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**Session I – Invited paper**

***MIGRATION RESULTS FROM THE 1995 MALTA POPULATION AND HOUSING CENSUS:  
COMPARISON WITH OTHER DATA SOURCES REGARDING COVERAGE AND RELIABILITY***

Submitted by the National Statistical Office of Malta

**Introduction**

Malta, a “tiny rock” in the middle of the Mediterranean, has always faced the problem of how to strike a balance between population growth and the very limited economic resources available. With a superficial area of just over 300 square kilometers and a population density of 1260 persons per km<sup>2</sup>, the third highest in the world, the country has been a traditional emigration country for a long time.

The foreign element in the population is small-around 2.3 per cent. International migration is on a very small scale and most of it consists of inward migrations in the form of returning Maltese former emigrants.

**A historical perspective**

An objective understanding of the Maltese migratory movement has to make reference to three main periods:

- Early efforts to encourage and assist the Maltese to settle in other lands. This period would cover the years from the beginning of the last century up to the onset of the First World War.
- The establishment of the migratory movement on a permanent basis - a period that would extend up to the Second World War. During the inter-war years the USA, Canada and Australia emerged as ‘traditional’ countries for Maltese emigrants. Since then, Maltese settlements in these countries have been very rapid. Government policy, governing

emigration, had by this time been amply defined and the Department of Emigration was set up to guide Maltese emigrants and provide them with assistance abroad.

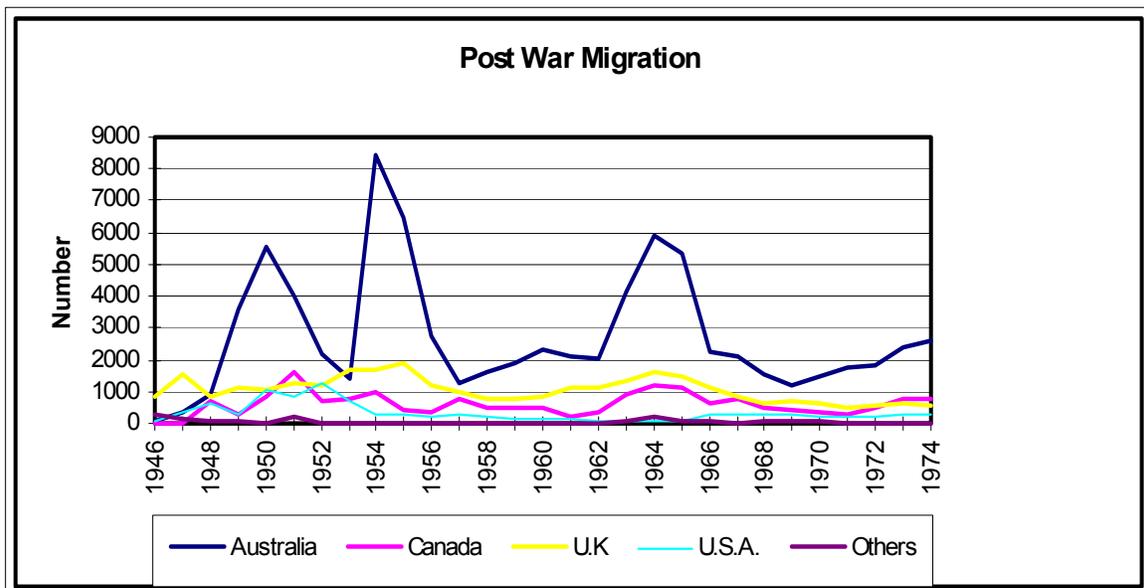
- The great exodus of the Maltese towards their second homeland – Australia – which started soon after the Second World War and ended in the early seventies.

The migration information gathered during the censuses and in particular during the last Population and Housing census held in November 1995, generally reflect the migratory movements during the last intercensal period.

Indeed, after the Second World War, efforts to facilitate emigration were intensified. Agreements were entered into with Australia, the United Kingdom and Canada for implementing an extensive emigration programme to beat unemployment. Australia continued to take the majority of the Maltese migrants.

