



Population

FORM 5 UNIT 4 (OPTION)

4. **Population:** demography (mobility, birth rates and death rates, life expectancy); migration; urbanisation and the challenges which this brings with it (density, traffic problems, pollution, job opportunities, and facilities).

- Definition of demography; trends in birth rates and death rates. The natural increase or decrease in population; the importance of the population census.
- Population explosion in the 20th and 21st centuries and the effect of this on the developed countries (for example, ageing populations) and on those who are still developing (populations which are still young).
- Population mobility; temporary or permanent, related to work or residence, factors which lead to population mobility (high quality transport and education as well as technological developments).
- Migration (immigration, emigration, transmigration and returning immigrants). Different types of migration: internal and external, forced or voluntary, legal and illegal, migrant integration, detention centres, asylum seekers or a refugee status.
- The integration of migrants in society (the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)).
- The push and pull factors of migration.
- Urbanisation: the advantages (opportunities of work, education and better health facilities, as well as a higher level of infrastructure) and the disadvantages (traffic congestion and pollution, environmental and social stress, and accommodation problems); urban development and the density of population.

More information on Studji Soċjali – Nifhmu l-Ġenn tas-Soċjetà Paġna 255

The relationship between humans and the environment around them is very much affected by the **size of the population**. A study about the population is called a **demographic study** and this needs to be carried out every so often so that people's needs and the effects these are leaving on their environment (resources and land) can be measured and assessed.

First we look at quantity – we call this the **density of population**. We measure this by taking the number of people and comparing this to the size of the territory so that we know how many people live in every kilometre squared. Here we find that in Malta we have around 1,200 people per kilometre squared and this is considered to be a very high level of density. One of the highest in the world in fact. This is not because we have a large population but because we have a very small piece of land to live on. Now we also know that although Gozo is smaller its density is nonetheless smaller because there are much less people, 390 people per kilometre squared.

However, if we were to measure **demographic pressure**, and this is the economic ability of the country to provide for the people living in it, we see that Gozo has a higher pressure because Gozo is not as industrially developed and depends for all its needs on Malta.

A demographic study which deals with the whole population of a country is called a **census** and this is carried out every ten years by the government. It is carried out so that the government can measure the **standard of living** of the people and formulate a development plan for the years to come accordingly.

Up to 200 years ago the world population was relatively stable – this was due to the fact that the number of births was equal to the number of deaths however, all this changed, thanks to hygiene, discoveries in medicine, healthy food etc. Deaths decreased. Very often we also find that births decreased however this happened only in developed countries and still population is increasing with a big percentage of **elderly** and this in turn is causing an ageing population problem.

The **infant mortality rate** decreased a lot, even in Malta, today almost every baby who is born lives and the **life expectancy** is always increasing. Here in Malta this has increased to 75 for men and 78 for women.

In third world countries the **crude birth rate** is still high and the **crude death rate** has decreased so we see a population explosion every few years. Many people hope that we do not wait very long for a **demographic change** whereby a certain stability and balance is reached because we cannot keep on increasing the way we are. Presently there are around six thousand million people (6000,000,000) in the world and every person needs a lot of things to live, both material as well as social and these use up many natural resources which are becoming very scarce. Presently also 5 children are being born globally every second.

In Malta the biggest problem we are facing is the **lack of land and housing**. Every person needs a place to live in, where to work, schools, shops, hospitals, places of entertainment etc. Apart from this in Malta we have to host around a million tourists per year. We also see two big waves of development in construction – that for tourists and that

for Maltese people themselves. We see that Malta is continuously being built up, housing estates, hotels, holiday flats, industrial estates etc. This construction work is a very important economic activity because through this many people have work and one of the few resources we have is being utilised – globigerina limestone which one has to keep in mind will come to an end sooner or later too. Wherever houses are built there is a great demand for many other services which are provided either by government or private industry.

