

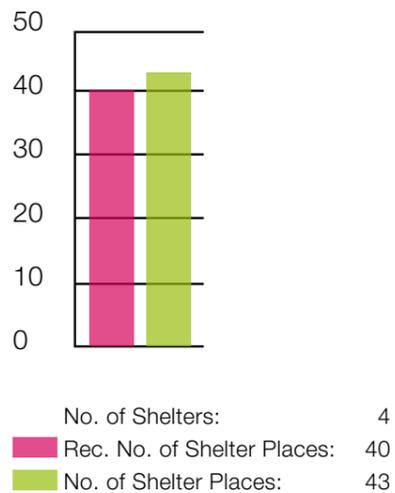
MALTA

(REPUBLIC OF MALTA)



General Country Information
Population: 404,962¹
Female inhabitants:
 204,143 = 50.41% of total population
CEDAW ratified: 1991
Optional Protocol of CEDAW ratified: no
Member of Council of Europe: 1965
Member of European Union: 2004

Facts and Figures
Latest number of femicides: One in 2008²
Latest number of DV cases reported by police:
 260 between 1st of January 2008 until 31st of August 2008; 341 in 2007³
Latest number of DV cases reported by women's shelters: From January to June 2008, the Domestic Violence Unit – DVU received 236 referrals and 190 cases were opened. In 2007, DVU received 524 referrals of which 479 cases were opened.⁴
Prevalence of DV: No data available.⁵



SERVICES FOR WOMEN SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

Women's Helplines

In Malta there is one national helpline providing 24 hours service for survivors of domestic violence, victims of child abuse and mental health clients. Free-of charge counselling is offered in Maltese and English. The costs for operating the helpline are fully covered by state funding.

Table of Women's HELPLINES:

	Number of Helplines	Call free of charge	Helplines with 24/7	Helplines with multi-lingual service	State funding per %
National	1	1	1	1	100%
Regional	0	/	/	/	0%

Women's Shelters

In Malta, there are four women's shelters which provide services in Maltese and English. Some of these also provide services in Italian, Arabic and French. The shelters include one state emergency shelter with a capacity of 15 beds

accommodating women and children, one NGO emergency shelter providing 13 individual rooms for women and their children, one church-run NGO emergency shelter in Gozo with six rooms for women and their children (due to refurbishing it is currently not available), and one second stage shelter consisting of nine individual flats for women and their children. According to Agency Appoggs (the national social welfare agency for children and families in need) all three emergency shelters are operational 24 hours a day. While the state emergency shelter is fully funded by state, the three remaining NGO shelters are partly financed through state funding and partly by the church and other donations. With a total number of 43 women's shelter places, Malta has fulfilled the recommendation of the European Parliament.

Further, there is one NGO hostel for homeless women with a capacity of 17 beds in total. It is designed to accommodate both women and their children. It is accessible 24 hours a day and partly funded by the state.

Table of Women's SHELTERS:



Number of Shelters	Shelter Places available	Shelter Places needed	Shelter Places missing	Shelters with 24/7 service	Shelters with multi-lingual service
4	43	40	0	3	4

Further Services for women survivors of violence

There are no intervention centres in Malta, however, there is a main State Social Work Agency with a specialised Unit on Domestic Violence. A Central Police Vice Squad deals with cases of severe domestic violence when referred to them by district police or social workers.

National Action Plan

Based on the Council of Europe Blueprint for the Campaign to Eliminate Violence Against Women developed by The Commission on Domestic Violence, the rudiments of a National Action Plan on Combating Domestic Violence for 2007-2008 in Malta have been drawn up.

Additional Issues

Since the national elections in March 2008, the Commission on Domestic Violence is awaiting confirmation of its members by the Ministry of Social Policy. Although the Commission has continued to work, this work is limited. The commission has three sub-committees which have not met since March 2008. The sub-committees deal with research, service development, and media awareness. As soon as the members become confirmed, these sub-committees will be able to continue their work.

Situation of MM women survivors of violence in Malta⁵

The most serious problems of MM women survivors of violence in Malta include the following:

Women are not empowered to report violence to the police, sometimes as a result of their cultural background. Reporting domestic violence becomes even more difficult when language barriers are present.

Women may find it difficult to get alternative accommodation and/or employment if they decide to leave their husband/partner, especially if they do not have a visa, remained in the country on an expired visa, or do not have refugee or other status based on humanitarian grounds.

There are four women's shelters in Malta. One of them is a government shelter and is run by Appogg. At the moment, there are no women's shelters specialised in the issues facing MM women in Malta. However, MM women do have access to the shelters for survivors of violence. Most shelters in Malta receive some funding from the state and some from fundraising activities. Shelters do not receive separate funds specifically allocated for MM women.

1. Access of MM women to women's shelters and other services

MM women have access to shelters regardless of their legal status. Restrictions that apply are the same as those applying to non-MM women. In such cases, where restrictions prohibit a woman's access to shelter, the respective social workers would attempt to find alternative services.