It was government's policy to monitor closely emigration and reliable statistics exist to cover outward migration to Australia which represented more than eighty per cent of all departures. In contrast, records of departures to other countries are either non-existent or unreliable.

The number of returnees is not known, although as from 1985 the information is considered to be satisfactory.



## **Migration data**

A lot of information is available as a result of the introduction of the Emigrants' Passage Assistance Scheme in 1948. Prospective emigrants were then allowed to apply for financial assistance and good records were kept of such applications. Before 1948, emigration had been averaging less than 3,000 departures per year, but soon after the introduction of this Scheme, more and more people sought their future abroad. In 1950, 5,400 persons left the Island while 8,500 departed in 1951. Four years later, a new peak had been reached when 11,400 persons emigrated, 75 per cent going to Australia. In the following year, another 9,000 Maltese left the Island; thereafter, the trend continued on a lower scale. It has been estimated that between 1931 and 1980, no less than 155,000 persons, amounting to nearly half the present Maltese population, left Malta to settle abroad.

## **Immigration**

As from 1975, Malta witnessed an influx of returnees mostly coming from Australia where economic conditions had become less favourable. Included in the population was a net inward migration balance ranging from nearly 3000 in 1975 to a meager 400 or less in the late nineties. The latter situation is not expected to change in the near future. This demographic dimension will thus compensate for the current reduction in fertility. Together with the expected increase in life expectancy, this positive migration balance will ensure population growth for the next twenty years or so.

## **The Census**

The first population census, in a series of regular censuses was held in 1842. At that time and up to the 1967 census, Malta was under British rule and a considerable number of British servicemen and their families were stationed on the Island. This foreign element showed in all censuses although in several instances the servicemen were left out but their families were duly enumerated. By the time of the 1985 census, the British had left the Island and the census provided a reliable profile of the Maltese population and those foreigners who had settled in Malta particularly during the 1960s. Attempts were made to gather information on the former Maltese emigrants who were returning to Malta in relatively large numbers since 1975, but the sources of data were very defective.

## **The 1995 census**

The last Population and Housing census was held in 1995. Past censuses collected information on place of birth and residence as well as nationality since it has always been the practice to publish detailed information on the foreign element of the population by gender, age and nationality. The stock of international immigrants was thus accurately determined. But in 1995, it was decided to include some questions specifically directed to collect information on ex-emigrants.

Thus the last census provided for more information related to internal and international immigration.

Firstly, information was sought on dual nationality. Dual nationality was a legal arrangement that had been introduced during the intercensal period.

Secondly, households had to specify their:

- residence a year before the census date and
- usual address five years before.

Thirdly, in addition to the standard question on nationality to determine the stock of the foreign population, a specific migration module was included in the questionnaire. It was directed towards the collection of information on *returned* emigrants. A returned migrant was defined as a Maltese national who returned to Malta with the intention of settling here after having previously lived permanently in a foreign country. As soon as a member of the household or the whole household was identified as having emigrated in the past, information had to be provided on:

- year of return to Malta,
- the country of previous residence,

The findings of the census were considered as providing a good database for annual population adjustments during the intercensal period in respect of net flows. Some adjustments of past population estimates were, in fact, made on the basis of the census information.

### **Publication of results.**

The census findings in respect of inward migration consisting mainly of former Maltese emigrants who had returned to Malta were published in Volume V of the census report. Three main tables were compiled:

- Returned migrants by gender, age, country of emigration and present locality of residence. This information allowed also a distribution of the returnees by locality of residence which is an important indicator for socio-economic planning;
- Returned emigrants by gender, country of emigration and year of return;
- Returned emigrants by gender, age and year of return.

There were also a number of complimentary tables based on separate variables or complementary ones.

The following three tables summarise the results of the 1995 census findings concerning returned migrants.

