The Second Generation in Australia
A survey of Maltese-background persons

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The Second and subsequent generations in Australia

- The second and subsequent generation of Maltese-background persons in Australia totals **163,990** (Census 2011).
- Note: Only half of these had both parents born overseas (ie Malta-born):
  - Both parents born overseas: 85,822 (52.3%)
  - Father only born overseas: 21,150 (12.9%)
  - Mother only born overseas: 11,254 (6.9%)
  - Both parents born in Australia: 42,602 (26.0%)
  - Parents birthplace not stated: 3,162 (1.9%)
- Nearly 43,000 (26%) were born to parents who were themselves born in Australia (ie they belong to the third generation).
The majority (65\%) are under the age of 50, with a few (13\%) over the age of 60 years.
Gender distribution

• There were slightly more female participants compared to males in the ratio (F:M ratio = 1.22)
Family constitution

• There were an average of 1.24 child per participant. Most families had 2 children. Single individuals with children amounted to nearly 7%.

• Note: the total fertility rate per woman in Malta is 1.38, and in most countries in Europe it is well below 2. (Eurostat 2011)
Ethnicity:
How do they describe themselves?

• ‘Maltese-Australians’ 66 per cent,
• 'Maltese' 11.3 per cent,
• ‘Australian’ 22.6 per cent.

• What does this mean?
  – ‘Australian’ : have they lost all links with Malta?
  – ‘Maltese’: Are they still living in the past?
  – ‘Maltese-Australians’: are they well-integrated but still appreciate their Maltese culture and background?
Religious practice

• Majority (77%) considered themselves 'Catholic',
• Only a third (37%) attended church regularly on Sundays.
• 40% indicated that they go to church only on special occasions (Christmas, Easter, weddings)
• Half of the children were said to have the same religious orientation as their parents.
• Note:
  – marked change from first generation who considered themselves ‘catholic’ and regular church goers.
  – Reasons: general trend: [Note Malta itself, the proportion of persons attending church regularly has fallen to 51 per cent by 2005. (http://www.discern-malta.org/research.html)], and now to 40%,
  – Role of intermarriage: Half of the number of respondents stated that their partner did not have the same religious background as themselves.
Maltese Language Maintenance

- Can understand Maltese at least moderately well: 57%
- Speak to parents or friends in Maltese: 21%
- Majority never speak in Maltese to their children: 69%
- Note:
  - Role of intermarriage: in about half of the population;
  - Prefer to speak other parent’s language;
  - Brought up monolingual by their parents (worried about language interference) and parents not fluent in Maltese;
  - Maltese considered “not a useful language”;
  - Prefer to learn another language considered ‘more useful’:
    - classical (eg, Italian, French, German),
    - commercial (eg Chinese, Indonesian)
    - other parent ‘s language.
Maintaining Maltese Language teaching

- Considerable efforts have been made, and are being made, by community leaders and other organisations to encourage the teaching of Maltese, to ensure that it remains a viable language. A more energetic approach would involve convincing the second generation (which currently exceeds the first in a ratio of 4 to 1) of the importance of language maintenance.
Membership of Maltese associations

- **First** generation: Clubs and Associations used to be well frequented by Maltese of the first generation.
- **Second** generation:
  - A small minority (20%) stated that they were members of Maltese associations, (mostly older persons),
  - only 6% of these were under 40 years of age.
- Comment:
  - 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation not interested in Maltese clubs/associations.
  - Difficult to reach through Newsletters, etc
  - Some resurgence in niche organisations (cooking competitions, annual Maltese-oriented musical performance attracts several hundred participants.
  - Culture of Maltese 2\textsuperscript{nd} generation is no different from that of the general Australian population.
Citizenship

• A considerable proportion (31%) had a Maltese passport,
• Another 30% were considering applying for one.
• Comment:
  – Importance of availability of double citizenship,
  – Changes in Maltese legislation to permit those with the correct ‘blood line’ to become citizens,
  – Esp for those from N. Africa: relaxation of documentation to satisfy ‘blood line’ connection,
  – Relevance of joining the EU since 2004: a passport to Europe.
  – Implications: If all those considering applying for passport did apply, one would expect 30,000 applications from Australia, and possibly up to 100,000 world wide!
The proportion of participants with a tertiary qualification reached 58%.

