HEALTHY SPACES

Co-creating Child-Friendly Towns and Villages

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L-Università ta' Malta

Kummissarju għat-Tfal
Commissioner for Children

ERA
Environment & Resources Authority

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Co-creating Child-Friendly Towns and Villages

First Published in 2022

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Published by Commissioner for Children

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ISBN: 978-9918-0-0265-8

Design and layout: Etienne Robinich (Government Press)

Cover design: Etienne Robinich

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Message from the Commissioner

Office of the Commissioner for Children

‘I live in Mosta’. ‘I live in Birżebbuġa’. ‘I live in Nadur’. ‘I live in Ħamrun’.

These plain statements are often robbed of their true significance and narrowly interpreted as meaning that a person’s residence is situated in this or that locality. In truth, these statements mean what they say, namely that a person’s life, or at least an important part of it, is *in* these places.

For children especially, the locality they live in is an extension of their home. Physically, towns and villages increase the space available for children to play, hence the importance of local public playgrounds that are safe, accessible and fun for younger children to use regularly. Socially, towns and villages extend children’s social networks beyond their immediate family circle, allowing them to meet and make friends even when they are not at school. However, we cannot keep thinking the traditional way by isolating children and simply allocating dedicated spaces for them to play in. As an integral part of the community they should be able to commute, play and feel safe in all the spaces they share with the community such as the streets and squares. Children should also be involved in decision-making within their locality. Regaining these spaces, making them accessible and child-friendly would empower children and the community at large.

As Commissioner for Children, I strongly urge local councils and other relevant authorities to use this research study as a tool to inspire their work. Having been a mayor for many years, I can truly understand the challenges faced however, we owe it to all children as rights holders to make our towns and villages as child-friendly as possible.

I would like to thank my predecessor, Ms Pauline Miceli, for embarking on this project and my staff for their commitment to the realisation of this project.

Antoinette Vassallo
Commissioner for Children

Preface

Office of the Commissioner for Children

The idea of having child-friendly towns and villages in Malta and Gozo has not yet been extensively researched. Therefore, the former Commissioner for Children, Ms Pauline Miceli, commissioned this research project in 2019 so as to ensure that children's rights are embedded in ths regard.

Ms Miceli's experience in Local Councils inspired her to undertake and explore how by working together with other stakeholders, any locality could be transformed into a child-friendly one.

The strength of the Office of the Commissioner for Children lies in being the voice of the child, taking children of all ages on board and listening to them about how they feel living in their town or village, their involvement and their wishes and opinions on what they want to be done in their locality. This forms the basis of this two year study. The first part of this project consisted of a national survey and focus groups with the participation of schoolchildren, parents and stakeholders. The knowledge gained will then be applied through a practical pilot project in Hamrun, an inland central town, which over the years has developed into a highly urbanised town with an intercultural and diverse population. The project will be co-designed with children themselves.

There is scant recognition of how crucial the role and responsibility of local governments is in enabling children to enjoy their fundamental rights. Fortunately, in recent years the participation of children in their communities has increased, thanks to the lowering of the minimum age for voting in local council elections to sixteen years, and the creation of children's local councils in some localities.

This project is the result of the dialogue and collaboration between diverse strands, namely the child rights and participation strand, represented by the Office of the Commissioner for Children, the research strand, represented by the University of Malta, and the environmental strand, represented by the Environment and Resources Authority.

As a result of this study, an index will be developed so as to guide and support local councils to make towns and villages in Malta and Gozo more receptive and responsive to children's needs. It is hoped that this index will be a powerful tool to encourage and support local councils in the creation of ever more child-friendly towns and villages in Malta.

Authors' Biography

CARMEL CEFAI PhD, FBPS, is Director and Resident Professor at the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health and the Department of Psychology, Faculty for Social Wellbeing, at the University of Malta. He is Honorary Chair of the European Network for Social and Emotional Competence, joint founding Editor of the International Journal of Emotional Education, and a Coordinating Member of the EU Network of Experts on Social Aspects of Education and Training. His research interests are focused on the promotion of resilience, wellbeing and mental health of children and young people, and the inclusion of children's voice, and he has led various local and international research projects in this area. He has published extensively in the area, with numerous books, research reports and papers in peer reviewed journals.

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their gratitude to Ms Pauline Miceli, former Commissioner for Children, for her personal interest and support to this project and to Ms Anoinette Vassallo, present Commissioner for Children, for her continued support. We are also indebted to all the children, young people, parents, local councils, community leaders and other stakeholders who participated in the study. Our appreciation goes also to all the Heads of School and other school personnel who supported the data collection in this project. Thanks also to Mollie O'Riordan, Ingrid Baldacchino, and Deborah Micallef, research support officers and students at the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health, University of Malta; the management of SkolaSajf (Foundation for Educational Services); Aġenzija Żgħażagħ; EkoSkola; Avantis Education; and the Maltese Association of Parents of State Schools for their administrative support in data collection. Finally we would like to thank Dr Luke Buhagiar for his continued guidance and support on the quantitative data analysis, and Professor Valerie Sollars for her invaluable feedback on the final report.

This project has been funded by the Commissioner for Children and the Environment and Resources Authority (ERA). Members of staff from both entities have offered their support through the whole process of this project.

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We don’t inherit the earth from our ancestors;
we borrow it from our children

Unknown

Executive summary

The aim of this study was to investigate how Maltese towns and villages may become more child-friendly and consequently drive the key stakeholders to create appropriate spaces in collaboration with children and young people themselves. It sought to explore the views of children, parents and community stakeholders on how Maltese towns and villages may provide more child-friendly spaces for their children and families, with particular attention to the voices of children and young people themselves. The study focused on areas such as safety and security, recreational, play and social spaces for children and young people, spaces where nature and the outdoor environment can be enjoyed, cleanliness, inclusive spaces, and the voice and participation of children in the community. The study adopted a mixed methods design, with surveys and focus groups with children, adolescents, parents and key locality stakeholders such as mayors, religious leaders, leaders of social, cultural and sports organisations for children and young people, Heads of School and educational centres, and business leaders. The survey sample included primary school children aged 8 to 11 years, and secondary school students aged 12 to 16, as well as parents and stakeholders from various regions in Malta. The final sample consisted of 651 primary school children, 412 secondary school children, 1518 parents and 170 stakeholders. The four groups of participants completed separate online questionnaires. Eleven focus group discussions were also carried out: five with primary school students, 3 with secondary school students and three with parents and stakeholders. In total, 45 students, 20 parents and 13 stakeholders participated in the focus group discussions.

Findings

Children (8–11 years old)

Less than one third of children walk or cycle frequently where they live, while 41% do so only sometimes. Only 52% of the participants agreed that they have enough open areas to play or enough walking and cycling routes where they live. Fifty-four percent visit the playing field less than once per week while 47- 42% visit sports centres, nature areas or open areas less than once a week. The majority (79%) visit the play areas with their parents, while 33% go with siblings and relatives. Children report accessing these places by car (62.2%) or on foot (48.8%). Public transport is hardly used at all.

Forty eight percent like to play most in the football ground although playing/spending time in public parks and playing fields were close favourites (44%). Playing outside on the streets was amongst the least popular play areas identified by children (19%). Most of the children indicated their preferences for playing in a playing field rather than a natural open space (55.7%). In the focus group discussions (FGD), children spoke very positively about visiting spaces where they can play sports and cycle. Football grounds, skate parks, and the playing field were identified as their favourite recreational hub.

Most participants (68.5%) agreed that it is possible to play different and new games, physical activities and sports in the play areas, and 54.4% believe that they can discover and learn new things when playing. Forty six percent reported that most play areas are open on all days of the week, while 38.4% said that they are open all day. Overwhelmingly, play areas can be used when it is nice weather, but only 20% or less agreed they can be used when it is cold, windy or raining.

Most participants (85.5%) reported that the play areas can be used by children of different genders. Whereas 44.2% agreed that children with disabilities can use play areas, 18.6% did not agree. In the FGD, various participants mentioned that some shops, supermarkets, playgrounds, public toilets and nature areas were not safe and accessible for all, especially

for wheelchair users. They also mentioned the need for more maintenance and cleanliness of play areas and equipment which would encourage them to spend more time in these places. Seventy one percent of participants reported that there is a garden, park or natural open area close to where they live, but only 8.9% go there everyday, 41% go frequently, and 29.3% go there less than once a week. Most participants claim that these areas are within walking distance (56.7%); while 29.3% access the sites when taken by car, and 20.9% cycle. Most reported visiting these open spaces with their parents (71.9%), with siblings and relatives (33.3%) or friends (21.4%). In the FGD, many participants identified having a public garden or the sea as one of the aspects they liked most about their locality.

Most participants (53.8%) agreed that the places where they play are clean and well-maintained. Thirty two percent reported the presence of rubbish or dirty water where they live and that dogs are allowed to dirty the places where they play. In the FGD, the participants frequently referred to the problem of littering in their locality, such as pavements, and the need for more litter bins and signs. Traffic and pollution are among the annoying aspects identified about their locality.

Only forty-eight percent of children reported feeling safe playing outdoors or walking on their own. In contrast, 57.2% feel safe cycling where they live. If they feel in danger, 65.4% know how to get help, but only 32.5% feel protected from being taken away by strangers. The great majority of participants (78.6%) reported that they are not bullied when they play outdoors. Safety, however, was a primary concern which emerged during the FGD, higlighting children's awareness about safety issues. In particular the children mentioned risks from cars and traffic, such as speed driving, inadequate pavements, and lack of bicycle lanes; risks from strangers and other adults; violence amongst adults; and the need for close-knit neighbourhoods which provide protection to children.

The majority of participants are not actively engaged in activities in their locality, with less than one fourth participating in local projects or involved in decisions regarding projects for children. Yet most participants agreed that adults listen to and respect children (63.4%) and that all children are respected in their locality (53.4%). In the FGD, participants expressed their appreciation in participating in family-and child-friendly events in their locality such as treasure hunts, local festivals, and religious feasts, but they would like more child-friendly events such as magic shows, activities involving animals, and seasonal events, such as Christmas festivities. They would also appreciate being asked for their suggestions about what they would like for their locality, with some mentioning that the FGD was the first event of this nature for them.

When asked if they were satisfied with various aspects of their locality, the majority of participants reported being satisfied with the play and nature areas in their locality, such as the places where they can play and practise sports (75.8%), nature areas (74.9%), cycling lanes (69%), accessibility for children with a disability (64.6%), cleanliness (61.1%), safety from peer bullying (58.9%) and safety from traffic in their locality (50.4%). However, less than one third were completely satisfied with safety from strangers, traffic and bullying (22.3-31.9%) and accessibility of play areas (30.8%), while less than one half were completely satisfied with play, nature and sports areas and cleanliness (35.4-45.1%). Although 66.9% were satisfied with opportunities to participate in events planned for their locality, less participants were satisfied with the opportunities to help with projects to improve their locality (48.1%), or to make suggestions about what they would like to change (42.9%). Furthermore less than one third were completely satisfied with participation and voice in the community (17-19.7%).

Places where children can play and do sports and enjoy nature were ranked as the most satisfying aspect in their locality, whilst safety from strangers and opportunities to suggest what they would like to change in their locality, were ranked as the least satisfying aspects.

The areas participants would like to improve include safety from traffic (57.9%), clean and healthy public spaces (51.2%), public areas where nature can be enjoyed (46.2%), places where they can play and do sports (45.8%), accessibility of play and nature areas for children with a disability (41.9%), cycling lanes (41.5%) and safety from strangers or other people (40.9%). More females indicated that they would like increased safety from strangers.

Overall, participants from Gozo generally appeared to be the most satisfied with their locality.

Adolescents (12-16 years old)

Among adolescent participants only 39.4% agreed they have enough spaces to play. They reported that they spend most of their play time in football grounds (26%), sports centres (18%), on the street (17%), in open fields (14%) and on pavements (13%). Most (59.8 -81.5%) claimed that they visit the outdoor spaces such as playing field, sports centre, public park, open field and football ground less than once a week. Only 11.3% go to a football ground or a sports centre everyday, and 2% visit a nature area daily. Favourite outdoor play areas include public parks or gardens (39.3%) and open fields (35.4%), whilst their least favourite play areas are the street (11.4%) and the pavement (5.8%).

The majority of the participants reported that they can access the play areas on foot (65.8%), but close to half of them (47.8%) go by car, while only 13.1% and 9.5% go by bicycle and public transport respectively. More girls like playing in public parks, gardens and open fields, whilst more boys prefer football grounds and sports centres. Most participants visit the outdoor play and recreational areas with their parents (54.1%) or friends (51.0%), while 35.2% go on their own. Most participants reported that the play areas are open daily (55.1%) but only 38.1% reported that these areas are accessible for the whole day. The vast majority said that they can use the play areas mostly on fine days (96.4%), but more challenging to visit or spend time at these places when it is hot (34.5%), or cold, windy or raining (25.5% -16.7%).

The vast majority of respondents agreed that the play areas can be used by children of any gender (90%) but participants were less certain about the possibility of these spaces being used by children with a disability: 20% reported that such places are not suitable for children with disabilities and 38% did not know. Less than half believe the outdoor play areas provide opportunities to play different and new games and sports (42%) or to discover and learn new things (45%). In the FGD, various participants mentioned that most of the play areas are targeted mainly for younger children and that there was a need for more hubs for young people in their locality such as community centres, shopping malls and cafés.

Most participants (62%) like walking and cycling where they live, but more participants agreed there are not enough walking and cycling spaces (47%) compared to those who do (42%). Participants from the South Eastern region were more likely to agree that there are enough walking and cycling routes where they live, compared with those from the Harbour regions. Over half of participants walk at least once a week or more frequently to shops or supermarkets in their town or village, nature area, places to meet other children, and religious places (55.8% to 53.5%), but 68.4% walk to the playing field, football ground or sports centre less than once a week. Less than one half (44.6%) agreed that there are public toilets they can use close to where they play and meet. In the FGD, various participants mentioned the need for more public areas where they can do sports, such as football grounds, as well as sports complexes or premises which include basketball, tennis and volleyball courts and swimming pools.

Just over half of the participants (52%) agreed that there are adequate spaces to meet with friends. In the FGD, participants mentioned the village square and religious centres as hubs where they can meet and socialise with friends.

The majority of participants agreed there is a garden, park or nature area close to where they live (77%) but only 52.7% reported visiting them once a week or more often. The majority walk to the nature areas (74.3%), with only 13.8% using a bicycle. Most participants (67.8%) enjoy going to nature areas and prefer playing in a natural open space (65.3%) compared to a playing field (34.7%). In the FGD, participants spoke very positively about nature, whether it is living close to nature or going to green areas where they can have picnics, do physical exercise, or walk the nature trails. Various participants mentioned however, that there are not enough nature areas close to where they live, and that green areas are lacking due to more space being taken up by buildings and commercial enterprises.

Only 55% of participants agreed that the places where they play and socialise are clean and cared for. Forty-one percent agreed that there is noise and pollution where they live while only 17% said that there was no rubbish or dirty water where they lived. Participants from the South Eastern, Western and Gozo regions were the most likely to indicate that the places where they play and spend time with friends are clean and cared for, compared to those from the Harbour regions. On the other hand children from the Harbour regions were the most to complain about noise and pollution where they live compared to peers from the South Eastern, Western and Gozo regions. In the FGD, the participants frequently highlighted the problem of littering, rubbish and general uncleanliness in their localities, including garbage bags, animal litter and full dustbins. They suggested more frequent street cleaning, installation of more bins and more enforcement, and appealed for more responsible behaviour from the inhabitants. The participants also referred to the problem of pollution in their locality, arising from traffic and construction.

Most participants (61.4% to 56.9%) felt safe to go out to play or walk on their own, agreed that there were safe crossings to the playing fields, parks and school, and that their locality was safe for all children, while 83.1% reported that they were not bullied. On the other hand, more than one third did not feel totally safe from strangers (44.4%), using buses or public transport in their home town (37.8%) and going out (34%). Sixteen percent mentioned dangerous, broken buildings where they live and 9.0% agreed that there was a lot of crime, drugs and violence in their locality. Male participants generally feel safer than female participants, whilst participants from the Northern Harbour indicated a high rate of crime, drugs and violence when compared with participants from Gozo. During the FGD, the participants spoke at length about issues of safety in their locality such as fear of strangers and unlit areas, drugs, violence and crime, safety risks from traffic, and lack of maintenance in play areas, sometimes making them difficult to access for children with a disability.

Only around half of the participants agreed that children and young people in their locality are respected (54.5%), have opportunities to participate in social activities (49%) and that adults in their village listen to and respect children and young people (46.8%). Less than one third agreed that they have opportunities to contribute to projects to change the area where they live (28%), and that they are asked how facilities and services for children and young people in their locality may be improved (26%). In the FGD, various participants mentioned several activities they like to participate in such as religious feasts and socio-cultural events, but some complained that they were not aware of events and activities organised for them in their localities, and that most events were mainly targeted at adults. Various participants argued that they are not normally asked to express their opinions about their locality, and that the younger generation which they form part of are not always made to feel appreciated.

The areas in their locality that adolescents are most satisfied with include safety from bullying by peers (63.9%), use of buses and public transport (61.9%), safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings (61.3%), the inclusion of all children and young people in their locality (59.1%) and adequate places where they can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle (55.6%).

On the other hand, they are least satisfied with the opportunities to express their opinion about what they would like in their locality (41.0%) and expressed a desire to have their opinions taken seriously (36.6%), the opportunities to participate in local council and other organisations in their locality (27.4%), and with a clean and healthy environment (33.5%) and the level of safety on the roads (26.9%).

Participants would particularly like to have more suitable places where they can meet with friends (51.5%), a cleaner and healthier environment (47.6%), road safety (47.1%), more adequate places where they can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle (45.4%) and more parks and nature areas (41%). More female than male participants would like increased safety to reduce abuse by strangers and other adults, suitable places where to meet friends, and a clean and healthy environment. Participants from the Harbour regions were the most to express the need for more adequate places where they can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle and for a cleaner and healthier environment.

Parents

Most parents agreed on the need for better play and recreational areas for their children, with 77.1% agreeing that there is a need for more pedestrian areas and less areas for cars. The majority did not believe that their children can go out to play in different weather conditions (81%), that their children can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own (62.3%), that there are enough routes for walking and cycling for children (61.9%) or enough space for children to play games and different sports in their locality (52%). Moreover, 44.3% did not agree that the places for play can also be used by children with a physical disability, young children and parents with pushchairs, and 43.3% disagreed that places for children are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate.

Parents of older children were more likely to agree than those of younger children, that their children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places, can play, walk or cycle on their own, can play in different weather conditions, have enough routes for walking and cycling, and that there are well kept bus stops within walking distance. On the other hand, parents of younger children were more likely to agree that in their locality there are places for children that are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate.

In the three FGD in different regions, parents consistently complained about the lack of spaces and safe areas where their children could play and cycle, and the lack of accessibility around parks and playgrounds and on pavements. They underlined the need for more diverse activities and equipment in playgrounds, more spaces for older children and teenagers to meet and socialise, more indoor spaces for winter, and to give spaces back to children and families.

Just over one half of parents (53%-51%) agreed that there are places in their locality or within close reach where children can enjoy nature such as gardens, parks, and natural open areas and that these places are within walking distance from their house. Most parents did not agree that their children can visit these areas on their own (69.2%), that there are public toilets which children could easily use (60.3%) or that in these places there are nature trails which children could follow (50%). Parents of older children were more likely to agree than those of younger children that their children can visit nature areas on their own and that there are nature trails that their children could follow in these places.

Seventy percent of parents agreed that there is a garden, park or natural open area either in their locality or within reach. Parents from the Western region were more likely to agree that there are nature areas in their town or village compared to those from the Harbour and South Eastern region. Most parents (65.0%) go to parks or natural open areas on foot, followed by car

(32.2%), with less than 2% going by bicycle or by bus. Only one third (33.9%) visit these places frequently (once per week or more). Most parents seek nature areas for peace and quiet, fresh and clean air and being close to nature (61% - 54.1%) but only one fourth (25.7%) go there for physical exercise.

When asked what they would like to improve in the nature areas, over one half selected more play areas for young children, maintenance and cleanliness (52.3% - 51.6%). In contrast to parents of older children, those of younger children would like more animals and more play areas for young children. In the FGD, parents underlined the need for more family parks where children and families could enjoy nature, frequently referring to Ta Qali National Park as an example of good practice.

Over one half of parent participants (54%) agreed that there is a high level of noise and pollution in their locality, while 48.3% agreed that there is a problem with rubbish, open drains, dust, and dog mess. On the other hand, 40% agreed that places for children such as parks and playing fields are clean and well kept. In the FGD, various parents, most notably those residing in Malta, referred to the risks from pollution for their own and their children's health.

The majority of parents did not agree that it is safe for their children to walk and cycle on their own (72.1%) or to go out and play on their own (67.1%). Forty percent and over disagreed that their children are safe from crime, violence and abuse (45.9%), that it is safe for their children to use buses or public vehicles in their town/village (40.3%). On the other hand, over 40% agreed that there are safe crossings to playing fields, ground parks and schools in their locality. In the focus group discussions, parents raised various issues related to the safety of their children particularly about traffic, maintenance and supervision of play areas.

Fifty four percent of the parents agreed that all children in their locality are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability. However, only 36.3% agreed that their children have opportunities to participate in projects or activities organised in their locality, and 48.2% disagreed that their children have opportunities to give their opinion about projects. In the FGD, parents underlined the importance of giving children the opportunity to express themselves and voice their opinions on how they can improve their locality as these are often different to the ones expressed by adults.

In many instances, the majority of the parents were not satisfied with the physical and social spaces for their children, such as safety from cars and traffic (63.5%), adequate space where children can go out to play and cycle (61.3%) and play different games, sports and physical exercise (55.8%), clean and healthy environment (52.8%), and opportunities for children to express their opinion and for these to be taken seriously (52.3%). Forty percent and over were also not satisfied that there are sufficient green areas where children can enjoy nature (48%), clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children (44%), safety from crime, drugs and violence (44%), opportunities for their children to participate in social activities organised in their locality (40.1%), and suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others (40%). Parents from the Northern Harbour were generally the least satisfied overall.

When asked which aspects of their locality they would like to improve, the most frequently chosen areas were safety from cars and traffic for children (74%), adequate space where children can go out to play and cycle (63.7%) and play different games, sports and physical exercise (61.9%), green areas where children can enjoy nature (61.9%), and safety from crime, drugs and violence (59.1%). In contrast, adequate means of public transport and the inclusion of children were the least mentioned.

Stakeholders

Most stakeholders (58.6%) did not feel satisfied with the spaces available for children to walk and cycle or with a clean and healthy environment in their locality (51%). Over 40% did not feel satisfied with the spaces available for children to play and do different sports, with the green areas available for children, with safety from traffic for children, and with the accessibility of places for children with a disability, young children and parents with pushchairs (46% to 44%).

Less than half of the participants (46.2% - 39%) were satisfied with the opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations, the inclusion of all children in the locality, the opportunities for children to participate in social activities, clean and well-kept places and facilities used by children, suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others, safety from crime, violence and abuse and from bullying by other children, and the public transport available for children. They were least satisfied with opportunities for children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality (34.3%). Participants from the Harbour regions were the least satisfied with safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse, clean and healthy environment and opportunities for children to participate in social activities.

Local councils were the most likely to be satisfied with most of the aspects of their locality, whilst religious leaders were the least satisfied with safety from crime, violence and abuse and adequate play and sports spaces. Leaders of social and cultural organisations were the least satisfied with accessible places for children and with opportunities for children to participate in social activities, whilst leaders of sports organisations were the least satisfied with suitable social places for children and young people, green areas for children, clean and well-kept places and facilities, and opportunities for children to voice their opinion.

Over half of the stakeholders agreed that there is a need for improvement in green areas where children can enjoy nature, safety from cars and traffic, and adequate space where children can walk and cycle (57.1% - 51.2%). Over 40% of the participants (45.3% - 42.4%) indicted the need for a clean and healthy environment, adequate space where children can play and do sports and safety from crime, drugs and abuse. Safety from bullying, opportunities for children to participate in the locality and improvement of the public transport were the least mentioned areas for improvement. Half of the participants from local councils agreed that there is an increased need for opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations in contrast to just 7.7% of business organisations. More stakeholders in the Northern Harbour believed that safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse is one of the most urgent issues to be addressed, while more participants from the Southern Harbour indicated the need for green areas and clean and well-kept places and facilities for children.

In the FGD, the stakeholders recommended amongst others, more child- and family- friendly recreational and nature areas, regular maintenance and supervision of open spaces to prevent risk and damage, safety in the streets and local areas, increased accessibility of parks and playgrounds, and a stronger children's voice and participation in the locality.

Whilst most participants (76%) saw themselves participating in this initiative if implemented in their locality, only 21.8% were categorical about it. Local councils were the most to consider themselves participating in this activity. When asked what they expected to be different when the initiative will be completed, one half expected that there will be more nature areas and a cleaner and healthier environment for children, followed by more adequate play spaces (44.7%), more participation of children in the life of the locality (40.6%) and safer streets and public spaces for children (39.4%). Local councils and leaders of sports organisations were the most to expect more participation of children in the life of the locality.

When asked about their concerns in supporting or participating in this initiative, the majority (58.2%) mentioned time constraints, followed by financial limitations (37.1%), lack of resources (28.8%) and lack of consultation (20.6%). More participants from local councils and sports organisations mentioned financial limitations as their biggest concern, while more Heads of school and leaders of social or cultural organisations were concerned about lack of consultation.

When asked how they saw such an initiative supporting their activities, just over one half said that it will enable them to work with other stakeholders in the community and make it more possible for them to work directly with children and young people. Around one third mentioned that it will bring more needed resources to the locality, support the initiatives that they are undertaking and enable them to participate in initiatives which they are unable to do on their own (34% - 31.2%). More local councils and leaders of social or cultural organisations agreed that such an initiative supports their activities by making it more possible for them to work directly with children and young people.

Recommendations

- Develop mandatory guidelines with a children's rights perspective on how the voice of children and young people is to be heard and taken into consideration in policy and project development for the community.
- Launch a collaborative needs analysis in each locality to establish how the locality may be transformed into a more child-friendly community. It may be led by the local councils in collaboration with the children, young people, parents, community leaders and other citizens in the community.
- Establish national indicators of child-friendly towns and villages leading to award of a quality label. The findings of this report provide a good basis towards understanding what children, young people, parents and other stakeholders would like for Maltese towns and villages to be more child-friendly.
- Appoint a designated member in each local council responsible for policy actions on how to make the locality more child-friendly and to establish formal procedures on how to include the voices of children and young people in projects for children.
- Strengthen and celebrate green, blue and eco initiatives such as child-friendly streets, pedestrianised squares, zones, and hubs, opening of recreational areas and parks in the community for children and families, streetscaping, soundscaping, cleanliness, and regulation of building construction.
- Prioritise environmental education from the early years up to tertiary education as well as lifelong education to ensure an eco friendly approach and responsible decision-making both in policy and project development at national, local and community levels, as well as individual responsibility in promoting and preserving a sustainable and healthy environment, conserving biodiversity, being close to nature, and climate change.
- Empower local communities to actively participate and contribute towards the quality of the environment in their towns and villages and in feeling more responsible in taking care of their neighbourhood and the environment as a whole as part of a global approach towards the preservation of the planet.
- Raise awareness through research, education and training amongst all stakeholders including educators, policy makers, professionals, spatial planners, politicians and councillors, on the relationship between the environment and wellbeing, and how nature areas as well as urban planning and residential areas, may help to improve wellbeing and mental health.

1 Introduction

Background

In its development of the National Strategy for the Environment for 2050, the Environment Resource Authority (ERA, 2020) seeks to answer the question "Are we using our environment and its resources in a manner that does not compromise environmental prosperity and; overall wellbeing?" The environment has become a national issue for all Maltese citizens, generating considerable debate on its effect on the health and wellbeing of the Maltese population (ERA, 2020). The impact of the environment on the health and wellbeing of children in Malta, such as traffic and pollution, decreasing play and recreational areas and lack of green open spaces in urban areas, has taken an increasingly central stage in this national debate. Statistics on the health and lifestyle of Maltese children show that Maltese children and adolescents have the highest rate of obesity, the highest problematic use of social media, and below average participation in physical exercise and sports amongst more than 40 countries (Inchley et al.,2020). Such concerning statistics may in part be linked to neighbourhood environments which do not facilitate play and physical exercise, such as lack of green open spaces in urban areas and the overuse of private means of transport leading to lack of physical mobility and exercise (cf. ERA, 2020).

The voices of Maltese children and adolescents themselves have also been getting louder about the state of the play and open areas. In a series of studies on children's subjective wellbeing, they expressed their dissatisfaction with the places available for them to play as well as the level of safety in their locality (Cefai, 2018; Cefai and Galea, 2016; 2020; see also MFWS, 2021; Satariano et al, 2021). In a recent international study, 10 year-old Maltese children are almost at the bottom of the group (31st out of 33 places) in completely agreeing that there are enough places to play; they are also within the bottom half (18th place) in agreeing that their neighbourhood is a safe area for children (Cefai and Galea, 2020).

