional council's administrative staff 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 the resident's awareness and knowledge of their respective local council, whilst questions 19-26 assessed the resident's awareness and knowldege 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 Tramuntana. Following their input, the research team made some minor adjustments.

Focus Groups

Apart from a questionnaire held with residents of the Reġjun Tramuntana, the research design included focus groups with councillors and mayors from local councils of the region and the regional council's administrative staff. 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 400 residents of Reġjun Tramuntana. 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 4,600 did not end in a successful interview wherein 920 (20%) did not answer, 2,300 (50%) were not eligible and 1,380 (30%) refused to participate. The remaining 400 completed the survey, a number which produced a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of ± 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 Tramuntana is 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 Tramuntana accepted to act as gatekeeper and made contact with potential participants of the focus groups. Local councillors and mayors and administrative staff, 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 Tramuntana's office and participants were offered the choice of participating either online or in person. A total number of 2 councillors attended the focus group for local councillors whilst 2 mayors and 5 administrative staff attended the focus group for mayors and regional council's administrative staff. 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 researchers 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, Mġarr). 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 Tramuntana's foreign national population amounts to 26.25% 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 two 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 researchers were aware that focus group participants, local councillors, mayors and administrative staff, brought to the table their biases and possibly their own agendas. Whilst these were also considered with the data analysis, since they are a reflection of the lived experience of the 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 the 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 regional and local levels. In order to mitigate such issues, local councillors and mayors/regional council's administrative staff 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 then they would in reality, due to the fact that they are being observed. In such case the Hawthorne effect could have materialised in 'text-book' 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 situation.

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 examine the quantitative data obtained from the responses to the residents' questionnaire carried out in Reġjun Tramuntana. 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 Tramuntana 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 Tramuntana 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 Tramuntana 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	42	10.50
26-35	65	16.25
36-45	63	15.75
46-55	63	15.75
56-65	66	16.50
66+	101	25.25
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.1 | Respondents by age group
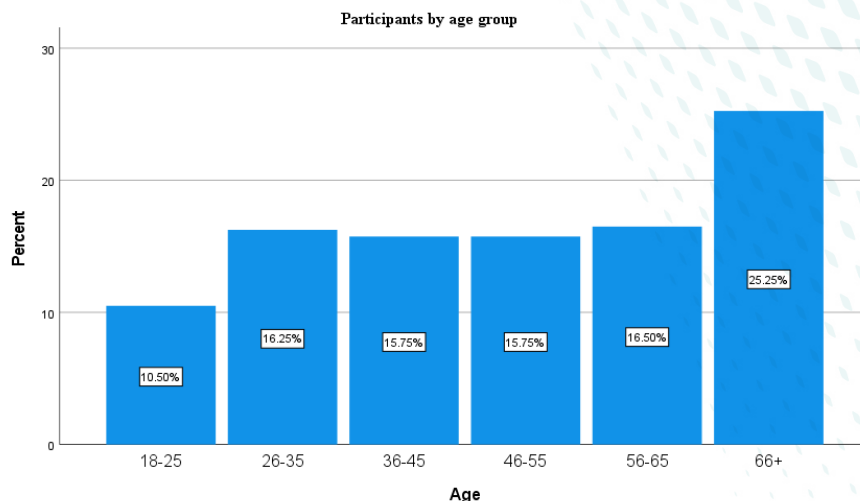
In total 400 residents responded to the questionnaire. The majority, 25.25% (n = 101) were aged 66 and over, 16.50% (n=66) were aged 56-65, while 16.25% (n=65) were aged 26-35. A further 15.75% (n=63) were aged 36-45, and similarly respondents aged 46-55 also made up 15.75% (n=63) or respondents. 18–25-year-olds made up 10.5% (n=42) of participants. 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

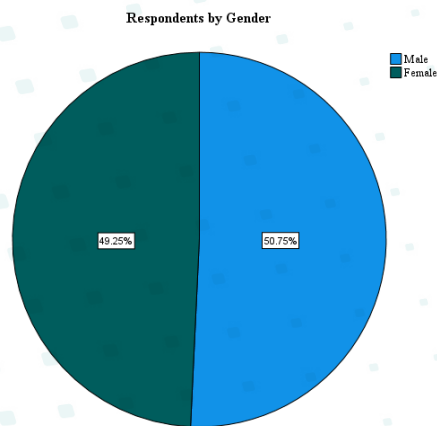| Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	203	50.75
Female	197	49.25
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.2 | Respondents by gender

Table Figure 5.2and Figure 5.2 show that there was a quasi-equal distribution between male and female respondents whereby 50.75% (n= 203) males and 49.25% (n = 197) females responded to the questionnaire.

Table 5.3 | Respondents by level of education

Type of Education	Frequency	Percent (%)
No formal education	3	0.75
Primary level	34	8.50
Secondary level	123	30.75
Post-secondary level	85	21.25
Tertiary Level	155	38.75
Total	400	100.0

Level of education distribution
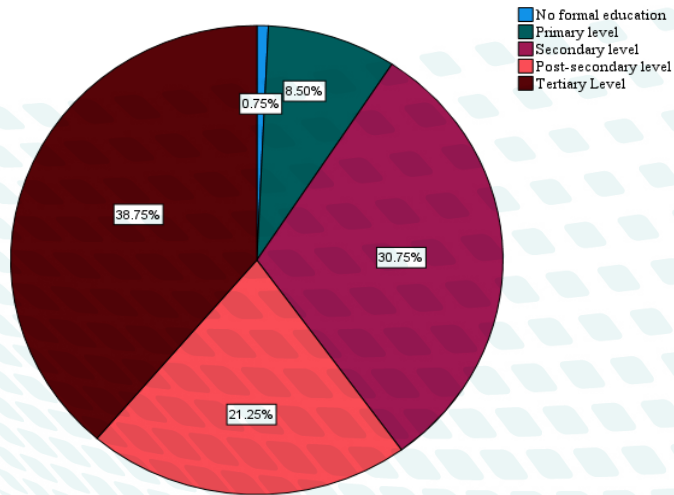
More than a third of respondents have obtained a high level of education with 38.75% (n=155) having a tertiary level of education. 30.75% (n=123) of respondents have a secondary level of education, while 21.25% (n=85) have a post-secondary level of education with 8.50% (n=34) having a primary level of education. Only 0.75% (n=3) have no formal education. (Table and Figure 5.3).

Table 5.4 | Respondents by employment status

Employment Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Student	26	6.50
Pensioner	121	30.25
Employed	174	43.50
Self-employed	27	6.75
Unemployed	9	2.25
Homemaker	42	10.50
Did not specify	1	0.25
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.4 | Respondents by employment status

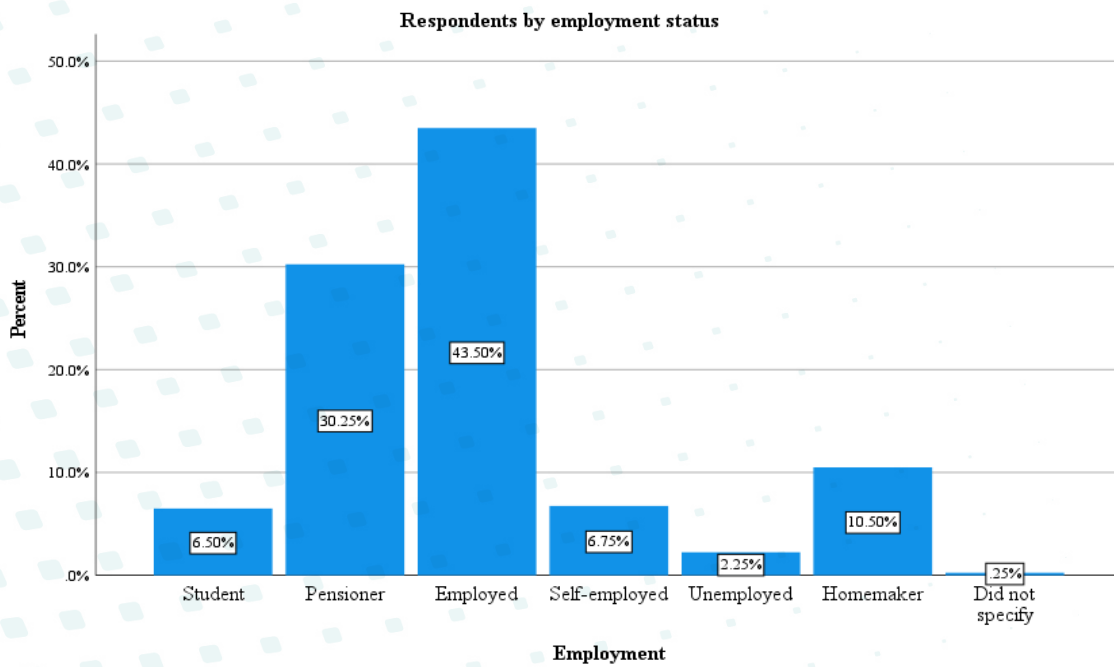
Respondents by employment status

Table and Figure 5.4 illustrate that out of 400 respondents, 43.5% (n=174) were employed while 30.25% (n=121) were pensioners. Homemakers totalled 10.50% (n=42), while 6.50% (n=26) were students. 6.75% (n=27) were self-employed and 2.25% (n=9) were unemployed. Only 0.25% (n=1) opted not to state the type of employment status.

Table 5.5 | Respondents by locality

Locality	Frequency	Percent (%)
Mellieħa	37	9.25
St. Paul's Bay	56	14.0
Mġarr	17	5.15
Mtarfa	16	4.0
Mosta	101	25.25
Naxxar	58	14.5
San Ġwann	52	13.0
Balzan	19	4.75
Attard	44	11.0
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.5 | Respondents by locality

Respondents by locality
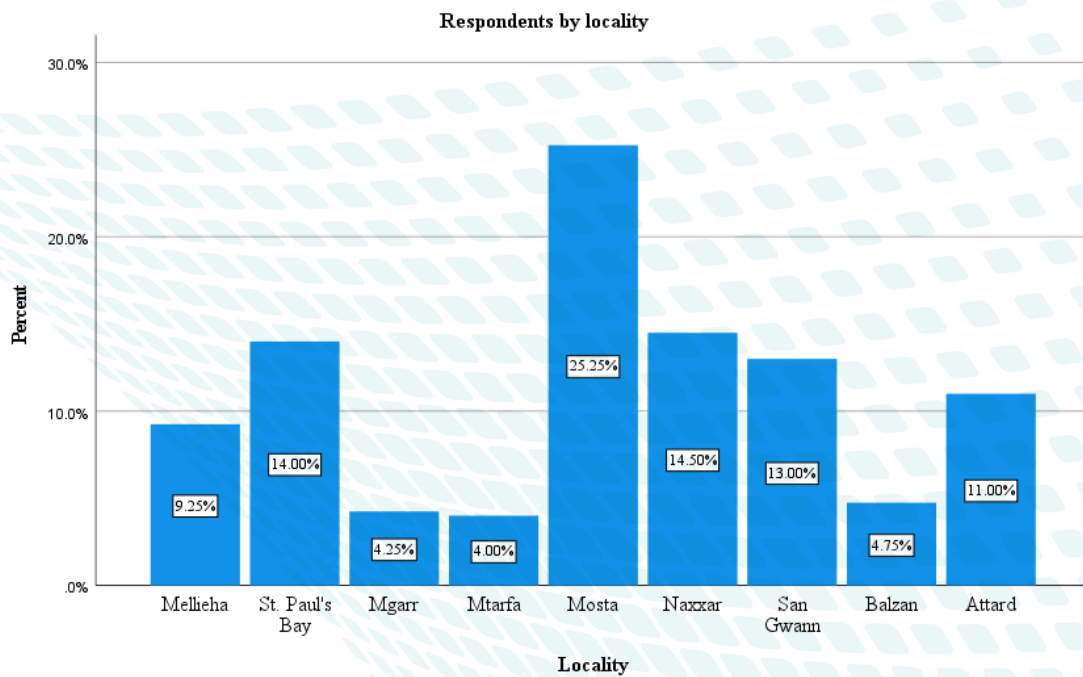
Figure 5.6 | Comparison of locality distribution of respondents. Population Vs Sample*

Locality Distribution - Population Vs Sample
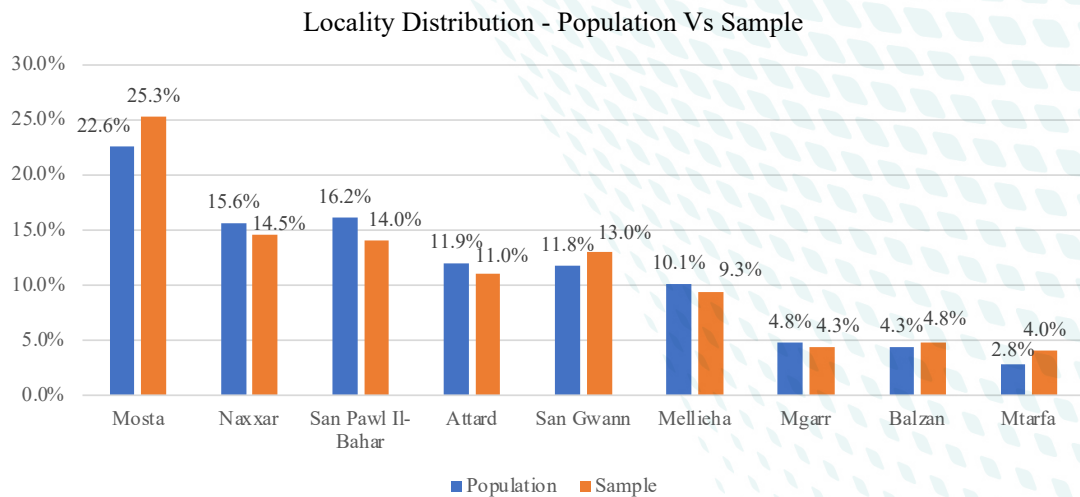
(*) Data provided by statistician. Range of discrepancies varies between +2.7% and -2.2% with margin of error being ± 4.9%. Percentages might not add up to 100% due to decimal places.

Out of the 9 localities that form part of Reġjun Tramuntana, Mosta had the highest number of respondents (25.25%, n=101), followed by Naxxar (14.5%, n=58) and St. Paul's Bay (14.0%, n=56) (Table and Figure 5.5). Figure 5.6 shows that nearly each locality's share of individuals who responded to the questionnaire was somewhat comparable to 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 Reġjun Tramuntana perceive their quality of life and their knowledge and awareness of their local and regional council.

Table 5.6 | Respondents by dependents living in the same household

No of children under 18 years of age	Frequency	Percent (%)
0	288	72.00
1	60	15.00
2	40	10.00
3	11	2.75
4	1	0.25
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.7 | Respondents by dependents living in the same household

Number of dependents under 18 living in the same household
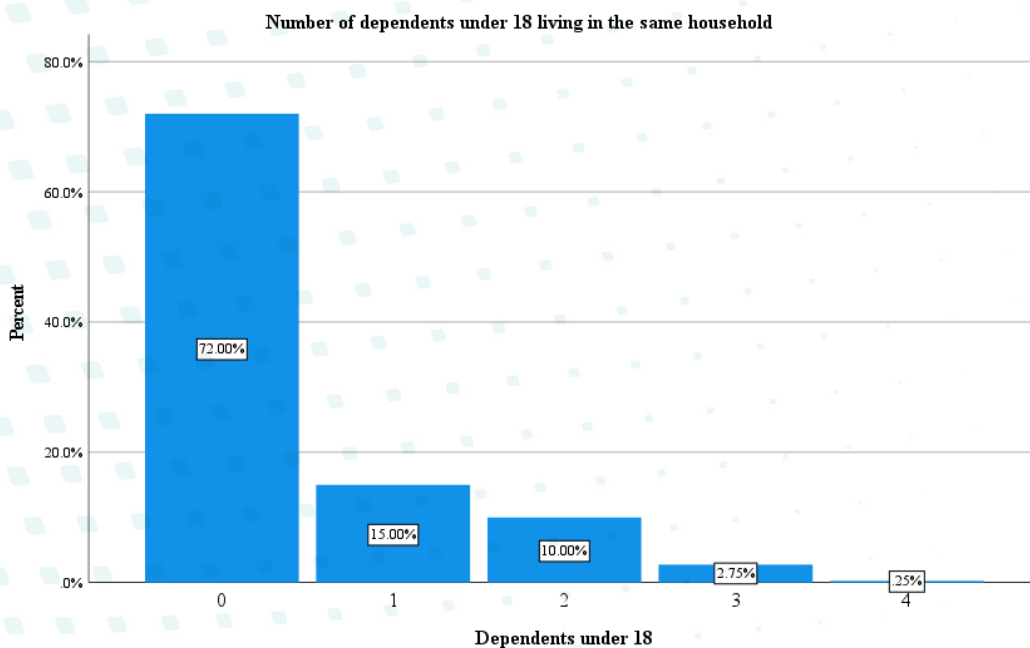
More than two-thirds of respondents (72.0%, n=288) did not have any dependents under 18 years of age living in their household. 15% (n=60) had one dependent, 10% (n=40) had two dependents and 2.75% (n=11) had 3 dependents. Only 0.25% (n=1) out of the 400 respondents had 4 dependents living in their household (Table 5.6 and Figure 5.7)

Table 5.7 | Respondents by length of residence

No. of years	Frequency	Percent (%)
0-9	86	21.50
10-19	39	9.75
20+	275	68.75
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.8 | Respondents by length of residence

Respondents by Lenght of Residence
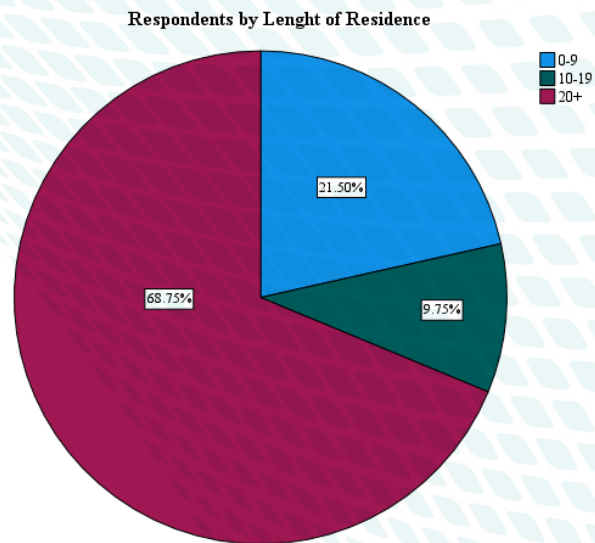
Table 5.7 and Figure 5.8 show that 68.75% (n=275) of respondents had been living in the same locality for more than 20 years, while 21.50 % (n=86) have been living for 9 years or less. Respondents that had been living in the same locality between 10-19 years amounted to 9.75% (n=39).

Table 5.8 | Active participation in voluntary or community organisations

Active Participation	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	350	87.5
Yes	50	12.5
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.9 | Active participation in voluntary or community organisations

Active participation in the locality

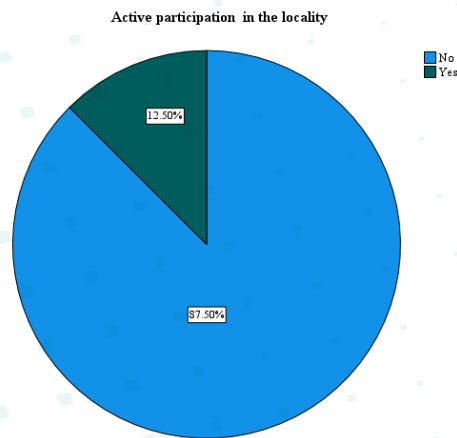Table 5.8 and Figure 5.9 indicate that out of the 400 respondents, 87.50% (n=350) were not active in any voluntary or community organisation. On the other hand, 12.5% (n=50) were actively involved in diverse voluntary and community organisations. 21 respondents specified that they were actively involved in religious organisations, such as the parish church or the MUSEUM. Others mentioned being active in a musical organisation (4 mentions), the band club (3 mentions) and the feast (3 mentions).

Quality of Life
Questions 9 to 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 likert scale that ranged from Very Dissatisfied (1), Fairly Dissatisfied, Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, Fairly Satisfied through to Very Satisfied (5).

Table 5.9 | Residents' level of satisfaction with their locality

Satisfaction scale	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	29	7.25
Fairly dissatisfied	37	9.25
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	91	22.75
Fairly satisfied	110	27.50
Very satisfied	133	33.25
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.10 | Residents' level of satisfaction with their locality

Level of satisfaction with locality

Level of Satisfaction
- Very dissatisfied
- Fairly dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
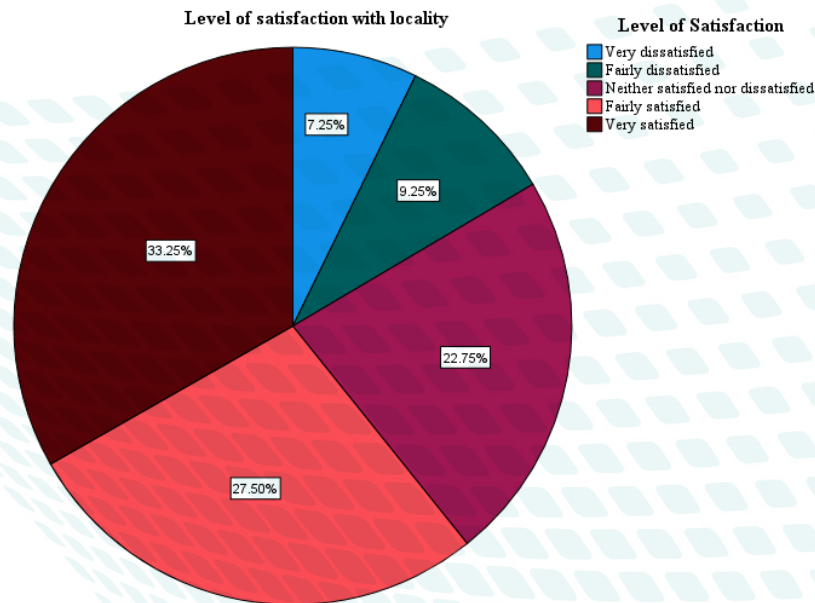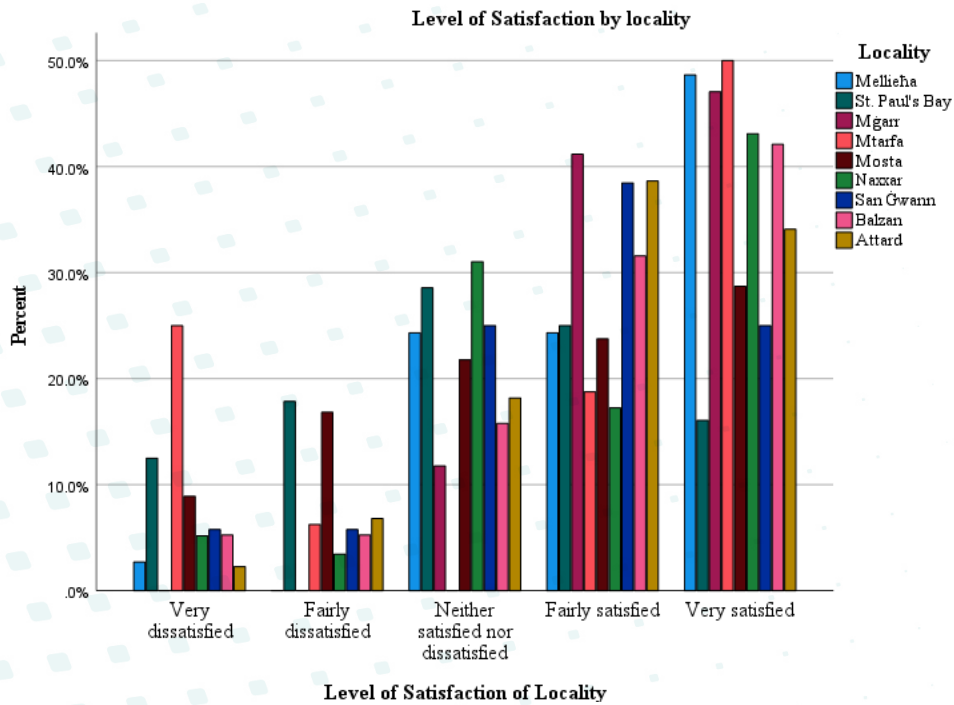- Fairly satisfied
- Very satisfied

Table 5.9 and Figure 5.10 illustrate that most respondents were satisfied with their local area as a place to live. 60.75% (n=243) of respondents stated that they are satisfied (33.25% Very Satisfied and 27.5% Fairly Satisfied), 16.5% (n = 66) were dissatisfied (7.25% Very Dissatisfied and 9.25% Fairly Dissatisfied), while 22.75% (n=91) were neutral.

A Pearson's Chi square test was performed for age, gender and locality, to identify whether there were any statistically significant relationships between these factors and the level of satisfaction with the locality. Testing found no statistically significant association for age (p-value = 0.13) and gender (p-value = 0.26). On the other hand, testing found a relatively statistically significant for locality, as the Chi square test returned a p-value of <0.001, a value which is below the 0.05 level of significance (Table 5.10 and Figure 5.11).

