

# News Release

e-stats service



No. 192/2003  
10 December 2003  
Time of release: 11.00 hrs

## THE MALTESE WAY OF LIFE.....

### SUMMARY

- Young adults rate their health best.
- Over a quarter of the adult population suffers from a long-term health problem or disability.
- Book reading is the most popular hobby with the adult population.
- Interest in arts and cultural events is highly related to education level successfully completed.
- Adult males spend an average of 140 minutes per week exercising, compared with 120 minutes for adult females.
- The average weight stands at 78.5kg for adult males and 68.5kg for adult females.
- The average height stands at 1.7m for adult males and 1.6m for adult females.
- 175,770 adult persons, or 60.0 per cent of the adult population, are either overweight or obese.
- The number of children females have is related to their education level and occupation.
- Those who are divorced, annulled or separated are the least satisfied with their lives.
- Those in employment are fairly satisfied with their occupation and immediate colleagues.

### INTRODUCTION

The National Statistics Office (NSO) carried out a survey between June and July 2003 to study factors related to the lifestyle of Maltese residents, aged 18 years or over living within private households. The target population was estimated at around 292,700 persons.

A sample of 1,000 individuals was selected randomly from the Electoral Register, each individual having the same chance of being selected. The data was collected by means of anonymous self-completion questionnaires which were mailed out to respondents. A total of 528 questionnaires were received, meaning a response rate of 52.8 per cent was achieved.

Post-stratification by gender, age-group, marital status and highest education level successfully completed was performed. A weight was assigned to each respondent according to these variables so that the results could be representative of the population.

The NSO has published a publication titled 'Lifestyle Survey 2003' which contains detailed information and tables. Additionally the NSO offers users the possibility of submitting requests for tailor-made reports. Requests for the publication and tailor-made reports are to be sent to:

**Library and Information Unit  
National Statistics Office  
Lascaris  
Valletta CMR02**

**Tel: 25997209  
Fax: 21249841  
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## **RESULTS**

### **HEALTH**

On average respondents rate their health condition as fair. No relation between health condition and gender was found. Youngsters aged between 18 to 24 rate their health as being significantly better when compared to elderly persons aged 65 years or more.

It was estimated that around 78,800 persons, or 26.9 per cent, suffer from a long-term health problem and/or disability. This was found to be highly related to the age of a person. In fact 98.7 per cent of the persons who are between 18 to 24 years of age do not suffer from a long-term health problem or disability, compared with 40.8 per cent of persons aged 65 years or over.

### **SMOKING**

Some 75,260 persons, or 25.7 per cent, smoke tobacco. On a gender level 30.3 per cent of males and 21.3 per cent of females are smokers. It was estimated that 19.9 per cent of the population used to smoke tobacco and stopped whilst 64.7 per cent of females have never smoked tobacco.

Most female smokers, or 56.8 per cent, smoke between 1 to 10 cigarettes a day whilst 25.5 per cent of males smoke between 21 to 30 cigarettes a day. A considerable proportion, or 81.6 per cent of smokers, aged between 18 to 24 years smoke between 1 to 10 cigarettes a day compared with 18.6 per cent of persons aged 65 years or more smoke an average of 31 cigarettes or more daily.

It emerged that 59.6 per cent of smokers who successfully completed a tertiary level of education smoke between 1 to 10 cigarettes a day, compared with 34.8 per cent of those with no schooling.

### **ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION**

It was also found that 36.0 per cent of the adult population drinks alcohol on a regular basis, i.e. at least once a week. On a gender level 47.5 per cent of males and 25.0 per cent of the females drink alcohol on a regular basis. Out of these persons 22.6 per cent suffer from a long-term health problem. Apart from this 60.2 per cent of persons aged between 18 to 24 years drink alcohol at least once every week.

On average males drink more alcohol than females with an average of 4.9 units per week, compared with 1.1 units for females. Beer accounts to around half of the total alcohol consumption, whilst wine accounts to 33.0 per cent. Proportionally, females consume more wine than males. In fact wine accounts to 50.0 per cent of the total amount of alcohol consumed by females, compared with 28.9 per cent for males.

It was found that smoking of tobacco and alcohol are related. In fact, 32.2 per cent of those who consume alcohol regularly are smokers whereas 58.8 per cent of those who do not drink alcohol on a regular basis have never smoked.

### **DRUGS**

Some 33.3 per cent of females reported that they used pain relievers during the previous 6 months, compared with 27.6 per cent of males. Additionally, 1.3 per cent of the respondents indicated that they had made use of illegal substances during the preceding 6 months.

### **HOBBIES**

Book reading is the most popular hobby with the population. In fact 51.5 per cent of females and 24.8 per cent of males indicated book reading as their most popular hobby.

Interest in arts and cultural events is highly related to the educational level successfully completed. In fact interest in such events varied from 50.2 per cent for individuals with a tertiary level of education to 12.2 per cent for those who completed a secondary level of education and 3.1 per cent for those with no

schooling. On the other hand the opposite holds for bingo, lotteries or sweepstakes, these hobbies being most popular with individuals with no schooling.

### **PLACES FREQUENTED**

From the analysis it resulted that a relationship exists between education level and places frequented. It was found that individuals with a tertiary level of education frequent all places most, except bars and pool halls. For example, 56.8 per cent of individuals with a tertiary level of education frequent cinemas compared with 23.7 per cent who completed a secondary level of education and 8.9 per cent of individuals with no schooling.