Government set up the **planning authority** in 1992 so that these present a **structural plan** which would protect the environment, regulate land use and see that the people are having their needs met and that a balance is being kept between land use for tourists and that for the Maltese themselves. Later still **MEPA** was set up, this today is responsible for every building permit issued. Every bit of construction today has to be approved by this authority because it looks like finally the Maltese government has realised that the size of our country is not growing any bigger and that if we do not use our land well, we are the ones to suffer in the end. It is important that every type of development that happens in the country be **sustainable**, which means that it goes hand in hand with the needs both of the people as well as those of the environment so we need to look after this – which means that we need to invest in what is known as **sustainable development**.

QUALITY OF LIFE IN TOWNS, SUBURBS AND VILLAGES

It is not true that population has to stop growing because there is not enough land and food for everyone. In the world **there is a lot of space** and **enough food** is produced for everyone however, the **distribution**

of these resources is not being carried out fairly. There are countries which produce a lot and in order to keep a high Price on their produced objects they prefer to throw these away, even when the products are foodstuffs. Here we have to mention the **butter mountains** and the **milk lakes** which are found in Europe.

Apart from this we have no right to criticise the **third world countries** because these have **large families** – people who work and live by working their land need to have large families. The more hands to work, the more production of crops to live on for all the family.

In **developed countries** on the other hand where life is very fast, competitive and expensive, the birth rate has decreased so much so that the **population in these countries is decreasing too.** Many women are preferring a career to babies. Apart from this, progress in medicine, hygiene and healthy food have all helped so that in these countries every new-born lives. However children **do not have the role of producers anymore but have become consumers** and they take a very long time to start earning their own living in an independent manner – hence the number has really decreased.

However it is not only the size of the population which matters if we want to measure the effect this is having on the environment but also **how this population is distributed.**

Villages started when people realised that they could increase their standard of living if they **share their work with others.** As soon as they started to live close to one another to better use the **barter system,** they set up the first communities which in a short time became the first villages. However a lack of work in the countryside and work

which looked easier and paid well gave rise to the first **towns** where we now can find millions of people living.

We call this phenomenon **urbanisation**.

Life in towns is a comfortable one, luxurious and full of services and essential things. None of which are to be found in villages so the attraction life in towns held, was very big. So much so that in a town like **Mexico City** we find **33 million** people living. However not all that glitters is gold. Many people who leave the country for towns realise that the yellow brick road dream was just that, a dream – they find neither work nor a place to live and it is these people who end up poor in the towns and living in **slums**. These slums are nothing more than a stretch of land on the peripheries of the towns where many people are forced to live without any decent conditions at all. Sometimes these slum areas grow so big that they start to be referred to as **shanty towns**. In Malta we had slum areas which we called **kerrejiet** however we do not have large enough areas that they may be classified as shanty towns. We used to find these slums in Valletta, Bormla, Birgu and in Isla, in Hamrun, Birkirkara, Zabbar and in many other localities where population was increasing.

Certain towns become so **commercial** after some time that the inhabitants start to live further and further away from them. They start to build away from the towns, comfortable and luxurious houses, more spacious and with less traffic, noise and dirt. These **suburbs** at the periphery of the towns are still close enough to enable people to easily find all the necessities and services (work, services, health, entertainment etc.) minus the disadvantages of living in town.

Every place whatever it is has to provide all that is essential for life – water, food, waste disposal and drainage and adequate transport.

So what is different between life in a village to life in a town?

In many countries the **rural zone** (countryside) is the largest tract of land in the country with the least people on it. This is because agricultural land is needed to grow food and animals. Rural life is one that is tied to the seasonal cycle and it is one which follows a very calm rhythm. Houses serve many functions – everything happens under the same roof. Work is mainly in the primary sector of the economy, agriculture and other related services. Workers are usually self-employed.

In **town** we find a small tract of land with a lot of people living on it, every building is specialised, people have to hurry from one place to another to avail themselves of all the services therefore means of transport and communication have to be efficient. Jobs are mainly those of the secondary and tertiary sector. The rhythm of life is a very hectic one and nothing is affected by nature.