Table 5.10 | '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.	%
Mellieħa	1	2.70%	0	0.00%	9	24.32%	9	24.32%	18	48.65%
St. Paul's Bay	7	12.50%	10	17.86%	16	28.57%	14	25.00%	9	16.07%
Mġarr	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	2	11.76%	7	41.18%	8	47.06%
Mtarfa	4	25.00%	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	3	18.75%	8	50.00%
Mosta	9	8.91%	17	16.83%	22	21.78%	24	23.76%	29	28.71%
Naxxar	3	5.17%	2	3.45%	18	31.03%	10	17.24%	25	43.10%
San Ġwann	3	5.77%	3	5.77%	13	25.00%	20	38.46%	13	25.00%
Balzan	1	5.26%	1	5.26%	3	15.79%	6	31.58%	8	42.11%
Attard	1	2.27%	3	6.82%	8	18.18%	17	38.64%	15	34.09%

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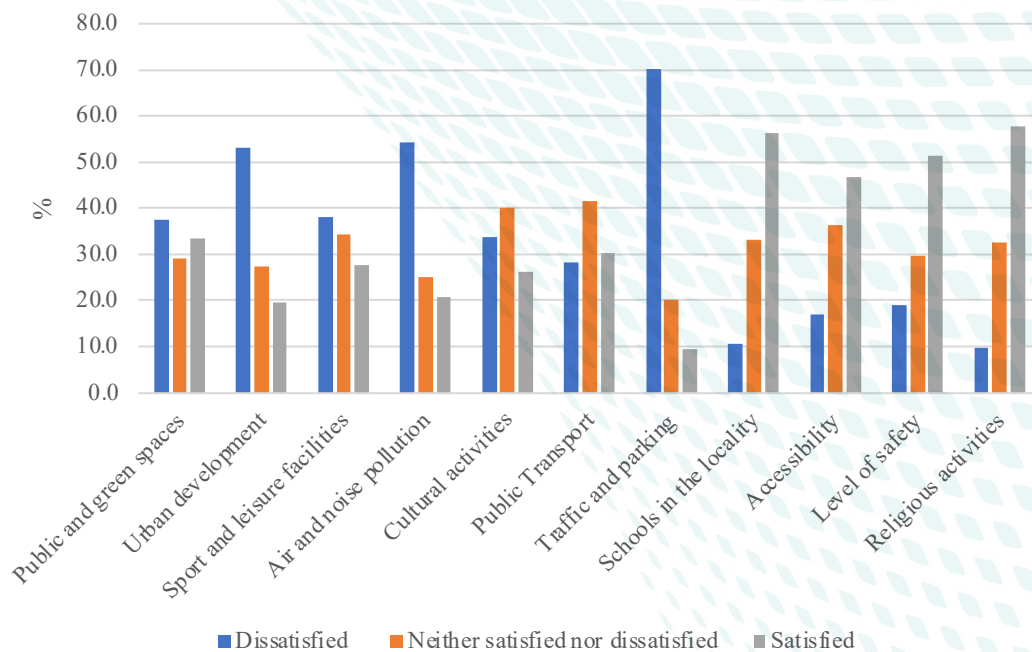

Level of Satisfaction by locality

As indicated in Table 5.10 and Figure 5.11, Mġarr residents have not indicated any level of dissatisfaction (very dissatisfied or fairly dissatisfied = 0%), instead they exhibited the highest percentage of satisfaction at 88.2% (Fairly satisfied = 41.2% and Very Satisfied = 47.1%). On the other hand, 30.4% of St. Paul Bay's residents mentioned that they were either very dissatisfied (12.5%) or fairly dissatisfied (17.9%), with only 41.1% mentioning that they were fairly satisfied (25%) or very satisfied (16.1%). The level of satisfaction was also found to be low (at 52.5%) amongst Mosta residents.

Respondents were then asked to rate their level of satisfaction with regards to diverse factors in their locality, which are associated with having on impact on their quality of life. Table 5.11 and Figure 5.12 illustrate the results.

Table 5.11 | Level of satisfaction for 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	79	19.8	71	17.8	116	29.0	66	16.5	68	17.0
Urban development	136	34.0	76	19.0	110	27.5	54	13.5	24	6.0
Sport and leisure facilities	66	16.5	86	21.5	137	34.3	72	18.0	39	9.8
Air and noise pollution	150	37.5	67	16.8	100	25.0	55	13.8	28	7.0
Cultural activities	64	16.0	71	17.8	160	40.0	61	15.3	44	11.0
Public Transport	62	15.5	51	12.8	166	41.5	73	18.3	48	12.0
Traffic and parking	205	51.3	76	19.0	81	20.3	28	7.0	10	2.5
Schools in the locality	24	6.0	18	4.5	133	33.3	111	27.8	114	28.5
Accessibility	35	8.8	33	8.3	145	36.3	97	24.3	90	22.5
Level of safety	27	6.8	49	12.3	119	29.8	141	35.3	64	16.0
Religious activities	23	5.8	16	4.0	130	32.5	124	31.0	107	26.8

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


Respondents were asked to rate their level of satisfaction with regards to diverse factors that are associated with having on impact on their quality of life. Table 5.11 and Figure 5.12 show that the majority of respondents were mostly dissatisfied with traffic and parking (70.3%, n=281), 54.3% (n=217) were dissatisfied with air and noise pollution and 53% (n=212) were dissatisfied with urban development.

A Chi Square test was carried out to test for significant statistical association between the above-mentioned diverse factors and age, gender and locality. Testing yielded a statistically significant association between public and green spaces and locality , with a p-value of 0.003, which is smaller than the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the findings per locality could be generalisable to the entire population of the region (Table 5.12 and Figure 5.13).

Table 5.12 | 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.**	**%**
Mellieħa	3	8.1%	5	13.5%	7	18.9%	9	24.3%	13	35.1%
St. Paul's Bay	12	21.4%	9	16.1%	19	33.9%	9	16.1%	7	12.5%
Mġarr	0	0.0%	1	5.9%	3	17.6%	5	29.4%	8	47.1%
Mtarfa	1	6.3%	5	31.3%	1	6.3%	4	25.0%	5	31.3%
Mosta	27	26.7%	17	16.8%	34	33.7%	11	10.9%	12	11.9%
Naxxar	17	29.3%	9	15.5%	17	29.3%	8	13.8%	7	12.1%
San Ġwann	9	17.3%	13	25.0%	13	25.0%	9	17.3%	8	15.4%
Balzan	6	31.6%	3	15.8%	5	26.3%	3	15.8%	2	10.5%
Attard	4	9.1%	9	20.5%	17	38.6%	8	18.2%	6	13.6%

Figure 5.13 | Level of satisfaction of public and green spaces by locality
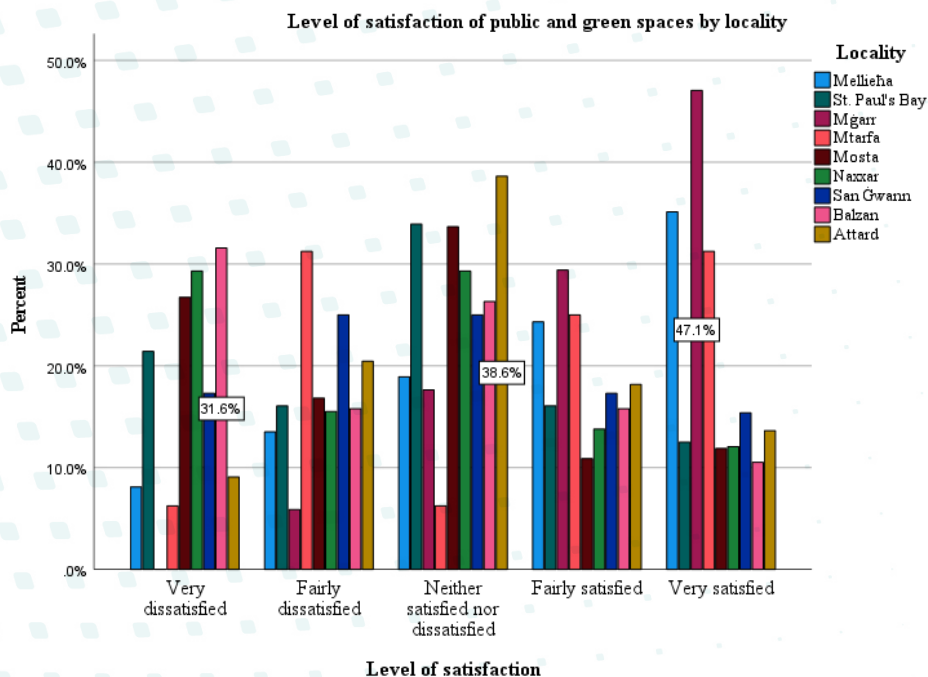
Both Table 5.12 and Figure 5.13, show that people from Balzan tend to be the most dissatisfied (47.37%, n = 9), with 31.6% (n=6) being very dissatisfied and 15.8% (n=3) being fairly dissatisfied. Similarly, people from Naxxar were 44.83% (n=26) dissatisfied with the public and green spaces, with 29.3% (n=17) being very dissatisfied and 15.5% (n=9) being fairly dissatisfied. On the other hand, Mġarr residents are the most satisfied with such areas, amounting to 76.47% (n=13), with

29.4% (n=5) being fairly satisfied and 47.1% (n=8) being very satisfied. Mellieħa residents also tend to be amongst the most satisfied with public and green areas, 59.4% (n=22), with 24.3% (n=9) being fairly satisfied and 35.1% (n=13) being very satisfied.

The Pearson's Chi-square test yielded no statistically significant association for urban development but found sports and leisure facilities to be relatively statistically significant to age (p=0.022) (Table 5.13 and Figure 5.14).

Table 5.13 | Level of satisfaction of sports and leisure facilities by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	**No.**	**%**
18-25	8	19.05%	11	26.19%	11	26.19%	12	28.57%	0	0.00%
26-35	6	9.23%	16	24.62%	20	30.77%	13	20.00%	10	15.38%
36-45	11	17.46%	20	31.75%	18	28.57%	11	17.46%	3	4.76%
46-55	14	22.22%	14	22.22%	21	33.33%	8	12.70%	6	9.52%
56-65	7	10.61%	13	19.70%	32	48.48%	9	13.64%	5	7.58%
66+	20	19.80%	12	11.88%	35	34.65%	19	18.81%	15	14.85%

*Figure 5.14 | Level of satisfaction of sports and leisure facilities by age*
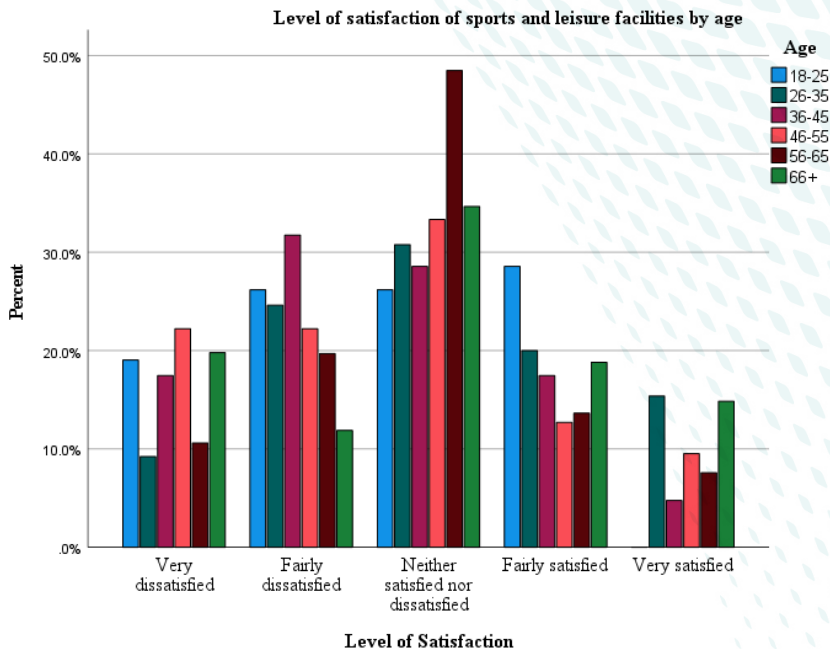
Both Table 5.13 and Figure 5.14 show that respondents between the ages of 36-45 were most unsatisfied with 49.21% (n=32) being either very dissatisfied (17.46%, n=11) or fairly dissatisfied (31.75%, n= 20). Worth noting also that 48.48% (n=32) of the people aged 56-65, were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Testing found air and noise pollution to be statistically significant to locality with a p-value approximately zero (<0.001). This means that the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with noise and air pollution varied depending on the locality people reside in, and the findings can be generalised for the entire population of the region, when looking at the localities. (Table 5.14 and Figure 5.15).

Table 5.14 | Level of satisfaction in terms of air and noise pollution by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	7	18.92%	4	10.81%	11	29.73%	10	27.03%	5	13.51%
St. Paul's Bay	33	58.93%	7	12.50%	10	17.86%	3	5.36%	3	5.36%
Mġarr	0	0.00%	6	35.29%	5	29.41%	4	23.53%	2	11.76%
Mtarfa	3	18.75%	2	12.50%	2	12.50%	5	31.25%	4	25.00%
Mosta	43	42.57%	19	18.81%	24	23.76%	13	12.87%	2	1.98%
Naxxar	22	37.93%	9	15.52%	15	25.86%	7	12.07%	5	8.62%
San Ġwann	23	45.13%	9	17.31%	12	23.08%	4	7.69%	4	7.69%
Balzan	6	31.58%	5	26.32%	6	31.58%	0	0.00%	2	10.53%
Attard	13	29.55%	6	13.64%	15	34.09%	9	20.45%	1	2.27%

Figure 5.15 | Level of satisfaction in terms of air and noise pollution by locality
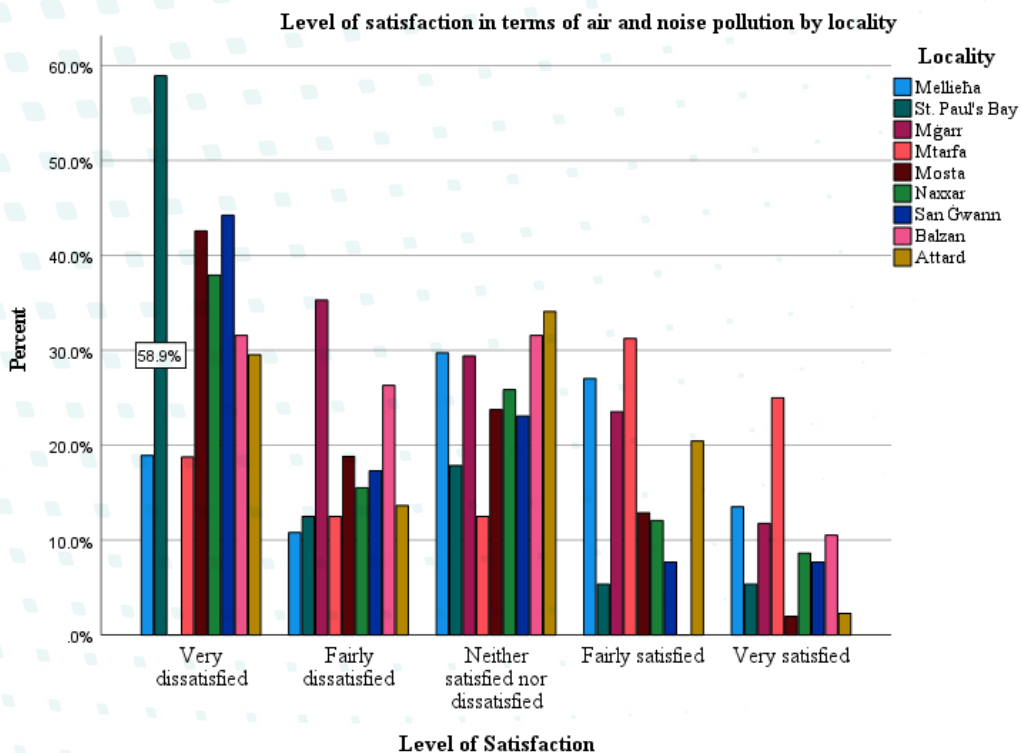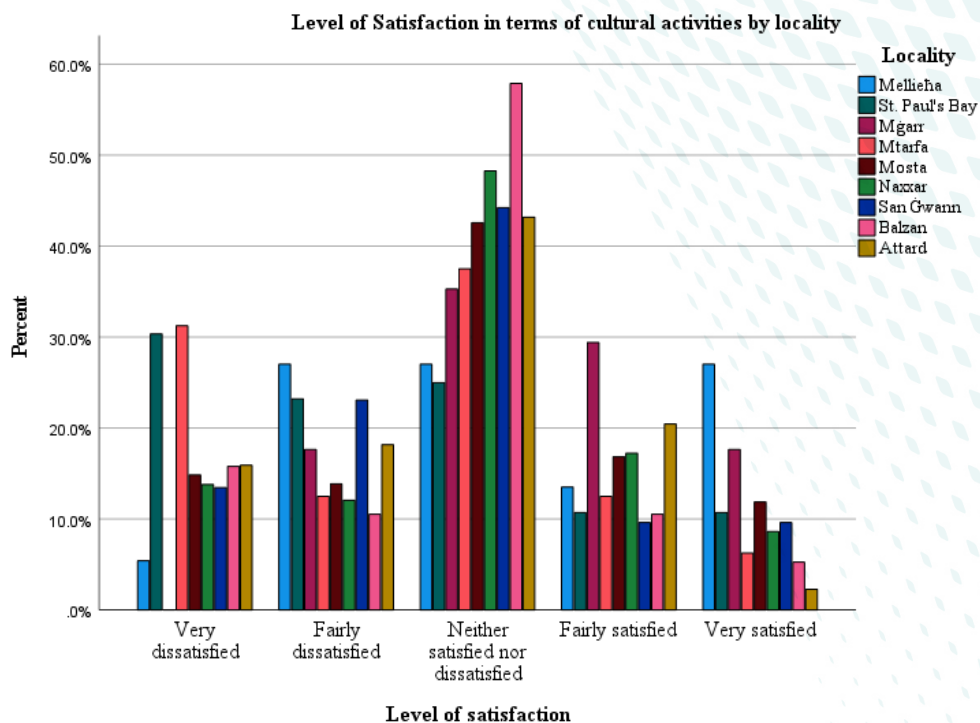
Through both Table 5.14 and Figure 5.15, it is clear that people residing in St. Pauls' Bay are particularly dissatisfied with the air and noise pollution, with level of dissatisfaction standing at 71.4% (n=40), whereby 58.93% (n=33) were very dissatisfied, whilst 12.50% (n=7) were fairly dissatisfied. San Ġwann residents were also particularly dissatisfied at 61.54% (n=32), followed by Mosta residents at 61.39% (n=52) and Balzan at 57.89% (n=11). On the other hand, the citizens who were mostly satisfied, were those from Mtarfa, 56.25% (n=9), with 31.25% (n=5) being fairly satisfied and 25% (n=4) being very satisfied.

The Chi-square test showed that cultural activities had a statistically significant association to locality (p=0.029) (Table 5.15 and Figure 5.16).

Table 5.15 | Level of Satisfaction in terms of cultural activities by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	**No.**	**%**
Mellieħa	2	5.41%	10	27.03%	10	27.03%	5	13.51%	10	27.03%
St. Paul's Bay	17	30.36%	13	23.21%	14	25.00%	6	10.71%	6	10.71%
Mġarr	0	0.00%	3	17.65%	6	35.29%	5	29.41%	3	17.65%
Mtarfa	5	31.25%	2	12.50%	6	37.50%	2	12.50%	1	6.25%
Mosta	15	14.85%	14	13.86%	43	42.57%	17	16.83%	12	11.88%
Naxxar	8	13.79%	7	12.07%	28	48.28%	10	17.24%	5	8.62%
San Ġwann	7	13.46%	12	23.08%	23	45.13%	5	9.62%	5	9.62%
Balzan	3	15.79%	2	10.53%	11	57.89%	2	10.53%	1	5.26%
Attard	7	15.91%	8	18.18%	19	43.18%	9	20.45%	1	2.27%

Figure 5.16 | Level of Satisfaction in terms of cultural activities by locality

Through both Table 5.15 and Figure 5.16, it is clear that people residing in St. Pauls' Bay seem to be the most dissatisfied with the cultural activities in the area 53.57% (n=30). 30.36% (n=17) were very dissatisfied, whilst 23.21% (n=13), were fairly dissatisfied. Most Balzan residents stated that they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with cultural activities – 57.89% (n=11). On the other hand, people from Mġarr were 47.06% (n=8), with 29.41% (n=5) were fairly satisfied, whilst 17.65% (n=3), were very satisfied.

Testing found a statistically significant relationship between public transport and age (p=0.041) (Table 5.16 and Figure 5.17).

Table 5.16 | Level of satisfaction in terms of public transport by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	**No.**	%
18-25	7	16.67%	12	28.57%	9	21.43%	11	26.19%	3	7.14%
26-35	13	20.00%	9	13.85%	23	35.38%	14	21.54%	6	9.23%
36-45	10	15.87%	4	6.35%	33	52.38%	12	19.05%	4	6.35%
46-55	8	12.70%	11	17.46%	28	44.44%	10	15.87%	6	9.52%
56-65	10	15.15%	5	7.58%	30	45.45%	11	16.67%	10	15.15%
66+	14	13.86%	10	9.90%	43	42.57%	15	14.85%	19	18.81%

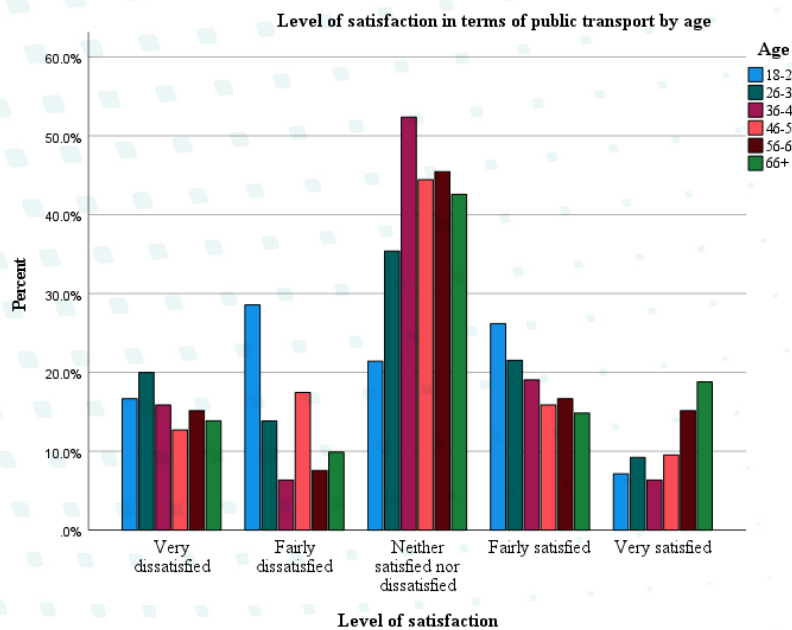*Figure 5.17 | Level of satisfaction in terms of public transport by age*

Table 5.16 and Figure 5.17 show that there were no particular age groups which were particularly more dissatisfied or satisfied than the rest. The notable finding was that more than half the people aged 36-45, were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Testing yielded a statistically significant association between traffic and parking and locality (p= <0.001) (Table 5.17 and Figure 5.18).

Table 5.17 | Level of satisfaction in terms of traffic and parking by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	13	35.14%	8	21.62%	13	35.14%	2	5.41%	1	2.70%
St. Paul's Bay	37	66.07%	9	16.07%	8	15.19%	2	3.57%	0	0.00%
Mġarr	4	23.53%	4	23.53%	8	47.06%	0	0.00%	1	5.88%
Mtarfa	6	37.50%	2	12.50%	4	25.00%	3	18.75%	1	6.25%
Mosta	63	62.38%	20	19.80%	14	13.86%	4	3.96%	0	0.00%
Naxxar	34	58.62%	11	18.97%	4	6.90%	8	13.79%	1	1.72%
San Ġwann	19	36.54%	10	19.23%	13	25.00%	5	9.62%	5	9.62%
Balzan	10	52.63%	3	15.79%	6	31.58%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%
Attard	19	43.18%	9	20.45%	11	25.00%	4	9.09%	1	2.27%

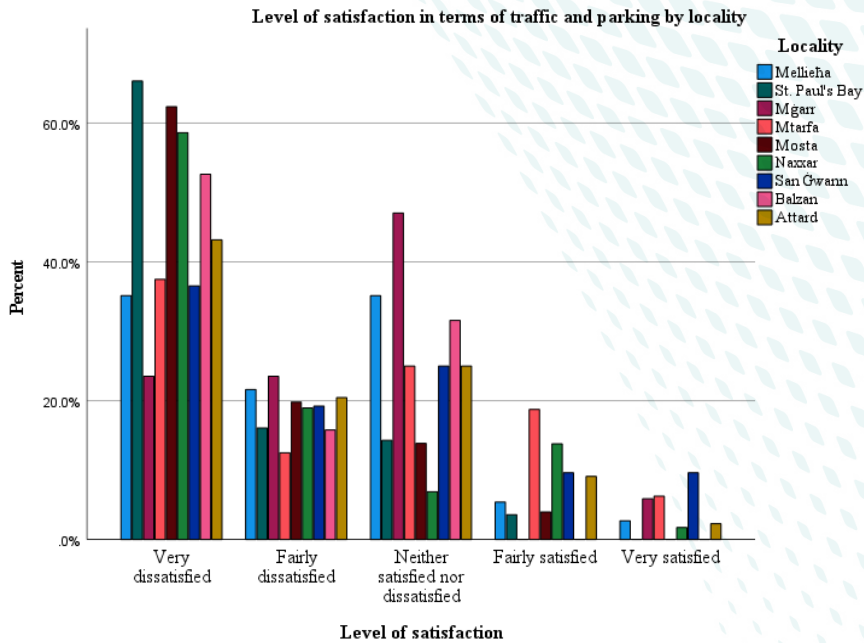*Figure 5.18 | Level of satisfaction in terms of traffic and parking by locality*

Table 5.17 and Figure 5.18 show that in general more than half the residents of 7 out of 9 localities seemed to be dissatisfied with the traffic and parking issues in their area. 82.18% (n=83) of Mosta residents, 82.14% (n=46) of St. Paul's Bay residents and 77.59% (n=45) of Naxxar residents were dissatisfied.