### **EXERCISE**

It was found that males spend an average of 140 minutes per week exercising, this being 20 minutes above the average for females. From the survey it emerged that 61.7 per cent of females practice walking and 13.3 per cent practice some form of exercise at home.

A relationship between educational level and the average time per week spent exercising was also found. In fact the average time varied from 50 minutes for persons having no schooling to 130 minutes for persons with a secondary level of education and 260 minutes for those with a tertiary level of education.

### **WEIGHT AND HEIGHT**

On average a Maltese adult weighs 72.0 kg. On a gender level females on average weigh 65.8 kg, compared with 78.5 kg for males. It seems that males aged between 25 to 34 years old weigh most. In fact the average weight for this group was 84.7 kg, compared with 64.1 kg for females. On the other hand females aged between 18 to 24 years old weigh least, with an average of 55.6 kg, compared with 79.1 kg for males.

The average height of the population also seems to be related to age. In fact males aged between 25 and 34 are the tallest group, with an average height of 175.2cm compared with an average height of 165.3 for males aged 65 years or over. For females the average height for those aged between 25 and 34 stood at 163.8 cm, compared with 156.8 cm for those aged 65 years or over. The average height for all individuals aged 18 years or over stood at 164.8cm. Globally the average height for males stood at 169.9cm and 159.9cm for females.

It was estimated that in Malta some 175,770 adult persons, or 60.0 per cent, are either overweight or obese. Of these 99,110 persons, or 56.3 per cent, are males. On the other hand 7.6 per cent of females aged between 18 to 24 years are underweight, compared with 2.3 per cent for the whole population.

### **REST**

It was found that Maltese residents aged 18 years or over sleep an average of 7.4 hours each day. Interestingly persons aged between 18 to 24 years old on average sleep 42 minutes less during the weekend when compared with the amount of time they sleep during weekdays.

### **CHILDREN**

Women aged 18 years or over gave birth to an average of 1.9 children, the number being related to their education level and occupation. Whereas the average age of women with a primary level of education at the time they first gave birth was 25.5 years, the average age of women with a tertiary level of education stood at 27.7 years. Professional females were aged 28.3 years at the time when they first gave birth, compared with 22.3 years for plant and machine operators and assemblers.

## **INTERNAL MIGRATION**

It was observed that 86.4 per cent of the population reside in the same district they lived in until they were 14 years old. In particular 96.2 per cent of Gozitan residents did not move elsewhere. However 26,370 persons, or 22.4 per cent, who lived in the Southern Harbour and South Eastern districts until they were 14 years old moved to the Northern Harbour, Western or Northern districts. On the other hand only 11,340 persons, or 7.7 per cent, who lived in the Northern Harbour, Western or Northern districts until they reached 14 years moved to the southern districts.

Analysis revealed that 56.0 per cent of the persons who moved from the Southern Harbour and South Eastern districts to the Northern Harbour, Western and Northern districts were females. However just 35.0 per cent of the persons who moved the opposite way were females.

## **LIFE SATISFACTION**

Persons are generally satisfied with their lives. However those who were divorced, annulled or separated are only mildly satisfied. On the other hand it seems that males residing within the Western district were the most satisfied. It resulted that the family's standard of living is related to life satisfaction. Indeed, persons with either a good or a very good standard of living turned out to be more satisfied with their lives than others who do not have such a high standard of living. Actually persons whose standard of living is very bad were quite dissatisfied with their lives.

## **SATISFACTION WITH EMPLOYMENT**

Generally those in employment are fairly satisfied with their occupation and their immediate colleagues. On a gender level females are on average more satisfied than males with their occupation and immediate colleagues.

## **DEFINITIONS**

### **DISTRICTS**

**South Harbour** - Żabbar, Xgħajra, Valletta, Tarxien, Santa Lucija, Paola, Marsa, Luqa, Kalkara, Senglea, Floriana, Fgura, Cospicua, Vittoriosa.

**North Harbour** - Ta' Xbiex, Swieqi, Sliema, Santa Venera, San Gwann, St. Julians, Qormi, Pietà, Pembroke, Msida, Ħamrun, Gżira, Birkirkara.

**South Eastern** - Żurrieq, Żejtun, Safi, Qrendi, Mqabba, Marsaxlokk, Marsaskala, Kirkop, Gudja, Għaxaq, Birżebbuġja.

**Western** - Żebbuġ (Malta), Siġġiewi, Rabat (Malta), Mtarfa, Mdina, Lija, Iklin, Dingli, Balzan, Attard.

**Northern** - St. Paul's Bay, Naxxar, Mosta, Mġarr, Mellieħa, Għargħur.

**Gozo and Comino** - Rabat (Gozo), Fontana, Għajnsielem and Comino, Għarb, Għasri, Kerċem, Munxar, Nadur, Qala, San Lawrenz, Sannat, Xagħra, Xewkija, Żebbuġ (Gozo).

**Body Mass Index (BMI):** This is an objective scientific measure of body fat based on height and weight that applies to both adult men and women. The BMI can be calculated by dividing the weight in kilograms by the square of the height in metres.

The classification of underweight, overweight and obesity by BMI are as follows:

$BMI < 18.5$                       **Underweight**

$18.5 \leq BMI < 24.9$         **Normal**

$24.9 \leq BMI < 29.9$         **Overweight**

$BMI \geq 29.9$                     **Obese**

**Alcohol Units:** These are alcoholic measures related to the alcoholic content of different drinks. A unit of alcohol is the equivalent of 10g of alcohol. One glass of wine, one bottle of beer and one tot of spirits constitute one unit of alcohol.