**Table 1 Distribution of returned migrants by gender, and country of migration.**

<i>Country</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>	<i>%</i>
<b>Australia</b>	6096	48.87	4394	44.20	10490	46.80
<b>USA</b>	1039	8.33	890	8.95	1929	8.61
<b>Canada</b>	1886	15.12	1487	14.96	3373	15.05
<b>United Kingdom</b>	2641	21.17	2179	21.92	4820	21.50
<b>Italy</b>	93	0.75	233	2.34	326	1.45
<b>France</b>	18	0.14	29	0.29	47	0.21
<b>Germany</b>	83	0.67	72	0.72	155	0.69
<b>Other European</b>	94	0.75	110	1.11	4204	0.91
<b>Other Country</b>	254	2.04	305	3.07	559	2.49
<b>Non Respondent</b>	269	2.16	242	2.43	511	2.28
<b>Total</b>	12473	100.00	9941	100.00	22414	100.00

*Source: 1995 census, Vol. V*

According to the census, 22,414 person of Maltese origin who had emigrated in the past had returned to settle in Malta on a permanent basis. Most of these, 10,490 or 46.8% returned from Australia. Another 4,820 or 21.5% returned from the United Kingdom while another 3,373 or 15.5% returned from Canada. Returnees from the USA totaled 1,929 or 8.61%. The magnitudes of these data in respect of returned migration generally reflect the geographical pattern of the Maltese out-migration movements.

**Table 2. Distribution of returned migrants by year of return.**

<i>Year</i>	<i>No of Returned Migrants</i>	<i>% of Total</i>
<b>Pre – 1950</b>	265	1.18
<b>1951 – 1955</b>	340	1.52
<b>1956 – 1960</b>	704	3.14
<b>1961 – 1965</b>	847	3.78
<b>1966 – 1970</b>	2975	13.27
<b>1971 – 1975</b>	3218	14.36
<b>1976 – 1980</b>	3040	13.56
<b>1981 – 1985</b>	2598	11.59
<b>1986 – 1990</b>	3884	17.33
<b>1991 – 1995</b>	3519	15.70
<b>Non Respondent</b>	1024	4.57
<b>Total</b>	22414	100.00

*Source: 1995 census, Vol. V*  
Table 2 illustrates

the phenomenon of returned migration that started in the late sixties and continued unabated until the early nineties. The period 1970-1985 witnessed an influx of returnees although the table suggest that inflows were more pronounced in the first half of the 1990s. However, in reading the table information, one has to keep in mind that the census, being a *de facto* exercise took into

account the surviving portion of the returnees. As one moves away from the actual year of return, it may be presumed that most of those who had returned at an age over 55 years would not have survived twenty- five years later or at the time of the 1995 census. Indeed, research into the causes that prompted most emigrants to return to Malta reflect the wish of emigrants to retire in their homeland.

**Table 3: Returned Migrants by Gender and Broad Age Group**

*Source: 1995 census, Vol. V*

Table 3 provides a distribution of returned migrants who were enumerated in 1995. Most of them, 56.8 per cent fell within the 40-64 age group. There were few entries (3.5 per cent) within the young age groups (0-14yrs). The table illustrates also the contribution of immigration to make the elderly portion of the population more pronounced. A study of the primary data

Age Group	Males	Females	Total	%
0-4	54	31	85	0.38
5-9	139	108	247	1.10
10-14	229	239	468	2.09
15-19	364	372	736	3.28
20-24	424	421	845	3.77
25-29	415	464	879	3.92
30-34	658	650	1308	5.84
35-39	893	1034	1927	8.60
40-44	1372	1225	2597	11.59
45-49	1957	1545	3502	15.62
50-54	1732	1162	2894	12.91
55-59	1278	846	2124	9.48
60-64	1016	596	1612	7.19
65-69	774	471	1245	5.55
70-74	578	353	931	4.15
75-79	318	183	501	2.24
80-84	170	154	324	1.45
85-89	81	73	154	0.69
90-94	16	13	29	0.13
95+	5	1	6	0.03

reflected in Tables 2 and 3 can provide an insight into the immigration process by age of the returnees.