The Pearson's Chi-square test yielded a relatively statistically association between schools in the locality and locality (p= <0.001) (Table 5.18 and Figure 5.19).

Table 5.18 | Level of Satisfaction in terms of schools in the locality by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	**No.**	**%**
Mellieħa	2	5.41%	4	10.81%	13	35.14%	7	18.92%	11	29.73%
St. Paul's Bay	3	5.36%	3	5.36%	25	44.64%	11	19.64%	14	25.00%
Mġarr	1	5.88%	0	0.00%	3	17.65%	7	41.18%	6	35.29%
Mtarfa	7	43.75%	1	6.25%	5	31.25%	1	6.25%	2	12.50%
Mosta	5	4.95%	3	2.97%	32	31.68%	32	31.68%	29	28.71%
Naxxar	5	8.62%	2	3.45%	17	29.31%	15	25.86%	19	32.76%
San Ġwann	0	0.00%	2	3.85%	19	36.54%	15	28.85%	16	30.77%
Balzan	1	5.26%	3	15.79%	5	26.32%	4	21.05%	6	31.58%
Attard	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	14	31.82%	19	43.18%	11	25.00%

Figure 5.19 | Level of satisfaction in terms of schools in the locality by locality
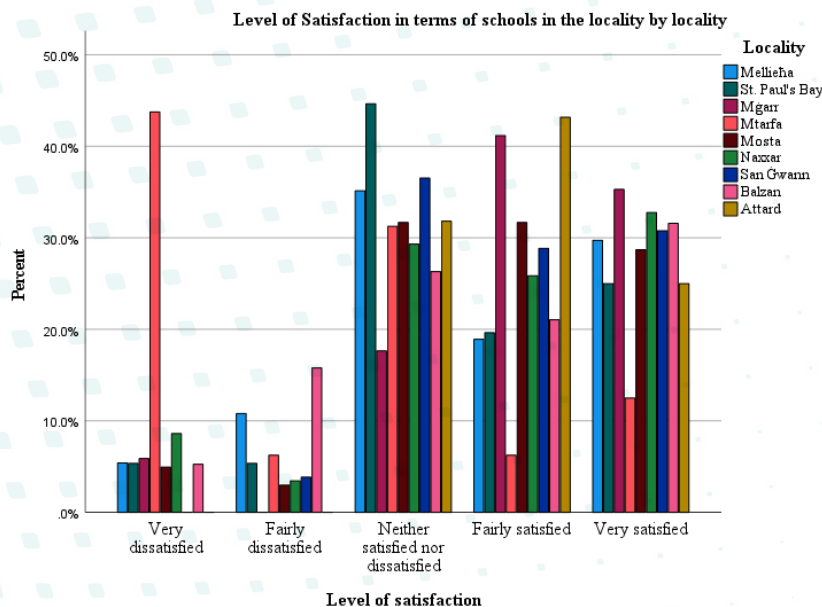

Table 5.18 and Figure 5.19 show that half of the respondents (50%, n=8) of Mtarfa were dissatisfied with the schools in the locality, with 43.75% (n=7) being very dissatisfied, whilst 6.25% (n=1) being fairly dissatisfied. On the other hand, 76.47% (n= 23) respondents from Mġarr were satisfied, with 41.18% (n=7) being fairly satisfied and 35.29%(n=6) being very satisfied.

Similarly, Attard and Mosta residents were amongst the most satisfied with 68.18% (n=30) and 60.4% (n= 61) of residents respectively mentioning that they were fairly or very satisfied.

Testing also found a relatively statistically significant relationship between accessibility and age (p=0.014) (Table 5.19 and Figure 5.20).

Table 5.19 | Level of satisfaction in terms of accessibility by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	2	4.76%	3	7.14%	18	42.86%	17	40.48%	2	4.76%
26-35	6	9.23%	7	10.77%	17	26.15%	20	30.77%	15	23.08%
36-45	7	11.11%	5	7.94%	27	42.86%	15	23.81%	9	15.19%
46-55	5	7.94%	6	9.52%	22	34.92%	19	30.16%	11	17.46%
56-65	8	12.12%	6	9.09%	25	37.88%	11	16.67%	16	25.14%
66+	7	6.93%	6	5.94%	36	35.64%	15	14.85%	37	36.63%

Figure 5.20 | Level of satisfaction in terms of accessibility by age

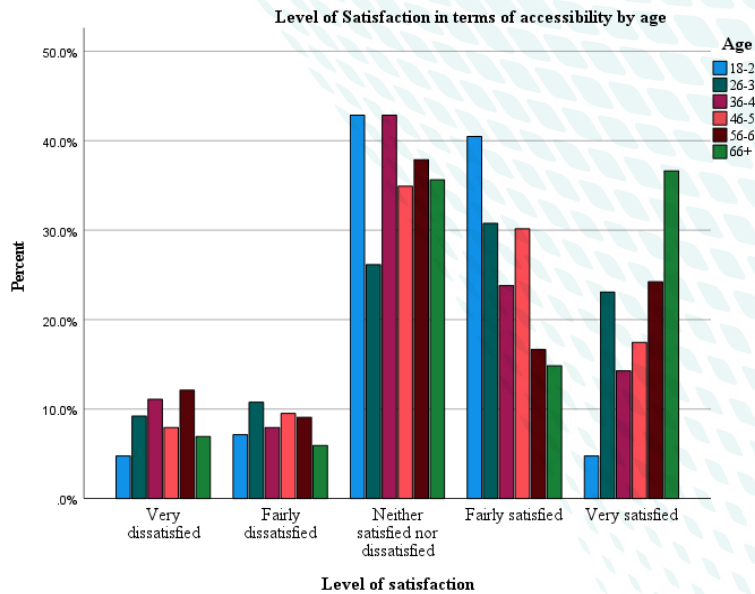

Level of Satisfaction in terms of accessibility by age

Table 5.19 and Figure 5.20 show most of the respondents were either indifferent, or else satisfied with accessibility of their areas. In particular, 53.85% (n= 35) of respondents aged 26-35 were satisfied. 51.49% (n= 52) of the 66-year olds or older respondents also indicated being satisfied with accessibility.

Testing found a relatively significant association between level of safety and locality (p=0.017) (Table 5.20 and Figure 5.21).

Table 5.20 | Level of satisfaction in terms of level of safety by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	2	5.41%	1	2.70%	11	29.73%	17	45.95%	6	16.22%
St. Paul's Bay	11	19.64%	11	19.64%	12	21.43%	20	35.71%	2	3.57%
Mġarr	1	5.88%	4	23.53%	3	17.65%	8	47.06%	1	5.88%
Mtarfa	1	6.25%	0	0.00%	6	37.50%	2	12.50%	7	43.75%
Mosta	5	4.95%	10	9.90%	34	33.66%	36	35.64%	16	15.84%
Naxxar	1	1.72%	6	10.34%	19	32.76%	20	34.48%	12	20.69%
San Ġwann	4	7.69%	8	15.38%	15	28.85%	16	30.77%	9	17.31%
Balzan	1	5.26%	3	15.79%	6	31.58%	6	31.58%	3	15.79%
Attard	1	2.27%	6	13.64%	13	29.55%	16	36.36%	8	18.18%

Figure 5.21 | Level of satisfaction in terms of level of safety by locality
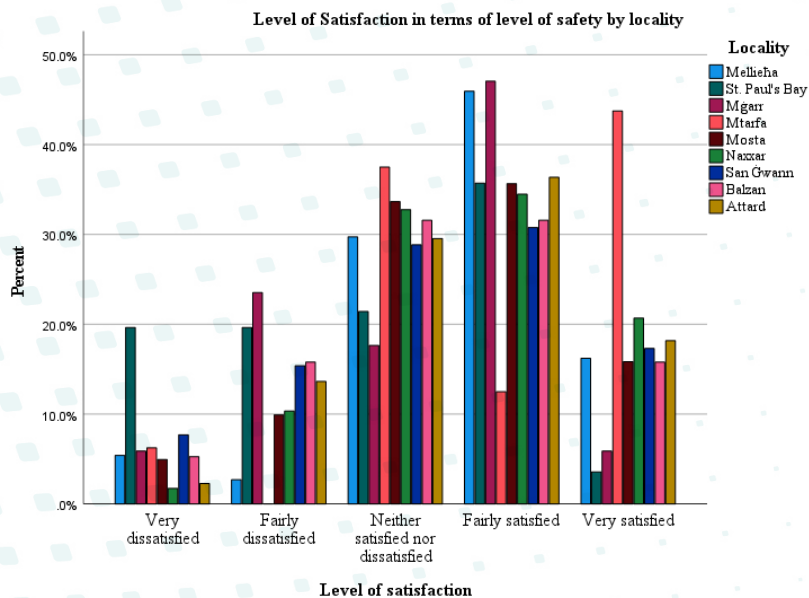
Table 5.20 and Figure 5.21 show that most respondents were somewhat satisfied with the level of safety. The highest level of dissatisfaction was recorded at a 39.29% (n=22) by residents of St. Paul's Bay, with 19.64% (n=11), being fairly dissatisfied and another 19.64% (n=11) being very dissatisfied. On the other hand, Mellieħa recorded the highest level of satisfaction at 62.16% (n=23), split by 45.95% (n=17) being fairly satisfied and 16.22% (n=6) being very satisfied.

Finally, the Pearson's Chi-square test yielded a relatively statistically significant relationship between religious activities and age (p=0.018) (Table 5.21 and Figure 5.22) and a statistically significant relationship to gender (p=0.026) (Table 5.22 and Figure 5.23).

Table 5.21 | Level of satisfaction in terms of religious activities by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	4	9.52%	5	11.90%	11	26.19%	16	38.10%	6	15.19%
26-35	4	6.15%	1	1.54%	26	40.00%	21	32.31%	13	20.00%
36-45	4	6.35%	0	0.00%	21	33.33%	23	36.51%	15	23.81%
46-55	0	0.00%	3	4.76%	25	39.68%	18	28.57%	17	26.98%
56-65	6	9.09%	3	4.55%	19	28.79%	23	34.85%	15	22.73%
66+	5	4.95%	4	3.96%	28	27.72%	23	22.77%	41	40.59%

Figure 5.22 | Level of satisfaction in terms of religious activities by age

Level of Satisfaction of religious activities by age
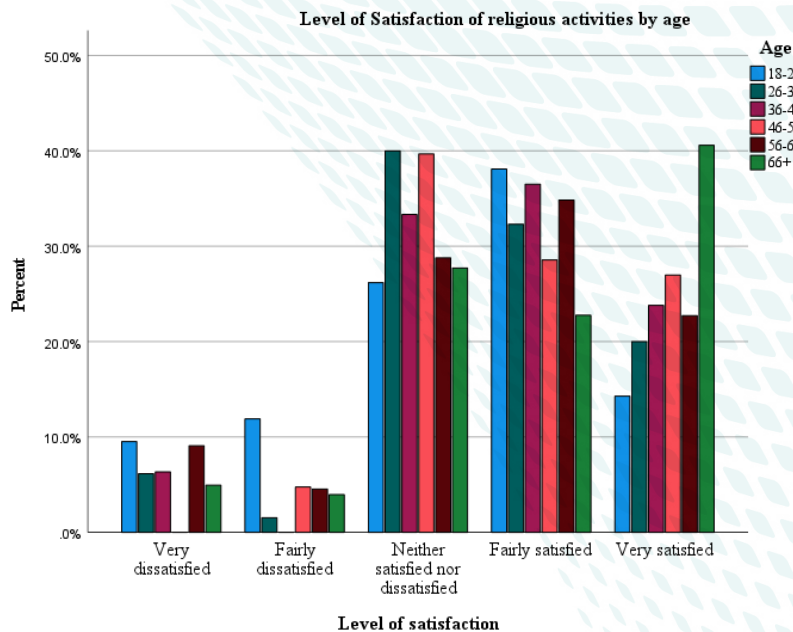
Table 5.21 and Figure 5.22 show that most respondents were somewhat satisfied with the religious activities in their locality. The highest level of satisfaction was recorded by residents falling within the 66+ years, age group at 63.37% (n=64).

Table 5.22 | Level of satisfaction in terms of religious activities by gender

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Male	15	7.39%	8	3.94%	75	36.95%	64	31.53%	41	20.20%
Female	8	4.06%	8	4.06%	55	27.92%	60	30.46%	66	33.50%

Figure 5.23 | Level of satisfaction in terms of religious activities by gender

Level of satisfaction in terms of religious activities by gender
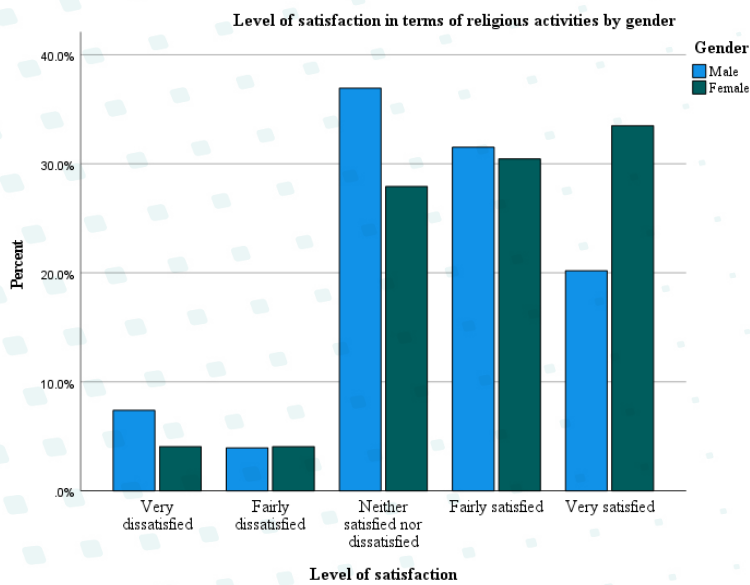
Table 5.22 and Figure 5.23 show that over half of both males and females, tend to be satisfied with the religious activities in the area, with females being the most satisfied group at 63.96% (n=126), split by 30.46% (n=60) being fairly satisfied and another 33.50% (n=66) being very satisfied. On the other hand, a greater share of males, 36,95% (n=75) tend to be indifferent.

Question 11 asked respondents to rank their perception of integration in their locality of a variety of groups (e.g. people with disability or of different sexual orientation etc.). Moreover, this question asked respondents to rank their perceived level of sense of community and the level of civic participation. Replies were based on a Likert scale that ranged from Very High (5), High, Neither High or Low, Low through to Very Low (1).

Table 5.23 | 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	37	9.25%	42	10.50%	168	42.00%	95	23.75%	58	14.50%
People of different sexual orientation	18	4.50%	38	9.50%	173	43.25%	114	28.50%	57	15.15%
People of different religious beliefs	24	6.00%	41	10.30%	181	45.30%	102	25.50%	52	13.00%
People of different culture	26	6.50%	41	10.30%	158	39.50%	112	28.00%	63	15.80%
Elderly	9	2.30%	15	3.80%	102	25.50%	144	36.00%	130	32.50%

Figure 5.24 | Level of integration of different groups
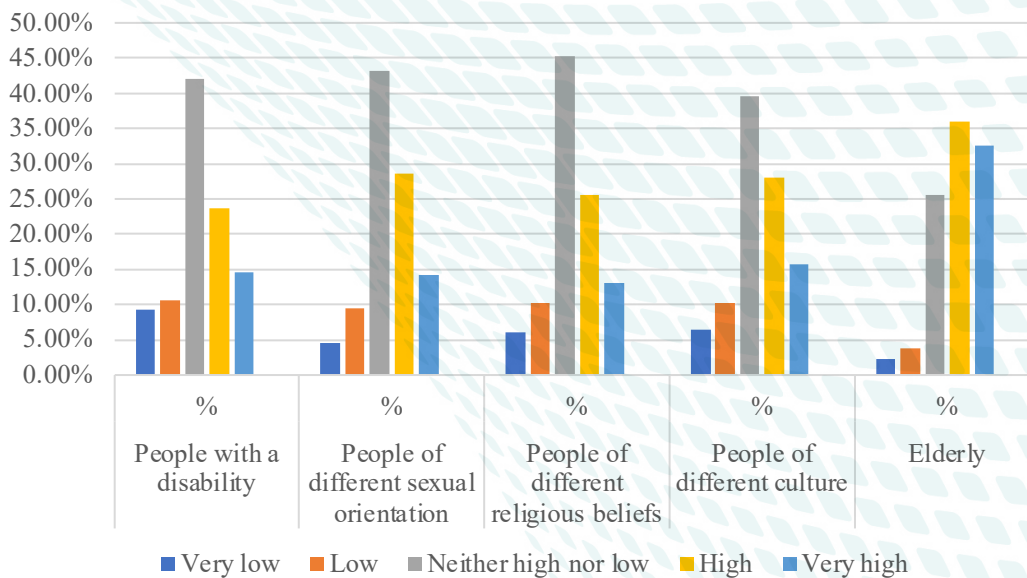
Table 5.23 and Figure 5.24 illustrate the perception of respondents regarding the level of integration of a variety of groups in their locality. The majority of respondents (68.5%, n=274) view the level of integration of the elderly as being high or very high, followed by that of people with different cultures (43.8%, n=175). People with a disability were perceived to be the least integrated whereby only 38.25% (n=153) considered their integration to be high, 42% (n=168) considered it to be neither low or high and 19.75% (n=79) considered it to be low or very low.

The Pearson Chi-square test found that there is no statistically significant relationship between the perceived level of integration of the said different groups, with age, gender or locality, except for a statistically significant association between the perception of integration of people with disability with the factor of age, whereby the p-value stood at 0.016 . As indicated in Table 5.24 and Figure 5.25, 39.7% (n=25) of respondents pertaining to the 46-55 years cohort, felt that people with disability were highly or very highly integrated. 27.70%, (n=18) of 26–35-year-old group felt that such a group's integration was low or very low. Circa 51% (n=32) of 36-45-year-old group felt that people with disability in their locality were neither integrated nor not integrated.

Table 5.24 | Perceived of level of integration of people with disability depending on age of respondents

	Very low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	2	4.76%	6	15.19%	19	45.24%	12	28.57%	3	7.14%
26-35	4	6.15%	14	21.54%	25	38.46%	13	20.00%	9	13.85%
36-45	7	11.11%	5	7.94%	32	50.79%	15	23.81%	4	6.35%
46-55	10	15.87%	0	0.00%	28	44.44%	17	26.98%	8	12.70%
56-65	3	4.55%	8	12.12%	29	43.94%	12	18.18%	14	21.21%
66+	11	10.89%	9	8.91%	35	34.65%	26	25.74%	20	19.80%

Figure 5.25 | Perceived of level of integration of people with disability depending on age of respondents

REĠJUN
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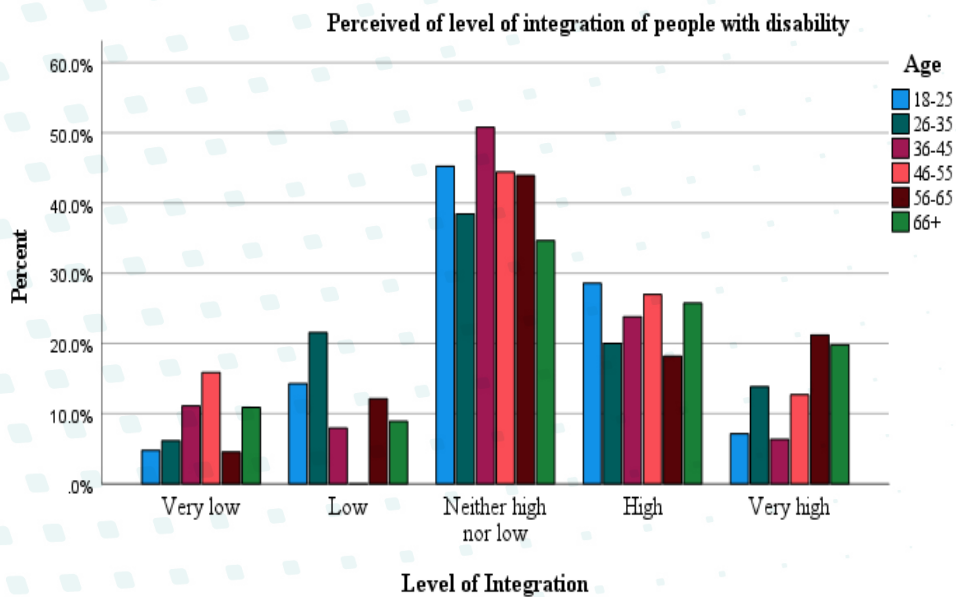
Table 5.25 | Sense of community and participation in civic life

	Very low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sense of Community	18	4.50%	34	8.50%	139	34.75%	120	30.00%	89	22.25%
Participation in Civic Life	22	5.5%	56	14%	192	48%	85	21.25%	45	11.25%

Figure 5.26 | Perception of sense of community
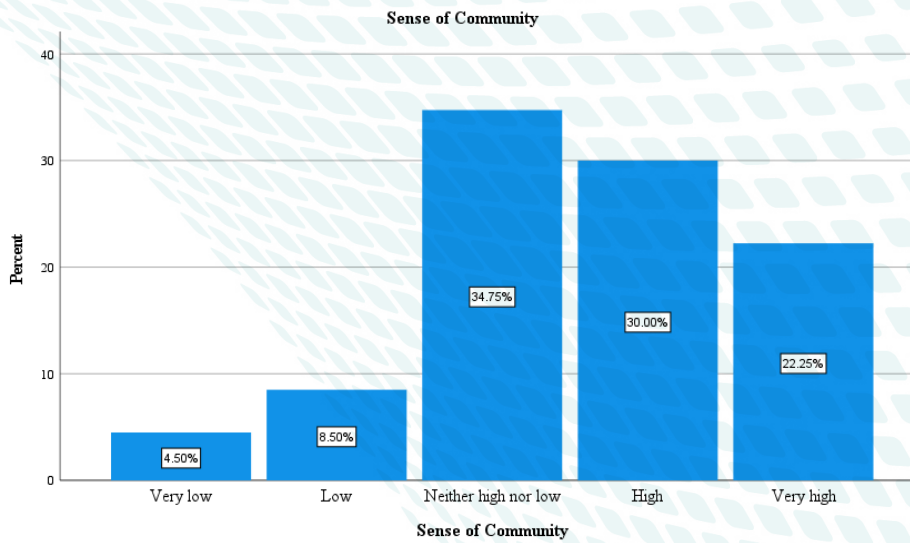
Figure 5.27 | Perception of participation of residents in civic life
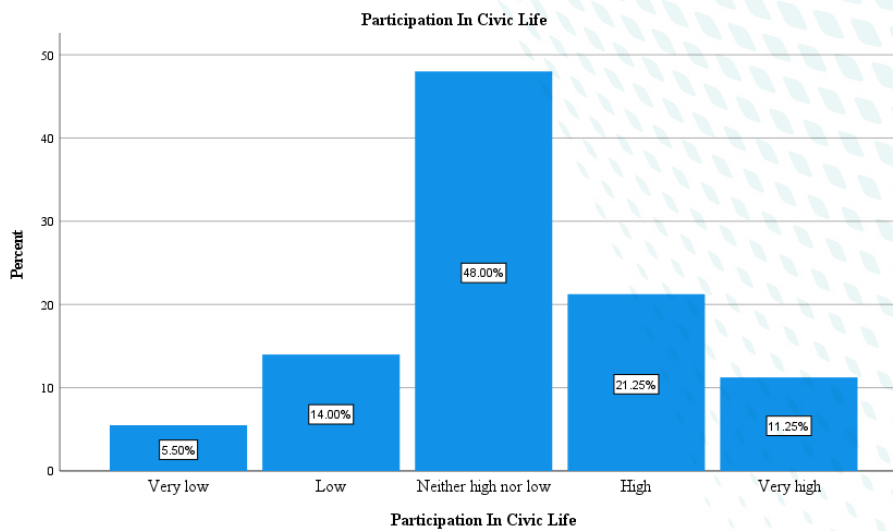
The Pearson Chi-Square test indicated that the only relatively statistical significant association was between 'sense of community' and locality, with a p-value of 0.016 , which is smaller than the 0.05 level of significance. (Table 5.26 and Figure 5.28)

Table 5.26 | Perception of sense of community by locality

	Very low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	2	5.4%	1	2.7%	9	24.3%	13	35.1%	12	32.4%
St. Paul's Bay	6	10.7%	8	14.3%	25	44.6%	9	16.1%	8	14.3%
Mġarr	0	0.0%	1	5.9%	6	35.3%	4	23.5%	6	35.3%
Mtarfa	2	12.5%	0	0.0%	2	12.5%	5	31.3%	7	43.8%
Mosta	3	3.0%	10	9.9%	34	33.7%	28	27.7%	26	25.7%
Naxxar	2	3.4%	3	5.2%	20	34.5%	23	39.7%	10	17.2%
San Ġwann	2	3.8%	6	11.5%	24	46.2%	10	19.2%	10	19.2%
Balzan	1	5.3%	0	0.0%	7	36.8%	8	42.1%	3	15.8%
Attard	0	0.0%	5	11.4%	12	27.3%	20	45.5%	7	15.9%

Figure 5.28 | Perception of sense of community by locality
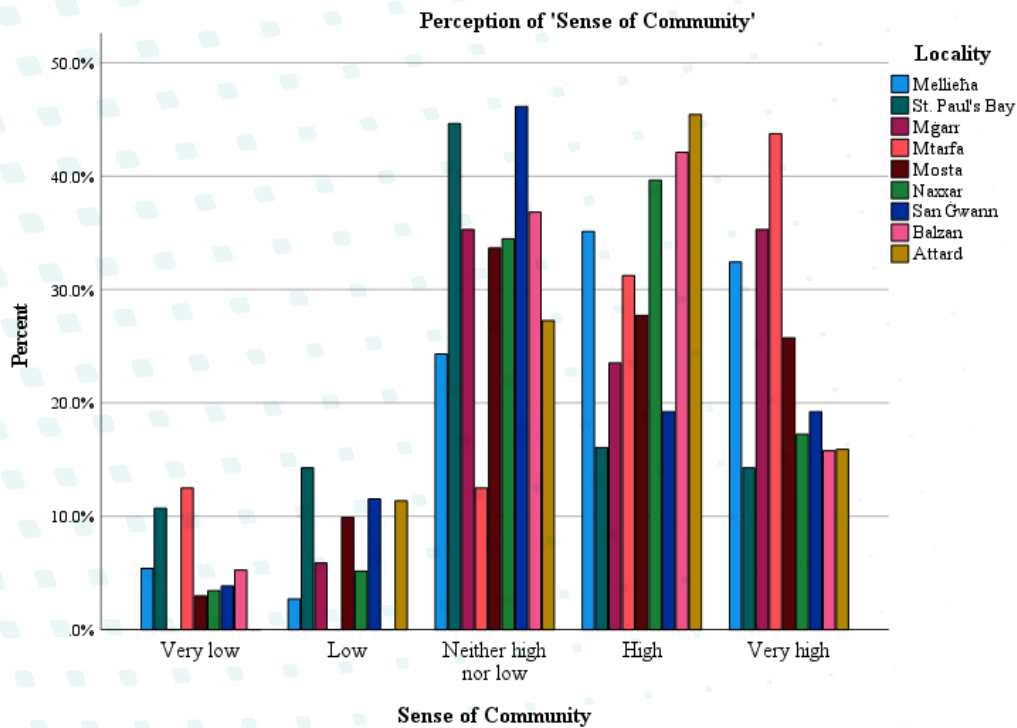
As indicated in both Table 5.26 and Figure 5.28, Mtarfa residents have the highest perception of a sense of community in their locality, at 75.10% (n=12), followed by Mellieħa at 67.5% (n=25). On the other hand, only 30.4% % (n=17) of St. Paul's Bay residents feel there is a high or very high sense of community, with circa 25% % (n=14) reporting a low or very low sense of community.