Comment:

– This compares very favourably with the number of persons with tertiary qualifications a generation ago,

– For comparison, in Malta the proportion of persons aged 25-34 with a tertiary qualification was 26% (Times of Malta, Sat 22 March, 2014)
Links with Malta - visits

- The majority (82%) stated that they had visited Malta several times,
- Several (17%) had been 4 – 10 times,
- Only a very small number (10%) had never been to Malta.
- Degree of satisfaction:
  - On a scale of 1 – 5 ( “1” = complete satisfaction: average was 1.7.
  - 14% not so satisfied!
- Comment:
  - An indication of a strong link still existing in the second generation.
Links with Malta – Radio/TV

- The majority do not listen to local Maltese radio or SBS television (in Australia). Two-thirds never listen to local radio, and 28% sometimes listen to local broadcasts;
- SBS television: about half (45%) watched sometimes and 15% watched frequently,
- About half of the participants (45%) stated that they kept in touch with Malta news through internet;
- About 14% accessed radio from Malta and 45% looked at Maltese newspapers on internet;
- Comment: These data also confirm that there is still quite an interest in keeping in touch with Malta by persons of the second generation.
Some comments by participants

- I am Australian, but I will always be Maltese;
- There is a need to keep the Maltese culture alive for current and future generations of Maltese descent;
- A young lady under 40 years of age wrote: While born in Australia, Malta will always hold a special place for me as the birthplace of my parents and a country I have very fond memories of as a child from our many visits. Having recently taken our 3 children to Malta it was pleasing to see that they loved it just as much as we did as children and loved going there....It will always hold a special place in my heart;
- As a Maltese Australian second generation I feel we are losing the identity of our heritage. The Maltese adapted to Australian way of life and mixed well with other cultures and in the process they lose their culture. Most [of] the 40-50 age group next generation don't keep traditions or even know the language.
Some more comments by participants

• We love our Maltese heritage. My husband who is Australian has never stopped my parents talking to my children. He has encouraged it. He loves the sense of Maltese family.

• A 69 year old respondent who arrived in Australia when only 4 years old comments: I regret that I have not kept up my Maltese language. I understand 75% - 80% of spoken and written Maltese but do not speak it as fluently as I would like because of lack of practice. I have attended Maltese classes at MCCV and am very grateful for that. I applaud MCCV for their initiative and encourage you to keep them going for future generations.
Other Participants’ comments

• My only regret in terms of my nationality is that I cannot speak and read Maltese. Although my mother's family speaks Maltese (which I can understand but cannot speak very well), Maltese was banned in my father's family ... as a way of making them become 'Australian' quicker. As a result my father stopped speaking Maltese (at age 6), and as a result no Maltese was spoken in our household when I was growing up.
Participants’ Comments

• I think it is sad that in Malta itself they use way too much English and feel the language has changed...I feel that in our country Malta they are ruining the language themselves. My culture is very important to me. .... I have done some Maltese language classes in the past at MCCV to improve.
Participants’ Comments

• While being brought up an 'Australian' and with no Maltese language – (my father died when I was 13 and my mother is Australian with no Maltese language), I still consider myself Maltese to a degree. I regret I was never taught the language as a child. I look forward to visiting Malta and have read a number of books regarding Maltese History. I suppose it's in the blood.

• I am proud of my Maltese heritage however do not feel I have any reason to identify as Maltese.
About visiting Malta

• "I love it, it is my second home.

• The thought of never going to Malta again fills them with sorrow: My parents, my brother and I came to Australia in 1951..... As I am turning 70 this year, I will probably not see Malta again. It is too long a journey now. I keep in touch with my cousins in Malta via internet and Skype.

• In Malta I feel Australian; in Australia I feel Maltese.

• I have Maltese family on one side of the family. I have visited Malta and loved the place but found some of the people very rude.
Some Requests from participants

• Why can we not have Maltese-speaking priests within Australia in areas where there is a high level of people who speak Maltese?
• Why is there not financial support from the Maltese Government to provide more Maltese translators for public support systems available in Australia?
• For Christ sake can we have more than 20 minutes on Maltese programs on TV?
Involvement of young persons:

• The Maltese Community Council of Victoria needs to encourage our age groups in the committee to keep the Maltese second generation alive and well.

• The MCCV needs to recruit young people to its board to ensure the local Maltese community is sustainable.
Some conclusions

• **Language Maintenance**: While it is difficult to foresee a future for Maltese language in the long run, I believe that it is important to do all that we can to preserve it for those who wish to learn it.

• **Communication**: it is essential to provide a forum where persons from the Diaspora can communicate. An interactive website should be established for participants to put their views, questions and get answers. As far as I know, while there are some good individual Newsletters, the only on line website dealing responding to readers’ queries is the one set up 12 years ago by the Migration Museum ([www.maltamigration.com](http://www.maltamigration.com)). The Council for Maltese living abroad (CMLA) has been recommending this for some time.
Further Details about this Survey can be obtained from:

mauricecauchi.wordpress.com