Research has been increasingly underlining the benefits of open play and green spaces on children's cognitive, physical, emotional and social development. Multinational studies show that the quality of play, physical exercise and social spaces are related to children's level of overall wellbeing and health (Rees, 2018) and that children who play regularly outside enjoy a higher level of wellbeing than those who do so rarely (UNICEF Innocenti, 2020). A review of the evidence by the WHO Regional Office for Europe (2016) reported that adequate exposure to green spaces during pregnancy has beneficial effects on both prenatal development and birth weight, while during childhood, it enhances children's cognitive development, improves their fine and gross motor skills and spatial skills, reduces challenging behaviour and promotes emotional (eg emotional regulation) and social development (eg sense of belonging, making friends). Such positive effects are likely to persist into adulthood. Clearly the open spaces are a crucial arena for children's learning and development; in fact 80% of children's time is not spent in schools (Hassinger-Das et al, 2018).

It was within this context that in 2019 the Commissioner for Children, with the support the Environment and Resource Agency, commissioned the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health at the University of Malta to undertake this study. The aim of the two year study was to promote more awareness on the need for more child-friendly spaces in Maltese towns and villages, and to inspire and encourage key stakeholders to create such spaces in their locality. It sought to explore the views of children, parents and community stakeholders on how Maltese towns and villages may provide more child-friendly spaces for their children and families, paying particular attention to the voices of children and young people themselves.

Through a mixed method design, the study focused on areas such as safety and security, recreational, play and social spaces for children and young people, nature spaces, cleanliness, inclusive spaces, and the voice and participation of children in the community.

Methodology

Sample

Quantitative Study

The sample included school children from Year 4 to Year 6 (primary school level) and Year 9 to Year 11 (secondary school level) in state, church and independent schools, as well as parents and stakeholders from the six regions around Malta and Gozo (Tables 1.1-1.4).

Primary school students. Ninety two state, church and independent primary schools were contacted to participate in the study. 28 schools, including 21 state schools, 6 church schools, and 1 independent school accepted to circulate the information letter and consent form with parents of students in the applicable year groups. The online survey was also circulated on primary school students' tablets who were invited to complete the survey at home, following parental consent. 775 responses were collected from primary school students with the final sample consisting of 651 participants following data cleaning.

Secondary school students. Forty five secondary schools were contacted to participate in the study; 29 schools, including 9 state schools, 13 church schools, and 7 independent schools accepted to circulate the information letter and consent form with parents of students in the applicable year groups. The online survey for secondary school students was also distributed amongst 5 scout groups around Malta and Gozo, as well as through EkoSkola and Agenzija Żgħażagħ. A total of 671 responses were collected, with the final sample consisting of 412 participants once data was cleaned.

Parents. Parents were contacted through the schools, the 57 primary and secondary participating schools were also asked to forward an invitation to all parents at the school to participate in the study via a link to the parents' survey in Maltese and English. An additional 22 state schools were also contacted in order to increase the number of parent participants; 12 of the schools accepted to do so. A total of 1952 responses were collected from parents, with the final sample consisting of 1518 participants following data cleaning. Three regions had around 20% of participants each, another two had around 15% to 16%, but parents from the Western region comprised only 7% of the sample. The vast majority of participants were mothers/step mothers (85.6%) followed by fathers/step fathers (12.9%). Most of the participants were Maltese (89.8%), with 10% being EU (non Maltese) and other nationalities. Just over 60% (60.7%) had younger children aged 0 to 11 years old, whilst 39.3% had older children aged 12 to 17.

Stakeholders. A total of 840 stakeholders including local council mayors, heads of schools, religious leaders, local businesses, NGOs, leaders of social and cultural organisations, and leaders of sports organisations were individually contacted by email, inviting them to complete the stakeholders' survey. Of these, 227 completed the questionnaire, with the final sample consisting of 170 responses following data cleaning. Just over one fourth (25.9%) were heads of schools, followed by NGOs or leaders of social or cultural organisations (19.9%), religious leaders (17.5%), business or industry (15.7%), local councils (10.8%), and leaders of sports organisations (10.2%). Around one fourth were from the Northern Harbour area (24.7%) followed by the Southern Harbour (21.6%), Northern region (17.3%), Western region (14.8%), South Eastern (14.2%) and Gozo (7.4%). Just over one half have been in their role for six years or more (53.3%) and 43.2% between 1 to 5 years.

Table 1.1 Information on survey participants: Students

Primary School Students			Secondary School Students		
	N	%		N	%
Gender			Gender		
Male	326	51.6%	Male	136	33.6%
Female	306	48.4%	Female	269	66.4%
Age			Age		
8	117	19.4%	12	25	6.4%
9	201	33.4%	13	108	27.8%
10	217	36.0%	14	124	32.0%
11	67	11.1%	15	100	25.8%
			16	31	8.0%
Nationality			Nationality		
Maltese	574	89.5%	Maltese	372	91.0%
EU (non-Maltese)	26	4.1%	EU (non-Maltese)	26	6.4%
Other	41	6.4%	Other	11	2.7%
Region (NSO)			Region (NSO)		
Southern Harbour	161	26.0%	Southern Harbour	54	13.3%
Northern Harbour	115	18.5%	Northern Harbour	81	19.9%
South Eastern	138	22.3%	South Eastern	78	19.2%
Western	83	13.4%	Western	66	16.2%
Northern	31	5.0%	Northern	29	7.1%
Gozo	92	14.8%	Gozo	99	24.3%
Duration			Duration		
Less than one year	28	4.4%	Less than one year	7	1.7%
1-5 years	114	17.8%	1-5 years	50	12.2%
6 years +	497	77.8%	6 years +	354	86.1%

N= Sample Population

Table 1.2 Information on survey participants: Parents

Parents		
Gender	N	%
Male	241	15.9%
Female	1270	83.6%
Other	2	0.1%
No answer	6	0.4%
Total	1519	100%
Region		
Southern Harbour	241	15.9%
Northern Harbour	308	20.3%
South Eastern	316	20.8%
Western	109	7.2%
Northern	220	14.5%
Gozo	316	20.8%
No answer	9	0.6%
Total	1519	100%
Parent Nationality		
Maltese	1361	89.6%
EU (non-Maltese)	100	6.6%
Other	54	3.6%
No answer	4	0.3%
Total	1519	100%
Relationship to child		
Mother/step mother	1284	84.5%
Father/ step father	194	12.8%
Grandmother	5	0.3%
Grandfather	2	0.1%
Carer	15	1.0%
No answer	19	1.3%
Total	1519	100%
Age of children		
0-11	658	43.3%
12-17	426	28.0%
No answer	435	28.6%
Total	1519	100%

Table 1.3 Information on survey participants: Stakeholders

Stakeholders		
Role	N	%
Local council	18	10.6%
Religious leader	29	17.1%
Business or industry	26	15.3%
NGO or Leader of social or cultural organisations	33	19.4%
Leader of sports organisations	17	10.0%
Head of School	43	25.3%
No answer	4	2.4%
Total	170	100%
Region		
Southern Harbour	35	20.6%
Northern Harbour	40	23.5%
South Eastern	23	13.5%
Western	24	14.1%
Northern	28	16.5%
Gozo & Comino	12	7.1%
No answer	8	4.7%
Total	170	100%
Duration of performing the role		
Less than one year	6	3.5%
1-5 years	73	42.9%
6-15 years	53	31.2%
16+ years	37	21.8%
No answer	1	0.6%
Total	170	100%

Table 1.4 Regions in Malta and Gozo

Region	Towns and Villages within Region
Southern Harbour	Cospicua, Fgura, Floriana, Luqa, Zabbar, Kalkara, Marsa, Paola, Santa Lucija, Senglea, Tarxien, Valletta, Vittoriosa, Xghajra
Northern Harbour	Birkirkara, Gzira, Qormi, Harmun, Msida, Pembroke, San Gwann, Santa Venera, St Julian's, Swieqi, Ta Xbiex, Pieta, Sliema
South Eastern	Birzebbugia, Gudja, Ghaxaq, Kirkop, Safi, Marsascala, Marsaxlokk, Mqabba, Qrendi, Zejtun, Zurrieq
Western	Dingli, Balzan, Lija, Attard, Zebbug, Iklin, Mdina, Mtarfa, Rabat, Siggiewi
Northern	Gharghur, Mellieha, Mgarr, Mosta, Naxxar, St Paul's Bay
Gozo & Comino	Fontana, Ghajnsielem, Gharb, Ghasri, Munxar, Nadur, Qala, San Lawrenz, Kercem, Sannat, Victoria, Xaghra, Xewkija, Zebbug

Qualitative Study

Eleven focus group discussions were carried out, 8 with primary and secondary school students and 3 with parents and stakeholders. Forty five students, 20 parents and 13 stakeholders participated in the focus groups (Tables 1.4-1.5).

Students. Students from Years 3-4, 5-6 and 9-10 were recruited from three state colleges in different regions around Malta. Of the 16 schools contacted, 14 accepted to participate. Schools were asked to select 8-10 students to participate in the focus groups and to send an information letter and consent form to the respective parents. In those cases where the schools did not manage to obtain the minimum parental consent forms, a further school was contacted, and where necessary, students from the same regions and age groups were merged into one focus group.

Parents and Stakeholders. Parents were recruited through schools in three regions across Malta and Gozo, namely the Northern Harbour, South Eastern region and Gozo. Forty five primary and secondary state schools within these regions were contacted and asked to forward an information letter to parents, inviting any interested persons to get in touch directly with the research team. Twenty parents accepted to participate in the FGD. One hundred and fifteen stakeholders from the same three regions, including local council mayors, religious leaders, social and cultural group leaders and youth leaders, were invited by email to participate in the FGD. Thirteen accepted to participate.

Table 1.5 Focus Group Discussions with Students

Focus group	Year groups	No. of participants	Gender	Localities
Primary school 1 (Senglea Primary)	Years 3-4	6	2 females, 4 males	Cospicua, Senglea, Fgura
Primary school 2 (Qormi SS/SG Primary)	Years 3-4	6	4 females, 2 males	Qormi, Vittoriosa
Primary school 3 (Gharghur/Naxxar Primary)	Years 3-4	8	3 females, 5 males	Gharghur, Naxxar, Qawra, Qormi, Xghajra
Primary school 4 (Zebbug Primary)	Years 5-6	7	4 females, 3 males	Zebbug,
Primary school 5 (Vittoriosa Primary)	Year 5, Year 9	3	2 females, 1 male	Marsascala, Kalkara, Fgura
Secondary school 1 (Verdala Secondary)	Years 9-10	4	4 females	Paola, Zabbar, Senglea
Secondary school 2 (Mosta Zokrija Secondary)	Years 9-10	5	4 females, 1 male	Balzan, Qawra, Mellieha, Xemxija
Secondary school 3 (Handaq Secondary)	Years 9-10	6	3 females, 3 males	Paola, Luqa, Zebbug, Siggiewi, Qawra

Table 1.6 Focus Group Discussions with Parents and Stakeholders

Focus group	No. of participants	Roles	Localities
Northern Harbour	14	6 parents, 2 mayors, 3 scouts representatives, 2 girl guides representatives, 1 architect	Msida, Pieta, Swieqi, Pembroke, Birkirkara, Sliema, Qormi, Mosta
South Eastern	10	7 parents, 1 mayor, 1 scouts representative, 1 youth group leader	Marsascala, Zejtun, Zurrieq, Fgura, Xghajra, Mqabba, Qrendi
Gozo	9	7 parents, 1 mayor, 1 scouts representative	Victoria, Marsalforn, Xaghra, Nadur, Xewkija, Sannat

Data Collection and Instruments

Quantitative Study

Data collection took place during the academic year 2020/2021, between the months of December 2020 and June 2021. Data was collected online via SurveyMonkey. Four anonymous surveys were designed to collect information from primary school students, secondary school students, parents and stakeholders respectively. The surveys were made available in both Maltese and English.

The questionnaires explored the following areas: open areas where children play and spend their time, open natural or green areas close to where they live, places where children and young people meet in the community, accessibility cleanliness, safety, involvement in the life of the locality, the level of satisfaction with these areas in their locality, and the areas they would like to improve to make their locality more child-friendly. Some of the questions were adapted from the self assessment tools in the Child-friendly Cities Initiative by UNESCO[1]. The questionnaires were adapted according the respondents, namely young children, adolescents, parents and stakeholders, with initial sections on demographic information. The stakeholders' questionnaire included also a section about their potential participation in the initiative and the challenges they foresaw in implementing it. The surveys were piloted with a small number of primary and secondary students, parents and stakeholders, prior to data collection.

Primary school students who received parental consent completed the online survey using their tablets, during school hours. Due to COVID-19 restrictions in place during data collection, the surveys were administered remotely via Microsoft Teams by the research team, or else by the classroom teachers who were present in the classroom, according to each school's preference. Secondary school students were originally asked the complete the online survey at school, in a computer lab. However, due to on-going restrictions and pressures faced by schools related to the COVID-19 pandemic, 23 out of the 29 schools who agreed to participate, only accepted to participate as long as students could complete the survey from home. In this case, the Heads of Schools sent the information letter to all parents of students in the

1 https://childfriendlycities.org/?popuppress=building-a-cfci-assessment

applicable year groups, and students were able to complete the survey from home following parental consent. Parents and stakeholders completed the questionnaire online through the link provided on the information sheet.

Qualitative Study

Data collection took place between the months of June and July 2021. Although the focus groups were originally planned to take place in a face-to-face setting, these were organised online, over the Zoom platform, due to the on-going COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to data collection, consent was sought from the parents/carers of participating students, whilst all participants were informed that participation was strictly voluntary.

The focus groups were led by the research team and explored participants' views on the locality where they live, or in the case of stakeholders, the locality where they exercised their role. Focus groups followed a semi-structured approach and addressed such topics as the play and leisure areas in the locality, nature areas, accessibility, safety, children's involvement in the life of the locality, participants' satisfaction with the spaces available for children, and improvements they would like to see in their locality. The students' focus group originally involved a number of face-to-face small group activities adapted from the qualitative research framework developed by Fattore et al (2014). These had to be adjusted, however, to be held online. Participants were asked to draw or write down the important places in their locality where they can play/walk/cycle, the places where they can enjoy nature, meet their friends, and other important places in their locality. They were then given some time to write or draw. They were then asked to show and explain to the rest of the group what they wrote or drew and discussed this together. The second activity originally involved designing a poster as a group on what their ideal locality would be like. Instead of this, the participants were given some time to draw or write down the things they would like to have in their ideal locality, which they subsequently showed or read out and explained to the rest of the group.

In the case of parents and stakeholders, the focus group consisted of an additional section towards the end of the focus group on the study itself whereby they could express any concerns they may have about the study, and share their opinions on what they would expect to be different once such a study is completed.

Ethics

Ethical approval was obtained from the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) at the University of Malta, the MEDE Research Ethics Committee within the Directorate for Research, Lifelong Learning and Employability at the Ministry for Education and Employment, as well as the Secretariat for Catholic Education. Following this, consent was obtained from the State College Principals and the Heads of Schools. Participants were provided with an information letter regarding the study, and parental consent was sought for all participants who were under 18 years of age; consent was also sought from the children and adolescents themselves as well. All participants were informed that participation was voluntary. Questionnaires were all completed anonymously, and the names of the participants in the focus groups were changed in order to safeguard participants' anonymity.

Data Analysis

Statistical analysis of the survey data was performed with IBM SPSS Statistics 28. Quantitative analyses included general descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages), Chi-square tests, Independent Samples T-Test, ANOVA and post-hoc tests including Tukey and Games-Howell, to check for significant differences across different regions, genders, nationalities and roles. The level of significance for all tests was taken as $p<0.05$.

The focus group discussions were transcribed and together with the screen shots of the drawings and lists produced by the participants, they were analysed thematically (Brown & Clarke, 2006) in order to identify the common themes that emerged from the primary school students, secondary school students and from parents and stakeholders respectively.

2 Children's Voices

Play areas

Just over one half of 8-11 year old participants (52.2%) agreed that they have enough open areas to play where they live, with 15.9% stating that they do not have enough of these areas and 31.9% saying just a little (Figure 2.1).

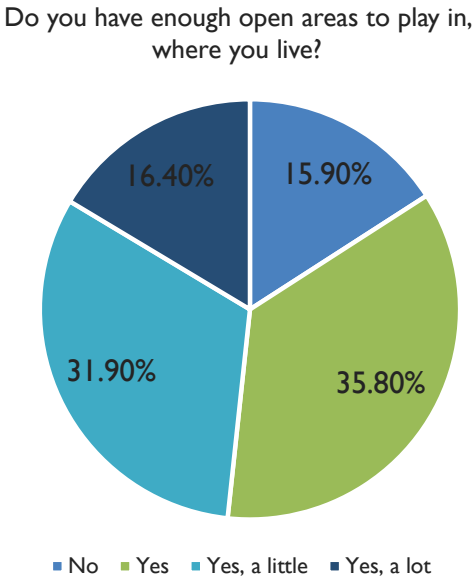

Figure 2.1. Enough open play areas to play

More participants from Gozo and the South Eastern region were likely to agree that they have sufficient open play areas whilst those from the Southern Harbour and Northern regions were the least to agree (Table 2.1).

Table 2.1. Enough open play areas by region

Do you have enough open areas to play in where you live?						
		No	Yes	Yes a little	Yes a lot	Total
Southern Harbour	N	42	48	40	31	161
	%	26.1%	29.8%	24.8%	19.3%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	18	38	41	16	113
	%	15.9%	33.6%	36.3%	14.2%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	15	58	50	15	138
	%	10.9%	42.0%	36.2%	10.9%	100.0%
Western	N	10	27	36	8	81
	%	12.3%	33.3%	44.4%	9.9%	100.0%
Northern	N	8	10	4	8	30
	%	26.7%	33.3%	13.3%	26.7%	100.0%
Gozo	N	6	37	23	21	87
	%	6.9%	42.5%	26.4%	24.1%	100.0%

When asked about the frequency of their visits to the play areas, 77.8% said that they visit the football ground at least once a week or more, followed by other areas (73%), and public parks or gardens, their street, their pavement, open field or sports centre (50% to 60%). However, 54.4% stated that they visit the playing field less than once per week, followed by sports centres and nature and open areas (47%-44%) (Figure 2.2).

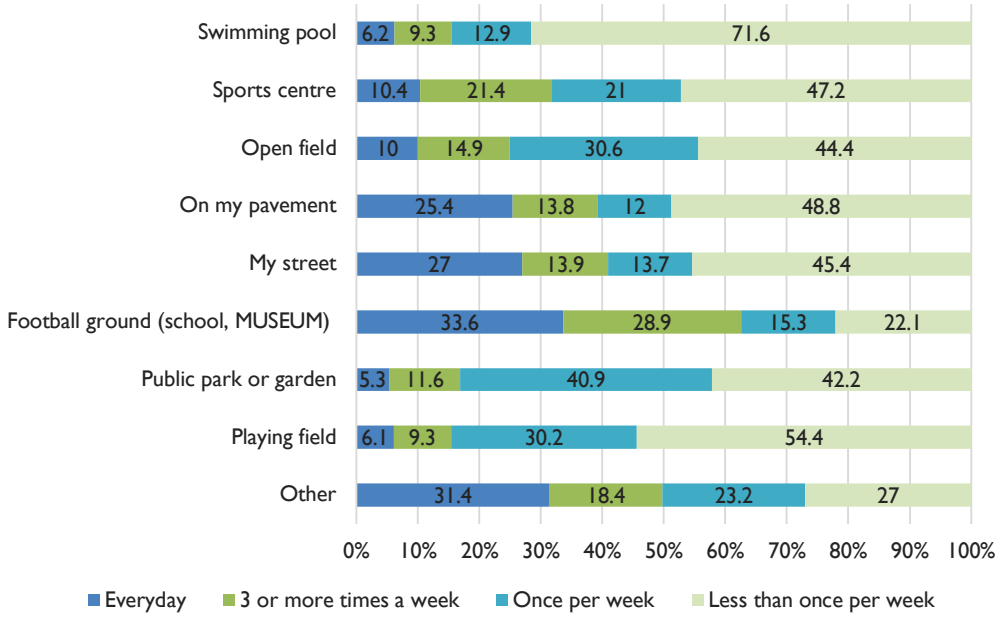

Figure 2.2. Areas used for playtime

Boys were more likely to go to the playing field and football ground at least once a week or more compared to girls, while the latter were more likely than boys to go to the swimming pool at least once a week or more often (Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Use of playing field and football ground by gender

		Playing field[1]			Football ground[2]			Swimming pool[3]	
		Male	Female		Male	Female		Male	Female
Everyday	N	20	11	N	107	83	N	18	11
	%	7.1%	4.2%	%	36.1%	31.0%	%	7.0%	4.6%
3 or more times a week	N	34	16	N	90	74	N	18	28
	%	12.1%	6.1%	%	30.4%	27.6%	%	7.0%	11.8%
Once per week	N	89	77	N	50	37	N	26	38
	%	31.6%	29.3%	%	16.9%	13.8%	%	10.1%	16.0%
Less than once per week	N	139	159	N	49	74	N	196	160
	%	49.3%	60.5%	%	16.6%	27.6%	%	76.0%	67.5%
Total	N	282	263	N	296	268	N	258	237
	%	100.0%	100.0%	N	100.0%	100.0%	N	100.0%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(3, N = 545) = 10.65$, $p = 0.014$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(3, N = 564) = 10.25$, $p = 0.017$; Note[3]: $\chi^2(3, N = 495) = 8.88$, $p = 0.031$.									

Non-Maltese participants visit playing fields and public parks and gardens more frequently than Maltese participants (Tables 2.3, 2.4). More Gozitan children were likely to go to the playing field and football ground at least once a week or more often, while those from the South Eastern region were least likely to do so (Tables 2.5, 2.6).

Table 2.3. Use of playing field by nationality

		Everyday	3 or more times a week	Once per week	Less than once per week	Total
Maltese	N	25	47	148	277	497
	%	5.0%	9.5%	29.8%	55.7%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	8	5	19	25	57
	%	14.0%	8.8%	33.3%	43.9%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(3) = 8.52$, $p = 0.036$						

Table 2.4. Use of public park or garden by nationality

		Everyday	3 or more times a week	Once per week	Less than once per week	Total
Maltese	N	21	52	199	211	483
	%	4.3%	10.8%	41.2%	43.7%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	7	10	23	18	58
	%	12.1%	17.2%	39.7%	31.0%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(3) = 9.85$, $p = 0.020$						

Table 2.5. Use of playing field by region

		Everyday	3 or more times a week	Once per week	Less than once per week	Total
Southern Harbour	N	13	14	45	73	145
	%	9.0%	9.7%	31.0%	50.3%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	3	12	32	49	96
	%	3.1%	12.5%	33.3%	51.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	3	4	32	79	118
	%	2.5%	3.4%	27.1%	66.9%	100.0%
Western	N	3	5	20	52	80
	%	3.8%	6.3%	25.0%	65.0%	100.0%
Northern	N	2	7	4	13	26
	%	7.7%	26.9%	15.4%	50.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	2	10	28	30	70
	%	2.9%	14.3%	40.0%	42.9%	100.0%

Table 2.6. Use of football ground by region

		Everyday	3 or more times a week	Once per week	Less than once per week	Total
Southern Harbour	N	59	38	17	37	151
	%	39.1%	25.2%	11.3%	24.5%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	37	25	15	20	97
	%	38.1%	25.8%	15.5%	20.6%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	28	42	18	33	121
	%	23.1%	34.7%	14.9%	27.3%	100.0%
Western	N	22	31	11	18	82
	%	26.8%	37.8%	13.4%	22.0%	100.0%
Northern	N	11	6	4	7	28
	%	39.3%	21.4%	14.3%	25.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	29	20	20	9	78
	%	37.2%	25.6%	25.6%	11.5%	100.0%

When asked to select the places where they prefer to play, most participants selected the football ground (48.1%), followed by public park or garden (44.4%) and playing field (43.9%). Amongst the least popular play areas were pavements (10.3%) and streets (19.2%) (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Where children like to play most

	N	%
Football ground (school, MUSEUM)	313	48.1%
Public park or garden	289	44.4%
Playing field	286	43.9%
Swimming pool	241	37.0%
Other	227	34.9%
Open field	223	34.3%
Sports centre	188	28.9%
Your street	125	19.2%
On the pavement	67	10.3%

Participants from the Western region chose 'open field' more frequently, while those from the Northern region choose this place least frequently (Table 2.8).

Table 2.8. Open field as a preferred play area by region

Open field				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	40	121	161
	%	24.8%	75.2%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	40	75	115
	%	34.8%	65.2%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	55	83	138
	%	39.9%	60.1%	100.0%
Western	N	37	46	83
	%	44.6%	55.4%	100.0%
Northern	N	7	24	31
	%	22.6%	77.4%	100.0%
Gozo	N	36	56	92
	%	39.1%	60.9%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 14.91$, $p = 0.011$				

Non-Maltese participants are more likely to prefer playing in public parks or gardens, compared to Maltese participants, whils the latter like to play more in football grounds than non-Maltese participants (Table 2.9).

Table 2.9. Preferred play area by nationality

	Public park or garden[1]				Football ground[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	247	327	574	N	288	286	574
	%	43.0%	57.0%	100.0%	%	50.2%	49.8%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	38	29	67	N	24	43	67
	%	56.7%	43.3%	100.0%	%	35.8%	64.2%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 641) = 4.55$, p = 0.033; Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 641) = 4.95$, p = 0.026								

In the five focus group discussions (FGD) with 8 to 11 year old children from different regions, participants spoke very positively about visiting spaces where they can play sports and cycle, such as football grounds, skate parks, or other open areas:

"There is also an area outside I can play with my bike too, and you can play football and lots of other things and it's safe as well for kids" (Maria Regina College Primary)

The playground as the children's hub. Participants referred to their local playgrounds as one of the primary spaces in their locality where they could meet their friends, play and have fun:

"I meet and enjoy my friends at the playground" (Maria Regina College Primary)

"Niftemu u niltaqgħu l-bandli u noqgħodu nagħmlu attivitajiet flimkien" / "We agree to meet at the playground and we do many activities together" (St Ignatius College Primary)

Need for more play and social spaces.

The children also mentioned that they would like more spaces to play and meet their friends, such as safe, indoor spaces:

"Nixtieq li jkun hawn post qisu bħal Mużew imma mhux Mużew, li niltaqgħu mal-ħbieb u noqogħdu nilgħabu u nitkellmu, li jkun safe… Inkun nixtiequ kkulurit u jkollna games room" / "I wish there would be a space like the MUSEUM but not the MUSEUM, where we can meet up with friends and play and talk, that would be safe.. I would like it to be colourful and to have a games room" (St Ignatius College Primary)

Some participants would also like more spaces where they can go and play with their pets:

"M'hawnx fejn toħrog il-kelb bla ċinga… x'imkien bħal Ta' Qali" / "There is nowhere to take the dog out without a leash… somewhere like Ta' Qali" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Iktar postijiet għal-annimali fejn nkunu nistgħu mmorru" / "More places where we can go with animals" (St Ignatius College Primary)

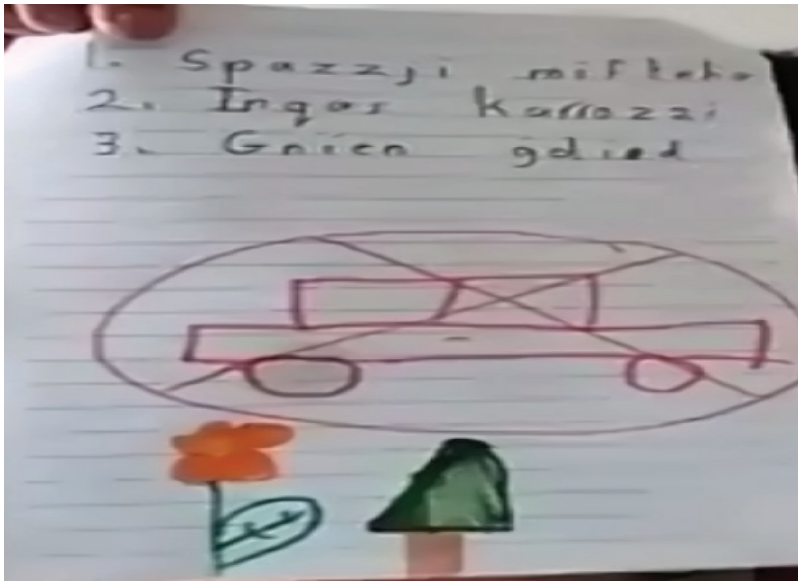

Figure 2.3. Drawing by an 8 year old child during the focus group discussions

When asked with whom they go to the play areas, most participants said they go with their parents (79.4%) followed by siblings and relatives (33.3%). The most common way of travelling to these places is by car (62.2%) followed by walking (48.8%), whilst use of public transport (3.5%) is the least common method of travel (Table 2.10).

