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Social Impact Assessment Reġjun Lvant

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



L-Università ta' Malta
Faculty for Social Wellbeing



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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

The scope of a Social Impact Assessment is to analyse, better monitor the intended and unintended social consequences from policies, programs and project concluded or planned, and the social changes these would have had or might bring about.

Obviously, the conclusion from such a study - which all of Malta's Regional Councils are obliged to conduct within the initial years of each new legislature - has the primary purpose to help gauge the present social status within each. In the light of the findings hereby being presented by the Faculty for Social Wellbeing within the University of Malta, the Eastern Regional Council, is now in a more knowledgeable position to mitigate for, address and plan adequate interventions to maximise benefits towards the Social Wellbeing and best interest of our communities.

We feel our Region is rich in contrasts of different aspects. Ours, is the most populous region and assembles, smaller, quaint localities steeped in tradition, amassed over many centuries. A few of more recent development, and which are still evolving at a very fast pace, totally away from previously early identifiable characteristics of a more traditional way of life. Others larger, ever expanding - mostly upwards! quite cosmopolitan, vibrant and bustling with commercial, entertainment and tourism activities! So, matters of social concerns abound.

This report's conclusions provide us with the opportunity to test how near or far off correct are our perceptions.

This scientific snapshot is most needed and welcome; conclusions need to be very carefully studied and assessed, so the right policies may be set in place at the earliest.

Times change, and our Islands have and still are experiencing a great deal of this. Are we adapting to change? Surely forever - a bone of contention -, we have to learn to adapt to change if we are to move forward. Does however the old saying "When in Rome do like the Romans do"! still hold water? This report should enlighten us further. I am of the opinion that there's still a great deal to debate on this!

Let's thrive towards building a Society that embraces every person irrespective; one based on 'common understanding' and one that will always hold dear to its heart the 'Wellbeing of All'.

Anthony Chircop
President
Eastern Regional Council

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 Eastern Region 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.

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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 researches, understands and monitors perceptions and experiences of stakeholders on matters such as quality of life, knowledge about and interactions with local government. This also leads to better accountability of authorities and gives local governments the information and knowledge to maintain and improve their performances.

In May 2023, the Eastern Regional Council (Reġjun Lvant) commissioned the research services of 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. These task 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 Eastern Region's residents' perceived quality of life, liveability and social integration of their locality and their awareness and knowledge of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof. By applying a multi-method research approach, the study sought to address the following research questions:

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

At the time of the study, the Eastern Region's residents comprised of those residing in the region's 12 localities, namely: Birkirkara, Ħal-Għargħur, Ħal-Lija, Il-Gżira, Is-Swieqi, L-Iklin, L-Imsida, Pembroke, San Ġiljan, Ta' Xbiex, Tal-Pieta' and Tas-Sliema. As at November 2021, Reġjun Lvant's total resident population stood at 115,908, c. 37.71% of which were non-Maltese (NSO, 2023a).

The methodology adopted comprised quantitative and qualitative components. The research team designed and administered the quantitative telephonic questionnaire with a sample of residents of the localities forming part of Reġjun Lvant (414 residents, margin of error $\pm 4.9\%$). Whilst the qualitative data collection consisted of two focus groups, one with the mayors and one with the local councillors of the Region. Additionally, in view of the ever-increasing presence of foreigners in the localities mentioned, data collection from representatives of the top 10 nationalities residing in this region, which make up the top 51% of foreign communities in the region (Italy, India, UK, Philippines, Libya, Serbia, Turkey, Spain, Bulgaria and Sweden) 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. For Italy and Serbia, two representatives for the community responded. For the other communities only one representative.

Quantitative findings

The results of the questionnaire show that, at the time of data collection, less than half of the residents expressed being very or fairly satisfied with their locality (c. 46.5%), with a substantial 25.9% being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Similarly, only 37.9% felt that there was a 'high' or 'very high' sense of community, with a substantial 35.5% choosing, 'neither high nor low'.

Limited participation in civic life transpired with 45.5% mentioning that this was neither high nor low and only 27.6% choosing high or very high participation.

Residents expressed that integration of elderly people was high (62.1%), however, integration of people with disability, people with different religious belief and people with different cultures seemed to rank quite low with only 28.1%, 40.1% and 40.4% respectively believing that integration in such cases is high.

Residents seemed particularly dissatisfied with Traffic and Parking issues (77.7% very or fairly dissatisfied), Urban Development and Air and Noise Pollution (both at 71.4% very or fairly dissatisfied) and Public and Green Spaces (59.1% very or fairly dissatisfied). Respondents seemed to be particularly satisfied with religious activities (51.1% being very or fairly satisfied). Factors which could lead to better quality of life, included, more cleanliness (53 mentions), less construction (20 mentions), better traffic and parking management (14 mentions), more recreation and green spaces (13 mentions) and more law enforcement (8 mentions).

When looking at the awareness of the residents in relation to the Local Councillors' roles and responsibilities, this was somewhat on the low side, with only 28.1% of the respondents stating that they knew a fair amount or a great deal of the local councillor's role. 34.2% of respondents said that they were fairly or highly satisfied with the local council, yet a similar 38.9% of respondents mentioned that they were fairly or very dissatisfied. The remaining 26.9% expressed a neutral opinion. Again, when asked if the local council meets their expectations, 41.08% answered in the positive, yet, 54.28% answered 'no'. Respondents mentioned that to meet their expectations, local councils should communicate, listen and act more (89 mentions), have better upkeep of the locality (79 mentions) and have more law enforcement (12 mentions).

The awareness with regards Regional Councils was also low, with only 8 people (2%) actually knowing the region they form part of. 29.1% of respondents gave a wrong answer, whilst the remaining 68.9% of respondents stated directly 'I do not know'. When asked about their awareness in terms of functions and responsibilities of the Regional Council, 65.5% stated that they did not know, whilst 7.1% stated no. This clearly indicates, that even more so for Regional Councils than for local councils, there is lack of awareness amongst the general public about what the Regional Council is and what it does. 4.9% of respondents said they were satisfied with the Regional Council, yet a substantial number of the respondents (84.1%) stated they felt neutral about it, possibly reflecting the fact that they did not know about the Council in itself. To possibly increase the level of satisfaction of residents in terms of Regional Councils, respondents mentioned the need for the Regional Council to communicate more their role (29 mentions), be more proactive (10 mentions) and have better upkeep of the locality (9 mentions).

Qualitative findings

Through the focus groups, the researchers found that mayors and local councillors were very much in line in terms of the areas of concern.

Local Councillors flagged that at the time of writing there seemed to be a lack of civil pride and low community feel within their localities, mentioning issues such as vandalism and the day-to-day problem of garbage bags being taken out on the wrong day. Also, corroborating the quantitative findings in terms of low community participation, they outlined how people,

especially youths did not participate in events. In order to overcome this, sometimes local councils said they collaborated with other community organisations to set up joint events. Moreover, they mentioned how they feel that their wings were being clipped, with lack of funds and human resources, and little power to enforce within their own locality and due to the gap in communication with central governments (authorities).

This idea of feeling powerless resonated with the comments made by mayors, who mentioned that the lack of autonomy allowed, the lack of consultation held by the government authorities with them, with regards to issues regarding their localities, as well as the lack of funds and human resources, meant that they had very little power to assist their residents, despite them being the first port of call when there is a problem in the locality. Moreover, the mayors also outlined that the influx of foreign nationals into the region has created a dividing line between Maltese and foreigners, with often clear demarcation lines in relationships, whereby the two groups rarely mix.

Foreigners' Annex

Indeed, given the great number of foreigners residing in the region, looking at the foreigners' annex gives a better view of the whole quality of life of residents. The biggest pull factors for foreigners to live in the Region were, having other people from the same country living there already (100%, 12 mentions), the favourable rental rates (88%) and being close to amenities (83%). Prima facie, all foreign representatives mentioned that overall, they were satisfied with their localities (12 out of 12 respondents). Reasons enlisted included, 'safety, calmness and quietness' (5 mentions), 'having compatriots live there, making socialising easier' (3 mentions) and being close to amenities such as schools and healthcare (4 mentions). 2 representatives also mentioned that being close to the sea and the beach is a plus.

However, through the semi-structured survey, concerns were raised, such as time in traffic and parking issues (4 mentions) and cleanliness and garbage issues (3 mentions). Other issues which were mentioned only once each included, "lack of safety", "pollution," "not enough buses," "lack of prayer spaces for the Muslim community," and "high rent rates." Interestingly, one community complained of "not much involvement with the locals" in the area, whilst another, on the contrary, mentioned having too much of a "mix of nationalities." This points directly to the tensions that a diverse community might be facing in Reġjun Lvant.

Half of the respondents (6) mentioned that they are aware of the Local councils (Italian, Swedish, Turkish, Philippines, Indians and Spanish). These 6 respondents mentioned that they were satisfied with the local councils and got involved in activities organised by the council. Moreover, the same 6 respondents along with the Bulgarian representative mentioned that they felt they can approach the Local Council despite being foreign. 4 representatives mentioned that they felt that their needs were not being seen to by the local councils.

On the other hand, only 4 mentioned that they were aware of the Regional Council (Turkish, Philippines, Indians and Spanish). 5 respondents mentioned that they felt they can approach the Regional Council (Italians, Turkish, Libyans, Philippines, Indians). Still there was mention that even if they approach, sometimes issues are not taken seriously. Moreover, others mentioned that the opening hours of such council was not convenient for people who work. Only the Italian and Indian communities felt that the Regional Council addressed their concerns.

50% of the foreign representatives mentioned that they feel integrated in the community, mostly mentioning language as an enabler. For instance, Libyans specifically mentioned that the fact that they can speak Maltese helps a lot. Other communities, such as Serbian and Bulgarian tend to find it harder to integrate, with both lack of interest from their own community, as well as a sense of acceptance of being the outsiders.

Recommendations

In line with the findings of both the quantitative and qualitative research, the research team has put forward recommendations for policy, practice as well as further research 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 Lvant 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 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. A quantitative questionnaire, specifically designed for this project, was carried out with residents of the localities forming part of Reġjun Lvant. The researchers also conducted two focus groups, one with the mayors 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 determinant of quality of life, the citizens expect from their living environments” (p. 1). A city is considered to be liveable, if “the economic, social, environment and aesthetic expectations” (p. 1) of the residents are met. Therefore, the more liveable the place is, the better the quality of life of its residents.

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

2.2 INCLUSION

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

(Stren & Polèse, 2000).

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

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

If well managed, inclusive cities should be conducive to greater social cohesion which in turn improves the sense of belonging and civic pride, making the city more liveable. This is particularly pertinent to localities in Malta, which are experiencing a demographic overhaul in many instances. An ageing indigenous local population coupled with an unprecedented influx of foreign nationals 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 Lvant.

3. Context

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

3.1 LEGISLATIVE OVERVIEW

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

Figure 3.1
Malta's Regional Council



3.1.1 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL COUNCILS

Local Councils

What started as a pilot, back in 1993, has now become a focal point for the residents of each locality. Local Councils 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: Adapted from the Local Government Act XIV, 2019, p. 20. Full version in Appendix D.

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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 LVANT

Reġjun Lvant is made up of twelve localities, namely Birkirkara, Ғal-Chargħur, Ғal-Lija, Il-Gżira, Is-Swieqi, L-Iklin, L-Imsida, Pembroke, San Ġiljan, Ta' Xbiex, Tal-Pieta' and Tas-Sliema. According to NSO data, the region covers c. 19.26km², equivalent to circa 6.11% 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 24.47%. Although not at the same rate, the population grew in all Regions. As at November 2021, Reġjun Lvant's total resident population stood at 115,908, representing an increase of 31,086 (37%) since 2011, considerably a higher increase than the national average. Indeed, the region saw a large increase nearly in all localities, with the least being in Pembroke (2%) and the highest being L-Imsida (75% increase) followed by Swieqi (49%). Birkirkara remains the most highly populated locality in the Region (25,807 people) followed by Sliema (19,655). This is illustrated in the Figure 3.2 and Table 3.3 below. (NSO, 2023a).

Figure 3.2
Population per locality in 2011 and 2021

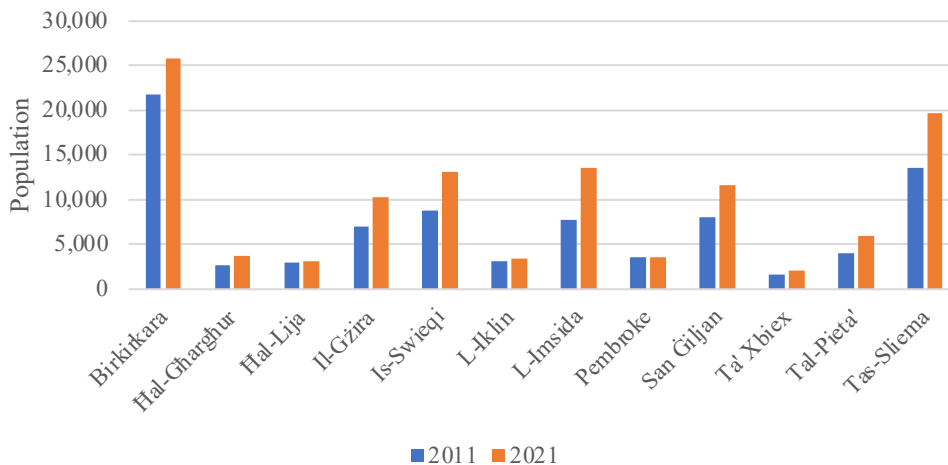


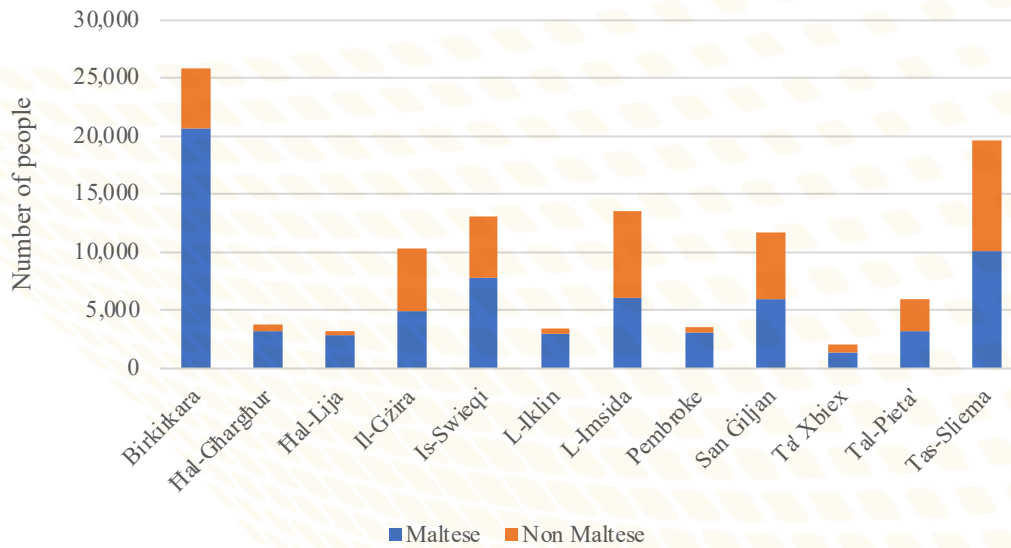
Table 3.3
Population per locality in 2011 and 2021

Localities	2011	2021
Birkirkara	21,749	25,807
Ħal-Għargħur	2,605	3,741
Ħal-Lija	2,977	3,162
Il-Gżira	7,055	10,331
Is-Swieqi	8,755	13,044
L-Iklin	3,169	3,399
L-Imsida	7,748	13,587
Pembroke	3,488	3,545
San Ġiljan	8,067	11,653
Ta' Xbiex	1,556	2,092
Tal-Pieta'	4,032	5,892
Tas-Sliema	13,621	19,655
Total	84,822	115,908

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) was non-Maltese. Around 37.86% of Malta's foreign population (43,708 individuals) reside in Reġjun Lvant, making it the region with the highest proportion of foreigners. This number of non-Maltese nationals amounts to 37.71% of the Region's total resident population. L-Imsida has the highest proportion of foreigners in its population standing at 55% (7,493 individuals), followed by 52% for Gżira (5,401) and San Ġiljan (5,754) and Tas-Sliema (9,605), both having 49% of the population as foreign. The locality with the least foreigners was that of Ħal-Lija with only 9% foreigners (290). (NSO, 2023a). This is illustrated in Figure 3.3 and Table 3.4 below. Since the data collection for the 2021 Census, figures pertaining to the non-Maltese population have continued to inflate at a national level. Given such socio-demographic change, an Annex has been added to this report, in relation to the non-Maltese residents so as to give further detail to such a shift.

Figure 3.3
Population composition by Maltese and non-Maltese individuals



In terms of gender presence in the region, Reġjun Lvant has circa 60,745 male residents (52.41%) and 55,163 (47.59%) females, as indicated in Table 3.4 below (NSO, 2023a).

Table 3.4
Gender and nationality per locality

Localities	Gender		Nationality	
	Male	Females	Maltese	Non- Maltese
Birkirkara	13,331	12,476	20,636	5,171
Hal-Għargħur	1,880	1,861	3,238	503
Hal-Lija	1,581	1,581	2,872	290
Il-Gżira	5,598	4,733	4,930	5,401
Is-Swieqi	6,751	6,293	7,825	5,219
L-Iklin	1,728	1,671	2,997	402
L-Imsida	7,591	5,996	6,094	7,493
Pembroke	1,789	1,756	3,096	449
San Ġiljan	6,251	5,402	5,899	5,754
Ta' Xbiex	1,084	1,008	1,323	769
Tal-Pieta'	3,202	2,690	3,240	2,652
Tas-Sliema	9,959	9,696	10,050	9,605
Total	60,745	55,163	72,200	43,708

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 Lvant, in 2021, this stood at around 6,019 people per km², indicating a much more densely populated region than the average of Malta. Indeed, the localities in the region are mostly urban and built-up areas, with very limited country side or open spaces, when compared to the number of residents residing within. Tas-Sliema, is the most densely populated locality, with around 15,167 people per km², mirroring the fact that the locality is extremely urbanised with a number of apartments and flats and a decreasing stock of terraced houses which are being pulled down to develop apartments instead, thereby increasing the number of persons on the same footprint. This is followed by Tal-Pieta' with 13,047 people per km². In the latter case the very small area of the locality is also a contributing factor to this high-density score (0.45 km²).

The average age of the population in this region stands at 41.26, very much in line with the Maltese average of 41.7. Within the region the average age of women (42.19) is higher than that of men (40.44) overall. Moreover, the average age of Maltese nationals (45.8) is substantially higher than that of non-Maltese (34.3), 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 Lvant, this stands at 41.8% (Vs 46.7% for Malta). The old age dependency ratio stands at 25.1% (Vs 27.6% for Malta) (NSO, 2023). This indicates that the percentage of elderly in comparison with people of working age is lower in this region, than in Malta overall. This could be due to the high presence of foreigners in the localities within the region, who tend to be of working age, thereby drawing the average down. This is 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

In Reġjun Lvant there seems to be a lower-than-average vulnerability in terms of people claiming social security benefits, possibly also due to the fact that the foreign component of the population does not and in some cases cannot claim social security benefits. The latest publicly available data disaggregated by locality refers to the year 2020. In 2020, the total beneficiaries of social security benefits in the Region amounted to 31,944 individuals (c.18.76% of all beneficiaries in Malta). At a national level in 2020, around 32.99% of the population was receiving some kind of benefits (170,259 individuals), whilst for the Region, this rate was equal to 24.40% of the population. Birkirkara and Ħal-Għargħur recorded the highest percentage of population on benefits, 35% and 35.52% respectively, as indicated in Table 3.5 (NSO, 2022).

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

Localities	Total Beneficiaries	% of population
Birkirkara	9,026	35.00%
Ħal-Għargħur	1,038	35.52%
Ħal-Lija	1,073	32.49%
Il-Gżira	2,776	21.32%
Is-Swieqi	2,598	16.39%
L-Iklin	1,049	29.68%
L-Imsida	3,146	20.21%
Pembroke	1,041	26.62%
San Ġiljan	2,696	17.85%
Ta' Xbiex	643	29.37%
Tal-Pieta'	1,594	30.01%
Tas-Sliema	5,264	21.56%
Totals	31,944	24.40%
Malta	170,259	32.99%

When looking closer at the type of benefits being taken by 5,687 individuals, being 4.34% of the population of the Region were on sickness benefits in the year 2020. This is lower than 6.94% of the total Maltese population receiving sickness benefits. Birkirkara seems to have recorded the highest percentage of beneficiaries of such benefit, amounting to 7.81% of the population (c. 2,015 individuals). (NSO, 2022).

In terms of the disability benefits 1,411 individuals (1.08% of the Region's population) were receiving such benefits in 2020. This is again slightly lower than the national percentage of 1.83%. In terms of localities, more or less all localities recorded claimants to be between 0.6% to 2%, with Birkirkara again recording the highest percentage of 1.93% (499 individuals) (NSO, 2022).

When looking at old age benefits such as pensions, 14,684 individuals (i.e., 11.22% of the Region's population) claimed such benefits in 2020. At a national level this percentage stood at 13.83%. This further strengthens the point that the number of elderly, in the Region is proportionally less than in the total of Malta, as also indicated by the average age. The areas with the highest old age benefits' beneficiaries were that of Ta' Xbiex (16.95%), Ħal-Lija (15.59%) and L-Iklin (15.34%). The area with the lowest old age benefits' beneficiaries is that of Swieqi at 7.39% (NSO, 2022).

Finally, when looking at the unemployment benefits 1.60% of the total Maltese population were beneficiaries. This percentage stood at 1.26% for Reġjun Lvant, indicating that there are lower-than-average number of people registering as unemployed in the area. The highest locality with unemployment benefit beneficiaries was that of Tal-Pieta' at 1.98%, whilst the lowest was that of Swieqi at 0.71% (NSO, 2022).

Moreover, "in comparison to the national average, this region has a low rate of poverty ... The most pertinent social problems observed in this region are neglect of elderly persons and of persons with mental health issues" (Arts Council Malta, n.d)

3.2.3 Housing

In accordance with the Arts Council Malta (n.d) the region, “has relatively high property market price[s]” when compared to other regions (p.23). When looking at the data pertaining to housing and dwellings, it seems that 23.32% (69,336 dwellings) of the property stock in Malta is found in Reġjun Lvant. 52,103 (75.15%) of these dwellings are considered to be main residential dwellings and the remaining 17,233 (24.85%) are considered secondary, seasonally used or vacant dwelling, as illustrated in Figure 3.4 below. Interestingly, in San Ġiljan the percentage of secondary houses is higher (31.1%). Possibly a number of rental properties are found in this locality, whereby the owners operate them as short-term or long-term lets. On the other hand, Pembroke has the lowest average of secondary housing (18.3% respectively). Overall, the region seems to have a higher share of flats or penthouses (46,233 equivalent to 66.68% of the stock Vs 52.66% average of the whole of Malta). The areas with the largest share of flats are Ta' Xbiex (83.53%), San Ġiljan (80.30%) and I-Imnsida (79.52%). In this region, townhouses make up a smaller share (13.72% equivalent to 9,515 properties), than the Maltese average (22.85%), as indicated in Figure 3.5. The highest percentage of traditional townhouses remaining are found in Ħal-Lija (30.38%) and Ħal-Ġhargħur (25.70%). Maisonettes are mostly present in Birkirkara (28.61%) and Ħal-Lija (28.52%).

Figure 3.4
Dwelling stock by occupancy

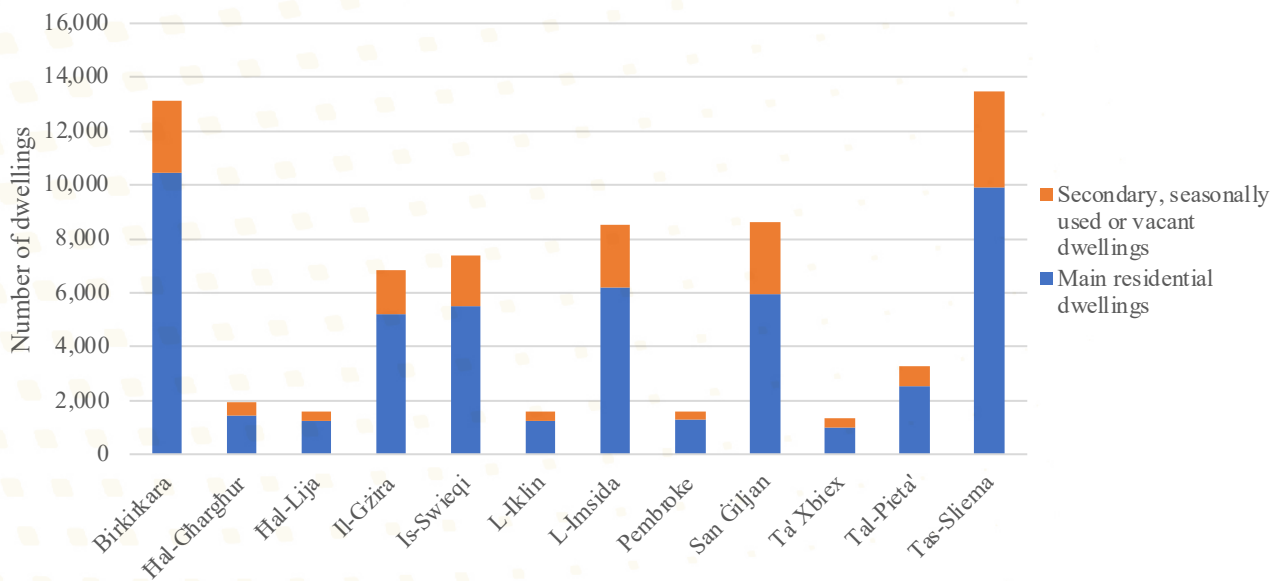
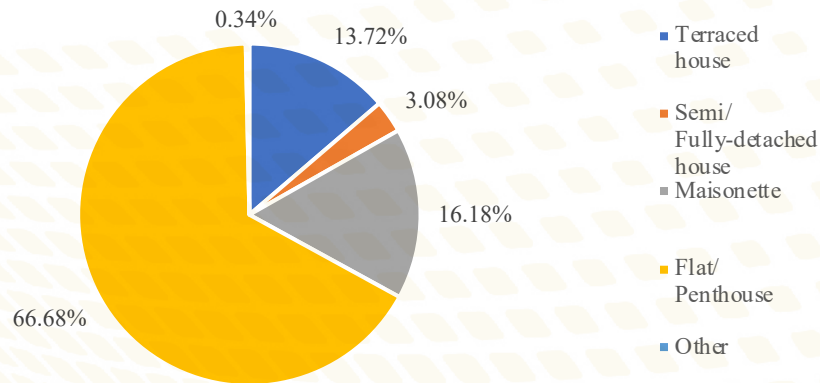


Figure 3.5
Dwelling stock by type



It is worth noting that within the Region there are also a number of institutional accommodations. These include elderly care homes, including Casa Leone XIII (San Ġiljan), Dar San Pietru (Ħal-Lija), Dar tal-Kleru (Birkirkara), Jasmine Residence, St. Mark's and Marina Palace (L-Imsida) ("List of Homes for the Elderly", n.d). Moreover, one also finds a respite home in Birkirkara, Dar Pirotta which houses a number of people with intellectual disability ("Dar Pirotta", n.d). In Sliema one also finds Dar Osanna Pia, which provides accommodation for young men between the ages of 16 and 25 and a transit home to independence, Mamma Margherita Home, both operated by the Salesians ("Residential Care", n.d.). One must 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 Lvant comprises of twelve localities which provide a mix of residential as well as commercial areas.

One finds a major industrial estate situated in Mriehel, as part of the locality of Birkirkara. The Central Business District is spread over 800,000m², with a variety of manufacturing companies using this space, ranging from companies specialising in electronic components, food and beverage as well as homeware stores. One also finds representatives of the service industry, specifically the finance and banking sector ("Central Business District", n.d.). In more recent years, the Industrial Estate also saw the development and opening of the 'Quad Central', being a cutting edge, modern development comprising of 38,000m² of offices, 7,000m² open piazzas and 6,000m² of retail and leisure outlets. Moreover, this development also obtained the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, which certifies the cost-efficiency and healthy green building ("About us", n.d.). Moreover, in Birkirkara one also finds a number of retail shops with possibly 'Naxxar Road' and the 'Dun Karm' by pass, being

two of the major hotspots for ‘retail shops’ ranging from telecommunications, electronics, clothing, as well as supermarkets, just to mention a few.

At the limits of Birkirkara and Msida, one also finds the ‘Malta Life Sciences Park’. Its development started in 2013, with the aim of creating a first-class facility for international operators in the life science and information technology sector who want to invest in research and development.

A number of Marinas are also present in the region, including those of Ta’ Xbiex, L-Imsida as well as Manoel Island yacht marina, all of which offer a number of berthing spots for leisure boats and some of which also allow the operation of charter boats and tourist boats in the area.

Additionally, these same localities as well as Sliema and San Ġiljan are considered to be a hub of tourist operations. One here finds a number of retail shops, as well as numerous businesses operating in the HORECA industry, that is hotel operators, restaurants and other catering establishments. Indeed, especially in the summer months these localities are bustling with tourists. As per the latest, Malta Hotels Directory 2023 (MTA, 2023), 69 hotels were registered in the Region. The split between the localities and the rating of each hotel is depicted in Table 3.6 below.

Table 3.6
Number of hotels in the region per locality and per hotel rating

Localities	5 star	4 star	3 star	2 star	Boutique
Il-Gżira	0	3	5	0	0
Is-Swieqi	0	0	1	0	0
L-Imsida	0	0	0	1	0
San Ġiljan	7	9	17	2	3
Tas-Sliema	1	7	9	3	1
Totals	8	19	32	6	4

In San Ġiljan, one also finds Paceville, which is known to be a mecca of entertainment in the local scene, with numerous pubs and clubs, as well as other entertainment options such as a cinema and a bowling arena. This area, was also the focus of a Master plan aimed to regenerate the area in 2016.

Despite, not being directly related to commercial activity, the region also hosts the Materdei hospital (L-Imsida), which is the national public hospital. In addition, one also finds the Ġ.F. Abela Junior College as well as the University of Malta. These are the two public tertiary education institutions, which provide free access to education to Maltese students, thereby, preparing the workforce of tomorrow.

3.2.5 Transport infrastructure

Malta in general is heavily dependent on vehicles and its road infrastructure, with circa 18,000 vehicles for each km² (Borg 2023). Reġjun Lvant tends to face a number of issues with traffic at different points of time of day. This is especially due to the fact of the concentration of people and commercial activities in its different localities.

The Region was part of a major €55million infrastructural project carried out connecting different localities, namely the Central Link, passing through Mrieħel (Birkirkara). This partly EU funded project was developed in order to ease the traffic congestion 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).

Il-Gżira promenade, also known as the 'ferries' has in the past few years received a face-lift, with works being carried out in the area. Moreover, plans for the Msida Creek have been presented and revised last year. The project will include a flyover, replacing the current existing traffic lights and will include new cycling and walking tracks to enable safer alternative commuting. The embellishments in the area will also be improved (Balzan, 2023).

Other major roadworks currently being undertaken are those on the Pembroke Junction connecting Pembroke to Swieqi. The €4million project, set to alleviate the bottlenecks which currently are present in the Swieqi area, is projected to be closed off by the first quarter of 2024 (Camilleri, 2023).

3.2.6 Natural and Cultural Assets

This region has a number of historical assets dating back from the times of the Knights of St. John up to the British empire and even closer to date. Examples include the water aqueducts in Birkirkara, a number of harbour fortifications including in Pembroke and Tas-Sliema, parts of the Victoria lines and the English Barracks found in Pembroke as well as numerous buildings of historical and architectural importance. Across the region, c.227 sites are scheduled as Grade 1 and c. another 410 scheduled as Grade 2 sites. This clearly indicates the cultural value of such dwellings, buildings or sites.

