

## MISSIONARY ATLAS PROJEC

### EUROPE

### MALTA

### SNAPSHOT SECTION

**Country Name:** (Republic of) Malta; (Repubblica ta') Malta.

**Country Founded in:** Independent country since 21 September 1964. Republic since 1974.

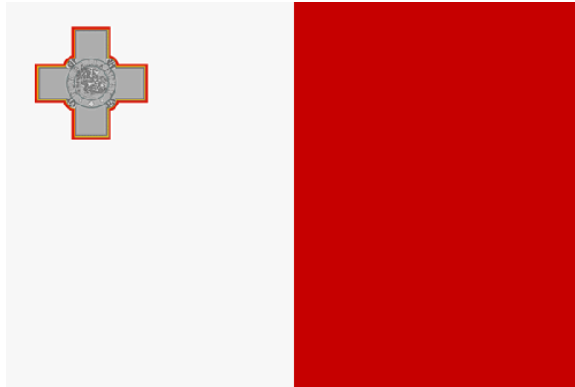
**Population:** 400,214 (July 2006 est.).

**Government Type:** Republic.

**Geography/location in the world:** Southern Europe, island in the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sicily (Italy). 35 50 N, 14 35 E.

**Number of people groups:** 11 people groups with the Maltese forming the majority (375,000).

**Picture of flag:**



### Religion

Major Religion and % of population: Roman Catholicism, 98%.

All religions and % or number of members for each:

#### Christian:

Roman Catholicism, 98%

Church of England, 270 members

Presbyterian and Methodist Church, 120 members  
Evangelical Church of Germany, 70 members  
Pentecostal and other non-denominational churches, 500 members  
Bible Baptist Church, 30 members

**Christian Cults/Sects:**

Jehovah's Witnesses, 680 members  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, 115 members

**Other:**

Judaism, 100 members  
Islam, 3,000 members  
Zen Buddhism, 10 members  
Baha'i Faith, 30 members  
Atheists and other non-believers, 2%

**Government interaction with religion:** The government provides for freedom of religion. The Maltese constitution establishes the Roman Catholic faith as the state religion.

Sources consulted:

<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71395.htm>

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/mt.html>

<http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

## Country Profile

### Malta

#### Basic Facts

**Name:** Republic of Malta; (Repubblica ta' Malta)

#### Demographics:

In July 2006, Malta's population numbered 400,214. Of these people, 17.1% were between 0 and 14 years (male 35,264/female 33,368); 69.1% were between 15 and 64 years (male 139,890/female 136,767); and 13.7% were 65 years and older (male 23,554/female 31,371). The median age was 38.7 years (male 37.2 years/female 40.1 years).

That same year the population increased by 0.42%, with a birth rate of 10.22 births/1,000 population, a death rate of 8.1 deaths/1,000 population, and a net migration rate of 2.05 migrants/1,000 population. The sex ratio is as follows:

At birth: 1.06 males/female

Under 15 years: 1.06 males/female

15-64 years: 1.02 males/female

65 years and over: 0.75 males/female

Total population: 0.99 males/female

The infant mortality rate is 3.86 deaths/1,000 live births (male 4.34 deaths/1,000 live births, female 3.35 deaths/1,000 live births). At birth, the life expectancy is 79.01 years (76.83 years for males; 81.31 years for females). The fertility rate is 1.5 children born/woman. In 2001, the HIV/AIDS adult prevalence rate was 0.2%. In 2003, less than 500 people lived with HIV/AIDS and less than 100 died of HIV/AIDS.

The legal age to marry in Malta is 16. In 2005, there were 766 brides and 311 grooms under age 25. Males are less likely than females to marry very young (8 grooms and 51 brides aged 16 to 19 in 2005). The total number of marriages in 2005 was 2,374.

With a population density of 1.282 people per square kilometer (3.322 per square mile), Malta's population density is one of the highest in the world. Malta consists of an archipelago of 7 islands. Only the 3 largest islands are inhabited (Malta Island, Gozo, and Comino). Valletta is the capital of Malta (6,897) and Birkirkara is the largest Maltese city (22,051). 68 local councils or districts have made up Malta since 1993. 391,906 people live on Malta Island and 30,998 total on Gozo and Comino (2005 est., [http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document\\_file.aspx?id=1916](http://www.nso.gov.mt/statdoc/document_file.aspx?id=1916)).