Question 12 was an open-ended question which asked respondents whether they would like to add anything else with regards to the quality of life in their locality. 62.75% (n=251) opted not to reply to this question or stated that they had nothing else to add. The remaining 37.25% (n=149) gave diverse views as regards to how the quality of life in their locality could be improved. Traffic management was the most common comment, with 24 mentions, followed by the need for more cleanliness, the need for open and/or green spaces, less construction, more parking and less noise, amongst others (Figure 5.29).

Figure 5.29 | Top mentions for better quality of life
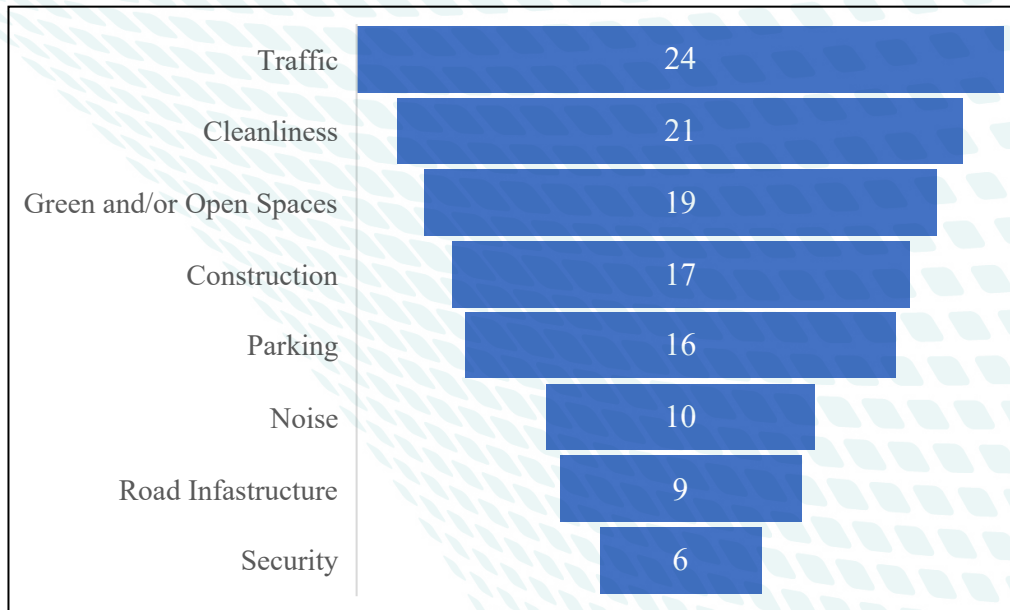
Local council

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 through the use of a 5-Likert Scale ranging from Very Satisfied (5) through to Very Dissatisfied (1)

Table 5.27 | Respondents' level of satisfaction with their local council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	79	19.75%
Fairly dissatisfied	63	15.75%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	131	32.75%
Fairly satisfied	78	19.50%
Very satisfied	49	12.25%
Total	400	100%

Figure 5.30 | Respondents' level of satisfaction with their local council
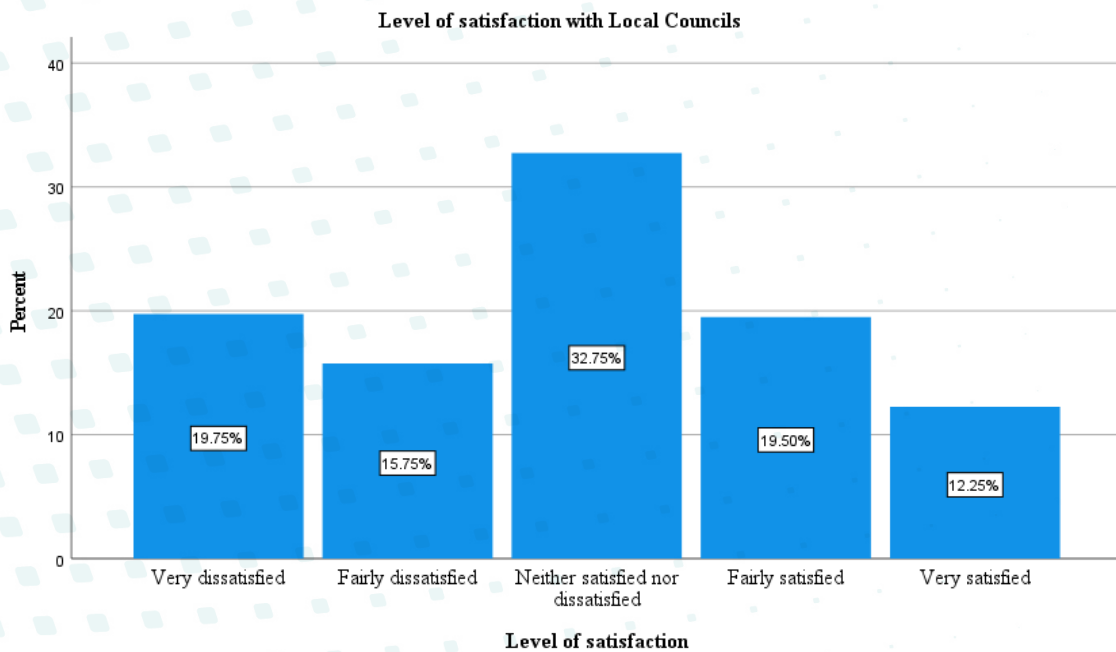
Table 5.27 and Figure 5.30 show that 31.75% (n= 127) are Satisfied with their local council while 35.5% (n= 142) are Dissatisfied. A relatively high percentage of 32.75% (n=131) were Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.

The Pearson Chi-square test indicated that there is a statistically significant association between the level of satisfaction of the local council and the locality the respondents live in (p-value = 0.018) .

As shown in Table 5.28 and Figure 5.31, Attard residents demonstrate the highest level of satisfaction with their local council, 59.10% (n= 26), with 34.10% (n= 15) being fairly satisfied whilst 25% (n= 11) being very satisfied. Similarly, 52.90% (n= 9) of Mġarr residents seem to be satisfied with their local councils, 29.40% (n=5) being fairly satisfied and 23.5% (n=4) being very

satisfied. On the other hand, 49.5% (n= 50) of Mosta residents seem to be dissatisfied, split between 31.70% (n=32) being very dissatisfied and 17.80% (n=18). 44.60% (n=25) of St. Paul's Bay residents also seem to be dissatisfied, split between, 19.60% (n=11) being very dissatisfied and 25% (n=14) being fairly dissatisfied.

Table 5.28 | Respondents' level of satisfaction with local council by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	7	18.9%	6	16.2%	11	29.7%	7	18.9%	6	16.2%
St. Paul's Bay	11	19.6%	14	25.0%	21	37.5%	7	12.5%	3	5.4%
Mġarr	1	5.9%	1	5.9%	6	35.3%	5	29.4%	4	23.5%
Mtarfa	3	18.8%	4	25.0%	3	18.8%	5	31.3%	1	6.3%
Mosta	32	31.7%	18	17.8%	26	25.7%	14	13.9%	11	10.9%
Naxxar	11	19.0%	8	13.8%	22	37.9%	11	19.0%	6	10.3%
San Ġwann	9	17.3%	5	9.6%	24	46.2%	9	17.3%	5	9.6%
Balzan	3	15.8%	2	10.5%	7	36.8%	5	26.3%	2	10.5%
Attard	2	4.5%	5	11.4%	11	25.0%	15	34.1%	11	25.0%

Figure 5.31 | Respondents' level of satisfaction with local council by locality
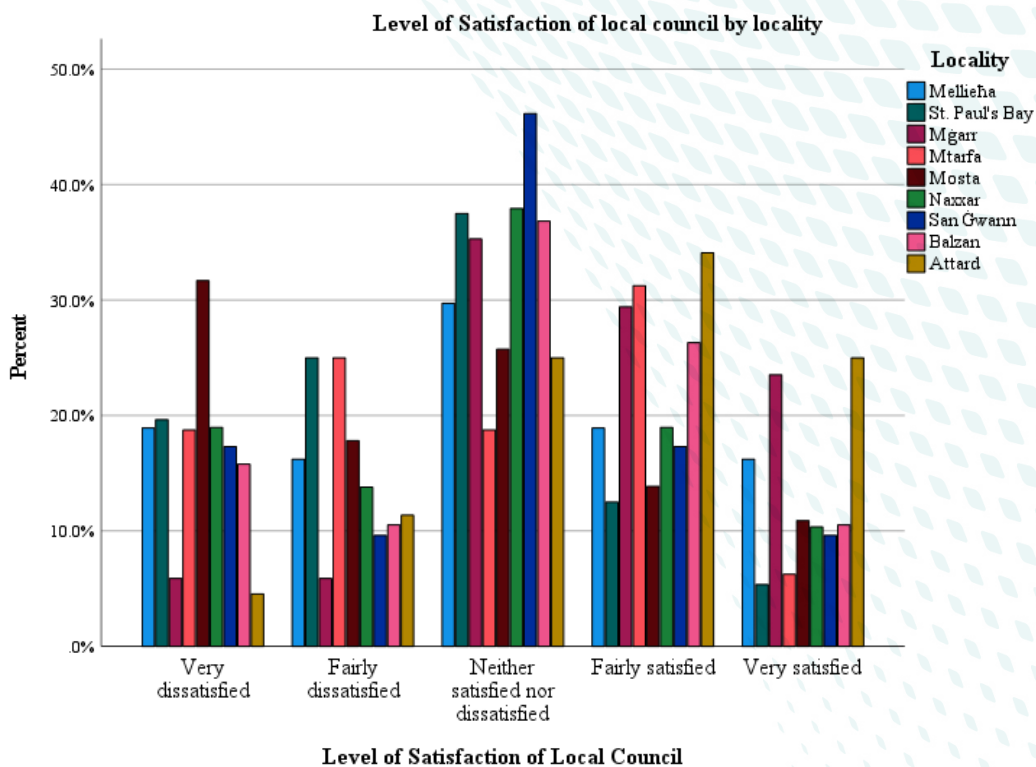
Question 14 asked respondents to rate the extent to which they perceive that their local council acts on the concerns of the residents and the extent to which it involves the community. A 5 Likert Scale ranging from Not at all (1), Little, Somewhat, A Fair Amount through to A Great Deal (5) was used.

Table 5.29 | 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	72	18.00%	73	18.25%	138	34.50%	68	17.00%	49	12.25%
Involves the community	67	16.75%	73	18.25%	139	34.75%	68	17.00%	53	13.25%

Figure 5.32 | Perception of residents on local councils acting on concerns of residents
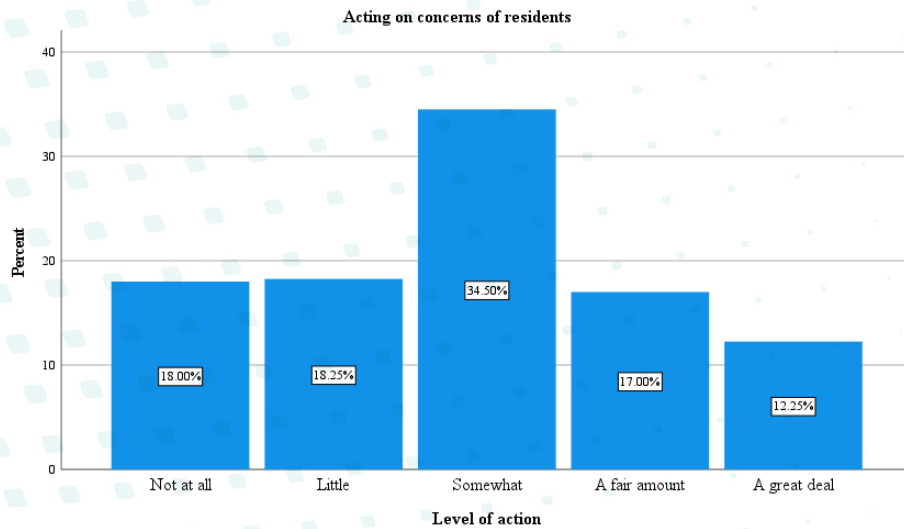
Figure 5.33 | Perception of residents on level of involvement of community
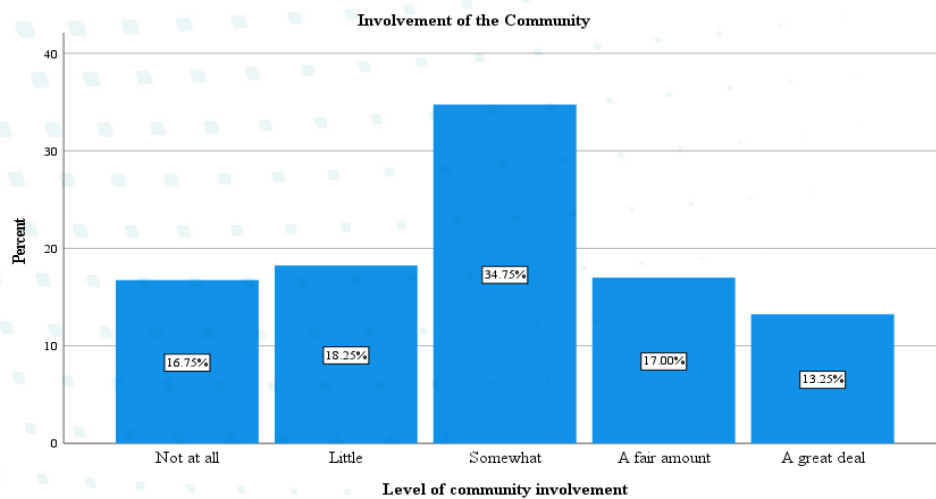
Table 5.29, Figure 5.32 and Figure 5.33 show the perception of the local councils' responsiveness to the needs of residents and their involvement. Around 12.25% of respondents consider their local council to act a great deal on the concerns of residents (n=49). 13.25% of respondents feel that the local council involves the community to a great extent (n=53). On the other hand, 18% (n=72) believe that the local council does not act at all on the residents' concerns, and 16.75% (n=67) feel that the local councils do not involve the community at all.

A Pearson Chi-square test was 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. Testing yielded no statistical significance with all relationships, whereby the p-values were larger than the 0.05 level of significance, except for one relationship, namely the perception of respondents with regards to the local council's responsiveness to act on residents' concerns with the locality of respondents, with a p-value of 0.003.

Table 5.30 | Perception on local councils acting on residents' concerns by locality

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	6	16.22%	8	21.62%	14	37.84%	5	13.51%	4	10.81%
St. Paul's Bay	13	23.21%	9	16.07%	21	37.50%	7	12.50%	6	10.71%
Mġarr	1	5.88%	0	0.00%	9	52.94%	5	29.41%	2	11.76%
Mtarfa	4	25.00%	4	25.00%	4	25.00%	2	12.50%	2	12.50%
Mosta	27	26.73%	23	22.77%	29	28.71%	12	11.88%	10	9.90%
Naxxar	12	20.69%	10	17.24%	21	36.21%	8	13.79%	7	12.07%
San Ġwann	6	11.54%	12	23.08%	22	42.31%	9	17.31%	3	5.77%
Balzan	3	15.79%	4	21.05%	6	31.58%	3	15.79%	3	15.79%
Attard	0	0.00%	3	6.82%	12	27.27%	17	38.64%	12	27.27%

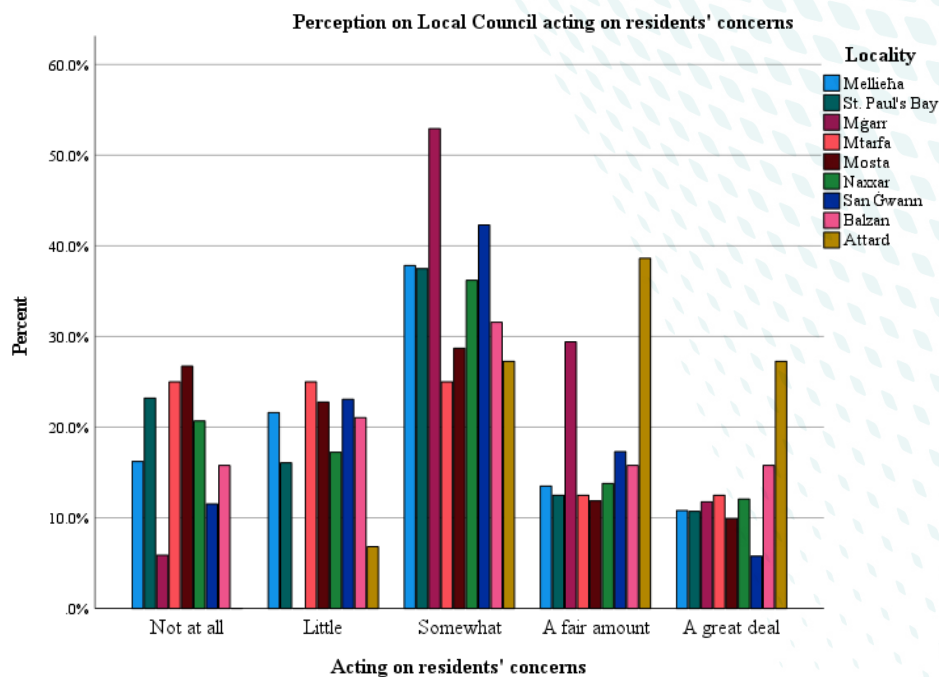*Figure 5.34 | Perception of local councils acting on residents' concerns by locality*

Table 5.30 and Figure 5.34 indicate that the perceived level of responsiveness of local councils to residents' concerns varies with the locality of the respondents. For instance, more than half of the respondents from Attard (66.91%, n=29) feel that the local council responds to residents' concerns 'a fair amount' (38.64%, n=17) or 'a great deal' (27.27%, n=12). On the other hand, 50% (n=8) of Mtarfa residents feel that the local council does not respond to their concerns, 25% (n=4) mentioning not at all, and 25% (n=4) believing that the council does so only to a little extent. Similarly, 49.5% (¬n=50) of Mosta residents feel that the local council does not respond to the residents' concern at all (26.73%, n=27) or just a little (22.77%, n=23).

Question 15 gauged the level of awareness of residents on the role of local councillors in their locality through the same 5 level Likert Scale utilised in the previous question. 16.75% (n=67) were not at all aware of their local councillors' role, 18.50% (n=74) replied as being slightly aware, 19.75% (n=79) were fairly aware while 9.75% (n=39) were greatly aware. A substantial percentage 35.25% (n=141) replied that they were somewhat aware. (Table 5.31 and Figure 5.35).

Table 5.31 | Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all	67	16.75%
Little	74	18.50%
Somewhat	141	35.25%
A fair amount	79	19.75%
A great deal	39	9.75%
Total	400	100%

Figure 5.35 | Respondents' Awareness of local councillors' role
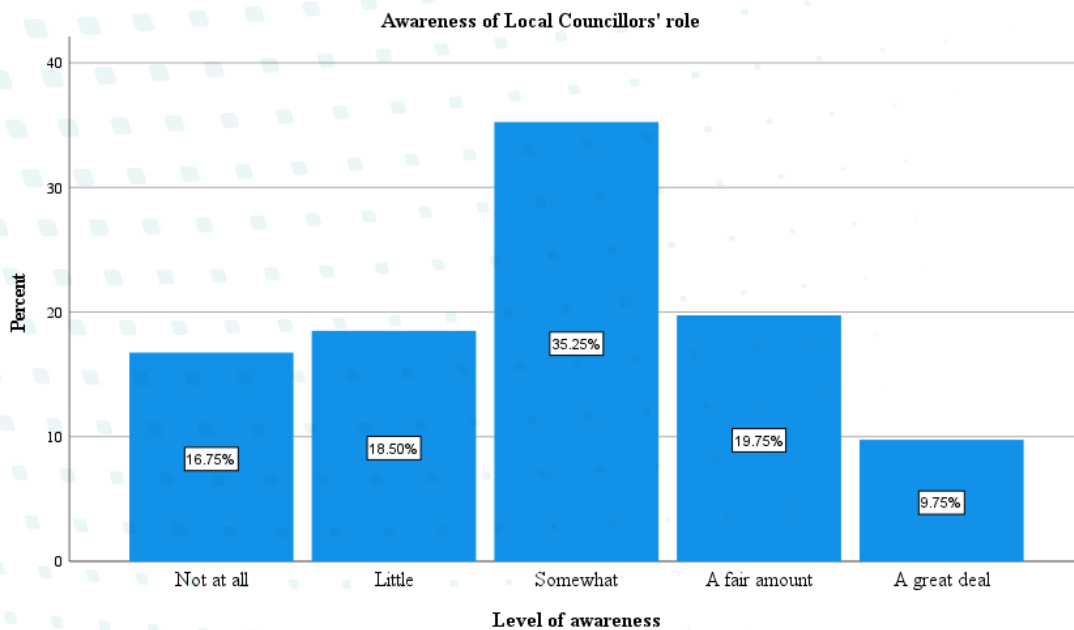
A Pearson Chi Squared test was run to understand whether there was a statistically significant relationship between this level of awareness of local councillors' roles, when related to age, gender and locality. Testing only revealed a statistically significant relationship with age (p-value = 0.015).

