



Perceptions and Attitudes of Women and Men in Malta towards Work-Life Balance: with a specific focus on family size

National Commission for the
Promotion of Equality

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Promozzjoni tal-Ugwaljanza

1.13 vs 2.1- A Requiem for the Second Child?

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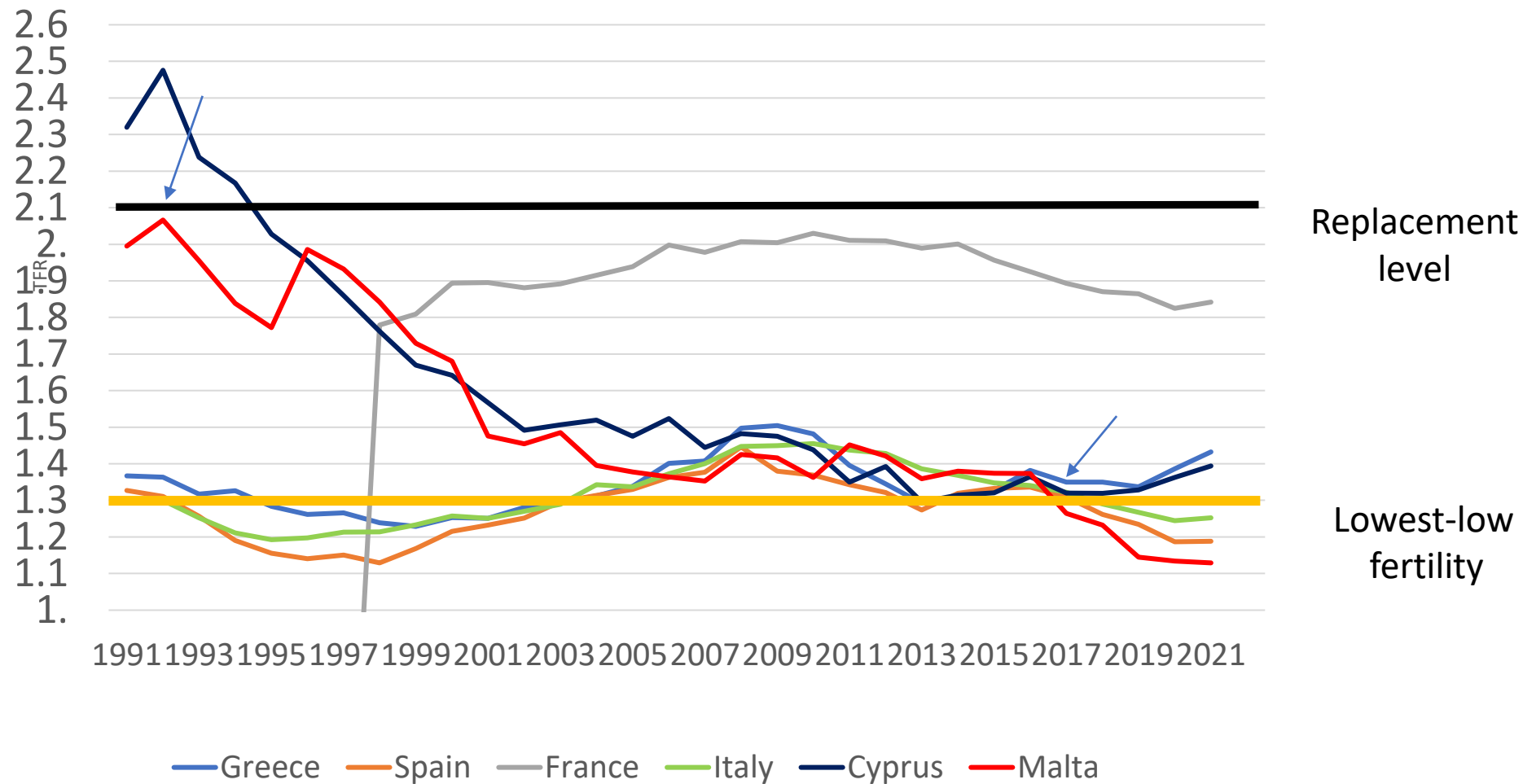
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Malta's sub-replacement fertility was evident for a long time

Total Fertility Rate, 1991-2021





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Who is doing better than us?





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The knowledge we did not have!

- **Personal ideal** number of children?
- Is **WLB** the **main cause** of fertility decline?
- Parenthood a 'thankless' call: **Gen. Y** and **Z**?
- Banking on **women with higher levels of education?**





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Based on the NCPE sample:

- **47% of women do not send children to formal childcare!** (61% of men respondents)!
- **Mothers of one child predominantly do not want to have another child (77.1%).**
- **Having 3 children is heroic!** Only 7.2% of 600 respondents intend to have **(another) 2 children!**
- High share of respondents **19-24 years of age**, who are **married/cohabitate (86.2%)** - a new trend of tolerance towards cohabitation.
- **Youngest, the brightest** – the highest percentage of respondents **with higher education** (post-sec. +) are **19-24 years of age (87.1%)**, 25-24 (75%) and 35-44 (65.5%).