#### Language:

Malta has 2 official languages, Maltese and English. Maltese is "the only Semitic language written in the Latin alphabet in its standard form" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/>

[Maltese language](#)). Maltese descended from Maghrebi Arabic ([http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=Malta](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Malta)) but in its development has borrowed extensively from Italian, Sicilian, and English. Since 1936, Maltese has been Malta's official language along with English. Italian and English were the official languages before 1936. The Maltese dialects are the following: "Standard Maltese, Port Maltese, Rural West Maltese, Rural East Maltese, Rural Central Maltese, Zurrieq, Gozo" ([http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=Malta](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Malta)). (For more information on the Maltese language, see [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maltese\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maltese_language))

The other official language, English, is an Indo-European, West-Germanic language. Due to the relationship between Great Britain and Malta (see History section), English is acknowledged as an official language. "As a result of the Norman Conquest, a large number of words entered into the English lexis through Norman French, Latin, and Greek" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English\\_language](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/English_language)). Worldwide, English is "the most widely spoken and distributed language" (ibid.).

Many people in Malta are bilingual or even multilingual. In 1995, an estimated 76% of the population was conversant in English and 36% conversant in Italian. English is the workplace language for about 29% of the population. Maltese is spoken among family by 86-90% of the population, among friends by about 84%. English is the exclusive language in secondary and tertiary education ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maltese\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maltese_people)).

### **Society/Culture:**

The Maltese culture is a melting pot of various cultures which have 'landed' on the Maltese archipelago throughout the centuries. Among these cultures are those of neighboring Mediterranean islands (e.g. Sicily) and countries as well as those of the countries that ruled Malta for different periods of time (e.g. Arabs, Romans, Spanish, and British) prior to Malta's independence in 1964.

The Romance influences are more visible in Malta than the Semitic influences. The main reason is probably Malta's geographical proximity to other Romance cultures. The influence of Roman Catholicism as the state religion upon Malta is considerable. For example, divorce is not available in the country. Also, Malta's Constitution states that "the authorities of the Catholic Church have the duty and the right to teach which principles are right and which are wrong" (<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71395.htm>).

Malta's income per capita (\$19,700) places Malta among the less affluent EU countries. The unemployment rate is fairly low at 7.8%. People with a full-time job usually work 40 hours per week. Some full-time jobs require 45 hours per week. Most people have a siesta during the early afternoon. Most businesses close for about 2 hours. Banks are only open in the mornings.

Maltese people live in terraced housing, flats, terrans ("self-contained rooms at ground level with a separate entrance accessible from the street," *Worldmark Encyclopedia of the*

*Nations*, vol. 5: *Europe*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001), 321), maisonettes, semi-detached housing, or farms.

Children between the ages of 5 and 16 years have to go to school to receive an education. The Maltese government provides free education. Several Roman Catholic churches and the private sector, however, run schools in Malta and Gozo. In Church schools, most of the teachers' salaries are paid by the government. The Maltese school system follows the British school model. There are primary, secondary, post-secondary, tertiary, and special schools in Malta (for more information on different types of schools in Malta, visit <http://www.gov.mt/servicecluster.asp?s=7&l=2>). Tertiary schools are the University of Malta, the School of Art, and the International Maritime Law Institute.

Folklore and traditions form an important part of Maltese culture. Local festivals are very common. The most important festivals are weddings, christenings, and saints' days. On *festas* or saints' days religious prayers open the ceremonies. Other parts are 3 days of band processions, stalls, and fireworks. On the last day, the people carry a statue of the saint around the local streets. Malta's national holidays are Freedom Day (March 31), Sette Giugno (June 7), Victory Day (September 8), Independence Day (September 21), and Republic Day (December 31). The following are Malta's public holidays: New Year's Day (January 1), Saint Paul's Shipwreck (February 10), Feast of Saint Joseph (March 19), Good Friday (Friday before Easter), Worker's Day (May 1), Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul, Malta's patron saints (June 29), Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady (August 15), Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8), and Christmas Day (December 25). Children in kindergartens, primary, and secondary schools are off on All Saints' Day (November 1), All Souls Day (November 2), and the last 2 days of Carnival as well. A day celebrated by all Commonwealth nations is Remembrance Day: everyone observes 2 minutes of silence accompanied by the wail of sirens at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month.

Malta has many libraries and 20 museums. The oldest library, the National Library of Malta, was founded in 1555 and is housed in Valetta. The University of Malta Library, founded in 1769, is located in Msidaan. The central public library in Beltissebħ is the largest public library. School libraries number over 50. Like the National Library, the National Museum is located in Valetta. This museum contains an archaeological collection as well as the Palace Armory and the St. John's Museum. Vittoriosa's 2 museums are the Museum of Political History and the Folk Museum. Museums in other towns include a Fine Arts Museum and a Museum of Zomon Antiquities.

