



C.O.N.T.A.C.T.

Creating an On-line Network, monitoring Team and phone App to Counter hate crime Tactics

Results of the perceptual experiment following the answers to the online questionnaire in Malta

In the framework of the European project C.O.N.T.A.C.T., led by the University of Cyprus, we at the Institute of Linguistics of the University of Malta have carried out an assessment on the perceptions of online hate speech and hate crime on the basis of the answers to our questionnaire filled in by Maltese internet-users. The questionnaire was distributed online.

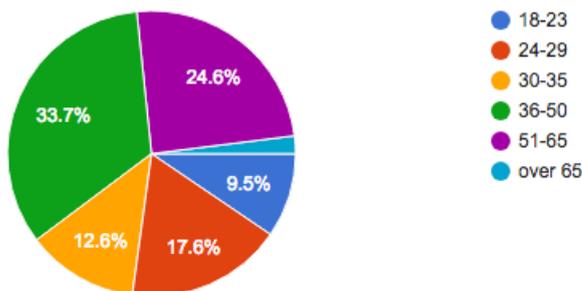
Information about the respondents:

The number of respondents totalled 199.

Demographic information

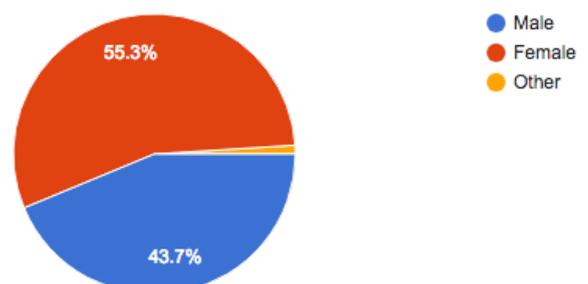
Age:

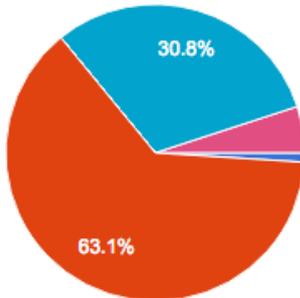
The largest group of respondents were aged between 36-50, making up 33.7% of the sample population. 24.6% were aged between 51 and 65, 17.6% were aged between 24 and 29, 12.6% aged between 30 and 35, 9.5% aged between 18 and 23, and finally, the smallest group of respondents (2%) were aged over 65.



Gender:

The majority of respondents identified as either female (55.3%) or male (43.7%), with only 1% of the respondents not identifying as either male or female.



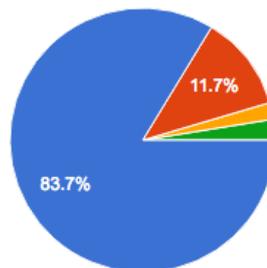


- Buddhist
- Christian
- Hindu
- Jewish
- Muslim
- None
- Other

198 of the respondents answered the question pertaining to their religion. Of these 198, the majority of respondents were Christian (63.1%) and 1% of the respondents identified as Buddhist. 30.8% of respondents do not assimilate with any religion, while 5.1% assimilate with another faith not listed.

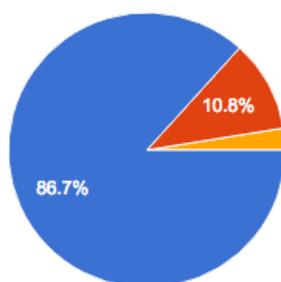
National Background:

196 of the respondents answered the question pertaining to their national background. Of these 196, a large majority identified as Maltese (83.7%). Another 11.7% identified as non-Maltese EU citizens, while 2% identified as non-EU citizens and another 2.6% as other.



- Maltese
- EU non-Maltese
- Non-EU
- Other

Sexual Orientation:

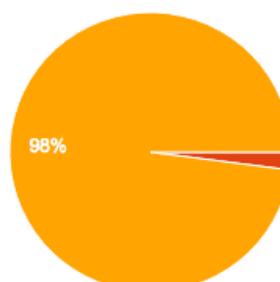


- Heterosexual
- LGBTQI
- Other

195 of the respondents answered the question pertaining to their sexual orientation. Of these 195 respondents, a great majority identified as heterosexual (86.7%). 10.8% identified as LGBTQI and 2.6% identified as other.

Educational Level:

196 of the respondents answered the question pertaining to their level of education. Of these 196, almost all of them have reached a level of higher education (98%). 2% have reached secondary education and none of the respondents stopped studying at primary education.



- Primary
- Secondary
- Higher Education



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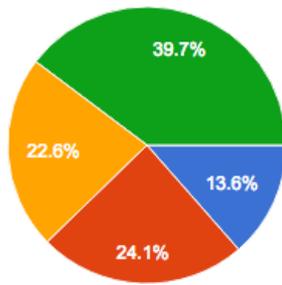


Section 1: In section 1 of the questionnaire respondents were given six examples of the online comments written in public forums and asked to indicate how acceptable they think it is for people to post such comments online in public forums. All 199 respondents responded to the questions in this section.

Example 1:

Immigrants are not stupid. They love the freedom and rights they have over here. This is nothing but arrogance and it is what we should expect from them in the future. Maybe it's you who's in denial, but wake up and smell the coffee because it is starting to smell.