Table 5.32 | Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role by age

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	0	0.00%	11	26.19%	19	45.24%	10	23.81%	2	4.76%
26-35	13	20.00%	18	27.69%	16	24.62%	12	18.46%	6	9.23%
36-45	9	15.19%	9	15.19%	24	38.10%	16	25.40%	5	7.94%
46-55	7	11.11%	15	23.81%	23	36.51%	13	20.63%	5	7.94%
56-65	10	15.15%	8	12.12%	26	39.39%	11	16.67%	11	16.67%
66+	28	27.72%	13	12.87%	33	32.67%	17	16.83%	10	9.90%

Figure 5.36 | Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role by age
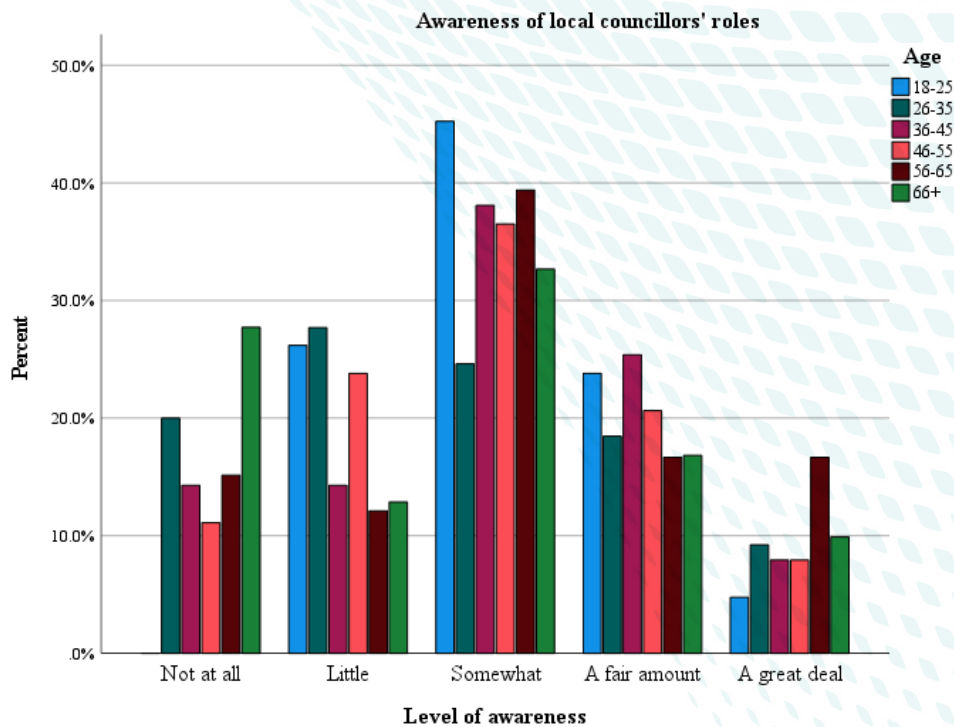
Table 5.32 and Figure 5.36 indicate that the largest percentage of the listed age groups, who had no idea with regards to the local councillors' roles were 27.7% (n=28) of the 66+ year olds. The group which had the highest mentioned of feeling they knew a great deal about the local councillors' roles was that of 56–65-year-olds, at 16.7% (n=11), which in itself wasn't too high of a percentage. Nearly half (45.2%, n=19) of the youngest group (18-25) mentioned that they

somewhat had an idea, but they were also the group with the lowest respondents stating that they know a great deal (5.1%, n=2). 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 the 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 the local councils.

Table 5.33 outlines the public services which do not fall under the remit of the local councils. Yet as the table demonstrates, many respondents are unaware that these services are provided by other entities and not by the local councils. Possibly the most telling result is that in relation to waste management, whereby 80.3% (n= 321) of respondents believed incorrectly that this falls in the local councils' remit. Similarly, 60% (n=240) believes projects administration is one of the tasks of the local council. More than half of respondents, 51.5% (n=206), believe that road infrastructure is the role of local councils. Such results clearly indicate that many individuals believe that the remits of the local councils are much wider than they actually are, possibly skewing unrealistically the expectations of the residents in terms of the local councils.

Table 5.33 | Awareness of local councils' roles - public services falling outside the LCs' remit

	Waste Management		Road Infrastructure		Traffic Enforcement		Building Permits		Projects Administration	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	23	5.8%	34	8.5%	29	7.3%	41	10.3%	60	15.0%
Correct (No)	56	14.0%	160	40.0%	221	55.3%	303	75.8%	100	25.0%
Incorrect (Yes)	321	80.3%	206	51.5%	150	37.5%	56	14.0%	240	60.0%

On the other hand, Table 5.34 outlines the public services which fall within the remit of the local councils. It seems that respondents were aware that street cleaning (90.8%, n=363), the upkeep of gardens and parks (85.5%, n=342), as well as parking permits (81.8%, n=327), fall within scope for local councils. Yet a substantial number of respondents seemed to be unaware that animal protection (48.3%, n=193) and education matters such as cultural events (36.8%, n= 147) also fall within the remit of such entities. Moreover, when asked to mention any other local council remits, 90% (n = 361) stated that they did not know of any other remits.

***Table 5.34 | Awareness of local councils' roles -
Public services falling within the LCs' remit***

	Education matters		Parking Permits		Street Cleaning		Upkeep and maintenance of parks and gardens		Integration		Welfare of children, youth and elderly		Protection of animals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	57	14.3%	38	9.5%	18	4.5%	29	7.3%	66	16.5%	78	19.5%	56	14.0%
	147	36.8%	35	8.8%	19	4.8%	29	7.3%	104	26.0%	88	22.0%	193	48.3%
Correct (Yes)	196	49.0%	327	81.8%	363	90.8%	342	85.5%	230	57.5%	234	58.5%	151	37.8%

Subsequently, the following question asked respondents whether they felt that the local council met their expectations. Table 5.35 and Figure 5.37

Local Council meets respondents' expectations indicate that there seems to be a somewhat equal distribution in relation to negative and positive responses to this question, whereas 46.3% (n=185) stated that their expectations had not been met by the local council, whilst 48.3% (n=193) felt that they had been met. 5.5% (n=22) of respondents were indifferent.

Table 5.35 | Local Council meets respondents' expectations

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	22	5.5%
No	185	46.3%
Yes	193	48.3%
Total	400	100%

Figure 5.37 | Local Council meets respondents' expectations
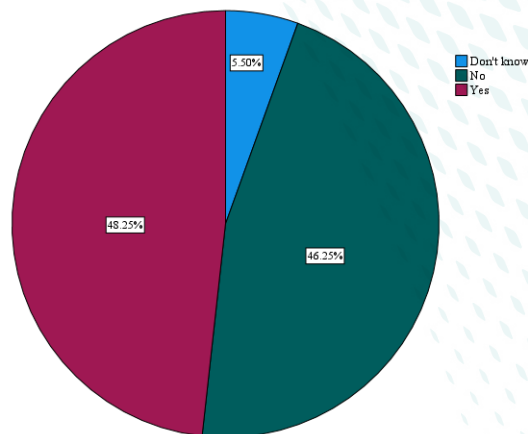
The Pearson Chi Square test indicated that there is a relatively statistically significant relationship between 'perceived met expectation by the local council' and the age of the respondents (p = 0.011) as well as the locality of the respondents (p = 0.025) .

Table 5.36 and Figure 5.38 indicate that people from the younger age group 76.2% (n=32) feel that their expectations are met by the local council, as opposed to a 39.7% (n=25) of 46–55-year-olds.

Table 5.36 | Local council meets respondents' expectations by age

	Don't know		No		Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	0	0.00%	10	23.81%	32	76.19%
26-35	4	6.15%	34	52.31%	27	41.54%
36-45	3	4.76%	30	47.62%	30	47.62%
46-55	1	1.59%	37	58.73%	25	39.68%
56-65	5	7.58%	31	46.97%	30	45.45%
66+	9	8.91%	43	42.57%	49	48.51%

Figure 5.38 | Local council meets respondents' expectations by age
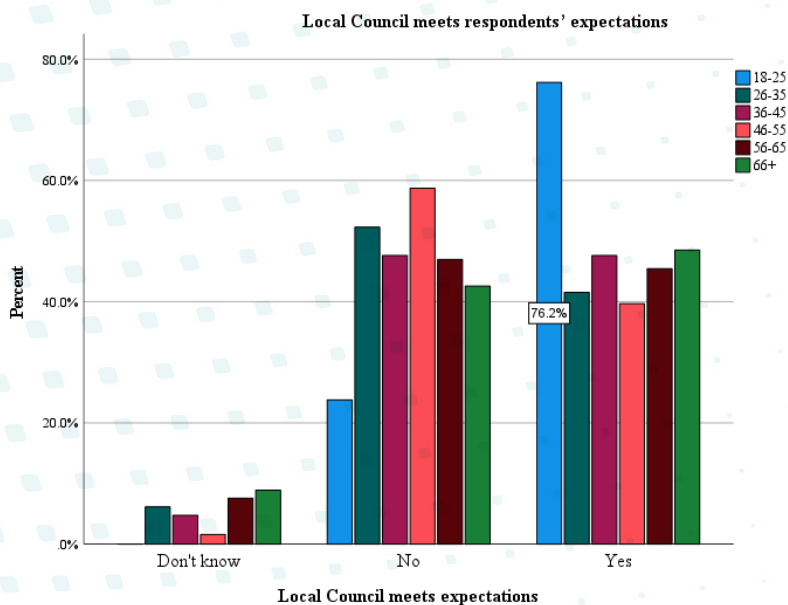
Table 5.37 and Figure 5.39 indicate that people form Attard seem to be the most satisfied with having their expectations have been met by the local council, at 75% (n=33). On the other hand, 62.5% (n=10) of Mtarfa residents and 59.4% (n=60) of Mosta feel that their expectations are not met by the local council.

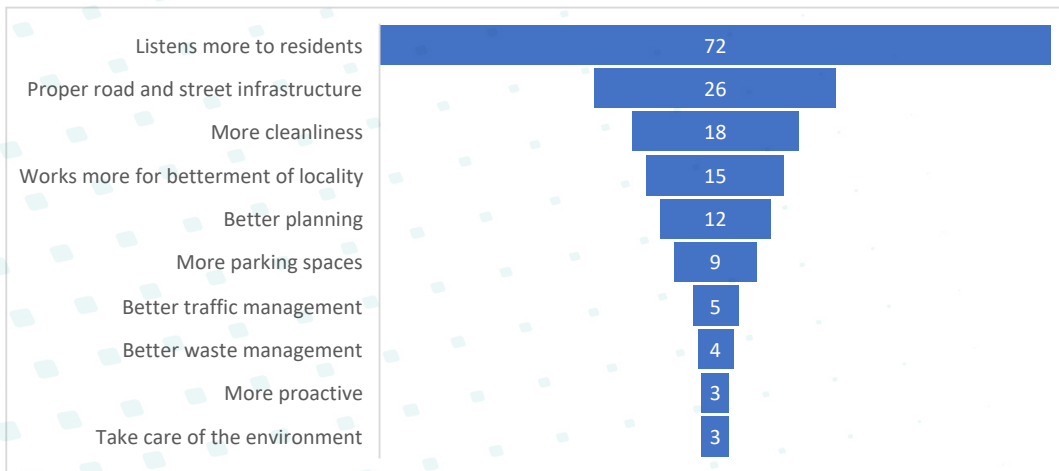**Table 5.37 | Local council meets respondents' expectations by locality**

	No		Yes		Don't know	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	2	5.41%	16	43.24%	19	51.35%
St. Paul's Bay	4	7.14%	31	55.36%	21	37.50%
Mġarr	1	5.88%	6	35.29%	10	58.82%
Mtarfa	1	6.25%	10	62.50%	5	31.25%
Mosta	3	2.97%	60	59.41%	38	37.62%
Naxxar	3	5.17%	25	43.10%	30	51.72%
San Ġwann	3	5.77%	22	42.31%	27	51.92%
Balzan	2	10.53%	7	36.84%	10	52.63%
Attard	3	6.82%	8	18.18%	33	75.00%

Figure 5.39 | Local council meets respondents' expectations by locality
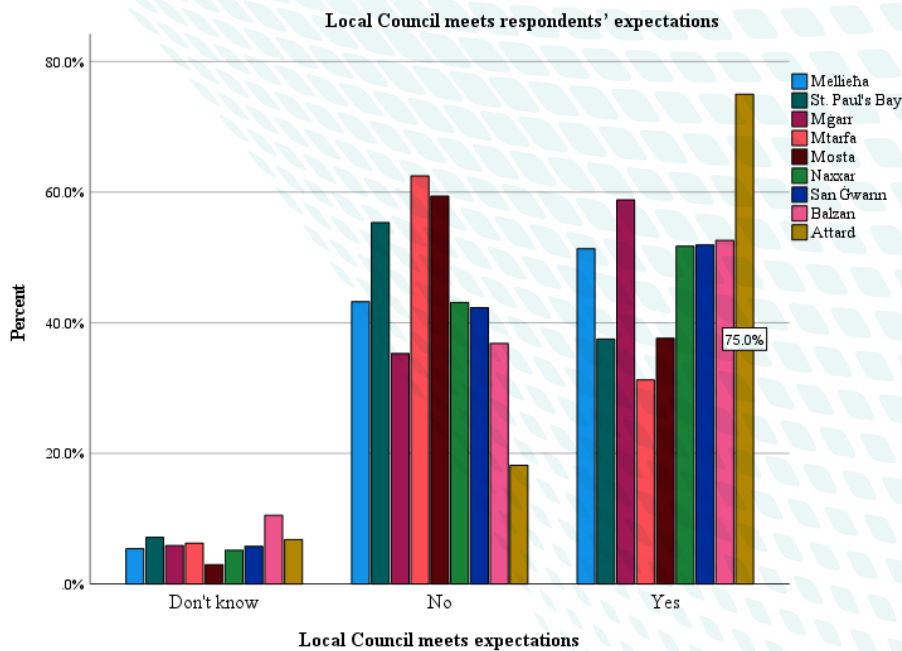
Those respondents who answered that their expectations were not met by the local councils, were subsequently asked what could the local council do to meet such expectations. The top mention was that of listening more to the residents (72 mentions), ensuring that there is the right infrastructure in the locality (e.g. street and pavements) (26 mentions) and ensuring greater cleanliness in the locality (18 mentions). (Figure 5.40)

Figure 5.40 | How can the local council meet the residents' expectations?

Listens more to residents	72
Proper road and street infrastructure	26
More cleanliness	18
Works more for betterment of locality	15
Better planning	12
More parking spaces	9
Better traffic management	5
Better waste management	4
More proactive	3
Take care of the environment	3

Question 18 asked respondents whether they would like to add anything else with regards to their local council. 76.75% (n=307) of respondents stated that they had nothing else to add. Of interest, 7% (n=28) stated again that local councils need to listen more to the people, just as was mentioned in the previous question.

Regional council

Question 19 asked respondents to state which regional council does their locality form part of. Circa half of the respondents 49.5% (n=198) stated Reġjun Tramuntana, being the correct answer. 17.0% (n= 68) stated that they don't know. 33.5% (n=134) gave the wrong answer with 84 out of these 134 respondents stated that their regional council is Reġjun Ċentrali (Table 5.38 and Figure 5.41).

Table 5.38 | Awareness of the regional council their local council pertains to

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	68	17.0
Wrong answer	134	33.5
Right answer	198	49.5
Total	400	100.0

Which Regional Council does the Local Council make part of?
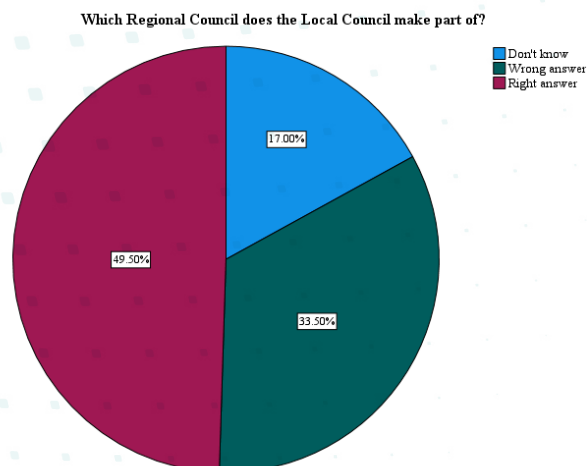
A Pearson's Chi-Square test was carried out to test for a significant association with age, gender, locality and length of residence. Testing found a significantly statistical association with locality where the p-value gave a result of approximately 0 (p= <0.001) (Table 5.39 and Figure 5.42. No significant statistical association was found with age (p=0.111), gender (p=0.233) and length of residence (p=0.693), whose p-values were all above the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 5.39 | Awareness of 'the regional council their local council pertains to' by locality

	Don't know		Wrong Answer		Right Answer	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Mellieħa	5	13.51%	7	18.92%	25	67.57%
St. Paul's Bay	5	8.93%	14	25.00%	37	66.07%
Mġarr	5	29.41%	1	5.88%	11	64.71%
Mtarfa	1	6.25%	7	43.75%	8	50.00%
Mosta	13	12.87%	33	32.67%	55	54.46%
Naxxar	12	20.69%	13	22.41%	33	56.90%
San Ġwann	12	23.08%	22	42.31%	18	34.62%
Balzan	8	42.11%	7	36.84%	4	21.05%
Attard	7	15.91%	30	68.18%	7	15.91%

Figure 5.42 | Awareness of 'the regional council their local council pertains to' by locality
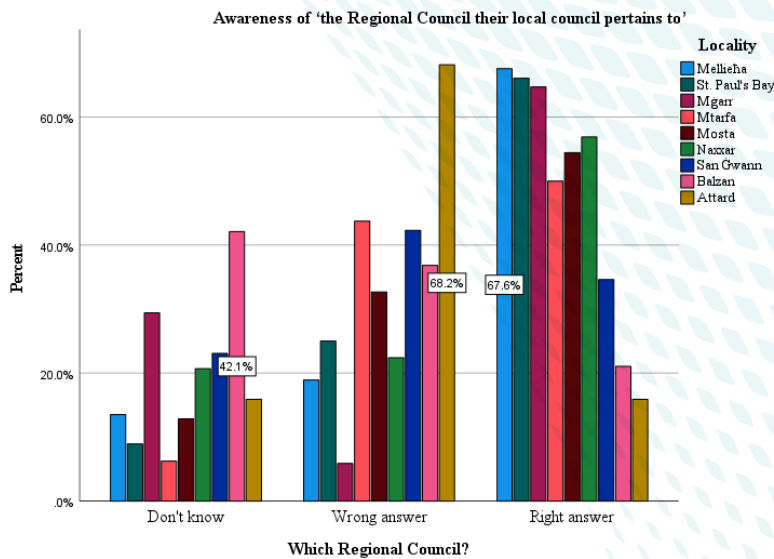
Table 5.39 and Figure 5.42 illustrate how Attard residents had the highest proportion of respondents who quoted a wrong answer (68.2%, n=30). Balzan had the highest proportion of respondents who didn't know which regional council they pertained to (42.1%, n=8). On the other hand, Mellieħa residents seem to be the ones which are most aware of the regional council, with 67.6% (n=25) quoting the correct answer.

Question 20 asked respondents whether the responsibilities of regional council differed from that of the local council or otherwise. Table 5.40 and Figure 5.43 illustrate that 48.3%

(n=193) stated that the functions and responsibilities of regional councils differed from those of local councils. 30% (n=119) stated that they did not know, whilst 22% (n=88) stated that the responsibilities and functions were the same.

Table 5.40 | Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	119	29.8%
No, same	88	22.0%
Yes, different	193	48.3%
Total	400	100.0%

Figure 5.43 | Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council

Are functions and responsabilities of the RC the same as those of the LC?
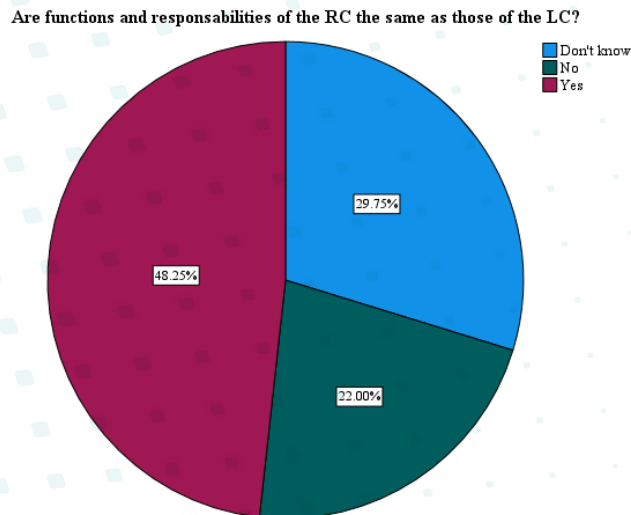
Through the use of the Pearsons Chi-square test age, gender, locality and length of residence were cross-tabuated with the awareness in terms of functions and responsibilities of the regional council vs local council. Testing yielded a significantly statistical association with age (p-value = 0.014) (Table 5.41 and Figure 5.44).

Table 5.41 | Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council by age

	Don't know		No, same		Yes, different	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	11	26.19%	13	30.95%	18	42.86%
26-35	18	27.69%	13	20.00%	34	52.31%
36-45	10	15.87%	12	19.05%	41	65.08%
46-55	13	20.63%	15	23.81%	35	55.56%
56-65	27	40.91%	13	19.70%	26	39.39%
66+	40	39.60%	22	21.78%	39	38.61%

Figure 5.44 | Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council by age

Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of Regional Council vs Local Council
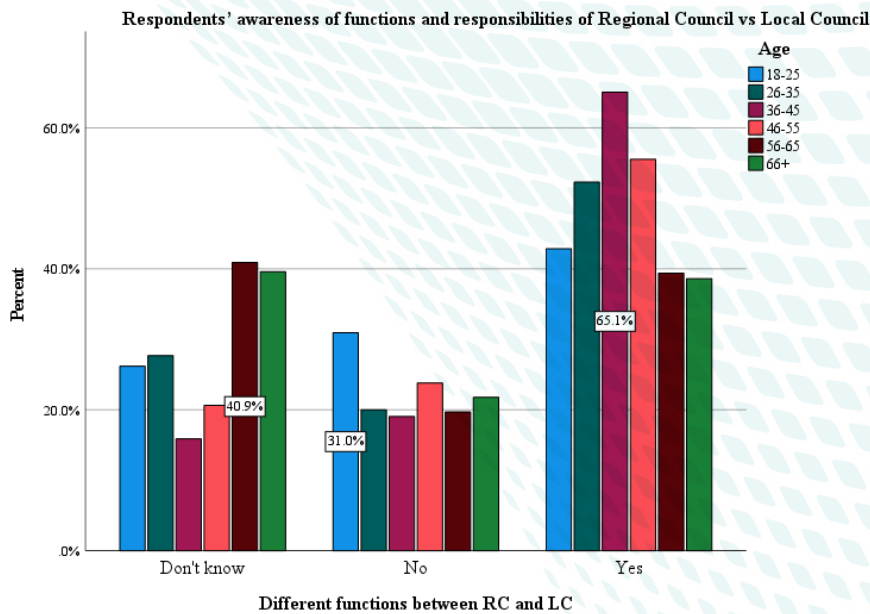
Table 5.41 and Figure 5.45Figure 5.44 show that the age group which understands mostly that the regional council have different and distinct responsibilities from those of the local council, are the respondents between 36 and 45, 65.1% (n=41). On the other hand, the greatest percentage of people who believe the two councils have the same roles was recorded at 31% (n=13) by the youngest cohort (18-25). 40.9% of the people aged 56-65 (n=27) stated that they don't know.

Question 21 asked respondents who replied in the affirmative in Question 20 to state how they think the functions and responsibilities of the regional council differed from those of the local council. The top three mentions were that the regional council has more and/or wider responsibilities (50 mentions), that the regional council takes care of more than just one locality (27 mentions) and that it takes care of the local councils (12 mentions) (Figure 5.45).

Figure 5.45 | Difference in functions and responsibilities -
Regional council vs local council
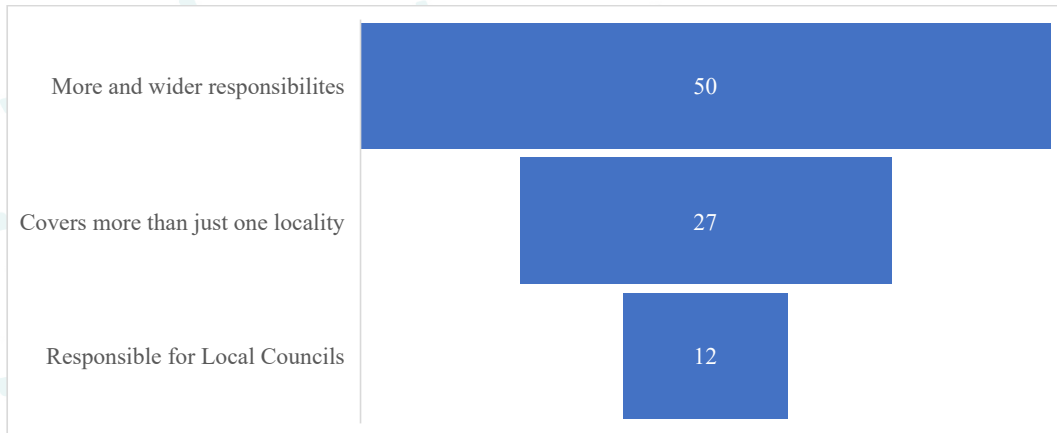
Subsequently, Question 22 presented respondents with 10 different role/services, 4 of which do not fall under the remit of the regional councils (road infrastructure, traffic enforcement, upkeep and maintenance of street lightning and street cleaning), whilst the remaining 6 (waste management and issuing of relevant tenders, administration of the Regional Tribunal, protection of the natural and urban environment, assistance to local councils, co-ordination with the central government entities and administration of the region) fall within the regional councils' remits. This questsion then asked respondents to identify the roles which they believed fell within the remit of the regional councils.

Table 5.42 outlines the roles which do not fall under the remit of the regional councils. Yet, as the table demonstrates, many respondents are not aware that such roles are not to be carried out by the regional council. For instance, 46.8% (n= 187) of respondents believe that the regional council is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of street lighting. 44% (n=176) believe that street cleaning falls within the regional councils' remit.

Table 5.42 | Awareness of regional councils' roles – Roles falling outside the RCs' remit

	Road Infrastructure		Traffic Enforcement		Upkeep and maintenance of street lighting		Street Cleaning	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	119	29.8%	118	29.5%	122	30.5%	118	29.5%
Correct (No)	118	29.5%	137	34.3%	91	22.8%	106	26.5%
Incorrect (Yes)	163	40.8%	145	36.3%	187	46.8%	176	44%

On the other hand, Table 5.43 outlines the roles which fall within the remit of the regional council. When compared with the awareness of the local council remits, whereby for some roles of the LC respondents were 90-80% aware, for regional council roles, the awareness level is much lower. The highest awareness was that of 64.8% of respondents (n=259), who knew that the regional council has the role of assisting local councils, followed closely by 62.3%

(n=249), who were aware that the regional council co-ordinates with the central government. 13.5% (n=54) seemed unaware that the regional council is responsible for waste management and the issuing of relevant tenders. Moreover, when asked whether they could mention other remits, most respondents, 93.25% (n=373) did not give any other remit. Interesting to note that 4.5% (n=18) of the respondents mentioned that they had never heard of the regional council.