Football/soccer is Malta's national sport. English and Italian clubs as well as national teams have many supporters. Horse racing is a Maltese tradition dating back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century when the annual celebrations of the Feast of St. Peter and St. Paul began. Waterpolo is a popular sport during the summer months. Boċċi is another common sport. It is a variety of the game of boules. People play in teams of 3. Boċċi clubs exist in Malta and among Maltese emigrants in the USA, Australia, and Canada.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture\\_of\\_Malta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Malta)

*Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations*, vol. 5: *Europe*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001)

## **Government:**

Malta is a republic. The British Westminster system formed the model for the Maltese parliamentary system and public administration. The single transferable vote system, which Malta has used since its independence in 1964, has resulted in “a strict bi-partisan representation in parliament” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta>). This voting system allows for parties, which receive “reasonable percentages of first preference votes,” to fail obtaining “seats in parliament” (ibid.). Discussions exist around the Maltese “erosion of true democracy” (ibid.).

Elections for the unicameral House of Representatives (Il-Kamra tar-Rappreżentanti) are held every 5 years with the next election taking place in 2008. The average voter turnout exceeds 96%. The suffrage is universal. 65 Members of Parliament make up the House of Representatives and choose the President of the Republic. The President’s role as head of state is largely ceremonial. The President appoints “as Prime Minister the member of the House who is best able to command a (governing) majority in the House” (ibid.). The 2 main parties are the Nationalist Party (Partit Nazzjonalista) and the Labour Party (Partit Laburista). The Nationalist Party is the current majority party. The 3 parties without parliamentary representation are the Green Party (Alternattiva Demokratika), Imperium Europa – promoting white nationalism and libertarianism – and Alpha Liberal Democratic Party.

From September 21, 1964, the date of Malta’s independence, until 1974, Malta was a parliamentary democracy within the British Commonwealth. The British Queen was sovereign of Malta, while a Governor-General was responsible for the executive branch on the Queen’s behalf. Then, on December 13, 1974, Malta revised its constitution and became a republic within the Commonwealth. Now the executive power rests with the President of Malta. Besides appointing the Prime Minister, the President, upon the Prime Minister’s recommendation, also appoints the individual ministers.

The 65 members of the House of Representatives, divided into 13 multi-seat constituencies, carry the legislative authority. Regarding the judicial branch, the President appoints the chief justice and 16 judges, whose mandatory retirement age is 65. Malta has a civil court, a commercial court, and a criminal court. The criminal court is the only court with a jury of nine. People tried and convicted in the civil and commercial court may appeal to the court of appeal. Those tried and convicted in the criminal court may appeal to the court of criminal appeal. The Constitutional Court, the highest Maltese court, hears appeals related to the Constitution.

In 1993, The Local Councils Act provided for Malta’s subdivision into 68 local councils (54 in Malta, 14 in Gozo). The inhabitants elect the Council every 3 years. At the head of each local council is the Mayor. The Mayor also represents the council. The Executive Secretary, appointed by the council, is responsible for the council’s executive, administrative, and financial affairs. The council takes all decisions collectively. The council is responsible “for the general upkeep and embellishment of the locality, local

wardens, and refuse collection, and [carries] out general administrative duties for the central government such as collection of government rents and funds, and answering government-related public inquiries” (ibid.).

The National Insurance Act of 1956 (amended in 1987) “provides benefits for sickness, unemployment, old age, widowhood, orphanhood, disability, and industrial injuries. Coverage includes all residents aged 16 and over, and excludes full time students and unemployed married women” (*Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations*, vol. 5: *Europe*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001), 321).

In May 2004, Malta became an EU member. Currently, Malta is still using its own currency, the Maltese lira (MTL). However, the Euro will be introduced soon. Military service is voluntary. The minimum age for military service is 18 years. The Armed Forces of Malta (AFM) include maritime and air elements. Military expenditures in 2005 were \$38.168 million (1% of GDP).

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/mt.html>  
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta>

*Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations*, vol. 5: *Europe*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001)

### **Economy:**

Malta’s GDP is \$5.193 billion (2005 est.) with a 1% real growth rate. The GDP per capita is \$19,700, placing the country among the less affluent EU countries. Agriculture accounts for 3% of the GDP, industry 23%, and services 74% (2003 est.). The labor force numbers 160,000 (2005 est.): 3% agriculture, 22% industry, and 75% services. Malta’s unemployment rate in 2005 was 7.8%. That same year the inflation rate was 3%. The republic’s revenues were \$2.503 billion and its expenditures \$2.703 billion. Malta’s economic strengths are its limestone, its productive labor force, and its favorable geographic location.

Malta’s agricultural products include potatoes, grapes, cauliflower, wheat, barley, citrus, tomatoes, cut flowers, green peppers, milk, pork, poultry, and eggs. Its industries comprise tourism, ship building and repair, electronics, construction, beverages and food, tobacco, textiles, clothing, and footwear. In 2005, Malta exported commodities worth \$2.744 billion to France, US, Singapore, UK, Germany, Italy, and Libya. These export commodities consisted of machinery and transport equipment, and manufactures. That same year, Malta imported commodities worth \$2.579 billion from Italy, UK, France, Germany, US, and Singapore. These import commodities were machinery and transport equipment, manufactured and semi-manufactured goods, food, drink, and tobacco.