This is a comment in response to another comment under an article in Malta Today about the Muslim community in Malta calling on authorities to grant permits for places of worship. The comment to which the comment above is a response suggests that there is enough space in Saudi Arabia for the building of any mosques.



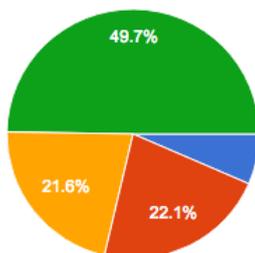
- Acceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Less acceptable
- Not acceptable

13.6% of respondents deemed the above comment to be acceptable, 24.1% found it somewhat acceptable, 22.6% as less acceptable, and 39.7% as not acceptable.

Example 2:

The gay community has become arrogant and aggressive towards achieving a one sided political agenda, completely in their favour, at the expense of all others' human rights to live and procreate as nature intended.

This comment is in response to an article in the Time of Malta discussing the approval of the new Gender Identity Bill.



- Acceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Less acceptable
- Not acceptable

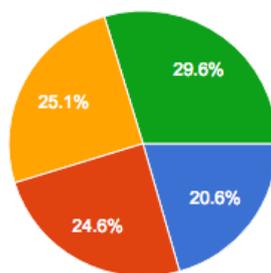
6.5% of respondents found the above comment to be acceptable. 22.1% found it to be somewhat acceptable, 21.6% found it to be less acceptable, and 49.7% deemed it to be not acceptable at all.



Example 3:

Multiculturalism as is being advertised by the pseudo liberals has failed BADLY. It is like putting the starter, main course and dessert in a liquidiser and eating everything together. It simply destroys the palate. European culture should be preserved in Europe; Arabian culture in Arab countries; Asian cultures in Asia, etc etc. This way all cultures can be appreciated without one culture subduing the other. We are ignoring the fact that some cultures are downright INCOMPATIBLE, and to try to impose cultural integration is asking for trouble.

This comment was written in response to an article in the Malta Independent about the declaration by labour MP, Etienne Grech, that he is against multi-culturalism.



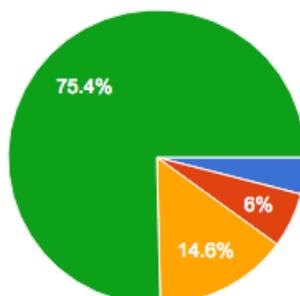
- Acceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Less acceptable
- Not acceptable

20.6% of respondents found the above comment to be acceptable, 24.6% found it to be somewhat acceptable, 25.1% deemed it to be less acceptable, and 29.6% found it to be not acceptable at all.

Example 4:

The practice of homosexuality qualifies as a "disease" because by definition "disease is a disorder of the normal function of an organism". The complicated anatomical structure and physiology of the sex organs leave no doubt that its normality consists in the fecundation of the female ovum by the male sperm and the further development of the zygote in the mother's womb to produce a new separate living human organism.

The comment above was written in response to an article in the Malta Independent about the criticism by Prime Minister Joseph Muscat about the church's commission statement equating homosexuality with sick people.



- Acceptable
- Somewhat acceptable
- Less acceptable
- Not acceptable

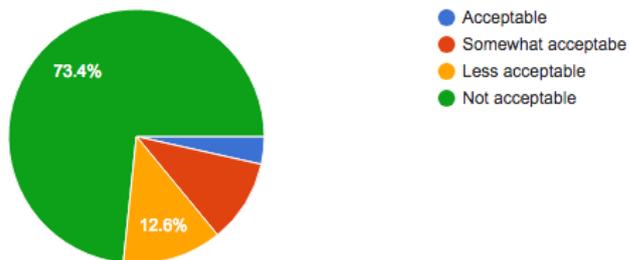
4% of the respondents found that the comment above was acceptable, 6% found it to be somewhat acceptable, 14.6% found it to be less acceptable, and the majority, 75.4%, found it to be not acceptable at all.



Example 5:

These homosexuals are embarrassing us because they want the UNNATURAL be made NATURAL and they want it recognized as such.

This comment was made in response to another comment made under an article in the Malta Independent about a formal warning given to Fr Mark Montebello by the Dominican Order in response to the former blessing the engagement rings of a gay couple. The comment to which the comment above is a response suggests that the Dominican Order is embarrassing itself and should teach love and acceptance.

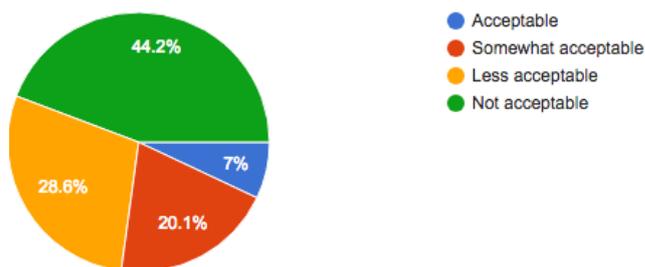


3.5% of respondents deemed the comment above to be acceptable, 10.6% found it to be somewhat acceptable, and 12.6% found it to be somewhat acceptable. A majority of 73.4% of respondents found the comments to be not acceptable at all.

Example 6:

The German authorities tried to suppress this massive crime but with the number of women assaulted now at 200 and counting, it had to come out. The cat is now out of the bag and there is no way it will be bagged again. Immigration from third world countries destroys western societies.