Table 2.10. How children go to play areas

	N	%
With my parents	517	79.4%
With my brother/ sister/relative	217	33.3%
With my friends	156	24.0%
On my own	97	14.9%
Other	56	8.6%

	N	%
By car	405	62.2%
On foot	318	48.8%
By bicycle	141	21.7%
By public transport	23	3.5%
Other	57	8.8%

More participants from the Western and Gozo regions reported going to play areas on their own whilst those from the Harbour regions were the least likely to do. Participants from the South Eastern region were more likely to go to play areas with their parents with those from Gozo least likely to do so (Table 2.11). Non-Maltese participants were more likely to visit play areas on their own or with their siblings and other relatives than Maltese peers (Table 2.12).

Table 2.11. Children who visit play areas on their own or with their parents by region

		On my own[1]				With my parents[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	17	144	161	N	131	30	161
	%	10.6%	89.4%	100.0%	%	81.4%	18.6%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	12	103	115	N	92	23	115
	%	10.4%	89.6%	100.0%	%	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	16	122	138	N	122	16	138
	%	11.6%	88.4%	100.0%	%	88.4%	11.6%	100.0%
Western	N	19	64	83	N	70	13	83
	%	22.9%	77.1%	100.0%	%	84.3%	15.7%	100.0%
Northern	N	6	25	31	N	21	10	31
	%	19.4%	80.6%	100.0%	N	67.7%	32.3%	100.0%
Gozo	N	21	71	92	%	58	34	92
	%	22.8%	77.2%	100.0%	N	63.0%	37.0%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 14.77$, $p = 0.011$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 26.35$, $p = 0.000$

Table 2.12. Children who visit play areas on their own or with their siblings and other relatives by nationality

		On my own[1]				With my brothers/sisters/relatives[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	77	497	574	N	184	390	574
	%	13.4%	86.6%	100.0%	%	32.1%	67.9%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	17	50	67	N	32	35	67
	%	25.4%	74.6%	100.0%	%	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 641) = 6.86$, $p = 0.009$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 641) = 6.62$, $p = 0.010$.

More participants from the Northern and Western regions go to play areas by bicycle, while those, from the Harbour regions were the least likely to do so. Children from the Western and South Eastern regions were more likely to go by car, with those from the Northern region least likely to do so (Table 2.13). Non-Maltese participants were more likely to walk to the play areas and to use public transport than Maltese participants (Table 2.14).

Table 2.13 Mode of transport to play areas by region

		By bicycle[1]				By car[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	25	136	161	N	110	51	161
	%	15.5%	84.5%	100.0%	%	68.3%	31.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	19	96	115	N	71	44	115
	%	16.5%	83.5%	100.0%	%	61.7%	38.3%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	39	99	138	N	86	52	138
	%	28.3%	71.7%	100.0%	%	62.3%	37.7%	100.0%
Western	N	24	59	83	N	59	24	83
	%	28.9%	71.1%	100.0%	%	71.1%	28.9%	100.0%
Northern	N	9	22	31	N	14	17	31
	%	29.0%	71.0%	100.0%	N	45.2%	54.8%	100.0%
Gozo	N	19	73	92	%	48	44	92
	%	20.7%	79.3%	100.0%	N	52.2%	47.8%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 12.47$, $p = 0.029$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 13.14$, $p = 0.022$

Table 2.14. Mode of transport to play areas by nationality

		On foot[1]				By public transport[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	273	301	574	N	16	558	574
	%	47.6%	52.4%	100.0%	%	2.8%	97.2%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	41	26	67	N	7	60	67
	%	61.2%	38.8%	100.0%	%	10.4%	89.6%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 641) = 4.46$, $p = 0.035$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 641) = 10.18$, $p = 0.001$

Diverse games and activities

The majority of participants (68.5%) stated that it is possible to play different and new games, physical activities and sports in the play areas, but just over one half (54.4%) agreed that they can discover and learn new things (Figure 2.4, 2.5).

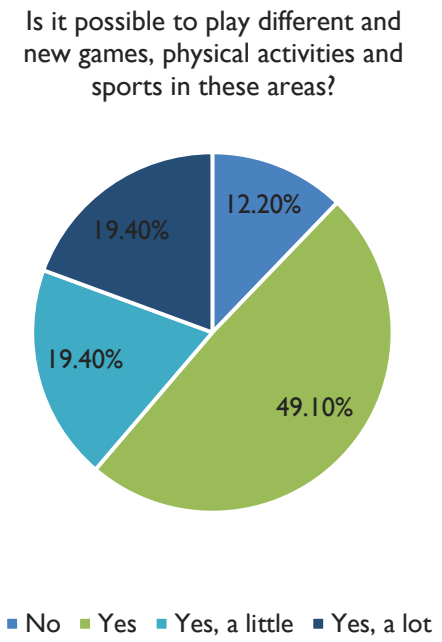

Figure 2.4. Play different and new games, physical activities and sports

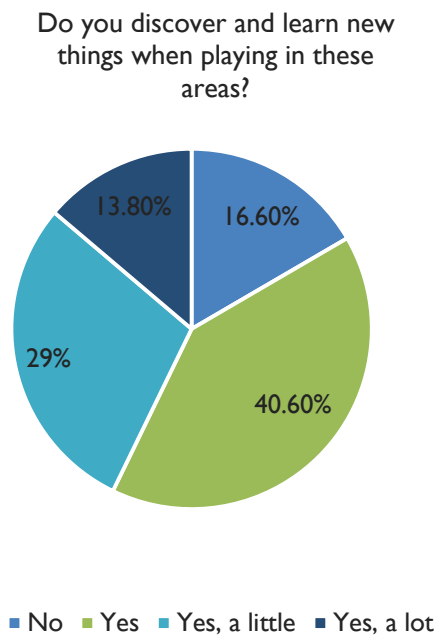

Figure 2.5. Discover and learn new things when playing

Girls were more likely to indicate than boys that it is possible to play different and new games, physical activities and sports (Table 2.15). Compared to participants from other regions, children from Gozo were the least to agree that it is possible to play different and new games, physical activities and sports in the areas they frequent (Table 2.16).

Table 2.15. Opportunity to play different and new games, physical activities and sports by gender

Is it possible to play different and new games, physical activities and sports in these areas?						
		No	Yes	Yes, a little	Yes, a lot	Total
Male	N	47	132	63	63	305
	%	15.4%	43.3%	20.7%	20.7%	100.0%
Female	N	24	153	50	52	279
	%	8.6%	54.8%	17.9%	18.6%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(3) = 10.41$, $p = 0.015$						

Table 2.16 Opportunity to play different and new games, physical activities and sports by region

Is it possible to play different and new games, physical activities and sports in these areas?						
		No	Yes	Yes, a little	Yes, a lot	Total
Southern Harbour	N	23	65	35	34	157
	%	14.6%	41.4%	22.3%	21.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	12	53	15	18	98
	%	12.2%	54.1%	15.3%	18.4%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	15	71	27	13	126
	%	11.9%	56.3%	21.4%	10.3%	100.0%
Western	N	6	38	16	17	77
	%	7.8%	49.4%	20.8%	22.1%	100.0%
Northern	N	5	14	6	2	27
	%	18.5%	51.9%	22.2%	7.4%	100.0%
Gozo	N	7	39	13	28	87
	%	8.0%	44.8%	14.9%	32.2%	100.0%

In the FGD, some participants also mentioned that they do not have many different options for places where they can go and have fun, apart from the playgrounds, some of which were described as being quite small. They argued that their locality would benefit from having more varied places where children can meet up and play:

"Ma tantx hawn postijiet imbagħad aktar fejn tilgħab, il-bandli biss imma l-bandli mbagħad jkunu wisq żgħar dak li hemm ħdejja" / "There aren't many more places where you can play, only the playground, but the playground next to where I live is too small" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Nagħmlu xi public pool" / "We could have a public pool" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"I'm thinking like kids maybe like a little skate park so the kids can have fun there with the scooters and even maybe a little track with remote control cars" (Maria Regina College Primary)

Figure 2.6 The Urban Thinkscape Project seeks to transform public buildings such as bus stops, into opportunities for learning through play (see Annex 3) (Image credit: Sahar Coston-Hardy)

Availability and accessibility of play areas

Less than half of participants (46.1%) said that the play areas are open on all days of the week, while only 38.4% said they are open all day (Table 2.17).

Table 2.17 Availability of play areas

When are they mostly open, many of these areas?	N	%
All days of the week	300	46.1%
Whole day	250	38.4%
Afternoon only	114	17.5%
Weekdays only	93	14.3%
Morning only	91	14.0%
Some days only	88	13.5%
Weekends only	85	13.1%
Evening only	52	8.0%

More participants in the Southern Harbour indicated that the places they go to are mostly open in the morning only when compared to those from other regions (Table 2.18).

Table 2.18. Availability of play areas by region

Morning only				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	39	122	161
	%	24.2%	75.8%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	12	103	115
	%	10.4%	89.6%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	18	120	138
	%	13.0%	87.0%	100.0%
Western	N	9	74	83
	%	10.8%	89.2%	100.0%
Northern	N	3	28	31
	%	9.7%	90.3%	100.0%
Gozo	N	5	87	92
	%	5.4%	94.6%	100.0%

Boys indicated more than girls that the places where they like to play are open in the morning only or evening only, whilst girls were more likely to indicate than boys that the play places are open the whole day (Table 2.19, 2.20).

Table 2.19. Availability of play areas by gender I

	Morning only[1]				Evening only[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	55	271	326	N	35	291	326
	%	16.9%	83.1%	100.0%	%	10.7%	89.3%	100.0%
Female	N	34	272	306	N	16	290	306
	%	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%	%	5.2%	94.8%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 632) = 4.33$, $p = 0.037$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 632) = 6.45$, $p = 0.011$

Table 2.20. Availability of play areas by gender II

Whole day				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	112	214	326
	%	34.4%	65.6%	100.0%
Female	N	132	174	306
	%	43.1%	56.9%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(1, N = 632) = 5.14, p = 0.023$				

Most of the play areas can be used mostly when it is nice weather (94.0%), with 20% or less saying they can be used when is cold, windy or raining (Table 2.21).

Table 2.21. Use of play areas

	N	%
When it is nice weather	612	94.0%
When it is hot	309	47.5%
When it is cold	130	20.0%
When it is windy	119	18.3%
When it is raining	53	8.1%

The vast majority of survey participants said that the play areas can be used by children of different genders (Figure 2.7). On the other hand, whilst 44.2% believed that children with a disability can use these play areas, 37.2% did not know and 18.6% did not agree (Figure 2.8).

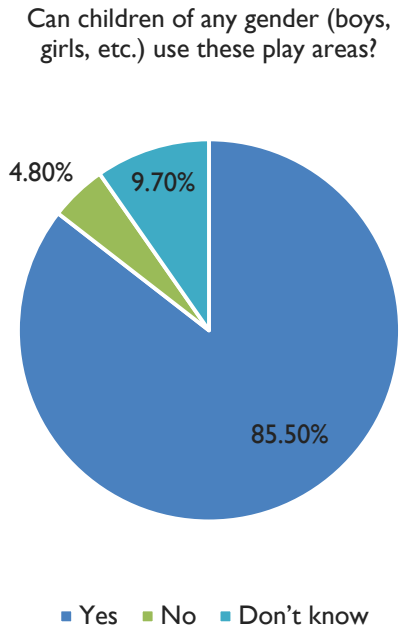

Figure 2.7. Use of play areas by children of any gender

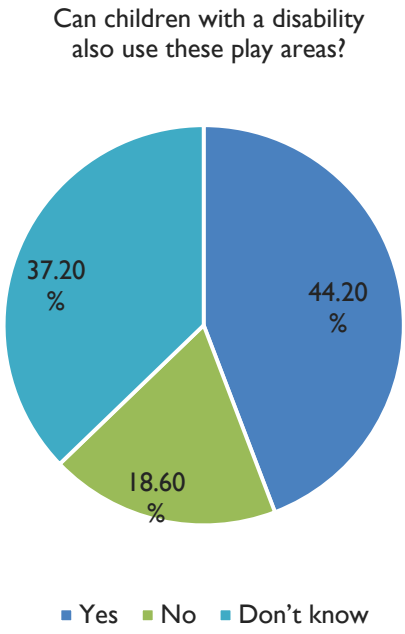

Figure 2.8. Use of play area by children with a disability

More participants from the Harbour regions believed that children with a disability can also use play areas, while those from Gozo were the least likely to agree (Table 2.22).

Table 2.22. Use of play area by children with a disability by region

Can children with a disability also use these play areas?					
		Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Southern Harbour	N	79	23	54	156
	%	50.6%	14.7%	34.6%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	50	15	33	98
	%	51.0%	15.3%	33.7%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	45	35	44	124
	%	36.3%	28.2%	35.5%	100.0%
Western	N	29	14	34	77
	%	37.7%	18.2%	44.2%	100.0%
Northern	N	13	7	8	28
	%	46.4%	25.0%	28.6%	100.0%
Gozo	N	26	16	45	87
	%	29.9%	18.4%	51.7%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(10, N = 570) = 24.03$, $p = 0.008$					

Less than one third of participants (30.70%) said that they walked or cycled frequently where they live, while 41% did so sometimes (Figure 2.9). Just over one half (52.1%) agreed that there are enough walking and cycling routes where they live (Figure 2.10).

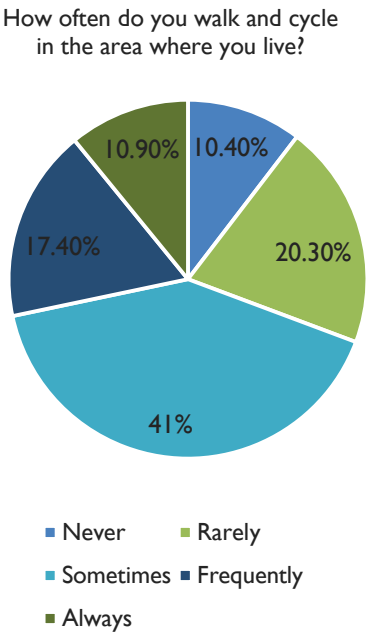

Figure 2.9. Frequency of walking or cycling routes

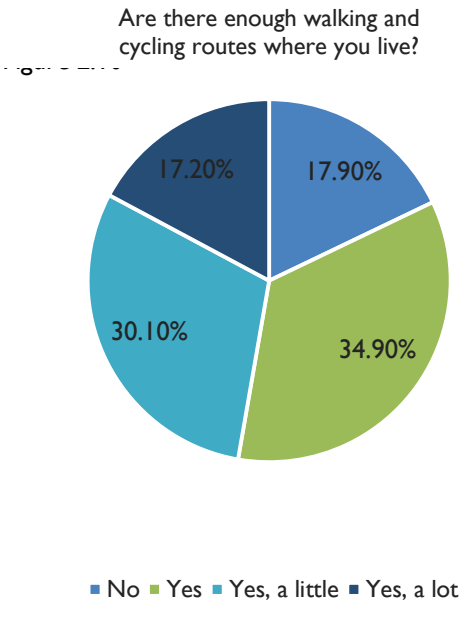

Figure 2.10. Walking and cycling routes

More participants from the Harbour regions reported 'never' walking or cycling where they live compared to peers from other regions, whilst those from the Northern region were more likely to always walk and cycle in their area (Table 2.23).

Table 2.23. Frequency of walking or cycling by region

How often do you walk and cycle in the area where you live?							
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Total
Southern Harbour	N	24	45	56	20	12	157
	%	15.3%	28.7%	35.7%	12.7%	7.6%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	17	18	40	12	11	98
	%	17.3%	18.4%	40.8%	12.2%	11.2%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	8	25	54	31	10	128
	%	6.3%	19.5%	42.2%	24.2%	7.8%	100.0%
Western	N	4	18	29	20	6	77
	%	5.2%	23.4%	37.7%	26.0%	7.8%	100.0%
Northern	N	2	5	13	1	7	28
	%	7.1%	17.9%	46.4%	3.6%	25.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	4	9	40	18	16	87
	%	4.6%	10.3%	46.0%	20.7%	18.4%	100.0%

Boys are more likely to never walk and cycle where they live than girls (Table 2.24). Non-Maltese participants were more likely than Maltese participants to disagree that there are enough walking and cycling routes where they live (Table 2.25) Participants from Gozo were the most to agree that there are enough walking and cycling routes where they live, with those from the Northern Harbour the least likely to agree (Table 2.26).

Table 2.24. Frequency of walking or cycling by gender

How often do you walk and cycle in the area where you live?							
		Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Total
Male	N	43	59	119	45	40	306
	%	14.1%	19.3%	38.9%	14.7%	13.1%	100.0%
Female	N	20	62	118	58	23	281
	%	7.1%	22.1%	42.0%	20.6%	8.2%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(4) = 13.66$, $p = 0.008$							

Table 2.25. Availability of walking and cycling routes by nationality

Are there enough walking and cycling routes where you live?						
		No	Yes	Yes, a little	Yes, a lot	Total
Maltese	N	88	183	163	94	528
	%	16.7%	34.7%	30.9%	17.8%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	18	25	14	6	63
	%	28.6%	39.7%	22.2%	9.5%	100.0%
Note: $\chi 2(3) = 8.54$, $p = 0.036$						

Table 2.26. Availability of walking and cycling routes by region

Are there enough walking and cycling routes where you live?						
		No	Yes	Yes, a little	Yes, a lot	Total
Southern Harbour	N	30	62	45	19	156
	%	19.2%	39.7%	28.8%	12.2%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	23	21	38	16	98
	%	23.5%	21.4%	38.8%	16.3%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	21	52	36	18	127
	%	16.5%	40.9%	28.3%	14.2%	100.0%
Western	N	16	16	30	15	77
	%	20.8%	20.8%	39.0%	19.5%	100.0%
Northern	N	6	9	7	5	27
	%	22.2%	33.3%	25.9%	18.5%	100.0%
Gozo	N	6	36	20	25	87
	%	6.9%	41.4%	23.0%	28.7%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(15, N = 572) = 37.75$, $p = 0.001$						

Nature areas

Seventy-one percent of respondents said that there is a garden, park or natural open area close to their home, but only 10% go there everyday, whilst 18.2% go there three or more times a week, and 39% once a week; and 32.8% less than once a week (Figure 2.11, 2.12).

Maltese participants were more likely to agree than non Maltese ones that there is a garden, park or natural open area close to their house (Table 2.27).

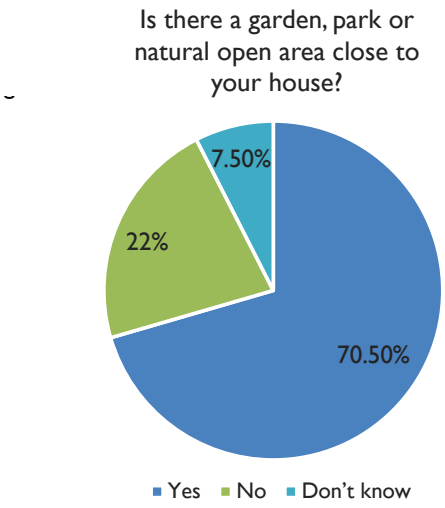

Figure 2.11. Garden, park or nature area close to home

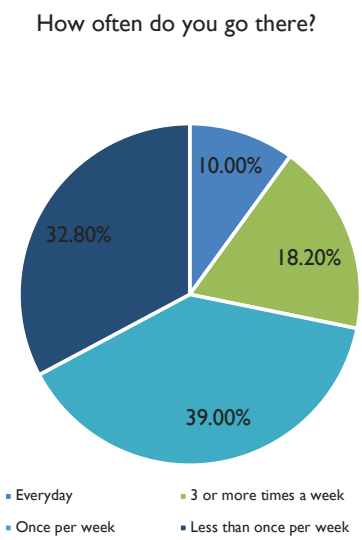

Figure 2.12. Frequency of going to garden, park or nature area

Table 2.27. Availability of garden, park or natural open area close to home by nationality

Is there a garden, park or natural open area close to your house?						
		No	Yes	Yes, a little	Yes, a lot	Total
Maltese	N	411	115	41	567	411
	%	72.5%	20.3%	7.2%	100.0%	72.5%
Non-Maltese	N	34	24	7	65	34
	%	52.3%	36.9%	10.8%	100.0%	52.3%
Note: $\chi^2(2) = 11.68$, $p = 0.003$						

Most participants visit the nature areas on foot (56.7%) followed by car (29.3%) and bicycle (20.9%) (Table 2.28). Participants from the Western region were the most to visit the nature areas on foot whilst those from the Northern region were the least likely to do so. On the other hand more Gozitan children go by bicycle while those from the Northern Harbour were the least likely to do so (Table 2.29).

Table 2.28. How children go to nature areas

	N	%
On foot	369	56.7%
By car	191	29.3%
By bicycle	136	20.9%
Other	49	7.5%
By public transport	9	1.4%

Table 2.29. Children who travel to nature areas by region

	On foot[1]				By bicycle[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	82	79	161	N	28	133	161
	%	50.9%	49.1%	100.0%	%	17.4%	82.6%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	70	45	115	N	15	100	115
	%	60.9%	39.1%	100.0%	%	13.0%	87.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	83	55	138	N	27	111	138
	%	60.1%	39.9%	100.0%	%	19.6%	80.4%	100.0%
Western	N	53	30	83	N	23	60	83
	%	63.9%	36.1%	100.0%	%	27.7%	72.3%	100.0%
Northern	N	10	21	31	N	5	26	31
	%	32.3%	67.7%	100.0%	N	16.1%	83.9%	100.0%
Gozo	N	55	37	92	%	28	64	92
	%	59.8%	40.2%	100.0%	N	30.4%	69.6%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 13.29$, p = 0.021; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 13.61$, p = 0.018								

Girls are more likely to visit green areas on foot than boys (Table 2.30), whilet non-Maltese participants travel to green areas by public transport more than Maltese participants (Table 2.31).

Table 2.30. Children who travel on foot to nature areas by gender

On foot				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	172	154	326
	%	52.8%	47.2%	100.0%
Female	N	190	116	306
	%	62.1%	37.9%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(1, N = 632) = 5.62$, p = 0.018				

Table 2.31. Travel by public transport to nature areas by nationality

		By public transport[1]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	6	568	574
	%	1.0%	99.0%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	3	64	67
	%	4.5%	95.5%	100.0%

Most participants visit green areas together with their parents (71.9%) followed by their siblings and relatives (33.3%) or friends (21.4%) (Table 2.32). More participants from Gozo visit nature areas on their own, whilst those from the Northern region were the least likely to do so. On the other hand, more children from the Northern region visit nature areas with siblings or relatives, whilst those from the South Eastern region were the least likely to do so. Finally, more participants from the Northern Harbour go with friends, with those from the Southern Harbour the least likely to do so (Table 2.33, Table 2.34).

Table 2.32. With whom do children go to nature areas

	N	%
With my parents	468	71.9%
With my brother/sister/relative	217	33.3%
With my friends	139	21.4%
On my own	87	13.4%
Other	53	8.1%

Table 2.33. Children who go to nature areas on their own by region

On their own				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	15	146	161
	%	9.3%	90.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	9	106	115
	%	7.8%	92.2%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	17	121	138
	%	12.3%	87.7%	100.0%
Western	N	16	67	83
	%	19.3%	80.7%	100.0%
Northern	N	2	29	31
	%	6.5%	93.5%	100.0%
Gozo	N	20	72	92
	%	21.7%	78.3%	100.0%

Table 2.34. With whom do children go to nature areas by region

		With my brother/sister/ relative[1]				With my friend/s[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	47	114	161	N	25	136	161
	%	29.2%	70.8%	100.0%	%	15.5%	84.5%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	50	65	115	N	35	80	115
	%	43.5%	56.5%	100.0%	%	30.4%	69.6%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	33	105	138	N	22	116	138
	%	23.9%	76.1%	100.0%	%	15.9%	84.1%	100.0%
Western	N	33	50	83	N	23	60	83
	%	39.8%	60.2%	100.0%	%	27.7%	72.3%	100.0%
Northern	N	14	17	31	N	5	26	31
	%	45.2%	54.8%	100.0%	N	16.1%	83.9%	100.0%
Gozo	N	33	59	92	%	19	73	92
	%	35.9%	64.1%	100.0%	N	20.7%	79.3%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 15.64$, $p = 0.008$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 13.98$, $p = 0.016$								

When asked what they see and hear when they visit the nature areas, most participants mentioned birds (76.3%), trees (70.0%) and plants (61.8%) (Table 2.35).

Table 2.35. What children see and hear in nature areas

	N	%
Birds	497	76.3%
Trees	456	70.0%
Plants	402	61.8%
Insects	323	49.6%
Cars	322	49.5%
Butterflies	288	44.2%
Animals	195	30.0%
Water flowing	101	15.5%

58% of the participants feel happy when they are outdoors in a garden or natural open area while 39.5% feel excited (Figure 2.13). When shown a picture of children in a playing field and another in a park (Figure 2.15), the majority (55.7%) prefer the playing field rather than the natural open space (44.3%) (Figure 2.14).

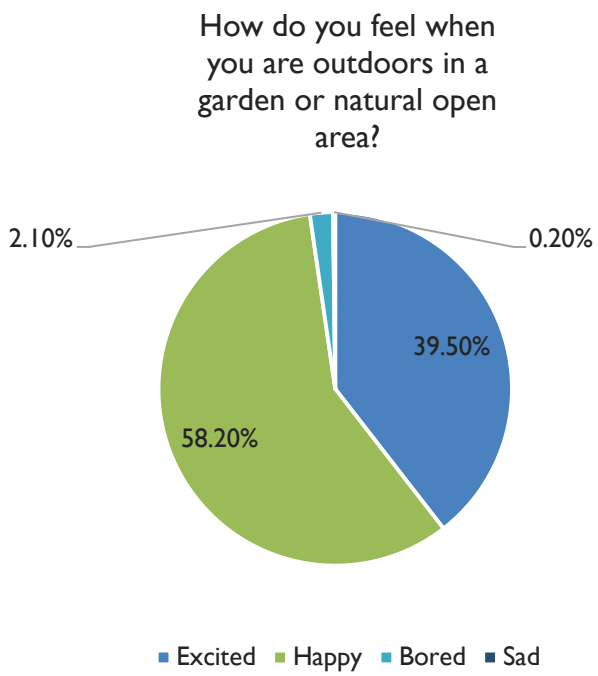

Figure 2.13. How children feel in nature

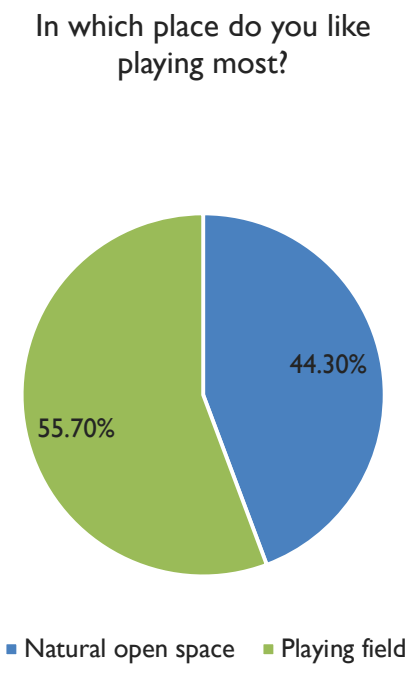

Figure 2.14. Which place children enjoy playing in most

Figure 2.15. Participants had to indicate their preference between playing in the playing field or in nature areas

More participants from Gozo prefer to play in the playing field, with those from the South Eastern region the least likely to do so, whilst the opposite is true of open spaces (Table 2.36).