Malta’s favorable location contributed to the country’s economic prosperity during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The Napoleonic Wars (1800-15) proved prosperous for Malta in that Malta became an important trading republic. The main trade consisted of British and colonial-manufactured goods. During this time, many artisans found jobs in the port industry. Throughout the wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Malta’s location was of strategic importance. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 caused a major increase in the shipping entering

Malta's ports. Malta reached the height of its prosperity in 1882. However, decline soon set in due to the modernization of ships which now no longer had to refuel in Malta.

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/mt.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy\\_of\\_Malta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economy_of_Malta)

*Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations*, vol. 5: *Europe*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001)

For statistics, see <http://www.nso.gov.mt/>

## Literacy:

Literacy is defined as age 10 and over can read and write.

Total population 92.8%: male 92%, female 93.6% (2003 est.)

## Land/Geography:



The archipelago of Malta is located about 93 km (58 mi) south of Sicily (Italy), in the central Mediterranean Sea, in Southern Europe. The geographic coordinates are 35 50 N, 14 35 E. Malta's total area is 320 sq km (124 sq mi), of which 320 sq km (124 sq mi) land and 0 sq km water. The archipelago consists of 5 islands. The 3 main islands, Malta (245.7 sq km, 94.9 sq mi), Gozo (67.1 sq km, 25.9 sq mi), and Comino (2.8 sq km, 1.1 sq



mi), are inhabited. The 2 smaller islands, Cominotto and Filfla, are uninhabited. The main island's (Malta) coastline is 196.8 km. Malta's capital is Valletta, located on the east coast of the main island.

The indented coastline with its numerous bays provides good harbors. Low hills with terraced fields and rocks (mainly limestone) characterize the landscape of the archipelago. Almost treeless, the islands' vegetation is stunted and sparse. Carob, fig, grape, bay, and olive occur widely. With a height of 253 m, the Ta' Dmejrek on Malta forms the highest point. In 2005, 31.25% of the archipelago consisted of arable land with 3.13% permanent crops (other 65.25%). About 20 sq km of the land is irrigated. The weasel, bat, hedgehog, rabbit, mouse, turtle, butterfly, lizard are all found on the islands. The surrounding waters contain common Mediterranean fish, seal and porpoise.

Malta's climate is "Mediterranean temperate climate with mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers" (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta>). In effect, there are only 2 seasons, making the islands more attractive for tourism. The annual average high temperature is 21 degrees Celsius (71 degrees Fahrenheit), while the annual average low temperature is 15 degrees Celsius (60 degrees Fahrenheit).

Malta's main environmental issues are twofold. First, the natural fresh water resources are very limited. This poses problems in the summer when rainfall is minimal but consumption is high due to tourism. This issue has led to increasing dependence of desalination. The second issue is that of preserving wildlife, including the killing of migratory birds. The Ministry of Health and Environment deals with these environmental issues on a frequent basis.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography\\_of\\_Malta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Geography_of_Malta)

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/mt.html>

*Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations*, vol. 5: *Europe*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (Detroit: Gale Group, 2001)

## History

Malta's known history begins around 5,200 BC when the first people, probably from Sicily, arrived on the island. Living in open dwellings and caves, they formed fishing and farming communities. Hunting formed a smaller source of livelihood. Contact with other cultures soon followed.

The Temple period (3600-2500 BC) is an important part of Malta's prehistory. During this time, many temples were built in the shape of a center surrounded by 5 semicircular rooms. These "prehistoric temples are the oldest free-standing buildings in the world" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Malta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Malta)). Around 2500 BC, the culture, which built the temples, disappeared.

The Bronze Age (starting around 2500 BC) has left us with remains of villages and settlements. Dolmens are found as well; they are "altar-like structures made out of very large slabs of stone" (ibid.). The Phoenicians and Greeks seem to have been the dominant

people groups in Malta during the Bronze Age. Around 400 BC, Carthage took control of the archipelago. Carthage's rule, however, did not last as Rome took over in 218 BC during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Punic War. A time of prosperity began for Malta as it formed now a part of the Roman Empire. Many Roman antiquities are still present on the islands, indicating Rome's importance and influence. During the Roman period, Christianity was introduced to Malta as the Apostle Paul shipwrecked and landed ashore in Malta.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the archipelago was mainly under Roman/Byzantine rule. The Vandals, coming from North Africa which they had just captured from the Romans, captured Malta in 440. Less than 100 years later (533), an East-Roman general recovered Malta. Malta's strategic position, including its magnificent harbor, appears to have been the main reason for foreign nations to colonize the archipelago throughout its history.