This comment is in response to an article in Malta Today about the police chief of Cologne being relieved of his duties in the aftermath of the New Year's Eve sexual assaults that occurred at the end of 2015.



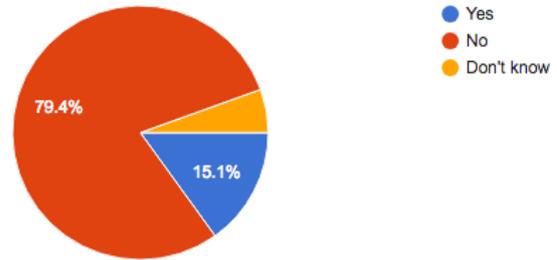
7% of the respondents found the comment above to be acceptable, while 20.1% found it to be somewhat acceptable. 28.6% deemed the comment to be less acceptable and 44.2% found it to be totally not acceptable.

Section 2: This section asked respondents to expand on some of the opinions given in the previous section.

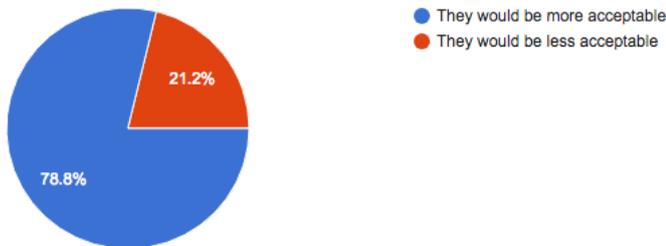
Question 1: The comments in the previous section were written as public comments to newspaper articles. Would it make a difference to your scores for what is acceptable if they had been written in private contexts online (e.g. private emails, private chat, private facebook pages)?



All 199 respondents answered this question. 15.1% answered that their responses may have been different had the comments in the previous section been taken from a more private online context. 79.4% said that context would have made no difference to their answers and 5.5% stated that they did not know.



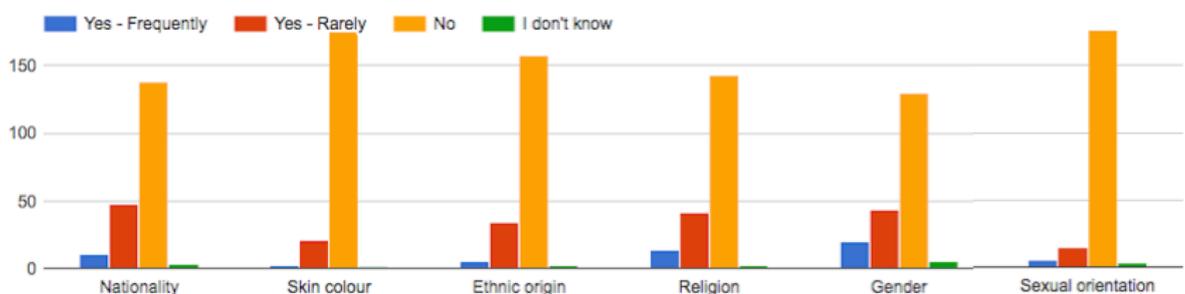
Question 2: If your answer to the previous question was yes, what kind of difference would it make?



33 respondents answered this question. Of these 33 respondents 78.8% of them believe that the statements in section 1 would be more acceptable if they were said in private. 21.2% of the 33 respondents that answered this question stated that they would find it less acceptable if the comments in section 1 were said in private.

Section 3: Section 3 asked respondents about their experiences of hate speech, both as victims and as witnesses, through a number of questions.

Question 1: Have you ever been a target of insults, threats because of your *nationality, skin colour, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation*. Rate- Yes, frequently, yes-rarely, no, I don't know. Respondents were also given the option of *other*.





All 199 respondents answered this question. 10 respondents stated that they have frequently been the target on insults and threats on the basis of their nationality, 48 stated that they have been, but rarely, 138 responded that they have never been the target of insults or threats on the basis of their nationality, and 3 respondents stated that they do not know.

Skin colour:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 2 respondents stated they are frequently the target of insults and threats on the basis of their skin colour. 21 stated that they have been the target of insults and threats on the basis of their skin colour, but rarely, 175 stated that they have never been the target of insults or threats on that basis of their skin colour and 1 respondent said that they do not know.

Ethnic origin:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 4 respondents answered that they are frequently the target of threats and insults on the basis of their ethnic origin. 34 stated that they have been the target of threats and insults on the basis of their ethnic origin, but rarely, 158 stated that they have never been, and 2 people responded that they do not know.

Religion:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 13 respondents stated that they are frequently the target of insults and threats on the basis of their religion and 41 stated that they are, but rarely. 143 stated that they have never been the target of insults or threats on the basis of their religion, and 2 stated that they do not know.

Gender:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 20 respondents answered that they have frequently been the target of insults or threats on the basis of their gender identity and a further 44 stated that they have been, but rarely. 130 respondents answered that they have never been the target of insults or threats on the basis of their gender identity, and 5 responded that they do not know.

Sexual Orientation:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 4 respondents stated that they are frequently the target of insults and threats on the basis of their sexual orientation and a further 15 stated that they have been, but rarely. 176 respondents said that they have never been the target of insults or threats on the basis of their sexual orientation, and 3 stated that they do not know.



