

**Title:**

Traffic in Malta and some ways to decrease it.

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**Group members:**

Attard Shanaya - Date of Birth: 31-08-04,

Gauci Daisy - Date of Birth: 19-01-04,

Magro Amy Ann - Date of Birth: 31-07-04,

Palmier Tara – Date of Birth: 27-06-04,

Sammut Mariah – Date of Birth: 19-12-04,

Suda Maya – Date of Birth: 17-09-04

**School:**

St. Francis Secondary School, Sliema

**Link Teacher:**

Ms. Vanessa Cachia

# **Traffic in Malta and some ways to decrease it.**

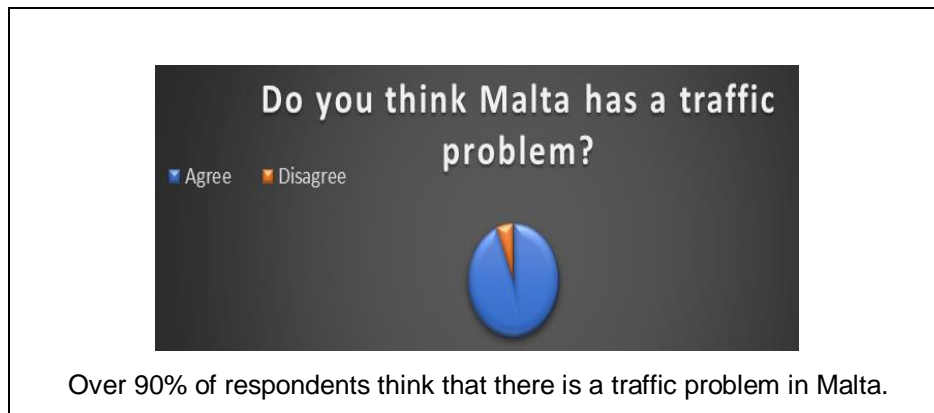
By: Attard Shanaya, Gauci Daisy, Magro Amy Ann, Palmier Tara, Sammut Mariah, and Suda Maya.

Scientific research states that Maltese roads are perceived as the fifth worst in Europe, and that Maltese people spend 52 hours stuck in traffic every year. As regards construction, it is evident that permits are issued without proper planning because one frequently finds closed roads at short notice at the same time that runs-offs from these roads are closed. Transport Minister Joe Mizzi (2017) said that Malta's infrastructure was not keeping up with demands. Mr. Van De Schouw, Policy Analyst in the European Commission's transport directorate, said (2017) that this, however, had shown slight improvement from 2010, when it ranked as the worst in Europe.

We have all been caught in traffic or forced to take an unplanned diversion, and we know how frustrating it is for our parents. Therefore, we carried out this research to determine what Maltese people think about traffic and related issues. Our research is based on 100 questionnaires we gave out to a representative sample of the Maltese population.

The vast majority 94% of our respondents (84% male, 94% female) think that Malta has a traffic problem and do not like driving (44% male, 42% female) because it is stressful to wait in traffic and also very irritating when they constantly arrive late to their destination. In fact, 13% complained that they spend about 15 minutes in traffic daily, 22% spend an hour and 4% (all females) spend about more than 2 hours daily. This shows that we do, in fact, have some traffic problems. We also seem to have problems with the public transport system. In fact, our respondents also do not have much faith in public transport and only 26% of males and 22% of females think that Maltese public transport is effective. 48% of respondents also said that they never use public transport, and only 10% use it regularly. This lack of faith in the public transport system could, in fact, be the cause of traffic on our roads, and a good sustainable plan to increase faith in the system might decrease traffic on the roads. Moreover, 72% of male respondents and 38% of female respondents also think that flyovers are a good solution to reduce traffic, 28% of male respondents and 40% of female respondents think that companies, schools etc. should provide transport for their employees, and 14% of male

respondents and 20% of female respondents think that construction work should only be carried out at night to reduce traffic.



Over 58% of respondents use their vehicle every day and more than half of them use them for working purposes. Unfortunately, only 34% actually like driving because they feel independent and self-sufficient, relaxed, free, and can go anywhere they like. Over 90% of our respondents think that Malta has a traffic problem and just 10% are still unsure. Moreover, more than 61% agree that there should be a change in the public transport system. Some of their suggestions regarding solutions to improve public transport include: more frequent buses and sticking to the schedule, cleaner interiors, more comfortable seats and friendlier bus drivers, which would result in mutual understanding between them and the passengers. Statistics shows that some causes of traffic are the excessive amount of cars on the road, slow drivers and people's inconvenient working hours, and many of our respondents also identified construction work, car accidents and too many cars on the road as causes of traffic. Over half of them complained that they usually arrive late to their destination because of traffic and most of them said it is quite stressful and irritating to wait in traffic.

In our opinion, there are plausible solutions to decrease traffic in Malta. We all agree that improving school transport and having more reasonable fees would result in less traffic on the road early in the morning and in the early afternoon. So would making public transport more effective, especially during peak hours, before and after work. Obviously, more flyovers and underground passageways should be built. For example, the new flyover in Kappara has already considerably reduced traffic. In fact, as reported in the *Times of Malta*:

“The first flyover was opened last July, already easing traffic in what is known as one of Malta's most problematic traffic junctions.”

Moreover, minor construction work and road repairs should be done at night, or at times when there is little traffic so that there is no reason to close roads. This would reduce a lot of stress on the drivers, yet work would still be getting done.



A traffic jam in Malta: a common sight on our roads.

For major works, work should be carried out 24/7, so that the work is finished sooner. However, whatever method is adopted, what is needed most is good planning because trying to do everything at the same time and closing down too many streets at the same time can only lead to chaos. Basically, what is necessary is sustainable development.

On the other hand, we cannot wait for the government or local councils to try to do miracles. It is very important that we all take the initiative and try to do something on a personal level to try to make a difference. The decision to walk or cycle to our destination, to catch the bus to certain problematic locations, or even to beg or offer a lift to reduce the number of cars on the road may seem a little thing, but it can make a big difference if many people do it. In the long run, decreasing traffic on our roads can only benefit us-physically, because there is less pollution, and mentally, because we are less stressed out.

## References:

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