Only 44 sites are scheduled as ecological or geological in the Region, including valleys such as Wied Għollieqa and Wied Għomor. This indicates that the greater number of assets in the area are in relation to historical and architectural importance, rather than the natural assets in the area.

The number of total scheduled sites with the PA for the Region amount to 826, with the highest percentage being architectural assets (85.96%). The highest number of scheduled sites were found in Tas-Sliema (219), followed by Tal-Pieta' (170). (Planning Authority, n.d.). Figure 3.6 and Figure 3.7 illustrate this.

Figure 3.6
Scheduled property, buildings and sites

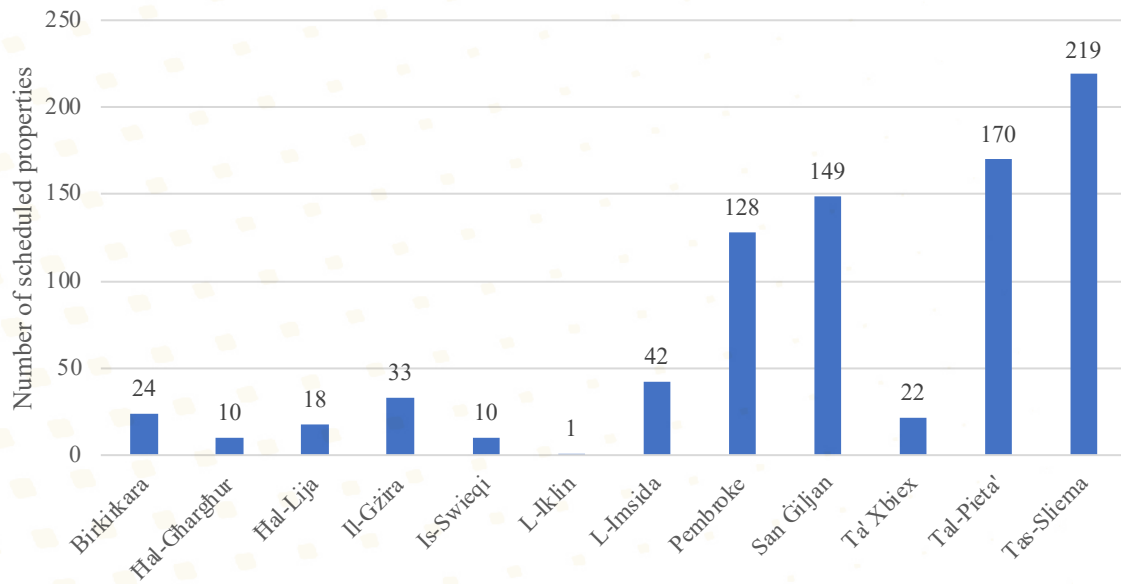
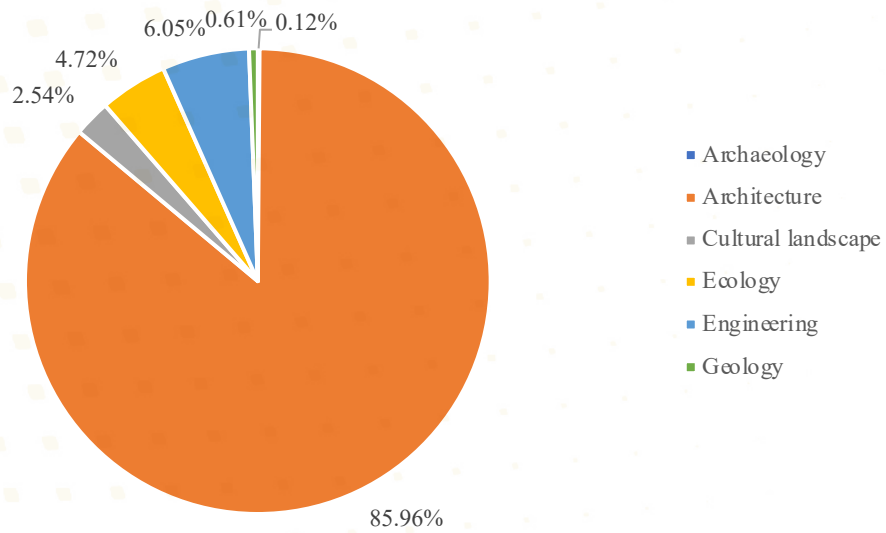


Figure 3.7
Type of scheduled sites



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, such as Festa Fjuri (Iklin), The Birkirkara Annual Fashion Show as well as the Halloween more spontaneous celebrations in Pembroke and Swieqi. These activities attract both locals as well as individuals from outside the localities, whilst enhancing the social fabric in the localities as a number of residents who make part of the events' associations come together to organise such events regularly.

It is worth noting that in 2023, the Eastern Region was tasked with being the European Region of Sports with numerous activities having been taken on over the months in terms of sports within the different localities. For the year 2024, the Region has now been assigned to be the European Region of Culture, envisaging various events being organised within each locality in view of promoting the culture of the region. The Region has been allocated €250,000 for this. (Eastern Regional Council, 2023).

3.2.7 Community spaces and local participation

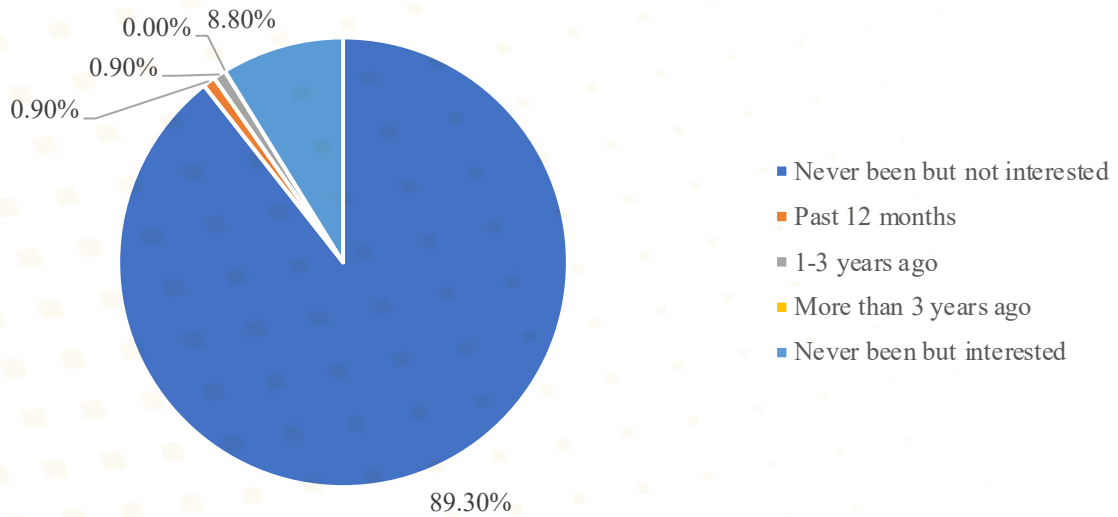
The region doesn't have plenty of natural green open spaces whereby families, friends and communities in general can gather, however one finds a number of urban gardens and playing areas that residents can enjoy. These include, Independence Gardens (Sliema), Old Railway Station Garden and Fleur-de-lys Garden (Birkirkara), Peace Garden and Żagħruna Garden (Hal-Għargħur. The Council of Europe Garden (Gżira) and others. This indicates that there is an effort to make the urban spaces greener for the residents to have open spaces to meet and congregate. The Msida Creek Project, has indeed been revised to include 60% of it as open spaces, following critique by the general public, residents and NGOs (Balzan, 2023). Moreover, given that a number of the localities in the region are coastal localities, one finds a number of promenades, which people can enjoy as communal spaces, as well as a number of rocky beaches (such as in I-Msida and Tas-Sliema) as well as a sandy beach (San Ġiljan).

Local band clubs, football clubs, political party clubs, as well as the parishes, especially during the time of the village feast, also remain important community spots, whereby social cohesion and social interaction is fostered in the Region. Unfortunately, and unpublished Esprimi research carried out in 2019 and referenced by the Arts Council of Malta (n.d), had indicated that in 2018, the Local Councils of the region only organised 18 events, representing only 16% of all events organised by the Maltese and Gozitan Local Councils. Moreover, 30% of local councils believe that citizens do not participate actively in cultural events they organise (Arts Council Malta, n.d., p. 23).

These statements correspond also to data collected from residents with regards to their participation in local council events. Only 0.9% of respondents of Reġjun Lvant stated that had been actively involved in the local council festivities in the previous 12 months, as opposed to the 2.4% at a national level and just 0.9% mentioned that they participated in the past 1-3 years (Vs 1.7% for Malta). The number of people who mentioned that they did not attend but are not interested to do so is higher than the national average at 89.3% (Vs 87% Malta). However, 8.80% mentioned that despite never having attended, they might be interested to do so in the future. This percentage is higher than the 7.1% at Malta level (Arts Council Malta, n.d.) This therefore, leaves a space for both the Local Councils and the Regional Councils to develop events to

attract further residents and find innovative ways to ensure that there is participation and collaboration. The above statistics are illustrated in Figure 3.8 below.

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



Additionally, 30% (vs. 14.8% of Local Councils in Malta and Gozo) of the local councils do not feel they are empowered to address the cultural priorities. In view of being the European Cultural Region for 2024, this will hopefully change (Arts Council Malta, n.d.).

3.2.8 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 12 localities of Lvant, but it is not this study's purpose to enlist them all. However, this chapter illustrates richness in culture, demography and its role in the commercial activities in Malta.

The region is particularly known to be "Malta's primary tourism and leisure area" (Arts Council Malta, n.d., p.23). Providing a positive experience for tourists and generating economic growth are key aspirations of the region with many of its businesses thriving from the inflow of tourists throughout the year. The Social Impact Assessment for Ta' Xbiex Palace, (Formosa & Brown, 2019), indicates that one of the aspiration of people in the locality was indeed that of supporting regeneration, also in line with the national thrust towards economic growth. Yet, all of this should be done in a sensible and sustainable manner.

Indeed, the increased economic activity is resulting in an increased pressure on the Region's infrastructure, including the road network, drainage systems as well as waste collection, the latter of which has been repeatedly flagged to the authorities (Azzopardi, 2023).

There is also a need to safeguard the quality of life and safety of the residents. Over the years, residents living close to the leisure hubs, such as Paceville and Sliema, have voiced their opinion on the complete disregard of entertainment revellers, to them and their properties (Cummings, 2023; Vella, 2022). This is especially true for elderly residents, who would like to have the collateral damage of the entertainment industry, that is the noise and dirt generated, to be dealt with (Billiard, 2014).

Given the great number of people being attracted in the area, crime is also on the high side in the region, especially in the Paceville area (falling under San Ġiljan). "The large cluster of recreation entities serve as an opportunity for offending that range from petty crime to serious crimes" (Formosa, 2019, p.1). When looking at the risk of crime (RISC), as per the Crime Observatory, from 1998 – 2016, San Ġiljan was positioned as the first locality at an extremely high risk of crime (over 5times the national rate). Post 2016, San Ġiljan started to classify as very high risk of crime (between twice and up to five times the national rate), but always positioning in the top 5 localities ("The Previous Years – All offences", n.d.). This crime rate, inadvertently impacts the quality of life of residents.

Moreover, whilst embracing urban development and growth, residents in the region also seem to value the little natural environment present and wish to preserve it as much as possible, reflecting a value of sustainability. This was seen as in the case of the development of Manoel Island, whereby residents protested and opposed the project in view of the suggested elimination of the promenade ("Gzira residents oppose the Midi masterplan for Manoel Island", 2019). "Perceptions of un(der)gulated and continuous development also feature among concerns expressed publicly, particularly on social media" (Formosa & Brown, 2023, p.86). Similarly, through another Social Impact Assessment carried out by Marvin Formosa and Maria Brown in 2019, in relation to the Phase 2 of Mercury Tower in San Ġiljan, it was found out that only 9% of residents were in favour of this further development, with many opposing due to the belief that the area is already overly developed. The general sentiment of the population was that of not trusting the construction industry and the developers, and a 'construction fatigue' was reported amongst residents, affecting their wellbeing (Debono, 2021). A great opposition was also made to the original plans of the Msida Creek, which led to the revisit of the plans and to an increase in dedicated open space. (Balzan, 2023).

Moreover, one also finds a sense of 'nostalgia' in the long-term residents of certain localities, such as those living in Ta' Sliema (Formosa & Brown 2023), outlining a change in the way of life of the areas.

3.3 SUMMARY OF CONTEXT

The discussion of this chapter has shown that salient characteristics of the Region under study include, i) an increasing population at a higher rate than at national levels which also lead to; ii) an extremely highly dense region, iii) a large percentage of foreigners within the population bringing multiculturalism, iv) a hub for tourist and entertainment economic activities, v) the need to safeguard the residents' quality of life, despite the high concentration of economic activity and vi) the need to safeguard the remaining open spaces as being requested by the residents.

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 and reaching out to the more vulnerable pockets of society, thereby 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 Lvant 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 Lvant perceive their quality of life and their region’s liveability?
2. To what extent are residents’ perceptions of the functions of the regional council congruent with the regional council’s official remit?
3. What initiatives can boost the resourcefulness of regional councils in enhancing liveability?

4.2 DATA-GATHERING INSTRUMENTS

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

Quantitative Questionnaire

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

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

Focus Groups

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

4.3 SAMPLING AND RECRUITMENT OF PARTICIPANTS

The questionnaire was administered telephonically to 409 residents of Reġjun Lvant. 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 4,591 did not end in a successful interview wherein 918 (20%) did not answer, 2,296 (50%) were not eligible and 1,377 (30%) refused to participate. The remaining 409 completed the survey, a number which produced a 95% confidence level and a margin of error of $\pm 4.9\%$. Measures were also taken to ensure that the sample was stratified by age, gender and locality, hence ensuring that each locality within Reġjun Lvant 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 Lvant accepted to act as gatekeeper and made contact with potential participants of the focus groups. Local councillors and mayors, aged 18 years and over, were asked to opt in and contact the research team to express their interest in participating in the focus groups and were offered the choice of participating either online or in person. The focus group for local councillors was held online and a total of five local councillors participated in the focus group. The focus group for mayors was held at the Urban Valley Resort and Spa, San Ġwann and a total number of 7 mayors attended the focus group. 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. 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 30th June 2023 (Phase 1) and 20th July 2023 (Phase 2) and data was gathered between July and October 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 Lvant's foreign national population amounts to 37.71% 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 group a number of limitations were taken into account and mitigated for.

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

Moreover, the researchers were aware that focus group participants 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, 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 examines the quantitative data obtained from the responses to the residents' questionnaire carried out in Reġjun Lvant. 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 Lvant 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.

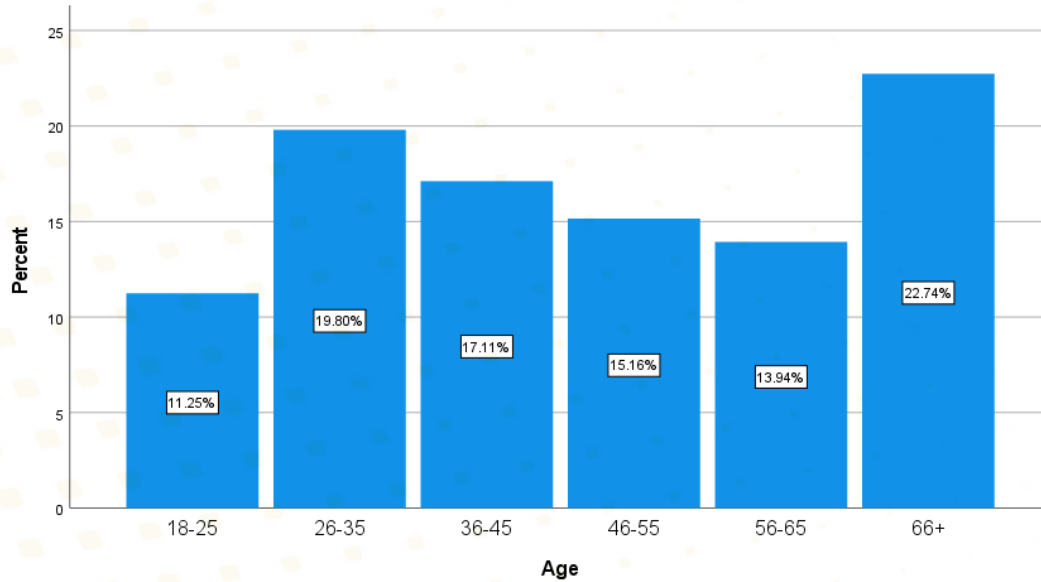
5.1 FINDINGS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE DATA

The main objective of this SIA is to examine the perception of residents of Reġjun Lvant 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 Lvant 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	46	11.2
26-35	81	19.8
36-45	70	17.1
46-55	62	15.2
56-65	57	13.9
66+	93	22.7
Total	409	100.0

Figure 5.1
Respondents by age group



In total 409 residents responded to the questionnaire. The majority, 22.7% (n=93) were aged 66 and over, 19.8% (n=81) were aged 26-35, while 17.1% (n=70) were aged 36-45. A further 15.2% (n=62) were aged 46-55, followed by 13.9% (n=57) aged 56-65 and 11.2% (n=46) aged 18-25. Such grouping reflects the stratified sample chosen, to mirror the percentages in the total population of Malta (Table and Figure 5.1)

Table 5.2
Respondents by gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	214	52.3
Female	195	47.7
Total	409	100.0

Figure 5.2
Respondents by gender

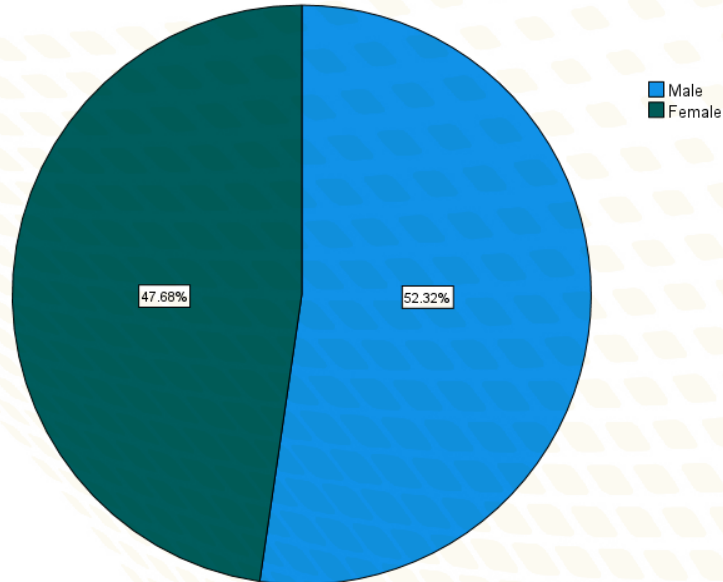
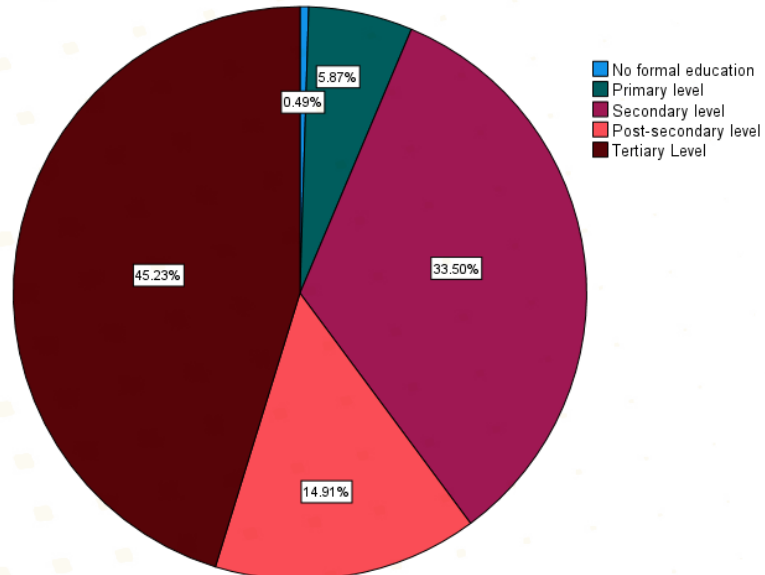


Table 5.2 and Figure 5.2 show that more males (52.3%, n = 213) than females (47.7%, n = 195) responded to the questionnaire.

Table 5.3
Respondents by level of education

Type of education	Frequency	Percent (%)
No formal education	2	0.5
Primary level	24	5.9
Secondary level	137	33.5
Post-secondary level	61	14.9
Tertiary level	185	45.2
Total	409	100

Figure 5.3
Respondents by level of education



At the time of data collection, nearly half of the respondents had a relatively high level of education with 45.2% (n=185) having a tertiary level of education while more than one-third of respondents (33.5% (n=137) have a secondary level of education. 14.9% (n=61) have a post-secondary level of education and 5.9% (n=24) have a primary level of education. Only 0.5% (n=2) have no formal education. (Table and Figure 5.3)

Table 5.4
Respondents by employment statu

Employment status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Student	20	4.9
Pensioner	110	26.9
Employed	193	47.2
Self-employed	36	8.8
Unemployed	14	3.4
Homemaker	36	8.8
Total	409	100

Figure 5.4
Respondents by employment status

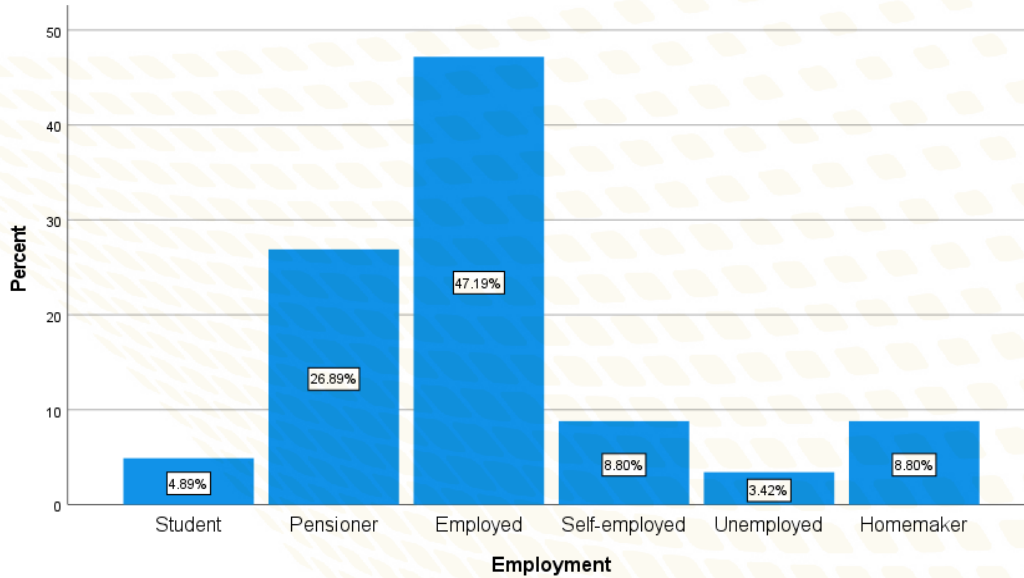


Table and Figure 5.4 illustrate that out of 409 respondents, 47.2% (n=193) were employed while 26.9% (n=110) were pensioners. Homemakers and self-employed both totalled 8.8% (n=36), while 4.9% (n=20) were students and 3.4% (n=14) were unemployed.

Table 5.5
Respondents by locality

Locality	Frequency	Percent (%)
Birkirkara	88	21.5
Hal Għargħur	14	3.4
Hal Lija	10	2.4
Il-Gżira	37	9
Is-Swieqi	52	12.7
L-Iklin	16	3.9
L-Imsida	43	10.5
Pembroke	14	3.4
San Ċiljan	41	10.0
Ta' Xbiex	6	1.5
Tal-Pieta'	20	4.9
Tas-Sliema	68	16.6
Total	409	100

Figure 5.5
Respondents by locality

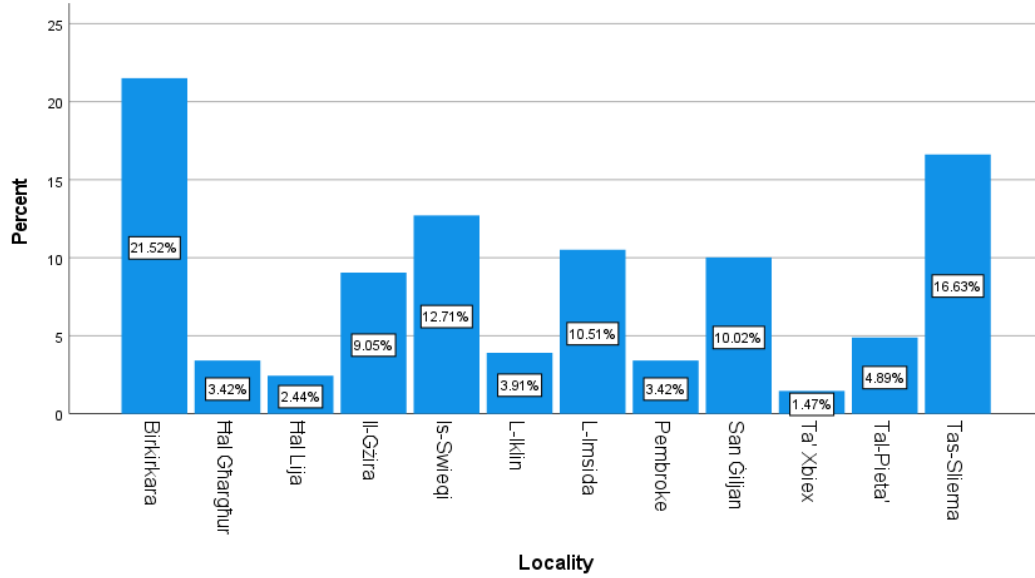
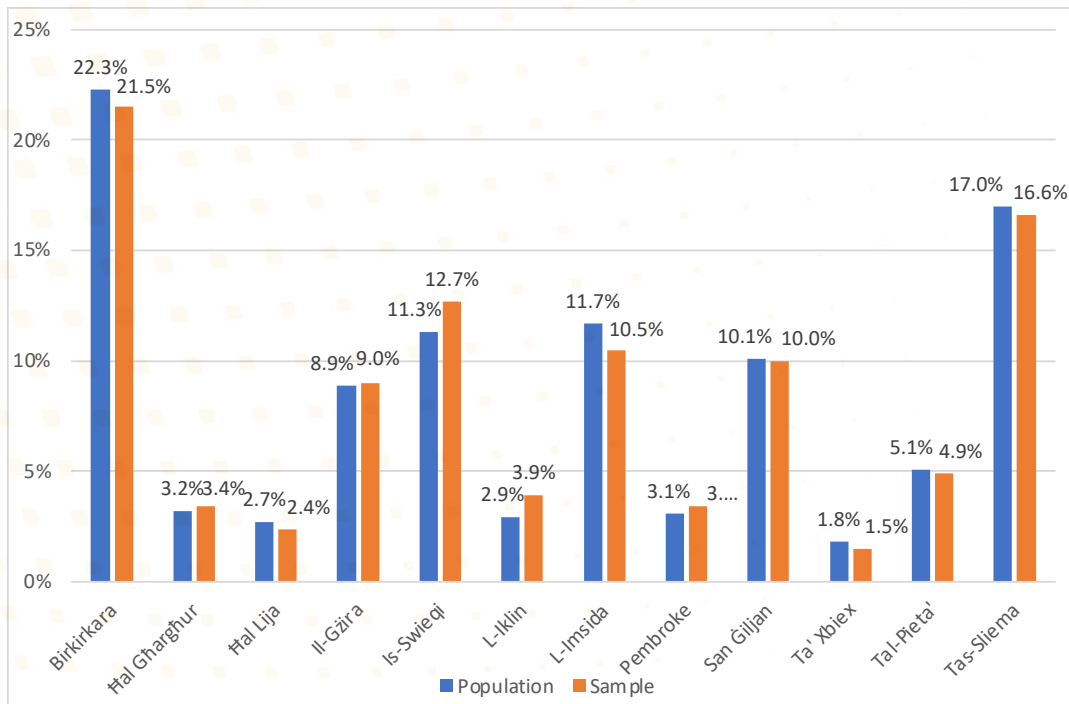


Figure 5.6
Comparison of locality distribution of respondents – Population vs Sample*



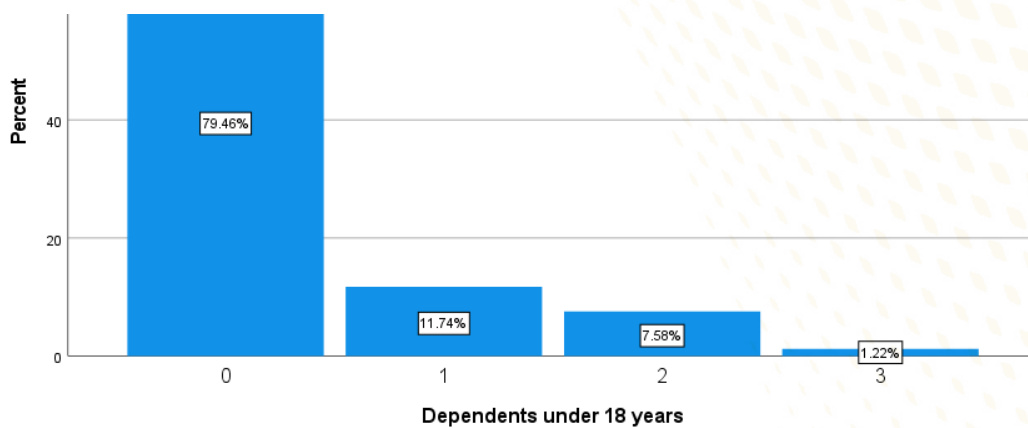
(*) Data provided by statistician. Range of discrepancies varies between +1.4% and -1.32% with margin of error being $\pm 4.9\%$. Percentages might not add up to 100% due to decimal places.

Out of the 12 localities that form part of Reġjun Lvant, Birkirkara had the highest number of respondents (21.5%, n=88), followed by Sliema (16.6%, n=68) and Is-Swieqi (12.7%, n=52) (Table and Figure 5.5). Figure 5.6 shows that each locality's share of individuals who responded to the questionnaire reflected closely the share of population living in each locality. Hence, one can conclude that the questionnaire is representative to the whole population and is a valid indicator of how residents of Reġjun Lvant perceive their quality of life and their knowledge and awareness of their local and regional councils and expectations thereof.