In the year 870, Sicilian Arabs conquered the islands. These Arabs, who were mostly Muslims, ruled for the next 260 years. Their influence is still noticeable today, mainly in the Maltese language and the names of many places. They also introduced irrigation and other techniques. Another group from Sicily, the Sicilian Normans, under the leadership of Count Roger I of Sicily, took the archipelago in 1091. The Maltese language was now barred from Arab influence and evolved into a distinctive language with both Arab and Romance characteristics. Roger II of Sicily consolidated Norman rule. Malta now was more and more influenced by European culture. Christianity, too, was reintroduced in Malta. Muslims were allowed to continue practicing their faith and remained a large part of the Maltese population.

For 440 years, Malta's status was that of an appendage of Sicily. Various feudal lords and barons bought the archipelago during this time. The main successive rulers were those of Swabia, Aquitaine, Aragon, Castile, and Spain. Between 1266 and 1283, the Università, Malta's administrative body, was created. Around 1350, the Maltese nobility was established. The nobility from then on ruled the Università. Of all the titles, 32 are still used today, the oldest being Barony of Djar-il-Bniet e Buqana. In 1479, Aragon joined Castile, making Malta part of the Spanish Empire.

During the early 1500s, the Ottoman Empire spread and reached South-East Europe. The Holy Roman Emperor Charles V of Spain feared that the Ottomans would conquer Rome and with it Malta. He, therefore, placed the rule of the archipelago in the hands of the Order of Knights of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem (for the Knights' history, see <http://www.orderofmalta.org/pdf/History.pdf>). This group of Knights had been driven out of Rhodes by Suleimann II in 1522. The group now found a place to serve in Malta and, thus, protected Christianity against Islam. The Knights became famous as the Knights of Malta. A heroic period in Malta's history began.

The Knights of Malta ruled Malta from 1530 through 1798 when Napoleon of France took over control. The Knights first fortified the main island, Malta. At the same time, however, they launched naval attacks of Ottoman shipping. Suleiman II retaliated with a final attack in 1565. This event is known as the Great Siege of Malta. Captain Jean

Parisot de la Vallette led the Knights of Malta. Although he had not been able to turn Malta into an invincible fortress, he had done everything to make the conquest of it as difficult as possible for Suleiman's army (<http://www.orderofmalta.org/pdf/History.pdf>). Surprisingly, the Knights withstood the Ottoman siege. Afterwards, the fortifications were increased.

Using a false pretense, Napoleon was able to capture the heavily fortified island of Malta on his way to his expedition of Egypt in 1798. The Maltese rebelled against the French forces because of the religious and financial reforms they forced on them. In 1800, Britain sent help to Malta, forcing the French to surrender. The archipelago became a British protectorate. In 1814, Malta became an official part of the British Empire. The British used Malta as a refueling station and fleet headquarters. The fleet was moved to Alexandria (Egypt) in the early 1930s. The Germans and Italians attempted to take over the archipelago, making it "the most heavily bombed place on earth" (<http://www.aboutmalta.com/history/1000years1.shtml>). To honor Maltese heroism, King George IV awarded the archipelago the George Cross in 1942. The cross still forms a part of the Maltese flag.

In 1964 (September 21), Malta, along with other countries, gained its independence from Great Britain. The British military completely withdrew from Malta in 1979. During the Cold War, Malta remained neutral, which proved to be positive for the country's economy and standing among the nations. Today, Malta is a member of the European Community (joined on May 1, 2004) and attracts more than one million tourists annually.

### **Christian History**

The first European nation embracing Christianity, Malta presently has a mainly Roman Catholic population. In fact, one might say that Malta's Christian history is largely Malta's Roman Catholic history. Malta's Christian history began with the Apostle Paul's shipwreck on what is known today as the Islands of St. Paul – one island visible only during low tide – off of Malta's coast. The biblical account of the shipwreck is recorded in Acts 27:39-42; 28:1-11) and can be dated to the year AD 60. The Apostle Paul and Malta's first bishop, Publius, are the founders of the Christian church in Malta.

Not much is known about the status of Christianity under Roman, Vandal, and Byzantine rule until AD 870. Since several Roman emperors persecuted Christians, one may assume that this was somehow the case for Christians in Malta as well. The Christians, however, were not without a bishop. During the Arabization period (AD 870-1127) of Malta, the Arabs were generally tolerant of Christians. A Greek, named Manas, was the bishop before the Arab conquest. Manas was imprisoned in Palermo (Sicily).

From the 15<sup>th</sup> through the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Knights of Malta were stationed in the archipelago. Having the status of a prince of the Catholic Church, the Knights' Grand Master, had a special relationship with the pope. This often caused friction between the Knights and the local bishops. Even the people began to dislike the Knights. All this time, however, Malta was under the rule of European houses of rulers and the Catholic faith

flourished. Because of their animosity toward the Knights, the Maltese were initially glad to see the French troops taking over control of the island group.