Children of MM women are allowed to stay in women's shelters. However, especially for boys, there are age restrictions. In exceptional cases, the government run shelter and one of the church run centres accept older boys.

If a boy is not accepted in a shelter and has little or no social network to provide a safe place for him, Agency Appogg and the National Social Welfare Agency running the government shelter, explores the possibility of placements with foster parents, in Children's Homes and Youth Hostels (depending on the age of the boys) and assesses availability of social contacts like friends/neighbours of the MM women in order to find a safe place for him.

Native language counselling is not available for MM women. If counselling or therapy is required by MM women and the professionals from the institutions engaged with them do not have the language skills required, the services of interpreters are sought.

The services provided for MM women do not differ from those available to non-MM women and include emotional support, empowerment, practical support regarding social security, employment and housing accommodations as well as social work intervention. These services are provided in Maltese and English, and interpreter services are provided if possible.

There is a national helpline called Supportline 179. This helpline offers bilingual services in the two official languages, Maltese and English.

No official data is available regarding the percentage of MM women accommodated by women's shelters in Malta. However, it is estimated that less than 25 per cent of women accommodated in women's shelters are MM women. There are no MM women employed in women's shelters.

There are other specialised agencies and organisations, such as AWAS (Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers), JRS (Jesuit Refugee Service), and IOM (International Office of Migration, Malta), which focus on the needs of irregular immigrants, but they also refer to the existing mainstream services such as those provided by the National Social Welfare Agency, Appogg. The main organisations providing such services have limited financial resources to cover the number of cultural mediators and interpreters that are needed.

2. Right of residence

A third country national woman married to a Maltese national has the ability to apply for her own residence permit after five years of marriage.

Neither heterosexual partnership/cohabitation nor same sex partnership/cohabitation gives a woman the right to a residence permit.

There are no exceptions for MM women if they experience violence. Only victims of human trafficking are offered temporary residence if they co-operate with the police.

3. Access of MM women to public funds and services

Healthcare services

MM women without documents, residence permit, or with an insecure or temporary residence permit as well as asylum seekers and refugees have access to healthcare services. Since there are no minority ethnic groups such as Roma in Malta, these public funds and services are not applicable to minority ethnic groups.

All of the above categories will have access to the public healthcare system, but those without any form of temporary or refugee status may be treated as non-EU citizens/foreigners (unless their country has a reciprocal agreement with Malta) and be expected to pay for services. Access to the private healthcare system is also possible, if MM women can afford to pay for it.

Social benefits

Only asylum seekers and refugees have access to social benefits.

Women survivors of DV are not specially considered for the provision of social benefits. However, if the social worker provides a letter to the department of social security, access to the first benefit payment may be hastened.

Housing programmes

Only asylum seekers and refugees have access to housing programmes. Migrant women who have refugee status have the same rights as Maltese citizens and therefore have access to housing programmes.

Childcare facilities

Migrant women with an insecure or temporary residence permit as well as asylum seekers and refugees have access to childcare facilities.

MM children are given priority due to their double vulnerability. The difficulties are the availability of placements in childcare facilities and currently the insufficient number of these facilities.

Education/training programmes

Migrant women without documents or with an insecure or temporary residence permit as well as asylum seekers and refugees have access to education/training programmes.

Labour market

Migrant women with an insecure or temporary residence permit as well as asylum seekers and refugees have access to the labour market.

Refugees with refugee or humanitarian status have access to the labour market. Those who are in the process of assessment of their asylum application may also have access to the labour market.

There are no existing regulations which give priority of labour market access to survivors of violence.

4. Legal protection of MM women from violence

Legal aid

MM women with refugee status can access mainstream legal aid services which are free of charge. This help is not provided in different languages, but interpreters are utilised if needed.

Endnotes

¹ United Nations Demographic Yearbook 2008 <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/dyb/dybsets/2008%20DYB.pdf>

² 1998: 3 women, 1999: 5 women, 2000: 2 women, 2001: 3 women, 2002: 3 women, 2003: 0 woman, 2004: 4 women, 2005: 2 women, 2006: 0 woman, 2007: 1 woman, 2008: 1 woman; From 1998 – 2008: 24 women. Source: Police Incident Reporting System.

³ 1998: 127 cases, 1999: 153 cases, 2000: 159 cases, 2001: 185 cases, 2002: 205 cases, 2003: 268 cases, 2004: 233 cases, 2005: 228 cases, 2006: 268 cases. Figures related to the number of alleged domestic violence reports entered in the P.I.R.S (Police Incident – Monthly Reporting System) throughout all Police districts around Malta and Gozo. These do not include reports that may have been filed solely at specialised branches.

⁴ Every woman who is hosted in the shelter has to make a report at the Domestic Violence Social Work Unit, hence the statistics for the Domestic Violence Social Work Unit, i.e. all the women that asked for social work/shelter help are provided here.

⁵ A prevalence survey is intended to be carried out by the Commission on Domestic Violence soon.

⁶ Information in this section has, unless quoted, been provided by the Agency APPOGG, <http://www.appogg.gov.mt>