Table 5.6
Respondents by dependents living in the same household

No. of children under 18 years of age	Frequency	Percent (%)
0	325	79.5
1	48	11.7
2	31	7.6
3	5	1.2
Total	409	100

Figure 5.7
Respondents by dependents living in the same household



More than three fourths of respondents (79.5%, n=325) did not have any dependents under 18 years of age living in their household. 11.7% (n=48) had one dependent, 7.6% (n=31) had two dependents and 1.2% (n=5) had 3 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	81	19.8
10-19	87	21.3
20+	241	58.9
Total	409	100

Figure 5.8
Respondents by length of residence

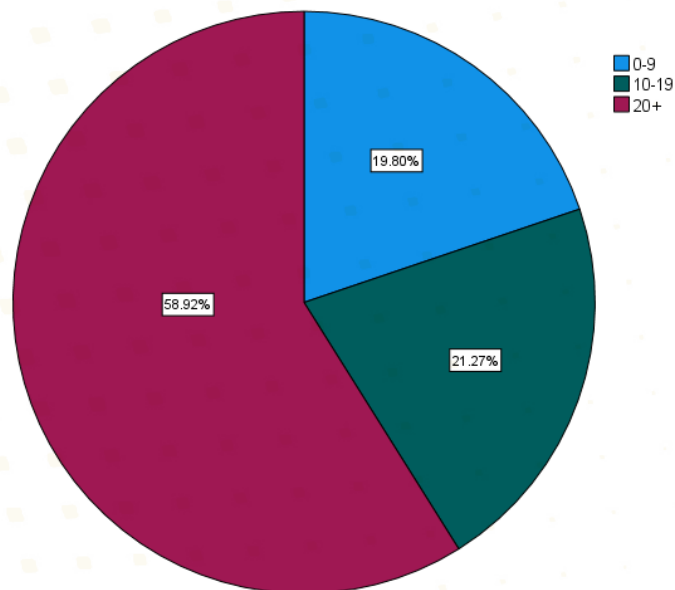
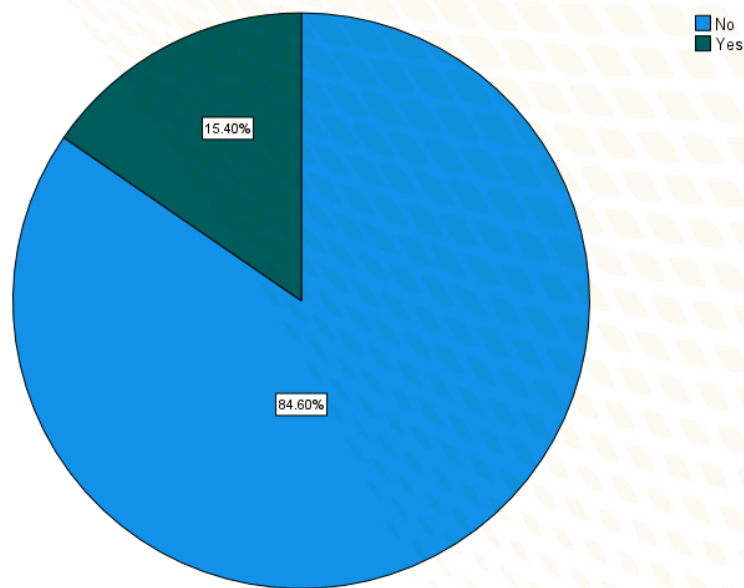


Table 5.7 and Figure 5.8 show that 58.9% (n=241) of respondents had been living in the same locality for more than 20 years, while 21.3% (n=87) had been living there between 10-19 years. Respondents that had been living in the same locality between 0-9 years amount to 19.8% (n=81).

Table 5.8
Active participation in voluntary and community organisations

Active participation	Frequency	Percent (%)
No	346	84.6
Yes	63	15.4
Total	409	100

Figure 5.9
Active participation in voluntary and community organisations



Out of 409 respondents, 84.6% (n=346) were not active in any voluntary or community organisations. On the other hand, 15.4% (n=63) were actively involved in diverse voluntary and community organisations (Table 5.8 and Figure 5.9). Out of these 63 respondents, 22 stated that they were actively involved in Religious Organisation, 10 in diverse social clubs, 7 in the band clubs and 5 in sports clubs.

Quality of life

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

Table 5.9
Residents' level of satisfaction with their locality

Satisfaction scale	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	71	17.4
Fairly dissatisfied	42	10.3
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	106	25.9
Fairly satisfied	85	20.8
Very satisfied	105	25.7
Total	409	100

Figure 5.10
Residents' level of satisfaction with their locality

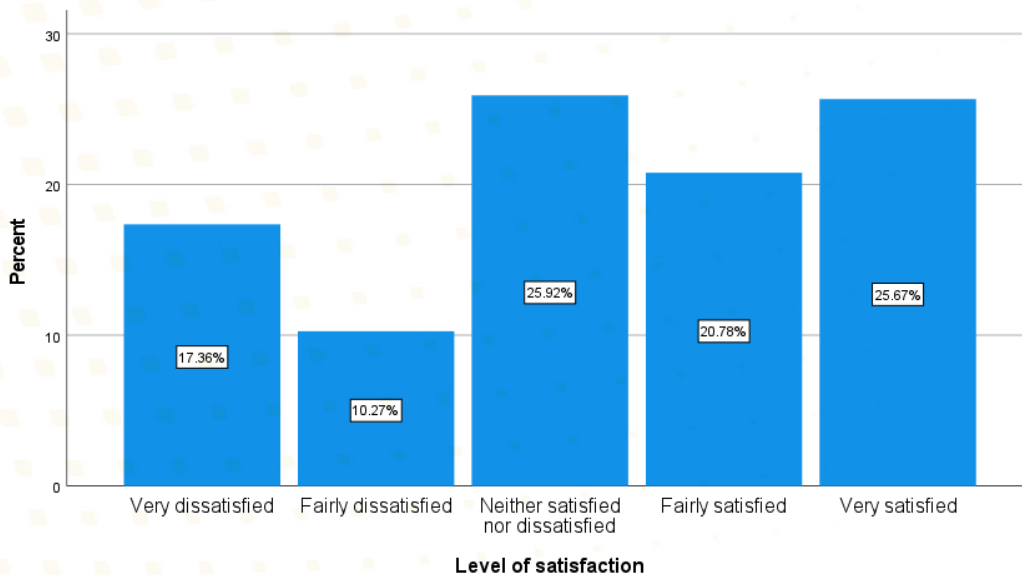


Table 5.9 and Figure 5.10 illustrate that nearly half of respondents (46.45%, n = 190) were satisfied with their local area as a place to live. On the other hand, 27.63% (n=113) of respondents stated that they were dissatisfied (17.4% Very Dissatisfied and 10.3% Fairly Dissatisfied) while 25.9% (n=106) were neutral.

The Pearson's Chi-square test yielded no statistically significant association with age (p-value = 0.140), gender (p-value = 0.773) and locality (p-value = 0.064) as the p-values were all greater than the 0.05 level of significance.

Subsequently, Question 10 asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with regards to diverse factors in their locality which are associated with having an impact on their quality of life. Table 5.10 and Figure 5.11 illustrate the results.

Table 5.10
Level of satisfaction of diverse factors impacting quality of life

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Public and green spaces	165	40.3%	77	18.8%	94	23.0%	46	11.2%	27	6.6%
Urban development	223	54.5%	69	16.9%	75	18.3%	23	5.6%	19	4.6%
Sport and leisure facilities	118	28.9%	71	17.4%	129	31.5%	56	13.7%	35	8.6%
Air and noise pollution	233	57.0%	59	14.4%	57	13.9%	36	8.8%	24	5.9%
Cultural activities	88	21.5%	71	17.4%	177	43.3%	42	10.3%	31	7.6%
Public transport	69	16.9%	33	8.1%	192	46.9%	69	16.9%	46	11.2%
Traffic and parking	248	60.6%	70	17.1%	57	13.9%	21	5.1%	13	3.2%
Schools in the locality	30	7.3%	18	4.4%	216	52.8%	93	22.7%	52	12.7%
Accessibility	84	20.5%	69	16.9%	113	27.6%	93	22.7%	50	12.2%
Level of safety	80	19.6%	63	15.4%	127	31.1%	96	23.5%	43	10.5%
Religious activities	28	6.8%	30	7.3%	142	34.7%	124	30.3%	85	20.8%

Figure 5.11
Level of satisfaction of diverse factors impacting quality of life

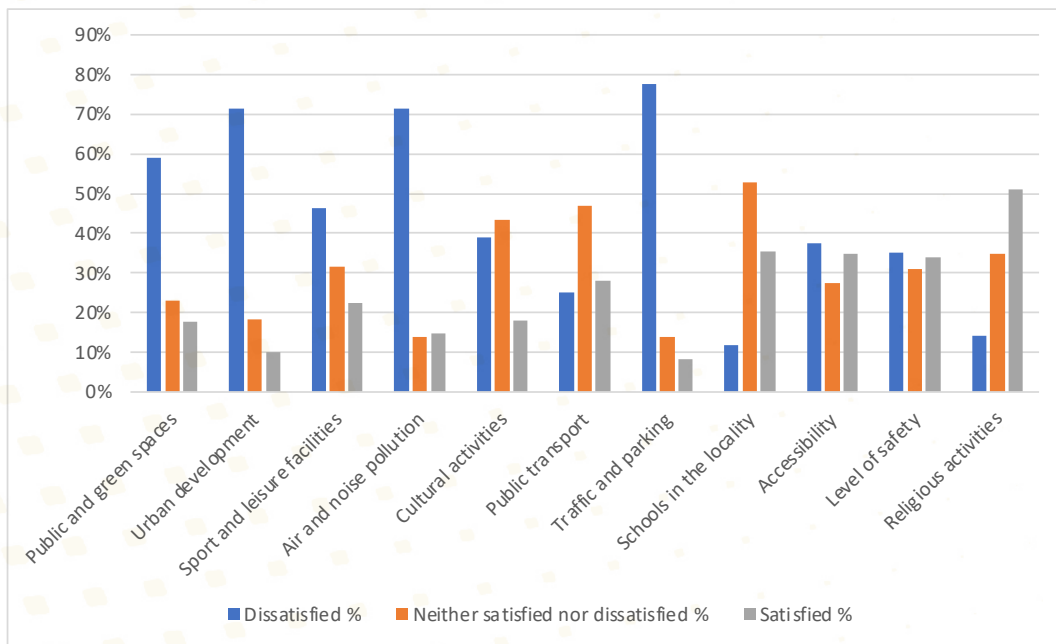


Table 5.10 and Figure 5.11 show that most respondents were mostly dissatisfied with Traffic and Parking (77.7%, n= 318) where 60.6% (n= 248) were very dissatisfied while 17.1% (n=70) were fairly dissatisfied. 71.4% (n=292) were dissatisfied with Urban development (54.5%, n=223 Very dissatisfied and 16.9%, n=65 Fairly dissatisfied) and with Air and noise pollution (57%, n=233 Very dissatisfied and 14.4%, n=59 Fairly dissatisfied).

The Pearson's Chi-square test found a relatively significant association for public and green spaces when cross tabulated with locality, with the p-value of 0.035 being below the 0.05 level of significance. This means that the findings per locality could be generalisable to the entire population of the Region (Table 5.11 and Figure 5.12)

Table 5.11 and Figure 5.12 below show that Birkirkara residents (72.7%) tend to be the most dissatisfied with public and green spaces in their locality (Very dissatisfied = 47.7% and Fairly dissatisfied = 25%). On the other hand, Pembroke residents (42.8%) emerged as the most satisfied (Fairly satisfied = 35.7% and Very satisfied = 7.1%).

Table 5.11
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.	%
Birkirkara	42	47.7%	22	25.0%	18	20.5%	5	5.7%	1	1.1%
Hal Gharghur	4	28.6%	2	14.3%	4	28.6%	0	0.0%	4	28.6%
Hal Lija	1	10.0%	2	20.0%	3	30.0%	3	30.0%	1	10.0%
Il-Gżira	22	59.5%	3	8.1%	10	27.0%	1	2.7%	1	2.7%
Is-Swieqi	18	34.6%	8	15.4%	12	23.1%	8	15.4%	6	11.5%
L-Iklin	4	25.0%	3	18.8%	5	31.3%	3	18.8%	1	6.3%
L-Imsida	16	37.2%	9	20.9%	11	25.6%	5	11.6%	2	4.7%
Pembroke	5	35.7%	1	7.1%	2	14.3%	5	35.7%	1	7.1%
San Giljan	14	34.1%	11	26.8%	9	22.0%	5	12.2%	2	4.9%
Ta' Xbiex	4	66.7%	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Tal-Pieta'	7	35.0%	3	15.0%	3	15.0%	4	20.0%	3	15.0%
Tas-Sliema	28	41.2%	13	19.1%	15	22.1%	7	10.3%	5	7.4%

$\chi^2 (44, N=409) = 62.493, p = 0.035$

Figure 5.12
Level of satisfaction of public green spaces by locality

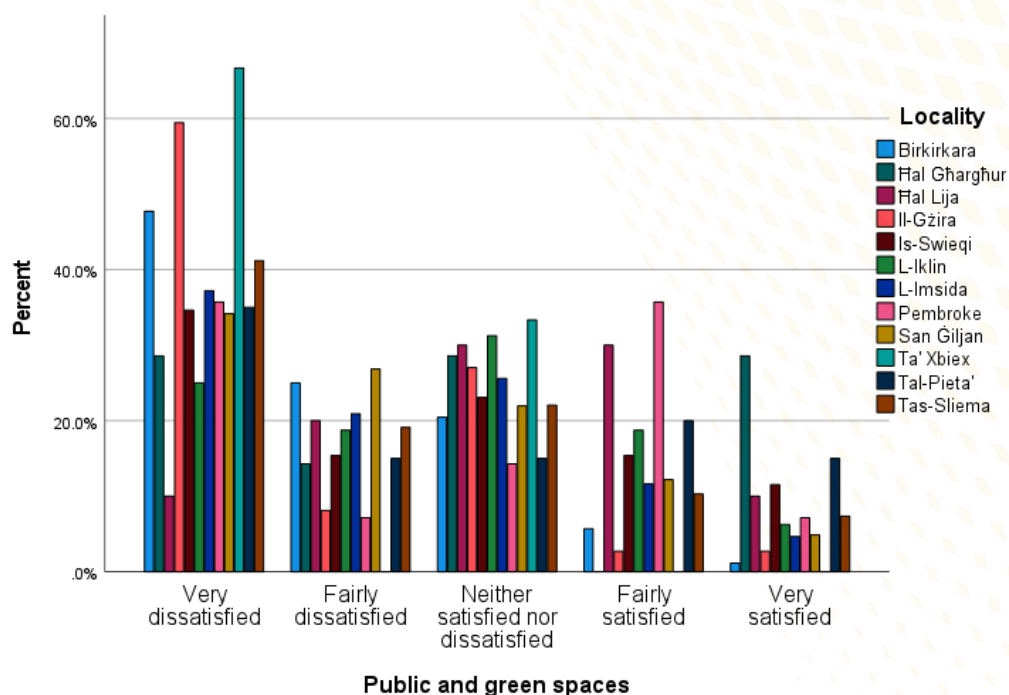
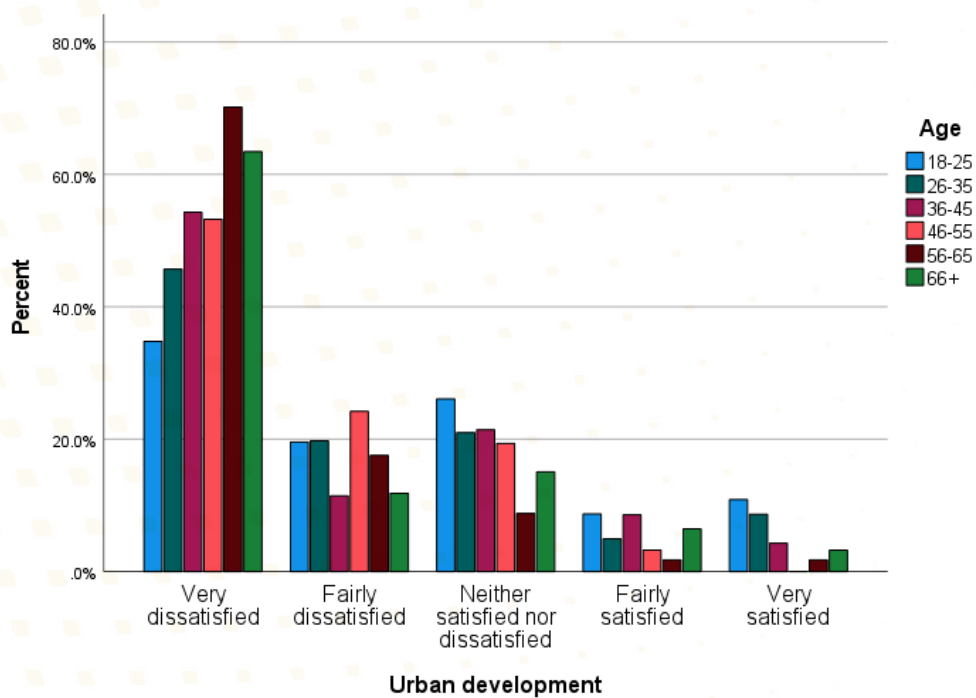


Table 5.12
Level of satisfaction of urban development by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	16	34.8%	9	19.6%	12	26.1%	4	8.7%	5	10.9%
26-35	37	45.7%	16	19.8%	17	21.0%	4	4.9%	7	8.6%
36-45	38	54.3%	8	11.4%	15	21.4%	6	8.6%	3	4.3%
46-55	33	53.2%	15	25%	12	19.4%	2	3.2%	0	0.0%
56-65	40	70.2%	10	17.5%	5	8.8%	1	1.8%	1	1.8%
66+	59	63.4%	11	11.8%	14	15.1%	6	6.5%	3	3.2%

$\chi^2 (20, N=409) = 34.344, p = 0.024$

Figure 5.13
Level of satisfaction of urban development by age



Testing also found a significantly statistical association between level of satisfaction of urban development and age, with the p-value of 0.024 being lower than the 0.05 level of significance. (Table 5.12 and Figure 5.13).

Table 5.12 and Figure 5.13 above illustrate that the 56-65 age bracket are the most dissatisfied with urban development (87.7%), followed by the 46-55 age bracket (77.4%). The most satisfied with urban development were the 18-25 age bracket (19.6%). Worth noting that more than a quarter of respondents in the 18-25 age bracket (26.1%) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

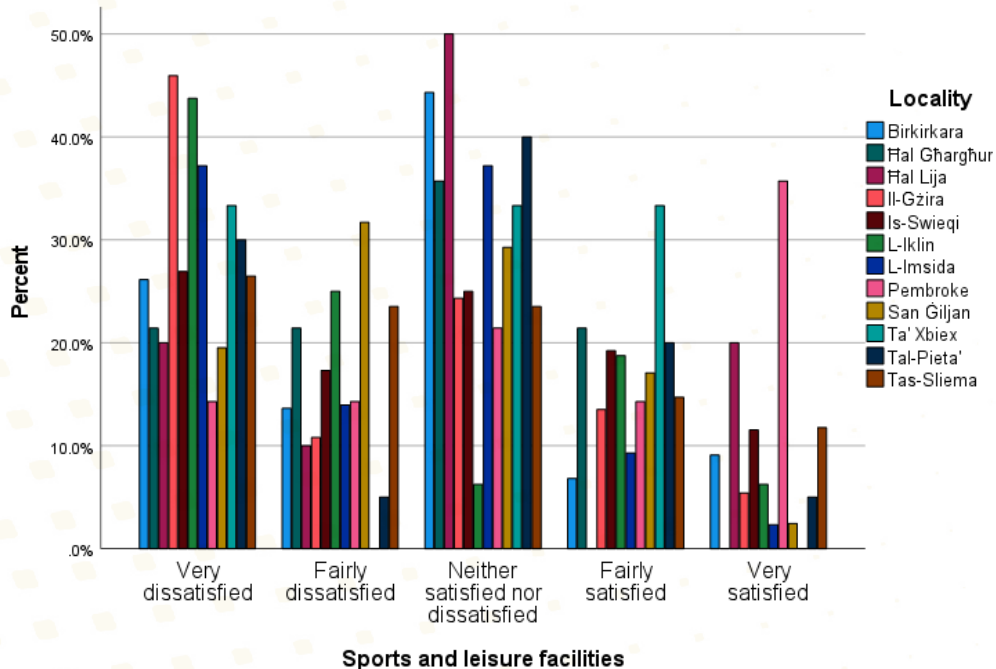
The Pearson's Chi square test also yielded a relatively significant statistical association between sports and leisure facilities and locality (p -value = 0.019). Table 5.13 and Figure 5.14 show that L-Iklin residents were the most dissatisfied (68.8%) with sports and leisure facilities in their locality while Pembroke residents (50%) were the most satisfied. Worth noting that 50% of Lija residents were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

Table 5.13
Level of satisfaction of sports and leisure facilities by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Birkirkara	23	26.1%	12	13.6%	39	44.3%	6	6.8%	8	9.1%
Hal Gharghur	3	21.4%	3	21.4%	5	35.7%	3	21.4%	0	0.0%
Hal Lija	2	20.0%	1	10.0%	5	50.0%	0	0.0%	2	20.0%
Il-Gżira	17	45.9%	4	10.8%	9	24.3%	5	13.5%	2	5.4%
Is-Swieqi	14	26.9%	9	17.3%	13	25.0%	10	19.2%	6	11.5%
L-Iklin	7	43.8%	4	25.0%	1	6.3%	3	18.8%	1	6.3%
L-Imsida	16	37.2%	6	14.0%	16	37.2%	4	9.3%	1	2.3%
Pembroke	2	14.3%	2	14.3%	3	21.4%	2	14.3%	5	35.7%
San Ġiljan	8	19.5%	13	31.7%	12	29.3%	7	17.1%	1	2.4%
Ta' Xbiex	2	33.3%	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	2	33.3%	0	0.0%
Tal-Pieta'	6	30.0%	1	5.0%	8	40.0%	4	20.0%	1	5.0%
Tas-Sliema	18	26.5%	16	23.5%	16	23.5%	10	14.7%	8	11.8%

$\chi^2 (44, N=409) = 65.520, p = 0.019$

Figure 5.14
Level of satisfaction of sports and leisure facilities by locality



Testing showed a statistically significant association when air and noise pollution was cross-tabulated to age (p-value = 0.002) (Table 5.14 and Figure 5.15) and a relatively significantly statistical association to locality (p-value = 0.010) (Table 5.15 and Figure 5.16).

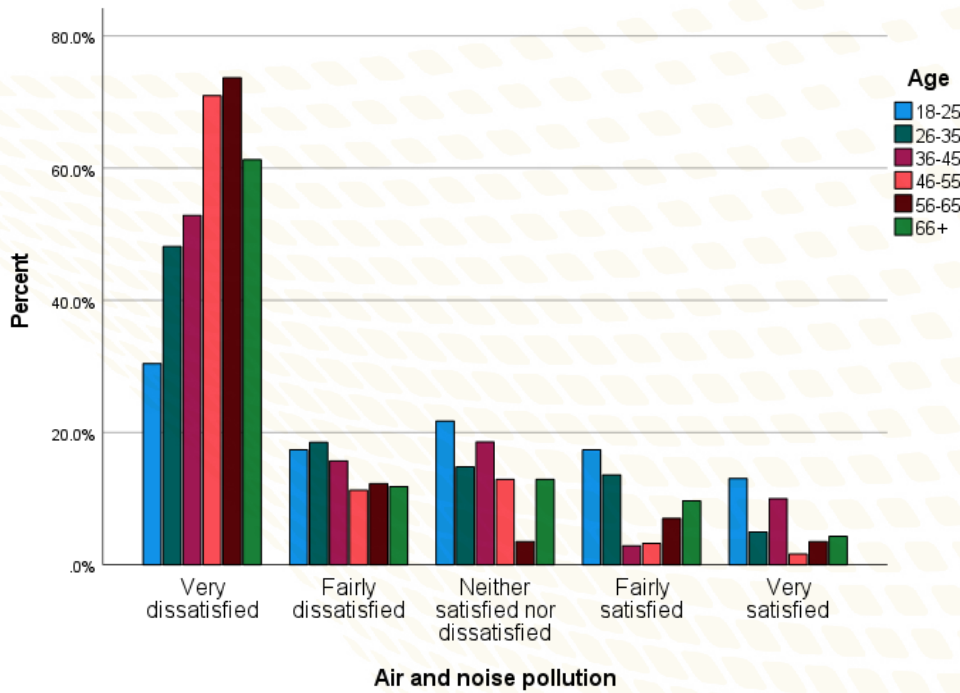
Table 5.14 and Figure 5.15 below illustrate that respondents aged between 56-65 years were the most dissatisfied with air and noise pollution (86%), closely followed by those aged between 46-55 years. On the other hand, respondents aged between 18-25 emerged as being the most satisfied (30.4%).

Table 5.14
Level of satisfaction with air and noise pollution by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	14	30.4%	8	17.4%	10	21.7%	8	17.4%	6	13.0%
26-35	39	48.1%	15	18.5%	12	14.8%	11	13.6%	4	4.9%
36-45	37	52.9%	11	15.7%	13	18.6%	2	2.9%	7	10.0%
46-55	44	71.0%	7	11.3%	8	12.9%	2	3.2%	1	1.6%
56-65	42	73.7%	7	12.3%	2	3.5%	4	7.0%	2	3.5%
66+	57	61.3%	11	11.8%	12	12.9%	9	9.7%	4	4.3%

$\chi^2 (20, N=409) = 42.553, p= 0.002$

Figure 5.15
Level of satisfaction with air and noise pollution by age



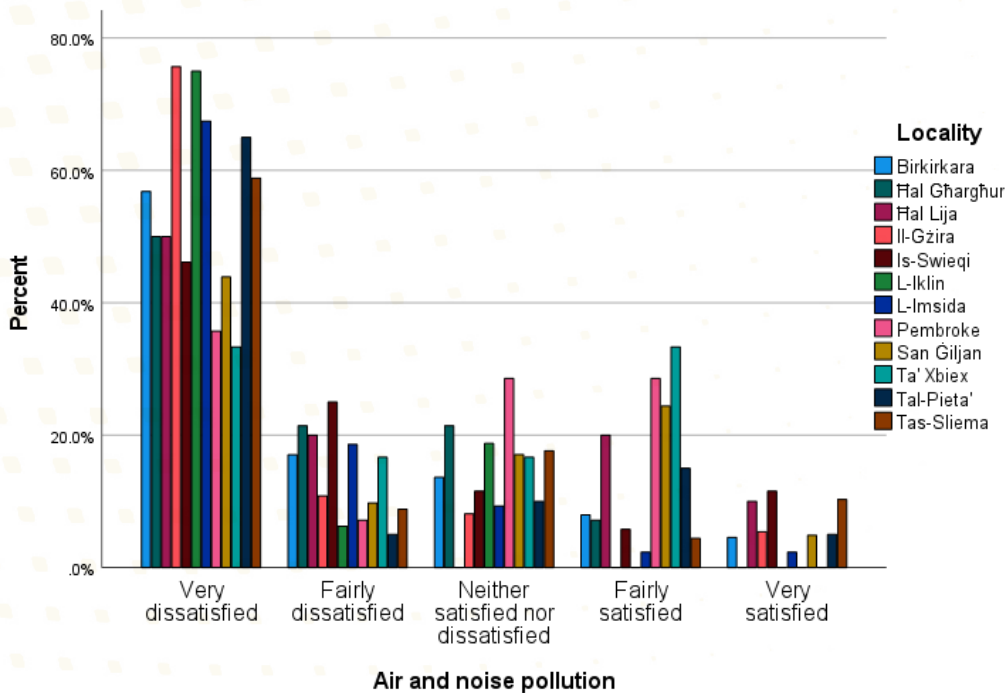
As shown in Table 5.15 and Figure 5.16 Gzira (86.5%) and Msida (86%) residents were the most dissatisfied with air and noise pollution in their locality while Ta' Xbiex residents (33.3%) tended to be the most satisfied. Worth noting that 0% of L-Iklin residents were satisfied with air and noise pollution in their locality.

Table 5.15
Level of satisfaction with air and noise pollution by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Birkirkara	50	56.8%	15	17.0%	12	13.6%	7	8.0%	4	4.5%
Hal Gharghur	7	50.0%	3	21.4%	3	21.4%	1	7.1%	0	0.0%
Hal Lija	5	50.0%	2	20.0%	0	0.0%	2	20.0%	1	10.0%
Il-Gzira	28	75.7%	4	10.8%	3	8.1%	0	0.0%	2	5.4%
Is-Swieqi	24	46.2%	13	25.0%	6	11.5%	3	5.8%	6	11.5%
L-Iklin	12	75.0%	1	6.3%	3	18.8%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
L-Imsida	29	67.4%	8	18.6%	4	9.3%	1	2.3%	1	2.3%
Pembroke	5	35.7%	1	7.1%	4	28.6%	4	28.6%	0	0.0%
San Giljan	18	43.9%	4	9.8%	7	17.1%	10	24.4%	2	4.9%
Ta' Xbiex	2	33.3%	1	16.7%	1	16.7%	2	33.3%	0	0.0%
Tal-Pieta'	13	65.0%	1	5.0%	2	10.0%	3	15.0%	1	5.0%
Tas-Sliema	40	58.8%	6	8.8%	12	17.6%	3	4.4%	7	10.3%

$\chi^2 (44, N=409) = 68.892, p = 0.010$

Figure 5.16
Level of satisfaction with air and noise pollution by locality



The Pearson's Chi-square test found no significantly statistical association between cultural activities and public transport when cross-tabulated to age, gender and locality. However, testing found a significantly statistical association between traffic and parking when cross-tabulated to age ($p=0.015$) and a relatively significant statistical association when cross-tabulated to locality ($p=0.029$).

Table 5.16 and Figure 5.17 show that a very high dissatisfaction with traffic and parking was manifested by respondents in the higher age brackets, namely 56-65 (85.9%), 46-55 (82.3%) and 36-45 (85%). On the other hand, 23.8% of respondents in the 18-25 age bracket stated that they were satisfied with traffic and parking.