Although France was in essence a Roman Catholic country, the military forces, which occupied Malta upon Napoleon's conquest of the archipelago (1798), soon expressed a negative attitude toward religion. This was one of the reasons why the Maltese rebelled against the French forces. Until 1808, most of Malta's bishops were Sicilian. Since 1808, the bishops have been Maltese natives. On September 6, 1864, the pope issued a bull entitled "With Remarkable Love." With this bull, Gozo and Comino were separated from the diocese of Malta and formed their own diocese. Buttigieg was the first bishop of the diocese of Gozo and Comino.

For Catholics in Malta, the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary is one of the most important feasts of the year. The Maltese devotion to the Assumption of the Virgin dates back to 1600. In 1848, the Virgin was made a special patroness of the island; St. Paul had been the island's patron for a long time already and was now joined by the Blessed Virgin Mary. The greatest act of protection attributed to the Virgin took place on August 15, 1942 (August 15 having been the international Assumption of Mary Day for many years prior to 1942), when "a battered, half-sunk convoy managed to enter the Grand Harbour of Valletta to feed the starved nation during the Second World War" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion\\_in\\_Malta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Malta)).

Although Roman Catholicism is the Maltese state religion and the canon law is Maltese law, Malta's constitution provides for freedom of religion. 95% of the population adheres to the Roman Catholic faith. The other 5% is mainly Jewish, Muslim, or Protestant (see section on Religions). Many members of the Protestant churches are British retirees.

The Bible Baptist Church in Malta was planted in 1985 by an American-Maltese pastor and his wife (<http://www.biblebaptistchurch-malta.org/index.htm>). Websites for other protestant churches do not give information on the history of these churches. In general, the Protestants and Catholics accept each other. In some instances, they work together.

## **Religions**

### **Non-Christian**

*Judaism* (100 members): Almost 3,500 years ago Semitic Phoenicians settled in Malta. They were the ancestors/forerunners of today's Jewish community in Malta. During the Middle Ages, the Jews lived independently and prosperously. Presently, the Jewish community, largely Sephardic, meets every 1<sup>st</sup> Sabbath of the month for worship in the synagogue, located at St. Ursula Street in Valletta. The Jewish Holy Book consists of the Torah (the law), the Nebiim (the prophets), and the Chetoebim (the writings). Christians refer to this collection as the Old Testament. Jews believe in one God, the Creator of heaven and earth.

*Islam* (3,000 members): Islam has been present in Malta since AD 870, when the Arabs conquered the archipelago. After the Norman conquests in the 11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> centuries,

Muslims were allowed to continue practicing their religion. Today there are 1 Islamic mosque and 1 Islamic primary school. Islam's holy book is the Qur'an. Some of the basic tenets of faith are belief in Allah and his unity, belief in the prophets (especially Muhammad; Jesus was only one of the prophets and fully man), belief in paradise and hell, and belief in judgment day.

*Zen Buddhism* (10 members): Buddhism is a religion and practical philosophy based on the teachings of Siddhartha/Buddha Gautama (6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC). Buddhism is the 4<sup>th</sup> largest religion in the world. A Buddha "is generally considered to be a person who discovers the true nature of reality through years of spiritual cultivation, investigation of the various religious practices of his time, and meditation. This transformational discovery is called bodhi - literally, "Awakening" (more commonly called "Enlightenment") (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buddhism>). To reach this state of enlightenment or nirvana, a person must follow the Noble Eightfold Path, which is 1 of the Four Noble Truths. Tibetan and Zen Buddhism form 2 expressions of Buddhism. <http://www.buddhistsinmalta.com/> Zen Buddhism heavily stresses moment-by-moment awareness and seeing the true nature of things by direct experience.

**Baha'i Faith** (30 members): The Baha'i religion began in Persia in 1844 under the leader and founder Bahá'u'lláh, whose name means "Glory of God." According to Baha'i the world is but one country and all people are its citizens. Baha'i emphasizes the unity of humanity, the equality of male and female, elimination of extreme riches and poverty, religious tolerance, and access for all to education and culture. According to Baha'i, all religions are diverse expressions of the one universal religion.

*Non-religious/Atheists* (2% of population): A small percentage of the Maltese considers themselves non-religious people or outspoken atheists.

### **Christian Cults and Sects**

*Jehovah's Witnesses* (680 members): In 1869, Charles Russell formed a Bible study group in Allegheny, PA, which led to the movement of the Jehovah's Witnesses. Jehovah's Witnesses differ from evangelical Christians on different points of doctrine. For example, Jesus is only human, not divine; there is no Trinity; and only 144,000 people will enter heaven.

*Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (115 members): The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of which the members are known as Mormons, was founded by Joseph Smith in 1820. The Church claims 11 million members worldwide. In addition to the Bible, the Latter-day Saints consider The Pearl of Great Price, The Doctrine and Covenants, and The Book of Mormon (1830) as sacred. Although in 1890, the practice of polygamy was officially rejected, polygamy is still present in the state of Utah (USA). The Mormons are known for their extensive research in genealogy. Their views on the main Christian doctrines differ from those held by evangelical Christians. Lorenzo Snow and Jabez Woodard were the 1<sup>st</sup> Mormons to arrive in Malta in February 1852. In May of

that same year, the 1<sup>st</sup> church was opened (<http://www.malta.imlds.com/page6.html>). Currently, there is 1 church in Malta. The services are in English.

### **Catholic/Orthodox Churches**

*Roman Catholic Church* (approximately 95% of population): About 80 Roman Catholic congregations provide spiritual food for the majority of Maltese. Christianity first came to Malta when the Apostle Paul landed ashore after he shipwrecked on his way to Rome around AD 60. The Roman Catholic expression of Christianity has dominated Malta ever since. Around 95% of the population expresses a relationship to the Roman Catholic Church. Church attendance in Malta is around 67% (December 1995 est.). For most Maltese, it is very important to celebrate rites of passage in the Church. (<http://www.maltachurch.org.mt/Malta/christianity.htm>) For information on the Roman Catholic order of the Jesuits, see <http://www.jesuit.org.mt/>.

*Greek Orthodox Church* (no number available): The Greek Orthodox Church is the main expression of the Orthodox Church in Malta. Eastern Orthodoxy is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest Christian denomination in the world. In 1054, the Great Schism took place between Rome and Constantinople. The result was the separation of the church of the west, the Roman Catholic Church, and the church of the east, the Eastern Orthodox Church.

### **Protestants/Evangelicals/Pentecostals**

*Church of England* (270 members): The Church of England for the Maltese archipelago consists of 2 churches (the Pro-Cathedral in Valletta and Holy Trinity in Sliema) and 1 congregation (Congregation of Our Lady and St. George on Gozo). The Anglican Church is rather Roman Catholic in its beliefs and traditions despite breaking with the Roman Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. (<http://www.anglicanmalta.org/index.html>)

*Presbyterian and Methodist Church* (120 members): The combined Presbyterian and Methodist Church in Malta has around 120 members. The Church's heritage is the Reformed tradition (beginning in the 16<sup>th</sup> century) with major emphases on the Bible and the sovereignty of God. There are 75 million Presbyterians worldwide. The church government is in the hands of elected lay leaders (elders, from the Greek word *presbuteros*) who work together with the ordained minister of the local congregation. The official name of the Presbyterian Church in Malta is St. Andrews Scots Church. The Methodist Church, too, has its roots in the Protestant Reformation. Its founder, John Wesley, emphasized the 'Four Alls:' All need to be saved; all can be saved; all may know themselves saved; and all may be completely saved (<http://www.bloomfieldmethodist.org.uk/Beliefs.htm>).

*Evangelical Church of Germany* (70 members): The name of the Evangelical Church of Germany (ECG) in Malta is Die Andreas Gemeinde, since it is connected with St. Andrews Scots Church. ECG consists of Lutheran, Reformed, and United regional churches. Die Andreas Gemeinde is reformed in its theology. ([http://www.ekd.de/auslandsgemeinden/auslandsgemeinden\\_gemeinden\\_a\\_bis\\_z\\_1412.php](http://www.ekd.de/auslandsgemeinden/auslandsgemeinden_gemeinden_a_bis_z_1412.php))

*Union of Evangelical Churches* (500 members): Includes Pentecostal, Christian Evangelical (Assembly of God, 70 members), and other nondenominational churches. Malta's Full Gospel Praise Centers are a nondenominational group with 2 different meeting places. (<http://www.fgpc.org.mt/>) With roots in the Holiness movement, the Pentecostal movement originated in the USA in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Having around 35 members, Word of Life is a classic Pentecostal church in Malta (<http://www.wordoflifemalta.org/>). The Assemblies of God has its roots in the Pentecostal revivals in the USA in the late 1800s, early 1900s. In 1914, the General Council of the Assemblies of God was founded in Hot Springs, Arkansas. The Assemblies of God churches worldwide emphasize missions and evangelism.

*Baptist Church* (70 members): Malta has 2 Baptist churches: Bible Baptist Church in Gzira (<http://www.biblebaptistchurch-malta.org/index.htm>) and Trinity Evangelical Church in Luqa. Trinity Evangelical Church is a Reformed Baptist church (<http://www.tecmalta.org/>). Regarding faith, Baptists are orthodox and conservative. Among other tenets, they hold to believer's baptism, the separation of church and state, the priesthood of the believers, and the autonomy of the local church.  
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/71395.htm>

## People Groups

000

(Anglo)-Australian (600)

More than 90% of the Australians are Caucasian (mainly of British and Irish descent). Asians account for 7%. Aborigines and other groups only form 1% of the total population. The official language is English. 25-30% of the Australians are Roman Catholic, 22% Anglican, and 22% belong to other Christian denominations. Some of the Australians in Malta are descendant of Maltese who immigrated to Australia after World War II. These descendants, sometimes with their parents, moved to Malta.