Table 2.36. Outdoor place children enjoy playing most by region

In which place do you like playing most?				
		Natural open space	Playing field	Total
Southern Harbour	N	56	91	147
	%	38.1%	61.9%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	54	50	104
	%	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	67	51	118
	%	56.8%	43.2%	100.0%
Western	N	31	38	69
	%	44.9%	55.1%	100.0%
Northern	N	10	15	25
	%	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	29	60	89
	%	32.6%	67.4%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(5, N = 552) = 17.26$, $p = 0.004$				

In the FGD, the participants frequently spoke about how much they enjoy being close to nature, including green and blue spaces. Having a garden or the sea close to where they lived was one of the aspects which children liked most about their locality:

"Jien jogħġobni li għandi l-ġnien viċin" / "I like that there is a garden close by" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Li nħobb hija li għandna baħar viċin" / "I like that the sea is close by" (St Margaret College Primary)

"There's a lot of plants and you can see the sea when you are at the park. I really like it there" (Maria Regina College Primary)

"Jogħġobni għax huwa ħafna sabiħ, hemm ħafna natura, u hemm bini antik ħafna… u hemm ħafna siġar hemmhekk…. jogħġbuni s-siġar jien għax inħobb in-natura" / "I like it because it is very nice, there is a lot of nature and old buildings… and there are a lot of trees there… I like trees because I love nature" (Maria Regina College Primary)

Need for more nature areas closer to home. Some children complained that they did not have enough nature areas close to their home:

"Ma tantx għandna siġar għax għandna ħafna karozzi u bini" / "We don't have many trees because we have a lot of cars and buildings" (Maria Regina College Primary)

"Jien ma jogħġobnix li m'hemmx ħafna postijiet fejn nista' mmur niġri fil-kampanja u bir-rota" / "I don't like that there aren't many places where I can go and run in the countryside and ride my bicycle" (Maria Regina College Primary)

"Nagħmel ġnien u per eżempju dan il-ġnien ikun kbir, ikollu ħafna pjanti, siġar, fjuri sbieħ u jkollu bandli eżatt miegħu" / "I would make a garden and for example this garden would be big, it would have many plants, trees, nice flowers and a playground near it" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"If I had a magic wand I would make a bigger space where I could go with my bike and see nature and run with my friends" (Maria Regina College Primary)

"Jien nixtieq ambjent nadif u annimali… għasafar u bħal xi squirrels" / "I would like a clean environment and animals… birds and maybe some squirrels" (St Margaret College Primary)

"Iktar natura… xi siġar, iktar pjanti, iktar fjuri" / "More nature… some trees, more plants, more flowers" (St Ignatius College Primary)

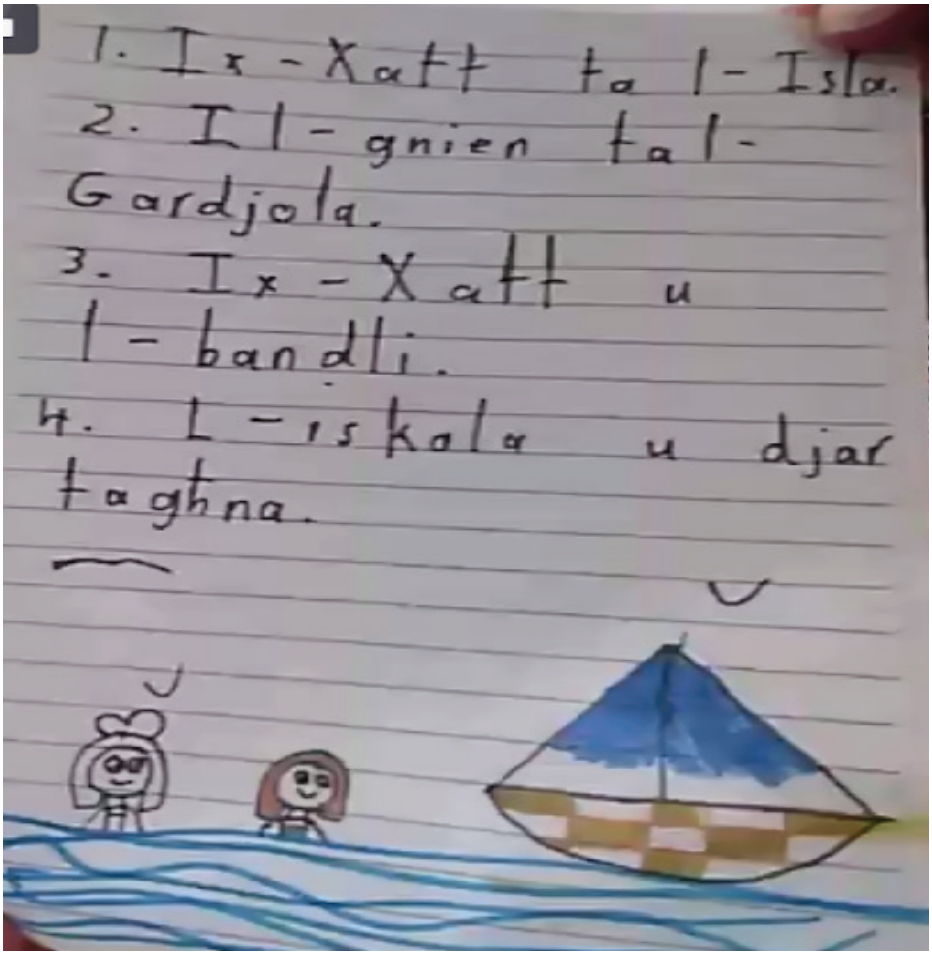

Figure 2.16. Drawing by an 8 year old participants during the focus group discussions

Cleanliness

Just over half of participants (53.8%) agreed that the places where they play are clean and cared for, whilst 16.6% said that there is noise, dust and dirty air, and 32 % mentioned rubbish or dirty water and dogs allowed to dirty the places where they play (Figure 2.17). A one-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons using Games-Howell test revealed significant differences between participants from Gozo who were more likely to agree that the places where they play are clean and cared for, and those from the Western region who were the least to agree ($p = .03$) (Table 2.37).

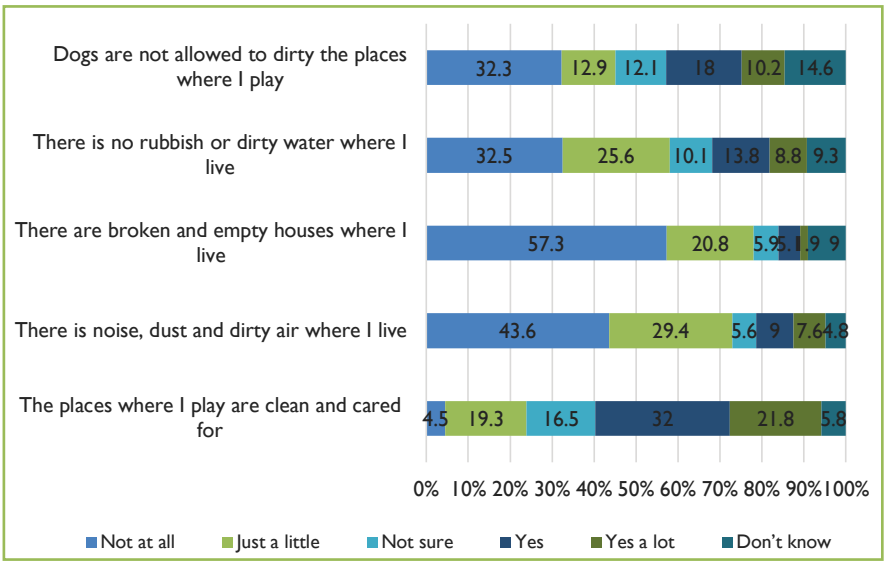

Figure 2.17. Cleanliness in children's localities

Table 2.37. Cleanliness in children's localities by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
The places where I play are clean and cared for[1]*	Mean	3.55	3.37	3.45	3.33	3.27	3.86
	Std. Dev.	1.252	1.298	1.055	1.082	1.402	1.014
There is noise, dust and dirty air where I live[2]	Mean	2.03	2.29	1.89	2.03	2.12	1.91
	Std. Dev.	1.261	1.411	1.237	1.260	1.364	1.171
There are broken and empty houses where I live[3]	Mean	1.65	1.65	1.68	1.52	1.40	1.50
	Std. Dev.	1.055	.970	1.060	.826	.764	.815
There is no rubbish or dirty water where I live [4]	Mean	2.25	2.42	2.22	2.32	2.20	2.69
	Std. Dev.	1.378	1.342	1.302	1.275	1.500	1.404
Dogs are not allowed to dirty the places where I play[5]	Mean	2.53	2.83	2.30	2.45	2.91	2.57
	Std. Dev.	1.475	1.541	1.426	1.361	1.474	1.510

Note: [1]F(5, 532)=2.361, [2]F(5, 531)=1.207, [3]F(5, 508)=.716, [4]F(5, 509)=1.437, [5]F(5, 475)=1.558, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

In the FGD, the participants frequently mentioned the problem of littering, such as the pavements and flowerbeds:

"Jien naħseb li ma tantx hu nadif għax hemm ħafna nies li jarmu mal-art u fuq il-bankina" / "I think that it is not clean because there are many people who litter on the ground and on the pavement" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Xi ħaġa li ma jogħġobnix, nara ħafna nies iwaddbu affarijiet fuq il-fjuri u dak ħazin" / "Something that I don't like, I see a lot of people throwing things on the flowers and that is bad" (Maria Regina College Primary)

“It-triq ġieli jkun hemm ħafna sigaretti” / “Sometimes there are many cigarettes in the street” (St Margaret College Primary)

“Sometimes I will find rubbish outside of trash cans… and sometimes I just say those were bad people, I’m not going to be like them, I’m going to pick up their trash and I’m going to put it there but even if there are people that fix the other people’s mistakes, the people who did the mistakes should not have done them in the first place” (St Ignatius College Primary)

Need for more dustbins and signs. The participants suggested that there is a need for more dustbins and more signs for people not to litter:

“Kieku kont nagħmel xi ambjent nadif, nagħmel xi dustbins u nneħħi l-ħmieg” / “I would make the environment clean, I’d install some dustbins and remove the dirt” (St Margaret College Primary)

“Inbiddel l-ambjent ta’ fejn noqgħod u minflok nagħmluh kullimkien maħmug nagħmlu nadif u nagħmel is signs… nagħmel stampa ta’ raġel qed jitfa ma’ l-art imma mhux suppost” / “I would change the environment of where I live and instead of everywhere being dirty I would make it clean and I would put up signs… I’d put a picture of a man throwing something on the floor but that he is not mean to be doing that” (St Margaret College Primary)

Traffic and Pollution. Many participants mentioned that one of the aspects they dislike about their locality, was that there are too many cars and traffic:

“Ma nħobbx meta filgħodu jkun hemm ħafna traffic” / “I don’t like when in the morning there is a lot of traffic” (St Ignatius College Primary)

“Kieku kelli magic wand. kont inżid iktar natura u kont inneħħi t-traffiku u nneħħi l-karozzi” / “If I had a magic wand I would increase nature and remove the traffic and the cars” (Maria Regina College Primary)

They also referred to the air and noise pollution from cars and buses:

“Ikun hawn ħafna traffiku u l-karozzi jagħmlu ħafna ħsejjes” / “There is a lot of traffic and the cars make a lot of noise” (St Ignatius College Primary)

“Ikun hemm ħafna exhaust ta’ tal-linja” / “There is a lot of exhaust from the buses” (St Margaret College Primary)

Some children also referred to air pollution generated by construction work close to their homes:

“In front of us the road is dusty all the time” (Maria Regina College Primary)

“We have a building site behind us and it makes lots of dust and I breathe in the dust a lot… all the dust coming out and it’s going in the garden” (Maria Regina College Primary)

Figure 2.18. Drawing by an 8 year old child during focus group discussions

Safety

Less than half of participants (48.4%) felt safe to go out to play or walk on their own, whilst 57.2% felt safe cycling where they live. When they feel in danger, 65.4% agreed that they know how to get help, yet only 32.5% feel protected from being taken away by a stranger. Most participants (78.6%) are not bullied when they go out to play, but 52.6% mentioned that there is not a lot of arguing among adults in their locality (Figure 2.19). On average, boys felt safer than girls to go out to play or walk on their own or to cycle where they live (Table 2.38).

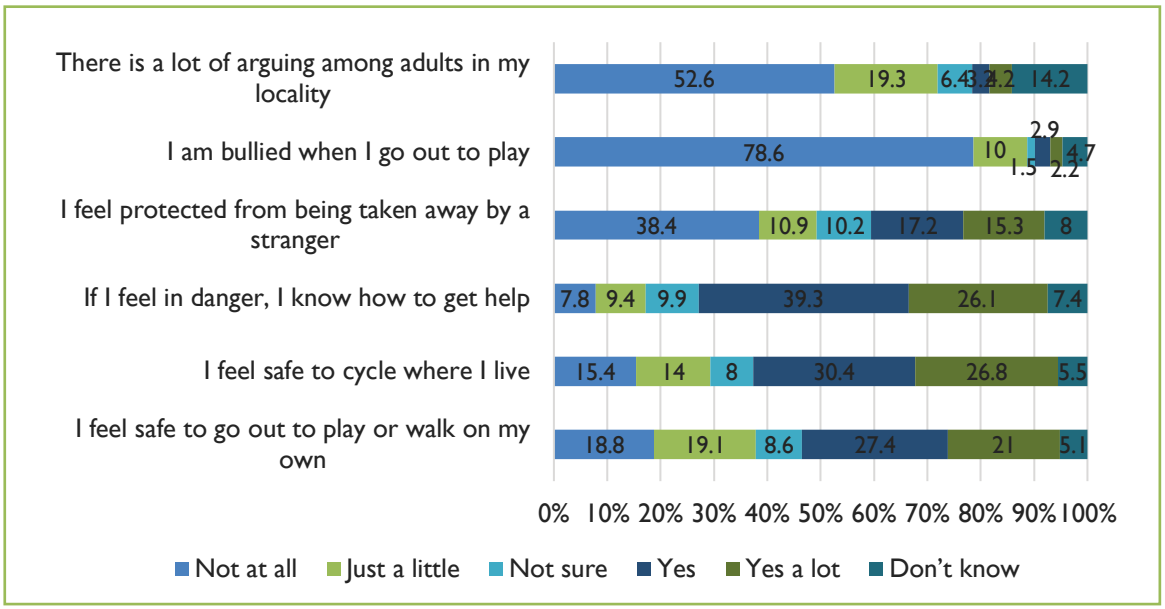

Figure 2.19. Safety in children's localities

Table 2.38. Safety in children's localities by gender

		Male	Female
I feel safe to go out to play or walk on my own[1]***	Mean	3.33	2.90
	Std. Dev.	1.507	1.405
I feel safe to cycle where I live[2]*	Mean	3.55	3.27
	Std. Dev.	1.417	1.466
If I feel in danger, I know how to get help[3]	Mean	3.82	3.62
	Std. Dev.	1.229	1.197
I feel protected from being taken away by a stranger[4]	Mean	2.55	2.56
	Std. Dev.	1.566	1.567
I am bullied when I go out to play[5]	Mean	1.32	1.32
	Std. Dev.	.820	.869
There is a lot of arguing among adults in my locality[6]*	Mean	1.67	1.67
	Std. Dev.	1.134	1.019

Note: [1]t(546)=3.467, [2]t(538)=2.301, [3]t(533)=1.892, [4]t(526)=-.038, [5]t(547)=-.001, [6]t(492)=.051, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test revealed significant differences between participants from the Southern Harbour who were more likely to report that adults argue frequently in their locality, than those from Gozo (p = .01) (Table 2.39).

Table 2.39. Safety in children's localities by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
I feel safe to go out to play or walk on my own[1]	Mean	2.94	3.08	3.10	3.31	3.12	3.36
	Std. Dev.	1.433	1.442	1.516	1.375	1.728	1.453
I feel safe to cycle where I live[2]	Mean	3.34	3.16	3.51	3.69	3.08	3.52
	Std. Dev.	1.534	1.447	1.441	1.249	1.730	1.359
If I feel in danger, I know how to get help[3]	Mean	3.69	3.76	3.73	3.60	3.38	3.91
	Std. Dev.	1.275	1.155	1.201	1.134	1.602	1.076
I feel protected from being taken away by a stranger[4]	Mean	2.50	2.55	2.70	2.27	2.28	2.89
	Std. Dev.	1.554	1.680	1.627	1.366	1.595	1.514
I am bullied when I go out to play[5]	Mean	1.38	1.40	1.28	1.18	1.39	1.23
	Std. Dev.	.915	.896	.826	.579	1.100	.694
There is a lot of arguing among adults in my locality[6]**	Mean	1.89	1.76	1.58	1.76	1.55	1.38
	Std. Dev.	1.281	1.078	1.068	1.055	.963	.834

Note: [1]F(5, 533)=1.122, [2]F(5, 525)=1.598, [3]F(5, 518)=.966, [4]F(5, 514)=1.571, [5]F(5, 534)=1.051,[6]F(5, 481)=2.359, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Safety was a primary theme which emerged during the focus group discussions, underlying the key importance issues of safety played in children's everyday life, particularly safety risks from traffic, strangers, and crime and violence.

Safety risks from cars and traffic. One of the main safety concerns mentioned by participants was the lack of safety from cars and traffic, including the high number of cars in their locality, as well as irresponsible driving:

"Imma l-wied meta tmur timxi trid bilfors tmur m'ommok jew missierek għax jgħaddu ħafna karozzi minn hemm u nkella ttajrek xi waħda" / "The valley, when you want to go walking, you have to go with your mum or dad because a lot of cars pass from there and they can run you over" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Fit-triq tiegħi jgħaddu ħafna karozzi filgħodu u ma tantx inħossni safe. Bħal meta tkun qed timxi bilfors trid tkun vera vera mal-ġenb u ma tantx tħossok safe" / "In my street there are a lot of cars in the morning and I don't feel safe. When you are walking there you have to stay at the very side of the road and you don't feel safe" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"There are some cars driving like sometimes they're very fast and they scare me" (Maria Regina College Primary)

Some participants recounted a number of incidents related to the lack of safety from cars, such as near-misses when cycling or walking, or accidents they witnessed involving stray animals, which left the children feeling worried and distressed.

"The traffic mostly worries me because one time when I was with my bike on the road a car was passing and it almost squashed my foot" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Xi drabi meta mmur bir-rota jkun hemm xi blind corners u joħorgu l-karozzi minn hemmhekk" / "Sometimes when I ride my bicycle there are some blind corners which cars come out from" (Maria Regina College Primary)

"Għax qisom ġieli jgħaddu ħafna karozzi allura qisek biex taqsam ġieli anki ma jarawkx allura qisu hekk ibeżżagħni" / "Because sometimes many cars pass so to cross the road sometimes they don't even see you and it scares me" (Maria Regina College Primary)

"Darba konna għaddejjin sejrin l-iskola jien u ommi u kien hemm miskina qattusa għaddejja u tajruha u dan baqa sejjer jiġifieri " / "One time me and my mum were going to school and there was a cat walking and they ran over her and kept on going" (St Ignatius College Primary)

Some children felt that these safety risks were exacerbated in areas which lacked adequate pavements, leaving them feeling unsafe when walking or cycling:

"Hawn ħafna postijiet li m'hawnx bankini u ma nħossnix safe fit-traffiku" / "There are many places where there are no pavements and I don't feel safe in the traffic" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Kieku nagħmel iktar zebra crossings" / "I would put more zebra crossings" (St Ignatius College Primary)

Safety risks from strangers and other adults. Another safety concern mentioned by children was safety from other people in the locality, such as young people or adult strangers:

“Meta mmur barra mmur mal-ġenituri għax inkella nista’ nweġġa’ u jista’ li xi ħadd imur jaqbadni u jeħodni” / “When I go out I go with my parents because otherwise I can hurt and someone can just catch me and take me away” (St Ignatius College Primary)

“Per eżempju l-bandli għax ma tafx ikun hemm xi tfal kbar li joqogħdu jejdulek, jitkessħu” / “For example, at the playground you don’t know when there are going to be older children that stay speaking to you and showing off” (St Ignatius College Primary)

“The older children in the swings, they play lots of music with rude words” (Maria Regina College Primary)

Safety concerns due to violence and fighting amongst adults. Children, most notably those from the Southern Harbour region, mentioned that frequent fighting occurs between the adults in their localities:

“Ma nħobbx meta jiġġieldu n-nies u jgħajtu man-nies l-oħrajn” / “I don’t like it when people fight and shout at other people” (St Margaret College Primary)

“Hawn ikun ħafna ġlied u jiġu ħafna pulizija” / “There is a lot of fighting and many police come” (St Margaret College Primary)

“Inbiddel li ir-residenti jirrispettaw lil xulxin u mhux joqogħdu jiġġieldu” / “I would change it so that the residents respect each other and they do not fight” (St Margaret College Primary)

Feeling safe in close-knit neighbourhoods and communities. Participants who described living in a more close-knit community where they know and trust the people who live in their neighbourhood, describe feeling safer:

“Hawnhekk jekk tkellem lil xi ħadd mhu se jgħamillek xejn għax huma friendly” / “Here if you speak to someone they will not do anything to you because they are friendly” (St Ignatius College Primary)

“Fejn noqgħod inħossni safe għax għandi ħafna nies li jiġu mil-familja tiegħi hemmhekk u kulħadd jaf lil xulxin” / “I feel safe where I live because I have many relatives there and everybody knows each other” (St Margaret College Primary)

Figure 2.20. Illustration of a whiteboard activity during the focus group discussions with children. Notes in blue refer to the most important places in the children's locality, those in red are aspects the children did not like.

Participation in the locality

Most children are not actively engaged in projects in their locality, with only 24.1% participating in local projects, 22.9% asked about what they would like when they do things for children in their locality, and 22.5% asked on how play areas and parks for children can be improved. On the other hand, most participants agreed that adults where they lived listen to and respect children (63.4%) and that all children are respected (53.4%) (Figure 2.21). More participants from Gozo agreed that they can participate in projects in their locality, whilst those from the Western region were the least to agree (Table 2.40).

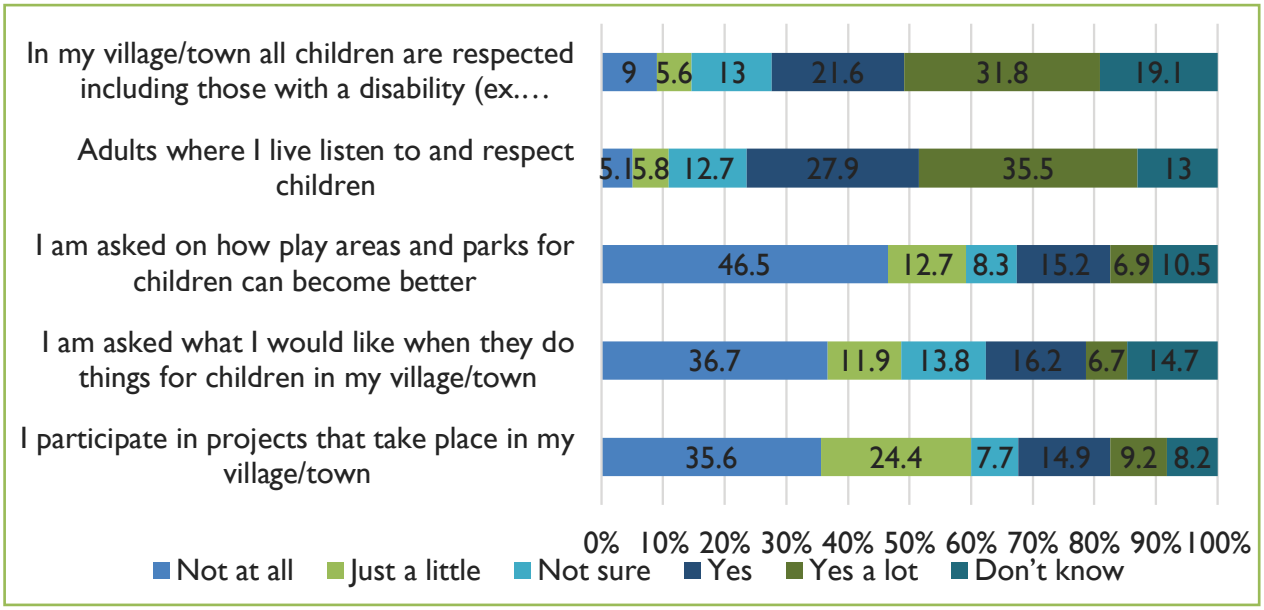

Figure 2.21. Children's participation in the life of the locality

Table 2.40. Children's participation in the life of the locality by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
I participate in projects that take place in my town/village[1]***	Mean	2.25	2.07	2.33	1.88	2.36	2.94
	Std. Dev.	1.440	1.292	1.326	1.087	1.465	1.453
I am asked what I would like when they do things for children in my village/town[2]	Mean	2.33	2.37	2.20	2.28	1.84	2.59
	Std. Dev.	1.459	1.396	1.320	1.303	1.463	1.388
I am asked on how play areas and parks for children can become better[3]	Mean	2.37	2.06	1.96	1.99	1.84	2.14
	Std. Dev.	1.454	1.374	1.255	1.378	1.344	1.474
Adults where I live listen to and respect children[4]	Mean	3.91	3.71	3.93	3.99	3.88	4.27
	Std. Dev.	1.232	1.183	1.135	1.108	1.333	1.018
In my village/town all children are respected including those with a disability (wheelchair) and those from other countries[5]	Mean	3.94	3.56	3.74	3.63	3.71	3.87
	Std. Dev.	1.271	1.360	1.231	1.303	1.649	1.413

Note: [1]F(5, 521)=5.617, [2]F(5, 474)=1.164, [3]F(5, 501)=1.533, [4]F(5, 485)=1.932, [5]F(5, 452)=1.084, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

In the FGD, children spoke at length about their participation in their localities, particularly events for families and children and religious feasts and events. They mentioned the kind of activities they would prefer and underlined the need for more voice in their localities.

Family-and child-friendly events as positive experiences. Participants enjoy events that are organised locally, especially family-friendly events and interactive activities such as treasure hunts, as well as nature events such as EkoSkola. They expressed the desire for more similar events in their locality:

"Fejn noqgħod jien darba waħda għamlu treasure hunt u mort" / "Where I live once they organised a treasure hunt and I went" (St Margaret College Primary)

"Bħal festa ħobz u hekk, immur, nieħu pjaċir" / "Like the bread festival, I go, I have fun" (St Ignatius College Primary)

"Jien qiegħda fil-grupp tal-EkoSkola u kollox għidna lis-sindku, u wkoll konna għamilna qisom bins fejn jitfgħu s-sigaretti imma bins apposta" / "I am in the EkoSkola group and we told the mayor everything and we had also installed some bins where they can throw away cigarettes" (St Margaret College Primary)

Opportunities to participate in religious feasts and events. Participants also mentioned that the events they often have the opportunity to be involved in locally, are of a religious nature, such as participating in the village festa or the Church choir.

“Per eżempju l-festa tar-raħal tagħna per eżempju xi ħaġa hekk qisni hekk inħobb immur” / “For example the village feast, something like that I enjoy going” (St Ignatius College Primary)
Ħadt sehem fil-Ġimgha l-Kbira, nattendi l-kor tal-Knisja” / “I took part in Good Friday, I attend the church choir” (Maria Regina College Primary)

“Inħobb nipparteċipa mal-festi għax ikun hemm il-fireworks u jkun hemm il-ħbieb tiegħi u noqodu nilgħabu” / “I like participating in the feasts because there are the fireworks and there are my friends and we stay playing” (Maria Regina College Primary).

“Jiena nieħu sehem peress li ndoqq fil-banda peress li Mother’s Day, Christmas, ikollna kunċert” / “I participate since I play with the band since on Mother’s Day, Christmas, we have a concert” (St Ignatius College Primary)

Events children want more of. Participants mentioned that if they could, they would organise more events such as magic shows, activities involving animals, more interactive activities such as treasure hunts as well as more seasonal events, such as Christmas or carnival activties:

Interviewer: “Kieku x’torganizzaw?” / “What would you organise?”
Child: “Xi ħaġa tal-annimali” / “Something with animals”
Child: “Mixja tal-klieb” / “A dog walk”
Child: “Horse riding”
Child: “Magic Shows” (St Ignatius College Primary)

“Aktar attivitajiet… per eżempju ikun hemm treasure hunt oħra jew inkella forsi jorganizzaw xi ħaga biex min irid it-tfal jeħodom il-baħar” / “I would do more activities… For example maybe there would be another treasure hunt or maybe they would organise something so that they can take the children who want to go to the sea” (St Margaret College Primary)

“Once a long time ago we had like a carnival, when it was carnival and it was really small, like short parade so hopefully they can do like when it’s carnival or Christmas like they can celebrate it a little bit more longer” (Maria Regina College Primary)

Lack of voice in their locality. Most of the focus group participants said that they are not normally asked to voice their opinions on the things that concern them, and for some, the focus group discussion was their first opportunity to express their opinion:

“Jien l-ewwel darba li staqsewni fuq ir-raħal tiegħi” / “This is the first time I was asked about my home town” (St Ignatius College Primary)

Satisfaction and areas for improvement

The majority of participants were satisfied with the play and nature areas in their locality, such as the places where they can play and do sports (75.8%), parks, gardens and other open areas to enjoy nature (74.9%), cycling areas (69%), accessibility of play and nature areas for children with a disability (64.6%), cleanliness (61.1%), safety from peer bullying (58.9%) and safety from cars and traffic (50.4%). While 66.9% were satisfied with opportunities to participate in what happens in their locality, less than half were satisfied with the opportunities to help with projects to change their locality (48.1%), and what they would like to change (42.9%) (Figure 2.22). Furthermore less than one third were completely satisfied with participation and voice in the community (17-19.7%), safety from strangers, traffic and bullying (22.3-31.9%) and accessibility of play areas (30.8%), while less than one half were completely satisfied with play, nature and sports areas and cleanliness (35.4-45.1%).