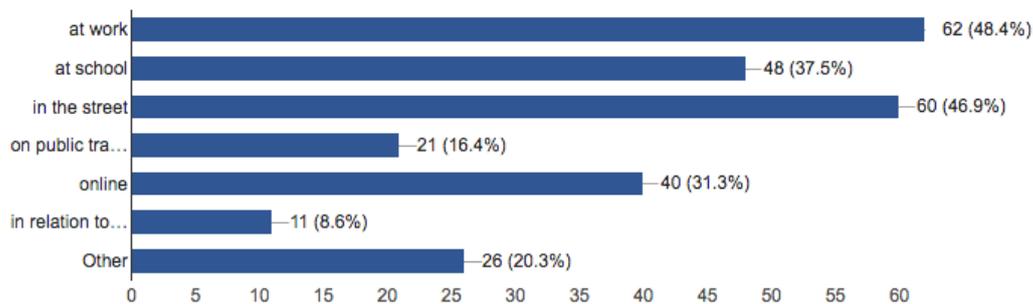
17 respondents answered this question, although 1 of these responses is actually referencing a question in a previous section. Beyond this 1 response, 1 respondent commented that they have felt discriminated against for being cisgendered, 1 respondent stated that they have been insulted by men for being a feminist and 1 respondent stated that, although they have not been insulted on the basis of their sexual orientation, they have been the target of perverted comments on the basis of their sexual orientation.

1 respondent stated that they have been the target of insults and threats due to misunderstandings about where they come from. Another respondents stated that they felt discriminated against on a small number of occasions, around forty years ago, for being Maltese at an international school, another respondent describes that they were referred to as inferior for being Maltese while in Germany. 1 respondent, giving a description of themselves as “white shaven head in a predominantly South East Asian community in UK” infers that they have felt insulted or threatened on the basis of their identity of being a white person with a shaven head within the aforementioned community. Another respondent stated that their direct answer to this question would be “No”, however, they have had experiences of bullying on the basis of their nationality “coming from a “small” county” [sic]” and gender “being considered “small” and “weak” in the face of incontrovertible evidence to the contrary”.

1 respondent explained that their identity is often misconceived because they speak a certain language, and they are treated as though they belong to an ethnic group that is discriminated against in society. Another respondent stated that they were the target of insults and threats on the basis of their language preference. 1 Maltese respondent explained that they were called names at school for being “too white” at a Maltese school.

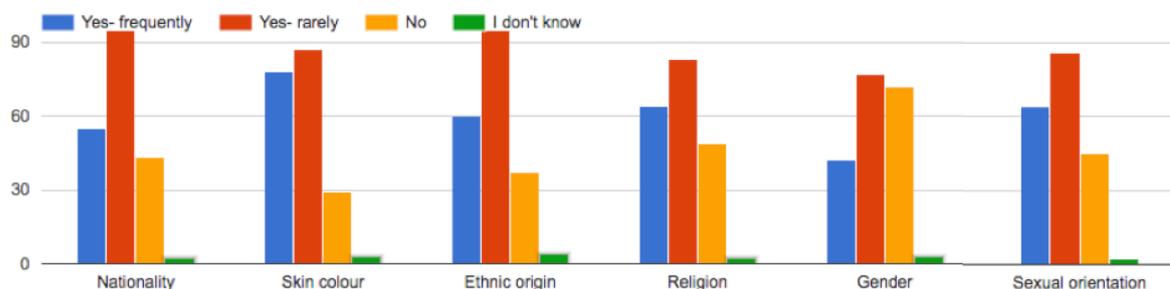
1 respondent stated they are frequently the target of insults and threats on the basis of their “personal lifestyle, mental health and well-being”. Another respondent stated that they have been the target of threats and insults on the basis of their “social class, income and line of specialization”. 1 respondent stated that they have been the target of insults and threats on the basis of their political views and another respondent on their basis of their status as unmarried. Finally, 1 respondent stated that they have been the target of threats and insults for being autistic.

Question 2: If you answered yes to any of the above, please specify where - *at work, at school, in the street, on public transport, online, in relation to sport, other*. Tick box (more than one answer is allowed).



128 respondents answered this question. Of these, 48.4% of respondents stated that they have experienced insults and threats at work, 37.5% at school, 46.9% in the street, 16.4% on public transport, 31.3% online, 8.6% in relation to sport, and 20.3% stated that had experienced discrimination in some other context.

Question 3: Have you ever witnessed anyone being a target of insults or threats because of their *nationality, skin colour, ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation*. Rate- Yes, frequently, yes-rarely, no, I don't know. Respondents were also given the option of *other*.



Nationality:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 55 respondents said that they have witnessed other people being the target of insults and threats on the basis of their nationality frequently. 95 respondents stated that they also have, but rarely. 43 people said that they have never witnessed anyone being the target of threats and insults on the basis of nationality, and 2 people do not know.

Skin colour:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 78 respondents said that they have witnessed other people being the target of insults and threats on the basis of skin colour. 87 respondents stated that they also have, but rarely. 29 people said that they have never witnessed anyone being the target of threats and insults on the basis of skin colour, and 3 people do not know.