Aim 1 – Do Maltese women and men of childbearing age want to have more children?

Yes! As the average general and personal ideals are high!

General ideal, personal ideal and intended number of children

	Total	Male	Female
General ideal (as a society)	1.92	1.84	2.01
Personal ideal	1.93	<u>1.86</u>	<u>2.00</u>
Intended	0.65	<u>0.75</u>	<u>0.53</u>

Source: calculated from the NCPE 2024 survey





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Aim 2 - The obstacles to having more children!

Behavioural change* –Value change!

- women with **primary or secondary** education - **intended number of children (0.35)**
- women with **higher level of education** intentions **(0.60)**
- **63.5%** of all women **with higher level of education** express **2 children** as their **personal ideal** (all women **63%**, women with lower level of education **53.8%**) ... **BUT**
- **45.5%** of women with **higher level of education**, who are mothers of one child, **do not intend to have another child because: 'they already had all the children they wanted'** (69.9% of all women).

Policy recommendations:

- Promote measures to facilitate easier transition to second child with the whole family in mind.

*Lower intentions observed when compared to Eurobarometer 2011, as in Testa (2012).





Aim 2 - First birth after the age of 30? A postponement issue!

Inverted priorities of women and men!

Women

Men

21.5% enjoying free time

17.2% enjoying free time

18.5% waited to get married

20.7% waited to get married

13.8% saving for first home



27.6% saving for first home

12.3% searching for a suitable partner

44.8% searching for a suitable partner



Policy recommendations:

- Gender equality education from a young age (priorities)
- Strengthening support schemes related to buying first home.





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Aim 2 - **The cost of children and financial problems!**

- **Financial problems were reported as an issue for 11.3%** of all women with zero intended children or uncertainty to have another child,
- **Children perceived expensive in 12.0% (valid cases of women).**
- **Men thought children were expensive only in 7.8% cases .**
- **Men stated financial problems in 17% cases (valid cases).**
- **33.9%** of all respondents report they live day-by-day, that cannot plan for the future.

Policy recommendations:

- Revisit formal child-care incentives, use of formal childcare not only for WLB, but for early development and education of the child.
- Focus on strengthening allowances and bonuses for women and men on the birth of a child (and second child) and raising awareness on such measures analysing the effects of social benefits on the fertility rate.
- Money management education, including financial literacy and the importance of equal economic independence for women and men.





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Aim 2 - The role of men

- **Lack of certainty by men!** Only 10/230 (4.3% of all and 10.9% of 92 valid cases) men with higher level of education **expressed certainty of having another child!** **Low! Lack of certainty by women too!** Women 9/214 (4.2% of all and 8.3% of 108 valid cases). **Opportunity costs of maternity!**
- 67 out of 476 (14.1%) respondents reported **frequent difficulty to fulfil family responsibilities**, gendered difference **40.3% were men**, 59.7% were women.

Policy recommendations:

- Sensitise men to participate in caring roles in order to balance family roles.
- Family policies should be reviewed regularly, and gender mainstreamed
- Ensure a long-term stability of family policies





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Aim 2 - **The role of employers**

- **82.5%** of all women (**77.9%** of men) **who intended to have another child** were allowed to make use of flexible time
- Even persons **who did not intend to have another child** reported flexibility of working hours **75.8%** of men and **67.1%** of women.

Policy recommendations:

- Strengthening of family-friendly measures at the workplace.



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Aim 2 - **Work-life balance has improved!**

Difficulty to combine work and family life was cited by:

- **18.6%** (51/381) respondents; **22.6%** (30/133) **women** and only **14.9%** (21/141) **men**. Gendered difference!
- **19 fathers** and **28 mothers** out of 405 respondents **with one child** cited a **difficulty with WLB** as a reason for not having/not being sure about having another child (11.6%).
- **94.8% men** and **98.3% of women agree** that **both** men and women should contribute to looking after/bringing up the child.

Policy recommendations:

- Ensure that even those workers with lower bargaining power at the place of work, get to know their rights regarding WLB, to be able to claim them.





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To conclude - times have changed, people have changed, values have changed. Stable, yet adaptable and durable policies needed!

... NOT TRYING TO BE ALARMIST, BUT ...

*“Every nation facing this (the situation of lowest-low fertility, MMB) is very likely to take action to stop the trend at some time. However, **delay of action has important consequences.**”*

Peter McDonald
(Australian demographer)





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THANK YOU

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