In **Malta** today this distinction between a village and a town is very difficult to make, in fact for foreigners Malta is considered to be **one city state**. We cannot consider our towns to be those behind the bastions anymore. In fact in Malta the urban zone is not exactly in the towns behind the bastions. It is true that Valletta has all the government services and many commercial outlets and the three cities have the dockyard however a lot of commerce is happening away from these areas and one could say that many other villages have grown to the size of towns now.

A demographic study is a study about the environment and an example of this is the **census** which is carried out by the government every ten years to measure the **standard of living** of people and then be better able to formulate a **development plan** for the following years.

If we were to compare a census with another we would also be able to note **population mobility**. For example the first census of 1842 showed that many of the population at the time used to live in Valletta and its peripheries. However today we can note the **four residential changes** which took place. From Valletta new suburbs were extended and older ones continued to expand and increase their population **the Valletta conurbation**. Other towns and villages **expanded so much on the peripheries** that now they almost touch one another.

Others **grew from scratch** for example Santa Luċija, San Ġwann, Swatar etc. Other changes showed that the Maltese population decreased between 1957 and 1967 due to **emigration**. Some towns and villages have a few people living in them for example the Cottonera area and some Gozitan villages, this is a sign that there are some type of **social problems** in these centres if people do not want to live in them anymore.

REFUGEES

Who is a refugee?

Where you to ask your grandparents the meaning of the word refugee most probably they would reply by saying that refugees were those people who were forced to leave their homes during the war to seek refuge in some other village which was not such a direct target for enemy fire, or else due to their house having been bombed and they now had nowhere to live.

When the refugees of our time escape, they do not usually go from one village to another. In our world we find many millions of people who were forced to flee their country and start walking, some leaving for one reason and others for another: they escape because of war, or because of persecution on their race, religion, nationality or their political beliefs, as well as because of hunger or natural disasters or other economic problems.

After the Second World War in Europe there was a big problem with refugees, and the United Nations gave this definition of a refugee in the convention about refugees in 1951:

‘A refugee is a person who for a valid reason, because of fear of persecution, because of race, religion, nationality, membership of some social group or because of their political opinions are forced to leave the country of which they have their nationality, and they cannot or do not want to return for fear of not being protected by that same country’.

Presently there are around 20 million people in the world who, according to this definition, can be considered refugees. To this figure we can add another 20 million who had to flee from their homes for fear of persecution but who are not accepted as refugees. We call these **internally displaced persons**, because even though they left their homes because of fear they did not flee to another country but they went to another part of their own country. Many others managed to arrive at a country which is not their own and to continue living there in hiding and without asking to be officially recognised as refugees and granted a refugee status.

THE REFUGEES: WHO ARE THEY? WHERE ARE THEY?

Most probably many of us think that all refugees flee their country so that they leave their poor country to those richer countries, mostly to North America and Europe. However, if we take a look at a world map, and check which countries are most affected by the refugee problem we realise that in fact the bulk of refugees escape from a poor country to other poor countries or even poorer than their own for example people leave from Sudan or from Eritrea and go to Chad, a really poor country.

That refugees are invading the industrialised countries is a lie?

From statistics we have we can confirm that mostly refugees escape to countries which are close to their own, so that as much as possible they remain in the vicinities of their original homeland. In fact the countries which generate the biggest numbers of refugees in turn welcome between 83 to 90 percent of their own refugees. The UNHCR

(United Nations High Commission For Refugees) estimates that 1.6 million which is (14 % from a total of 11.4 million) only live outside their own region of origin.

Where do these refugees live?

5% live in Western Europe

83% live in the poor countries

12% live in other rich countries.

The Refugees in Africa

We can call Africa the continent of poverty, suffering and refugees. The Major part of the 20 million refugees there are in the world are in Africa. There are 28 African countries which have refugees in them and it is very difficult to say how many there are exactly because the figures change daily. What is certain is that in Africa we find 27 of the poorest countries in the world, the climate in many of the African countries is very harsh, with too much heat, drought or else very strong rain storms, and communications are the worst one can imagine

Question:

Why do we find the biggest number of refugees in Africa which is the poorest continent; whilst in Europe there are only 5 percent of

refugees? Is there a connection between poverty, generosity and hospitality?