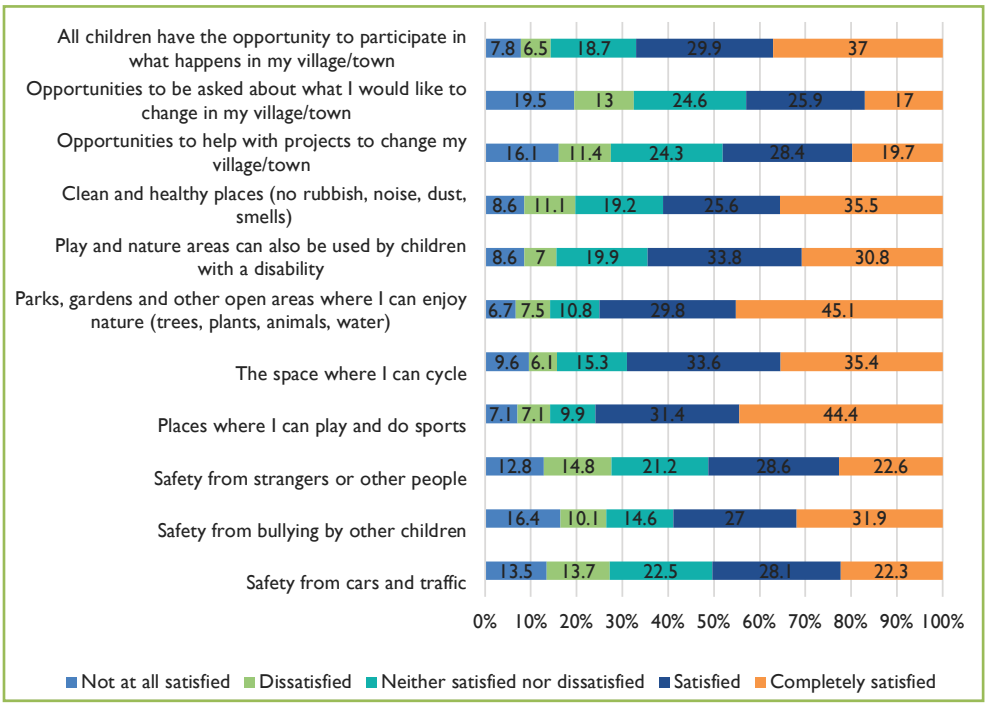

Figure 2.22. Children's' level of satisfaction with various aspects of their locality

Places where children can play and do sports and enjoy nature were ranked as the most satisfying aspect of their locality, whilst the opportunities children have to express what they would like to change and safety from strangers, were ranked as the least satisfying aspects (Table 2.41).

Table 2.41. Most and least satisfied aspects in children's localities

Most satisfied (Completely satisfied & satisfied)			Least satisfied (Not at all satisfied & dissatisfied)		
	%	R		%	R
Places where I can play and do sports	75.8%	1	Opportunities to be asked about what I would like to change in my village/town	32.5%	1
Parks, gardens and other open areas where I can enjoy nature (trees, plants, animals, water)	74.9%	2	Safety from strangers or oth-er people	27.6%	2
The space where I can cycle	69.0%	3	Opportunities to help with projects to change my village/ town	27.5%	3
All children (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from other countries) have the opportunity to participate in what happens in my village/town	66.9%	4	Safety from cars and traffic	27.2%	4
Play and nature areas can also be used by children with a disability	64.6%	5	Safety from bullying by other children	26.5%	5

A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test showed that participants from Gozo appeared to be the most satisfied in most of the areas, such as the places where they play and do sports and nature areas when compared to participants from the Southern Harbour, the least satisfied region (p = .02 / p = .001) (Table 2.42). Further analysis also revealed that Gozitan children were also the most satisfied with the opportunities to participate in what happens in their locality and to help with projects to change their locality as opposed to participants from the Southern Harbour (p = .001 / p = .03), Northern Harbour (p = .01 / p = .01) and South Eastern (p = .02 / p = .05) regions who were the least satisfied (Table 2.42).

Table 2.42. Children's satisfaction with their locality by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
Safety from cars and traffic[1]	Mean	3.38	3.12	3.27	3.26	3.38	3.38
	Std. Dev.	1.309	1.332	1.401	1.175	1.416	1.330
Safety from bullying by other children[2]	Mean	3.36	3.40	3.42	3.68	3.72	3.62
	Std. Dev.	1.517	1.444	1.410	1.381	1.242	1.397
Safety from strangers or other people[3]	Mean	3.19	3.31	3.18	3.41	4.00	3.42
	Std. Dev.	1.358	1.356	1.308	1.198	1.058	1.340
Places where I can play and do sports[4]*	Mean	3.80	3.90	3.92	4.21	3.88	4.29
	Std. Dev.	1.344	1.383	1.166	.984	1.243	.924
The space where I can cycle[5]	Mean	3.66	3.56	3.88	3.71	3.73	4.10
	Std. Dev.	1.373	1.352	1.114	1.156	1.458	1.115
Parks, gardens and other open areas where I can enjoy nature (trees, plants, animals, water)[6]***	Mean	3.71	4.03	3.97	4.01	3.93	4.42
	Std. Dev.	1.372	1.251	1.142	1.165	1.412	.810
Play and nature areas can also be used by children with a disability[7]	Mean	3.76	3.73	3.57	3.82	3.54	3.75
	Std. Dev.	1.233	1.132	1.223	1.117	1.529	1.204
Clean and healthy places (no rubbish, noise, dust, smells)[8]	Mean	3.56	3.43	3.80	3.71	3.81	3.95
	Std. Dev.	1.422	1.380	1.136	1.272	1.210	1.097
Opportunities to help with projects to change my village/ town[9]**	Mean	3.20	3.04	3.08	3.15	3.04	3.73
	Std. Dev.	1.363	1.461	1.281	1.327	1.207	1.134
Opportunities to be asked about what I would like to change in my village/ town[10]*	Mean	3.04	2.93	2.92	2.90	2.92	3.52
	Std. Dev.	1.382	1.491	1.321	1.258	1.230	1.275
All children (boys, girls, children with a disability, children from other countries) have the opportunity to participate in what happens in my village/town[11]**	Mean	3.60	3.67	3.78	3.86	3.96	4.25
	Std. Dev.	1.351	1.337	1.220	1.067	1.207	.890

Note: [1]F(5, 535)=.545 , [2]F(5, 528)=.886, [3]F(5, 528)=2.118, [4]F(5, 529)=2.451, [5]F(5, 520)=2.047, [6]F(5,529)=3.689 ,[7]F(5, 526)=.626, [8]F(5, 525)=1.930, [9]F(5, 519)=3.208, [10]F(5, 521)=2.636, [11]F(5, 519)=3.399, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

When asked about what they would like to have more of or what to improve in their locality, the most frequently chosen areas were safety from cars and traffic (57.9%) followed by clean and healthy places (51.2%), nature areas (46.2%), and places to play and do sports (45.8%). The least chosen were opportunities for participation in projects in their locality (Table 2.43). Girls were more likely to choose increased safety from strangers or other people than boys (Table 2.44).

Table 2.43. Areas children would most like to improve in their localities

	N	%
Safety from cars and traffic	377	57.9%
Clean and healthy places (no rubbish, noise, dust, smells)	333	51.2%
Parks, gardens and other open areas where I can enjoy nature (trees, plants, animals, water)	301	46.2%
Places where I can play and do sports	298	45.8%
Play and nature areas can also be used by children with a disability	273	41.9%
The space where I can cycle	270	41.5%
Safety from strangers or other people	266	40.9%
Safety from bullying by other children	227	34.9%
All children (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from other countries) have the opportunity to participate in what happens in my village/town	179	27.5%
Opportunities to help with projects to change my village/ town	171	26.3%
Opportunities to be asked about what I would like to change in my village/town	133	20.4%

Table 2.44. Safety from strangers or other people by gender

		Safety from strangers or other people		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	119	207	326
	%	36.5%	63.5%	100.0%
Female	N	139	167	306
	%	45.4%	54.6%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(1, N = 632) = 5.20, p = 0.023$				

More participants from the Southern Harbour and Gozo indicated that they would like more safety from cars and traffic, while those from the Northern region were the least concerned about this issue (Table 2.45).

Table 2.45. Improving safety from cars and traffic by region

Safety from cars and traffic				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	110	51	161
	%	68.3%	31.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	61	54	115
	%	53.0%	47.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	73	65	138
	%	52.9%	47.1%	100.0%
Western	N	40	43	83
	%	48.2%	51.8%	100.0%
Northern	N	14	17	31
	%	45.2%	54.8%	100.0%
Gozo	N	60	32	92
	%	65.2%	34.8%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(5, N = 620) = 16.97$, $p = 0.005$				

When asked what they would change if they had a magic wand, most suggestions were related to traffic, pollution, cleanliness, increase in play and nature spaces and safety (Table 2.46).

Table 2.46. Aspects children would like to change if they had a magic wand

Aspects children would like to change	N
Reduce cars and pollution, general noise and increase cleanliness (litter, rubbish)	180
Increase areas available for play, sports and cycling	88
Increase green spaces and nature	87
Improve safety in the locality (streets, cars, strangers)	55
Nicer locality and nicer houses	25
Respect others and stop bullying	25
Increase number of shops	9
Make more accessible places for all children	8
Other: climate change, animal cruelty, more and nicer friends	

3 Adolescents' Voices

Play areas

Only 39.4% of the secondary school age participants agreed that they have enough spaces to play, while 30% said that they did not have sufficient space (Figure 3.1). Just under one half of participants from the Harbour regions (46%) said that they do not have enough open areas to play in where they live, while only 18.6% of participants from Gozo indicated a lack of open spaces (Table 3.1).

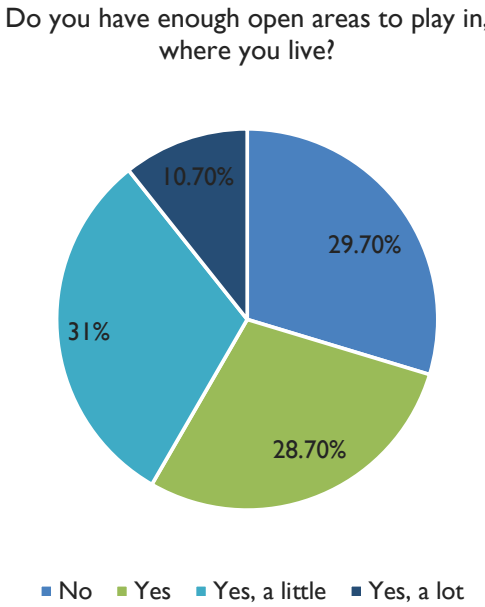

Figure 3.1. Enough open areas where to play?

Table 3.1 Enough open areas where to play by region

Do you have enough open areas to play in where you live?						
		No	Yes	Yes a little	Yes a lot	Total
Southern Harbour	N	24	11	14	3	52
	%	46.2%	21.2%	26.9%	5.8%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	36	12	27	4	79
	%	45.6%	15.2%	34.2%	5.1%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	16	28	20	8	72
	%	22.2%	38.9%	27.8%	11.1%	100.0%
Western	N	15	20	14	14	63
	%	23.8%	31.7%	22.2%	22.2%	100.0%
Northern	N	8	9	9	0	26
	%	30.8%	34.6%	34.6%	0.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	18	32	34	13	97
	%	18.6%	33.0%	35.1%	13.4%	100.0%

Participants spend most of their playtime in football grounds (26%), sports centres (18%), the street (17%), open fields (14%) and pavement (13%). Only 2% visit public parks/gardens every day, while 3.8% and 7.5% visit the sports centre and the football ground respectively. Most participants spend less than once a week at the swimming pool (86.5%), playing field (81.5%), sports centre (72.3%), their street (69.8%), public park or garden (62.5%), open field (61.7%) and football ground (59.8%) (Figure 3.2).

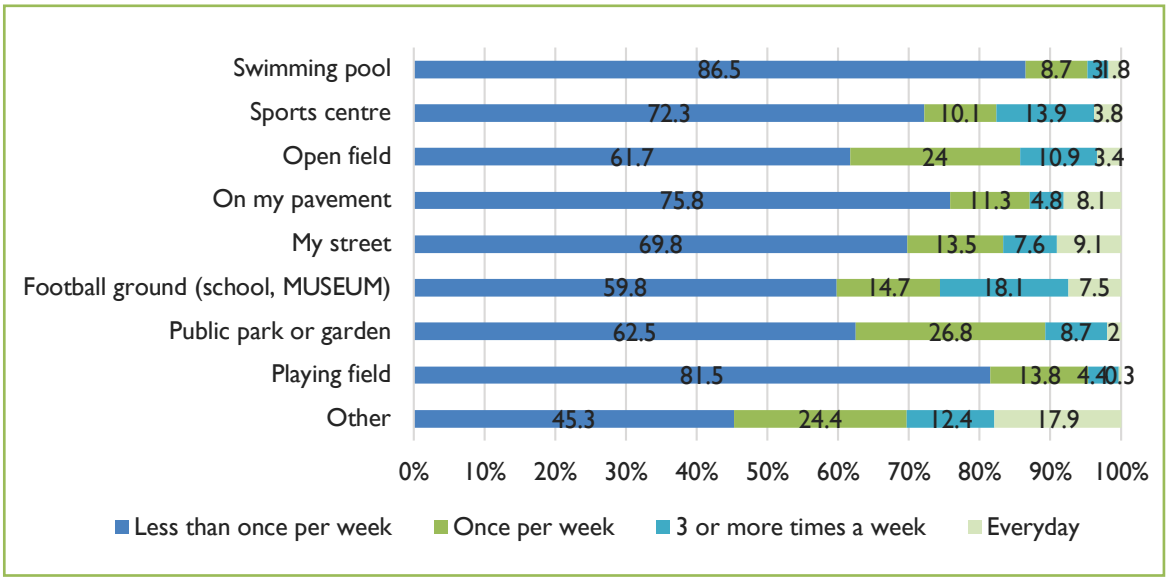

Figure 3.2. Frequency of visits to the play areas

Boys reported going to the football ground and sports centre more frequently than girls (Tables 3.2, Table 3.3).

Table 3.2. Frequency of visits to football ground by gender

		Everyday	3 or more days a week	Once a week	Less than once a week	Total
Male	N	14	35	9	55	113
	%	12.4%	31.0%	8.0%	48.7%	100.0%
Female	N	12	28	41	148	229
	%	5.2%	12.2%	17.9%	64.6%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(3, N=342) = 27.88, p = 0.000$						

Table 3.3. Frequency of visits to sports centre by gender

		Everyday	3 or more days a week	Once a week	Less than once a week	Total
Male	N	7	22	11	74	114
	%	6.1%	19.3%	9.6%	64.9%	100.0%
Female	N	5	25	24	173	227
	%	2.2%	11.0%	10.6%	76.2%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(3, N=341) = 8.52, p = 0.036$						

Participants from Gozo play more often in public parks/gardens, football grounds, and in their streets and pavements than those from other regions (Tables 3.4-3.7).

Table 3.4. Use of public parks or gardens by region

Where do you spend most of your playtime? (Public parks or gardens)?						
		Less than once per week	Once per week	3 or more times a week	Everyday	Total
Southern Harbour	N	32	15	1	0	48
	%	66.7%	31.3%	2.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	54	11	7	1	73
	%	74.0%	15.1%	9.6%	1.4%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	43	23	3	1	70
	%	61.4%	32.9%	4.3%	1.4%	100.0%
Western	N	34	15	6	0	55
	%	61.8%	27.3%	10.9%	0.0%	100.0%
Northern	N	16	6	2	0	24
	%	66.7%	25.0%	8.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	41	23	12	5	81
	%	50.6%	28.4%	14.8%	6.2%	100.0%

Table 3.5. Use of football ground by region

Where do you spend most of your playtime? (Football ground)?						
		Less than once per week	Once per week	3 or more times a week	Everyday	Total
Southern Harbour	N	35	5	4	2	46
	%	76.1%	10.9%	8.7%	4.3%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	40	8	13	9	70
	%	57.1%	11.4%	18.6%	12.9%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	39	6	14	6	65
	%	60.0%	9.2%	21.5%	9.2%	100.0%
Western	N	35	5	14	1	55
	%	63.6%	9.1%	25.5%	1.8%	100.0%
Northern	N	19	0	5	0	24
	%	79.2%	0.0%	20.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	39	24	13	8	84
	%	46.4%	28.6%	15.5%	9.5%	100.0%

Table 3.6. Use of street for playtime by region

Where do you spend most of your playtime (My street)?						
		Less than once per week	Once per week	3 or more times a week	Everyday	Total
Southern Harbour	N	40	5	1	1	47
	%	85.1%	10.6%	2.1%	2.1%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	53	8	1	9	71
	%	74.6%	11.3%	1.4%	12.7%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	44	12	6	2	64
	%	68.8%	18.8%	9.4%	3.1%	100.0%
Western	N	36	8	6	4	54
	%	66.7%	14.8%	11.1%	7.4%	100.0%
Northern	N	19	3	2	0	24
	%	79.2%	12.5%	8.3%	0.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	43	10	10	15	78
	%	55.1%	12.8%	12.8%	19.2%	100.0%

Table 3.7. Use of pavement for playtime by region

Where do you spend most of your playtime? (On my pavement)?						
		Less than once per week	Once per week	3 or more times a week	Everyday	Total
Southern Harbour	N	40	6	0	0	46
	%	87.0%	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	50	8	3	7	68
	%	73.5%	11.8%	4.4%	10.3%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	52	7	1	4	64
	%	81.3%	10.9%	1.6%	6.3%	100.0%
Western	N	44	4	1	3	52
	%	84.6%	7.7%	1.9%	5.8%	100.0%
Northern	N	21	2	1	0	24
	%	87.5%	8.3%	4.2%	0.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	45	11	9	13	78
	%	57.7%	14.1%	11.5%	16.7%	100.0%

The majority of participants go to the play areas on foot (65.8%), but close to one half go by car (47.8%). Only 13.1% go by bicycle and 9.5% by public transport (Table 3.8).

Table 3.8. Mode of transport to play areas

	N	%
On foot	271	65.8%
By car	197	47.8%
By bicycle	54	13.1%
By public transport	39	9.5%
Other	21	5.1%

More female participants reported going to play areas on foot than males, whilst more male participants go by bicycle (Table 3.9, Table 3.10).

Table 3.9. Frequency of going to play areas on foot by gender

		On foot		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	72	64	136
	%	52.9%	47.1%	100.0%
Female	N	195	74	269
	%	72.5%	27.5%	100.0%
Note: : $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 15.37, p = 0.000$				

Table 3.10. Frequency of going to play areas by bicycle by gender

		By bicycle		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	28	108	136
	%	20.6%	79.4%	100.0%
Female	N	26	243	269
	%	9.7%	90.3%	100.0%
Note: : $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 9.326, p = 0.002$				

More participants from Gozo and the Western region use the bicycle, whilst those from the Harbour regions are the least likely to do so (Table 3.11).

Table 3.11. Use of bicycle by region

Travel to play areas by bicycle				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	3	51	54
	%	5.6%	94.4%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	4	77	81
	%	4.9%	95.1%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	11	67	78
	%	14.1%	85.9%	100.0%
Western	N	13	53	66
	%	19.7%	80.3%	100.0%
Northern	N	3	26	29
	%	10.3%	89.7%	100.0%
Gozo	N	20	79	99
	%	20.2%	79.8%	100.0%

Non-Maltese participants use public transport to go to play areas more often than Maltese participants (Table 3.12).

Table 3.12. Use of public transport by gender

	Public transport			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	31	341	372
	%	8.3%	91.7%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	8	29	37
	%	21.6%	78.4%	100.0%
Note: : $\chi^2(1, N=409) = 6.89, p = 0.009$				

The favourite outdoor play areas amongst the adolescent participants are public parks or gardens (39.3%) and open fields (35.4%), whilst their least favourite are the street (11.4%) and pavement (5.8%) (Table 3.13).

Table 3.13. Play areas adolescents prefer

	N	%
Public park or garden	162	39.3%
Open field	146	35.4%
Football ground (school, MUSEUM)	102	24.8%
Playing field	101	24.5%
Sports centre	86	20.9%
Swimming pool	65	15.8%
Your street	47	11.4%
On your pavement	24	5.8%

Female participants like playing in public parks/gardens and open fields more when compared to male participants, whilst the latter prefer playing in football grounds and sports centres more than the former (Table 3.14, Table 3.15).

Table 3.14. Places where adolescents enjoy playing by gender I

		Public parks/gardens[1]				Open fields[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	36	100	136	N	37	99	136
	%	26.5%	73.5%	100.0%	%	27.2%	72.8%	100.0%
Female	N	125	144	269	N	108	161	269
	%	46.5%	53.5%	100.0%	%	40.1%	59.9%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 15.08$, p = 0.000, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 6.58$, p = 0.010								

Table 3.15. Places where adolescents enjoy playing by gender II

		Football grounds[1]				Sports centres[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	59	77	136	N	37	99	136
	%	43.4%	56.6%	100.0%	%	27.2%	72.8%	100.0%
Female	N	43	226	269	N	48	221	269
	%	16.0%	84.0%	100.0%	%	17.8%	82.2%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 35.99$, p = 0.000, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 4.77$, p = 0.029								

More participants from Gozo enjoy playing in playing fields and on their pavements than those from other regions (Table 3.16).

Table 3.16. Preferred use of playing fields and pavements by region

		Playing field[1]				On the pavement[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	13	41	54	N	1	53	54
	%	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%	%	1.9%	98.1%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	19	62	81	N	3	78	81
	%	23.5%	76.5%	100.0%	%	3.7%	96.3%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	15	63	78	N	3	75	78
	%	19.2%	80.8%	100.0%	%	3.8%	96.2%	100.0%
Western	N	11	55	66	N	1	65	66
	%	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%	%	1.5%	98.5%	100.0%
Northern	N	4	25	29	N	3	26	29
	%	13.8%	86.2%	100.0%	N	10.3%	89.7%	100.0%
Gozo	N	38	61	99	%	12	87	99
	%	38.4%	61.6%	100.0%	N	12.1%	87.9%	100.0%

Most participants indicated that they go to the play areas with their parents (54.1%) or friends (51.0%), while 35.2% go on their own (Table 3.17).

Table 3.17. With whom do adolescents go to play areas

	N	%
With my parents	223	54.1%
With my friends	210	51.0%
On my own	145	35.2%
With my brother/sister/relative	86	20.9%
Other	19	4.6%

Male participants are more likely go to with their parents than females, whilst more female participants go with their friends than males (Tables 3.18).

Table 3.18. With whom adolescents go to play areas by gender

		With parents[1]				With friends[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	84	52	136	N	52	84	136
	%	61.8%	38.2%	100.0%	%	38.2%	61.8%	100.0%
Female	N	136	133	269	N	156	113	269
	%	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%	%	58.0%	42.0%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 4.57$, $p = 0.032$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 14.12$, $p = 0.000$								

More participants from the Western region and Gozo go on their own than peers from the other regions (Table 3.19).

Table 3.19. Adolescents who go to the play areas on their own by region

	On my own			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	13	41	54
	%	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	26	55	81
	%	32.1%	67.9%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	22	56	78
	%	28.2%	71.8%	100.0%
Western	N	30	36	66
	%	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%
Northern	N	8	21	29
	%	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%
Gozo	N	43	56	99
	%	43.4%	56.6%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 11.69$, $p = 0.039$				

In the FGD, the participants mentioned playgrounds and parks in their locality as important places where they can meet up and play with their friends:

"Il-park ta' Marsaskala. hemmhekk ikun hemm fejn tilgħab u hekk, u tista' tilgħab mal-ħbieb" / "The park in Marsascala… there is space to play and you can play with friends" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"The playground, it's quite small, it's not that big, there are bigger playgrounds but that's where me and my friends spend most of our time" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

Availability, diversity and accessibility

Most of the participants said the play areas are open on all days of the week (55.1%) but only 38.1% said that they are open the whole day (Table 3.20). The vast majority said that they can mostly use the play areas when it is nice weather (96.4%), but they are less able to do so when it is hot (34.5%) or cold, windy or raining (25.5% to 16.7%) (Table 3.21).

Table 3.20. Availability of play areas

	N	%
All days of the week	227	55.1%
Whole day	157	38.1%
Afternoon only	43	10.4%
Weekdays only	38	9.2%
Morning only	29	7.0%
Some days only	25	6.1%
Weekends only	24	5.8%
Evening only	21	5.1%

Table 3.21. Use of play areas in different weather

	N	%
When it is nice weather	397	96.4%
When it is hot	142	34.5%
When it is cold	105	25.5%
When it is windy	98	23.8%
When it is raining	69	16.7%

Male participants were more likely to agree that their play areas can be used when it is raining, windy and cold than girls (Table 3.22, Table 3.23).

Table 3.22. Use of play areas in different weather by gender I

		When it is raining[1]			When it is windy[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	33	103	136	N	42	94	136
	%	24.3%	75.7%	100.0%	%	30.9%	69.1%	100.0%
Female	N	35	234	269	N	55	214	269
	%	13.0%	87.0%	100.0%	%	20.4%	79.6%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 8.19$, p = 0.004, p = 0.032, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 5.40$, p = 0.020								

Table 3.23. Use of play areas in different weather by gender II

		When it is cold		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	47	89	136
	%	34.6%	65.4%	100.0%
Female	N	57	212	269
	%	21.2%	78.8%	100.0%
Note: : $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 8.46, p = 0.004$				

Participants from Gozo are less likely to go to play areas in inclement weather than peers from other regions (Table 3.24, Table 3.25).

Table 3.24. Use of play areas when raining or windy by region

	When it is raining[1]				When it is windy[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	9	45	54	N	12	42	54
	%	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%	%	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	13	68	81	N	17	64	81
	%	16.0%	84.0%	100.0%	%	21.0%	79.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	14	64	78	N	23	55	78
	%	17.9%	82.1%	100.0%	%	29.5%	70.5%	100.0%
Western	N	16	50	66	N	26	40	66
	%	24.2%	75.8%	100.0%	%	39.4%	60.6%	100.0%
Northern	N	8	21	29	N	10	19	29
	%	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%	N	34.5%	65.5%	100.0%
Gozo	N	7	92	99	%	8	91	99
	%	7.1%	92.9%	100.0%	N	8.1%	91.9%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 12.00, p = 0.035$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 26.13, p = 0.000$								

Table 3.25. Use of play areas when it is cold by region

When it is cold				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	12	42	54
	%	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	21	60	81
	%	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	23	55	78
	%	29.5%	70.5%	100.0%
Western	N	24	42	66
	%	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
Northern	N	11	18	29
	%	37.9%	62.1%	100.0%
Gozo	N	12	87	99
	%	12.1%	87.9%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 16.83$, p = 0.005				

Less than half of the participants said that they can play different and new games and sports (42%) or discover and learn new things (45%) in the play areas (Figure 3.3, Figure 3.4). Male participants were more likely to agree that it is possible to play different and new games and sports in these areas than female participants (Table 3.26).

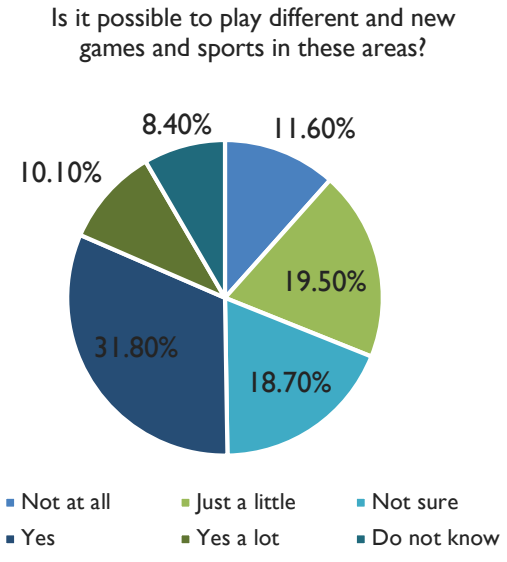

Figure 3.3. Opportunities to play different games and sports

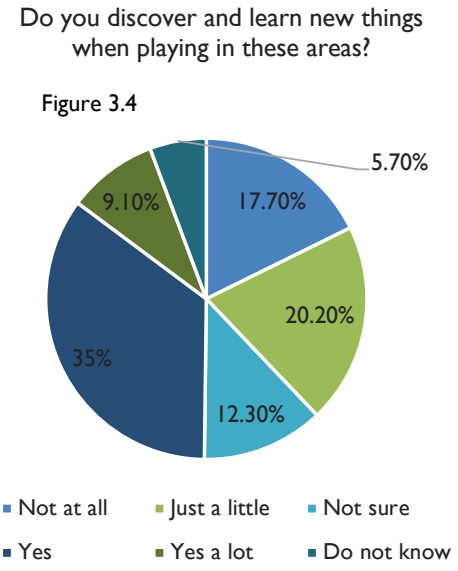

Figure 3.4. Opportunities to discover and learn new things when playing

Table 3.26. Possibility to play different and new games and sports by gender

		Not at all	Just a little	Not sure	Yes	Yes a lot	Don't know	Total
Male	N	20	23	14	47	16	13	133
	%	15.0%	17.3%	10.5%	35.3%	12.0%	9.8%	100.0%
Female	N	25	53	62	80	25	21	266
	%	9.4%	19.9%	23.3%	30.1%	9.4%	7.9%	100.0%
Note: : $\chi^2(5, N=399) = 12.16$, p = 0.033								

When asked whether the play areas can be used by children of any gender, the vast majority (90%) agreed (Figure 3.5). However, they were less certain when asked if they can be used by children with a disability, with only 42% agreeing, 38% did not know and 20% said no just a little (Figure 3.6). Female participants were more likely to agree that children of any gender can use these play areas than male adolescents (p=0.000) (Table 3.27).