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Anglo-Canadian (200)

The Anglo-Canadians form a small group in Malta. This group speaks English as its first language. The people in this group are originally from Canada or descendents of Anglo-Canadians in Malta. The majority adheres to the Christian faith.

374

Arab (2,000-7,200)

Arabs have been present in Malta since 836 when they first attacked the archipelago. The Maltese Arabs speak Arabic and are mainly Muslims. Worldwide Arabs number over 148 million. They form the majority population in 15 countries. The Arabs are "the largest, most diverse and most politically influential Muslim ethnic group in the world." (From Richard V. Weekes, ed., *Muslim Peoples: A World Ethnographic Survey*, 2d ed., *Acehnese-Lur* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1984), 35)

375

British (6,223-9,000)

The Anglophones are English-speaking people from Great Britain. They consist of English, Scots, Welsh, and Irish people. These people groups share a similar culture with many individual/national elements. The majority belongs to the Christian faith.

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Deaf (20,799)

The Maltese deaf can receive education in any of the 3 deaf institutions in Malta. ([http://www.ethnologue.com/show\\_country.asp?name=Malta](http://www.ethnologue.com/show_country.asp?name=Malta)). Many deaf make use of Maltese sign language.

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French (200)

The French in Malta come from France, one of the most powerful nations in the world. The French are a Latin people with a mix of Germanic, Mediterranean, and other European peoples. French is one of the Gallo-Romance languages (part of the Romance group of Indo-European languages). Close to 90% of the French worldwide are Roman Catholic. Although the majority of the population belongs to the Roman Catholic Church, most of the people are secular. For centuries, the French have been known for their art, letters, and fashion.

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Greek (100)

The Greeks are an ancient people and form a separate branch of the Indo-European peoples. Today's Greek language is derived from the Hellenistic standard Greek. The majority of the Greeks (98%) worldwide are Greek Orthodox. Greek culture is influenced by the Turkish people and culture. Greece is known for its history, culture, and literature.

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Indo-Pakistani (60)

The Indo-Pakistanis are originally from India. Many of them live in other countries around the world. The majority of them are Hindus (adhering to a polytheistic belief), speaking Hindi as their main language. In the Arab peninsula, the majority of Indo-Pakistanis are Muslim.

376

Italian (5,000-5,600)

The Italians are a Latin people with a mixture of Germanic and Mediterranean people groups. Known for their long and glorious history, the Italians are predominantly Roman



Catholic (84%). However, church attendance is only about 25%. Standard Italian is the official language but different dialects are spoken all throughout the country.

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Maltese Jew (60)

The first Jews settled in Malta around 1500 BC. The number of Jews in Malta reached a peak in the Middle Ages (500 Jews on Malta, 350 on Gozo). In 1479, the Spanish crown expelled all of Malta's Jews. Presumably, a large number of Jews converted to Christianity to avoid expulsion. Under the Knights of St. John (until 1792), many Jews on Malta were slaves. Before and during World War II, many Jews fled to Malta. Today's Jewish community numbers only 25 families. Many of the younger generation have emigrated. A synagogue indicates the adherence to the Jewish faith in Malta.

377

Maltese (375,000-385,000)

A Mediterranean people, the Maltese reflect the characterizations of their many colonizers and conquerors. The Maltese's mixed background includes Carthaginian, Greek, Roman, Norman, Arab, Italian, and British.

The Maltese language has 7 dialects. Many Maltese are bilingual or multilingual.

98% of the Maltese adhere to the Roman Catholic faith.

(Most info taken from James B. Minahan, *One Europe, Many Nations: A Historical Dictionary of European National Groups* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000))

### **Missiological Implications**

1. Evangelical Christians and Churches should recognize that while 95% of the people in Malta are claimed as members by the Roman Catholic Church, the faith of these people seems to be more traditional than a personal faith. These peoples need the true Message of Jesus Christ.
2. Evangelical Christians and Churches should seek ways to train believers in methods of witnessing to Roman Catholics.
3. Evangelical Christians and Churches should work toward a contextualized presentation of the Gospel in Malta. This approach, the same idea as implication number 2, should help believers witness without offending the Roman Catholic peoples of Malta.
4. Evangelical Christians and Churches should emphasize work among refugees in Malta

### **Pictures:**

See separate folder.

**Links:**

<https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/print/mt.html>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malta>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History\\_of\\_Malta](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Malta)

<http://www.nso.gov.mt/>