



IV CONVENTION
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Maurice Cauchi
Australia

The second generation: Who are they?

Introduction

The latest census in Australia (2011) shows that there currently 41,274 Malta-born persons (first generation). At its peak in the 1960s it had reached 56,000. The rate of decline over recent years is 1% pa. This rate is of course expected to rise quite sharply with increasing age of the current population.

By contrast, the number of persons belonging to the second and subsequent generations in Australia was 163,990, as follows:

- a. Both parents born overseas: 85,822
- b. Father only born overseas: 21,150
- c. Mother only born overseas: 11,254
- d. Both parents born in Australia: 42,602
- e. Parents birthplace not stated: 3,162
- f. Total 163,990

From these statistics it should be noted that nearly 43,000 of these were born to parents who were themselves born in Australia (ie they belong to the third generation).

Characteristics of the second generation

Demographics

- Two-thirds (65 percent) were below the age of 50, and one-third (34%) were below age 40 years
- There is a significant number aged over 60 (12.7%).
- There were slightly more female participants compared to males in the ratio (F:M ratio = 1.22)

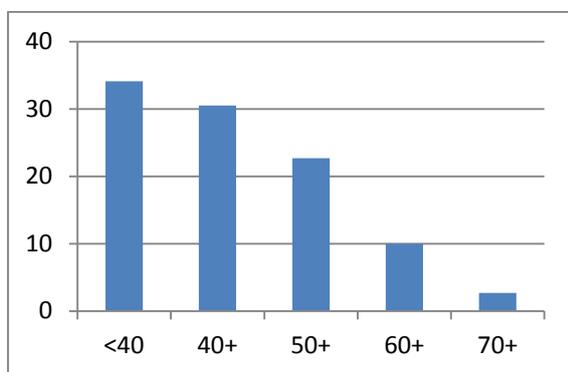


Figure 1: Proportion of participants within the age bracket indicated

The majority (63%) were married and another 9% had a de facto relationship and another 28% were single.

The majority of respondents had a partner of non-Maltese background (Australian - 60.4%) or other (eg. Another Italian, Polish, etc. -13.4%). Less than one-third of persons of Maltese background (26.2%) had a partner of Maltese background.

Ethnicity

A surprising majority of respondents (77 per cent) defined their ethnicity as either 'Maltese/Australian' (66 per cent), or simply as 'Maltese' (11.3 per cent), with 22.6 per cent considering themselves as 'Australian'. Very few actually think of themselves primarily as Maltese and these are largely the older members of the community. Over one-fifth of the total consider themselves as unhyphenated 'Australians'.

Religion

In this study, 77 per cent of respondents who chose to answer this rather personal question considered themselves Catholic. But when asked about their religious practice, only just over one-third (37%) stated that they go to church regularly on Sundays, several other (40%) indicated that they go to church only on special occasions (Christmas, Easter, weddings, baptisms). Others preferred not to answer the question.

Intermarriage is also a factor in reducing church attendance and loss of one's religious beliefs if these are not shared by a spouse or partner. Half of the number of respondents stated that their partner did not have the same religious background as themselves (50 per cent).

Perhaps of more significance is the religious orientation of their children. Again about half of the children (52%) of these couples were said to have the same religion as themselves.

For comparison, in Malta itself, the proportion of persons attending church regularly has fallen to 51 per cent by 2005.¹

Maltese language maintenance

Language encapsulates an identity, and loss of language often is associated with a loss of culture. There are also emotional needs best served by the original language, and no other language, especially if learned rather late in life, is capable of replacing.

The survey indicates that just over half of all persons (57%) in the 2nd generation claim to be able to understand Maltese well or moderately well. However, they do not seem to be using this language regularly. Only 21 % admit to speaking Maltese to parents or friends.

Just over two-thirds (69.1%) of respondents stated that they never speak to their children in Maltese, and only 2.3% per cent say that they speak in Maltese frequently to their children frequently.

¹ <http://www.discern-malta.org/research.html>

It can be readily deduced from these data that maintenance of language under these conditions, which is already stretched in the second generation, is likely to be extremely precarious in the third.

Membership of Maltese associations

Only a fifth (20.5%) of respondents stated that they belonged to a Maltese association. The majority of these were in the age group of 50 and over, and only 6 percent of all respondents under the age of 40 stated that they were members of associations.

One optimistic development of recent years is the setting up of a couple of organisations which cater for persons of Maltese-background, organising ethnically flavoured gatherings (cooking competitions, etc.) There is also the occasional jamboree where a popular DJ gives a performance with Maltese-orientation and flavour, and this can attract several hundred participants.