Table 5.16
Level of satisfaction with traffic and parking by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	20	43.5%	8	17.4%	7	15.2%	8	17.4%	3	6.5%
26-35	40	49.4%	20	24.7%	13	16.0%	4	4.9%	4	4.9%
36-45	47	67.1%	12	17.1%	8	11.4%	2	2.9%	1	1.4%
46-55	43	69.4%	8	12.9%	9	14.5%	1	1.6%	1	1.6%
56-65	41	71.9%	8	14.0%	4	7.0%	1	1.8%	3	5.3%
66+	57	61.3%	14	15.1%	16	17.2%	5	5.4%	1	1.1%

$\chi^2 (20, N = 409) = 36.201, p = 0.015$

Figure 5.17
Level of satisfaction with traffic and parking by age

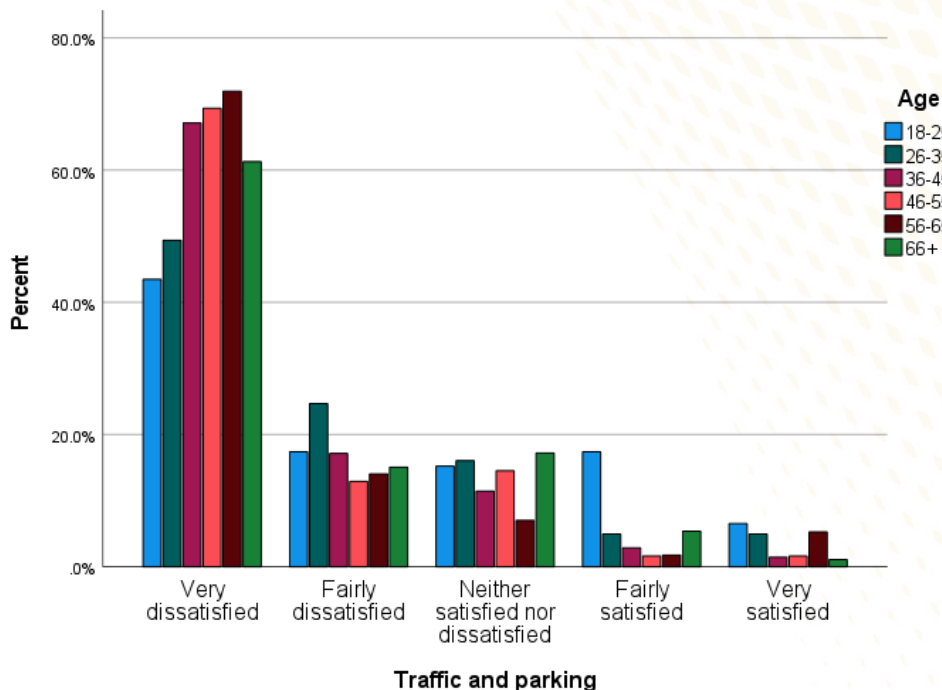
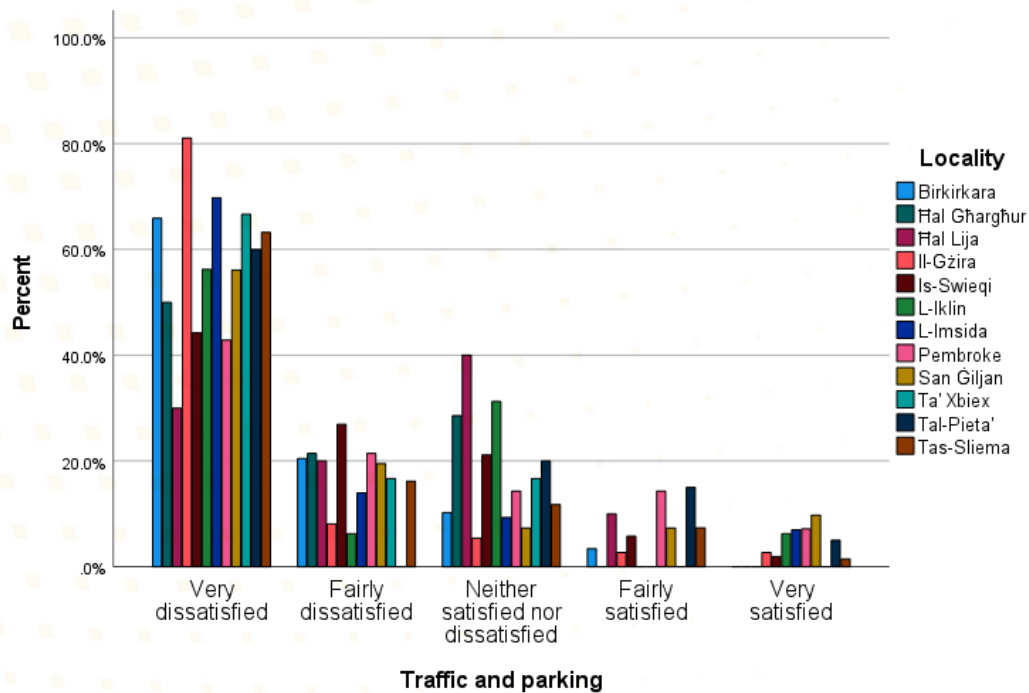


Table 5.17
Level of satisfaction with traffic and parking by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Birkirkara	58	65.9%	18	20.5%	9	10.2%	3	3.4%	0	0.0%
Hal Għarghur	7	50.0%	3	21.4%	4	28.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Hal Lija	3	30.0%	2	20.0%	4	40.0%	1	10.0%	0	0.0%
Il-Gżira	30	81.1%	3	8.1%	2	5.4%	1	2.7%	1	2.7%
Is-Swieqi	23	45%	14	26.9%	11	21.2%	3	5.8%	1	1.9%
L-Iklin	9	56.3%	1	6.3%	5	31.3%	0	0.0%	1	6.3%
L-Imsida	30	69.8%	6	14.0%	4	9.3%	0	0.0%	3	7.0%
Pembroke	6	42.9%	3	21.4%	2	14.3%	2	14.3%	1	7.1%
San Ġiljan	23	56.1%	8	19.5%	3	7.3%	3	7.3%	4	9.8%
Ta' Xbiex	4	66.7%	1	16.7%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Tal-Pieta'	12	60.0%	0	0.0%	4	20.0%	3	15.0%	1	5.0%
Tas-Sliema	43	63.2%	11	16.2%	8	11.8%	5	7.4%	1	1.5%

$\chi^2 (44, N=409) = 63.373, p = 0.029$

Figure 5.18
Level of satisfaction with traffic and parking by locality



Both Table 5.17 and Figure 5.18 above show that 89.2% of Gzira residents were dissatisfied with traffic and parking in their locality, closely followed by 86.4% of Birkirkara residents. The most satisfied with traffic and parking in their locality were Pembroke residents (21.4%), while, of interest, none (0%) of L-Iklin and Ta' Xbiex respondents stated that they were satisfied with traffic and parking in their locality.

Testing also revealed a significantly statistical relationship between level of satisfaction with schools in the locality and age ($p=0.005$) and a relatively statistical relationship between level of satisfaction with schools in the locality and locality ($p=0.008$).

As illustrated in Table 5.18 and Figure 5.19 respondents in the 36-45 age bracket (48.6%) were satisfied with schools in their locality, while a high percentage (61.3%) of those aged 46 years or more were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with schools in their locality.

Table 5.18
Level of satisfaction with schools in the locality by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	5	10.9%	3	6.5%	19	41.3%	9	19.6%	10	21.7%
26-35	2	2.5%	4	4.9%	44	54.3%	14	17.3%	17	21.0%
36-45	9	12.9%	4	5.7%	23	32.9%	23	32.9%	11	15.7%
46-55	3	4.8%	3	4.8%	38	61.3%	12	19.4%	6	9.7%
56-65	3	5.3%	3	5.3%	35	61.4%	12	21.1%	4	7.0%
66+	8	8.6%	1	1.1%	57	61.3%	23	24.7%	4	4.3%

$\chi^2 (20, N = 409) = 39.850, p = 0.005$

Figure 5.19
Level of satisfaction with schools in the locality by age

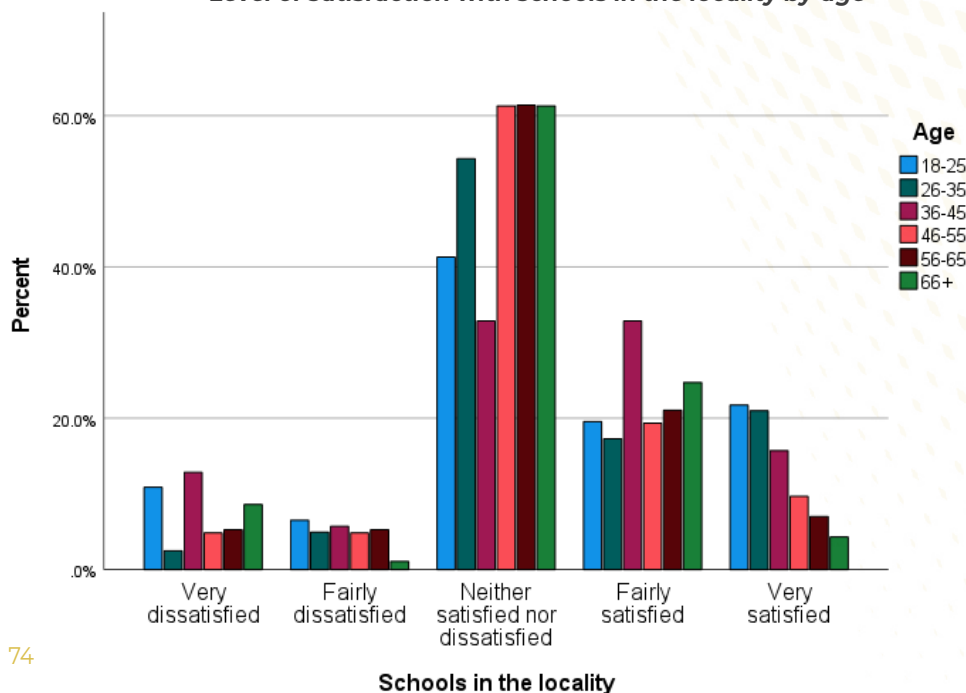


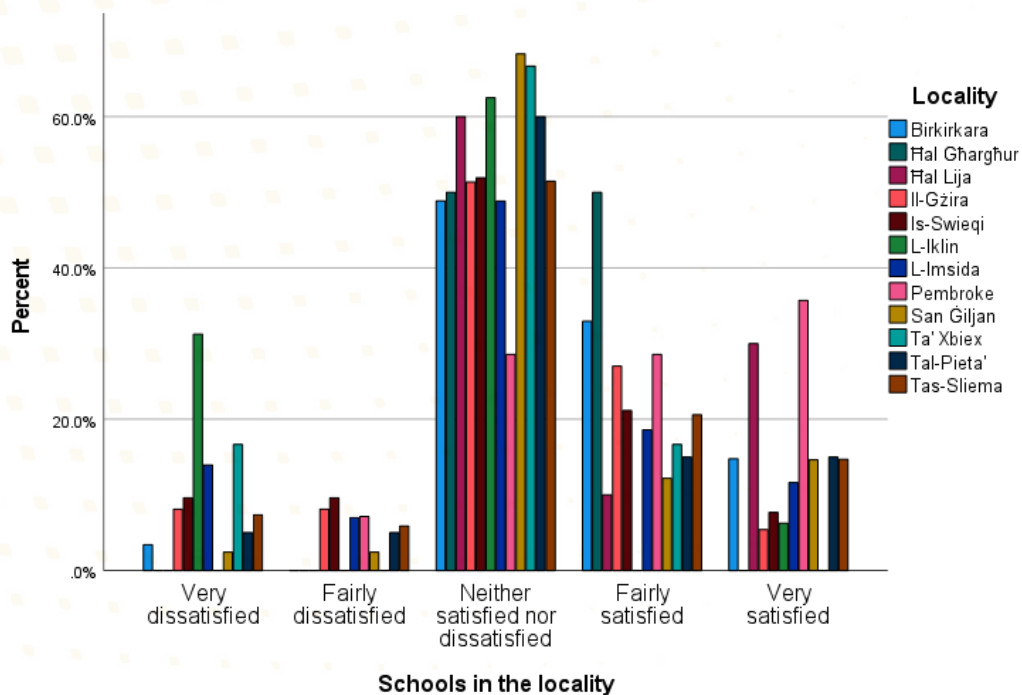
Table 5.19 and Figure 5.20 illustrate that Pembroke residents (64.3%) were the most satisfied with schools in their locality, while no dissatisfaction (0%) was shown by Hal-Gharghur and Hal Lija residents.

Table 5.19
Level of satisfaction with schools in the locality by locality

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Birkirkara	3	3.4%	0	0.0%	43	48.9%	29	33.0%	13	14.8%
Hal Gharghur	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	50.0%	7	50.0%	0	0.0%
Hal Lija	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	60.0%	1	10.0%	3	30.0%
Il-Gżira	3	8.1%	3	8.1%	19	51.4%	10	27.0%	2	5.4%
Is-Swieqi	5	9.6%	5	9.6%	27	51.9%	11	21.2%	4	7.7%
L-Iklin	5	31.3%	0	0.0%	10	62.5%	0	0.0%	1	6.3%
L-Imsida	6	14.0%	3	7.0%	21	48.8%	8	18.6%	5	11.6%
Pembroke	0	0.0%	1	7.1%	4	28.6%	4	28.6%	5	35.7%
San Ġiljan	1	2.4%	1	2.4%	28	68.3%	5	12.2%	6	14.6%
Ta' Xbiex	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	4	66.7%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%
Tal-Pieta'	1	5.0%	1	5.0%	12	60.0%	3	15.0%	3	15.0%
Tas-Sliema	5	7.4%	4	5.9%	35	51.5%	14	20.6%	10	14.7%

$\chi^2(44, N = 409) = 70.015, p = 0.008$

Figure 5.20
Level of satisfaction with schools in the locality by locality



Testing found no statistically significant association with accessibility and religious activities when cross-tabulated with age, gender and locality but found a statistically significant association between level of safety when cross-tabulated to age ($p=0.024$).

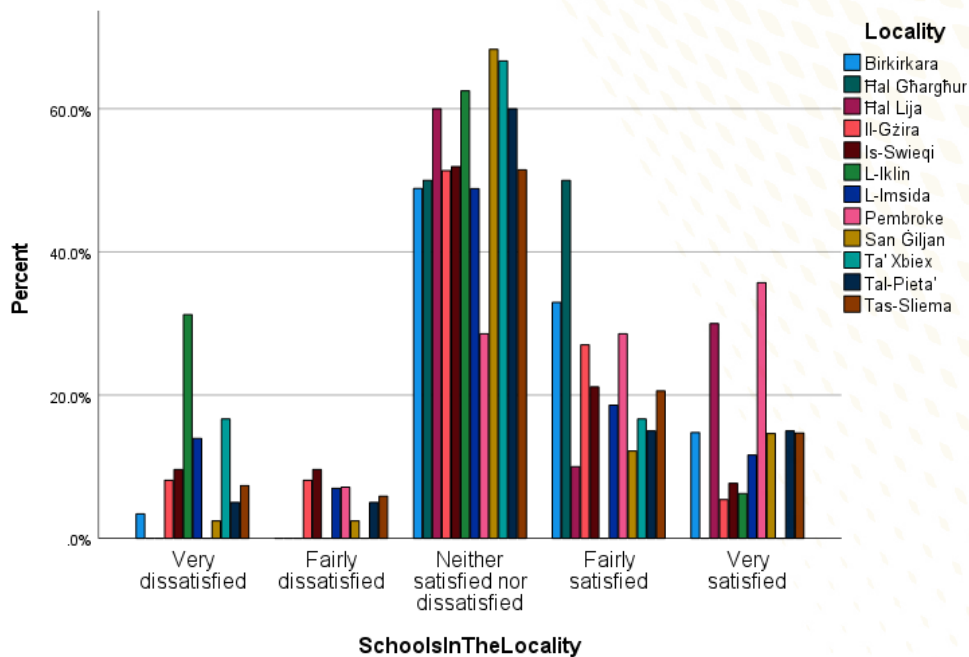
Table 5.20 and Figure 5.21 show that respondents in the higher age brackets were the most dissatisfied with the level of safety in their locality (46-55 (43.5%), 56-65 (42.1%), 66+ (42%)). On the other hand, those in the lower age bracket (18-25 (43.4%), 26-35 (45.7%)) tended to be the most satisfied with the level of safety in their locality.

Table 5.20
Level of satisfaction with level of safety by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	4	8.7%	6	13.0%	16	34.8%	10	21.7%	10	21.7%
26-35	13	16.0%	9	11.1%	22	27.2%	26	32.1%	11	13.6%
36-45	15	21.4%	6	8.6%	22	31.4%	21	30.0%	6	8.6%
46-55	17	27.4%	10	16.1%	18	29.0%	16	25.8%	1	1.6%
56-65	13	22.8%	11	19.3%	18	31.6%	11	19.3%	4	7.0%
66+	18	19.4%	21	22.6%	31	33.3%	12	12.9%	11	11.8%

$X^2 (20, N = 409) = 34.341, p = 0.024$

Figure 5.21
Level of satisfaction with level of safety by age



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 5.21
Level of integration of different groups

Integration of:	Very low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
	People with disability	47	11.5%	71	17.4%	176	43.0%	77	18.8%	38
People with different religious beliefs	41	10.0%	43	10.5%	161	39.4%	98	24.0%	66	16.1%
People with different sexual orientation	31	7.6%	44	10.8%	206	50.4%	84	20.5%	44	10.8%
People with different cultures	40	9.8%	43	10.5%	161	39.4%	105	25.7%	60	14.7%
Elderly	20	4.9%	29	7.1%	106	25.9%	147	35.9%	107	26.2%

Figure 5.22
Level of integration of different groups

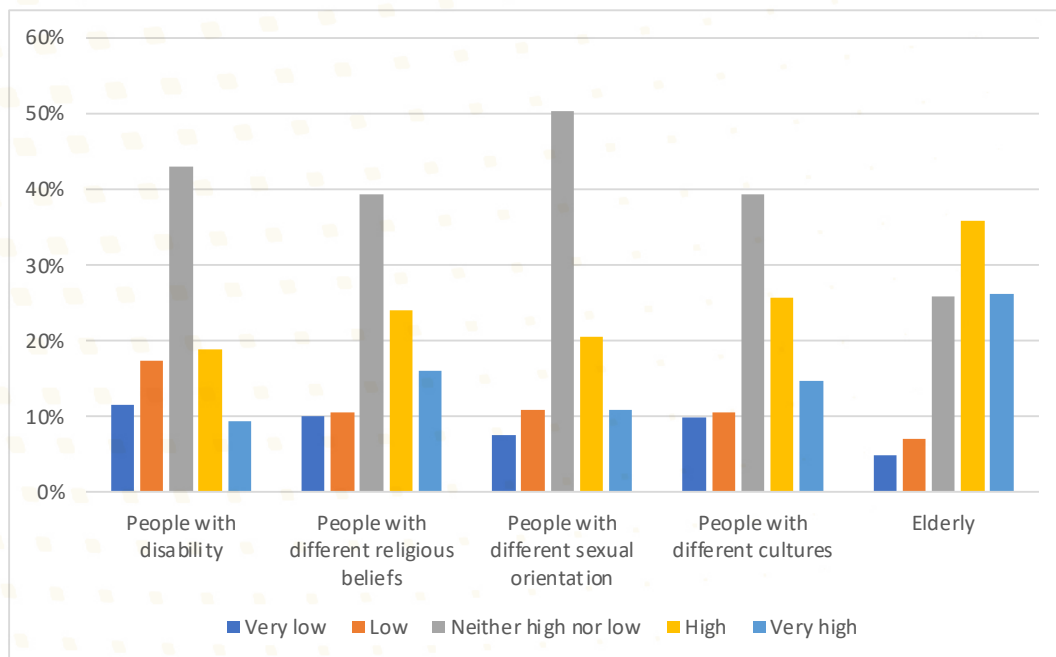


Table 5.21 and Figure 5.22 illustrate the perception of respondents regarding the level of integration of a variety of groups in their locality. The majority of respondents (62.1%, n=254) view the level of integration of the elderly as being high or very high, followed by that of people with different cultures (40.4%, n=165). People with a disability were perceived to be the least integrated whereby only 28.1% (n=115) considered their integration to be high, 43% (n=176) considered it to be neither low or high and 28.9% (n=118) considered it to be low or very low.

The Pearson Chi-square test indicated that there is no statistically significant association between the perceived level of integration of the said different groups with age, gender and locality, except for a statistically significant relationship between level of integration of people with different religious beliefs (p-value = 0.015) and age.

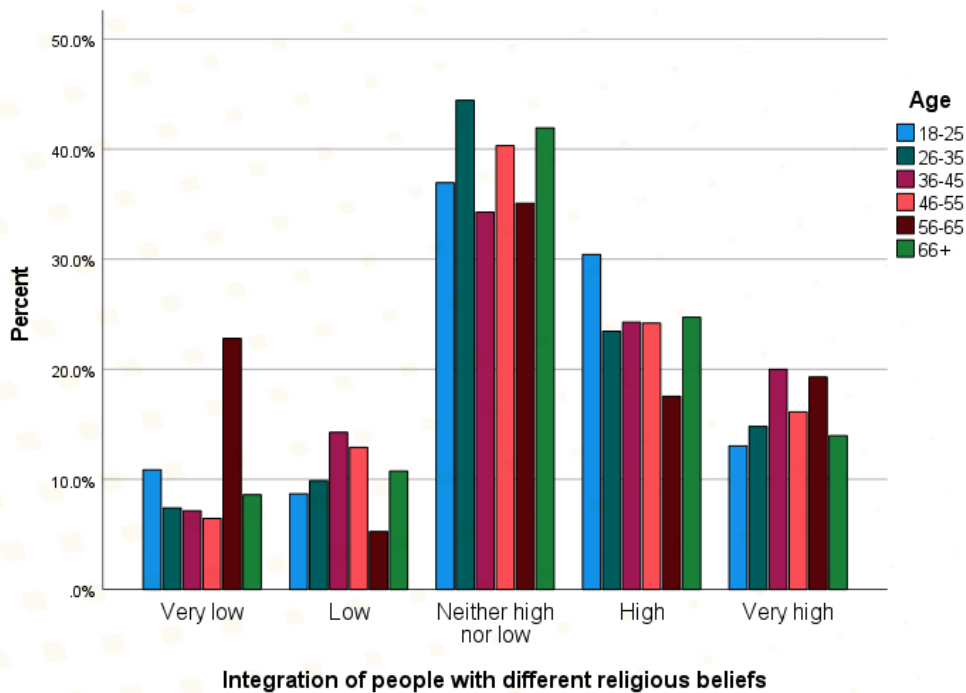
Table 5.22 and Figure 5.23 show that 76.1% (n=35) of respondents pertaining to the 18-25 years cohort, felt that people with different religious beliefs were highly or very highly integrated. On the other hand, 19.3%, (n=12) of 46-55 year-old group felt that such a group's integration was low or very low.

Table 5.22
Perceived level of integration of people with different religious beliefs by age

	Very low		Low		Neither high nor low		High		Very high	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	1	2.2%	1	2.2%	9	19.6%	19	41.3%	16	34.8%
26-35	4	4.9%	2	2.5%	22	27.2%	24	29.6%	29	35.8%
36-45	3	4.3%	4	5.7%	11	15.7%	34	48.6%	18	25.7%
46-55	2	3.2%	10	16.1%	15	25%	22	35.5%	13	21.0%
56-65	5	8.8%	2	3.5%	21	36.8%	16	28.1%	13	22.8%
66+	5	5.4%	10	10.8%	28	30.1%	32	34.4%	18	19.4%

$\chi^2 (20, N=409) = 36.072, p = 0.015$

Figure 5.23
Perceived level of integration of people with different religious beliefs by age



A sense of community was perceived to be moderately prevalent by most respondents (37.9%, n=155) (Table 5.23 and Figure 5.24) while 27.5% (n=113) considered participation by residents in civic life to be high (Table 5.23 and Figure 5.25). Of interest, 45.5% (n = 186) of respondents perceived participation in civic life to be neither high nor low.

Further testing revealed no statistically significant association between sense of community and participation in civic life and age, gender or locality.

Table 5.23
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	46	11.2%	63	15.4%	145	35.5%	110	26.9%	45	11.0%
Participation in civic life	50	12.2%	60	14.7%	186	45.5%	81	19.8%	32	7.8%

Figure 5.25
Perception of sense of community

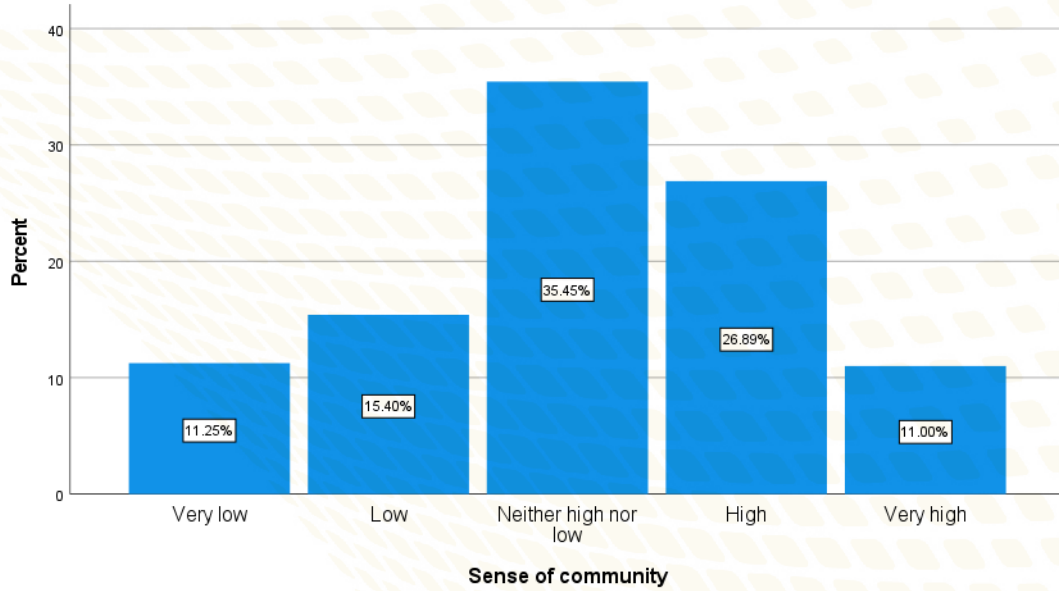
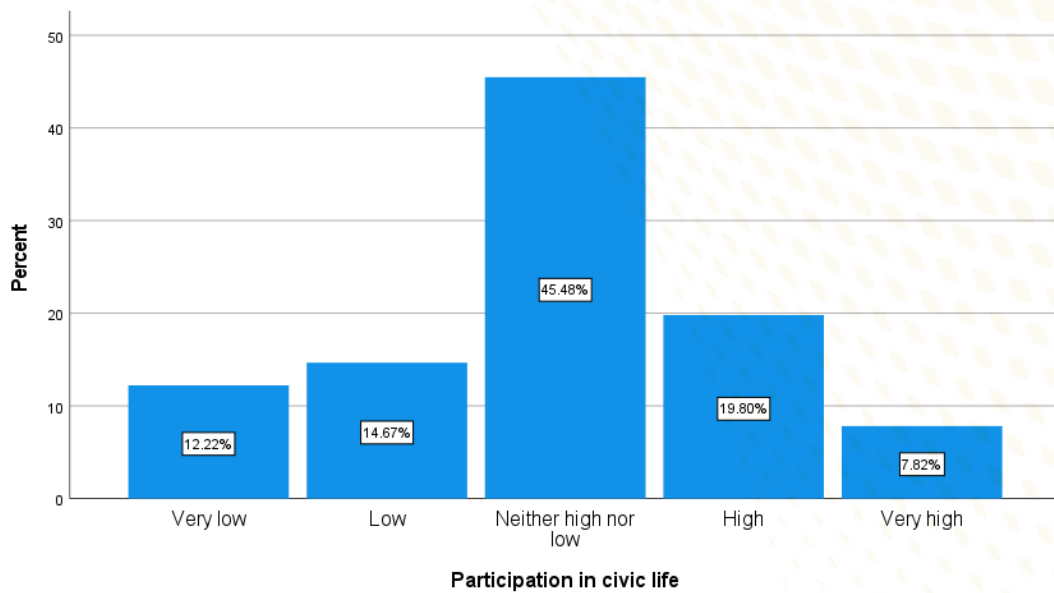
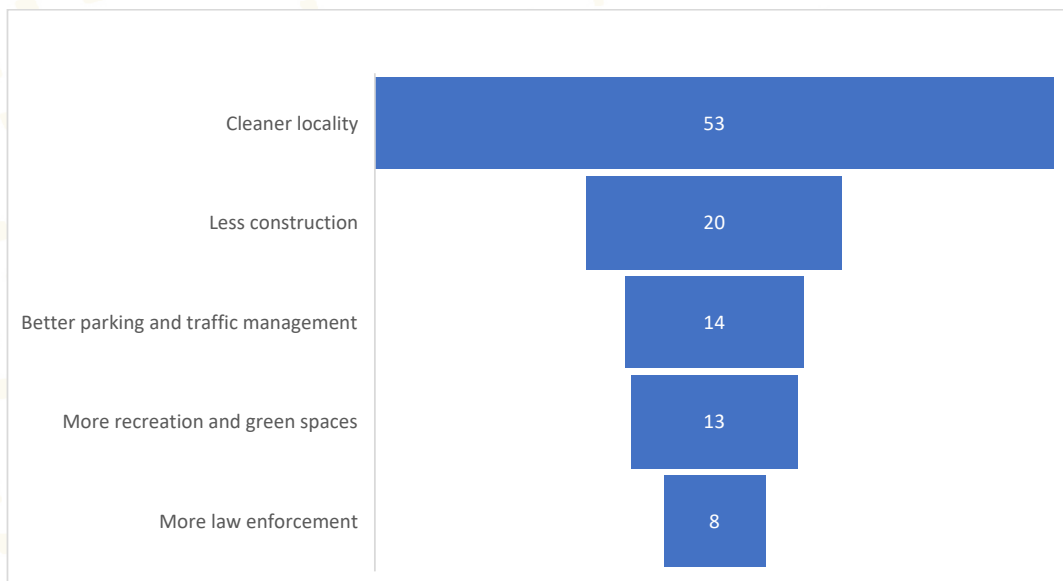


Figure 5.25
Perception of participation of residents in civic life



Subsequently, an open-ended question asked respondents whether they would like to add anything else with regards to the quality of life in their locality. 68.46% (n=280) opted not to reply to this question or stated that they had nothing else to add. The remaining 31.54% (n=129) gave diverse views as regards to how the quality of life in their locality could be improved. The top five mentions were the need of a cleaner locality, less construction, more recreation and green spaces, better parking and traffic management and more law enforcement. (Figure 5.26)

Figure 5.26
Top mentions for a better quality of life



Local Council

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

Table 5.24
Respondents' level of satisfaction with their local council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	98	24.0
Fairly dissatisfied	61	14.9
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	110	26.9
Fairly satisfied	97	23.7
Very satisfied	43	10.5
Total	409	100

Figure 5.27
Respondents' level of satisfaction with their local council

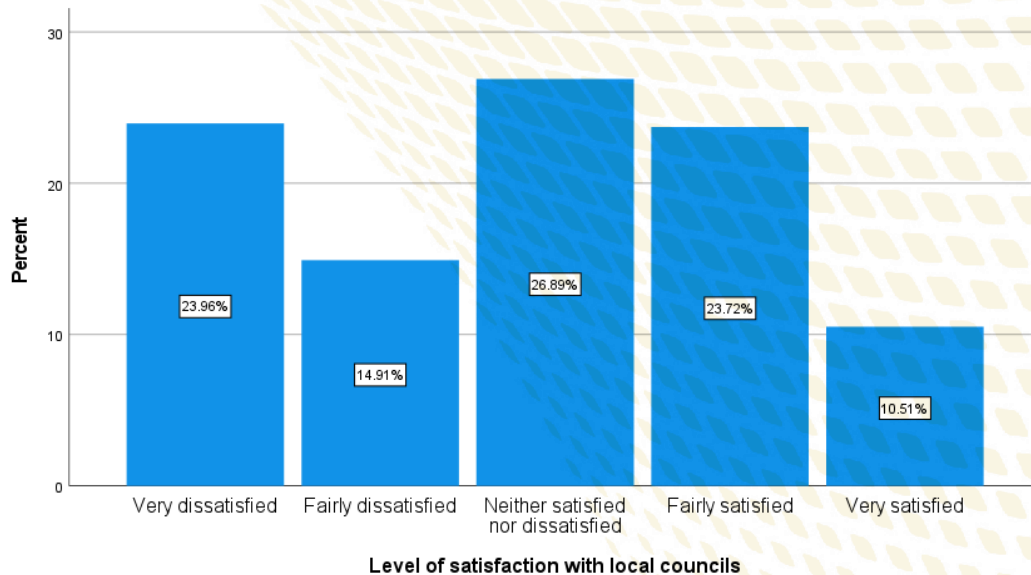


Table 5.24 and Figure 5.27 show that 35% (n= 143) are satisfied with their local council while 38.9% (n=159) are dissatisfied. More than a quarter of respondents 26.9% (n=110) were Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied.

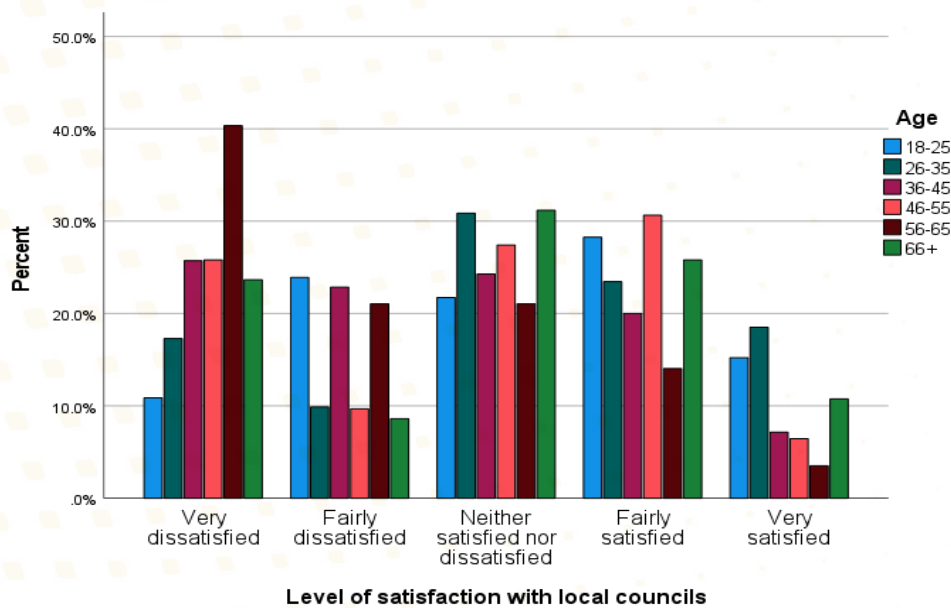
The Pearson Chi-square test returned a p-value above the 0.05 level of significance for gender (p = 0.427), locality (p = 0.311) and level of education (p=0.826), meaning that level of satisfaction with local councils is not statistically significantly associated with either gender, locality or level of education. However, a statistically significant association was found with age (p-value = 0.004) as testing returned a p-value below the 0.05 level of significance.