### **Validation of census results**

An attempt is being made to establish the degree of reliability of the census results concerning in-migration in Malta between 1986 and 1995 by comparing it with the published yearly data. The yearly data are derived from administrative records introduced in 1985.

In that year arrangements were worked out between the NSO and the Customs department to enable the Office to have details about returned Maltese migrants. It was premised that returning migrants would bring with them personal effects which the Customs Authorities would have to verify in order not to charge duties on the importation of these items. It was agreed that all incoming migrants would be asked to complete this statistical form providing a demographic profile of the immigrant and other persons accompanying him.

The NSO publishes monthly data on in-coming migrants based on the information derived from these forms. Yearly estimates of in and out-migration are also published in the *Demographic Review*.

The following table shows that, according to the published information during the period 1986-1995, there were 7666 returned migrants of different ages.

**Table 4.**

<b>The Immigration component in the Maltese population**</b>							
Year	Population	Births	Deaths	Natural increase	Emigrants	<b>Returned Migrants</b>	Migration Balance
1986	343,514	5,245	2,824	2,421	737	<b>622</b>	-115
1987	345,636	5,314	2,908	2,406	670	<b>365</b>	-305
1988	349,014	5,533	2,708	2,825	561	<b>936</b>	375
1989	352,430	5,584	2,610	2,974	399	<b>722</b>	323
1990	355,910	5,368	2,745	2,623	130	<b>858</b>	728
1991	359,543	5,302	2,875	2,427	140	<b>1,124</b>	984
1992	362,977	5,474	2,900	2,574	153	<b>820</b>	667
1993	366,431	5,147	2,692	2,455	66	<b>837</b>	771
1994	369,451	4,826	2,698	2,128	104	<b>761</b>	657
1995	371,173*	4,613	2,708	1,905	107	<b>621</b>	514

*Source: Demographic reviews*

\* *Adjusted to reflect the Census results*

\*\**Table does not include the number of registrations, naturalizations and regularizations during the years.*

On the other hand, the census findings showed that returned migrants who reported having returned to Malta during the same period numbered 7403 a difference of 263. An examination of the figures derived from the two sources reveal differences in both directions in respect of some years. The most pronounced difference - 248 - was in 1991. In other instances e.g. in 1986, the difference is 26 while in 1992 the difference is only 4. If one were to consider a longer period, e.g. five years, the resulting difference is notably small. Bearing in mind that the enumerated immigrants were the surviving ones during the same period of ten years, this small difference of 3.4% could well represent the deaths of those returning during the period and a small error in respect of those who did not indicate the year of their return in the census.

## **Out-migration**

During the next census due to be held in 2005, it is the intention of the National Statistics Office to continue to collect information on inflows to supplement the data from administrative sources. It is also possible to expand the 1995 migration module to include some questions on outflows even though the number of out-going migrants is very small.

The intention is to satisfy as far as possible the revised UN recommendations on international migration statistics. As in the case of most countries, Malta cannot present any information on emigration. For this reason the inclusion of some questions on emigration in the next census may be considered during the planning stage of the census.

The case for and the limitations of collecting information on emigration during the census has been the subject of several research projects in the past and has recently been discussed during a Training Seminar on Migration Statistics held in Poland in 1999. It was also the subject of two papers submitted during a Seminar organised in Rome in 2002 by CESD-Roma under the Med-Migr. project within the Medstat Programme administered by Eurostat. The first paper focused on the different questions on migration asked during censuses held in the Medstat group of countries, in Latin American countries and in other selected European countries during the 1990s. The other document presented for discussion an emigration module which may be considered for inclusion in the census or in any other extensive survey like the Labour Force survey.

Notwithstanding these efforts to collect and validate migration information, it would seem that the quest for reliable statistics on international migration flows is still posing challenges that can only be solved through concerted actions by researchers and administrators alike. Above all, little can be achieved in the absence of political will.