Very often poor people can understand better those who are poor like themselves, and they are more willing to help and share with them the little they have. Those who have a lot often believe that those who have nothing are to blame for their own situation and it's only right that they suffer because they are lazy. Think and discuss.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC REFUGEES

Apart from the refugees who flee their country because of political problems or war, in recent years there was an increase in the number of so called environmental refugees. The United Nations calls these, those who had to flee their country, for some time or for good, due to the strong change in the environment, both because of natural causes as well as those brought on by humans themselves, which led to people's life being put at risk.

We can say that there are four primary reasons which have been the cause for hundreds of thousands of people being forced to leave their homeland.

- Firstly there are those who had to leave because of **natural disasters** such as earthquakes, floods, or erupting volcanos. The most dramatic cases happening in the countries in the region known as Sahel, in Africa. These are the countries of the Sahara desert and those surrounding it, which during the 80's experienced a longer than usual period of drought, which in turn led to death through famine of millions of people from countries such as Ethiopia, Chad, Eritrea, Somalia etc. Many of these

peoples where nomads, however the lack of rain brought this life to an end: their flocks had nowhere to graze, and where in danger of dying of hunger too, as in fact happened to millions of them.

- The second category are those who were victims of **industrial incidents** where because of these the environment became too dangerous to live in. Incidents such as these happen mostly in the third world countries, and in the chemical production or oil sector. Chernobyl has become the symbol for this second category where the people of a town and surrounding areas had to leave because of the high level of toxic pollution in the environment which had risen so much as to make living there impossible. From Chernobyl, apart from the victims who died or became sick, around 135,000 other people had to leave for good.
- Then there are the victims of **large development projects which failed**, or where people tried to create a more balanced population and did not succeed. In Indonesia there was a Project to displace a big number of people from a heavily populated zone to one not inhabited at all: this project failed, and around half a million people ended up fleeing their country. The same thing happened in Ethiopia and India, where such projects displaced around 20 million people from their places of habitation.
- Last but not least there are the victims of situations where **the land has become so poor** that it can no longer maintain the people and these are forced to leave. It is thought that more than 1,000 million people are presently living in zones around the world which are threatened. These include dry lands, those zones in poor countries where the fields are to be found on the mountains, and the tropical forests around the world. The

countries most at risk are Ethiopia, Chad, Afghanistan, Brazil, Haiti, Honduras and El-Salvador.

We must not forget that when we look at the population of refugees we see that two thirds of these are women and children. Together with the elderly and those with some form of disability, these are the most disadvantaged, both when trying to escape to another country as well as when trying to find work or education if they are children, or to find someone to care for them if sick or elderly.

THE REFUGEES IN OUR COUNTRY

One of the characteristics of us Maltese is the many influences we experienced throughout our history. We are situated in the middle of a very important sea in world history, and through our seas many travelled such as the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Spaniards, French and British. And who knows how many more people from other nations came not only to colonise us but also to live here. These all left an influence, some bigger than others: on our language, mainly, but also in styles of building and architecture, our towns and many of their names, our surnames, systems of education and administration, and thousands of other things. We do not even know whether to call these things foreign or Maltese, because it is through all these things that we are who we are, Maltese.

At the same time, we are a people of strong emigrations. Most probably there isn't a Maltese family who does not have someone in America, Australia, Canada or England. This did not happen only lately, because in the beginning of the century the Maltese were immigrating to North Africa, to Egypt, Tunisia or Algeria. It was after

the First World War, and even more so after the Second World War, that the Maltese started to turn to the countries which spoke English when planning to immigrate.

This emigration completely changed our country, because during this century a bit less than a quarter of a million people left Malta. The Maltese population during our century doubled: so it is unimaginable had those quarter of a million people remained here, with their children and their children's children. In fact, we all know that there are more Maltese people living abroad than there are in Malta.

Maybe it is this mix of different cultures together with the experiences of so many of us who live abroad which make us a people well known for our hospitality.