All 199 respondents answered this question. 60 respondents said that they have witnessed other people being the target of insults and threats on the basis of ethnic origin frequently. 95 respondents stated that they also do so, but rarely. 37 people said that they have never witnessed anyone being the target of threats and insults on the basis of ethnic origin, and 4 people do not know.

Religion:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 64 respondents said that they have witnessed other people being the target of insults and threats on the basis of religion frequently. 83 respondents stated that they also do so, but rarely. 49 people said that they have never witnessed anyone being the target of threats and insults on the basis of religion, and 2 people do not know.

Gender:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 42 respondents said that they have witnessed other people being the target of insults and threats on the basis of gender identity frequently. 77 respondents stated that they also do so, but rarely. 72 people said that they have never witnessed anyone being the targets of threat and insults on the basis of gender identity, and 3 people do not know.

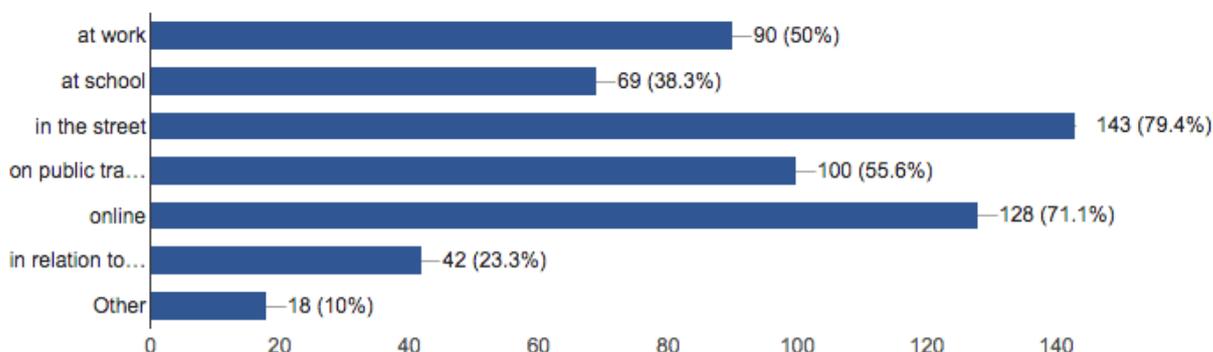
Sexual Orientation:

All 199 respondents answered this question. 64 respondents said that they have witnessed other people being the target of insults and threats on the basis of sexual orientation frequently. 86 respondents stated that they also do so, but rarely. 45 people said that they have never witnessed anyone being the target of threats and insults on the basis of sexual orientation, and 2 people do not know.

Other:

7 respondents answered this question. 1 respondent stated that they have seen racism by a black person directed at a white person. Other respondents mentioned height, weight, attire, social class, political views, taste, and manners as causes on insults, threats, and discriminatory behaviour. Another respondent mentioned mental and physical health as motivations for discrimination that they have witnessed. Another respondent used this space to give their opinion about the reality that some of the aforementioned identities are very linked and states "nationality, ethnic origin and skin colour are quite linked and cannot really distinguish". Finally, another user also used this space to state that they feel threats and insults are part of everyday life "mostly "veiled" but all of the above, unfortunately, are a feature of everyday life".

Question 4: If you answered yes to any of the above, please specify where - *at work, at school, in the street, on public transport, online, in relation to sport, other*. Tick box (more than one answer is allowed).

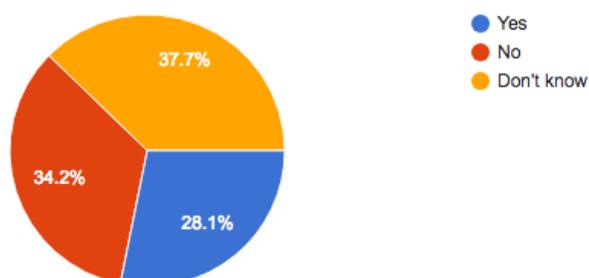


180 respondents answered this question. 50% of those respondents stated that they have witnessed threats and insults being targeted at individuals at work, 38.3% at school, 79.4% in the street, 55.6% on public transport, 71.1% online, 23.3% in relation to sport, and 10% in some other context.

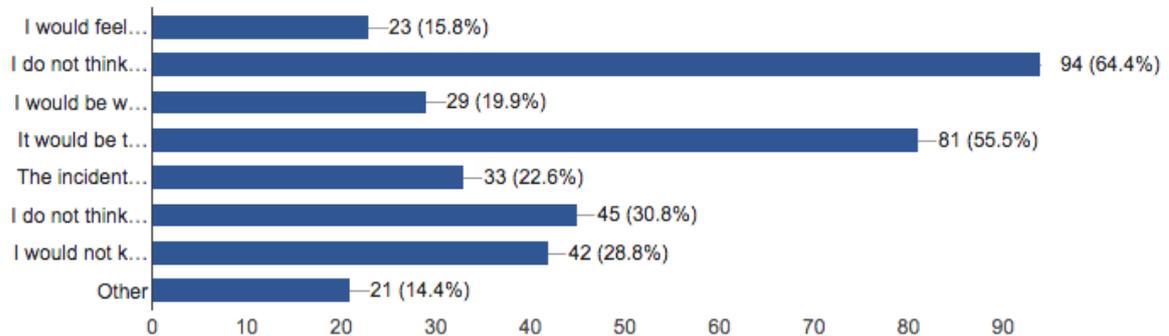
Section 4: Through section 4 the researchers sought to ascertain whether or not people generally report hate speech and the reasons why they do or do not.