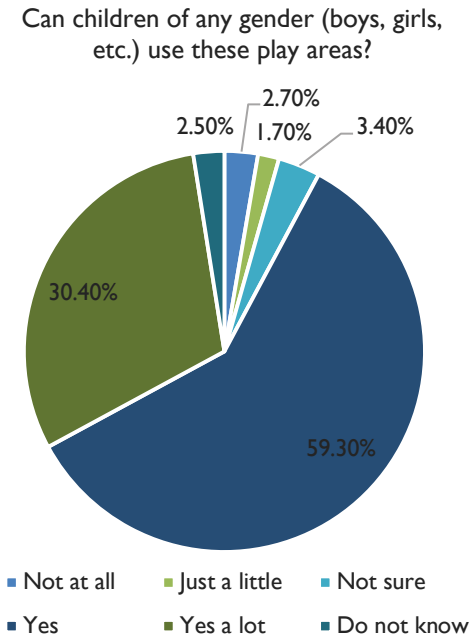

Figure 3.5: Use of play areas by children of any gender

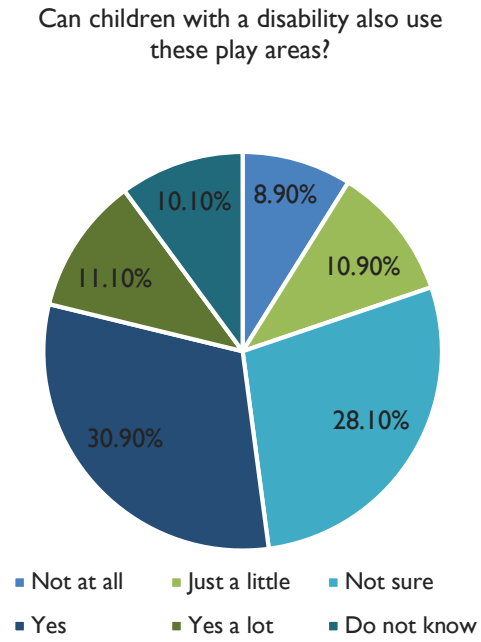

Figure 3.6: Use of play area by children with a disability

Table 3.27. Use of play areas by children of any gender by gender

		Mean	Std. Dev.
Can children of any gender (boys, girls, etc.) use these play areas?***	Male	3.99	0.989
	Female	4.21	0.740
Note: $t(399)=-3.746$, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.			

In the FGD, various participants mentioned that most of the play areas in their locality are tailored mainly for young children, and argued that there was a need for more hubs for young people in their locality such as community centres, shopping malls and cafés:

"Ma tantx għandna postijiet fejn nilgħabu, niltaqgħu ma' sħabna" / "We don't really have places where we can play, meet up with our friends" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"U l-park li għadom kif għamlu, kull m'għamlu naqra bandli għat-tfal iż-żgħar" / "The park that they've just done, all they put are some swings for young children"(St Margaret College Secondary)

"It is mainly targeted at younger kids because they have like the younger park, the aquarium…, but there are still places you can go as a teenager but it is more limited than if you were a child" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"Inżid iktar postijiet fejn nistgħu niltaqgħu bħala żgħażagħ, eżempju komunita' taż-żgħażagħ. Qisu iktar hemm postijiet għaż-żgħar, għax hemm bħal bandli, iktar addattati għaż-żgħar, tfal ta' eta' żgħira, mhux bħali eżempju żgħażagħ" / "I would add more places where teenagers can meet up, for example a community centre for teenagers. There are more places for young children, because there is the playground, it is more appropriate for young children, not for those like myself, teenagers" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"I think they should add… boutiques and shops where younger teenagers or younger youths can go and have fun with their friends or have a coffee with them" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

It was also mentioned that abandoned, disused buildings can be renovated and turned into centres for young people:

"There are quite a few abandoned buildings, old hotels which aren't in use anymore which should be renovated into places like cafés or shopping places… where teens can go and enjoy it more instead of destroying more greenery and more land" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

Figure 3.7. The Urban Thinkscape Project seeks to transform public buildings into opportunities for learning through play (see Annex 3) (Image credit: Sahar Coston-Hardy)

Walking and cycling

Most participants (62%) like to walk and cycle where they live, but one third (33%) do not or just a little (Figure 3.8). More participants believe that there are not enough spaces (47%) compared to those who do (42%) (Figure 3.9).

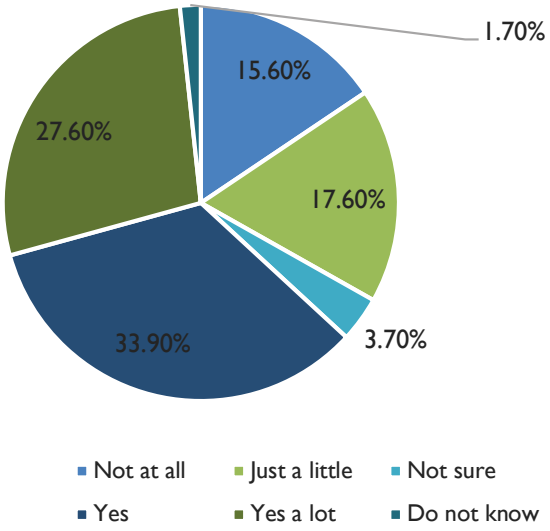

Figure 3.8. Preference for walking and cycling

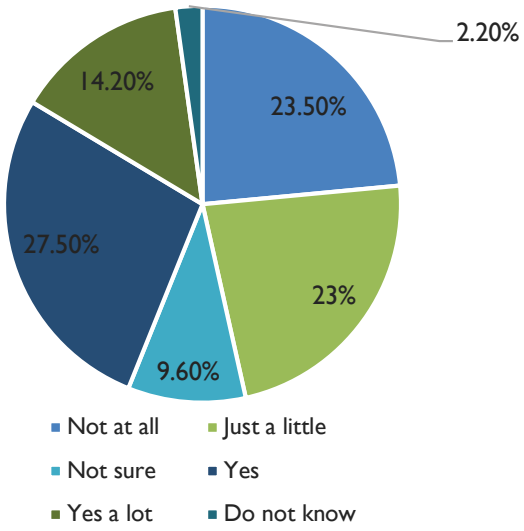

Figure 3.9. Enough walking and cycling routes

A one-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons using Games-Howell test revealed statistically significant differences between adolescents from the South Eastern region (p=.028) and Gozo (p=.046) who prefer walking and cycling in the area compared to those from the Southern Harbour (Table 3.28). Tukey's range test also revealed that adolescents from the South Eastern Region were more likely to agree that there are enough walking and cycling routes where they live, compared to those from the Southern Harbour (p=.010) and Northern Harbour (p=.043) regions.

Table 3.28. Mean scores of walking and cycling by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
Do you like to walk and cycle in the area where you live?[1]***	Mean	3.00	3.10	3.78	3.71	2.90	3.70
	Std. Dev.	1.427	1.627	1.382	1.423	1,472	1.359
Are there enough walking and cycling routes where you live?[2]**	Mean	2.50	2.70	3.38	3.24	2.52	2.90
	Std. Dev.	1.463	1.636	1.338	1.458	1.379	1.403

Note: [1]F(5, 399)=4.635, [2]F(5, 397)=3.886, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Over half of participants walk at least once a week or more frequently to shops or supermarkets (55.8%), nature areas (54.4%), places to meet other children (53.6%) and religious places (53.5%) in their locality. On the other hand, 68.4% walk to the playing field, football ground or sports centre less than once a week (Figure 3.10).

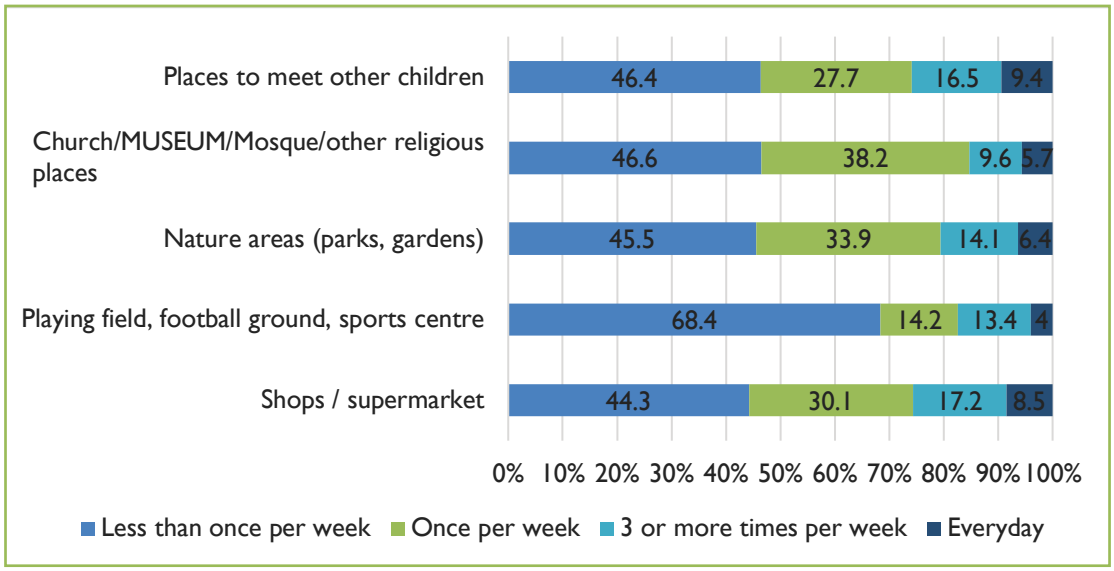

Figure 3.10. Frequency of walking to different places

Participants from Gozo are more likely to walk to nature areas as well as religious places than their peers in other regions (Table 3.29, Table 3.30).

Table 3.29. Frequency of walking to nature areas by region

Nature areas (parks or gardens)						
		Less than once per week	Once per week	3 or more times a week	Everyday	Total
Southern Harbour	N	32	14	5	2	53
	%	60.4%	26.4%	9.4%	3.8%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	43	24	9	4	80
	%	53.8%	30.0%	11.3%	5.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	40	27	8	2	77
	%	51.9%	35.1%	10.4%	2.6%	100.0%
Western	N	27	22	11	4	64
	%	42.2%	34.4%	17.2%	6.3%	100.0%
Northern	N	15	9	3	2	29
	%	51.7%	31.0%	10.3%	6.9%	100.0%
Gozo	N	26	39	20	12	97
	%	26.8%	40.2%	20.6%	12.4%	100.0%

Table 3.30. Frequency of walking to religious places by region

Church, MUSEUM, Mosque or other religious places						
		Less than once per week	Once per week	3 or more times a week	Everyday	Total
Southern Harbour	N	25	20	7	2	54
	%	46.3%	37.0%	13.0%	3.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	50	24	3	3	80
	%	62.5%	30.0%	3.8%	3.8%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	47	20	5	4	76
	%	61.8%	26.3%	6.6%	5.3%	100.0%
Western	N	30	27	5	2	64
	%	46.9%	42.2%	7.8%	3.1%	100.0%
Northern	N	15	13	1	0	29
	%	51.7%	44.8%	3.4%	0.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	21	49	16	12	98
	%	21.4%	50.0%	16.3%	12.2%	100.0%

In the FGD, various participants mentioned the need for more public areas where they can do sports, such as football, basketball, lawn tennis, volleyball and swimming:

"We need more grounds like football grounds…more grounds which are public for everyone to use" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"I feel like there could be more sports places that we can do in water also or at the beach like volleyball or something like that" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"Maybe like a little sports ground, like a football ground, volleyball ground like we could do all in one, because when we were younger, me and my brother's friends we used to play actually outside in the street because there isn't anywhere to play" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

It was also mentioned that having access to open sports areas will attract more adolescents to go out and exercise, instead of staying inside and playing video games:

"More public places to play sports… For example basketball courts, tennis courts, football pitches, but public ones. Because a lot of teenagers nowadays stay inside with their computers and video games. I think it will encourage them to go out more and exercise if we have places where they can exercise" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

Places to meet with friends

Just over one half of the respondents (52%) agreed that there are adequate spaces to meet and spend time with friends, but 42% did not agree or just a little (Figure 3.11). A one-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons using Games-Howell test revealed significant differences between participants from the Southern Harbour who were the least likely to agree, compared to those from Gozo (p=.001), South Eastern (p=.003) and Western regions (p=.026) who were the most to agree that there are adequate spaces to meet and spend time with friends (Table 3.31).

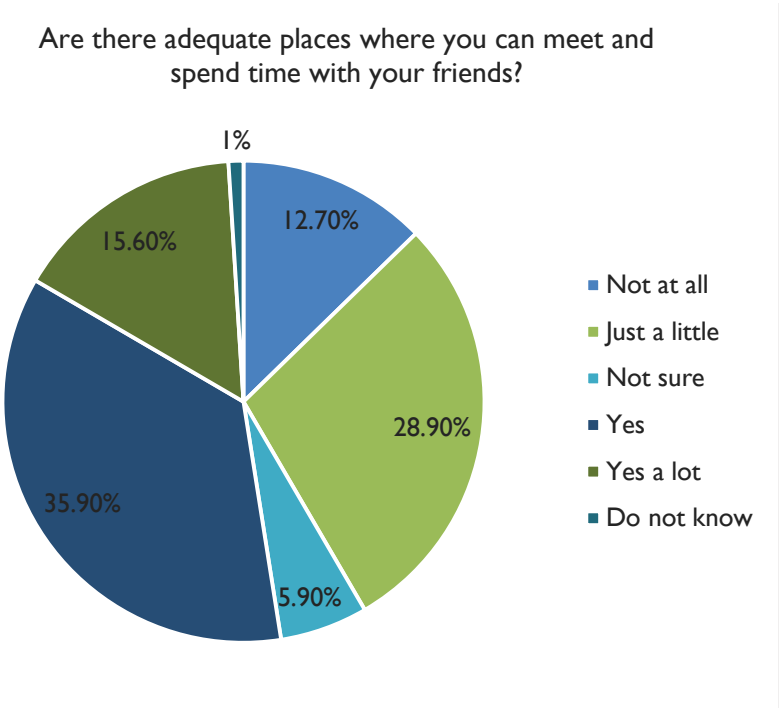

Figure 3.11. Adequate places to meet and spend time with friends

Table 3.31. Mean scores of adequate places to meet by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
Are there adequate places where you can meet and spend time with your friends?	Mean	2.52	3.04	3.35	3.23	3.10	3.44
	Std. Dev.	1.209	1.488	1.285	1.262	1.566	1.293
Note: [1]F(5, 398)=3.825, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.							

When asked whether there are public toilets that they could easily use during play, 44.6% agreed while 37.0% did not (Figure 3.12). Most participants (68.8%) from the South Eastern region indicated that there are public toilets that they can easily use when playing, in contrast to just 35% in the Harbour regions (Table 3.32). Most participants (65.1%) agreed that there are well-kept bus stops or shelters close to their home (Figure 3.13).

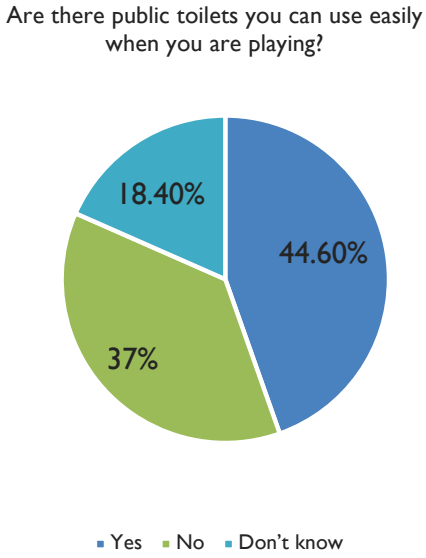

Figure 3.12. Public toilets in play a

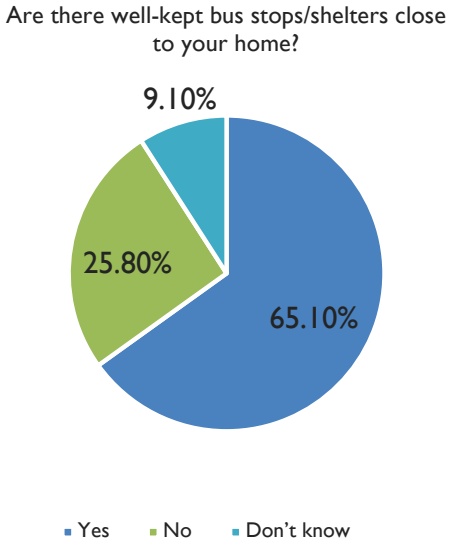

Figure 3.13. Bus stops/shelters close to home

Table 3.32. Availability of public toilets in play areas by region

Are there public toilets you can use easily when you are playing?					
		Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Southern Harbour	N	19	24	11	54
	%	35.2%	44.4%	20.4%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	28	32	20	80
	%	35.0%	40.0%	25.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	53	20	4	77
	%	68.8%	26.0%	5.2%	100.0%
Western	N	27	24	15	66
	%	40.9%	36.4%	22.7%	100.0%
Northern	N	11	13	5	29
	%	37.9%	44.8%	17.2%	100.0%
Gozo	N	41	36	20	97
	%	42.3%	37.1%	20.6%	100.0%

In the FGD, participants mentioned the village/town square and religious centres as hubs where they could meet and socialise with friends:

"The square…there is a large area where people can walk" (St Igantius College)

"In our square there are restaurants, and friends can enjoy themselves and talk in these restaurants" (St Ignatius College))

"The Church which we meet as well because it's really big and behind it there is a small ground where we can play as well" (St Ignatius College)

"A place where I meet my friends is the MUSEUM… it's a nice place to socialise with friends" (St Ignatius College)

Nature Areas

The majority of participants (77%) agreed there is a garden or park close to where they live (Figure3.14). The vast majority of participants from the Western region (90.9%) indicated that there is a garden, park or natural open area close to their house while those from the Northern Harbour who were the least to agree (63.7%) (Table 3.33).

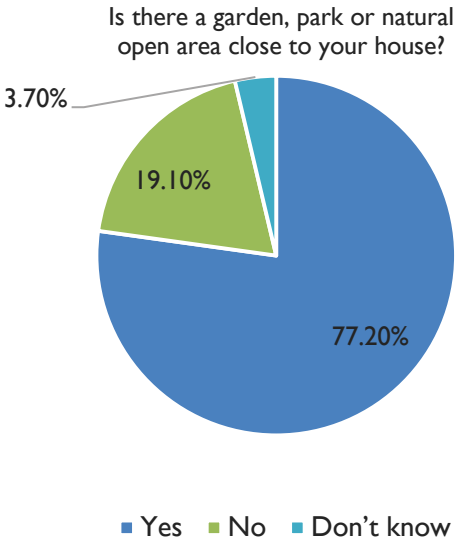

Figure 3.14. Nearby garden, park or natural open area

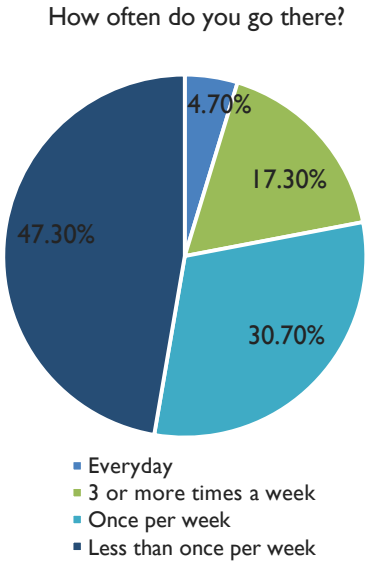

Figure 3.15. Frequency of visits to nature areas

When asked how often they go to the nature areas, just over one half (52.7%) of participants said they go frequently (once per week or more often) while 47.30% go less than once a week (Figure 3.15). More participants from Gozo visit green areas frequently, while those from the Southern Harbour are the least likely to do so (Tables 3.34).

Table 3.33. Availability of nearby garden, park or natural open area by region

Is there a garden, park or natural open area close to your house?					
		Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Southern Harbour	N	39	15	0	54
	%	72.2%	27.8%	0.0%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	51	25	4	80
	%	63.7%	31.3%	5.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	62	11	3	76
	%	81.6%	14.5%	3.9%	100.0%
Western	N	60	3	3	66
	%	90.9%	4.5%	4.5%	100.0%
Northern	N	23	5	1	29
	%	79.3%	17.2%	3.4%	100.0%
Gozo	N	77	17	4	98
	%	78.6%	17.3%	4.1%	100.0%

Table 3.34. Frequency of visits to nature areas by region

How often do you go there (garden, park or natural open area close to your house)?						
		Less than once per week	Once per week	3 or more times a week	Everyday	Total
Southern Harbour	N	33	13	3	0	49
	%	67.3%	26.5%	6.1%	0.0%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	40	15	14	5	74
	%	54.1%	20.3%	18.9%	6.8%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	37	23	8	5	73
	%	50.7%	31.5%	11.0%	6.8%	100.0%
Western	N	27	24	10	3	64
	%	42.2%	37.5%	15.6%	4.7%	100.0%
Northern	N	17	10	1	0	28
	%	60.7%	35.7%	3.6%	0.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	27	33	30	5	95
	%	28.4%	34.7%	31.6%	5.3%	100.0%

The majority of respondents go to nature areas on foot (74.3%), with only 13.8 % going by bicycle (Table 3.35).

Table 3.35. Mode of transport to nature areas

	N	%
On foot	306	74.3%
By car	76	18.4%
By bicycle	57	13.8%
By public transport	8	1.9%
Other	33	8.0%

Female participants are more likely to go on foot than male participants, while the latter are more likely to go by bicycle than the former (Table 3.36).

Table 3.36. Mode of transport to nature areas by gender

		On foot[1]				By bicycle[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	91	45	136	N	37	99	136
	%	66.9%	33.1%	100.0%	%	27.2%	72.8%	100.0%
Female	N	211	58	269	N	39	230	269
	%	78.4%	21.6%	100.0%	%	14.5%	85.5%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 6.33$, p = 0.012, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 9.57$, p = 0.002								

More participants from the Western region and Gozo travel on foot, with those from the Harbour regions the least likely to do so (Table 3.37). Participants from the Northern Harbour and the Northern region were the least likely to go by bicycle (Table 3.38).

Table 3.37 Visiting gardens, parks or natural open areas on foot by region

		On foot[1]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	34	20	54
	%	63.0%	37.0%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	53	28	81
	%	65.4%	34.6%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	56	22	78
	%	71.8%	28.2%	100.0%
Western	N	57	9	66
	%	86.4%	13.6%	100.0%
Northern	N	20	9	29
	%	69.0%	31.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	83	16	99
	%	83.8%	16.2%	100.0%

Table 3.38 Visiting gardens, parks or natural open areas by bicycle by region

		By bicycle[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	7	47	54
	%	13.0%	87.0%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	8	73	81
	%	9.9%	90.1%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	18	60	78
	%	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%
Western	N	17	49	66
	%	25.8%	74.2%	100.0%
Northern	N	3	26	29
	N	10.3%	89.7%	100.0%
Gozo	%	23	76	99
	N	23.2%	76.8%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 17.47$, p = 0.004; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 11.14$, p = 0.049				

When asked with whom they go to the nature areas, around half of respondents said that they go with their friends (50.5%) or with their parents (48.1%) (Table 3.39).

Table 3.39. With whom do adolescents go to nature areas

	N	%
With my friends	208	50.5%
With my parents	198	48.1%
On my own	133	32.3%
With my brother/sister/relative	114	27.7%
Other	28	6.8%

Female participants are more likely to go to nature areas with their siblings or relatives and with their friends than male participants (Table 3.40).

Table 3.40. With whom do adolescents go to nature areas by gender

		With siblings/relatives[1]				With friends[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	26	110	136	N	55	81	136
	%	19.1%	80.9%	100.0%	%	40.4%	59.6%	100.0%
Female	N	88	181	269	N	152	117	269
	%	32.7%	67.3%	100.0%	%	56.5%	43.5%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 8.26$, p = 0.004, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=405) = 9.33$, p = 0.002								

More participants from the Western region go to nature areas on their own than those from other regions, while more respondents from Gozo go with their siblings and relatives compared to peers from the other regions (Table 3.41).

Table 3.41. Visiting gardens, parks or natural open areas on their own or with siblings or relatives by region

		On my own[1]			With my brother/sister/ relative[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	14	40	54	N	8	46	54
	%	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%	%	14.8%	85.2%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	16	65	81	N	10	71	81
	%	19.8%	80.2%	100.0%	%	12.3%	87.7%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	24	54	78	N	21	57	78
	%	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%	%	26.9%	73.1%	100.0%
Western	N	30	36	66	N	22	44	66
	%	45.5%	54.5%	100.0%	%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
Northern	N	10	19	29	N	8	21	29
	%	34.5%	65.5%	100.0%	N	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%
Gozo	N	36	63	99	%	42	57	99
	%	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%	N	42.4%	57.6%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 13.00$, $p = 0.023$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=407) = 26.01$, $p = 0.000$

When asked what they see and hear when visiting nature areas, the majority of participants mentioned trees (74.8%), birds (71.6%) and plants (70.9%), with flowing water the least commonly seen or heard (15.5%) (Table 3.42).

Table 3.42. Elements found in nearby garden, park or natural open area

	N	%
Trees	308	74.8%
Birds	295	71.6%
Plants	292	70.9%
Cars	248	60.2%
Insects	216	52.4%
Butterflies	165	40.0%
Animals	111	26.9%
Water flowing	64	15.5%

Most participants (67.8%) enjoyed going to nature areas, however, close to one third (28.9%) did not or just a little or were not sure (Figure 3.16). When asked how they feel when they are in a garden or natural open areas, the great majority (87.50%) feel happy (Figure 3.17). When shown pictures of children playing in a playing field and in nature, most participants (65.3%) indicated that they prefer playing in a natural open space compared to a playing field (Figure 3.18).

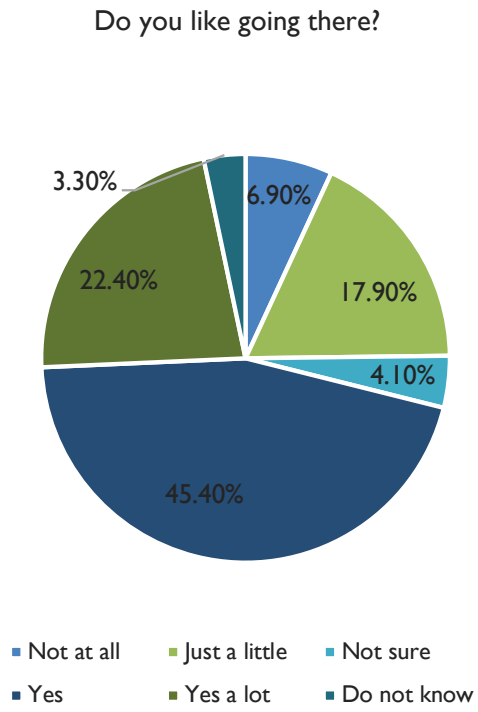

Figure 3.16. Going to nature areas?

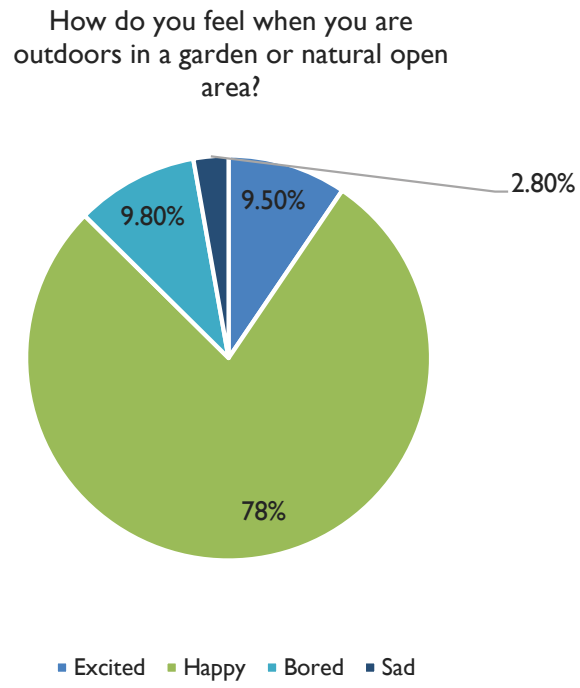

Figure 3.17. Feelings when being outdoors

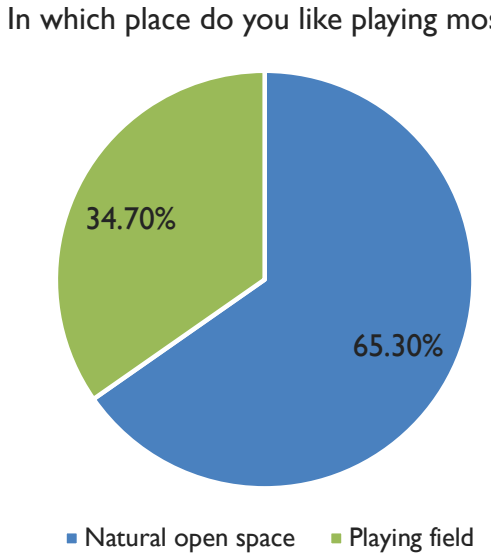

Figure 3.18. Preferred play area

In the FGD, the adolescents spoke very positively about nature, whether it is living close to nature or being able to go to such areas, where they can have picnics, do physical exercise, and enjoy nature and the sea:

"Il-Buskett hemm natura sabiħa u toqgħod tisma' l-għasafar ikantaw" / "In Buskett there is nice nature and you can hear the birds sing" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"Dan l-aħħar għamlulna ġnien… issa hemm ħafna siġar ukoll, per eżempju anke għamlu s-siġar mal-ġenb u allura jkollok triq fejn timxi fin-nofs.. anke post biex tmur taqra u hekk" / "Recently they made a new garden… now there are a lot of trees as well, for example they put trees at the sides and so there is a path where you can walk in the middle.. there is even a place to go and read" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"The countryside next to the village is perfect for cycling, walking or jogging" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"I really like the trails because there are a lot of trees there and plants, and I like the view because there's the sea" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

However, various participants mentioned that there are not enough nature areas they can enjoy close to where they live, and that green areas are lacking due to more space being taken up by buildings and businesses such as shops.