Table 5.43 | Awareness of regional councils' roles - Roles falling within the RCs' remit

	Waste Management and issuing of relevant tenders		Regional Tribunal		Protection of the natural and urban environment		Assist local councils		Co-ordinate with Central Government		Administration of the region	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	119	29.8%	138	34.5%	126	31.5%	128	32.0%	134	33.5%	141	35.3%
Incorrect (No)	54	13.5%	47	11.8%	55	13.8%	13	3.3%	17	4.3%	22	5.5%
Correct (Yes)	227	56.8%	215	53.8%	219	54.8%	259	64.8%	249	62.3%	237	59.3%

Question 23 asked respondents to gauge their level of satisfaction with how their regional council runs things. This was gauged through the use of a 5-Likert Scale ranging from Very Satisfied (5) through to Very Dissatisfied (1). A very high percentage (64.75%, n = 259) expressed a neutral opinion, stating that they were Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, while 17% (n = 68) were Dissatisfied. Only 18.25% (n = 73) were satisfied with their regional council (Table 5.44 and Figure 5.46). No significant statistical association was found for age (p = 0.537), gender (p = 0.531) and locality (p = 0.233).

Table 5.44 | Respondents' level of satisfaction with the regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	28	7.00%
Fairly dissatisfied	40	10.00%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	259	64.75%
Fairly satisfied	44	11.00%
Very satisfied	29	7.25%
Total	400	100.0%

Figure 5.46 | Respondents' level of satisfaction with the regional council
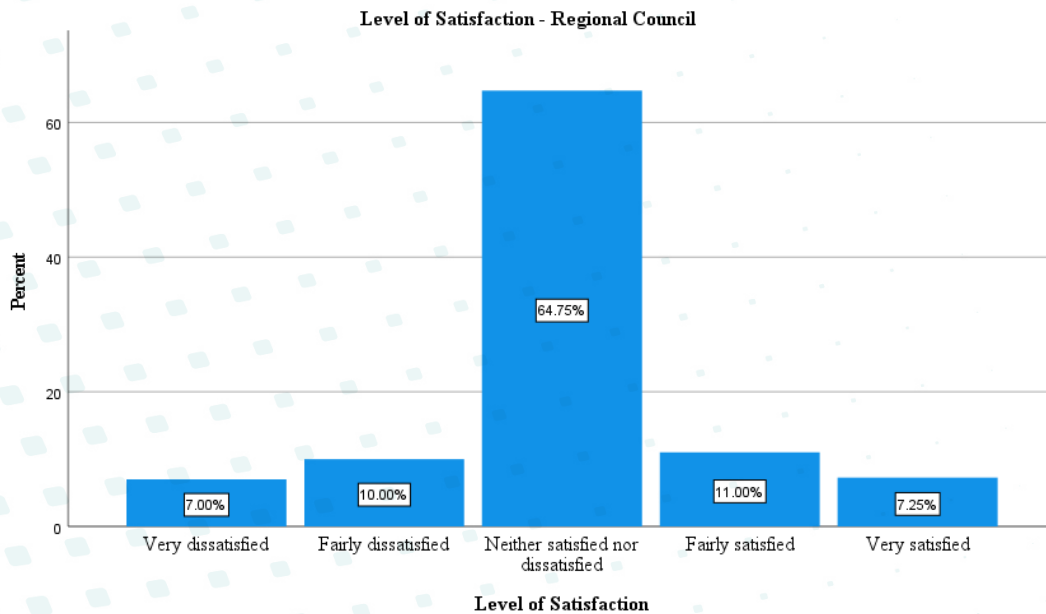
The subsequent question (Q24) asked respondents to comment on the extent to which they feel the regional council: i) reaches out and communicates with them and ii) involves the community.

Table 5.45 and Figure 5.47 show the perception of the respondents with regards to the level of communication of the regional council with the community. This was gauged through the use of a Likert Scale ranging from 'not ot at all' (1), little, somewhat, a fair amount through to a great deal (5). 38.5% (n=154) replied 'not at all' and 15.15% (n=57) 'little'. More than a third of respondents (41%, n = 164) perceive the regional council to somewhat communicate with them, with 3.25% (n=13) stating 'a fair amount'. Only 3% (n=12) view their regional council communicates with them a great deal.

Table 5.45 and Figure 5.48, on the other hand illustrate the perception of respondents on the level of involvement of the community by the regional council. 26.25% (n=105) feel that their regional council does not involve the community at all, with 14.75% (n=59) stating 'a little'. A relatively high percentage (49.75%, n=199) perceive their regional council as somewhat involving the community. 5.75% (n=23) believe the regional council involves the community a fair deal, but only 3.5% (n=14) view their regional council as greatly involving the community.

Table 5.45 | Extent to which regional council is in contact with the community

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reaches out and communicates with the respondents	154	38.50%	57	15.15%	164	41.00%	13	3.25%	12	3.00%
Involves the community	105	26.25%	59	14.75%	199	49.75%	23	5.75%	14	3.50%

Figure 5.47 | Perception of the level of communication of regional council with community members
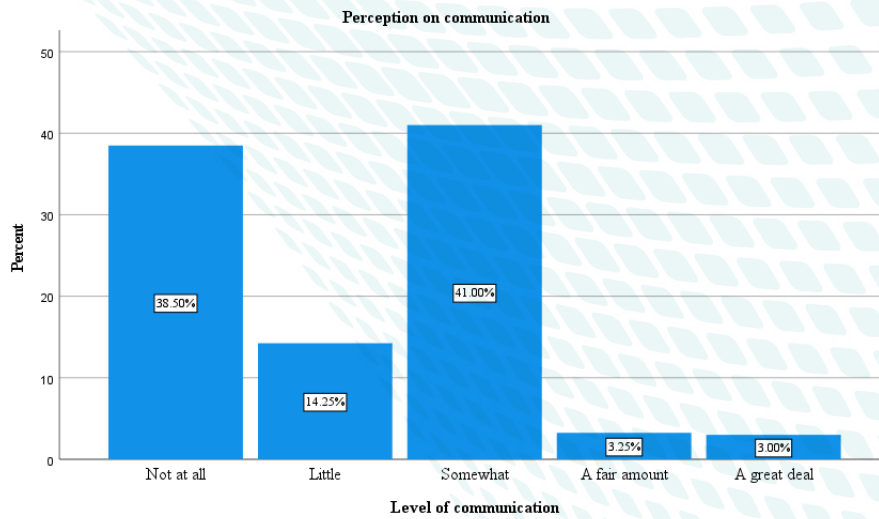
Figure 5.48 | Perception on level of involvement of community members by the regional council
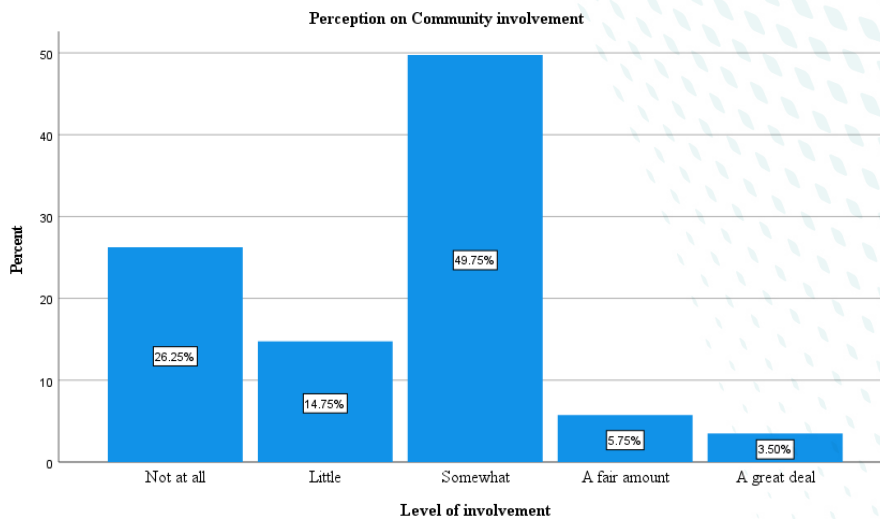
A Pearson Chi-Square test, for age, gender, locality and length of residence was carried out against both 'level of communication', as well as 'involvement of the community'. Testing revealed no significantly statistical association for any of them.

Question 25 asked respondents whether their expectations have been met by the regional Council. Table 5.46 and Figure 5.49 below show that only 28.25% (n=113) of respondents felt that the regional council has met their expectations. More than one third of respondents (30.25%, n = 121) were neutral, while nearly half of respondents (41.5%, n=166) stated that their level of expection from regional council had not been met.

Table 5.46 | Expectations met by the regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	121	30.25
No	166	41.50
Yes	113	28.25
Total	400	100.0

Figure 5.49 | Expectations met by the regional council
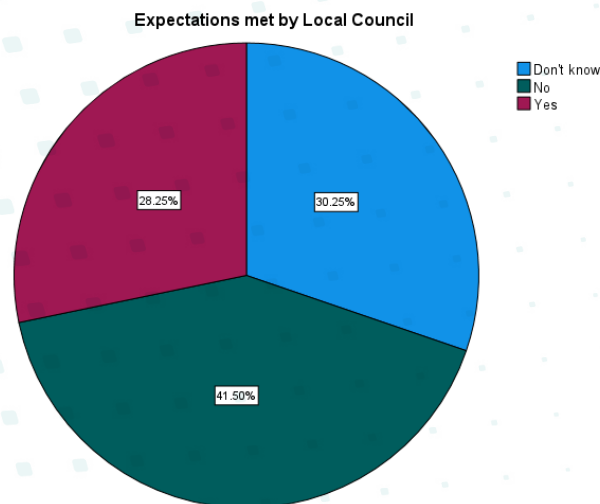
'Expectations met' was tested against age, gender and locality through the use of the Pearson's Chi-Square test. Testing found no significantly statistical association for gender (p=0.921) and locality (p=0.395), whilst a statistical significant relationship was found for age (p=0.012), since the p-value was lower than the 0.05 level of significance (Table 5.47 and Figure 5.50).

Table 5.47 | Expectations met by the regional council by age

	Don't know		No, same		Yes, different	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	10	23.81%	14	33.33%	18	42.86%
26-35	19	29.23%	30	46.15%	16	24.62%
36-45	13	20.63%	31	49.21%	19	30.16%
46-55	16	25.40%	32	50.79%	15	23.81%
56-65	24	36.36%	31	46.97%	11	16.67%
66+	39	38.61%	28	27.72%	34	33.66%

Figure 5.50 | Expectations met by the regional council by age
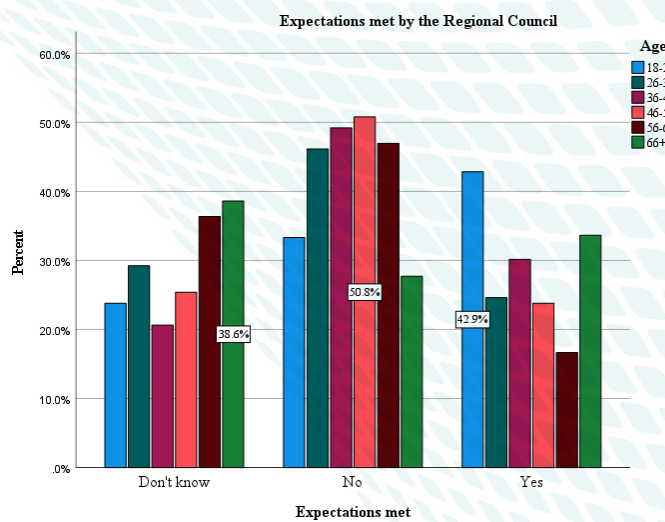
Table 5.47 and Figure 5.50 show that the age group which reported the highest level of expectations being met by the regional council, were the people aged 18-25 (42.9%, n=18). The 46–55-year-olds were the group who reported having their expectations met the least (50.8%, n=32). On the other hand, 38.6% (n=39) of the 66+ year olds, reported that they were neutral. Subsequently, Question 25 asked 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 5.51, the top 3 mentions were that the regional council needs to better communicate their role since 45 people mentioned that they had never heard of it (amounting to circa 11% of all respondents), listens more to the people (30 mentions) and communicate better with the community (29 mentions).

Figure 5.51 | *What can the regional council do to meet expectations*
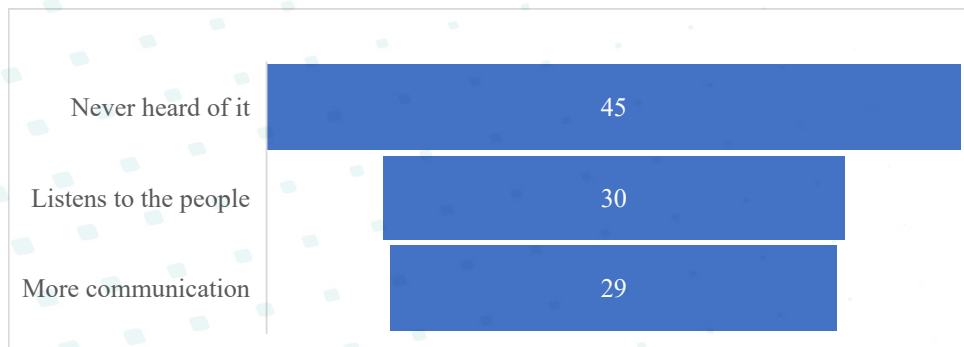
The final question of the questionnaire asked respondents whether they would like to add anything else with regards to their regional council whereby 78.75% (n=315) of respondents had nothing else to add. Interestingly, 11.50% (n=46) mentioned how they had never heard of the regional council, indicating that more information and awareness needs to be created in this regard.

5.2 FINDINGS FROM THE QUALITATIVE DATA

Qualitative data was gathered from two focus groups, one with local councillors and one with mayors of the region and the regional council's administrative staff. This was done to compliment and corroborate the quantitative data gathered from residents through the questionnaires, thus giving this study a more well-rounded and holistic perspective.

5.2.1 Focus Group - Local councillors

Three overarching themes were captured through the local councillors' focus group. These themes encompassed the experience of the two local councillors present. The themes, namely civic pride, community participation and clipped wings are interlinked and occasionally overlap, thus, indicating the complexity of issues which are faced by local councillors in Reġjun Tramuntana.

Theme 1: Civic pride

Both local councillors present stated that they encounter diverse problems related to the lack of civic pride in their locality. They stated that there is a great lack of cooperation from residents as many of them tend to be undisciplined and egoistic, also indicating a lack of sense of belonging and pride in the areas in which they reside. This contrasts with the fact that 52.5% of respondents to the questionnaire perceived a high sense of community in their locality.

"Jien naħseb in-nies tagħna huma egoisti u kattivi. Jekk jien ma rridx d-dar tiegħi tkun maħmuġa suppost nagħmel l-istess għal-barra. Il-ħmieġ li jitfgħu barra n-nies tal-biża. Is- servizz tal-bulky refuse huwa veru tajjeb u b'xejn. U kulħadd xorta jitfa' barra. Radio fuq barra, żarbun imqattgħa. Tal-biża. Imbagħad joqgħodu jgergru għal-kunsill u semhom ma jagħmluħx. Tajjeb ukoll!!." (Kunsillier – Mġarr)

[I think that our people are selfish and cruel. If you do not want your house to be dirty you should do the same outside. The rubbish that people throw outside is unbelievable. The bulky refuse service is really good and free. But still everyone throws things outside. Radio, torn shoes, etc. Unbelievable. Then they complain against the council and they do not do their part. That is not good!!] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

"Jien naħseb bħala poplu mfisdin. Mfisdin. Għandna il-qżież. Sens ta' dixxiplina ma għandniex. Qegħda fid-DNA tal-Malti. Jekk għandna oġġett mhux naraw kif se nagħmluħ kif suppost imma dejjem naraw kif nsibu loophole". (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[We are a spoilt population. Spoilt. We are pampered. We do not have a sense of discipline. It is in the Maltese DNA. If we have something we should see how to do it properly and not always try to find a loophole]. (Local councillor – Balzan)

They both claimed that the only solution to this lack of cooperation is to have more enforcement. Balzan Local councillor claimed that there needs to be more police presence in the locality, whilst Mġarr Local councillor stressed that fines need to be imposed for any type of infringement as it is the only way that people will start to abide to rules and regulations currently in place.

"Il-problema li ma hemm l-ebda enforcement. U ma hemm l-ebda presenza tal-pulizija". (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[The problem is that there is no enforcement. And that there is no police presence] (Local councillor – Balzan)

"Biex tasal trid tagħmel enforcement irrespective huwa min huwa. U trid tmissilhom il-but. Kemm kulħadd qal li huwa hassle biex tmur bil-fliexken tal-plastic ta' l-ilma? Imma kulħadd qed imur għax qed tmissilhom il-but". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[To get there, there needs to be more enforcement, irrespective of whoever the person might be. And it needs to be monetary enforcement. How many people said it was going to be a hassle to go and recycle the plastic bottles? But everybody is recycling them, since there is money involved] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

Theme 2: Community participation
Apart from, and possibly linked to, the lack of civic pride, local councillors lamented that community participation tends to be on the low side. This contrasts with the quantitative findings whereby only 19.5% of respondents perceived a low participation of residents in civic life.

Although community activities organised by local councils for the elderly are generally very well attended, local councillors claimed that there is a lack of participation from other age cohorts, most especially young people. Mġarr Local councillor stated that even though they do try to attract and involve children and young people they never have a good response. However, local councillor admitted that one of the reasons could be that they are not doing timely and appropriate promotion.

"Aħna norganizzaw ħarġa għall-anzjani darba fix-xahar u din ikollna konkorrenza tajba. Pero għall-anzjani biss." (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[We organise an outing for elderly people once a month and a good number of people attend. However, this is only for the elderly] (Local councillor – Balzan)

"Jien ġieli ippruvajt nagħmel attivitajiet għat tfal jew ippruvajt nolqot naqra aktar l-addolexxenti. Imma mhux dejjem faċli. Issa jista jkun li mhux qed nagħmlu promotion tajba. Forsi rridu nagħmluha aktar in advance". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[It is not the first time that I tried to organise activities for children or activities that are targeted for adolescents. But this is not always easy. However, it could be that we are not doing the right promotion. Maybe we need to promote it more in advance] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

"Hija diffiċli ħafna biex tattratta lill-addolexxenti. Nagħmlu x'nagħmlu għalihom ma jkollniex rispons" (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[It is very difficult to attract adolescents. Whatever we organise for them we never have a good turnout] (Local councillor – Balzan)

On the other hand, community activities organised by local councils in collaboration with other organisations from the locality, in particular the parish church, are generally very well attended by all age cohorts. Both local councillors mentioned that many residents are either affiliated with a church organisation or a band club and it is only through collaboration with these organisations that community activities can have a successful outcome. Interestingly, this contrasts to the quantitative findings which show that only 12.5% of respondents of the questionnaire are affiliated in diverse voluntary and community organisations. This could point out that the same limited pool of people are involved in the various activities and groups in the locality and that the remaining pool of residents remain inactive and invisible to the local council.

"Bħala kunsillier nara li għandek aktar ċans li l-attivita' tkun suċċess jekk tkun b'kollaborazzjoni mal-Parroċċa. U jekk tkun xi ħaġa għat-tfal trid tinvolvi lill-Kap tal-iskola għax tasal iżjed. Iġifieri qed nghid li jekk imorru through xi ħadd, bħal Knisja jew Skola, aktar tirnexxi. Jekk tkun il-kunsill biss ma tantx iċċaqqlaqom għax il-kunsill ma tantx jingħata valur u importanza". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[As a local councillor I feel that you have a greater chance that an activity is successful if it is organised in collaboration with the parish church. And if you are organising something for children the head of school needs to be involved. That means that you need to collaborate with someone, like the church or the school or else it will not be successful. If it is only an activity of the local council people do not participate that much as the local council is not given value and importance] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

When discussing resident participation in terms of passing on comments, complaints and recommendations to the local council, both councillors lamented that residents tend to publicly air all their complaints on social media, sometimes even on specific pages dedicated to the residents, as opposed to the official local council page. Few people tend to go directly to the respective local councillors with their concerns. The reason for this could be that residents perceive local councillors as not being receptive to their needs as indicated through the findings of the quantitative questionnaire, whereby only 29.25% of respondents viewed local councils as acting on their concerns.

"In-nies igorru ħafna u dejjem isibu fuq xiex igorru". (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[People complain a lot and they always find something to complain about] (Local councillor – Balzan)

"Ir-residenti għandhom tendenza li jpoġġu l-ilmenti tagħhom fuq il-Facebook page ta' Mġarr Residents u mhux fuq tal-kunsill lokali. Allura noqgħodu nagħmlu storja u jien naħseb li jekk inti għandek xi problema ejja għidli. Ma għandekx bżonn titfgħu fuq l-Mġarr Residents. Min ikun serju biex iwassal l-ilment għandu jmur mill-ewwel f'ras il-għajn". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)

[Residents have the tendency to upload their complaints on the Facebook page of Mġarr residents and not that of the local council. So they stay creating a fuss online and I think that if you have a problem you should come and tell me directly. There is no need to put it up on Mġarr Residents Facebook page. Who is serious about his complaint should go immediately to the proper source.] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

Theme 3 – Clipped wings

Local councillors claimed that they feel that their wings are being clipped, as many times they do not have the power they need to carry out their duties and perform their role to the best of their abilities. They stated 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 for things that they ultimately have no control over. They lamented that this situation creates a lot of frustration as it makes them look incompetent in the eyes of the residents, whilst leaving them with a sense of powerlessness.

"Ahna nħossuna mpotenti bħala kunsill għax issa ħafna remits ġew ċentralizzati u allura l- akbar say hi tal-gvern ċentrali u allura x'tista' tagħmel? Mil-bidla tal-2019 ir-remits naqsu għal-kunsilli. Per eżempju il-kunsilli, jekk ikunx hemm pulizija fil-lokalita' m'għandhomx say, m'ghandhomx say jekk il-Posta għandhiex tagħmel ġabra fis-7pm, m'għandhomx say, jekk triq trid tinbidel one way, m'għandhomx say, etċ. Jien kultant inħossni vera limitat għax qiesek qatt ma tasal mkien". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)

[We feel impotent as a local council because many remits have become centralised and therefore the last say is that of central government and so what can one do? Since the change in 2019 the remits of local councils have lessened. For example, the local council has no say whether there are police in the locality, whether there should be a postal collection at 7pm, whether a particular street should be changed to one way, etc. Sometimes I feel very limited as I feel that I am getting nowhere] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

"Bħala kunsillier kultant nħossni naqra powerless. Jien niddeskrivini kultant bħala kelb bla snin. Anzi kultant mhux kelb bla snin, imma bil-maskra u biċ-ċinga nwaħħla". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)

[As a local councillor sometimes I feel powerless. Sometimes I describe myself as a toothless dog. Or worse still, a dog on a leash with a muzzle on his mouth] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

"Jien naħseb li l-kunsill għandu jkollu aktar say fuq il-permessi tal-lokalita' tiegħu. L-ewwel nies ikollok aktar awtorita' u mhux qiesu aħna ma aħna xejn. Li ma jkollokx say veru frustranti". (Kunsillier – Balzan)

[I think that the local council needs to have more say with regards to permits in his locality. First of all you will have more authority and it will change the view that we

are nobody. The fact that you don't have a say is very frustrating.] (Local councillor – Balzan)

"Aħna bħala kunsill kull ma nistgħu nagħmlu huwa li 'nifflagjawha' problema. Ma għandna l-ebda power li nagħmlu xejn aktar. U nispiċċaw nirċievu ħafna complaints u aħna neħlu mar-residenti. Dejjem igorru fuq il-kunsill u ħafna drabi aħna ma jkollniex x' naqsmu". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[As a council all we can do is flag a problem. We do not have any power to do anything else. And then we end up receiving loads of complaints and we get the blame from the residents. They are always complaining about the local council and many times we would not have had any say in the matter] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

The existence of this red tape and bureaucracy also results in a loss of time and energy as local councillors end up chasing the relevant and responsible authorities, whilst at the same time having to manage the complaints from the residents' end, who many a time go to the local councillors as opposed to the relevant government departments who would be responsible for that particular issue.

"Il-Gvern Ċentrali huwa wkoll problema. Għax hemm ħafna burokrazija u red tape. Apparti li hemm il-problema tal-politika. Hemm ħafna hurdles". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[Central Government is also a problem. Because there is a lot of bureaucracy and red tape. Apart from this there is also the political aspect. There are a lot of hurdles.] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

"Jien per eżempju jekk bniedem m'għandux raġun ma hemmx x'tagħmel. Imma hekk hemm xi ħaġa li nista' ngħinu għalfejn ma nistax? Dik twaqqani veru down and I end up questioning myself. Għax hemm wisq bureaucracy u red tape". (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[For example if a person is not right there is nothing one can do. But if there is something that I can do to help him out why not? I feel really down when I cannot and I end up questioning myself. Because there is too much bureaucracy and red tape] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

"Aħna ma nsibux kooperazzjoni mill-gvern ċentrali. Per eżempju kellna toqba f'Main Street għamilna kważi xahrejn nduru għand id-dipartimenti tal-Gvern. Spiċċajna li twikkejna biha aħna din it-toqba u swietna €15,000". (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[We do not find cooperation from central overnment. For example, we had a pothole in Main Street and we spent nearly two months running from one government department to another. We ended up doing it ourselves and it cost us €15,000.] (Local councillor – Balzan)

Subtheme 1 – Gap in communication
Both local councillors lamented that they are rarely consulted or advised by central authorities with regards to certain projects within their locality, such as road and infrastructural works.

