

1,021 enumerators, 91 supervisors and 28 call centre operators are involved in this year's census.

The 2011 Census of Population and Housing

The seventeenth Census of Population and Housing is currently being undertaken, with Census Day being next Sunday, 20 November. The 2011 Census of Population and Housing will provide an important and updated source of information about the count, characteristics, composition and condition of the population of Malta. Census results influence a number of aspects of Maltese life: public policy-making; options and decisions of families and households; choices made by the elderly; initiatives and investments by the business sector; streams of research and development.

This year's Census was officially launched in June, and is being carried out in conformity with the Census Act of 1948 and Regulation 763/2008 of the European Parliament and of the Council. Census questionnaires were mailed in the last week of October and started being collected on 7 November. This process will last till 4 December. All residents of Malta are required by law to participate in the Census.

Population growth along the years

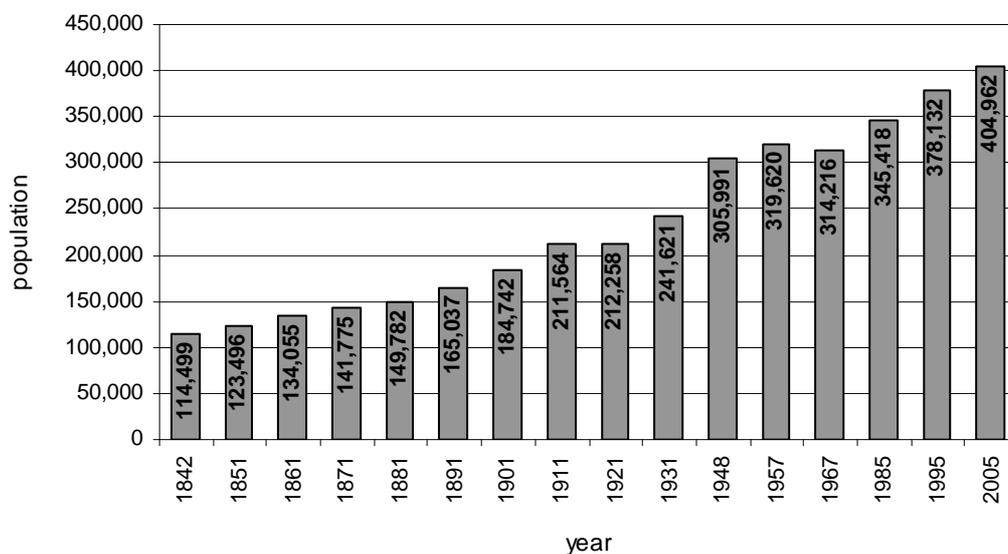
Since the first official census, the population of Malta has increased three-and-a-half times over, from 114,499 in 1842 to 404,962 in 2005. Furthermore, while the population increased by over 60 per cent between 1842 and the turn of the 20th century, the population more than doubled between the beginning of the 20th century and the turn of the 21st, i.e. between 1901 and 2005.

In the last Census the population grew by 7.1 per cent when compared to the one taken a decade earlier, indicating a slowdown in population growth. In fact, in the period between 1985 and 1995, the population had grown by 9.5 per cent.

Over a period of around 160 years, between 1842 and 2005, the population growth rate has varied. Chart 1 below provides a graphical representation of the population count and growth rates between 1842 and 2005.



Chart 1. Population counts between censuses



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Organisational and operational set-up

In the first quarter this year, an organisational structure was set up within the Census Office, co-ordinating all activities including methodology, logistics, information technology and communications.

The Census process involves almost 1,200 persons, headed by the Census Officer, and including two deputies, three co-ordinators, five district managers, five area supervisors, 28 call centre operators, together with 91 supervisors and 1,021 enumerators, who are responsible for the collection of Census questionnaires from households. All personnel performing duties connected with the Census were sworn in by the Census Officer in terms of the Census Act to ensure confidentiality in relation to information furnished for the purposes of the Census.

To facilitate the enumeration process, Malta was divided into a number of so-called enumeration areas, where each one consists of a number of streets or parts thereof in a particular locality. Each enumeration area was then assigned to an enumerator.

The NSO rented the ex-Pilar school in Valletta for housing the Census Office, responsible for the administration of Census operations, the IT Unit and the data-processing Unit. Census questionnaires are also being stored in these premises. These questionnaires are fed to the Census Office from 41 schools across Malta and Gozo.

To date, nearly 50,000 questionnaires have been collected, covering more than 138,000 persons.

The NSO is also operating a call centre, which manages all calls received through freephone 170. Between 26 October, when the service was launched, and 17 November 15,980 calls were received. Of these, 14,323, or 90 per cent, were answered. The Census has a dedicated website at www.census2011.gov.mt.

The Census questionnaire

The Census questionnaire was prepared after a series of consultation meetings were held with a number of organisations in June and July. Eventually it was pilot tested among a random sample of households in August. Suggestions and recommendations received proved useful in drawing up the final census questionnaire, which ensures continuation with previous censuses that were carried out in Malta and conforms to the recommendations, concepts and definitions on population censuses of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and Eurostat.

The questionnaire, which is used for both private and institutional households, is divided into two parts. The first part covers demographic and other socio-demographic topics while the second part deals with housing. The Census questionnaire contains extensive explanatory notes intended to facilitate its completion.

The first set of preliminary results from the Census will be available in the second quarter next year ■