From the beginning of the 90's we started to receive amongst us a number of refugees from different countries, and in April 1994 there were amongst us around 900 of these. They came to Malta because they escaped the dire situations in their own countries, either because of war or else some form of persecution. They ask to be officially recognised as refugees, hoping in so doing to settle for good in a country willing to welcome them, mostly Canada or the United States. In Malta it is very difficult that anyone be granted a refugee status because our current immigration law is very strict about this.

Amongst these foreigners we find some Iranians, as well as people from Russia and ex-Yugoslavia, many of these are from Bosnia. There are also people from Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Congo, Ivory Coast and from Palestine. Although the government does not

give them a permit to remain in Malta permanently, he gives them a lot of help whilst they are here.

Those registered as refugees, or who are waiting for this status, will receive free medical services in state hospitals, as well as being able to send their children to learn in the state schools for a very small fee.

On her part the Church has the Emigrant Commission to provide important services to these our brothers, mostly by informing them about the services they are entitled to and helping them create contacts. There were a number of Maltese people who hosted refugees in their own homes, or offered them the use of their summer residence for free. There are a number also of widows and children who live in Church residences, parishes that organise this help, as well as groups of neighbours who are paying the rent for the refugees who live in their vicinities.

However, one of the most important needs a person has in their life to feel respected, is work. The bulk of refugees that are in Malta have a very good preparation for work: there are doctors, teachers, scientists, engineers as well as many skilled labourers. In their own countries they used to work and earn a living for their families. Till they find work they suffer a lot, not only through a lack of money, which makes them feel like a burden on others, but also because of the uncertainty which this state of unemployment creates in them.

There is a substantial number, who after waiting for a long time, gained a work permit. There are others who work without a permit, but this is a dangerous thing to do because if they are caught most probably they would be sent out of the country. We also find, people

who exploit them, by profiting from their difficult state and so pay them much less than they deserve to be paid, and definitely much less than they would pay Maltese workers who do the same work. This is a very worrying fact because it creates problems between the Maltese and refugees because the Maltese feel that the refugees are taking their jobs and this gives rise to racism.

Finally we are realising that all these millions of people have every right, as much as you and I have, to their own state and a passport, and that they should not endure many more years of running from one state to another without control over their future. However, we also see that we are in 2016 and up till now everything remains the same if not much worse than ever for the Palestinians. America continues to give arms to Israel and strengthens their military and the Palestinians lose all hope of independent living in their own homeland.

The situation in Palestine seems to be getting worse and after the last massacre of 2014 many Palestinians have become refugees and these have joined other people who were forced to flee their countries because of civil war which there also is in their own country and these are they Syrian people. One of the biggest tragedies which we had in the Mediterranean Sea till now was during this summer when hundreds of Syrians and Palestinians drowned between Italy and Malta.

The refugee problem does not look like it will be resolved any time soon, as long as there are wars and the problems of hunger and absolute poverty refugees are going to go on looking for shelter and security for themselves and their children.

RACISM

We started to hear of racism in Malta since refugees from Africa started to arrive during the last few years. Previously the only racism we heard of was that which some studies used to discuss, however, today, it has become obvious and evident for everyone to see.

On one hand we find extreme right wing groups and organisations and populist movements (which have been associated with hatred for years, not only for coloured people) and on the other hand we are continuously hearing the general public talking about 'the blacks' and what they would like to do to them where they in power.

Many still do not want to accept that this is racism, and they insist that they are not racists but that they worry about their jobs, and in a more abstract way, about our country's culture.

Nevertheless where we to take a look at our history we would find that this racism and xenophobia was in place before the arrival of the people who arrived from Africa by boats. That historically Malta had inherited her idea of an island of 'us' and 'them'. The Knights, Turks, Napoleon, Protestants are a few words which remind us of the exclusivity of Malta for the Maltese. Groups such as the Knights are considered to be 'heroes' whilst the Turks considered to be 'villains'. We consider ourselves to be good, the others, if not exactly bad, are always suspect of being so.

Although we enjoy an ethnic heterogeneity, linguistic, as well as religious derived from the mix of our country's DNA, the Maltese still

have the tendency to see things as ours and theirs. The blacks especially those African blacks with a history of slavery, colonialism and exploitation by the rich European countries have become an easy target. To many of us, these appear and act too differently to us to enable us to accept them. At worst the Europeans get money with them.