"U mhux l-ewwel darba li jaqbdu u jalqgħu żewġ toroq u aħna lanqas nkunu nafu. It-tajba hija li mbagħad man-nies nispiċċaw neħlu aħna. U aħna ma jkollna x'naqsmu xejn u ħafna drabi lanqas biss biss inkunu nafu." (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[And it is not the first time that they close off two roads and we would not have been

informed. The thing is that then we get the blame from residents. And we would not have had a say in the matter and many times we would not have even been informed.]
(Local councillor – Balzan)

This gap in communication sometimes also seems to exist between the regional council and local councils. Local councillors claimed that many times messages from the regional council do not get through to them and unless there is a good link between the regional council and the Executive Secretary of the respective council they do not receive the relevant information. This points to a disconnect between the mayor and local councillors as each mayor should pass on all information from regional council meetings to his fellow councillors. Mġarr Local councillor suggested that it would be much better if the regional council makes direct contact with the local councillors on matters of importance.

"Kultant jien naħseb li ma jaslux daqshekk il-messaġġi mir-Reġjun. U dik veru frustranti." (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[Sometimes I feel that messages from the regional council do not reach us. And that is very frustrating.] (Local councillor – Mġarr)

"L-aktar li r-Reġjun ikollu kuntatt huwa mal-administration tal-kunsill lokali, mal-Executive Secretary u mas-sindku. Jekk dawn ma jkollomx link tajba magħna aħna nispiċċaw ma nafu xejn x'qed jiġri. Hemm gap." (Kunsillier – Balzan)
[The regional council has contact with the local council administration, Executive Secretary and mayor. If these do not have a good link with us we end up not knowing what is happening. There is a gap.] (Local councillor – Balzan)

"Jien naħseb li meta r-Reġjun jagħmel direct contact mal-kunsillieri huwa ħafna aħjar." (Kunsillier – Mġarr)
[I think that when the regional council makes direct contact with the local councillors it is much better.] (Local councillor – Mgarr)

5.2.2 Focus Group – Mayors

Two interlinked and occassionally overlapping themes, namely dearth of awareness and clipped wings were ellicited during the focus group for mayors and the regional council's administrative staff. These encapsulate the majority of views expressed throughout 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 councils 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 most residents are only aware of the basic remits of local councils. This resonates with the quantitative findings whereby 80-90% of respondents were aware of some of the basic remits of local councils, whilst awareness of regional council's role was much lower, with 30-35% of respondents being unable to state whether certain roles were part of the regional council's remit.

"In-nies ma għandomx idea dwar ir-Reġjuni. Għandna xorti jekk jafu ir-rwol tal-kunsilli

aħseb u ara tar-Reġjun." (Sindku 1)
[People are not aware of the regional councils. We are lucky if they are aware of the role of the local council let alone that of the Region.] (Mayor 1)

"In-nies għadhom bl-impressjoni li l-gwardjani lokali għadhom taħt il-kunsill. Taf kemm iċempluli u jgħidulu għalfejn qed tibgħat il-warden f'dik it-triq partikolari meta taf li kull ma hemm tlett residenti u qatt ma tibgħatuħ fil-pjazza fejn hemm il-viżitaturi u dejjem jibblokkaw il-garaxxijiet? U tipprova tispjegalhom li l-kunsill issa ma għandux x'jaqsam xejn mal-Gwardjani lokali. Imma ma tasal imkien għax huma ma jafux." *(Sindku 3)*
[People have the impression that traffic wardens still fall under the remit of local councils. Do you know how many people call me asking why I am sending wardens in a road where there are only three residents and I do not send them in the main square where visitors are continuously blocking the garages? And you try to explain to them that the local council is no longer responsible for the wardens. But this is futile as they do not understand.] (Mayor 3)

"In-nies għalihom ir-rwol tal-kunsill huwa il-bulky refuse, il-ġbir taż-żibel, il-kennies, etċ. Hekk in-nies. U jekk hemm bozza maqtugħa in-nies mhux se jċemplu lill-Enemalta imma lill-kunsill. Għax ma għandhomx idea x'jaqa' taħt il-kunsill jew le." (Sindku 2)

[For the people the role of the local council comprises bulky refuse, waste collection, the street sweeper, etc. That is their belief. And if there is a faulty street bulb they will not call Enemalta but will call the local council. Because they do not have any idea of what are the remits of the local council] (Mayor 2)

Theme 2 – Clipped wings

Mayors and regional council administrative staff 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. This lack of power and red tape ties in with what local councillors stated during their focus group.

"Imkien fid-dinja li l-kunsill ma għandu l-ebda power li jinforza il-liġi. Irridu imorru nitkarrbu għand il-community police. Jien naħseb li l-kunsill mingħajr l-abilita li jinforza il-liġi huwa kunsill mingħajr snin." (Sindku 3)
[Nowhere in the world is there a local council that does not have the power to enforce the law. We have to go to the community police. I think that a local council without the ability to enforce the law is a local council without teeth.] (Mayor 3)

"Hemm ħafna affarijiet li jdumu biex isiru bħal tkun trid tinbidel bozza u tgħidx kemm idumu biex jaqduk. Hemm wisq red tape." (Sindku 2)
[There are a lot of things that take time to be carried out like you need a street bulb to be changed and they take a lot of time to come and change it. There is too much red tape.] (Mayor 2)

Local councils and the Region do not enjoy the respect they deserve. Government Agencies' legislation has changed with the intention to reduce the power of local councils. When you see the legislation from Infrastructure Malta there is written that they do not need to consult with anyone. But this cannot be. For example, if you are digging a road in Balzan

you cannot not inform Attard Local council as they are practically one locality. (Regional council Administrator 4)

If we had to take the example of waste management the power should have never been taken from the local council and given to the regional council. This has created a lot of problems. And even with regards to enforcement, as a regional council we do not have any power to enforce and all we can do is to tell the local council to put a sign and inform the resident to go and report to the police. This creates a lot of frustration as we end up feeling powerless. (Regional council Administrator 3)

Sub-theme 1: Lack of human resources
Mayors also claimed that another reason why they feel they cannot act to the best of their abilities and feel so powerless is due to a great lack of human resources. They stated that it is impossible to meet the needs of their residents when they do not have the necessary resources and support.

"Aħna bħala riżorsi veru limitati u ma nistgħux nagħmlu mirakli. Heqq jien nixtieq li xi ħadd ikollu ilment u naqdiegħ mill-ewwel, pero iebsa ħafna. Li kieku għandna ħaddiema magħna li, per eżempju, nkissret bankina u marru għamluha mill-ewwel kieku ħafna aħjar għax ir-resident inqegħda u l-lokalita ġiet msebbħa." (Sindku 2)

[We are extremely limited in resources and we cannot do miracles. I wish that when someone has a complaint I can deal with it immediately but it is very tough. If we had our own employees we could, for example, repair a broken pavement straight away and it would be much better because the residents would be satisfied and the locality would be embellished.] (Mayor 2)

"Għandna bżonn ta' ħafna aktar riżorsi. Per eżempju sakemm ma jkollniex aktar riżorsi l-iskemi li joħorġu kull sena impossibbli li tlaħħaq magħhom". (Sindku 3)
[We need more resources. For example, unless we have more resources it is impossible to deal with all the schemes that are issued every year]. (Mayor 3)

Mayor 1 further mentioned that whilst more power is needed it would be very difficult for local councils to be given more power unless they have more human resources to carry out the necessary work involved.

"Veru li ma għandniex power imma ma jistgħax jkollna jekk ma jkollniex ir-riżorsi. Kif nista' kieku jien immexxi b'dawn l-erbgħa min-nies li għandi miegħi? Diġa diffiċli ħafna issa aħseb u ara kieku għandna aktar power." (Sindku 1)
[It is true that we do not have any power but how can we have more power if we do not have the necessary human resources. How would I be able to carry out more work with these four people that I have with me? It is already difficult now let alone if we have more power.] (Mayor 1)

Regional council administrative staff also stressed that the lack of human resources tends to be across the board. They claimed that this is very taxing as many times they end up carrying too much weight and at the end this becomes counter-productive.

Resources are lacking throughout the board. That is the biggest problem of it all. (Regional council Administrator 2)

We assist local councils and many times we try to do things so that they do not get professionals for the work involved and saves them money. But that is taxing on us because we then end up carrying too much weight which you cannot carry anyway. So what you do in five minutes you end up taking 1 hour or 3 hours. And because of our enthusiasm we end up being counter-productive. We are only 4 administrative staff for 9 councils. In other words the harvest is huge but the workers are few. (Regional council Administrator 4)

Sub-theme 2: Lack of funds
All mayors claimed that due to the current rise in the cost of living the allocated Government funds for local councils is not sufficient and that there is a great possibility that the majority of local councils will end up with a deficit. Mayor 3 stated that unless they manage to either obtain funds from Government schemes or get European funding they can never embark on any ambitious infrastructural project. Moreover, Mayor 2 stated that this has resulted in them becoming beggars as they have to plead for sponsorships from one person or another so that they will be able to carry out necessary projects in their locality.

"Bħalissa kollox qed jogħla u allavolja għandna il-budget kulħadd ħa jispiċċa b'deficit at this rate. Per eżempju it-tipping fees u affarijiet oħra qed jogħlew u ma għandniex allocation għalihom. Għax imbagħad għandek oħra jew tagħmel l-affarijiet u tispiċċa b'deficit jew inkella ma tagħmel xejn jew just tagħmel il-basics u tkun ok. Imma mbagħad kulħadd igorr u il-lokalita' tispiċċa diżastru." (Sindku 1)
[At the moment everything has become expensive and even though we have a budget everybody is going to end up with a deficit at this rate. For example tipping fees and other things are becoming more expensive and we do not have allocation for them. Then you have another thing because if you do certain things you end up with a deficit and if you do not do anything or just do the basics you will be ok. But then there will be a lot of complaints and the locality will be a disaster.] (Mayor 1)

"Il-problema hi li llum bil-fondi li għandna realistikament we are day to day managers. Iġifieri proġett ambizjuż diment li ma jirnexxilikx ġġib xi skema mill-Gvern Ċentrali jew ikollok fondi Ewropew mintiex se tagħmel proġett infrastrutturali kbir speċjalment jekk inti kunsill zgħir. Aħna spiċċajna day to day managers. Hawn kunsilli li forsi jirnexxielom jagħmlu xi ħaġa imma hija iebsa ħafna." (Sindku 3)
[The problem is that nowadays with the funds we have we are realistically day to day managers. That means that an ambitious project cannot be carried out unless you get funds from a Government scheme or from European funds, more so if you are a small council. We have ended up as day to day managers. Maybe there are some councils that manage to do something but it is very difficult.] (Mayor 3)

"Aħna qiesna tallaba sirna. Spiċċajna nitkarbu ma' dak u ma' l-ieħor biex forsi naslu." (Sindku 2)

[We have become like beggars. We have ended up pleading with one person or another maybe we get somewhere.] (Mayor 2)

Sub-theme 3 – Bearing the flak

Similarly to local councillors, mayors and administrative staff alike, lamented that residents tend to complain about every little thing and publicly air their concerns on social media pages instead of going directly to the respective mayors or local councillors with their concerns. This is the cause of a lot of frustration as many times it stops local councils from being innovative and creative as they are immediately bombarded with complaints.

"In-nies tgerger kemm jekk ma tagħmel xejn u kemm jekk tagħmel." (Sindku 3)
[People complain if you do not do anything and also if you do something] (Mayor 3)

"In-nies malajr jingħaqdu u jaqilgħu ħafna paroli meta jkun hemm problema bħal ma ġara fuq tal-iskola. U aħna ma ġejniex infurmati dwarha. Kien nuqqas minn naħa tas-Surmast għax in-nies jaħsbu li aħna nafu b'kollox u mhux il-każ. U anki hemm il problema ta' Facebook għax kulħadd jinqeda b'Facebook u jien jekk hemm problema ejja iffaċċjani u niddiskutu bil-kwiet u naslu żgur. Għax once you stand your ground tasal man-nies." (Sindku 2)

[People quickly unite and they create a lot of commotion when there is a problem like when there was a problem with the school. And we had not even been informed about it. It was an oversight from the Headmaster but the people thought that we knew everything about the case. There is also a problem about Facebook as everybody uses Facebook to complain and I think that if you have a problem you should come to complain about it directly to me and we discuss it quietly and we will definitely arrive to a solution. Because once you stand your ground with the people you get there] (Mayor 2)

Local councils are there to administrate the locality, administer the environment, the waste, culture, etc. But whenever the council takes the initiative to do something innovative they become bombarded with complaints from residents. (Regional council Administrator 2)

Residents think that the Facebook page e.g. 'Proud to be from Mosta' is enough to get the message through. Sometimes yes because you get the attention of the media. But that is not the official page to put forward your concerns. (Regional council Administrator 4)

6. Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The telephonic residents' questionnaire conducted for this research study revealed that the majority of Reġjun Tramuntana's residents were satisfied with their locality as a place to live, with 60.75% being either fairly satisfied or very satisfied with their locality. 52.5% of residents seemed to feel that there is a high sense of community.

Nevertheless, dissatisfaction was noted with regards to Traffic and Parking (70.4%), air and noise pollution (54.3%) and Urban Development (53% dissatisfied). On the other hand, satisfaction with schools in the locality (56.3%) was recorded.

Integration of elderly people was perceived as high (68.5%), however, integration of people with disability was perceived as being on the low side, with only 38.25% of respondents thinking their integration is high.

More cleanliness (21 mentions), lower levels of development (17 mentions) and better traffic and parking management (40 mentions) were suggested as possible contributors to a better quality of life.

This research study also revealed a relatively low satisfaction rate with local councils, with only 31.65% feeling very or fairly satisfied with their local councils. The study also revealed a low awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the local councillors (29.5% of respondents being aware). On the other hand, 50.5% did not know which Regional Council they pertained to.

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, give more information, and create more awareness on their roles and responsibilities, but also make sure that there is better maintenance and upkeep of the localities.

Through the focus groups conducted, 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, 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 leave 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 need 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 to actuate 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.

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APPENDIX

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APPENDIX A – Residents' Questionnaire

Social Impact Assessment/ Assessjar tal-Impatt Soċjali

[EN: Black font, MT: Blue font]

Socio-demographic Details
Dettalji Soċio-demografiċi

1. What is your age?/Kemm għandek żmien? _____

2. Which gender/s do you primarily identify with? Ma' liema ġeneru tidentifika ruħek?

   (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 milħuq 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/Naħdem għal-rasi
   5) Unemployed/Mhux impjegat/a
   6) Homemaker/Nieħu ħsieb id-dar
   7) Other (please specify)/Ieħor (jekk jogħġbok speċifika) _____

5. How many children under 18 years live with you?/Kemm għandek tfal taħt it-18 il-sena jgħixu miegħek? _____

6. In which locality do you live/F'liema lokalita' toqgħod? _____

7. How long have you been living there?/Kemm ijlek toqgħod 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 organizzazjoni fil-komunita'? Jekk iva, f'liema settur hija involuta din l-organizzazzjoni (eż. mużikali, kulturali, storiku, socjali)?

   _____

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Questionnaire
Kwestjonarju

QUALITY OF LIFE
Kwalita' tal-ħajja

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

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 ħafna, kemm inti sodisfatt jew mhux sodisfatt bil-lokalita' tiegħek bħala post biex tgħix?

Very satisfied/ Sodisfatt ħafna	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
○	○	○	○	○

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

	Very satisfied/ Sodisfatt ħafna	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
Public and green spaces/Spazji ħodor u publiċi	○	○	○	○	○

Urban development/Żvilupp urban	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Sport and leisure facilities/Facilitajiet sportivi u ta' rikreazzjoni	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Air and noise pollution/Tniġġiż tal-arja u storbju	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Cultural activities/Attivitajiet kulturali	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Public transport/Trasport pubbliku	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Traffic and parking/Traffiku u parkeġġ	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Schools in the locality/Skejjel fil-lokalita'	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Accessibility/ Aċċessibilita'	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Level of safety/Livell ta' sigurta'	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Religious activities/Attivitajiet reliġjużi	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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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 ħafna u 5 tfisser ogħli ħafna kif tara dawn l-affarijiet li ġejjin?

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

12. Would you like to add anything else with regards to the quality of life in your locality? Tixtieq iżżid xi ħaġa 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 ħa jkunu dwar il-Kunsill Lokali tiegħek.

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 tiegħek?

Very satisfied/ Sodisfatt ħafna	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
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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 Ħafna kemm taħseb li l-Kunsill tiegħek:

	A great deal/ Ħafna	A fair amount/ Mhux ħażin	Somewhat/ Kemmxejn	Little/ Ftit	Not at all/Xejn
	5	4	3	2	1
Acts on the concerns of its residents/Jaġġixxi fuq l-ilmenti tar-residenti	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Involves the community/Jinvolvi lill-komunita'	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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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-xogħol li jagħmlu il-Kunsilliera fil-lokalita' tiegħek?

A great deal/Ħafna	A fair amount/Mhux ħażin	Somewhat/ Kemmxejn	Little/ Ftit	Not at all/Xejn
5	4	3	2	1
◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

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 tiegħek huwa responsabbli għal diversi servizzi publiċi. Liema minn dawn is-servizzi jaqgħu taħt ir-responsabilita' tiegħu?

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

Protection of animals/Protezzjoni tal-animali	◯	◯
Projects Administration/Amministrazzjoni ta' Proġetti	◯	◯
Can you mention any other remits?/Tista' issemmi xi responsabilitajiet oħra?	_____	

17. Does your Local Council meet your expectations? Il-Kunsill Lokali tiegħek qiegħed jilħaq 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 jilħaq l-aspettativi tiegħek? _____

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

_____

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REGIONAL COUNCIL
Kunsill Reġjonali

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

19. Of which Regional Council does your Local Council form part? F'liema Kunsill Reġjonali taqa' il-lokalita' fejn tgħix? _____

20. Do you think that the functions and responsibilities of the Regional Council differ from those of the Local Council? Taħseb 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 publiċi. Liema minn dawn is-servizzi jaqgħu taħt ir-responsabilita' tiegħu?

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

Coordinates with Central Government entities/Jikkordina mal-entitajiet tal-Gvern Ċentrali	○	○
Administration of the Region/Amministrazzjoni tar-Reġjun	○	○
Can you mention any other remits?/Tista' issemmi xi responsabilitajiet oħra?	_____	

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 ħafna, kemm inti sodisfatt jew mhux sodisfatt bit-tmexxija tal-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek?

Very satisfied/ Sodisfatt ħafna	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
○	○	○	○	○

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 Ħafna kemm taħseb li l-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek:

	A great deal/ Ħafna	A fair amount/ Mhux ħażin	Somewhat/ Kemmxejn	Little/ Ftit	Not at all/Xejn
	5	4	3	2	1
Reaches out and communicating with you/Qiegħed jikkomunika miegħek	○	○	○	○	○

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Involves the community/Jinvolvi lill-komunita'	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

25. Does your Regional Council meet your expectations? Il-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek qiegħed jilħaq l-aspettativi 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 jilħaq l-aspettativi tiegħek?

   _____

26. Would you like to add anything else with regards to your Regional Council? Tixtieq iżżid xi ħaġa oħra 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

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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

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Consent Form – Focus Group

Project title: Social Impact Assessment – Northern Regional Council

Research Team & Contact Details:

Profs. 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 Northern Regional Council, is seeking to determine the quality of life and liveability of localities of the Northern Regional Council and provide recommendations for initiatives that can boost the resourcefulness of the Northern 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

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boost the resourcefulness of the Northern 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, Naxxar).

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.

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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;

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REĠJUN
TRAMUNTANA

(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 iniatives 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 iniatives;

(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

FOREIGN ANNEX
REĠJUN TRAMUNTANA

Table of Contents

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 2023[1], 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 the Reġjun Tramuntana 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 the Reġjun Tramuntana (Northern Regional Council) and its associated local councils, function in relation to foreigners. The following section 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 TRAMUNTANA

For years, a number of particular localities in the region have always been known for their diverse communities, e.g., San Pawl il-Baħar and Il-Mellieħa, welcoming both Maltese residents and foreigners. With more than one-fourth 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 32,524 foreign individuals residing in the Region, amounting to around 26% of the total population. Based on the 2021 Census, as per Table 2 below, San Pawl il-Baħar displays the highest percentage of foreign nationals as a proportion of its total population (53.94%, amounting to 17,282 foreigners). Il-Mellieħa, the second-ranked area with the highest foreign population of 3,527 (27.69%), exhibits a significant contrast when compared to San Pawl il-Baħar. L-Imtarfa (1.99%) had the least number of foreigners, with only 51 individuals in 2021. Through this observation, San Pawl il-Baħar holds a significant position in terms of its role as a central point for foreign residents in the Region (NSO, 2023).

Table 2 | Total Number of Foreigners in Reġjun Tramuntana Localities

Locality	**Maltese - Totals**	Non Maltese - Totals	Total Population	% of total Population
Ħal Balzan	3,949	825	4,774	17.28%
Ħ'Attard	10,885	1,383	12,268	11.27%
Il-Mellieħa	9,211	3,527	12,738	27.69%
Il-Mosta	20,632	2,850	23,482	12.14%
In-Naxxar	14,251	2,661	16,912	15.73%
L-Imġarr	4,382	458	4,840	9.46%
L-Imtarfa	2,515	51	2,566	1.99%
San Ġwann	10,757	3,487	14,244	24.48%
San Pawl Il-Baħar	14,760	17,282	32,042	53.94%
Total	91,342	32,524	123,866	26.26%

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 28.17% to 41,686 individuals (Minister for the Interior, Security, Reforms, and Equality, 2023). 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 3,910 (12.02%) individuals, while Romanians held the tenth place with a total of 897 (2.76%).

Table 4 | Top 10 Nationalities in the Reġjun Tramuntana

Top 10 Nationalities	Number of foreigners	**% of total Foreigners**
Italy	3910	12.02%
UK	3835	11.79%
Serbia	2700	8.30%
Philippines	1756	5.40%
Bulgaria	1728	5.31%
India	1698	5.22%
Nepal	1067	3.28%
North Macedonia	1017	3.13%
Hungary	916	2.82%
Romania	897	2.76%
Total foreigners	32,524	60.03%

In terms of gender presence in the region, Table 5 displays that Reġjun Tramuntana has approximately 18,419 (56.6%) non-Maltese male residents and 14,105 (43.4%) females (NSO, 2023). This contrasts with the 49.7% males and 50.24% females of Maltese nationals in the region (NSO, 2023).

Table 5 | Population of non-Maltese residents by sex and locality in Reġjun Tramuntana

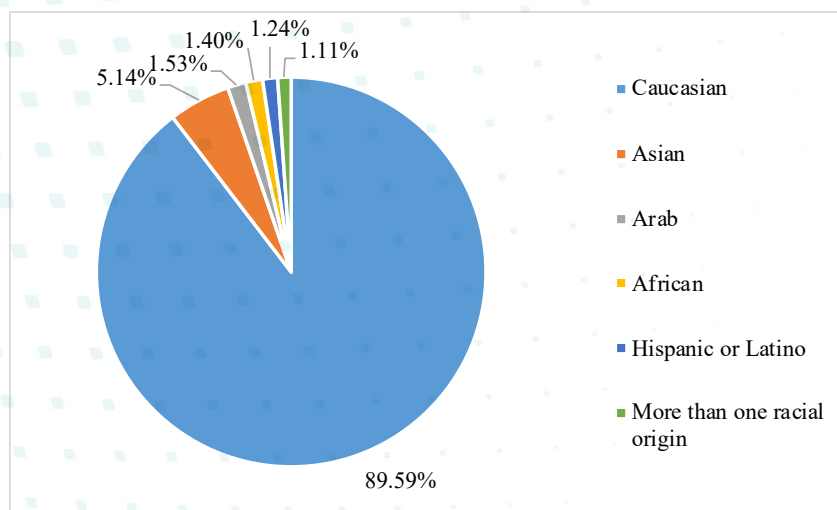|	Males	Females	Total
Ħal Balzan	419	406	825
Ħ'Attard	765	618	1,383
Il-Mellieħa	1,914	1,613	3,527
Il-Mosta	1,585	1,265	2,850
In-Naxxar	1,391	1,270	2,661
L-Imġarr	249	209	458
L-Imtarfa	27	24	51
San Ġwann	1,958	1,529	3,487
San Pawl Il-Baħar	10,111	7,171	17,282

Moreover, the average age of the population of foreigners in this region stands at 36.5, as opposed to a 42.1years for Maltese nationals. Table 6 shows that within the region, foreign men have an overall average age of 36.7 (vs. 41.5 of Maltese male nationals), whilst that of women stands at 36.2 (vs. 42.7 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 the Reġjun Tramuntana

	Males	Females	Total
Ħal Balzan	42.3	39.7	41.2
Ħ'Attard	35.8	36.0	35.9
Il-Mellieħa	39.3	38.5	39.0
Il-Mosta	33.7	34.6	34.1
In-Naxxar	35.3	35.4	35.4
L-Imġarr	37.6	36.9	37.3
L-Imtarfa	38.0	36.9	37.5
San Ġwann	33.0	32.6	32.8
San Pawl Il-Baħar	35.8	35.6	35.7

When looking at the racial origin composition of Reġjun Tramuntana, also including the Maltese population, the highest percentage is Caucasian at 89.59% (110,973 individuals). The second highest race is that of Asians, at 5.14% (6,362 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 which make up the community (NSO, 2023).