"… Ma tantx hemm ġnien. aktar ikun hemm bini u ma jkollokx fejn tmur passiġġata jew tmur tilgħab x'imkien bil-ballun fuq xi ħaxix" / "…There aren't many parks… there are more buildings and there isn't anywhere to go for a walk or to go and play with a ball somewhere on the grass" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"My biggest negative point is that we are taking away countryside and instead building a lot of houses" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"Not enough countryside… I live in a new building and my friends who have lived here more years than I, told me that instead of my new house there was a nice field where they used to play" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

The participants spoke about the need for more nature areas in their localities:

"Kieku kont inżid is-siġar. per eżempju park tal-familja" / "I would add more trees… for example a family park" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"More nature and places where people can walk around without cars" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"More green space where we could, for example we do a little picnic with our family, go out with friends" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"Abandoned places which could easily be turned into something else, we could change them into nature stuff" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"Not only we need more nature, we need to take care of it. Because if we just have it, it's useless if in 3 or 4 years' time it's just not taken care of and breaking down" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

Cleanliness

Over one half of the participants (55%) agreed that the places where they play and socialise are clean and cared for, though more than one third (34.8%) did not agree or just a little. Forty-one percent said that there is noise and pollution where they live, while less than 1 in 5 (17%) agreed that there is no rubbish or dirty water where they live (Figure 3.19).

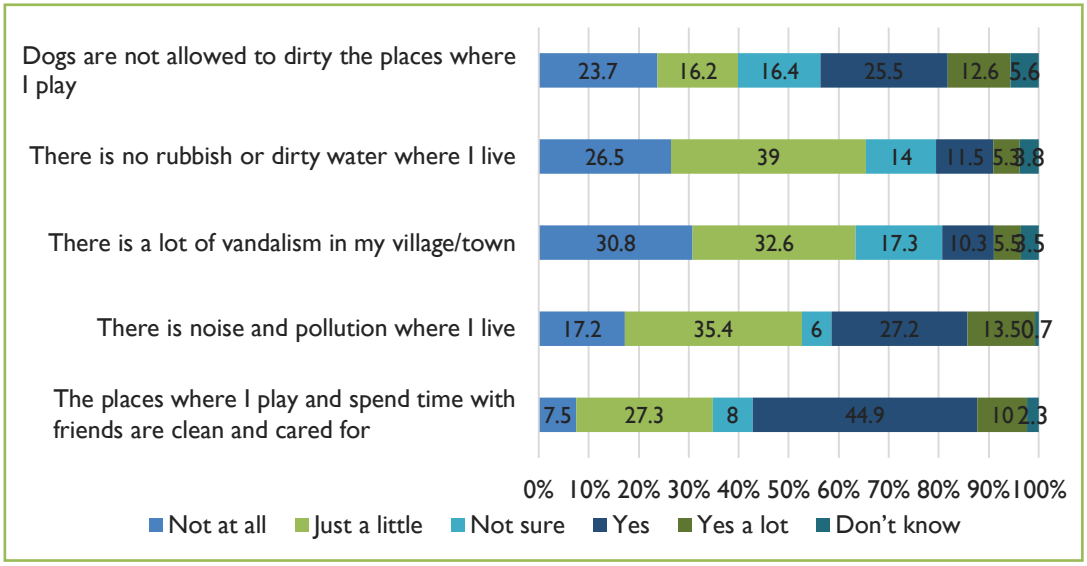

Figure 3.19. Cleanliness of open areas where adolescents play and spend their time

A one-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons using Games-Howell test revealed that participants from the South Eastern (p=.014/ p=.009), Western (p=.036/ p=.028), and Gozo (p=.024/ p=.016) regions, were more likely to indicate that their play and social places are clean and cared for, when compared to those from the Harbour regions who were the least to agree (Table 3.43). Games-Howell post-hoc test also revealed that participants from the Harbour regions were the most to agree that there is noise and pollution where they live compared to those from the South Eastern (p=.002/ p=.007), Western region (p=.007/ p=.026), and Gozo (p=.008/ p=.027) who were the least to agree (Table 3.43).

Table 3.43. Cleanliness of localities by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
The places where I play and spend time with friends are clean and cared for[1]***	Mean	2.85	2.90	3.59	3.52	3.10	3.52
	Std. Dev.	1.274	1.317	1.140	1.090	1.345	1.161
There is noise and pollution where I live[2]***	Mean	3.46	3.29	2.51	2.59	2.97	2.66
	Std. Dev.	1.370	1.397	1.339	1.278	1.426	1.288
There is a lot of vandalism in my village/town[3]	Mean	2.70	2.54	2.36	2.22	2.57	2.11
	Std. Dev.	1.449	1.338	1.458	1.170	1.260	1.259
There is no rubbish or dirty water where I live [4]	Mean	2.62	2.44	2.42	2.32	2.43	2.32
	Std. Dev.	1.444	1.465	1.299	1.162	1.425	1.235
Dogs are not allowed to dirty the places where I play[5]	Mean	2.91	3.03	3.11	2.98	3.18	3.04
	Std. Dev.	1.560	1.529	1.588	1.454	1.786	1.502

Note: [1]F(5, 388)=5.275, [2]F(5, 390)=5.855, [3]F(5, 388)=1.992, [4]F(5, 389)=.427, [5]F(5, 385)=.168, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

In their FGD, the participants spoke at length on issues of cleanliness and pollution in their locality**.** They frequently highlighted the problem of littering, rubbish and general uncleanliness in their localities, including garbage bags left in the street, animal litter, full dustbins, and the smell of sewage:

“Bħala fit-toroq jkun hawn ħafna ħmieġ…l-iktar pakketti tal-ikel u affarijiet hekk” / “In the streets there is a lot of dirt… mostly packets of food and things like that” (St Margaret College Secondary)

*“Jien niddejjaq nara l-ħmieġ barra. G*ħax per eżempju tmur timxi u ssib il-ħmieġ tal-annimali barra” / “I get bothered by seeing dirt outside. for example you go walking and you find animal litter outside” (St Margaret College Secondary)

“I think the main problem is that on the streets there is a lot of garbage bags and they’re just left there sometimes for days” (Maria Regina College Secondary)

“There’s also a strong smell of sewage sometimes we can even smell” (St Ignatius College Secondary)

The participants suggested more frequent street cleaning, installation of more bins and more enforcement:

“Clean the streets a bit more since it’s really dirty” (St Ignatius College Secondary)

“Forsi tal-lanqas inżid forsi dustbins” / “Maybe I would at least add more dustbins” (St Margaret College Secondary)

“Jekk jaqbdu lil xi ħadd jagħmel xi vandaliżmu jew qed jarmi postijiet kullimkien dan għandu jkollu multa” / “If they catch someone vandalising or littering they should give the person a fine” (St Margaret College Secondary)

They also appealed for more responsible behaviour from the local people:

“People throw rubbish on the floor and not in the bins” (Maria Regina College Secondary)

“There are these teenagers who come to our garden and they kind of litter and leave some of their remainings there” (Maria Regina College Secondary)

“The people take out the garbage bags, the wrong garbage bags on the wrong day. But that’s their fault and not taking enough responsibility” (St Ignatius College Secondary)

Various participants also referred to the problem of pollution in their locality, due to cars and traffic and construction work in particular:

“A lot of cars pass by our house and it’s often very polluted and you can smell all the pollution” (St Ignatius College Secondary)

“When you come inside there’s the living room, and it often smells of pollution and gases and it’s not very healthy so we can’t stay there for long” (St Ignatius College Secondary).

“Because there is construction everywhere, noise pollution, even dust” (St Ignatius College Secondary)

“They’re building a lot of new buildings, a lot, like there is four or five just in front of my house and there is always dust and in the morning I can always hear the noise and it’s a bit annoying” (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"There's a lot of buildings coming up and some of them don't get finished and leaving the unfinished ones there, they still continue to build more so there's more and more building sites" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"Inqas construction għax per eżempju l-bus stop biex naqbad il-private qed jagħmlu construction u kissru bankina sħiħa u jkollna, jien u sħabi naqbżu l-ġebel biex inkunu nimxu lejn id-dar" / "Less construction because for example the bus stop where I catch the school bus, they are doing construction work and they broke the whole pavement and me and my friends have to jump over stones to walk home" (St Margaret College Secondary)

Safety

Most participants feel safe to go out to play or walk on their own (59%), agree that there are safe crossings to the playing fields, parks and school (61.4%), know where to get help and report if they feel that they are in danger (56.9%), feel that their locality is safe for all children (57.4%), and do not feel bullied (83.1%). On the other hand, more than one third do not feel totally safe from strangers (44.4%), using buses or public transport in their locality (37.8%) and going out on their own (34%). Sixteen percent mentioned dangerous, broken buildings where they live and 9.0% believe there is a lot of crime, drugs and violence (Figure 3.20).

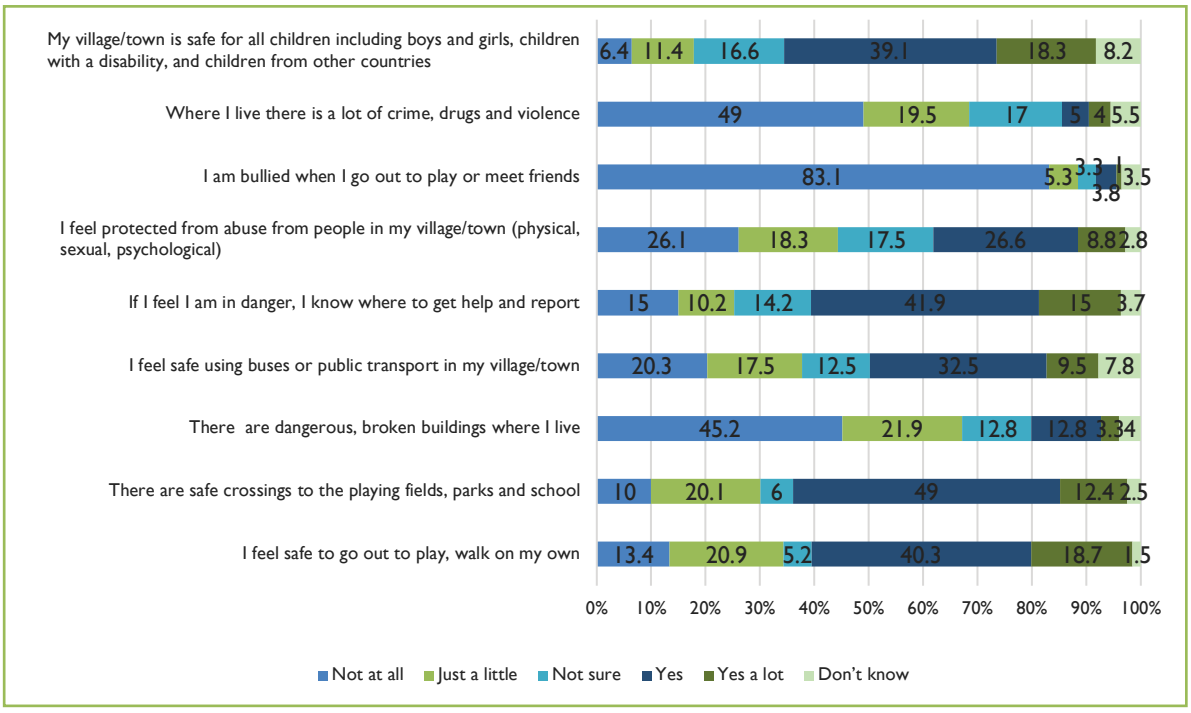

Figure 3.20. Safety in the area where adolescents live

Male participants generally feel safer than females to go out to play or walk on their own, use buses or public transport, know where to get help, feel protected from abuse from people in their village/town, and believe that their locality is safe for all children (Table 3.44).

Table 3.44. Safety in locality by gender

		Mean	Std. Dev.
I feel safe to go out to play or walk on my own[1]***	Male	3.69	1.288
	Female	3.18	1.402
There are safe crossings to the playing field, parks and school[2]	Male	3.36	1.291
	Female	3.42	1.279
There are dangerous, broken buildings where I live[3]	Male	2.07	1.447
	Female	2.25	1.404
I feel safe using buses or public transport in my village/town[4]***	Male	3.63	1.421
	Female	2.93	1.542
If I feel I am in danger I know where to get help and report[5]*	Male	3.66	1.264
	Female	3.32	1.414
I feel protected from abuse from people in my village/ town (physical, sexual, psychological)[6]*	Male	3.03	1.565
	Female	2.71	1.359
I am bullied when I go out to play or meet friends[7]	Male	1.53	1.303
	Female	1.39	1.085
Where I live there is a lot of crime, drugs and violence[8]	Male	2.09	1.454
	Female	2.13	1.440
My village/town is safe for all children including boys and girls, children with a disability and children from other countries[9]**	Male	4.06	1.209
	Female	3.64	1.287

Note: [1]t(394)=3.547, [2]t(394)=-.471, [3]t(390)=-1.187, [4]t(392)=4.369, [5]t(393)=2.292, [6]t(391)=2.061, [7]t(390)=1.154, [8]t(392)=-.227, [9]t(396)=3.109, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

A one-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons using Tukey range test revealed significant differences between participants from the Northern Harbour who indicated that there is a high rate of crime, drugs and violence where they live, compared to participants from Gozo (p=.021) who expressed the least concern (Table 3.45).

Table 3.45. Safety in locality by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
I feel safe to go out to play or walk on my own[1]	Mean	3.19	3.13	3.47	3.55	3.00	3.44
	Std. Dev.	1.429	1.343	1.371	1.379	1.440	1.369
There are safe crossings to the playing field, parks and school[2]	Mean	3.28	3.30	3.43	3.50	3.14	3.53
	Std. Dev.	1.295	1.334	1.170	1.309	1.533	1.239
There are dangerous, broken buildings where I live[3]	Mean	2.26	2.17	2.13	2.06	2.36	2.23
	Std. Dev.	1.507	1.294	1.388	1.435	1.638	1.387
I feel safe using buses or public transport in my village/towns[4]	Mean	2.78	3.35	3.11	3.09	3.00	3.39
	Std. Dev.	1.550	1.585	1.494	1.611	1.819	1.387
If I feel I am in danger I know where to get help and report[5]	Mean	3.57	3.25	3.65	3.38	3.29	3.38
	Std. Dev.	1.500	1.427	1.202	1.397	1.301	1.363
I feel protected from abuse from people in my village/ town (physical, sexual, psychological)[6]	Mean	2.78	2.72	2.66	3.22	2.43	2.86
	Std. Dev.	1.327	1.414	1.546	1.431	1.550	1.342
I am bullied when I go out to play or meet friends[7]	Mean	1.48	1.49	1.58	1.41	1.15	1.40
	Std. Dev.	1.161	1.239	1.314	1.227	.456	1.124
Where I live there is a lot of crime, drugs and violence[8]**	Mean	2.48	2.51	2.00	2.05	1.96	1.82
	Std. Dev.	1.551	1.501	1.306	1.506	1.347	1.376
My village/town is safe for all children including boys and girls, children with a disability and children from other countries[9]	Mean	3.54	3.54	3.75	3.83	3.86	4.02
	Std. Dev.	1.356	1.457	1.145	1.203	1.505	1.145

Note: [1]F(5, 391)=1.386, [2]F(5, 391)=.697, [3]F(5, 387)=.249, [4]F(5, 389)=1.428, [5]F(5, 390)=.896,[6]F(5, 388)=1.709, [7]F(5, 386)=.615, [8]F(5, 389)=2.889, [9]F(5, 393)=1.658, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

On average, Maltese participants tended to agree more strongly that there is a lot of crime, drugs and violence where they live compared to non-Maltese participants but they are more likely to know where to get help when in danger compared to their non-Maltese peers (Table 3.46).

Table 3.46. Safety in locality by nationality

		Mean	Std. Dev.
I feel safe to go out to play or walk on my own[1]	Maltese	3.34	1.397
	Non-Maltese	3.32	1.292
There are safe crossings to the playing field, parks and school[2]	Maltese	3.43	1.277
	Non-Maltese	3.16	1.344
There are dangerous, broken buildings where I live[3]	Maltese	2.15	1.401
	Non-Maltese	2.57	1.537
I feel safe using buses or public transport in my village/towns[4]	Maltese	3.17	1.545
	Non-Maltese	3.11	1.545
If I feel I am in danger I know where to get help and report[5]*	Maltese	3.47	1.352
	Non-Maltese	2.97	1.500
I feel protected from abuse from people in my village/ town (physical, sexual, psychological)[6]	Maltese	2.79	1.447
	Non-Maltese	3.00	1.225
I am bullied when I go out to play or meet friends[7]	Maltese	1.44	1.159
	Non-Maltese	1.49	1.261
Where I live there is a lot of crime, drugs and violence[8]*	Maltese	2.17	1.478
	Non-Maltese	1.73	1.071
My village/town is safe for all children including boys and girls, children with a disability and children from other countries[9]	Maltese	3.75	1.299
	Non-Maltese	3.86	1.228

Note: [1]t(397)=.053, [2]t(397)=1.213, [3]t(393)=-1.695, [4]t(395)=.225, [5]t(396)=2.112, [6]t(394)=-.858, [7]t(392)=-.231, [8]t(395)=1.751, [9]t(399)=-.515, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

During the FGD, the participants spoke at length about issues of safety related to strangers, traffic, broken equipment, and drugs and crime where they live:

Fear of strangers and unlit areas

"There are also drunk people and adults who keep talking to us, mostly girls" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"Sometimes there are scary people, the ones you would stay away from" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"As it's not very well lit and there's a lot of drunk people around I always overthink and get worried" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

Drugs, violence and crime:

"[Nixtieq] li l-pulizija jagħtu kaz aktar ta' nies li jieħdu d-drogi għax ġieli tmur il-bandli u ssib xi siringa ma' l-art" / "[I would like] that the police take more notice of people that do drugs because sometimes you go to the playground and you find a syringe on the ground" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"Malajr ikun hemm xi ġlieda" / "It will quickly escalate into a fight" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"Jien ma tantx inħossni safe… qed jiżdiedu ħafna nies li jisirqu u llum qisek qas tista' tafda lil xi ħadd" / "I don't feel very safe… the number of people who steal are increasing and nowadays you cannot trust anyone" (St Margaret College Secondary)

Safety risks from cars and traffic:

"It-triq li rridu nimxu fiha vera dejqa u rridu ngħaddu minn ħdejn balla karozzi u mhiex safe għalina biex nimxu ġo fiha.. jekk ikunu se jagħmlu xi toroq ġodda jagħmluhom iktar wesgħin" / "The street where we have to walk is very narrow and we need to pass by many cars and it is not safe for us to walk there… if they are going to make new roads, they should make them wider" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"A lot of the drivers here are not very responsible. I've seen many times when they've sped through and people have been hurt" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"I don't feel safe in the square just walking there because it will be busy, many cars and I don't feel that I am safe… in my street it is safe, there are not many cars there" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"Zebra crossings there is none...I mean a bit in the new part [of the town], really a bit" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"U misshom izidu naqra oħra traffic lights biex in-nies ikunu jistgħu jaqsmu" / "They should add some more traffic lights so that people can cross the road" (St Margaret College Secondary)

Lack of maintenance in play areas:

"Hemm bandli…(izda) kien hemm il-bandli maqlugħin it-tnejn li huma… anki l-pitch tal-football ma tantx huwa fi stat tajjeb.. hemm post mitluq, ilu li qalu li ha jirranġawh kont għadni żgħir…" / "There is a playground.. (but) there were two swings that were broken… even the football pitch is not in a good state.. there is an abandoned place, a long time ago, when I was still young, they had said that they would fix it…" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"Jekk ikun hemm xi ħofor [fit-triq] għandom jagħmluhom mill-ewwel… għax min-ħofra kbira jista' wkoll jikkawża aċċidenti" / "If there are holes [in the road], they should fix them immediately because a big hole can also cause accidents" (St Margaret College Secondary).

"Hawn ħafna toroq mkissrin, allura jekk jirranġaw ċertu toroq jiġi eħfef għal dawk li qedgħin b'xi wheelchair biex jimxu fit-triq" / "There are many broken roads so if they repair them it would be easier for those with a wheelchair to use them" (St Margaret College Secondary)

Participation

Only around one half of participants agreed that all children and young people in their locality are respected (54.5%), that they have opportunities to participate in social activities organised in their locality (49%) and that adults in their village listen to and respect children and young people (46.8%). Less than one third agreed that they have opportunities to help with projects to change the area where they live (28%), and that they are asked about how facilities and services for children and young people in their locality can be improved (26%) (Figure 3.21).

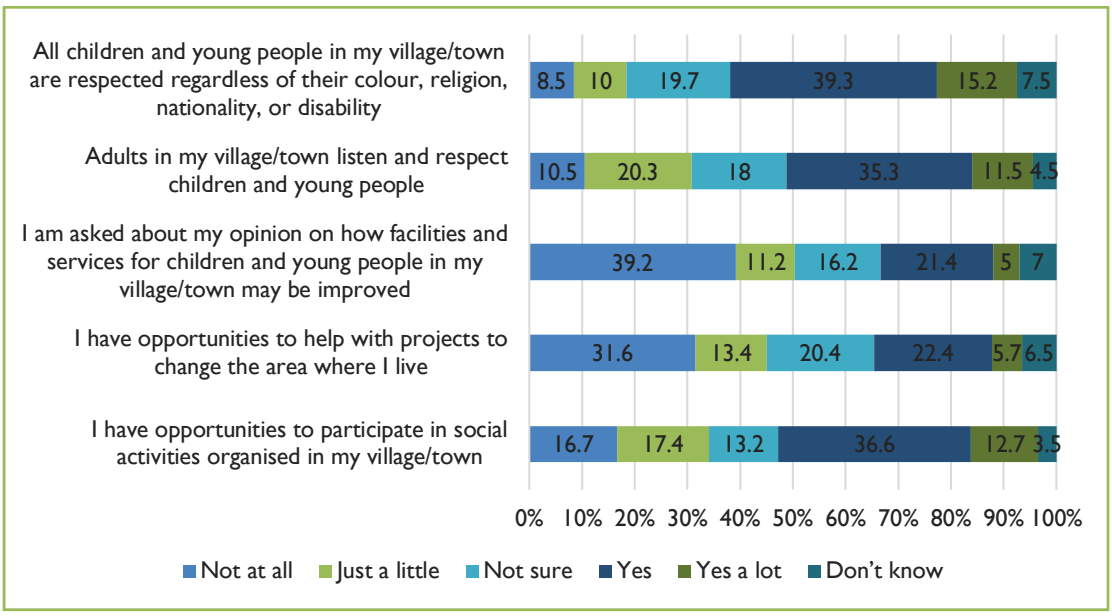

Figure 3.21. Adolescents' participation in their community

Male participants are more likely to agree than female ones that adults in their village/town listen to and respect children and young people while more Maltese than non-Maltese participants agreed that they are listened to and consulted in improving their locality (Table 3.47, Table 3.48).

Table 3.47. Adolescents' participation by gender

		Mean	Std. Dev.
I have opportunities to participate in social activities organised in my town/village[1]	Male	3.28	1.463
	Female	3.19	1.386
I have opportunities to help with projects to change the area where I live[2]	Male	2.97	1.595
	Female	2.68	1.510
I am asked about my opinion on how facilities and services for children and young people in my village/town may be improved[3]	Male	2.86	1.666
	Female	2.53	1.570
Adults in my village/town listen and respect children and young people[4]*	Male	3.54	1.240
	Female	3.22	1.342
All children and young people in my village/town are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability[5]	Male	3.75	1.207
	Female	3.62	1.328

Note: [1]t(393)=.556, [2]t(393)=-1.773, [3]t(392)=1.901, [4]t(391)=2.309, [5]t(393)=.947, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Table 3.48 Adolescents' participation by nationality

		Mean	Std. Dev.
I have opportunities to participate in social activities organised in my town/village[1]	Maltese	3.22	1.390
	Non-Maltese	3.19	1.578
I have opportunities to help with projects to change the area where I live[2]	Maltese	2.75	1.532
	Non-Maltese	2.89	1.663
I am asked about my opinion on how facilities and services for children and young people in my village/town may be improved[3]**	Maltese	2.71	1.614
	Non-Maltese	1.92	1.402
Adults in my village/town listen and respect children and young people[4]	Maltese	3.35	1.293
	Non-Maltese	2.89	1.542
All children and young people in my village/town are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability[5]	Maltese	3.70	1.261
	Non-Maltese	3.19	1.596

Note: [1]t(397)=.119, [2]t(397)=-.527, [3]t(396)=2.878, [4]t(395)=2.026, [5]t(397)=2.293, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test revealed significant differences between participants from the Western region (p=.022) and Gozo (p=.018) who agreed that they have opportunities to participate in social activities organised in their locality, compared to those from the Southern Harbour who were the least to agree (Table 3.53). Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey's range test revealed similar significant differences between respondents from Gozo (p=.001) and the Western region (p=.007) who were more likely to agree that adults listen to and respect children/young people, while those from the Northern region were the least likely to agree (Table 3.49).