Table 5.25
Level of satisfaction of local council by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	5	10.9%	11	23.9%	10	21.7%	13	28.3%	7	15.2%
26-35	14	17.3%	8	9.9%	25	30.9%	19	23.5%	15	18.5%
36-45	18	25.7%	16	22.9%	17	24.3%	14	20.0%	5	7.1%
46-55	16	25.8%	6	9.7%	17	27.4%	19	30.6%	4	6.5%
56-65	23	40.4%	12	21.1%	12	21.1%	8	14.0%	2	3.5%
66+	22	23.7%	8	8.6%	29	31.2%	24	25.8%	10	10.8%

$\chi^2 (20, N=409) = 40.532, p = 0.004$

Figure 5.28
Level of satisfaction of local council by age



As indicated in Table 5.25 and Figure 5.28 respondents aged between 46-55 were the most dissatisfied with their local council (61.5%, n=35). On the other hand, respondents aged between 26-35 tended to be the most satisfied with their local council (42%, n=34).

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

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

Table 5.26
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	93	22.7%	54	13.2%	128	31.3%	87	21.3%	47	11.5%
Involves the community	83	20.3%	56	13.7%	142	34.7%	77	18.8%	51	12.5%

Figure 5.29
Perception on responsiveness of local council to the needs of residents and community involvement

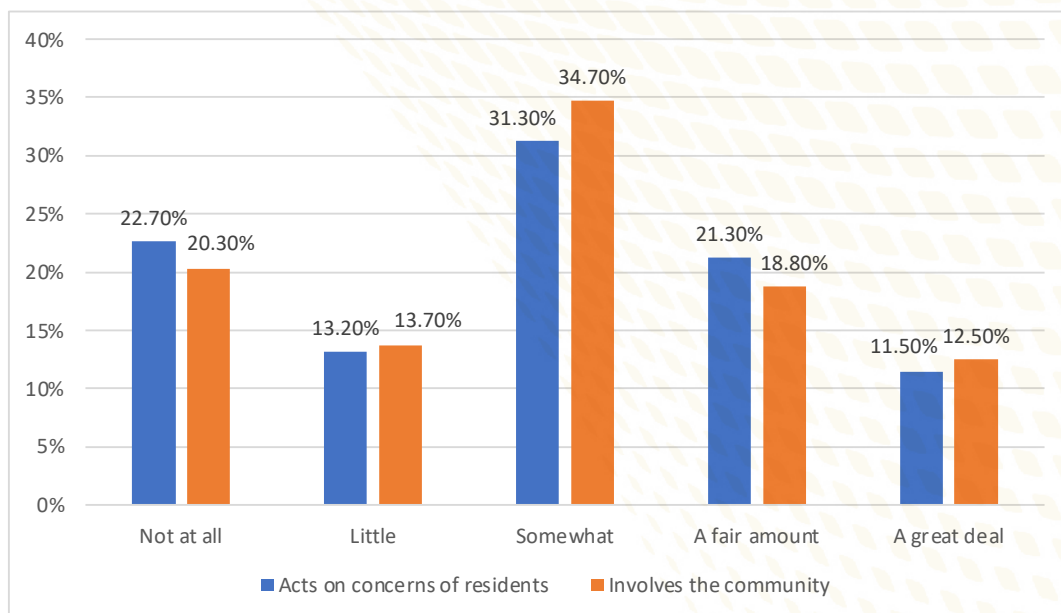


Table 5.26 and Figure 5.29 show that slightly more than one-tenth of respondents consider their local council to greatly involve the community (12.5%, n= 51) and act on the concerns of residents (11.5%, n= 47). On the other hand, more than one-fifth of respondents 20.3% (n=83) and 22.7% (n=93) view the local council as not involving at all the residents and not acting at all on their concerns. More than one-third of respondents view the local council as somewhat involving the community (34.7%, n=142) and somewhat acting on the concerns of residents (31.3%, n=128).

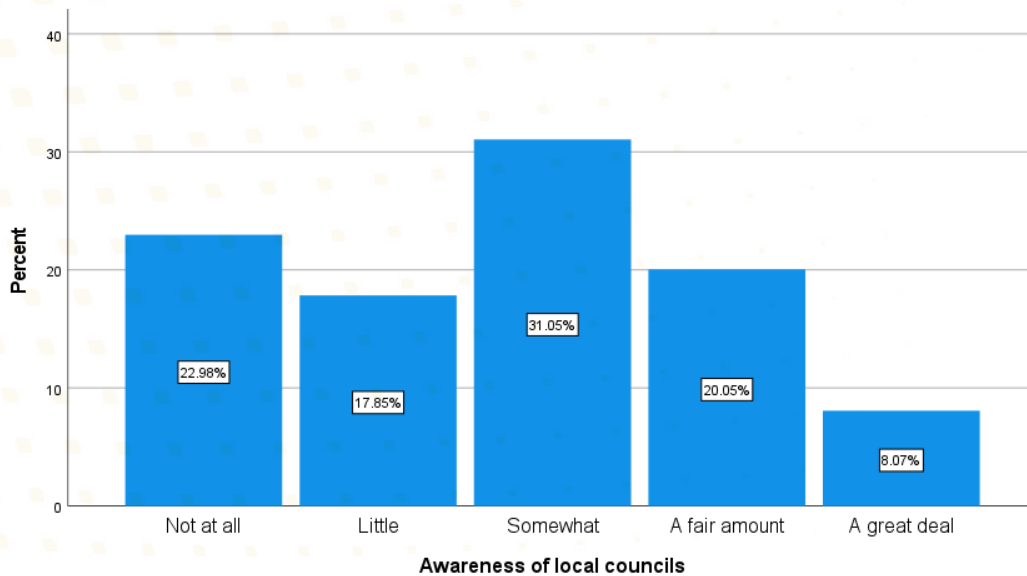
A Pearson Chi-square test run to identify any potential statistically significant relationships of these two factors ('Acting on concerns of residents' and 'Involves the community') with age, gender and locality did not yield statistically significant associations for age, gender and locality as the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

Question 15 gauged the level of awareness of residents on the role of local councillors in their locality. This was gauged through the same 5 level Likert scale utilised in the previous question. 23.0% (n=94) were not at all aware of their local councillors' role, 17.8% (n=73) replied as being slightly aware, 20.0% (n=82) were fairly aware while 8.1% (n=33) were greatly aware. A substantial percentage 31.1% (n=127) replied that they were somewhat aware. (Table 5.27 and Figure 5.30)

Table 5.27
Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Not at all	94	23.0
Little	73	17.8
Somewhat	127	31.1
A fair amount	82	20.0
A great deal	33	8.1
Total	409	100

Figure 5.30
Respondents' awareness of local councillors' role



The Pearson's Chi-square test yielded no significantly statistical association between respondents' awareness of local councillors' role and age (p-value = 0.519), gender (p-value = 0.414), locality (p-value = 0.124) and length of residence (p-value = 0.936) as the p-values were all above the 0.05 level of significance.

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

Table 5.28 outlines the public services which do not fall under the remit of the local council. The table clearly demonstrates that many respondents are unaware that these services are provided by other entities and not by local councils. A relatively high percentage incorrectly believed that waste management (71.56%, n = 293), traffic enforcement (53.3%, n = 218) and projects administration (53.3%, n = 218) were responsibilities of local councils. Such results clearly indicate that many individuals believe that the remits of local councils are much wider than they actually are, possibly skewing unrealistically the expectations of residents in terms of local councils.

Table 5.28
Awareness of local councils' role – 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	27	6.6%	41	10.0%	85	20.8%	52	12.7%	85	20.8%
Correct (No)	89	29.8%	171	41.8%	106	25.9%	275	67.2%	106	25.9%
Incorrect (Yes)	293	71.6%	197	48.2%	218	53.3%	82	20.0%	218	53.3%

On the other hand, Table 5.29 outlines the public services which fall within the remit of local councils. A high percentage of respondents are aware that street cleaning (80.4%), upkeep and maintenance of parks and gardens (77.0%) and parking permits (74.3%) fall under local councils' remit. Slightly more than half of respondents were also aware that the welfare of children, youth and the elderly (52.6%) while slightly less than half were aware that education matters such as cultural events (47.2%) were responsibilities of local councils. However, a substantial number of respondents (46.9%) were seemed to be unaware that animal protection also fall under the local councils' remit. Moreover, when asked to mention any other local council remits, 96% (n = 385) stated that they did not know of any other remits.

Table 5.29
Awareness of local councils' role – public service falling within LCs' remit

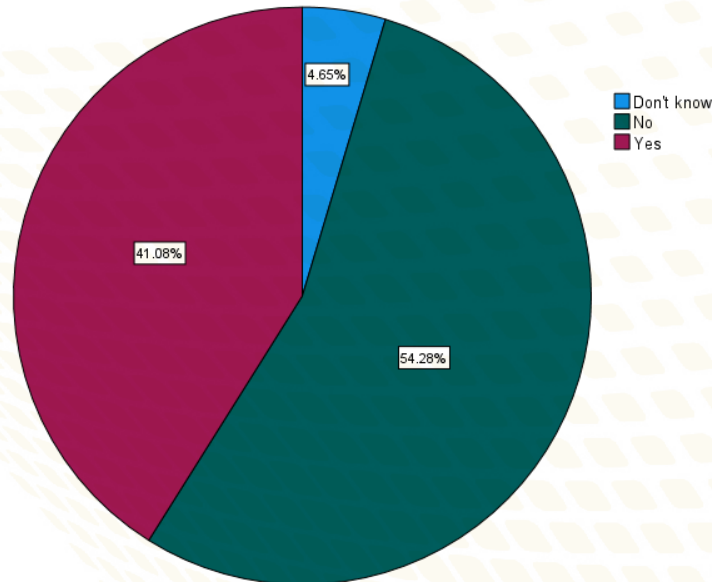
	Education matters		Parking permits		Street cleaning		Upkeep & maintenance of parks & gardens		Integration		Welfare of children, youth & elderly		Protection of animals	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	79	19.3%	47	11.5%	37	9.0%	45	11.0%	109	26.7%	104	25.4%	83	20.3%
Incorrect (No)	137	33.5%	58	15%	43	10.5%	49	12.0%	88	21.5%	90	22.0%	192	46.9%
Correct (Yes)	193	47.2%	304	74.3%	329	80.4%	315	77.0%	212	51.8%	215	52.6%	134	32.8%

Subsequently, Question 17 asked respondents to state whether their local council had met their expectations. Table 5.30 and Figure 5.31 illustrate that nearly 41.1% (n=168) of respondents stated that their expectations had been met while 54.3% (n=222) stated that it had not been met. Only 4.6% of respondents were neutral.

Table 5.30
Local council meets respondents' expectations

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	19	4.6
No	222	54.3
Yes	168	41.1
Total	401	100

Figure 5.31
Local council meets respondents' expectations



Testing yielded a significantly statistical association between respondents' expectations from local councils and age as the Chi square test returned a p-value well below the 0.05 level of significance (p-value = 0.027). Table and Figure 5.35 indicate that people more than 50% of respondents aged 18-25 (52.2%) were felt that their expectations from the local council had been met, as opposed to those aged 56-65 (24.6%).

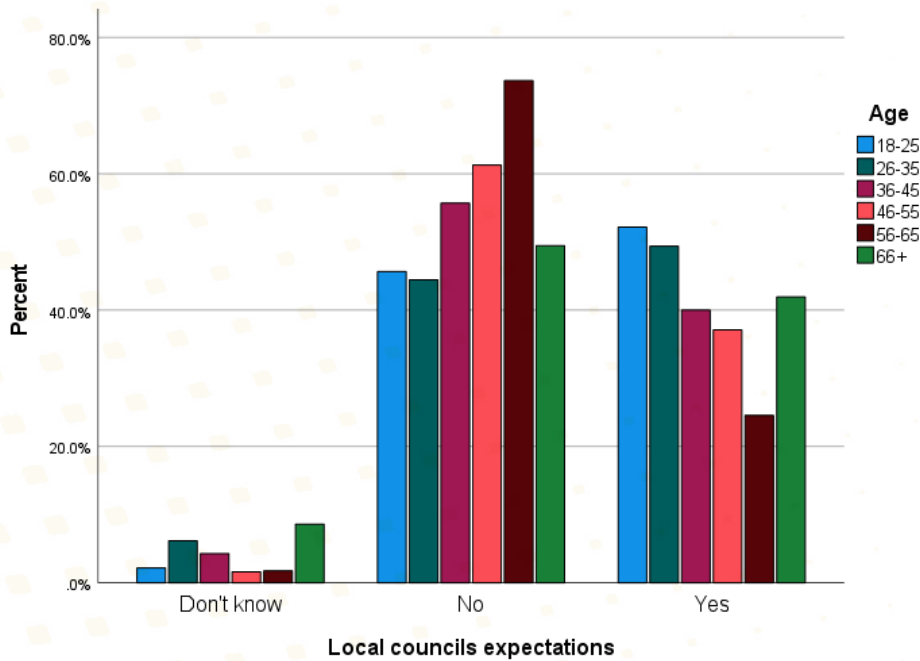
The Pearson's Chi-square test found no statistically significant association with gender (p-value = 0.575) and locality (p-value = 0.351).

Table 5.35
Respondents' expectations from local councils by age

	Don't know		No		Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	1	2.2%	21	45.7%	24	52.2%
26-35	5	6.2%	36	44.4%	40	49.4%
36-45	3	4.3%	39	55.7%	28	40.0%
46-55	1	1.6%	38	61.3%	23	37.1%
56-65	1	1.8%	42	73.7%	14	24.6%
66+	8	8.6%	46	49.5%	39	41.9%

$\chi^2 (10, N=409) = 20.232, p=0.027$

Figure 5.35
Respondents' expectations from local councils by age



Those respondents who replied that their expectations were not met by local councils were asked what could the local council do to meet such expectations. The top mentions were that of communicating, listening and acting on the concerns of residents, better upkeep of the locality and more law enforcement (Figure 5.36).

Figure 5.36
How can the local council meet residents' expectations?



Subsequently, Question 18 asked respondents whether they would like to add anything else with regards to their Local Council. 64.08% (n=314) of respondents had nothing else to add. Of interest, just as was stated in the previous question, 9.78% (n=40) stated that their local council needs to listen and act on the concerns of its residents, followed by 8.06% (n=33) stating that there needs to be a better upkeep of the locality.

Regional Council

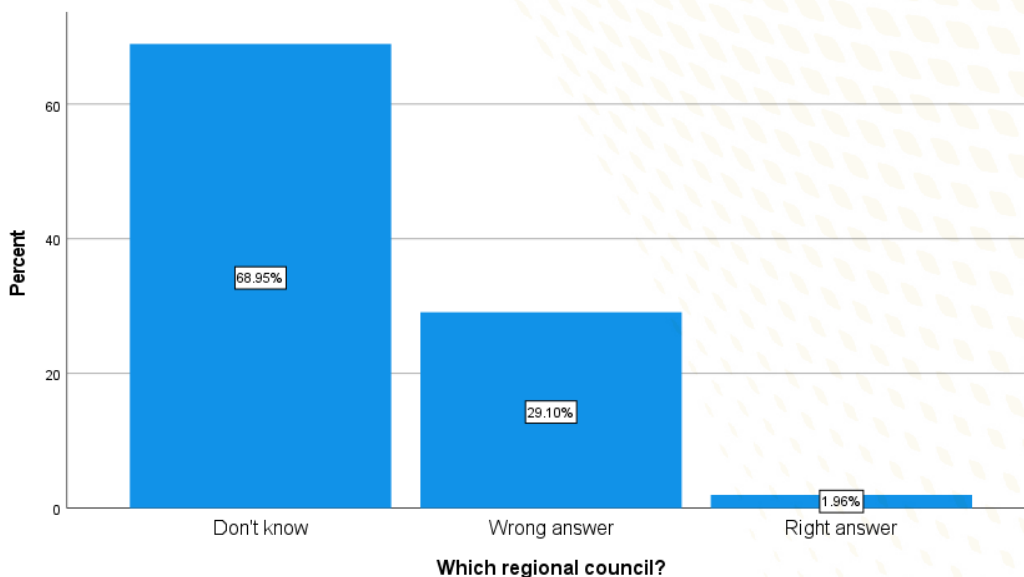
The final section of the questionnaire related to awareness with regards to the regional council.

Question 19 asked respondents to state which regional council does their locality form part of. The majority of respondents (68.9%, n=282) stated Don't know while 29.1% (n= 119) gave the wrong answer. Only 2.0% (n=8) were aware that their locality formed part of Reġjun Lvant (Table 5.36 and Figure 5.37)

Table 5.36
Respondents' awareness of regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	282	68.9
Wrong answer	119	29.1
Right answer	8	2.0

Figure 5.37
Respondents' awareness of regional council



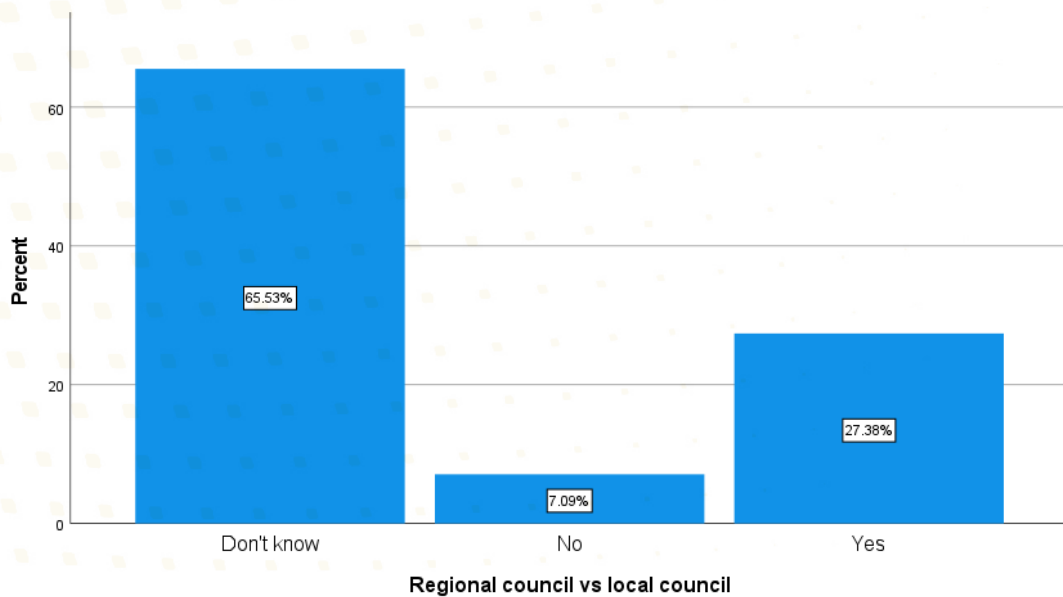
The Pearson's Chi-Square test yielded no statistically significant association with age (p-value = 0.063), gender (p-value = 0.381), locality (p-value = 0.123) and length of residence (p-value = 0.474) as the p-values were all above the 0.05 level of significance.

Question 20, asked respondents whether the responsibilities of the regional council differed from those of the local council or otherwise. Table 5.37 and Figure 5.38 illustrate that nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.5%, n= 268) stated that they did not know whether the functions and responsibilities of regional councils differed from those of local councils. 7.1% (n=29) stated that they did not differ while 27.4%(n=112) stated that there was a difference between the functions and responsibilities of regional councils and those of local councils.

Table 5.37
Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	268	65.5
No	29	7.1
Yes	112	27.4
Total	401	100.0

Figure 5.38
Respondents' awareness of functions and responsibilities of regional council vs local council



The Pearson Chi-square test yielded no statistically significant association for the awareness in terms of functions and responsibilities of the regional council vs local council when cross-tabulated with age (p-value = 0.752), gender (p-value = 0.286), locality (p-value = 0.414) and length of residence (p-value = 0.492).

Moreover, Question 20 asked those respondents who replied in the affirmative to state how they think the functions and responsibilities of the regional council differ from those of the local council wherein 11.2% (n=46) of these respondents stated that the regional council has more responsibilities than the local council while 3.7%(n=15) stated that the regional council coordinates the local councils. Of interest, 9.5% (n=39) stated that they had never heard of the regional councils.

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

Table 5.39 outlines the roles which do not fall under the remit of the regional councils. As the table demonstrates, many respondents are not aware that such roles are not to be carried out by the regional council. For instance, 13.4% believe that the regional council is responsible for street cleaning and 12.0% believe that the upkeep and maintenance of street lighting fall under the regional council's remit. Of interest is that for every role there were 76% or more of respondents who stated that they did not know whether that particular role fell under the remit of the regional council.

Table 5.39
Awareness of regional council's roles – Roles falling outside the RC's remit

	Road infrastructure		Traffic enforcement		Upkeep & maintenance of street lighting		Street Cleaning	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	312	76.3%	314	76.8%	312	76.3%	311	76.0%
Correct (No)	53	13.0%	57	13.9%	48	11.7%	43	10.5%
Incorrect (Yes)	44	10.8%	38	9.3%	49	12.0%	55	13.4%

On the other hand, Table 5.40 outlines the roles which fall under the remit of the regional council. When compared with the awareness of the local council remits, whereby for some roles of the local council respondents were 50-70% aware, for regional council roles, the awareness is much lower. The highest awareness was that the regional council co-ordinates with central government (21.8%), whilst similarly to Table 5.39 (roles not falling under the RC's remit) 76% or more of respondents stated don't know. Interestingly, when asked whether they could mention other remits, 100% (n=409) of respondents were unable to state any other remit.

Table 5.40
Awareness of regional council's roles – Roles falling under the RC's remit

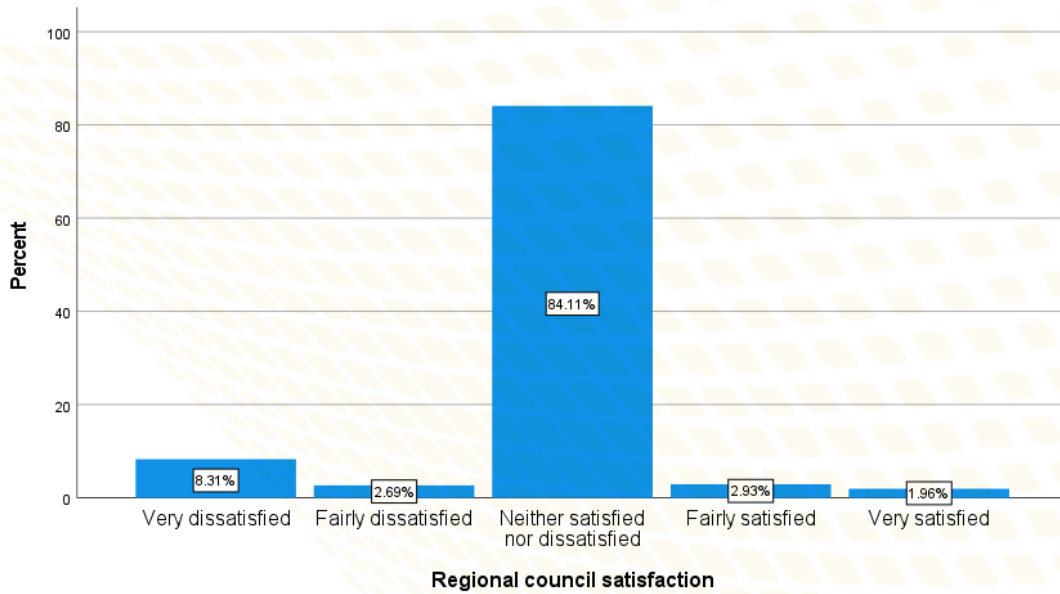
	Waste management and issuing of relevant tenders		Regional Tribunal		Protection of natural and urban environment		Assist Local Councils		Co-ordinate with Central Govt.		Administration of region	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Don't know	308	75.3%	311	76.0%	315	77.0%	315	77.0%	312	76.3%	314	76.8%
Incorrect (No)	27	6.6%	20	4.9%	27	6.6%	8	2.0%	8	2.0%	9	2.2%
Correct (Yes)	74	18.1%	78	19.1%	67	16.4%	86	21.0%	89	21.8%	86	21.0%

Through the use of a 5-Likert Scale ranging from Very Satisfied through to Very Dissatisfied, Question 23 asked respondents to rate their level of satisfaction with their regional council. A very high percentage (84.1%, n = 344) were Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied, while 11.0% (n = 45) were Dissatisfied. Only 4.9% (n = 20) were satisfied with their regional council (Table 5.41 and Figure 5.39 refer).

Table 5.41
Respondents' level of satisfaction with their regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Very dissatisfied	34	8.3
Fairly dissatisfied	11	2.7
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	344	84.1
Fairly satisfied	12	2.9
Very satisfied	8	2.0
Total	401	100.0

Figure 5.39
Respondents' level of satisfaction with their regional council



The Pearson Chi-square test yielded a relatively statistically significant association when the level of satisfaction with regional council was cross-tabulated with age (p-value = 0.026). On the other hand, testing found no statistically significant association with gender (p-value = 0.501), locality (p-value = 0.635), and length of residence (p-value = 0.680).

Table 5.42
Level of satisfaction with regional council by age

	Very dissatisfied		Fairly dissatisfied		Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied		Fairly satisfied		Very satisfied	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	4	8.7%	0	0.0%	38	82.6%	2	4.3%	2	4.3%
26-35	5	6.2%	3	3.7%	66	81.5%	2	2.5%	5	6.2%
36-45	6	8.6%	2	2.9%	60	85.7%	2	2.9%	0	0.0%
46-55	7	11.3%	0	0.0%	53	85.5%	1	1.6%	1	1.6%
56-65	8	14.0%	5	8.8%	41	71.9%	3	5.3%	0	0.0%
66+	4	4.3%	1	1.1%	86	92.5%	2	2.2%	0	0.0%

$\chi^2 (20, N=409) = 34.065, p=0.026$

Figure 5.40
Level of satisfaction with regional council by age

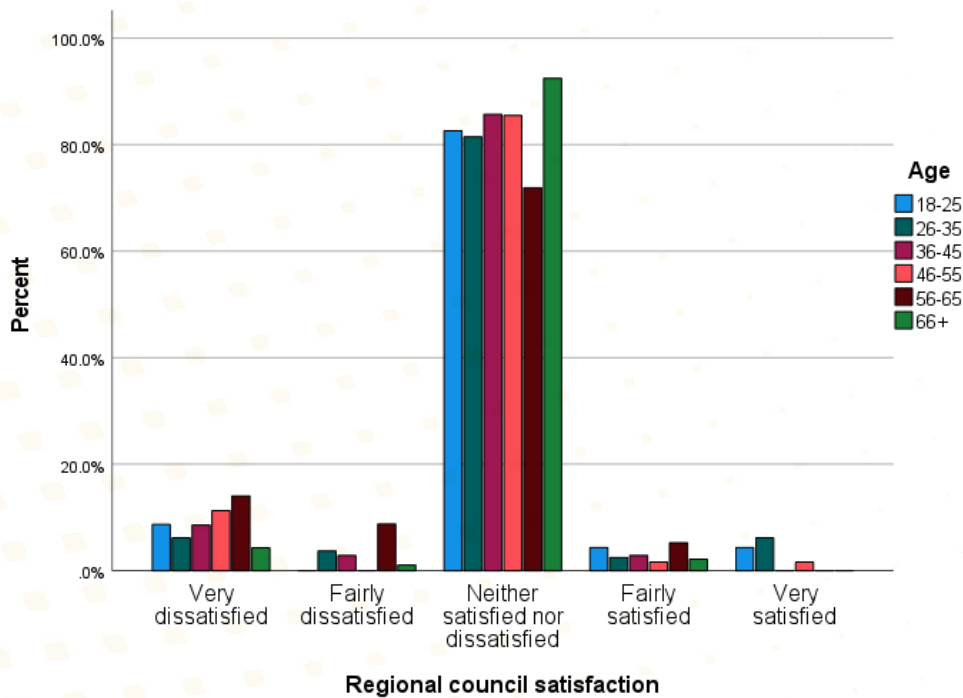


Table 5.42 and Figure 5.40 show that respondents in the 56-65 age bracket(22.8%) were the most dissatisfied with their regional council, while those in the 18-25 (8.6%) and 26-35(8.7%) age bracket were the most satisfied. Worth noting, more than 70% of all age brackets were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the highest percentage (92.5%) being those in the 66+ age bracket.

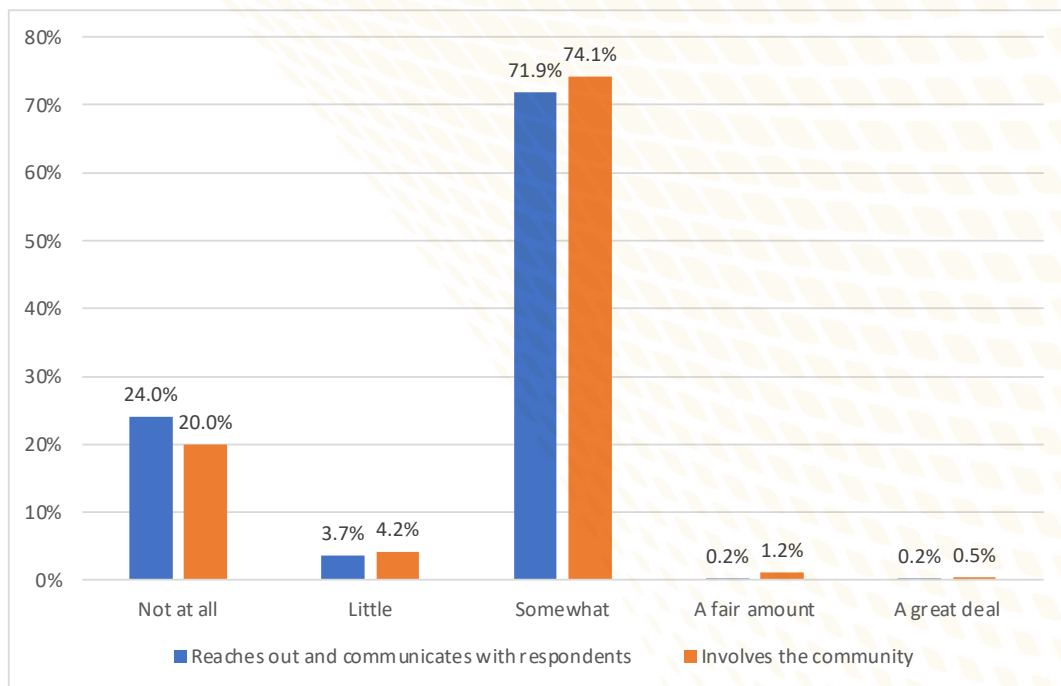
Question 24 asked respondents to comment on the extent to which they feel the regional council (i) reaches out and communicates with them and (ii) involves the community. This was gauged through the use of a Likert Scale ranging from Not at all, Little, Somewhat, A Fair Amount through to a A Great Deal.