Question 1: Would you report insults or threats directed at you because of your nationality, skin colour, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation?

All 199 respondents answered this question. 28.1% of respondents stated that they would report insults or threats directed at them on the basis their nationality, skin colour, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation. 34.2% said that they would not, and 37.7% said that they do not know.

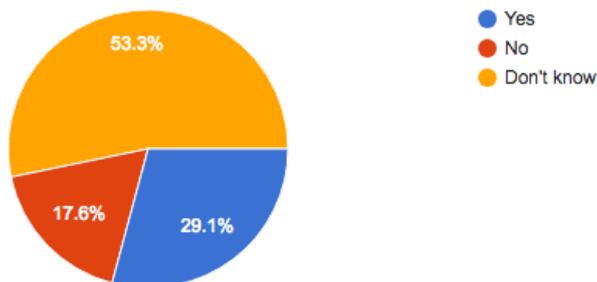


Question 2: If you answered no or don't know to the above question, please indicate why – I would feel ashamed, embarrassed, uncomfortable; I do not think the police or authorities would do anything; I would be worried about reprisals; it would be too much trouble to report it; the incident is too common an occurrence to report; I do not think it is serious enough to report; I would not know how to report it; other. Tick box (more than one answer is allowed).



146 respondents answered this question. Of these, 15.8% reported that they would feel uncomfortable reporting an insult or threat directed at them on the basis of one of the minority identities stated above. 64.4% stated that they would not report because they do not think that the police or authorities would do anything and 55.5% would be worried about reprisals. 22.6% reported that incidents like this are too common an occurrence to report every time, 30.8% said that they did not think the incidents were serious enough to report, and 28.8% said that they would not know how to report it. Finally, 14.4% stated that there is some other reason that they would not report such an incident.

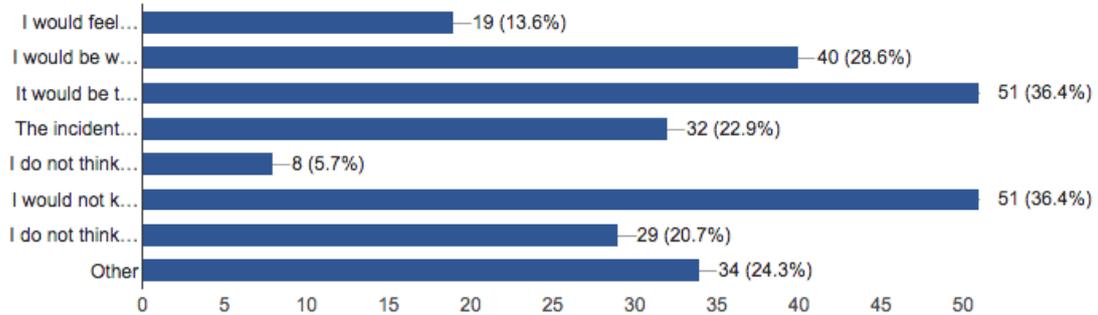
Question 3: If you witnessed someone being insulted or threatened because of their nationality, skin colour, ethnic origin, religion, gender or sexual orientation, would you report this?



All 199 respondents answered this question. 29.1% stated that they would report an incident in which they witnessed another person being insulted or threatened on the basis of their nationality, skin colour, ethnic origin, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

17.6% said that they would not report such an incident, and the majority, 53.3%, responded that they do not know what they would do in such a situation.

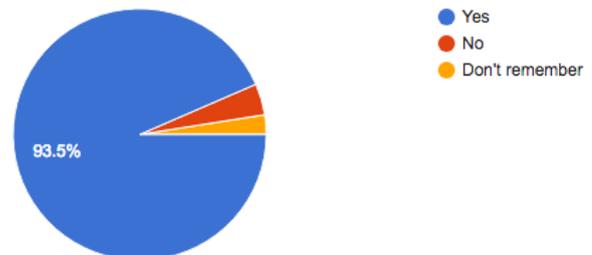
Question 4: If you answered no or don't know to the above question, please indicate why – I would feel embarrassed or uncomfortable; I would be worried about reprisals; it would be too much trouble to report it; the incident is too common an occurrence; I do not think it is serious enough; I would not know how to report it; I do not think it is any of my business; other. Tick box (more than one answer is allowed).



140 respondents answered this question. Of these, 13.6% reported that they would feel embarrassed or uncomfortable reporting an insult or threat directed at another person on the basis of one of the minority identities stated above. 28.6% stated that they would not report because they would be worried about reprisals and 36.4% said that it would be too much trouble to report. 22.9% reported that incidents like these are too common an occurrence to report and 5.7% think they are not serious enough to report. 36.4% answered that they would not know how to report it and 20.7% stated that they do not think that incidents directed at other people are any of their business. Finally, 24.3% answered that there is some other reason that they would not report such incidents.