Figure 1 | Total population by racial origin in Reġjun Tramuntana

89.59%

- Caucasian
- Asian
- Arab
- African
- Hispanic or Latino
- More than one racial origin

1.40% 1.24% 1.11% 1.53% 5.14%

San Pawl Il-Baħar stands out as the locality with the most diverse composition, with 80.7% (25,871) being Caucasian, 10.1% (3,228) Asians, 2.4% (762) Arabs, 3.0% (977) African, 2.1% (678) Hispanic or Latino, and the remaining 1.6% (526) having more than one racial origin. The locality with the most homogeneous race was that of l-Imtarfa, with 98.1% of the population (2,516 individuals) being Caucasian (NSO, 2023). This is illustrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7 | Racial Origin of Total Population by Locality in Reġjun Tramuntana

	Caucasian	Asian	Arab	African	Hispanic or Latino	More than one racial origin
Ħal Balzan	4,296	228	71	80	55	44
Ħ'Attard	11,525	397	96	77	66	107
Il-Mellieħa	11,830	522	91	99	116	80
Il-Mosta	21,879	809	206	184	185	219
In-Naxxar	15,805	498	180	116	145	168
L-Imġarr	4,685	62	15	9	35	34
L-Imtarfa	2,516	8	9	10	10	13
San Ġwann	12,566	610	461	176	245	186
San Pawl Il-Baħar	25,871	3,228	762	977	678	526
Total	110,973	6,362	1,891	1,728	1,535	1,377

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 people aged 15 and over at 78.83% (84,308), 6.19% (6,617) affiliate themselves to the Orthodox practice, and 3.40% (3,639) to Islam. 5.69% affiliate themselves with some other religion, such as Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, Church of England or other, whilst 5.89% do not affiliate themselves to any religion (NSO, 2023).

2.2.1 Reġjun Tramuntana: An Overview of the Foreigners' Presence
Reġjun Tramuntana, designated as the Cultural Region for 2028, 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).

The geographical features of Reġjun Tramuntana are diverse, including both traditionally rural villages and well-developed localities. Villages and towns like Ħ'Attard, Ħal-Balzan, and l-Imġarr have experienced some level of urbanisation while preserving their rural heritage. In contrast, localities such as San Ġwann and San Pawl il-Baħar have seen more substantial urbanisation and infrastructure development. Interestingly, even the mentioned traditionally rural localities have witnessed a notable rise in the foreign population (see Appendix A, Table 3), indicating that demographic changes are not limited to the well-developed areas alone.

Among the various localities in the Reġjun Tramuntana, Ħal-Balzan is notable for hosting the Migrants Commission's Residential Welcoming Centre. This facility currently provides assistance to approximately 60 individuals, with a primary focus on migrant women and single migrant mothers. The presence and increase of foreign students in government schools have also been observed in the region. According to the data gathered for the Parliamentary Question by Nationalist Member of Parliament Ivan Bartolo, in 2022, the Minister for Education, Clifton Grima, stated that San Pawl il-Baħar has the highest number of foreign students, with Qawra and St. Paul's Bay primary schools totaling 860. San Gwann primary school and the Middle School in Naxxar also showed an increase in foreign students, with 231 and 253, respectively. On the other hand, L-Imġarr primary school had 36 foreign students, while l-Imtarfa primary school had only 1 foreign student. Naxxar is also home to the Migrant Learners' Unit - Induction Hub, which recorded 205 students from over 70 different nationalities (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2022).

While research on the presence and complexity of foreigners in localities within the region is limited, San Pawl il-Baħar emerges as one of the most diverse and multicultural localities, as indicated by the aforementioned statistics. This locality attracts significant attention due to its remarkably high population and being the area with the highest number of registered rental leases in Malta (Malta Housing Authority, 2023).

In San Pawl il-Baħar, a total of 8,200 contracts were registered, representing 15% of all residential contracts (Housing Authority, 2023). These contracts include both Maltese and non-Maltese residents. The notable popularity of San Pawl il-Baħar can be attributed to its relatively affordable rental prices compared to other localities in the region. For instance, a 3-bedroom property in San Pawl il-Baħar on average costs EUR 850 per month, whilst in Naxxar, the price rises to EUR 1,100 per month (Housing Authority, 2023).

This affordability factor has been recognised for a number of years. Already back in 2009, a former Head of School from Maria Regina College St Paul's Bay Primary, believed that one of the reasons that San Pawl il-Baħar seemed to attract foreigners was because rent was still relatively more affordable when compared to other localities (Calleja, 2009). This affordability factor instigated the school to witness over 20 different nationalities present, with the majority coming from Europe (Calleja, 2009).

In 2012, San Pawl il-Baħar was identified as the "most intricate" area, primarily due to its rapid growth and the rising number of foreign residents (Galea 2012, as cited in Sansone, 2018). The influx of foreigners at that time prompted the former manager of the Qawra Access Centre, to integrate the residents of San Pawl il-Baħar and transform a social services centre into a meeting place that welcomed individuals of all ages, irrespective of their nationality. In recognition of the area's multiculturalism, a symbolic gesture followed in 2014, when trees were planted at the Kennedy Grove to represent each nationality present in San Pawl il-Baħar (Carabott, 2014).

Over the course of ten years, however, the complexity of localities, specifically San Pawl il-Baħar has created tensions too (Farrugia, 2023). Former mayor expressed concerns about the escalating street fights involving individuals from diverse nationalities and the lack of awareness regarding domestic waste collection (Farrugia, 2023). These circumstances have generated unease among both Maltese and non-Maltese residents, exacerbating the prevailing sense of disconnectedness (Farrugia, 2023).

The Northern Regional Council Charter 2022-2027 has recognised such disconnectedness, which acknowledges the need to address the issue of disengagement felt by certain communities in all the localities found in the region. Particularly, non-Maltese residents have expressed a sense of disconnection from certain activities organised by the local councils. Research findings highlight that these events tend to heavily reflect the dominant cultural narrative centered around the 'Maltese identity', perpetuating identity politics. Consequently, traditional activities like the Good Friday processions, National Public Holidays, and Carnival have seen below-average participation, partly due to the high number of non-Maltese residents in the area. This lack of representation in terms of diversity and multiple identities further widens the gap between the Maltese communities and those who feel disconnected (Malta Arts Council, n.d).

2.3   INITIATIVES FOR BETTER REPRESENTATION AND INTEGRATION AMONG FOREIGNERS

To effectively address such needs, the Reġjun Tramuntana has started to take on various actions in recent years. Notably, as illustrated in Figure 2 below, in October 2022, the region actively participated in a cultural festival held in the old town of Kaleici, Turkey (Reġjun Tramuntana, n.d.). This event provided an opportunity for the Reġjun Tramuntana to engage with and learn from other international guests, exchanging ideas and adapting them to suit their localities within the region.

*Figure 2 | Reġjun Tramuntana's Participation
in the Cultural Festival in Kaleici, Turkey (October 2022)*

Furthermore, as shown in Figure 3 below, as part of the implementation of the Anti-Racism Strategy, in August 2023, the HRD collaborated with the Reġjun Tramuntana to organise the third event on 'Patriotism=Anti-Racism' at the premises of San Pawl il-Baħar Local Council. This initiative was grounded in recognising the role of citizens as advocates for equality and our commitment to embracing a multicultural and inclusive society.

Figure 3 | Collaborative Event on 'Patriotism=Anti-Racism' Organised by HRD and Reġjun Tramuntana (August 2023)

Figure 4 illustrates that the San Pawl il-Baħar Local Council organised a three-day Destination North Festival in September 2023. This festival played a significant role in promoting inclusivity and diversity, with foreign groups being involved in dancing and singing performances. The festival also featured artisan stalls, where diverse cultural and ethnic groups showcased their traditional food and merchandise (Kunsill Lokali San Pawl il-Baħar, n.d.).

**Figure 4 | Destination North Festival organised
by San Pawl il-Baħar Local Council (September 2023)**

In addition to these efforts, Figure 5 showcases the active participation of Mġarr Mayor Paul Vella, Mosta Vice Mayor Rachel Abela, and Naxxar Councillor Noel Gatt in the Caltegra Project conference, which took place in November 2023. The conference is part of a 12-month initiative aimed at promoting the integration of EU migrant citizens and their families into the political and societal fabric of their host countries (Reġjun Tramuntana, n.d.).

Figure 5 | Participation of Reġjun Tramuntana in Caltegra Project Conference
(November 2023)

Other ongoing integration measures are actively being implemented in the Reġjun Tramuntana. For instance, as seen in Figure 6, the Regional Council has published a collection of domestic waste guidelines in multiple languages, including but not limited to Maltese, English, Italian, Serbian, Spanish, Arabic, Nepalese, Bulgarian, and French. This initiative aims to ensure that residents from diverse linguistic backgrounds can easily access important information and effectively participate in waste management practices (Reġjun Tramuntana, n.d.).

Figure 6 | National Domestic Waste Guidelines in Reġjun Tramuntana: Multilingual Integration

2.4 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 Tramuntana, n.d.).

Throughout this chapter, the focus has been on the Reġjun Tramuntana, 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 the Reġjun Tramuntana.

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 Tramuntana 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-structure 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 Tramuntana, as identified in the 2021 Census data (NSO, 2023), would be contacted. Out of a total of 32,524 foreigners in the Region, 51.33% belonged to the 7 foreign communities outlined in Table 7 below. The same method of purposeful selection was consistently applied to the other regions (Reġjun Nofsinhar, 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	3910	12.02%
UK and North Ireland	3835	11.79%
Serbia	2700	8.30%
Philippines	1756	5.40%
Bulgaria	1728	5.31%
India	1698	5.22%
Nepal	1067	3.28%
Total	16,694	51.33%

Given the fact that the Regional Councils operate within the field, a first attempt to contact foreign representatives was made through the Reġjun Tramuntana 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 the Reġjun Tramuntana 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.

Table 9 | Responses rate of Organisations reached

	Number of organisations contacted	Number of Responses Received	Mode of Data Collection
Italy	3	1	Email Response
UK and North Ireland	2	1	Email Response
Serbia	2	2	Email Response
Philippines	3	1	Email Response
Bulgaria	1	1	Email Response
India	2	1	Email Response
Nepal	1	1	Email Response
Total	14	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 Tramuntana 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 Tramuntana. 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 3 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 the top c. 51% of the foreign communities in the Region, including Italy, UK, Serbia, Philippines, Bulgaria, India and Nepal as outlined in Table 7 in the methodology section above.

4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

When looking at the number of respondents who agreed to answer such survey, 8 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
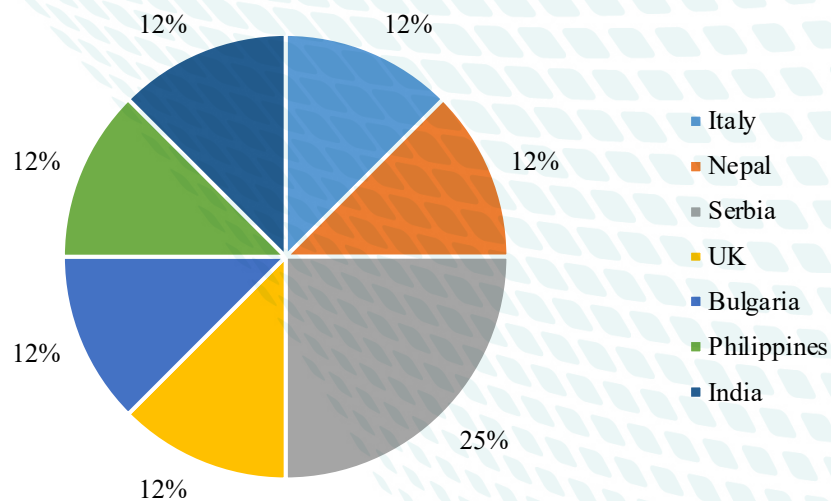
The respondents were also asked to disclose for how long they had been acting in the role of their community's representatives. Answers varied from 6 months up to 12 years, with an average of 6 years' representation. This indicates the volatile nature of such foreign organizations, whereby in some instances, 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 what are the major factors that attract their communities to the localities they reside in. All respondents mentioned that 'rental rates' were the major pull factor. 75% of respondents (6 mentions) stated that 'people from the same country already living there' was also a major pull factor. This option was however not chosen by the Italian and Bulgarian Communities. Being 'close to work' and 'close to amenities' also featured 3 mentions each (38%). Safety 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
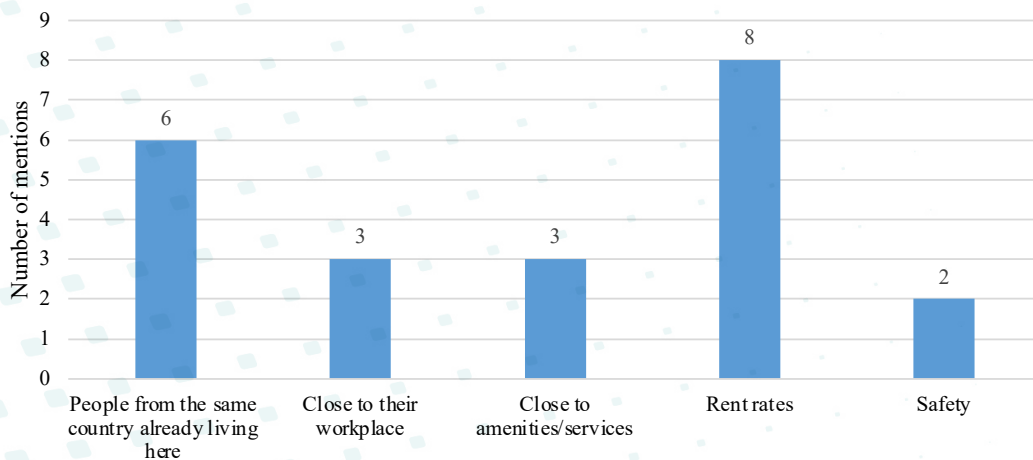

4.2 QUALITY OF LIFE

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 is that their communities like the most about the areas they reside in, 3 communities (Italians, Bulgarians and Indians) mentioned safety, calmness and quietness as a satisfactory factor. Nepalese, Serbians and British, mentioned how their community members like their localities since other compatriots live in the area and/or socializing is easier. Another three communities (Serbian, Bulgarian and Filipino), mentioned that the areas are close to either their work, to amenities such as schools or both. Two representatives (Serbia and UK) mentioned that the 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 is that of "time in traffic" and/or parking (5 mentions). Garbage and hygiene were also issues outlined by 4 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", "lack of green areas" and "not enough buses". Interestingly one community complained of "racism" 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 Reġjun Tramuntana.

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 'Public Transport' and 'Schools'. All communities also referred to making use of 'religious services' with only one of the two Serbian representatives not mentioning such service. Moreover, 63% (5 mentions), stated that they use 'public and green spaces' (excluding Bulgarian, British and one of the Serbian Representatives, whilst another 63% (5 mentions), stated that they use 'sports and leisure facilities' (Filipinos, Indians and Nepalese). This latter finding is interesting as it seems that the Asian representatives within the survey do not seem to use any sporting

facilities in the region, which could be an indication that there are no amenities available for them to practice their own sports, such as for instance, cricket, or they are simply not aware of them. These answered are illustrated in Figure 9 below.

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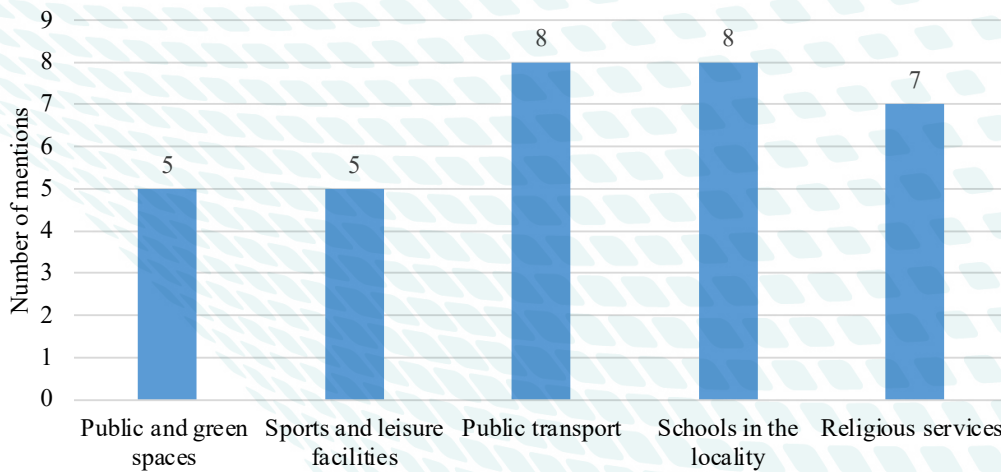

As indicated in Figure 10, when asked whether their communities participate in activities as a community level, all representatives mentioned at least two types of activities they would be active in. All respondents mentioned that their communities participate in 'social activities' being quite a broad and wide category. 88% of respondents (7 mentions, excluding Nepal) mentioned that they participate in some sporting activity. 63% (5 mentions) mentioned Cultural and Historical activities, as well as religious 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 different events suggested. On the other hand, British and Bulgarian only mentioned sports and social activities to be things their community is interested in.

Figure 10 | Which activities is the community active in?
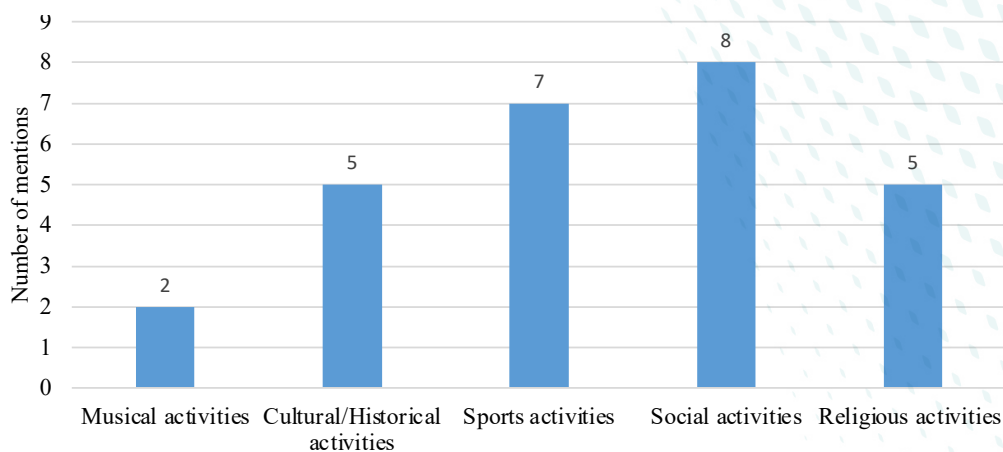
When asked whether they feel that their community is integrated within the Maltese society, it became clear that for most communities it was an easy yes or no answer. Nevertheless, for the sake of analysis, they have been recoded as 'yes', 'no' and 'depends where and with whom', as outlined in Figure 11.

Figure 11 | Are the people from the community integrated in the Maltese society?
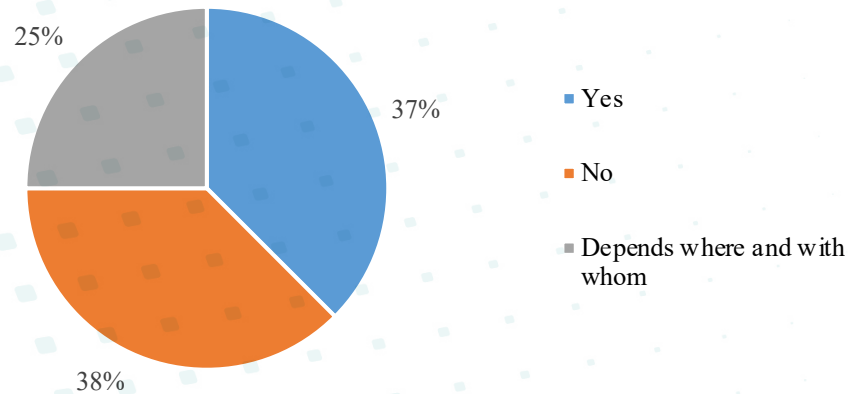
Italians and British both mentioned that their communities feel very integrated within Malta, both referring to language as an enabling element. Given that Maltese tend to know how to speak both Italian and English, has helped such communities to integrate.

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".

Both Filipinos and the Nepali representatives mentioned that they feel integrated, however delving in deeper in their answer sheds lights 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', whilst the Nepali representative mentioned that 'at work and when they take their kids' to their activities yes, however, in a following question when asked what can be done to integrate more, they mentioned that nothing is possible, since "we are not Maltese. We do not belong". This points towards the fact that integration here comes with caveats attached.

On the other hand, both Serbian representatives and the Bulgarian representative 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), "No there is lack of interest and lack of information" (Bulgarian Representative). However, 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 to integrate people further, both Nepalese and Bulgarians mentioned that it is difficult to find ways to do so, indicating a sense of helplessness. The Filippino 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. Finally, 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)

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 is the role of the local councillors. 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 are 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 no participated in the events ogranised 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 which 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, Filipino and Indians mentioned that they feel they can approach. Bulgarians also answered yes, despite previously mentioning that their compatriots do not know about local councils, assuming that this was answered in relation to those 'few' members who might know about the local councils. Serbians, Nepalese 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 asked whether their concerns as communities are being addressed by the local councils. Only the Bulgarian representative answered in the affirmative, again possible answering for the few people who might be aware of the local councils, "in the cases of bulk refuse, delivery, getting parking signs and wardens". The Indian representative also 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, Nepali and British, 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, For example the rubbish problem, parking spaces and no safety" (Nepali 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)

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, Italians 4 communities answered in the positive, namely, the Italians, Bulgarians, Filipinos and Indians.

On the other hand, the Nepali representative mentioned that "We can approach but we are turned down. We are not taken seriously because we are not Maltese", again highlighting the somewhat sense of helplessness amongst some of the foreign communities. Additionally, once 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 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 community said yes, four did no answer, whilst two said that their concerns are not addressed, with one respondent stating, "If they want to address something they never come to us and communicate".

4.5   ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Three representatives mentioned how many of their community members chose to live in Reġjun Tramuntana, since it is cheaper and rental rates are better. However, two of these respondents mentioned that living in areas like San Pawl il-Baħar and Buġibba is difficult. A particular respondents mentioned that "St Paul's Bay is not a safe place. We are not happy with the situation and we cannot like be happy mentally. And we cannot go anywhere because it's the cheap place to live". Another one specified, "I hope something will be done especially in Buġibba because it is difficult to live in a place where a lot is going on".

5. Conclusion

This Annex is an attempt to give a voice to the foreign residents in the Region, which in Reġjun Tramuntana are indeed a substantial percentage of the community, 26.26% (32,524) as per the Census 2021 data. And which are year-on-year increasing, as proven in the latest Parliamentary Question indicating around 41,686 foreign individuals residing in the Region, as at September 2023.

Foreign individuals seem to be primarily attracted to the area due to the lower-than-average rental rates when compared to other Regions. Other foreigners have mentioned that being close to people from their own nationality is also a pull factor. This of course might serve as a support system for the foreign individuals, yet, the Local and Regional Councils must ensure that proper integration is carried out, otherwise, this could easily lead into isolated groups of people or the formation of 'ghetto like' communities.

Through the semi-structured surveys, it became evident that language acts as a great enabler for integration. Indeed, Italians and English feel they are integrated especially, thanks to having no language barrier. Nevertheless, overall, it seems that other foreign communities either feel outrightly not integrated and victims of racism, or else partially integrated in particular parts of their lives (e.g. work), or with particular groups of people (e.g. TCNs amongst themselves). Of course, the Regional and Local Councils, should work for a complete and holistic 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. There 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 and public transport. Many also participate in some of the activities in the community, with the highest being social activities and sports activities. Such activities can be capitalized 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 felt that the Local Councils and Regional Councils did to address their concerns.

It is worth noting that this semi-structured survey and this additional part of the study aims to give a quick overview of the current situation with regards to foreigners in Reġjun Tramuntana, however, in no way should it be generalized 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.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Table 3

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

Tramuntana	NSO Census 2021	PQ - Sept 2023	% in foreign population
Ħal Balzan	825	975	18.18%
Ħ'Attard	1,383	1,767	27.77%
Il-Mellieħa	3,527	4,654	31.95%
Il-Mosta	2,850	4,043	41.86%
In-Naxxar	2,661	3,277	23.15%
L-Imġarr	458	675	47.38%
L-Imtarfa	51	94	84.31%
San Ġwann	3,487	4,499	29.02%
San Pawl Il-Baħar	17,282	21,702	25.58%
Total	**32,524**	**41,686**	**28.17%**

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, Għargħur, Gżira, Ħal Lija, Iklin, Msida, Pembroke, Pieta, San Ġiljan, Sliema,
Swieqi, Ta' Xbiex
Northern Region includes the following localities: Ħal 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, Ħal Għaxaq, Ħal Qormi, Il-Gudja, Il-Marsa, Iż-Żejtun, Marsaskala,
Marsaxlokk, Santa Luċija, Santa Venera, Ħal Luqa, Il-Ħamrun
Western Region includes the following localities: L-Imdina, Ħaż-Żebbuġ, Is-Siġġiewi, Ħad-Dingli, Ħal-Kirkop, L-Imqabba, Il-Qrendi, Ir-Rabat,Ħal-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:
    a. Familiar with their local council and what local councillors do?
        ☐ Yes
        ☐ No

    b. 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?

_____