Table 5.43 and Figure 5.41 below show the perception of respondents with regards to the level of communication of the regional council with the community and the level of involvement of the community by the regional council. 24% (n=98) of respondents perceive that their regional council does not communicate with them at all while 71.9% (n=294) stated that the regional council somewhat communicates with them. Only 0.2% (n=1) perceive their regional council as greatly communicating with them. Furthermore, 74.1% (n=303) of respondents felt that their regional council somewhat involves the community, with 0.5% (n=2) stating 'Not at all'.

Table 5.43
Perception on the extent to which regional council reaches out, communicates with and involves the community

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Reaches out and communicates with respondents	98	24.0%	15	3.7%	294	71.9%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%
Involves the community	82	20.0%	17	5%	303	74.1%	5	1.2%	2	0.5%

Figure 5.41
Perception on the extent to which regional council reaches out, communicates with and involves the community



The Pearson Chi-Square test yielded a significantly statistical association when 'involves the community' was cross-tabulated with length of residence (p-value = 0.028). Testing found no significantly statistical association when 'involves the community' was cross-tabulated with age (p-value = 0.186), gender (p-value = 0.216) and locality (p-value = 0.734). Furthermore, testing also revealed no significantly statistical association between 'reaches out and communicates with residents' and age (p-value = 0.139), gender (p-value = 0.425), locality (p-value = 0.938) and length of residence (p-value = 0.366).

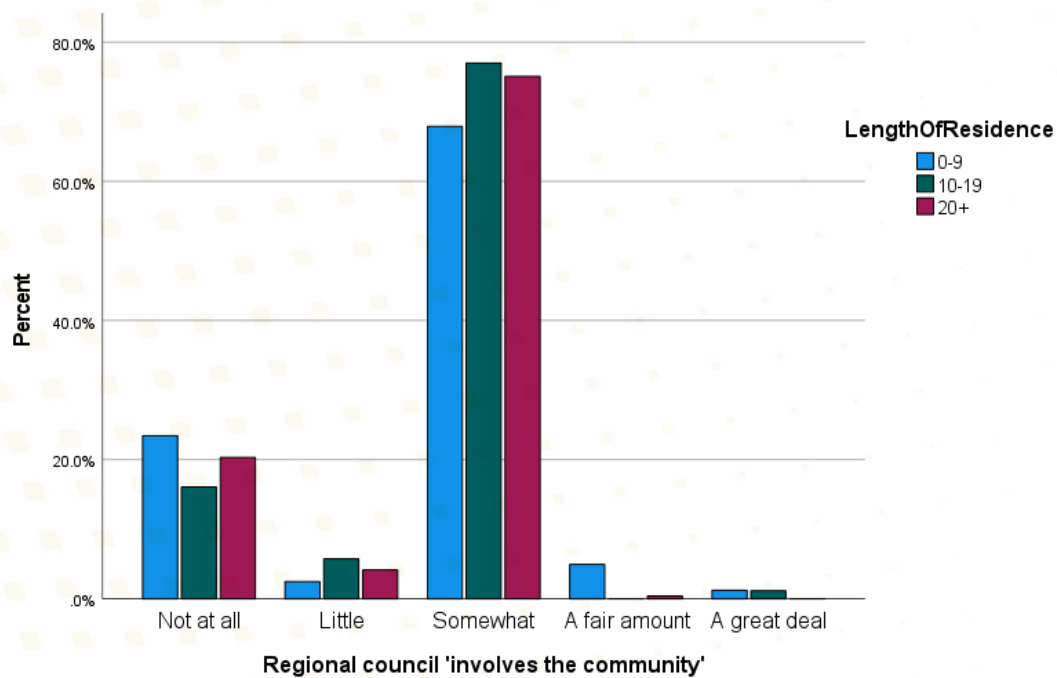
Table 5.44 and Figure 5.42 illustrate that 23.5% (n = 19) of respondents that have been living in the locality between 0 – 9 years perceive the regional council as 'not at all' involving the community, while 67.9% and over of all respondents, irrespective of their length of residence, stated that they felt that the regional council somewhat 'involves the community'.

Table 5.44
Perception on the extent to which regional council 'involves the community'
by length of residence

	Not at all		Little		Somewhat		A fair amount		A great deal	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
0-9	19	23.5%	2	2.5%	55	67.9%	4	4.9%	1	1.2%
10-19	14	16.1%	5	5.7%	67	77.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
20+	49	20.3%	10	4.1%	181	75.1%	1	0.4%	0	0.0%

$\chi^2 (8, N=409) = 17.168, p = 0.028$

Table 5.42
Perception on the extent to which regional council 'involves the community'
by length of residence

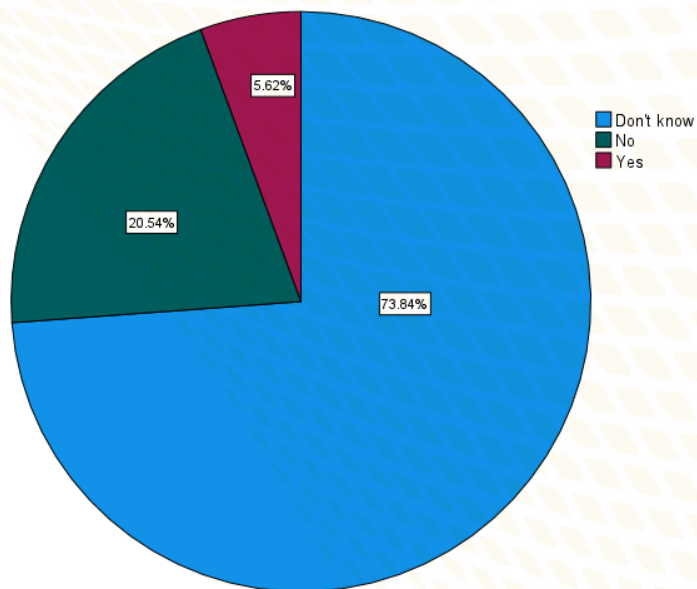


Question 25 then asked respondents whether their expectations are being met by the regional council. Table 5.45 and Figure 5.43 show that only 5.6% (n=23) of respondents felt that the regional council had met their expectations. 20.5% (n=84) of respondents stated that their level of expectation from regional council had not been met, while more than two thirds (73.8%, n=302) of respondents were neutral.

Table 5.45
Respondents' expectations met by regional council

	Frequency	Percent (%)
Don't know	302	73.8
No	84	20.5
Yes	23	5.6
Total	401	100.0

Figure 5.43
Respondents' expectations met by regional council



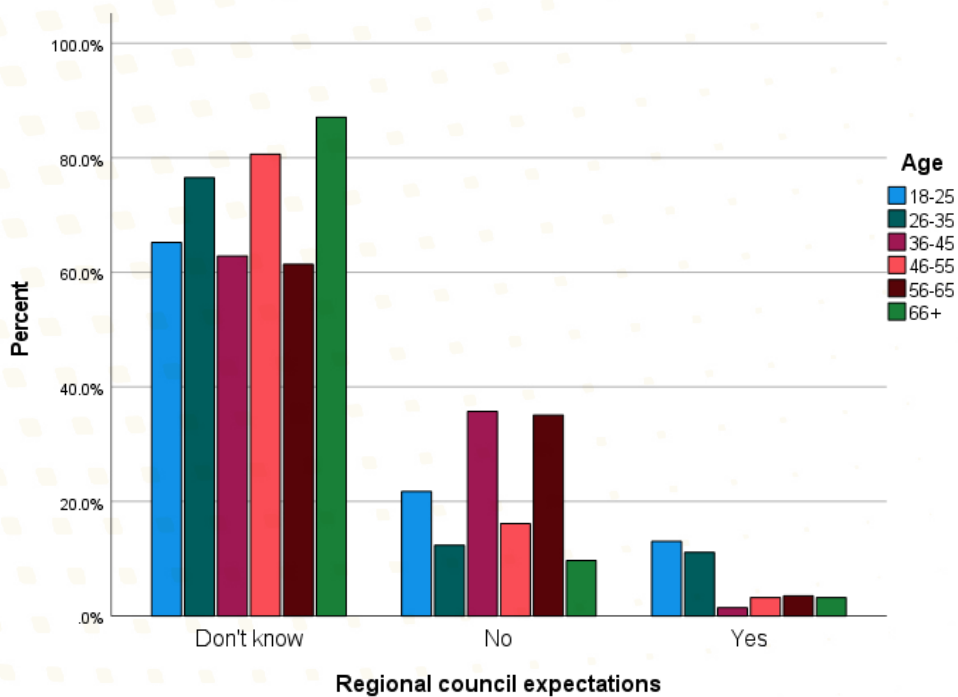
The Pearson Chi-square test yielded a statistically significant association for whether respondents' expectations had been met by the regional council when cross-tabulated with age (p-value = <0.001). On the other hand, testing found no statistically significant association with gender (p-value = 0.643), locality (p-value = 0.225) and length of residence (p-value = 0.603). As indicated in Table 5.46 and Figure 5.44 below 35.7% (n=25) in the 36-45 age bracket and 35.1%(n=20) in the 56-65 age bracket felt that their expectations from the Regional Council had not been met. On the other hand, a high percentage of respondents in the 66+ bracket (87.1%, n = 81) stated that they did not know whether they had been met or not.

Table 5.46
Respondents' expectations met by regional council by age

	Don't know		No		Yes	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
18-25	30	65.2%	10	21.7%	6	13.0%
26-35	62	76.5%	10	12.3%	9	11.1%
36-45	44	62.9%	25	35.7%	1	1.4%
46-55	50	80.6%	10	16.1%	2	3.2%
56-65	35	61.4%	20	35.1%	2	3.5%
66+	81	87.1%	9	9.7%	3	3.2%

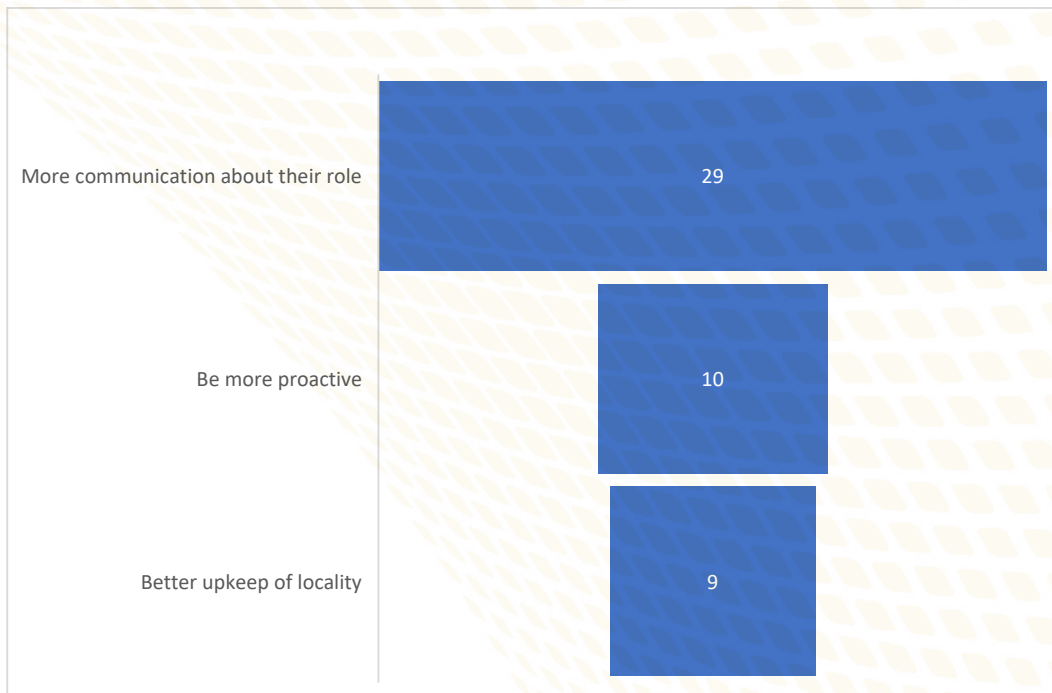
$\chi^2 (10, N = 409) = 40.885, p = <0.001$

Figure 5.44
Respondents' expectations met by regional council by age



Furthermore, Question 25 asked those respondents who stated that their expectations had not been met to state what the regional council needs to do to meet their expectations. As indicated in Figure 5.45, the top 3 mentions were that the regional council needs to better communicate their role, be more proactive and that there is a better upkeep of the locality.

Figure 5.45
Expectations from regional council – Top 3 mentions



When asked whether they would like to add anything else with regards to their regional council, 76.3% (n=312) of respondents had nothing else to add whilst 3.2% (n=13) reiterated that the regional council needs to communicate and create more awareness with regards to its role, functions and responsibilities. Interestingly, 16.4% (n=67) mentioned that they had never heard of the regional council, indicating that more information and awareness needs to be created in this regard.

5.2 FINDINGS FROM THE QUALITATIVE DATA

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

5.2.1 Focus Group - Local councillors

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

Theme 1: Civic pride and community feel

Local councillors present for the focus group stated that, on a daily basis, they encounter diverse problems related to the lack of civic pride present in their locality. The perception of a lack of civic pride links to the quantitative findings whereby only 37.9% of respondents perceived a sense of community in their locality to be moderately prevalent, which attribute is closely tied to a sense of civic pride. Local councillors also maintained that they are highly concerned with the vandalism and dirt created by certain residents as this has a negative impact on residents' quality of life. This also links to the findings from the quantitative questionnaire as 'the need of a cleaner locality' was perceived as the main factor that would have a positive impact on residents' quality of life.

"Għandna nuqqas kbira ta' civic pride. Il-bins ikunu mimlija sa fuq u jibqgħu jarmu fihom. Garbage bags kullimkien u ħadd ma jimpurtaħ. Kulħadd ikompli jħammeġ. Anki l-parks li għalkemm dejjem nirrorangaw fihom ikun hemm il-vandalismu." (Kunsillier – Swieqi)
[There is a great lack of civic pride. The waste bins would be overflowing and they still keep on putting waste there. Garbage bags everywhere and nobody cares. Everybody continues to dirty everywhere. Even our parks, notwithstanding that we perform continuous maintenance vandalism, is a daily occurrence.] (Local councillor – Swieqi)

"Il-ħadd kulħadd jaf li ma jingabarx il-garbage. Imma xorta ikun hemm min joħroġu għax ma jimpurtaħomx. Dik veru idejjaqni lili." (Kunsillier – Birkirkara)
[Everybody knows that waste is not collected on Sundays. However, there are still some who put the garbage bags out as they do not care. That really bothers me.] (Local councillor – Birkirkara)

"Aħna l-istess. Ħmieġ kullimkien u ħadd ma jinteressaħ. Egoismu sfrenat." (Kunsillier – Lija)
[We are the same. Dirt everywhere and no one is bothered. Extreme selfishness.] (Local councillor – Lija)

"Din hija xi ħaġa li tħalli impatt negattiv fuq il-kwalita' tal-ħajja tan-nies. Dik il-ħaġa li filgħodu toħroġ and issib ħmieġ tal-klieb quddiem il-bieb tiegħek u trid tara kif timxi fuq il-bankini minħabba ħmieġ jew boroż taż-żibel mitluqin l'hemm u l'hawn." (Kunsillier – Swieqi)
[This is something that negatively impacts people's quality of life. You wake up in the morning and you find dog waste in front of your door and you need to be careful how to walk on the pavement because of the dirt and garbage bags left lying around here and there.] (Local councillor – Swieqi)

Both the lack of civic pride and cleanliness were partially attributed to the increase of foreign nationals, as well as to the ever-increasing apartments being rented out on a short-let basis. Local councillors claimed that there is also a lack of social cohesion as foreign nationals tend to keep to themselves while people in short-let apartments are continuously changing, therefore leaving no time for interaction with the local community. This ties in with the quantitative findings where only 40.4% of respondents perceived the integration of people with different cultures to be high.

"Ma rridx inkun negattiv imma il-ħmieġ ġot-toroq tal-biża. Speċjalment billi aħna għandna ħafna barranin dawn ma jimpurtaħomx u ħmieġ kullimkien." (Kunsillier – San

Ġiljan)

[I do not want to be negative but the dirt that there is in the streets is terrible. Especially because we have a lot of foreign nationals who do not care and dirt is everywhere.] (Local councillor – San Ġiljan)

“Dawn jinqatgħu għalihom u xejn ma jithaltu magħna. Rari tara lill xi ħadd barra minnhom.” (Kunsillier – Lija).

[They stay in their own group and they do not mix. Very rarely does one see them roaming around outside.] (Local councillor – Lija)

“Aħna l-akbar problema li għandna huma s-short lets. Problema ta' skart għax għalxejn għamilna l-flyers b'kull lingwa għax joħroġu l-borża l-ħażina kontinwament. U ma tistax tintegra magħhom għax in-nies kontinwament jinbiddlu.” (Kunsillier – San Ġiljan)

[Our biggest problem is short lets. Problems regarding waste because even though we distributed flyers in every language they still take out the wrong garbage bags continuously. And you cannot integrate with them as these people are continuously changing.] (Local councillor – San Ġiljan)

Theme 2 – Community participation

Apart from lack of civic pride, community participation was also perceived by local councillors to be on the low side. This sustains the quantitative findings whereby only 17% of respondents perceived a very high participation of residents in civic life.

Local councillors stated that they generally organise community activities in collaboration with other organisations from the locality. They claimed that it is only through collaboration with these organisations that community activities can have a successful outcome as many of these organisations would have certain groups of people who are affiliated with them. Interestingly, this contrasts to the quantitative findings which show that only 16.2% of respondents were 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.

“Meta norganizzaw attivitajiet ma' għaqdiet oħrajn ikollna ħafna aktar parteċipazzjoni. Għax dik l-għaqda partikolari għanda ċertu grupp ta' nies, l-oħra ukoll u b'hekk inkabbru l-attendanza. Għax kieku waħidna ma tantx ikollna suċċess.” (Kunsillier – Lija)

[Whenever we organise any activities with other village organisations we have greater participation. Because one organisation would have a certain group of people, the other as well, and in that way we have better attendance. Because when we organise it on our own it is not that successful.] (Local councillor – Lija)

They also claimed that when organising large events there is generally greater participation of people from outside the locality and foreign nationals than local people.

“Meta jkollna events kbar jiġu ħafna nies minn barra r-raħal u mhux mill-lokal stess.” (Kunsillier – San Ġiljan)

[When we have large events we get people from outside the locality and not from our locality.] (Local councillor – San Ġiljan)

“Bħala parteċipazzjoni min-naħa tas-Swieqi hija nofs b’nofs. Pero naħseb nista’ ngħid li jkun hemm aktar barranin.” (Kunsillier – Swieqi)

[As regards to participation in Swieqi it is generally half and half. However, I think I can say that there generally is a greater attendance from foreign nationals.] (Local councillor – Swieqi)

“Matul is-sena jipparteċipaw aktar nies minn barra il-lokal jew nies barranin milli l-Karkariži.” (Kunsillier – Birkirkara)

[During the year people from outside the locality and foreign nationals participate much more than people from Birkirkara do.] (Local councillor – Birkirkara)

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 sectors of the population, most especially young people. Local councillors stated that this is of great concern as, even though they do organise activities for young people and even children, there have been instances when they had to cancel them due to low participation. However, whilst acknowledging that trying to come up with innovative activities to attract young people is indeed very challenging, one must try to identify young people’s trends and what attracts them to attend certain activities or else the local communities future would be at stake.

“L-anzjani jiġu. Ikollna konkorenza tajba meta norganizzaw attivitajiet għal-anzjani. Pero importanti tkun taf xi jridu. L-anzjani l-ewwel li jsaq suk jekk hemmx tomba. U malli tgħidilhom iva tarahom ġejjen.” (Kunsillier – Birkirkara)

[But old people participate. We generally have good participation when we organise activities for the elderly. However, it is important to be aware what they want. The first thing the elderly ask is whether there will be Bingo and once we confirm they participate.] (Local councillor – Birkirkara)

“L-anzjani jipparteċipaw fl-attivitajiet li nagħlulhom pero iż-żgħażaġħ ftit li xejn. Hemm grupp mhux ħażin tal-knisja pero apparti hekk xejn.” (Kunsillier – Iklin)

[The elderly participate in the activities we organise specifically for them but young people practically not at all. There is a relatively good group that participate in Church however apart from that nothing.] (Local councillor – Iklin)

“Meta nagħmlu attivita’ għal anzjani jiġu imma meta l-attivitajiet tkun għaż-żgħażaġħ jew għat-tfal il-konkorenza tkun baxxa ħafna. Kien hemm drabi li kellna nikkancellawhom. Pero’ mbagħad l-għaqdiet ikollhom parteċipazzjoni kbira min naħa taż-żgħażaġħ speċjalment fejn tidhol festa.” (Kunsillier – Lija)

[When we organise an activity for the elderly they participate but when the activity is for young people or children we have little participation. In fact there were instances that we had to cancel the activity. However, there are certain organisations, most especially feast organisations, that have great participation from young people.] (Local councillor – Lija)

“Kultant l-anqas ikollok idea x’sé torganizza biex forsi tiġbed liż-żgħażaġħ. Pero irridu naraw x’inhuma t-trends taż-żgħażaġħ u nipprova nkunu nnovattivi u nimxu magħhom. Għax inkella se nitilfu kollox u l-lokalitajiet tagħna jispiċċaw fix-xejn.” (Kunsillier – San Ġiljan)

[Sometimes you would not even have the slightest idea of what to organise so as to

attract young people. However, we need to see what are young people's trends and try to be innovative and follow them. Or else we are going to lose everything and our localities will die a natural death.] (Local councillor – San Ġiljan)

Theme 3 – Clipped wings

Local councillors stated that they feel that their wings are being clipped as many times they do not have the required power to perform their role to the best of their abilities. They claimed that they also lack funds and human resources and that there is a lack of consultation regarding important issues and that many times they are not given the respect that they deserve.

Subtheme 1: Lack of funds and human resources

All local councillors claimed that the allocated Government funds for local councils are not sufficient and that this is constraining them in carrying out necessary projects in their locality. They also lamented that one of the reasons why they feel that 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 this is having a negative impact on residents as it is impossible to meet the needs of residents when local councils do not have the necessary resources and support.

“Għandna nuqqas kbir ta’ fondi. Il-fondi li għandna qatt ma huma biżżejjed.” (Kunsillier – San Ġiljan)

[We have a great lack of funds. The funds we have are never enough.] (Local councillor – San Ġiljan)

“Il-fondi problema. Aħna sakemm ikollna biżżejjed fondi nagħmlu dak li hemm bżonn. Imma ħafna drabi qed nispiċċaw nagħzlu liema pot hole nimlew minħabba n-nuqqas kbir ta’ fondi.” (Kunsillier – Swieqi)

[Funds are a big issue. Until we have enough funds we do what is necessary. But many times we are ending up having to choose which pot hole to fill up because of the great lack of funds.] (Local councillor – Swieqi)

“In-nuqqas ta’ riżorsi wkoll hija problema. Hemm ħafna bżonnijiet imma nies ma għandniex. U dan kollu jkollu mpatt fuq ir-residenti għax l-affarijiet li hemm bżonn isiru ma jsirux.” (Kunsillier – Iklin)

[The lack of human resources is also a problem. There are a lot of requirements but we do not have human resources. And this all leaves an impact on residents as things that are needed are not being done.] (Local councillor – Iklin)

Subtheme 2: Gap in communication

Local councillors unanimously agreed that good communication exists between them and the regional council. They also stated that they find a lot of support from the regional council with regards to sourcing of funds and organisation of activities.

“Mar-reġjun immorru veru tajjeb. Naħseb l-aħjar ħaġa li qatt għamlu meta għamlu ir-reġjuni.” (Kunsillier – Lija)

[We get on really well with the regional council. I think that the best thing that they did was when they created the regional councils.] (Local councillor – Lija)

“Għal kollox insibuħ lir-reġjun. Jgħinuna f’ċerti fondi, attivitajiet, eċc. Veru ma għandniex xi ngergru.” (Kunsillier – Iklin)

[The regional council is there for whatever we may need. They help us with certain funds, activities, etc. We really cannot complain about anything.] (Local councillor – Iklin)

However, they lamented that there is a gap in communication between local councils and central government. They stated that they are rarely consulted or advised by central authorities with regards to certain projects within their locality. This often makes them feel useless and powerless as residents end up blaming the local councils for things that they would not have been informed about.

“Mal-gvern ċentrali hemm problema ta’ komunikazzjoni. Aħna se jibdewlna t-toroq imma lanqas nafu meta. Kellhom jibdew fis-sajf u ma bdewx. U sa issa għadna ma nafu xejn.” (Kunsillier – Iklin)

[There is a gap in communication with central government. They were supposed to start work on certain roads and we do not even know when. They had to start in summer but they did not. And till now we do not know anything.] (Local councillor – Iklin)

“Aħna nbatu bin-nuqqas ta’ komunikazzjoni mil-gvern ċentrali. Iva, nbatu, nbatu ħafna. Mhux biss dwar toroq imma anki dwar affarijiet oħra.” (Kunsillier – Swieqi)

[We suffer from lack of communication from central government. Yes, we suffer, we suffer a lot. Not only with regards to roads but also with regards to other things.] (Local councillor – Swieqi)

“Aħna ma jagħtuna forewarning ta’ xejn. Ġieli insiru nafu mis-social media. Xi ħadd ikun tella post li qed ssir din it-triq jew l-oħra jew jiġi xi ħadd il-kunsill u jgħidilna li sema’ li gimgħa oħra se ssir din it-triq jew l-oħra. Din veru frustranti għax aħna il-gvern lokali u lanqas inkun nafu x’qed jiġri. Nispiċċaw naqgħu għaċ-ċajt man-nies.” (Kunsillier – Swieqi)

[They do not give us any forewarning. Sometimes we get to know things from social media. Someone would have put up a post that this road or the other is being dug up or else someone comes to the local council and tells us that he has heard that a particular road will be dug up next week. This is very frustrating because we are the local government and we would not even know what is happening. We end up looking like fools with the residents.] (Local councillor – Swieqi)

Subtheme 3: Lack of enforcement

Local councillors lamented that another factor that causes them a lot of frustration and a sense of powerlessness is the lack of law enforcement. They maintained that the lack of law enforcement is having a negative impact on the quality of life in their localities. This ties in with the quantitative findings whereby more enforcement was one of the top five mentions when respondents were asked to state what they feel would contribute to a better quality of life in their locality.

“In-nuqqas ta’ enforcement hija problema kbira. Jekk mhux se jkun hawn enforcement kif suppost ma aħna se naslu mkien.” (Kunsillier – Swieqi)

[The lack of enforcement is a big problem. If there is not going to be proper enforcement we are not going to get anywhere.] (Local councillor – Swieqi)

“Aħna ma nistgħux nagħmlu enforcement. U qisu min suppost jagħmel l-enforcement qishom jibzġħu.” (Kunsillier – Iklin)
[We do not have the power to enforce. And it seems that those who do have the power to enforce are afraid to do so.] (Kunsillier – Iklin)

5.2.2 Focus Group – Mayors

Two interlinked and occasionally overlapping themes, namely clipped wings and a dividing line were elicited during the focus group for mayors which encapsulate the majority of views expressed during the process of this focus group. Overall, one could identify that many of the issues mentioned by the local councillors were also mentioned by the mayors therefore further enforcing the comments and issues mentioned.

Theme 1 – Clipped wings

All mayors reiterated what was expressed by local councillors during their focus group as they stated that they feel that their wings are clipped due to the lack of autonomy, consultation, funds and human resources that they encounter in the line of their duties.

Subtheme 1: Lack of autonomy

Mayors vociferously stated that they feel that their autonomy is continuously being undermined. Mayor 4 stated that, notwithstanding the success of local government over the past 30 years, less autonomy is being designated to local councils. Mayor 2 stated that, instead of adopting the European system where local councils are given the autonomy they deserve but are then held accountable for their work, central government creates diverse authorities so as to have total control over local councils.

“Ir-realta’ hija li r-resident mill-kunsill l-aħjar li jinqeda. Il-kunsilli ilhom 30 sena u qed ngħidu li kienu suċċess. Imma kien hemm snin li l-kunsilli kellhom ħafna aktar poteri milli għandhom illum. Imma dawn l-aħħar snin għal xi raġuni l-gvern ċentrali qed jiġbor il-poteri kollha f’idejha. U dan għaliex? Meta l-prinċipju tal-kunsill lokali huwa li jkun viċin in-nies u jkollu l-poteri biex jgħin lin-nies.” (Sindku 4)

[The reality is that the resident is best served by the local council. Local councils have been in operation for the past 30 years and they say they were a success. But there were many years where the local councils had much more power than they have today. Over the past years for whatever reason central government is taking more powers. Why? When the principles of local councils is to be near to the people and to have the power to help the people out.] (Mayor 4)

“Il-problema hija li qed joħolqu awtoritajiet li jagħmlu l-affarijiet huma minflok li jaddottaw is-sistema ewropewa fejn il-fondi jiġu dirett għand il-kunsill u mbagħad ikun hemm testing u jekk jaraw li inti ma obdejt, ma tkunx tista’ tuża l-fondi u jagħtuk multa. Imma dawn qed jagħmlu l-awtoritajiet ħalli jzommu kontroll fuq kollox. Din hija mentalita’ veru ħażina.” (Sindku 2)

[The problem is that government authorities are being created so they do certain things instead of adopting the European system where funds are directly allocated to local councils and testing is then carried out to check that everything is in order and, if not, the local council will not be able to use the funds and will be fined. But they are setting up these authorities so that they keep control on everything. This is a very bad mentality.] (Mayor 2)

"Fil-fehema tiegħi kull poter li neħħewlna bħala kunsill u tefgħu fil-gvern ċentrali huwa ħażin. Jien lest li nkun accountable għax xogħol tiegħi u jekk ix-xogħol isir ħażin neħel multa u jekk hemm bżonn tellgħani tribunal. Imma almenu ħallini naħdem." (Sindku 3)
[In my opinion any power that was removed from local councils and given to central government is not good. I am willing to be accountable for my work and if my work is not up to standard I will get a fine and if needed taken to the tribunal. But at least I am given the space to work.] (Mayor 3)

Mayors further lamented that many times they do not even have the autonomy to carry out certain daily work that is imperative for the upkeep of their locality.

"Ma għandna power ta' xejn. Lanqas biex nagħmlu double yellow line. Issa din, mhux xi ħaġa tajba minħabba l-upkeep tal-lokalita'?" (Sindku 5)
[We do not have any power at all. Not even to do a double yellow line. Isn't this something positive for the upkeep of the locality?] (Mayor 5)

"Aħna ma nistgħux nħarrku għax jien kieku jagħtuni ċans żgur naf lill min għandi nħarrek. Mela aħna iwaddbu kollox fuqna, qed nerġa ngħidha iwaddbu kollox fuqna u lanqas għandnais-saħħa li ninforzaw fejn hemm bżonn." (Sindku 2)
[We cannot give fines because if given the chance I would surely know whom to fine. So they put all the responsibility on us, I will say it again that they put all the responsibility on us, and then we do not have the power to hand out fines where needed.] (Mayor 2)

"Is-sistema ħażina minn fuq s'isfel. Aħna m' aħniex kuntenti għax qed nitolbu li jkollna aktar l-power li nieħdu ċertu deċizjonijiet. U mhux qatt ma nistgħu nagħmlu xejn dwar ċerti affarijiet." (Sindku 4)
[The system is wrong throughout. We are not happy as we are asking to have more power to take certain decisions. We are never able to do anything about certain issues.] (Mayor 4)

Mayors also stated that they do not agree with the possibility that local councils are abolished and that regional councils will take over the roles and responsibilities of local councils. On the other hand, they stated that they would agree that the amount of local councillors in each council would be curtailed should they have a guarantee that local councils would have more autonomy.