Passports

A major indicator of ethnicity is citizenship. There was a time when one could not hold citizenship of more than one country. Many persons of the first generation had to make the painful decision of losing their Maltese citizenship if they applied for an Australian one.²

Luckily, this situation has now changed completely, with Australia now recognising dual citizenships, and with Malta declaring that those who had Maltese citizenship (the first generation) never in effect lost it when they applied for other citizenships.

More recently dramatic changes have occurred which have extended Maltese citizenship to anyone who in effect could show direct connection with Maltese parentage. In effect, as long as there had been no interruption of the blood line, one is considered automatically to have the right to apply for recognition as a Maltese citizen.

In this respect it was of interest to see how many Maltese-background persons have taken up this option of applying for a Maltese passport.

² For further details relating to citizenship, see Cauchi M.N.: *Under one Umbrella: A history of the Maltese Community Council of Victoria, 1958-2008*. MCCV 2009, p 238-242

From this survey it appears that just under one-third (31%) of participants actually had a Maltese passport. About an equal number (30%) stated that they did not have one, but were considering applying for one.

Level of education achieved

One major issue that haunted educationalists in the early days of migration (1950s and 60s) was the very high rate of loss of students when they reached year 10 (Form 4) of secondary schooling, associated with a large proportion of students who did not complete school-leaving certificate, let alone participate in tertiary education. The situation was particularly marked among Maltese students, who preferred to take up an apprenticeship. The result was that Maltese students had one of the lowest participation in tertiary education, compensated for by one of the highest rate of participation in apprenticeships.³

It was therefore of interest to look into the educational achievements of second-generation persons of Maltese background in Australia. The main point that comes out of this survey however, is the finding that the proportion of persons with a higher qualification was as high as 58 per cent, which is far higher than expected. There was a higher proportion of women participants with a tertiary qualification (female to male ratio= 1.5). In other words, there were about 21 per cent more females than males with a tertiary qualification.

Links with Malta: Visiting Malta

One important parameter to test the strength of links with Malta is to assess how often participants have actually visit there, and what they think of the place.

More than half of respondents (58.2 %) said that they went several times (1-4 times), and a considerable number (17.3%) having been 4 – 10 times. A relatively small number (6.4%) stated that they had been to Malta more than 10 times. It is to be noted that less than 10 per cent stated that they never had been to Malta.

This would suggest that there is still a strong link between the second generation and Malta, and they consider this as a suitable destination to go for a holiday.

³ Cauchi, M: *Maltese Migrants in Australia*, 1996

An attempt was made to assess the degree of satisfaction they had from their visit to the islands. The questionnaire asked the participants to indicate on a scale of '1' to '5' how 'impressed' they were with what they found (with '1' indicating complete satisfaction, and '5' indicate least satisfaction.) An average mark close to '1' would therefore be expected to indicate good satisfaction with their visit to Malta.

In this survey, most participants appeared to be quite satisfied: overall an average grade of 1.7 was obtained.

There were, however, a few (13.6%) who were disgruntled and not too impressed with what they found. It would be important for those involved in the tourist industry to inquire as to the reasons for their dissatisfaction (an aspect not covered in this survey).

Links with Malta: Communications

The main means of communications with Malta for anyone interested in keeping in touch fall into two main categories:

Local radio stations: These are quite popular with the first generation, but not so popular with the second. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents stated that they never listened to local radio, with another third (28%) stating that they sometimes listened to these broadcasts. Only per cent stated that they listened to these radio broadcasts frequently.

SBS television: Almost half of respondents (46.5%) stated that they watched SBS television sometimes and another few (14.6%) stated that they watched it frequently. Just over one-third (38.9%) stated that they never watched this program.

Radio and print media from Malta: In relation to accessing information directly from sources from Malta, it was stated that 14.5 per cent accessed Maltese radio directly, and about half of respondents (44.5%) stated that they have contact through internet. A relatively small proportion (15%) stated that they look at Maltese newspapers.

These findings indicate that there is still a relatively strong interest within the second generation in relation to keeping in touch with what is happening in Malta, through the use of one or other means of communication, most frequently through electronic means.

Further reading

The full version of the Report: *The Second Generation in Australia: A survey of Maltese-background persons*, can be downloaded from:

mauricecauchi.wordpress.com

Cauchi, M, Borland, H, Adams, A (eds): *Maltese Background Youth.*, 1999, Victoria University.

Cauchi, M.N. 'The Second Generation in Australia', in *The Maltese Migrant Experience, Malta, (1999)*.

Cauchi, M.N. 'The View from the Future: the Second Generation', in *Maltese Achievers in Australia, , Maltese Community Council of Victoria. (2006)*

Cauchi, MN. *Under One Umbrella: A History of the Maltese Community Council of Victoria, 1958-2008. (2009)*.

Maurice Cauchi
Australia