



Happiness in Malta

Is everyone living a good life in Malta?

Does everyone feel satisfied with their life? Is everybody happy? In order to answer these questions, the University of Malta and the Malta Foundation for the Wellbeing of Society embarked on a study in collaboration of the National Office of Statistics in Malta. To answer this question, it is possible to use scientific methods that give a clear picture of who scores well on the happiness scale, and more importantly, who does not.

How can you answer happiness questions scientifically?

Starting in 2018, around 10,000 adults of all ages were interviewed annually from all regions in Malta, with all levels of education and life-style. They were asked about how they feel day to day, how satisfied they feel with their financial situation, their work, where they lived, how they lived, their health and their family. These were validated questions employed in other countries in Europe too.

What kind of questions?

For instance, they were asked "Think about the past 4 weeks. How often have you felt Lonely? Very nervous? Downhearted or depressed? Happy, calm and peaceful?" And... "Overall how satisfied are you with your life these days? Your financial situation? Your job? Your use of time? Your personal relationship with family, friends, neighbours and other people you know?" With this data in hand, it is possible to create models so as to be able to understand and predict wellbeing in Malta.

So, what about happiness in Malta?

Firstly, it seems that, on average, people in Malta are reasonably satisfied with their lives, at a level that compares well with that in other European countries. However people in Malta are somewhat less satisfied with their use of time, and generally tend to be nervous more often. One reason for this could be the long working hours and day to day situations like noise and traffic. Secondly, people who are satisfied with their lives are not necessarily also happy emotionally. For instance people who have more money tend to feel satisfied but not necessary more content. People who live in Gozo tend to have lower levels of satisfaction but higher levels of happiness. Satisfaction is one thing. Happiness is another. Thirdly, though people in Malta are fine on average, there are people who are doing really well and other who are doing quite poorly, especially if they are ill, poor and alone.

All in all, asking people how they feel generates very interesting (and very useful) data. After all, who better to judge how they're doing in a country than the people of that country themselves? With this kind of data it becomes possible to judge how a country is doing on a human level and not just on a financial level. And that way, policy decisions can be judged with evidence for their impact on wellbeing.