"Jien din tkellimtha mal-Ministru kemm il-darba. Jien faċli li l-kunsill nnaqqas mill-inqas ħamsa mill-kunsilliera li għandi. Imma li l-kunsilli jispicċaw u jiġu biss regjuni dik le." (Sindku 6)
[I have spoken with the Minister regarding this issue many times. It is easy for the local council to have five councillors less. But that the local councils are abolished and they become a regional council I do not agree.] (Mayor 6)

"Jekk b'inqas kunsilliera hemm garanzija li l-kunsill ikollu aktar poteri naqbel. Imma l-problema hija li l-Ministri ma jridux ineħħu l-poter min idejhom." (Sindku 5)
[If with less local councillors there is a guarantee that local councils will have more power I agree. But the problem is that the Ministers are not ready to remove any power from their hands.] (Mayor 5)

Subtheme 2: Lack of consultation

Similarly to local councillors, mayors lamented that many times they are rarely consulted or advised by central authorities with regards to certain projects within their locality, such as road works or infrastructural works. Mayor 3 maintained that it is extremely frustrating that, apart from not being duly informed, they will then have to deal with residents' complaints and end up bearing the flak themselves.

"Xejn. Ma hemm konsultazzjoni ta' xejn magħna. U l-aħjar li l-ewwel jibdeu jgħaffġu u mbagħad idaħħluk wara." (Sindku 4)

[Nothing. There is absolutely no consultation. And the thing is that first they start to mess it up and then they consult you.] (Mayor 4)

"Mela ma jikkonsultawx u r-resident imur u jgorr ma' xi entita' tal-gvern ċentrali. U x'jagħmlu? Jaqbdu jifforwardjawlek e-mail biex tirroranga l-ħsara li tkun saret inti." (Sindku 3)

[So they do not consult us and the resident goes and complains with a central government entity. And do you know what they do? They forward you an email with the complaint so that you fix the damage that has been done.] (Mayor 3)

Apart from this lack of consultation, the existence of a high level of bureaucracy and red tape between governmental entities and local councils often makes it very difficult for local councils to operate efficiently.

"Per eżempju jiġi xi ħadd japplika għal scaffolding fuq bankina. Għax m'huwiex il-Kunsill responsabbli? Trid tmur Transport Malta għal biċċa scaffolding. Dan mhux kollu ħela ta' ħin u burawkrazija żejda? Aħna bħalissa dwar scaffolding għandna backlog ta' 3 ġimgħat. Nibgħatulom l-emails u lanqas jirrispondu" (Sindku 7)

[For example somebody comes to apply for a permit to erect a scaffolding on a pavement. Why is this not the responsibility of the local council? You have to go to Transport Malta for the permit. Isn't this all a waste of time and bureaucracy? At the moment we have a backlog of 3 weeks regarding permits for scaffolding. We send emails to Transport Malta and they do not even reply.] (Mayor 7)

In terms of the central government and other central authorities, we could really have better communication. One thing that comes to mind is for instance Enemalta. It takes extremely long to get through and make a change happen. (Mayor 8)

Subtheme 3 – Lack of funds and human resources

All mayors claimed that due to the current rise in the cost of living, the allocated Government funds for local councils is not sufficient. Mayors stated that unless they manage to either obtain funds from the regional council or from Government schemes/European funding they can never embark on any ambitious infrastructural project.

"Aħna l-flus l-akbar problema li għandna. L-prezzijiet dejjem jogħlew u splodew u l-allokazzjoni baqgħet li kienet." (Sindku 2)

[Funds are our biggest problem. Prices are always increasing and the allocation remained as it always was.] (Mayor 2)

“Niddependu mill-flus li jagħtuna r-reġjun jew inkella napplikaw għal xi skema.” (Sindku 3)

[We depend on funds that are given to us by the regional council or else we apply for funds from a scheme.] (Mayor 3)

“In-nies iridu li l-bins jitnaddfu aktar spiss, li l-ftit ġonna jitnaddfu regolari għax huwa l-unika post fejn jistgħu jmorru jagħmlu ħames minuti fil-kwiet, it-toroq ikunu bit-tarmak, eċċ. Dan aħna nagħmlu mill-aħjar li nistgħu biex ikun hekk imma in-nuqqas ta' riżorsi u ta' fondi hija problema kbira.” (Sindku 4)

[The people want the public bins to be cleaned more often, that the few public gardens are regularly maintained as it is the only place where they can go and spend 5 minutes in peace, that the roads are tarmaced, etc. We do our best to do these things but the lack of resources and funds is a big problem.] (Sindku 4)

Moreover, Mayor 1 maintained that although there are funding schemes that one can apply for, there have been many instances that one would have been promised a certain amount of money and after having already committed oneself, one would end up getting substantially less.

“Limitati ħafna minħabba l-flus u riżorsi. Kull dħul li jiġi minn naħa tal-gvern ċentrali jinxtorob fuq servizzi u affarijiet mandatorji. Nippruvaw nagħmlu l-mirakli fejn nistgħu. Veru hemm l-iskemi. Imma dawn jwegħduk ammont, per eżempju, €80,000 u jagħtuk €20,000. U inti tkun ikkommettejt ruħek u trid tara minn fejn se ġġib d-differenza.” (Sindku1)
[Funds and resources are very limited. Income that comes from central government is all absorbed on mandatory services and activities. We try to do miracles where we can. It is true that there are schemes. But they promise you a certain amount, for example €80,000 and then give you €20,000. And you would have already committed yourself and will have to see from where you are going to get the difference.] (Mayor 1)

Mayor 6 stated that even though he agreed that local councils should be given more power to enforce and operate on a daily basis, such power and/or increased responsibility would be difficult to manage, given the fact that the current resources they have at hand, both financial and other, are already limited given their functions now, let alone if these increase. Local councils need more funds and human resources to carry out the necessary work involved.

“Nuqqas kbir ta' man power u fondi. U veru li aħna rridu li jkollna aktar power biex nagħmlu ċertu affarijiet imma l-ewwel rrid ikollna il-fondi u l-man power għax inkella xorta ma nkunux nistgħu nattwaw dak li hemm bżonn.” (Sindku 6)

[A great lack of man power and funds. And it is true that we want more power to be able to do certain things but firstly we need funds and man power or else we will still not be able to put into effect what is needed.] (Mayor 6)

Theme 2 – A dividing line

The influx of foreign nationals into Maltese localities, as a result of the economic boom and great employment opportunities, is being perceived by mayors as one of the biggest challenges that their localities encounter on a daily basis. Reġjun Lvant currently has the highest foreign population (37.71%) out of the six Maltese regional councils and mayors claimed that many of

these foreign nationals have a totally different culture than that of Maltese nationals. There is a great dividing line between foreign nationals and Maltese nationals and, even though local councils try to organise activities and courses to aid foreign nationals' integration in the community, foreign nationals are generally not interested and integration tends to be on the low side.

"Il-barranin ma jinteressahom minn xejn. L-aqwa li qegħdin viċin ix-xogħol tagħhom u daqshekk. Tipprova tagħmel courses biex tgħallimhom il-Malti imma ma jinteressaħomx." (Sindku 4)

[Foreign nationals are not interested in anything. The important thing that they are near to their place of work. You try to organise courses for them to learn Maltese but they are not interested.] (Mayor 4)

"Il-lokalita' tagħna issa saret kważi 5,000 pero 4,000 mhumiex minn hemm. Dan kullimkien. Din qed inhossuha ħafna. Qabel kont taf min joqgħod hawn u minn hemm imma illum ma tkunx taf." (Sindku 2)

[Currently there are 5,000 people living in our locality but 4,000 are not from the locality. This is everywhere. And this is affecting us a lot. Before you used to know who lives here and who lives there but now you do not know.] (Mayor 2)

"Hemm il-problema li joqgħodu xi 20 ruħ ġo flat. Taf x'qed tgħid? Pero trid tgħid ukoll illi persuna li qed taqla anqas minn €200 fil-ġimgħa ma tistax tikri l-ebda flat. Din hija problema soċjali kbira." (Sindku 7)

[There is a problem that there will be 20 people living in one flat. Do you know what I am saying? However, one must also say that if a person earns less than €200 per week it is impossible to rent out a flat. This is a big social problem.] (Mayor 7)

"Kunflitt ikun hemm. Il-Maltin jgħidulek "Għax dawn x'igifieri ġew hawnhekk u jeħdulna over dan il-ġnien li huwa tagħna il-Maltin." (Sindku 7)

[There is a conflict. The Maltese tell you "Why should they take over the public garden that belongs to us Maltese".] (Mayor 7)

"Ix-xewqa tagħna li nagħmlu ċentru ta' l-arti u l-kultura li jkun reġjonali għax hemmhekk il-barriers kollha jaqgħu u nemmen li b'hekk il-barranin ikunu jistgħu jintegraw." (Sindku 6)

[Our wish is that we do a regional art and cultural centre because through this there will be no barriers and I believe that it will serve as an opportunity for foreign nationals to integrate.] (Mayor 6)

5.3 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented and analysed both the quantitative and qualitative findings of this study. A summary of the salient findings from this study together with recommendations for policy, practice and further research will be presented in the sixth and final chapter.

6. Conclusion and recommendations

6.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The results of the telephonic questionnaire show that, at the time of data collection, less than half of the residents expressed being very or fairly satisfied with their locality (c. 46.5%), with a substantial 25.9% being neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. Similarly, only 37.9% felt that there was a 'high' or 'very high' sense of community. Limited participation in civic life transpired with 45.5% mentioning that this was neither high nor low and only 27.6% choosing high or very high participation.

Residents seemed particularly dissatisfied with Traffic and Parking issues (77.7%), Urban Development and Air and Noise Pollution (both at 71.4%) and Public and Green Spaces (59.1%). Respondents seemed to be particularly satisfied with religious activities (51.1%).

Residents expressed that integration of elderly people was high (62.1%), however, integration of people with disability, people with different religious belief and people with different cultures seemed to rank quite low with only 28.1%, 40.1% and 40.4% respectively believing that integration in such cases is high.

More cleanliness (53 mentions), less construction (20 mentions), better traffic and parking management (14 mentions), more recreation and green spaces (13 mentions) and more law enforcement (8 mentions), emerged as the most important factors that could contribute to a better quality of life for the residents.

This research study also revealed a relatively low satisfaction rate with local councils (34.2% stating being fairly or highly satisfied), and a low awareness of the roles and responsibilities of the local councillors (28.1%). 54.28% of respondents felt that the local councils did not meet their expectations. To have their expectations met, respondents suggested the following actions: local councils should communicate, listen and act more (89 mentions), have better upkeep of the locality (79 mentions) and have more law enforcement (12 mentions).

On the other hand, only 8 people (2%) were aware of which Regional Council they pertained to. 72.6% of respondents did not know which where the functions of the Regional Council, indicating that even more so for Regional Councils than with Local Councils – there was little awareness. 4.9% of respondents said they were satisfied with the Regional Council, yet a substantial 84.1% said they were neutral, possibly reflecting their lack of awareness of such Council. To possibly increase the level of satisfaction of residents in terms of Regional Councils, respondents mentioned the need for the Regional Council to communicate more their role (29 mentions), be more proactive (10 mentions) and have better upkeep of the locality (9 mentions).

Through the focus groups, the researchers found that mayors and local councillors were very much in line in terms of the areas of concern.

Local Councillors flagged that at the time of writing there seemed to be a lack of civil pride and low community feel within their localities, mentioning issues such as vandalism and the day-to-day problem of garbage bags being taken out on the wrong day. Also, corroborating the quantitative findings in terms of low community participation, they outlined how people, especially youths did not participate in events. In order to overcome this, sometimes local councils said they collaborated with other community organisations to set up joint events. Moreover, they mentioned how they feel that their wings were being clipped, with lack of

funds and human resources, and little power to enforce within their own locality and due to the gap in communication with central governments (authorities).

This idea of feeling powerless resonated with the comments made by mayors, who mentioned that the lack of autonomy allowed, the lack of consultation held by the government authorities with them, with regards to issues regarding their localities, as well as the lack of funds and human resources, meant that they had very little power to assist their residents, despite them being the first port of call when there is a problem in the locality. Moreover, the mayors also outlined that the influx of foreign nationals into the region has created a dividing line between Maltese and foreigners, with often clear demarcation lines in relationships, whereby the two groups rarely mix.

6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

- Educational and awareness campaigns for the general public regarding the functions, roles and responsibilities of local councils, and most especially regional councils through the use of social media, television and radio adverts.
- Local and regional councils need to improve the level of satisfaction of residents with local government and local democracy by improving the quality of local services provided.
- Local and regional councils need to pursue an efficient communication strategy so as to ensure a functional local democracy, with the engagement and participation of citizens.
- Educational workshops oriented towards disseminating practical knowledge of local democracy as a whole and ways in which residents can participate and effect local and national decisions.
- Provision of communal spaces where the local community can meet, celebrate ties and develop a collective identity.
- Events and activities specifically targeted towards the needs and aspirations of young people organised in collaboration with youth organisations.
- Community projects, such as greening of the locality, that will promote a sense of community and a sense of civic pride.
- Collaboration with local entities such as the local band club, football club and religious organisations in the organisation of local events and activities.
- Local councillors to be more in touch with residents, through door-to-door initiatives throughout the whole five-year legislation period, so as to become more aware of the real needs and concerns of their respective community.
- Set up of a migrant office in each locality that caters for the foreign individuals residing in the area.
- Orientation sessions for new community members (both foreigners and Maltese coming from other localities) to facilitate integration within the community.
- Commissioning public opinion surveys when launching new policies or pursuing old ones.
- Information sessions for governmental entities, with regards to the role and duties of the local councils and regional councils, in order to:
 - Create more awareness of the issues and barriers encountered by local and regional councils in their daily dealings with said entities.

Understand better the needs of the local councils.

Increase respect towards the local councils by these entities.

- Joint events between local and regional councils and government entities so as to foster more collaboration and enhance good practices regarding their daily interactions.
- Strengthening of human resources, operations, and funds of local councils to enable them to carry out their role and responsibilities in a more timely and efficient manner.
- Sufficient funds and resources to be allocated to local councils towards the upkeep of the locality, most especially with regards to cleanliness, greening of the locality and open spaces.
- Increased autonomy given to local councils vis-à-vis local matters through the devolution of certain functions such as local enforcement.
- Consultation with local councils regarding projects that are being undertaken by central government in their localities to ensure that real issues and needs of the locality are taken into consideration.
- Policy reform that enables mayors to hold the office on a full-time basis.
- Regional council skills audit which assesses and ultimately enhances the competencies of the regional council's workforce.
- Regional Council Award Scheme that will be designed to celebrate the success of the most sustainable NGO of the region, the best 2 collaborating councils, the resident of the region. The award scheme will be tied to certain procedures, such as one council nominating prospective awardees from other localities, so as to enhance communication and knowledge of other localities and their residents/organisations within the same region.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

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

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

6.4 CONCLUSION

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

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APPENDIX



APPENDIX A – Residents' Questionnaire

Social Impact Assessment/ *Assessjar tal-Impatt Soċjali*

[EN: Black font, MT: Blue font]

Socio-demographic Details *Dettalji Soċjo-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 milhuq l-aħħar/attwali?*
 - 1) No formal education/*Ebda edukazzjoni*
 - 2) Primary level/*Edukazzjoni Primarja*
 - 3) Secondary level/*Edukazzjoni Sekondarja*
 - 4) Post-secondary level/*Post-sekondarja* (Eż.: 'Sixth Form' jew 'Teachers Training College')
 - 5) Tertiary Level/*Edukazzjoni Terzjarja*
4. What is your main labour status/*X'inhu l-impjeg tiegħek?*
 - 1) Student/*Student*
 - 2) Pensioner/*Pensjonant/a*
 - 3) Employed/*Impjegat*
 - 4) Self-employed/*Nahdem għal-rasi*
 - 5) Unemployed/*Mhux impjegat/a*
 - 6) Homemaker/*Niehu hsieb id-dar*
 - 7) Other (please specify)/*Ieħor (jekk jogħġbok speċifika)* _____
5. How many children under 18 years live with you?/*Kemm għandek tfal 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 ijjek 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 organizzazzjoni fil-komunita'?* Jekk iva, f'liema settur hija involuta din l-organizzazzjoni (eż. mużikali, kulturali, storiku, soċjali)?



Questionnaire
Kwestjonarju

QUALITY OF LIFE
Kwalita' tal-hajja

The next questions will ask about the quality of life in your locality/*Il-mistoqsijiet li jmiss jirrigwardjaw il-kwalita' tal-hajja fil-lokalita' fejn 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 hafna, kemm inti sodisfatt jew mhux sodisfatt bil-lokalita' tiegħek bhala post biex tgħix?*

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

LOCAL COUNCIL

Kunsill Lokali

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



REGIONAL COUNCIL
Kunsill Reġjonali

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

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? Tahseb li l-funzjonijiet u r-responsabilitajiet tal-Kunsill Reġjonali huma differenti minn dawk tal-Kunsill Lokali? YES/IVA ____ NO/LE ____
21. If YES, give a reason/s for your answer/Jekk IVA, agħti raġuni għar-risposta tieghek

22. Which of the following services fall under the remit of your Regional Council?/Il-Kunsill tieghek 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 hruġ ta' sejha għall-immaniġġjar tal-iskart	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Road infrastructure/Infrastruttura tat-toroq	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Traffic enforcement e.g. parking fines/Infurzar tat-traffiku eż. ċitazzjonijiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Administers the Regional Tribunal/Jamministra it-Tribunal Reġjonali	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upkeep and maintenance of street lighting/Manutenzjoni tad-dawl tat-toroq	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protection of the natural and urban environment/Protezzjoni tal-ambjent naturali u urban	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assists Local Councils re diverse issues (E.g. Environment, culture, IT & EU Funds)/Jassisti lill Kunsilli Lokali dwar diversi kwitstjonijiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Street cleaning/Tindif tat-toroq	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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

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

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

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

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



Involves the community/ <i>Jinvolvi lill-komunita'</i>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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25. Does your Regional Council meet your expectations? *Il-Kunsill Reġjonali tiegħek qiegħed jilhaq 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 jilhaq l-aspettativi tiegħek?*

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



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



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Consent Form – Focus Group

Project title: Social Impact Assessment –Eastern Regional Council

Research Team & Contact Details:

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

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

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



boost the resourcefulness of the Southern Regional Council in enhancing the quality of live and liveability in that Region.

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

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

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

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

- I would like to review extracts of my interview transcript that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before these are published.
 - I would not like to review my interview transcript extracts that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before these are published.
13. I understand that all data collected will be stored in an anonymised form and only the research team will have access to the data.
 14. I have been provided with the study information and will be given a copy of this consent form, which includes the contact details of the researcher.



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

Participant name and surname: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Name: Stephanie Bugeja

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

Thank you for your participation.



APPENDIX D – Functions of Local Council

Functions of Local Council

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

- (i) to advise and, be consulted by, any authority empowered to take any decisions directly or indirectly affecting the Council and the residents it is responsible for;
- (j) as part of a national scheme, to provide in conjunction with any competent authority, for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of Child Care Centres, kindergartens and other educational services or buildings;
- (k) as part of a national scheme, to provide in conjunction with any competent authority for the establishment, upkeep and maintenance of health and rehabilitation centres, government dispensaries, health district offices and Homes for Senior Citizens, Day Centres for Senior Citizens and Night Care Centres; 22 CAP. 363.] LOCAL GOVERNMENT
- (l) to propose to the Minister responsible for education, persons to be appointed as presidents of primary school councils;
- (m) within the context of a national action plan, Councils shall promote social policy initiatives within their locality. A Council shall work with people having special needs, with children and young people having literacy problems, with the elderly, persons with mental health problems, in community care as well as initiatives in the area of preventive care;
- (n) safeguard local identity and for this purpose take the necessary initiatives to safeguard the local historical and cultural heritage, traditions and folklore;
- (o) in the framework of regulations made by the Minister, extend assistance to artists, musicians and sports persons from their locality in order that they may develop their talents;
- (p) organise cultural activities that promote the locality in every possible way;
- (q) protect the natural and urban environment of the locality and take all necessary measures to ensure the more efficient use of energy, good waste management and climate change initiatives;
- (r) in agreement with the education authorities to make the best use of facilities already existing in schools in the locality after normal school hours such as sports facilities, school halls, information technology laboratories, and other public facilities in the locality;
- (s) organise sports or physical activities for all residents of all ages, co-operate closely with the sports associations from the locality, to provide good sports facilities and organise such sports activities as are not normally organised by local sports associations;
- (t) ensure to give effect to the concept of life long learning with all residents, particularly adults and the elderly, by providing such service within the same locality local library;
- (u) provide and maintain the service of a local library
- (v) to promote an entrepreneurial policy whereby the interests of shop owners and the needs of the residents and the consumer in the community are catered for. The Council is to encourage activities which promote trade and to facilitate Council procedures to lessen bureaucracy so that commercial activities can improve the services they provide;
- (w) to enter into agreements with any agency or public body or Government department for the delegation to the local council of any of the functions of that agency, public body or department: LOCAL GOVERNMENT [CAP. 363. 23 Provided that any such delegation shall only come into effect after the Minister has made the relevant order in the Gazette;
- (x) to perform any other function which shall be delegated to it by the Government through the Minister by means of an order published in the Government Gazette;
- (z) to provide for all such other works, things, matters and services which are not excluded from a Council's competence by any law for the time being in force nor assigned to any other authority



ANNEX ON FOREIGNERS' POPULATION
REĠJUN LVANT



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1. Introduction

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

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

1.1 AIMS OF STUDY

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

1.2 FOREIGNERS' PRESENCE IN MALTA

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

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

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

1.2.1 Statistics of Foreigners in Malta

The Maltese 2021 Census (NSO, 2023) provided an overview of the ten most prominent foreign nationalities in Malta. As shown in Table 1, Italians were the prevailing nationality, exhibiting the most significant increase among the top ten nationalities, with the

number of individuals rising from 0.8% (947) in 2011 to 11.99% (13,838) in 2021 (NSO, 2023). Furthermore, the British, Indians, Filipinos, Serbians, Bulgarians, Libyans, Syrians, Nepalese, and Albanians were included in the top ten population.

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

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

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

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

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



1.3 STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT

This report is divided into five chapters. This chapter served as a general introduction to the study, highlighting the presence of foreigners and providing statistics associated with the population. Chapter Two provides an overview of the existing context of the Regional Councils, specifically focusing on the Reġjun Lvant 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 Lvant (Eastern 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 LVANT

For years, a number of particular localities in the region have always been known for their diverse communities, e.g., Msida, Gżira, San Ġiljan and Sliema, welcoming both Maltese residents and foreigners. Reġjun Port showcases the highest percentage of foreigners compared to the other regions (Reġjun Tramuntana, Reġjun Nofsinhar, Reġjun Port, and Reġjun Punent), with 37.71% of its population being non-Maltese. This significant presence of foreign residents contributes to a vibrant and culturally diverse atmosphere in the region.

Indeed, the 2021 Census recorded a total of 43,708 (37.71%) foreign individuals residing in the Region. Based on the 2021 Census, as per Table 2 below, Msida emerges as having the highest percentage of foreign nationals living in the locality (55%), with Gżira a close second (52%). On the other hand, Ғal Lija had the lowest percentage of foreigners, with 9% of individuals in 2021 (NSO, 2023).

Table 2
Total Number of Foreigners in Reġjun Lvant Localities

Locality	Maltese - Totals	Non Maltese - Totals	Total Population	% of total Population
Birkirkara	20,636	5,171	25,807	20%
Għarghur	3,238	503	3,741	13%
Gżira	4,930	5,401	10,331	52%
Ғal Lija	2,872	290	3,162	9%
Iklin	2,997	402	3,399	12%
Msida	6,094	7,493	13,587	55%
Pembroke	3,096	449	3,545	13%
Pietà	3,240	2,652	5,892	45%
San Ġiljan	5,899	5,754	11,653	49%
Sliema	10,050	9,605	19,655	49%
Swieqi	7,825	5,219	13,044	40%
Ta' Xbiex	1,323	769	2,092	37%
Total	72,200	43,708	115,908	37.71%

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 24.40% to 54,372 individuals. The table indicating the difference in foreign nationals between the 2021 Census and the September data can be found in Appendix A in Table 3. As previously outlined, the PQ does not disclose the country of origin of the foreigners; hence, the latest publicly available data on foreign nationals by country of origin remains the Census 2021.

As illustrated in Table 4 below, among the top ten foreign nationals in 2021, Italians held the highest representation with 5,143 (11.77%) individuals, while Swedish held the tenth place with a total of 1133 (2.59%) (NSO, 2023).

Table 4
Top 10 nationalities in Reġjun Lvant

Top 10 Nationalities	Number of foreigners	% of total Foreigners
Italy	5143	11.77%
India	3071	7.03%
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	2800	6.41%
Philippines	2736	6.26%
Libya	1910	4.37%
Serbia	1555	3.56%
Turkey	1394	3.19%
Spain	1283	2.94%
Bulgaria	1267	2.90%
Sweden	1133	2.59%
Total foreigners	22,292	51%

In terms of gender presence in the region, Table 5 displays that Reġjun Lvant has approximately 25,245 (41.56%) non-Maltese male residents and 18,463 (33.47%) females (NSO, 2023). This contrasts with the 49.17% (35,500) males and 50.83% (36,700) females of Maltese nationals in the region.

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

	Males	Females	Total
Birkirkara	3,078	2,093	5,171
Għarghur	280	223	503
Gżira	3,190	2,211	5,401
Hal Lija	159	131	290
Iklin	228	174	402
Msida	4,585	2,908	7,493
Pembroke	247	202	449
Pietà	1,605	1,047	2,652
San Ġiljan	3,342	2,412	5,754
Sliema	5,245	4,360	9,605
Swieqi	2,845	2,374	5,219
Ta' Xbiex	441	328	769

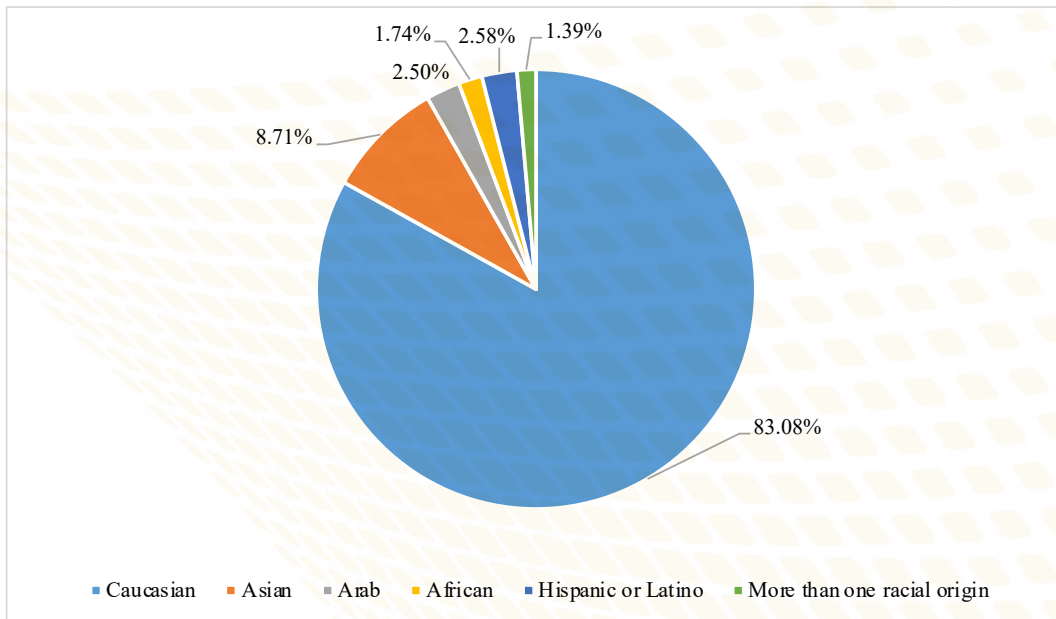
Moreover, the average age of the population of foreigners in this region stands at 34.3, as opposed to 45.8 years for Maltese nationals. Table 6 shows that within the region, foreign men have an overall average age of 34.6 (vs. 44.6 of Maltese male nationals), whilst that of women stands at 33.8 (vs. 46.9 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 Lvant

	Males	Females	Total
Birkirkara	33.4	32.4	33.0
Għargħur	34.4	33.3	33.9
Gżira	33.9	32.5	33.3
Hal Lija	35.9	36.3	36.1
Iklin	35.2	33.5	34.5
Msida	32.5	31.6	32.2
Pembroke	33.6	33.7	33.6
Pietà	32.8	33.1	32.9
San Ġiljan	35.9	35.1	35.6
Sliema	36.2	34.8	35.6
Swieqi	34.2	33.1	33.7
Ta' Xbiex	37.7	35.8	36.9

When looking at the racial origin composition of Reġjun Lvant, also including the Maltese population, the highest percentage is Caucasian at 83.08% (96,238 individuals). The second highest race is that of Asians, at 8.71% (10,095 individuals). Figure 1 below shows the racial composition of the residents within the region, which displays that despite the high homogeneity, in terms of Caucasians present, there are still substantial minorities that make up the community (NSO, 2023).

Figure 1
Total population by racial origin in Reġjun Lvant



Msida stands out as the locality with the most diverse composition, with 68.3% (9,281) being Caucasian, 20.8% (2,829) Asians, 3.1% (417) Arabs, 3.2% (433) African, 3.2% (438) Hispanic or Latino, and the remaining 1.4% (189) having more than one racial origin. The locality with the most homogeneous race was that of Ħal Lija, with 95.8% of the population (3,028 individuals) being Caucasian (NSO, 2023). This is illustrated in Table 7 below.

Table 7
Racial Origin of Total Population by Locality in Reġjun Lvant

	Caucasian	Asian	Arab	African	Hispanic or Latino	More than one racial origin
Birkirkara	22,360	1,968	490	418	295	276
Għargħur	3,562	57	43	26	31	22
Gżira	8,170	1,077	275	219	396	194
Ħal Lija	3,028	54	10	19	21	30
Iklin	3,147	144	33	24	27	24
Msida	9,281	2,829	417	433	438	189
Pembroke	3,310	58	48	38	44	47
Pietà	4,225	1,128	148	181	146	64
San Ġiljan	9,657	711	384	250	462	189
Sliema	16,553	1,228	602	261	656	355
Swieqi	11,104	719	444	125	448	204
Ta' Xbiex	1,841	122	53	29	30	17
Total	96,238	10,095	2,947	2,023	2,994	1,611

Similarly, when one looks at the religions practiced within the region, one can identify clear diversities. Notwithstanding the fact that Roman Catholicism remains the leading religion amongst all population aged 15 and over in the Reġjun Lvant, at 72.88% (74,966), 5.64% (5,804) affiliate themselves to the Orthodox practice and 5.54% (5,699) to Islam. 18.57% (19,106) affiliate themselves with some other religion, such as Hinduism, Church of England, Protestantism, Buddhism, Judaism or others, whilst 8.55% (8,790) do not affiliate themselves to any religion (NSO, 2023).

2.2.1 Reġjun Lvant: An Overview of the Foreigners' Presence

Reġjun Lvant 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 Lvant are diverse, including both traditionally rural villages and towns, and well-developed localities. Villages and towns like Ħal Lija, Ħal Ġhargħur, I-Iklin, and Pietà have experienced some level of urbanisation while preserving their rural heritage. On the other hand, localities such as Sliema, Msida, Swieqi, and San Ġiljan have seen more substantial urbanisation and infrastructure development, which has led to a significant increase in the number of foreign residents in these areas. 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.

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 Pembroke has the highest number of foreign students in the Reġjun Lvant, with Primary and Secondary schools totaling 656. Sliema Primary school and Birkirkara schools (Primary and Middle) also showed a substantial increase in foreign students, with 293 and 259, respectively. On the other hand, Pietà Primary school had 58 foreign students, while Iklin and Ħal Lija (together with Ħal Balzan) had only 47 foreign students (Ministry for Education, Sport, Youth, Research and Innovation, 2022).

