

**Title:**

Do you know the helpline number in case of a stray animal in distress?

**Category:**

11-14 years

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# Do you know the helpline number in case of a stray animal in distress?

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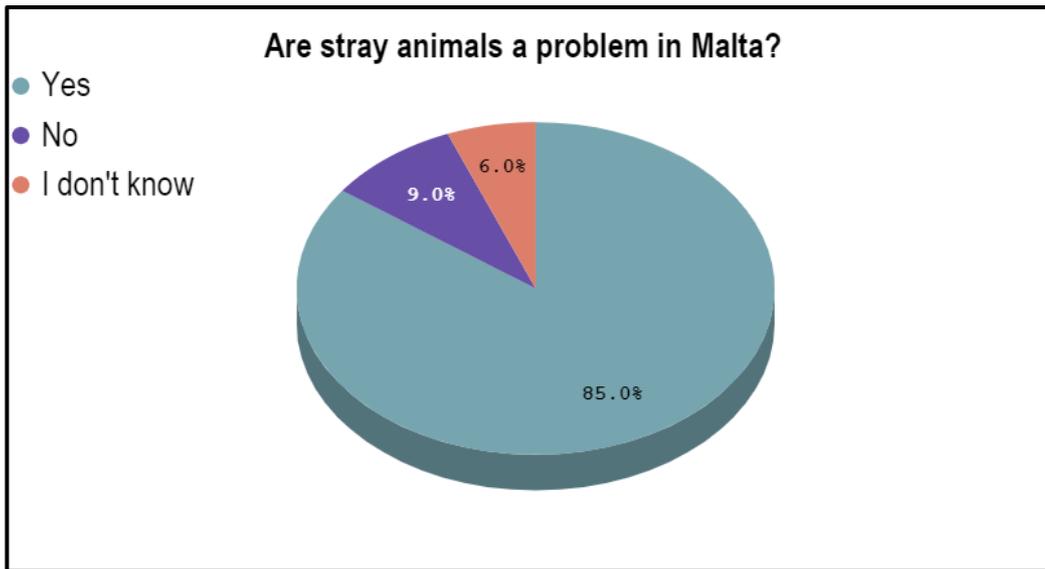
We all love animals and hate to see them suffer, so during the first discussions, we, as a group, agreed that our research should tackle an issue that we all care about, hoping that thanks to the results of our survey, we would be able to make a difference. Having chosen our subject, animals, we talked about certain issues relevant to Maltese society, including stray animals, the financial situation of animal sanctuaries, animal cemeteries and pet cremation. After considering these issues, we decided to focus on the situation of stray animals in the Maltese streets, because there are too many strays in unhealthy and bad living conditions. Together we decided to carry out this research and see what other people think about this issue.

According to [islandofcats.com](http://islandofcats.com) there are around 300,000 stray cats running around in Malta. One of the main reasons for this, is that people keep feeding them and their population is always increasing. The people who do this might think of it as helpful, but a well-fed cat is more likely to produce healthy kittens, though now stray animals are being neutered in order to decrease the amount of offspring. We gave out 100 questionnaires to 100 people who live in different towns around Malta to determine their point of view as regards this problem.

## Are stray animals a problem in Malta?

As shown in figure 1, 85% of our respondents believe that in Malta there is a problem regarding stray animals.

Figure 1:



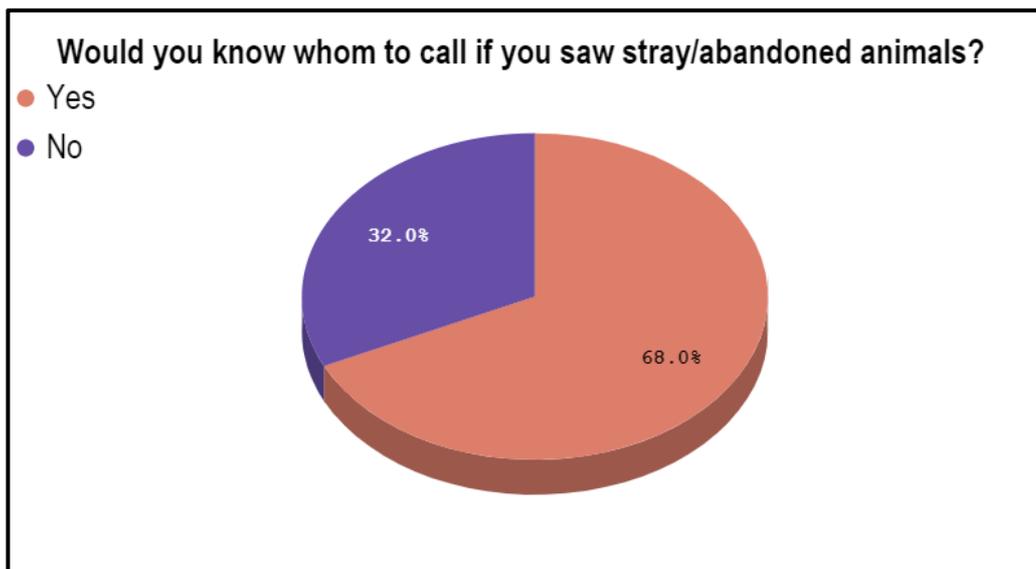
Strays are unfortunately a norm in Malta but this problem can be reduced if less people abandon their pets, and with the help of animal shelters. Animal shelters do help with this problem, although some of them are overcrowded and do not have the funding they need. This might be why some of our respondents suggested raising awareness among Maltese citizens so that they will be more cautious when getting a pet. They also recommended that educational talks should be held in schools (52%) and television programmes (35%). The result also shows that people think that fund raising events in aid of animal shelters should be held more often.

A suggestion that definitely caught our attention during the filtering of the results was that a person recommended that a pet rescue reality show programme should be shown on Maltese Television. This is a great idea because in other countries such as the United States of America, this is done and it is very beneficial as, apart from the awareness aspect, such programmes earn a substantial amount of money to help animal sanctuaries. This could be something new for Maltese viewers which could have positive results.

## Would you know whom to call if you saw stray/abandoned animals?

We were surprised to find out that 32% of our respondents, as shown in figure 2, do not know the helpline number (22924113/79969918) in case of a stray in distress.

Figure 2:



This contrasts sharply with the answer to the next question since 71% of respondents said that they would call an animal rescue organisation if they saw stray/ abandoned animals. How can they call if most of them do not know the number? Once more, more awareness should be raised about the helpline number, and different animal sanctuaries, since many citizens want to help but do not know how.

As part of this study we interviewed a Maltese citizen who takes care of stray cats in her street. She has mixed feelings about whether stray cats are a problem or not, as cats are animals of prey and hunt rats so in this way the sanitary conditions are improved since pests, like, for instance, rats are part of their diet and they help keep the rodent population under control. She stated:

I think there are fewer stray cats in Malta than there were a few years ago. However, it is a pity when someone kicks out a pet because they cannot afford to keep it.'

When asked what she would do in the case of a pregnant cat in her street, she answered that she would take her in and help her during the birth process and then she would try to find good homes for the kittens with other people.

To conclude, this issue is very important for us and we hope it may be solved. We also have our own suggestions, foremost of which is to raise more awareness about animal care by videos on social media as today they are more popular than television, and other media. Education is also very important from a young age, so that children are not afraid of animals but love them instead and know how to care for them as they deserve.