The fact that racism exists in other countries most especially in the countries of Eastern Europe does not decrease Malta's fault in this aspect. Every country has the responsibility to educate and take the necessary steps to eliminate racism. However, apart from some criticism from the Church about the dangers which racism could lead to and a few NGO's such as Graffiti who continuously write and talk about the harm of racism, little is heard from other sectors to bring this to a stop. We used to expect that the left would raise their voices but? is there still a left?

On the internet we find writings full of hate and the newspapers are no better. These are criminal acts and are stopped in European countries and in other liberal democracies. There is a limit to what is called "*free speech*". The state has till now not formulated a law about immigration, let alone started a campaign against racism. Every law and campaign has to be based on logic, not only on ethics and morality. Racism which is allowed to carry on without being stopped means that the country is risking serious consequences, a result of people who take the law in their own hands, and others who raise mass hysteria same as those we used to hear had taken place in South America in the past. This is not only going to create danger for all who live in Malta, but also, it is going to give Malta a bad name internationally and we stand to lose the good name which we enjoyed to date.

The most important point we should be talking about as regards immigrants is work. We say this with no sense of racism at all but in a rational way. If we look at statistics which show which foreigners work in Malta we see that the majority of these come from the rich Western countries and Eastern Europe. If we go back ten years we see that these figures have hardly changed at all. There was little or no criticism about these workers years ago, even though many were and still are working at more prestigious jobs than many Maltese people. On the other hand, those Africans who arrive on boats (remember that many of them are in detention centres) those who work (almost all without official documents) are more visible (or invisible) working at the worst jobs, and with the worst conditions and the worst pay. These are jobs which many Maltese people would not even dream of doing, especially for little pay. If nothing else these immigrants are doing work which no one else wanted to do, at the same time spending what they earn on their basic daily needs. This situation could be ameliorated for everyone if the work carried out by immigrants is regulated so that it falls in line with laws pertaining to health, security and payment, at the same time allowing them to contribute towards their national insurance and to pay their taxes. For this to happen they have to be accepted in Maltese society and recognised as an integral part of this country.

The irony is that as everyone says, immaterial to their political opinions, if they want the country's economy to grow and improve, Malta perforce has to accept immigrants to carry out all kinds of work from the most lowly to the best. If and when Malta reaches a high economic level foreign workers need to be able to maintain a high standard of living as well. The Trade Unions Council in England recognised this and publically spoke about the need for immigration if the economy were to advance.

On the same train of thought, Iceland with 300,000 people had to accept thousands of immigrants in the last few years because its level of unemployment fortunately had decreased to 1%. This created a problem because there were jobs which no one wanted to do. Malta obviously is not in the same situation; but in certain economic aspects we still have shortcomings. At the same time we can dream about a day where we see unemployment eradicated completely from our country.

And if we want the Maltese citizens, women and men, whites and blacks, those with Semitic surnames, English, Latin and others, who are educated and hold good jobs we are going to need other people to do the other work (sometimes even high level jobs).

It is a reality we have to face that we will in the future have an open and multicultural society, so we have to get used to the idea and learn to live together. We have to accept that in the near future the population could be very different to what it is today. It is the duty of the country in all its aspects to make certain that this acceptance takes place in the easiest way and that Malta becomes richer both culturally and economically.

Population Key Terms

- **Birth rate** – the number of births per 1000 people
- **Death rate** – the number of deaths per 1000 people
- **Fertility rate** – the number of births to women aged 15 to 45
- **Infant mortality** – the number of children who dies within the first year of life, per 1000
- **Life expectancy** – the average age a person can expect to live from birth
- **Rate of natural increase** – the difference between death and birth rate
- **Migration** – the movement of people from one place to another
- **Population growth** – an increase in an area as a result of death rate, birth rate and life expectancy
- **Population change** – change in a population measured
 - in terms of birth rate, death rate and migration figures
- **Dependent population** – people who are too old or too young to look after themselves