While research on the presence of foreigners in the Reġjun Lvant is limited, certain localities have garnered more attention than others due to the growing number of foreigners residing there. For example, Sliema, Msida, Gżira, and Birkirkara have long been recognised as popular destinations for foreigners. In contrast, localities such as Ħal Lija and Ġhargħur have received less recognition as they have a smaller foreign resident population.

Among the localities in Malta and Gozo, following San Pawl il-Baħar, which registered the highest number of active contracts, Sliema, Msida, Gżira, and San Ġiljan recorded the highest number of active contracts, respectively, according to the Malta Housing Authority (2023). In addition, starting in 2023, tas-Sliema, San Ġiljan, is-Swieqi, Ta' Xbiex, and Gżira were found to have the highest monthly rent for a two-bedroom apartment, making them the most expensive localities in terms of rental prices in Malta and Gozo (Housing Authority, 2023). These contracts include both Maltese and non-Maltese residents.

Localities such as Sliema and San Ġiljan have experienced a significant increase in population, largely due to their emergence as hubs for the online gaming industry. This trend was already noted back in 2018 when the former mayor of San Ġiljan, Guido Dalli, highlighted that many foreigners working in the iGaming sector had chosen to rent in these areas. The influx of foreign workers with higher incomes had a direct impact on rental prices, driving them up to levels that were unaffordable for the local Maltese residents (Cocks, 2018). Dalli pointed out that even Maltese residents with average wages could no longer afford to rent in St Julians, let alone consider purchasing property there. Recognising the potential market among foreigners who were willing to pay higher prices, property owners began to increase their prices in the locality and nearby ones, making them accessible only to those on higher salaries, both foreigners and some locals (Cocks, 2018).

The presence of foreigners, particularly from the EU, was noticed in 2019 when the local council electoral register revealed that there were more eligible EU foreign residents in localities like San Ġiljan than Maltese residents. In response, current mayor Albert Buttigieg expressed the importance of encouraging foreigners to participate in the voting process and suggested the establishment of a council specifically for foreigners within the San Ġiljan council (Diacono, 2019). Mayor Buttigieg emphasised that San Ġiljan is a cosmopolitan locality and that its diversity is a vital aspect of its identity. He acknowledged that while foreigners may present challenges, they also bring opportunities, and it is crucial to ensure that foreign residents feel Malta is their second home (Diacono, 2019).

The complexity of localities has also affected Gżira. In 2021, former Gżira Mayor Conrad Borg Manche highlighted the drastic changes that occurred during his six-year tenure. Developers were attracted to Gżira, enticed by the opportunity to construct additional floors. This surge in development led to an increased demand from foreigners seeking to live in Gżira (Vella, 2021). Meanwhile, in Msida, Mayor Margaret Baldacchino Cefai acknowledged the challenges faced by the locality in dealing with homeless individuals, the majority of whom are foreigners. The executive secretary of the Msida local council, Alan Vella, further revealed that some of these homeless individuals are not even third-country nationals but come from European countries such as Italy (Abbas Shalan, 2023).

In response to the increasing presence of foreigners and the challenges of integration, the Eastern Regional Council Charter 2022-2027 recognises the importance of fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity within the region. The Charter is aimed at designing and implementing programmes that are specifically tailored to address the unique needs and circumstances of all residents, including both locals and foreigners (Malta Arts Council, n.d.).

2.3 INITIATIVES FOR BETTER REPRESENTATION AND INTEGRATION AMONG FOREIGNERS

To effectively address such needs, the Reġjun Lvant has started to take on various actions in recent years. One notable action was their active participation in the ADMIn4ALL project in July 2019. As illustrated in Figure 2 below, the project aimed to enhance the capacity of local governments in 7 EU Member States (Italy, Austria, Poland, Romania, Spain, Greece, and Malta) to develop sustainable strategies and inclusive services for the social and economic integration of migrants from disadvantaged backgrounds. The Reġjun Lvant worked closely with local councils in this region to ensure better inclusion at the local level (Kunsill Reġjonali Lvant, n.d.).

Figure 2
Reġjun Lvant's Participation in the ADMIN4ALL project (July 2019)



Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 3 below, the region takes on the role of promoting awareness on social media. Specifically, in a Facebook post on the World Day of Cultural Diversity, the Reġjun Lvant encouraged residents to be open-minded and embrace cultural diversity. They emphasised the importance of understanding and appreciating different cultures and suggested various ways to support cultural diversity, such as speaking out against cultural insensitivity, reading literature from different cultures, and even learning a new language (Kunsill Reġjonali Lvant, n.d.).

Figure 3
Facebook post on the World Day of Cultural Diversity



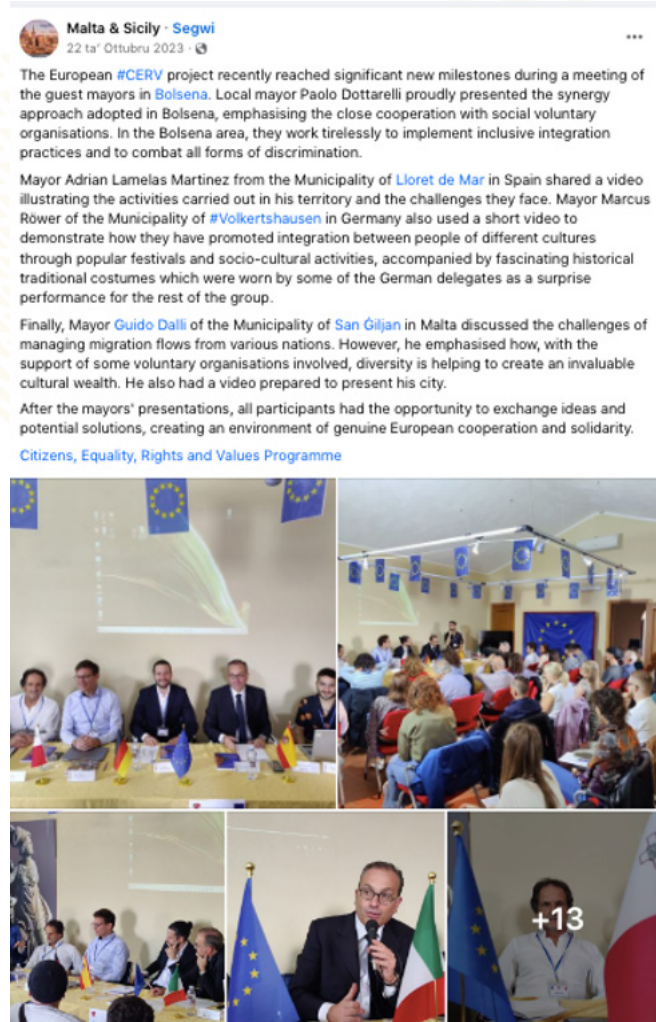
Figure 4 illustrates that Margaret Baldacchino Cefai, the mayor of Msida Local Council, and Alexander Callia Zammit, a councillor of Gżira Local Council, attended the celebration of Janmashtami. This annual Hindu festival, organised by the Hindu Association of Malta, was held for the first time in Malta and saw active participation from Hindu communities from India, Nepal, Malta, and Bangladesh (Alexander Calleja Zammit, n.d.).

Figure 4
Janmashtami Festival – Participation of Gżira and Msida Local Council



In addition to these efforts, Figure 5 showcases the active participation of San Ġiljan former Mayor Guido Dalli in the European #CERV project. Dalli specifically discussed the challenges of managing migration flows from various nations. He further emphasised how diversity, with the support of the voluntary organisations involved, is helping to create an invaluable cultural wealth (Malta & Sicily, n.d.).

Figure 5
San Ġiljan former Mayor Guido Dalli's involvement in the European #CERV project



Other ongoing integration measures are actively being implemented in the Reġjun Lvant. For instance, as seen in Figure 6, Reġjun Lvant, designated as the Region of Culture 2024, recently unveiled their logo and shared the concept behind it. The logo embodies the value of diverse communities, emphasising the importance of people coming together to celebrate and embrace their unique art and culture. This logo serves as a representation of the region's commitment to fostering inclusivity and promoting cultural diversity (Kunsill Reġjun Lvant, n.d.).

Figure 6
Region of Culture 2024



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 Lvant, n.d.).

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



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 Lvant 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 Lvant, as identified in the 2021 Census data (NSO, 2023), would be contacted. Out of a total of 43,708 foreigners in the Region, 51% belonged to the 10 foreign communities outlined in Table 8 below. The same method of purposeful selection was consistently applied to the other regions (Reġjun Tramuntana, Reġjun Port, Reġjun Nofsinhar, 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	5143	11.77%
India	3071	7.03%
UK	2800	6.41%
Philippines	2736	6.26%
Libya	1910	4.37%
Serbia	1555	3.56%
Turkey	1394	3.19%
Spain	1283	2.94%
Bulgaria	1267	2.90%
Sweden	1133	2.59%
Total foreigners	22,292	51%

Given the fact that the Regional Councils operate within the field, a first attempt to contact foreign representatives was made through the Reġjun Lvant, 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. The data collection process resulted in only one response, which was received from the Italian community residing in Reġjun Lvant. This response was obtained through direct contact with the research team via email.

Nevertheless, given the tight time frames and the lower than anticipated response rate that the Reġjun Lvant 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 from Organisations	Mode of Data Collection
Italy	3	2	Email response
India	2	1	Email response
UK	2	1	Email response
Philippines	3	1	Email response
Libya	2	1	Email response
Serbia	2	2	Email response
Turkey	2	1	Email response
Spain	1	1	Email response
Bulgaria	1	1	Email response
Sweden	1	1	Email response
Total	19	12	

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 Lvant 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 Lvant. This limitation hindered the ability to target specific individuals or groups within the actual foreign community in the Region.

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

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

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

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



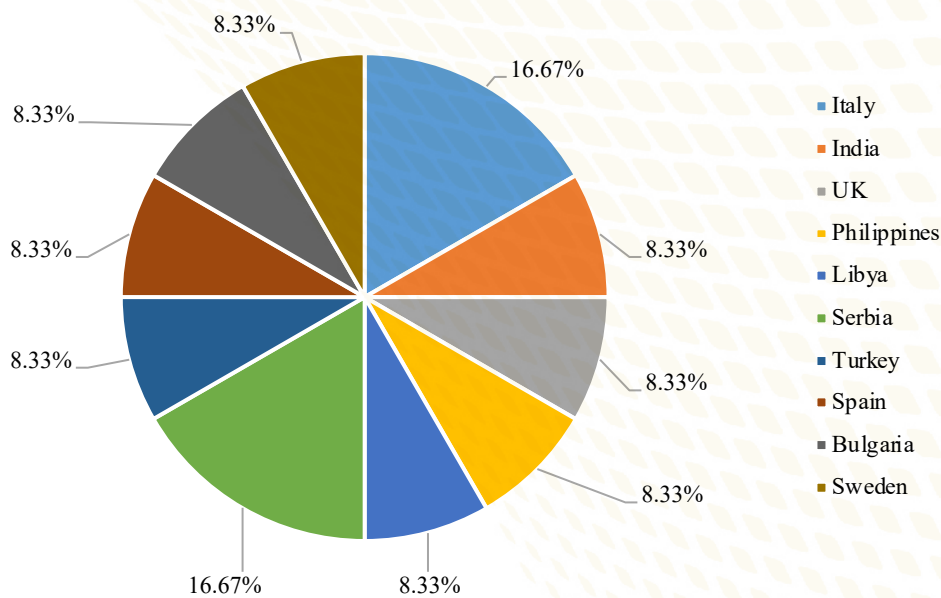
4. Analysis of Findings

The following section outlines the major findings obtained from the semi-structured interview/survey which was conducted with the 12 different community leaders representing the top 10 nationalities, which make up to c. 51% of the foreign communities in the region. These include Italy, India, the UK, the Philippines, Libya, Serbia, Turkey, Spain, Bulgaria, and Sweden, as outlined in Table 9 in the methodology section above.

4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHICS

When looking at the number of respondents who agreed to answer such a survey, 12 community leaders agreed to participate. These included one from each community and 2 Italian representatives and 2 Serbian representatives, as indicated in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7
Percentage of respondents per foreign community

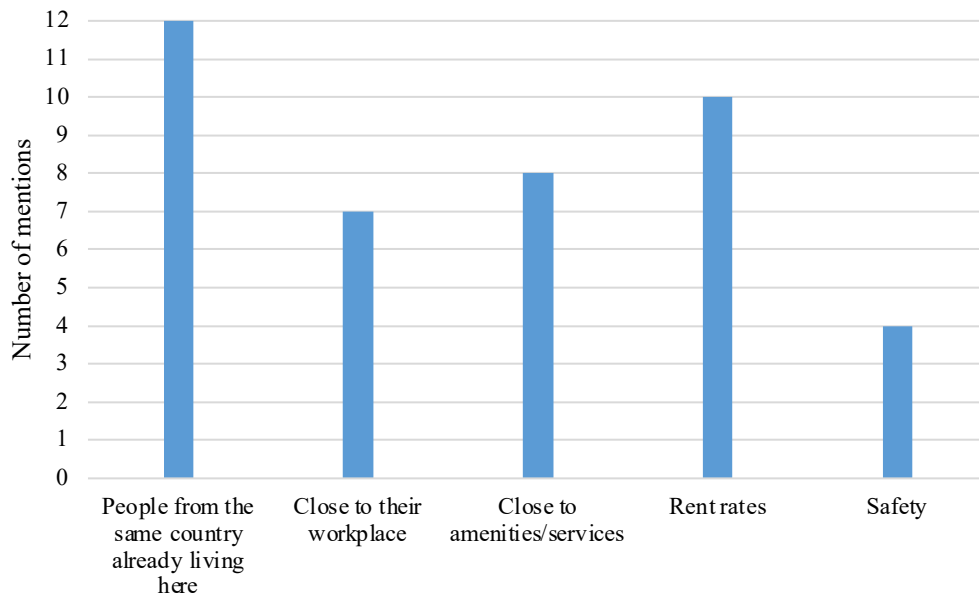


The respondents were also asked to disclose for how long they had been acting in the role of their community's representatives. Answers varied from 6 months up to 12 years, with an average of 7.5 years' representation. This indicates the volatile nature of such foreign organisations, whereby, in some instances, the mobile nature of migrants might also lead to turnover of the leadership teams, which are a key element of integration.

The representatives provided information on the major factors that attract their communities to the localities where they reside. The findings revealed that all of the respondents identified 'people from the same country already living there' as the main pull factor. 88% of respondents (10 mentions) mentioned that 'rental rates' was also a significant factor. In this case, the Swedish and Turkish communities did not select this option. Additionally, 'being close to amenities' was mentioned 8 times (83%). Safety, on the other hand, was only chosen by one

Serbian representative, the Spanish, the Filipino, and Swedish communities (33%, 4 mentions), as indicated in Figure 8.

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



24.2 QUALITY OF LIFE

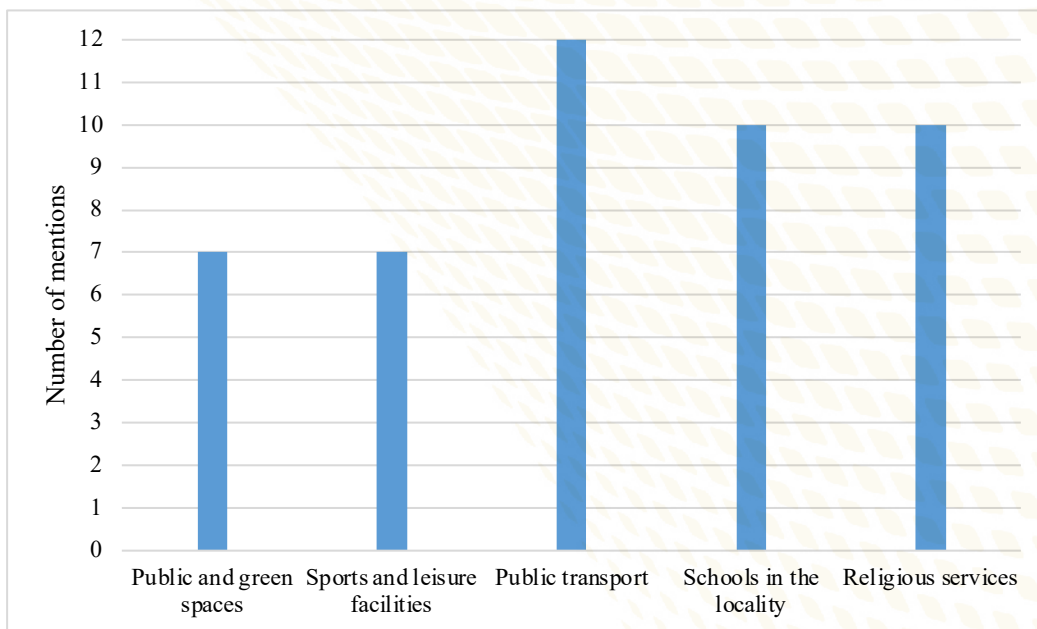
When asked whether their community living in the Region is satisfied or otherwise with the location they live in, all representatives answered satisfied (12 mentions). When asked specifically what their communities like the most about the areas they reside in, 4 communities (Italians, Swedish, Spanish, and Indians) mentioned safety, calmness, and quietness as satisfactory factors. Spanish, Serbians, and British mentioned how their community members like their localities since other compatriots live in the area and/or socialising is easier. Another four communities (Serbian, Syrian, Filipino, and Turkish) mentioned that the areas are close to their work to amenities such as schools, health care services, and prayer spaces. Two representatives (Serbia and UK) mentioned that proximity to the sea and beaches is also a plus.

Despite all respondents mentioning that their communities are satisfied with the areas they reside in, when asked if there was anything they were unsatisfied with, many outlined a number of issues. The biggest challenge issued was that of “time in traffic” and/or parking (4 mentions). Garbage and hygiene were also issues outlined by 3 different communities, with one respondent specifying, “Bad hygiene, bad organisation regarding the trash pickup, not enough trash bins on the streets, no covers for the rain or sun on the bus stops.” Other issues which were mentioned only once each included, “lack of safety”, “pollution,” “not enough buses,” “lack of prayers spaces for the Muslim community,” and “high rent rates.” Interestingly, one community complained of “not much involvement with the locals” in the area, whilst another, on the contrary, mentioned having too much of a “mix of nationalities.” This points

directly to the tensions that a diverse community might be facing in Reġjun Lvant.

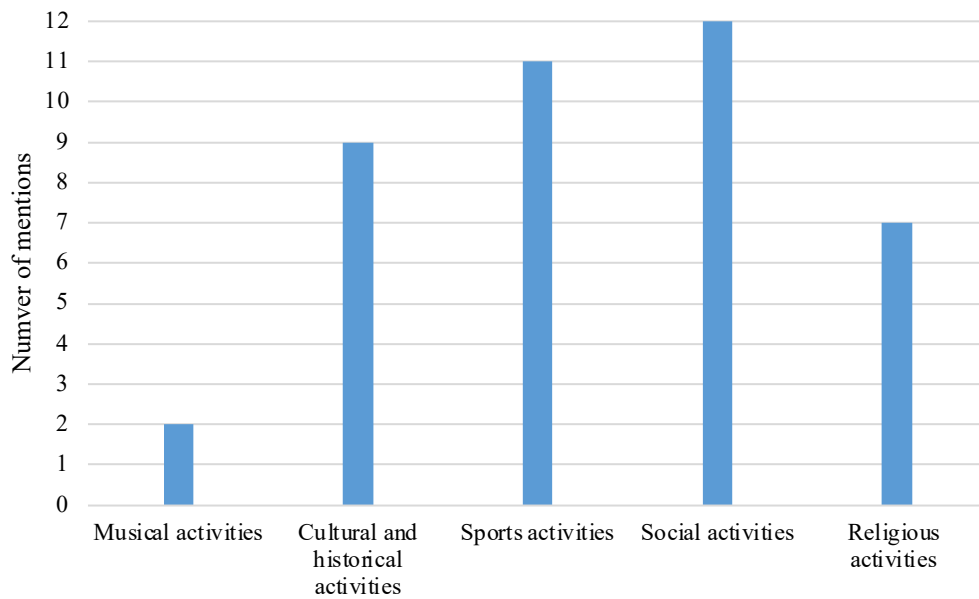
The survey further asked the representatives about which services and/or amenities they make use of in their communities/localities. All respondents mentioned that they make use of 'public transport'. 10 communities (83%) referred to making use of 'schools in the locality', with the Swedish and one Italian community not mentioning this service. Regarding 'religious services', all communities make use of the services, except for one of the two Serbian representatives and one of the two Italian representatives (83% - 10 mentions). Moreover, 58% (7 mentions) stated that they use 'public and green spaces' (excluding the British, Bulgarians, Libyans, one of the Serbian Representatives, and one of the Italian Representatives). Another 58% (7 mentions) stated that they use 'sports and leisure facilities' (excluding Libyans, Turkish, Filipinos, Spanish, and Indian Representatives).

Figure 9
Community services and amenities used by own community members



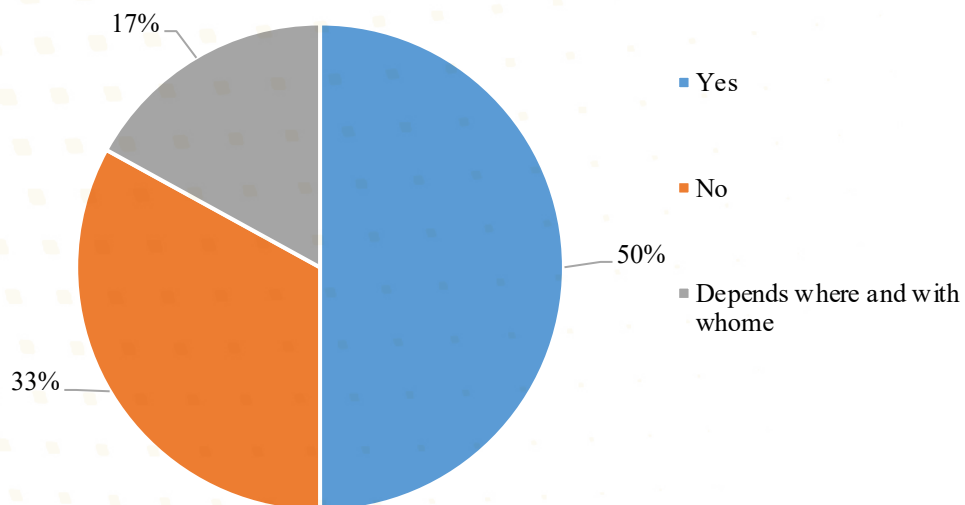
As highlighted in Figure 10, when asked whether their communities participate in activities as a community level, all representatives mentioned at least two types of activities they would be active in. All respondents (12 mentions) mentioned that their communities participate in 'social activities'. Another 92% of respondents (11 mentions, excluding the Libyan community) mentioned participation in sports activities and another 9 mentions (75%) came from 'cultural and historical activities'. Furthermore, 58% (7 mentions) of the respondents expressed their community's involvement in religious activities'. Only 17% (2 mentions by one Italian and one Serbian representatives) mentioned 'musical activities' as something their community attends to. It is worth noting that one of the Italian and one of the Serbian representative mentioned that overall, their community members are active in all the different events suggested. On the other hand, the British and Bulgarian representatives only mentioned sports and social activities as the main interests of their communities.

Figure 10
Which activities is the community active in



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

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



Italians, British, Libyans, and Spanish mentioned that their communities feel very integrated within Malta, all referring to language as an enabling element. Libyans specifically mentioned that, due to knowing how to speak the Maltese language, they find it easier to integrate. They stated, “Many Libyans speak Maltese so it is easy to integrate more.”

Given that Maltese tend to know how to speak both Italian and English, this has helped both the Italian and British communities to integrate. Italians 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.” The British further affirmed that the “English language is one that most people communicate with, so this becomes easy for us to.” Moreover, the Spanish community mentioned that “We feel like we are part of the Maltese Culture.”

Indians mentioned that they feel integrated but also highlighted that this does not come as a choice, stating, “If they are not integrated, they can’t live as a community.” The Filipino representative mentioned that they feel integrated, however, delving deeper into their answer sheds light on the fact that they do not feel entirely integrated. This is because the Filipino community mentioned that they feel integrated with “fellow Filipinos and TCNs.”

On the other hand, Serbian and Bulgarian representatives answered that they do not feel integrated. On the one hand, there seems to be a lack of interest from the community members themselves: “Serbians like to stay on their own” (Serbian Representative), and “Lack of interest and lack of information” (Bulgarian Representative). Regarding the other Serbian Representative, they also expressed a sense of acceptance towards not being accepted and, as a result, not attempting to overcome these barriers. They mentioned how Serbians tend to “feel like victims of racism in most cases, however, over time, [they] learned to accept that.”

When asked what could help integrate people further, the Filipino community mentioned the need to “socialise and involve themselves in the communities” they live in. The Libyan community leader also expressed a similar sentiment, stating, “Maybe more activities in the areas. ... For us it is not normal. We want to cook for them and be friendly but life is crazy. Maybe open days for us to integrate with others.” In line with this, the Swedish representative emphasised the importance of bringing different communities together and specifically highlighted, “One way to integrate is to have a good meal together.”

The British representative further outlined that having more knowledge on who to reach out when needed could help in the integration process since currently it was mentioned that reaching local councils is quite hard. Furthermore, one Serbian community leader emphasised the need to remove any prejudice and embrace respect:

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

4.3 LOCAL COUNCILS

The survey asked the foreign representatives if their communities are aware of local councils and the role of local councillors. Half of the respondents (50% - 6 mentions) mentioned that their communities (Italian, Swedish, Turkish, Philippines, Indians and Spanish) are aware of Local Councils. All the rest mentioned that their communities are not familiar.

Following that, the survey asked them if they were satisfied with their local council and if they were involved in the activities of the local councils. The six communities, which seemingly are aware of their local councils, mentioned that they are indeed satisfied and are involved in the activities and events that are organised by them. Unsurprisingly, those who were not aware of the local council, mentioned that they were neither satisfied nor participated in the events organised by the local councils.

When asked whether they think that their community members feel that they can approach such local councils, despite being foreigners, Italians, Swedish, Bulgarians, Filipinos, Turkish, Spanish, and Indians mentioned that they feel they can approach if needed.

Libyans answered yes, but "Only Libyan men who are into construction for example can approach local council for permits." Libyan Representative further stated that "for many others no. Because many do not even know they exist. But the problem is because back home we did not have it so now as long as you do not educate, how can people know about it." Serbians and the British said that given that many of their community members "don't know they exist" they do not really approach them.

In addition, the survey asked representatives if their communities' concerns were being addressed by the local councils. The Indian representative mentioned that their concerns are seen; however, it was also mentioned that when renewing the ID cards, they face the issue that local councils do not accept their blue paper (the temporary document). Italians, Serbians, British, and Libyans all mentioned that their concerns are not addressed:

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

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

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

"No. First one is the prayer spaces, it is very limited. Second one is the renting being very expensive. Third one is the garbage collection. For me I think the 3rd one is the worse because people are not helping too." (Libyan Representative)

4.4 REGIONAL COUNCILS

Similarly, the survey posed the same questions regarding the Regional Councils. This time, less representatives mentioned that their communities (Turkish, the Filipinos, Indians and Spanish) 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, 5 communities answered in the positive, namely, the Italians, Turkish, Libyans, the Filipinos, and Indians. The Libyan representative highlighted that notwithstanding the fact that much of the effort is not heard or taken seriously, they still approach if needed. However, one of the Serbian representatives mentioned difficulties in approaching the Regional Council due to their opening hours conflicting with people's work schedules. Additionally, language barriers seem to exist when trying to communicate with the Regional Council. The British representative, despite not facing a language barrier, expressed that it is difficult to reach out and contact the Council, especially for newcomers.

Finally, when asked whether the Regional Council addresses the concerns of the communities, the Italian and Indian communities said yes, six did 'no' answer, whilst two said that their concerns were not addressed, with one respondent stating:

No not much. We are very religious and I feel there is nothing wrong with it. We might be a threat for many but we are good people who only want our faith to continue being practised that is it. And since the regional council do not take that into consideration is very bad. (Libyan Representative)

4.5 ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Participants made comments about the positive aspects of living in the Reġjun Lvant, highlighting the convenient proximity to acquaintances and various services. Specifically, the Swedish community expressed a strong appreciation for the unique qualities of the Eastern Region. However, the Libyan Representative expressed a desire to have a voice and contribute to the betterment of the community. They emphasised that Malta has become their home and they want to maximise their opportunities there. The representative mentioned that organising gatherings with the regional councils would make a significant difference for the Libyan community. They emphasised the importance of speaking up and working towards improvement, as they no longer feel like outsiders in Malta. Although the possibility of returning to their home country may be considered if it becomes available, they are committed to doing what is best for Malta.

5. Conclusion

This Annex is an attempt to give a voice to the foreign residents in the Region, which in Reġjun Lvant are indeed a substantial percentage of the community, 43,708 (37.71%) as per the Census 2021 data. And which are year-on-year increasing, as proven in the latest parliamentary question indicating around 54,372 foreign individuals residing in the Region, as at September 2023.

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

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

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

Foreign communities seemingly make use of services in the community, with mostly being schools, public transport, and religious services. Many also participate in some of the activities in the community, with the highest being social activities and sports activities. It was also noted that there is a need for more prayer spaces, specifically mentioned by representatives from the Libyan and Turkish communities, as it would better accommodate their needs. These activities and needs expressed by foreign residents present an opportunity for the Regional and Local Councils to further integrate foreigners into the community.

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 specific needs and concerns.

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

The research team would recommend that following such a preliminary study, the Regional

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

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

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A

Table 3

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

Reġjun Lvant	NSO Census 2021	PQ - Sept 2023	% in foreign population
Birkirkara	5,171	6,804	31.58%
Gharghur	503	700	39.17%
Gżira	5,401	6,806	26.01%
Hal Lija	290	688	137.24%
Iklin	402	590	46.77%
Msida	7,493	8,654	15.49%
Pembroke	449	540	20.27%
Pietà	2,652	3,293	24.17%
San Ġiljan	5,754	7,681	33.49%
Sliema	9,605	11,795	22.80%
Swieqi	5,219	5,943	13.87%
Ta' Xbiex	769	878	14.17%
Total	43,708	54,372	24.40%

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, Ghargħur, Gżira, Hal Lija, Iklin, Msida, Pembroke, Pietà, San Ġiljan, Sliema, Swieqi, Ta' Xbiex
Northern Region includes the following localities: Hal Balzan, H'Attard, Il-Mellieħa, Il-Mosta, In-Naxxar, L-Imġarr, L-Imtarfa, San Ġwann, San Pawl Il-Baħar
Southern Region includes the following localities: Birżebbuġa, Hal Ghaxaq, Hal Qormi, Il-Gudja, Il-Marsa, Iz-Żejtun, Marsaskala, Marsaxlokk, Santa Luċija, Santa Venera, Hal Luqa, Il-Hamrun
Western Region includes the following localities: L-Imdina, Haż-Żebbuġ, Is-Siġġiewi, Had-Dingli, Hal-Kirkop, L-Imqabba, Il-Qrendi, Ir-Rabat, Hal-Safi, Iz-Żurrieq



Sociodemographic Details of representative

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

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

QUALITY OF LIFE

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

	Port	Eastern	Northern	Southern	Western
Satisfied					
Dissatisfied					

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

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

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

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

Religious services					
None					

Other (please specify) _____

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

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

9. Other (please specify) _____

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

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

- If yes, in what way/s?

- If no, why is this the case? -

11. What could help integrating them (further?)

LOCAL COUNCIL

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



- Yes
- No

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

- Yes
- No

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

REGIONAL COUNCIL

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

a. Familiar with their regional council?

- Yes
- No

b. Satisfied with their regional council?

- Yes
- No

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

- Yes
- No

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

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

16. Would you like to add anything else?