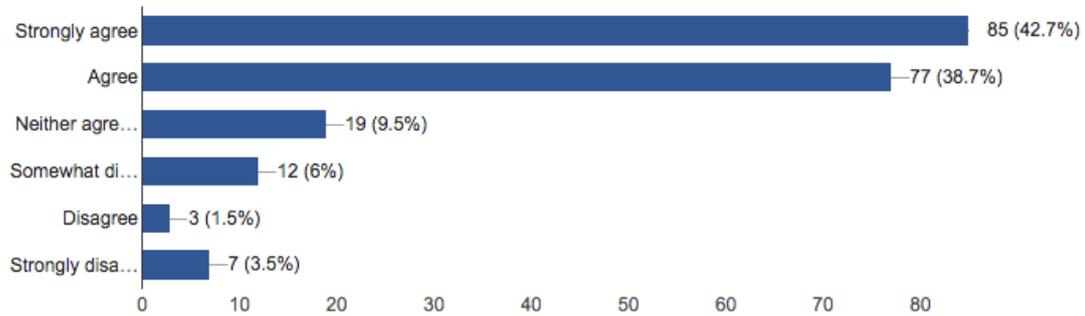
Question 5: Have you ever heard of the notion of hate speech?

199 respondents answered this question. 93.5% of the respondents said that they have heard of the notion of hate speech, 4% said that they have not, and 2.5% stated that they do not remember.



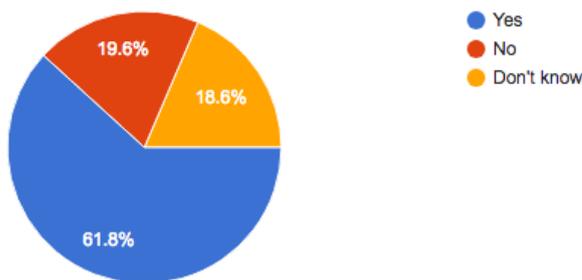
Section 5: The notion of hate speech does exist and can be defined in different ways. In this section, respondents were given some definitions and asked to indicate whether they agree or disagree with each of them.

Question 1: Hate speech means making negative prejudiced remarks about people because of their race or nationality or ethnic origins or religion or gender or sexual orientation. (Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree).



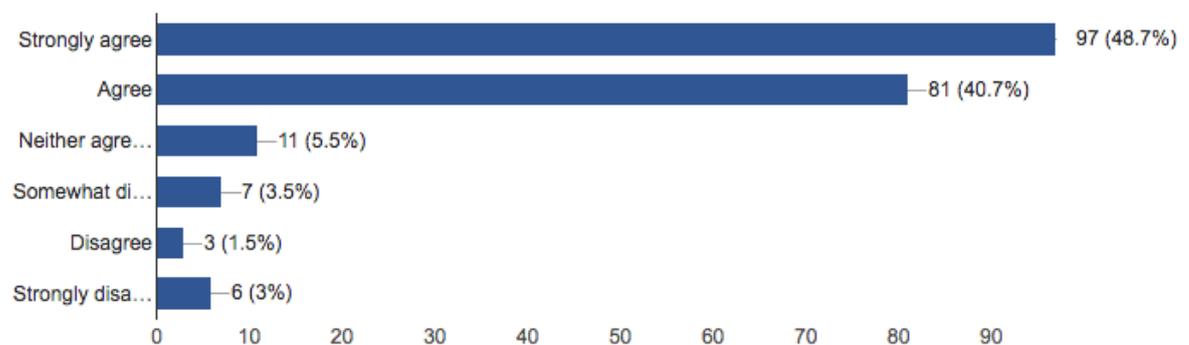
199 of respondents answered this question. 42.7% strongly agreed with the above statement. 38.7% agree, but 9.5% neither agree nor disagree. 6% of respondents somewhat disagree with the statement and 1.5% disagree. 3.5% strongly disagree.

Question 2: (with reference to question 1 above) Should there be a law against this type of hate speech?



199 respondents answered this question. 61.8% responded that they indeed think there should be a law against this type of hate speech. 19.6% stated that they think there should not be a law against this type of hate speech and 18.6% stated that they do not know.

Question 3: Hate speech means insulting someone because of their race or nationality or ethnic origin or religion or gender or sexual orientation. (Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree).





C.O.N.T.A.C.T.

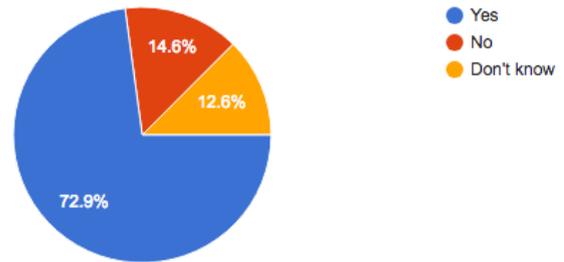
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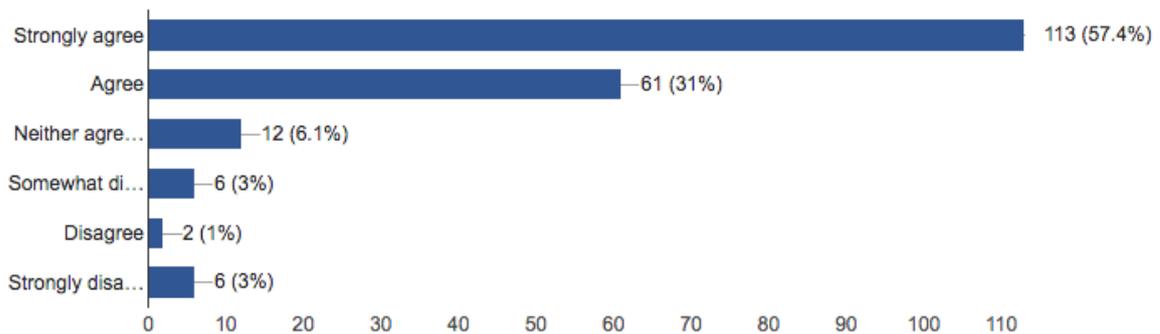
199 of respondents answered this question. 48.7% strongly agreed with the above statement. 40.7% agree, but 5.5% neither agree nor disagree. 3.5% of respondents somewhat disagree with the statement and 1.5% disagree. 3% strongly disagree.

Question 4: (with reference to question 3 above) Should there be a law against this type of hate speech?

199 respondents answered this question. 72.9% responded that they indeed think there should be a law against this type of hate speech. 14.6% stated that they think there should not be a law against this type of hate speech and 12.8% stated that they do not know.

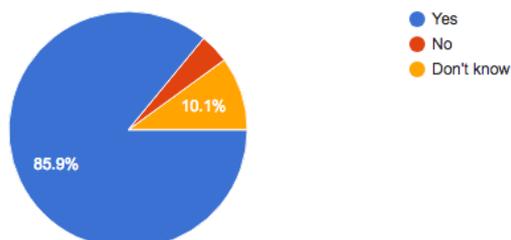


Question 5: Hate speech means threatening someone because of their race or nationality or ethnic origin or religion or gender or sexual orientation. (Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree).



197 of respondents answered this question. 57.4% strongly agreed with the above statement. 31% agree, but 6.1% neither agree nor disagree. 3% of respondents somewhat disagree with the statement and 1% disagree. 3% strongly disagree.

Question 6: (with reference to question 5 above) Should there be a law against this type of hate speech?



199 respondents answered this question. 85.9% responded that they indeed think there should be a law against this type of hate speech. 4% stated that they think there should not be a law against this type of hate speech and 10.1% stated that they do not know.

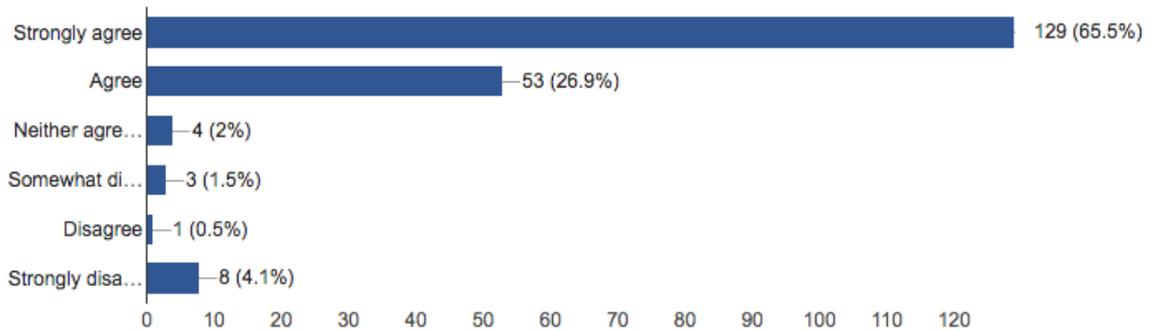


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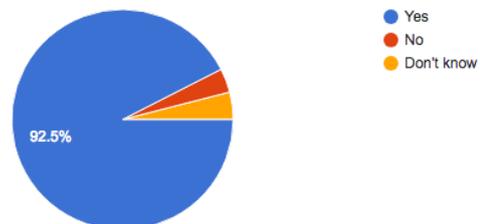
Question 7: Hate speech means encouraging other people to be violent towards or show hatred towards people because of their race or nationality or ethnicity or religion or gender or sexual orientation. (Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, strongly disagree).



197 of respondents answered this question. 65.5% strongly agreed with the above statement. 26.9% agree, but 2% neither agree nor disagree. 1.5% of respondents somewhat disagree with the statement and 0.5% disagree. 4.1% strongly disagree.

Question 8: (with reference to question 7 above) Should there be a law against this type of hate speech?

199 respondents answered this question. 92.5% responded that they indeed think there should be a law against this type of hate speech. 3.5% stated that they think there should not be a law against this type of hate speech and 4% stated that they do not know.



Conclusions

The results of this questionnaire provide some empirical data about the perception that internet users in Malta have of the hate speech phenomenon. This survey obtained information from a diverse group of people, from people as young as 18 to people in their 60s and from various ethnic, national and religious backgrounds. The data resulted from this survey provide small-scale evidence about how the respondents perceive discrimination based on racial, religious and sexual elements, as well as what they think about the need to develop norms and tools to tackle hate-based discrimination. The survey findings suggest that:

- there appears to be more consensus among respondents in terms of acceptability with regards to insults and threats targeted at sexual minorities rather than national, religious, and racial minorities;
- more respondents have witnessed discrimination than have been a target of it;
- the notion of hate speech is well known fact;
- the more extreme forms of violence and threat render more consensus among respondents with regards to legal ramifications.