Table 3.49. Adolescents' participation by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
I have opportunities to participate in social activities organised in my town/village[1]**	Mean	2.74	3.04	3.25	3.52	2.86	3.49
	Std. Dev.	1.390	1.571	1.357	1.229	1.580	1.292
I have opportunities to help with projects to change the area where I live[2]	Mean	2.43	2.68	2.76	2.95	2.43	3.01
	Std. Dev.	1.549	1.636	1.575	1.430	1.550	1.483
I am asked about my opinion on how facilities and services for children and young people in my village/town may be improved[3]	Mean	2.52	2.45	2.76	2.59	2.04	3.00
	Std. Dev.	1.370	1.742	1.715	1.477	1.453	1.622
Adults in my village/town listen and respect children and young people[4]**	Mean	3.26	3.26	3.28	3.46	2.43	3.57
	Std. Dev.	1.200	1.385	1.279	1.378	1.230	1.260
All children and young people in my village/town are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability[5]	Mean	3.53	3.43	3.87	3.86	3.17	3.74
	Std. Dev.	1.353	1.421	1.018	1.229	1.466	1.317

Note: [1]F(5, 391)=3.312, [2]F(5, 391)=1.528, [3]F(5, 390)=2.155, [4]F(5, 389)=3.543, [5]F(5, 391)=2.219, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

In the FGD, various participants mentioned a number of activities they like to participate in such as religious feasts and socio-cultural events in their locality:

"Immur nara l-festa, ħa nidħol mal-grupp ta' l-armar biex insib naqra oħra ħbieb" / "I go and watch the feast, I will be joining the group that works on the feast preparations to make some more friends" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"Every year there would be a feast and I participate because I am part of the choir… I really enjoy going there and like I have my friends, we really enjoy it" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"They did a festival, they did it every year so that kind of generates a bit of the population and everyone comes in and we just listen to music and we get together and have fun…" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

Some participants, however, complained that they were not aware of any events and activities in their localities for young people, and that most events were mainly targeted for adults such as political activities or bingo:

"Tal-kunsill qatt ma smajt b'attivitajiet. Naħseb hemm nuqqas ta' kommunikazzjoni bejn il-kunsill u t-tfal" / "I never heard of any activities organised by the council. I think there is a lack of communication between the council and the children" (St Margaret College Secondary)

"They are more of political things and for example things that only adults can participate in" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"The only thing that is happening is maybe tombola for the older generation" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"We really need like lively events, usually but the people don't really plan events targeted at the younger community but I think if planned well both old and young communities can join together and have fun" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

Participants would appreciate more events such as markets, fairs, interactive activities, music festivals, and sports events:

"They did like a market, they organised toys of old times and it was a beautiful…I wish that the local council organise a market…" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"Maybe we can add some fairs, mini shops and something like that. a lot of things that happen, they're only like once in a lifetime, they don't really happen a lot...so I would like some things that are always happening like at least twice a year… so even young children can participate in" (St Ignatius College Secondary)

"I think there should be more like, maybe the beach, some music, some stuff like that I think it would be interesting for our age" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"I think they should do festivals for the younger youths and maybe some more energy and more activities going on" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

Various participants argued that they are not normally asked about their opinions about their locality, and would like to have more say:

"No I don't really think that we have [opportunity to say what we think about our locality], like we're not really asked a lot about it" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

"I think because my town is in an older age group, us as a younger generation aren't being appreciated" (Maria Regina College Secondary)

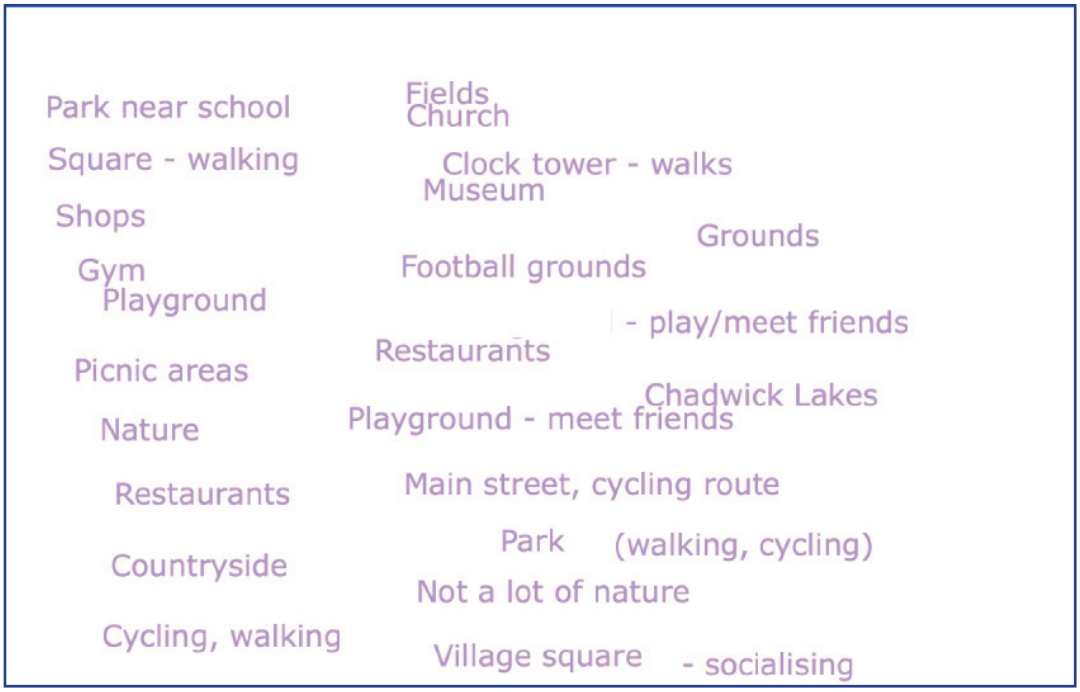

Figure 3.22. Example of whiteboard activity in the FGD: important places close the participants' home

Satisfaction and Areas for Improvement

Table 3.50 shows that the majority of the participants were satisfied with safety from peer bullying (63.9%), use of buses and public transport (61.9%), safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings (61.3%), inclusion of all children and young people in their community (59.1%), adequate places where to walk, play sports or cycle (55.6%), suitable places to meet and hang out with friends (55.3%), parks, gardens and other open areas to enjoy nature (55.2%), safety from crime, drugs and violence (52.9%) accessibility of play and public places for children and young people with a disability (52.9%), and safety from abuse by strangers or other adults (50%). Less than one half, however, were satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the local council, parish council, other youth organisations (42.6%), with the opportunities to voice their opinions on what they would like in their town/village (41%), and having their opinions taken seriously when they say something (36.6%). Forty one percent are not satisfied with safety from cars and traffic and with a clean and healthy environment, and 33.5% with cleanliness (Figure 3.23).

Table 3.50. Adolescents' most and least satisfied aspects of their locality

Most satisfied (Completely satisfied & satisfied)			Least satisfied (Not at all satisfied & dissatisfied)		
	%	R		%	R
Safety from bullying by peers	63.9%	1	I have opportunities to give my opinion on what I would like in my town/village	41.0%	1
Buses and public transport in my village/town	61.9%	2	My opinions are taken seriously when I say something	36.6%	2
Safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings	61.3%	3	The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)	33.5%	3
All children and young people are included (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from different countries)	59.1%	4	I have opportunities to participate in local council, parish council, other youth organisations in my town/village	27.4%	4
Adequate places where I can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle	55.6%	5	Safety from cars and traffic	26.9%	5

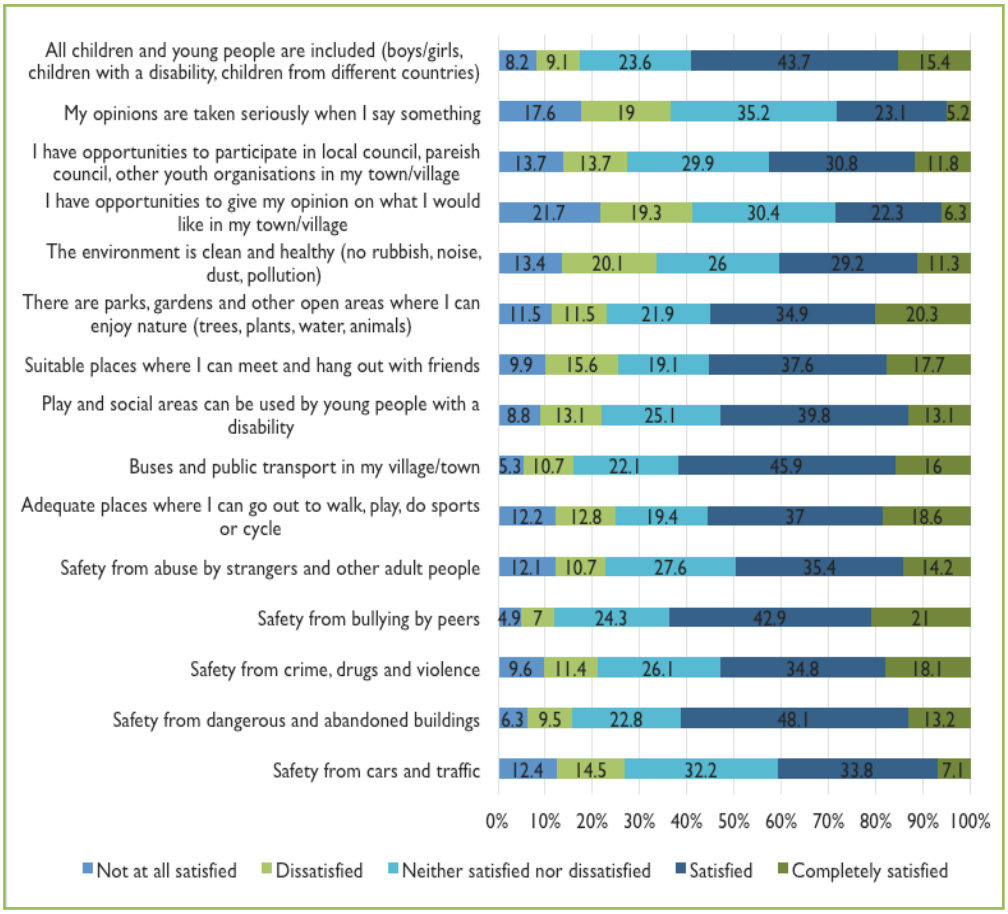

Figure 3.23. Satisfaction with various aspects of the locality

A one-way ANOVA and Tukey's range test revealed that:

- Adolescents from the Western region were more satisfied with safety from cars and traffic compared to those from the Northern Harbour (p=.001) and the Southern Harbour (p=.011) regions. They were also more satisfied with the play and social areas when compared to those from Southern Harbour (p=.011) and Northern Harbour (p=.003) regions (Table 3.51).
- Participants from the Harbour regions were the least satisfied with suitable places where they can meet and hang out with friends compared to participants from the Western (p=.003/p=.006), South Eastern (p=.007/p=.013) and Gozo (p=.017/p=.028) regions. Similar low levels of satisfaction among participants from Harbour areas concerning clean and healthy environments were also revealed when compared to those from Gozo (p=.021/ p=.001) and the Western region (p=.026/ p=.001) who were the most satisfied.
- Participants from the Southern Harbour region were less satisfied with opportunities to participate in local councils and to have their opinions taken seriously, when compared to those from Gozo (p=.022/ p=.011) (Table 3.51).

A one-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons using Games-Howell test indicated that:

- Participants from Gozo were more likely to be included in the life of the community, compared to those from the Harbour regions (p=.002) (Table 3.51).
- Adolescents from the Western region were more satisfied with safety from crime, drugs and violence compared to those from the Harbour regions (p=.001/p=.024).
- Participants from the Western (p=.001), South Eastern (p=.002/ p=.006) and Gozo (p=.003/ p=.007) regions were also more satisfied with adequate space where they can go out to walk, play and cycle compared with those from the Harbour regions.
- Participants from the Western region were also more satisfied with parks available and other open areas to enjoy nature when compared with those from Southern Harbour (p=.001) who were the least satisfied.
- Participants from the Western region (p=.032) and Gozo (p=.039) were also more satisfied with buses and public transport compared to those from the Southern Harbour region (Table 3.51).

Table 3.51. Adolescents' satisfaction with their locality by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
Safety from cars and traffic[1]***	Mean	2.76	2.71	3.10	3.46	3.12	3.26
	Std. Dev.	1.124	1.093	1.002	1.075	1.269	1.118
Safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings[2]	Mean	3.41	3.28	3.63	3.71	3.46	3.54
	Std. Dev.	1.099	1.169	.991	.869	1.141	1.010
Safety from crime, drugs and violence[3]**	Mean	3.16	3.08	3.44	3.81	3.21	3.52
	Std. Dev.	1.184	1.194	1.202	.931	1.382	1.205
Safety from bullying by peers[4]	Mean	3.58	3.62	3.59	3.74	3.67	3.82
	Std. Dev.	.992	1.143	1.082	.911	1.167	.972
Safety from abuse by strangers and other adult people[5]**	Mean	3.04	3.03	3.33	3.56	2.96	3.53
	Std. Dev.	1.341	1.208	1.147	1.041	1.429	1.083
Adequate places where I can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle[6]***	Mean	2.76	2.91	3.65	3.78	3.33	3.60
	Std. Dev.	1.305	1.377	1.062	1.128	1.373	1.114
Buses and public transport in my village/ town[7]**	Mean	3.14	3.45	3.53	3.81	3.33	3.78
	Std. Dev.	1.294	.878	1.014	.902	1.129	1.057
Play and social areas can be used by young people with a disability[8]***	Mean	3.00	2.99	3.47	3.71	3.50	3.48
	Std. Dev.	1.178	1.230	1.043	1.107	.780	1.084
Suitable places where I can meet and hang out with friends[9]***	Mean	2.92	2.96	3.66	3.72	3.33	3.56
	Std. Dev.	1.307	1.297	1.188	1.097	1.204	1.077
There are parks, gardens and other open areas where I can enjoy nature (trees, plants, water, animals)[10]***	Mean	2.92	2.99	3.57	3.90	3.29	3.64
	Std. Dev.	1.322	1.289	1.226	.970	1.367	1.140
The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)[11]***	Mean	2.68	2.52	3.21	3.37	3.08	3.33
	Std. Dev.	1.301	1.178	1.200	1.075	1.316	1.102
I have opportunities to give my opinion on what I would like in my town/village[12]	Mean	2.50	2.51	2.87	2.70	2.54	2.96
	Std. Dev.	1.147	1.222	1.153	1.131	1.141	1.305
I have opportunities to participate in local council, parish council, other youth organisations in my town/village[13]**	Mean	2.76	2.97	3.20	3.26	2.75	3.43
	Std. Dev.	1.205	1.253	1.205	1.196	1.032	1.1582
My opinions are taken seriously when I say something[14]**	Mean	2.37	2.82	2.79	2.97	2.38	3.03
	Std. Dev.	1.112	1.167	1.089	1.073	1.209	1.088
All children and young people are included (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from different countries)[15]***	Mean	2.96	3.14	3.62	3.69	3.29	3.83
	Std. Dev.	1.268	1.182	.873	1.057	.955	1.031

Note: [1]F(5, 368)=4.592 , [2]F(5, 367)=1.530, [3]F(5, 365)=3.413, [4]F(5, 360)=.612, [5]F(5, 362)=3.011, [6]F(5, 365)=7.585 ,[7]F(5, 364)=3.641, [8]F(5, 363)=4.372, [9]F(5, 361)=5.513, [10]F(5, 364)=6.546, [11]F(5, 362)=6.274, [12]F(5, 357)=1.747, [13]F(5, 353)=2.964, [14]F(5, 353)=3.233, [15]F(5, 353)=6.455, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

On average male participants were more likely to be satisfied with safety from abuse by strangers and other adults in their town/village than female participants (Table 3.52). Maltese participants were more satisfied than non-Maltese peers in various aspects of their locality, such as safety from cars and traffic, dangerous buildings, suitable places where to meet with their friends, having a clean and healthy environment, opportunities to express their opinion on what they would like in their locality, participation in local council, parish council and other youth organisations and having their opinions taken seriously (Table 3.53).

Table 3.52. Adolescents' satisfaction with their locality by gender

		Mean	Std. Dev.
Safety from cars and traffic[1]	Male	2.97	1.206
	Female	3.15	1.076
Safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings[2]	Male	3.52	1.122
	Female	3.52	.999
Safety from crime, drugs and violence[3]	Male	3.48	1.159
	Female	3.38	1.208
Safety from bullying by peers[4]	Male	3.76	1.029
	Female	3.65	1.030
Safety from abuse by strangers and other adult people[5]*	Male	3.51	1.177
	Female	3.20	1.186
Adequate places where I can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle[6]	Male	3.36	1.290
	Female	3.39	1.252
Buses and public transport in my village/town[7]	Male	3.59	.946
	Female	3.57	1.093
Play and social areas can be used by young people with a disability[8]	Male	3.38	1.117
	Female	3.36	1.140
Suitable places where I can meet and hang out with friends[9]	Male	3.31	1.213
	Female	3.43	1.224
There are parks, gardens and other open areas where I can enjoy nature (trees, plants, water, animals)[10]	Male	3.41	1.181
	Female	3.43	1.286
The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)[11]*	Male	3.15	1.200
	Female	3.01	1.228
I have opportunities to give my opinion on what I would like in my town/village[12]*	Male	2.70	1.135
	Female	2.73	1.247
I have opportunities to participate in local council, parish council, other youth organisations in my town/village[13]***	Male	3.01	1.168
	Female	3.20	1.213
My opinions are taken seriously when I say something[14]**	Male	2.91	1.060
	Female	2.75	1.165
All children and young people are included (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from different countries)[15]	Male	3.42	1.064
	Female	3.53	1.120

Note: [1]t(371)=-1.458, [2]t(370)=.040, [3]t(368)=.700, [4]t(363)=.945, [5]t(365)=2.415, [6]t(368)=-.215, [7]t(367)=.157, [8]t(366)=.194, [9]t(364)=-.868, [10]t(367)=-.102, [11]t(365)=1.016, [12]t(360)=-.222, [13]t(356)=-1.402, [14]t(356)=1.265, [15]t(356)=-.889, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Table 3.53. Adolescents' satisfaction with their locality by nationality

		Mean	Std. Dev.
Safety from cars and traffic[1]*	Maltese	3.12	1.122
	Non-Maltese	2.69	1.091
Safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings[2]*	Maltese	3.55	1.028
	Non-Maltese	3.17	1.150
Safety from crime, drugs and violence[3]	Maltese	3.40	1.204
	Non-Maltese	3.49	1.067
Safety from bullying by peers[4]	Maltese	3.70	1.042
	Non-Maltese	3.60	.976
Safety from abuse by strangers and other adult people[5]	Maltese	3.31	1.193
	Non-Maltese	3.14	1.240
Adequate places where I can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle[6]	Maltese	3.40	1.262
	Non-Maltese	3.03	1.272
Buses and public transport in my village/town[7]	Maltese	3.57	1.053
	Non-Maltese	3.46	1.039
Play and social areas can be used by young people with a disability[8]	Maltese	3.38	1.129
	Non-Maltese	3.11	1.207
Suitable places where I can meet and hang out with friends[9]**	Maltese	3.44	1.221
	Non-Maltese	2.83	1.175
There are parks, gardens and other open areas where I can enjoy nature (trees, plants, water, animals)[10]	Maltese	3.45	1.253
	Non-Maltese	3.11	1.231
The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)[11]*	Maltese	3.09	1.220
	Non-Maltese	2.60	1.143
I have opportunities to give my opinion on what I would like in my town/village[12]*	Maltese	2.76	1.224
	Non-Maltese	2.32	1.036
I have opportunities to participate in local council, parish council, other youth organisations in my town/village[13]***	Maltese	3.21	1.198
	Non-Maltese	2.44	1.050
My opinions are taken seriously when I say something[14]**	Maltese	2.85	1.126
	Non-Maltese	2.26	1.109
All children and young people are included (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from different countries)[15]	Maltese	3.52	1.109
	Non-Maltese	3.17	1.124

Note: [1]t(374)=2.187, [2]t(373)=2.068, [3]t(371)=-.422, [4]t(366)=.525, [5]t(368)=.788, [6]t(371)=1.653, [7]t(370)=.603, [8]t(369)=1.306, [9]t(367)=2.816, [10]t(370)=1.503, [11]t(368)=2.271, [12]t(363)=1.998, [13]t(359)=3.591, [14]t(359)=2.888, [15]t(359)=1.757, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

The aspects participants would like to improve most in their locality, include more suitable places where to meet with friends (51.5%), clean and healthy environment (47.6%), safety from cars and traffic (47.1%), adequate places where to walk, play sports or cycle (45.4%), and parks, gardens and other nature areas (41%) (Table 3.54).

Table 3.54. Areas for improvement

	N	%
Suitable places where I can meet and hang out with friends	212	51.5%
The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)	196	47.6%
Safety from cars and traffic	194	47.1%
Adequate places where I can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle	187	45.4%
There are parks, gardens and other open areas where I can enjoy nature (trees, plants, water, animals)	169	41.0%
Safety from crime, drugs and violence	155	37.6%
Safety from abuse by strangers and other adult people	151	36.7%
Play and social areas can be used by young people with a disability	131	31.8%
My opinions are taken seriously when I say something	118	28.6%
I have opportunities to give my opinion on what I would like in my town/village	104	25.2%
Safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings	94	22.8%
All children are included (boys/girls, children with a disability, from different countries)	90	21.8%
Buses and public transport in my village/town	82	19.9%
Safety from bullying by peers	71	17.2%
I have opportunities to participate in local council, parish council, other youth organisations	59	14.3%

Female participants would like more safety from abuse by strangers and other adults, suitable places where they can meet with friends, and a clean and healthy environment, than male peers (Table 3.55, Table 3.56).

Table 3.55. Safety from abuse by strangers and suitable places where adolescents can meet and hang out by gender

		Safety from abuse by strangers and other adult people[1]				Suitable places where I can meet and hang out with friends[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	36	100	136	N	60	76	136
	%	26.5%	73.5%	100.0%	%	44.1%	55.9%	100.0%
Female	N	112	157	269	N	147	122	269
	%	41.6%	58.4%	100.0%	%	54.6%	45.4%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 405) = 8.96$, $p = 0.003$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 405) = 4.01$, $p = 0.045$

Table 3.56. Clean and healthy environment by gender

		The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Male	N	54	82	136
	%	39.7%	60.3%	100.0%
Female	N	139	130	269
	%	51.7%	48.3%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(1, N = 405) = 5.19, p = 0.023$				

More non-Maltese than Maltese participants would like a clean and healthy environment with no rubbish, noise, dust and pollution (Table 3.57). More respondents from the Harbour regions would like adequate places where to walk, play, do sports or cycle (Southern Harbour) and a cleaner and healthier environment (Northern Harbour), than those from other regions (Table 3.58).

Table 3.57. Clean and healthy environment by nationality

		The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	169	203	372
	%	45.4%	54.6%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	27	10	37
	%	73.0%	27.0%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(1, N = 409) = 10.23, p = 0.001$				

Table 3.58. Adequate places and clean environment as areas for improvement by region

		Adequate places where I can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle[1]				The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	35	19	54	N	26	28	54
	%	64.8%	35.2%	100.0%	%	48.1%	51.9%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	40	41	81	N	52	29	81
	%	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%	%	64.2%	35.8%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	30	48	78	N	27	51	78
	%	38.5%	61.5%	100.0%	%	34.6%	65.4%	100.0%
Western	N	20	46	66	N	31	35	66
	%	30.3%	69.7%	100.0%	%	47.0%	53.0%	100.0%
Northern	N	13	16	29	N	11	18	29
	%	44.8%	55.2%	100.0%	N	37.9%	62.1%	100.0%
Gozo	N	47	52	99	%	47	52	99
	%	47.5%	52.5%	100.0%	N	47.5%	52.5%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N = 407) = 16.49$, $p = 0.006$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N = 407) = 15.32$, $p = 0.009$

When asked what they would change in their locality if they had a magic wand, a healthier and cleaner environment featured most prominently in their choices, as well as more green and nature spaces. Safety was another issue mentioned frequently by the participants (Table 3.59).

Table 3.59. What adolescents would change if they had a magic wand

Aspects adolescents would like to change	N
Healthier environment (cars, construction, pollution, noise) and increase cleanliness (litter, rubbish)	100
Increase green space and nature	73
Increase safe places for teenagers to meet friends	49
Increase safety in the locality	35
Add safe pedestrian zones/cycle lanes	35
Enhance diversity and respect for everyone, including young people	29
Increase spaces for sports and cycling	26
Improve public transport	10

4 Parents' Voices

Children's play and recreational areas

Figure 4.1 illustrates that most parent participants indicated the need for better play and recreational areas for their children, with 77.1% agreeing that there is a need for more pedestrian areas and less areas for cars. The majority of parents disagreed that their children could go out to play in different weather conditions (81%), that there are well kept bus stops / shelters within walking distance of their homes (69.4%), that their children can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own (62.3%), and that there are enough routes for walking and cycling for children (61.9%). On the other hand, 56.7% agreed that their children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places. Just under one half (48.5%) did not think that there are different types of gardens and open spaces where their children can discover and learn new things whilst playing, 44.3% disagreed that the places for play can also be used by children with a physical disability, young children and parents with pushchairs, and 43.3% disagreed that places for children are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate.

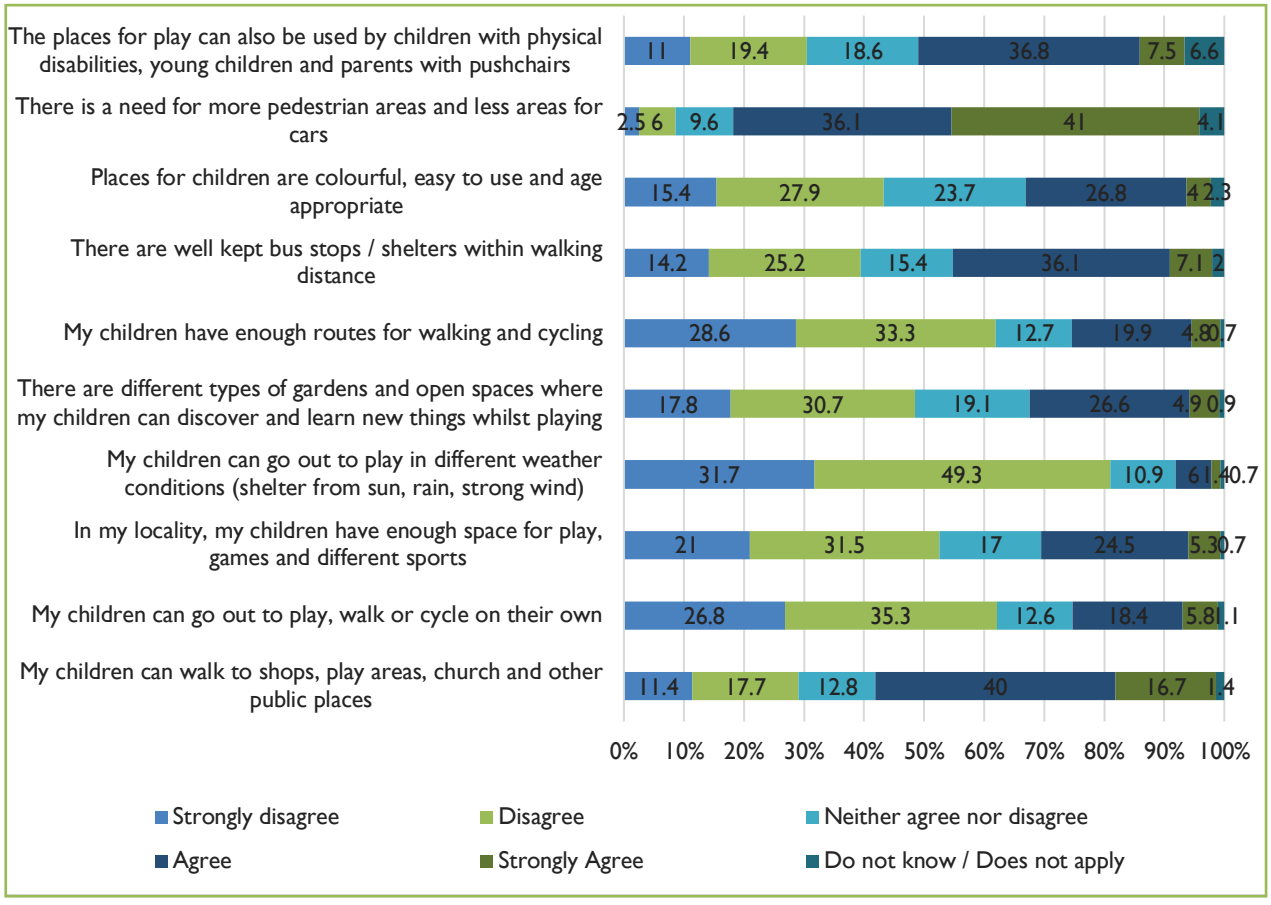

Figure 4.1: Play and recreational activities

Parents of non-Maltese children were more likely to agree than those of Maltese children, that their children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places, that their children can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own and that their children can go out to play in different weather conditions (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Play and recreational activities by nationality

		Maltese	Non-Maltese
My children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places[1**]	Mean	3.30	3.65
	Std. Dev.	1.277	1.171
My children can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own[2***]	Mean	2.36	2.85
	Std. Dev.	1.203	1.360
In my locality, my children have enough space for play, games and different sports[3]	Mean	2.63	2.47
	Std. Dev.	1.218	1.164
My children can go out to play in different weather conditions (shelter from sun, rain, strong wind)[4*]	Mean	1.93	2.15
	Std. Dev.	0.874	1.018
There are different types of gardens and open spaces where my children can discover and learn new things whilst playing[5]	Mean	2.72	2.52
	Std. Dev.	1.189	1.154
My children have enough routes for walking and cycling[6]	Mean	2.40	2.23
	Std. Dev.	1.230	1.176
There are well kept bus stops/shelters within walking distance[7]	Mean	2.95	3.13
	Std. Dev.	1.223	1.194
Places for children are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate[8]	Mean	2.75	2.83
	Std. Dev.	1.135	1,149
There is a need for more pedestrian areas and less areas for cars[9]	Mean	4.14	4.06
	Std. Dev.	0.978	1.168
The places for play can also be used by children with physical disabilities, young children and parents with pushchairs[10]	Mean	3.12	3.04
	Std. Dev.	1.173	1.205

Note: [1]t(191)=-3.421, p=0.001, [2]t(177)=-4.260, p=0.000, [3]t(1500)=1.570, p=0.117, [4]t(178)=-2.543, p=0.012, [5]t(1498)=1.937, p=0.053, [6]t(1501)=1.646, p=0.100, [7]t(1473)=-1.736, p=0.083, [8]t(1469)=-0.781, p=0.435, [9]t(167)=0.748, p=0.455, [10]t(1402)=0.740, p=0.459, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Parents of older children in comparison to those of younger children, were more likely to agree that their children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places, can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own, can go out to play in different weather conditions, have enough routes for walking and cycling, that there are well kept bus stops within walking distance in comparison to parents of younger children. On the other hand, parents of younger children, in comparison to those of older children, were more likely to agree that in their locality there are places for children that are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate (Table 4.2).

Table 4.2. Play and recreational activities by age of children

		Age 0-11	Age 12-17
My children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places[1***]	Mean	2.97	3.86
	Std. Dev.	1.307	1.050
My children can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own[2***]	Mean	2.01	3.02
	Std. Dev.	1.057	1.255
In my locality, my children have enough space for play, games and different sports[3]	Mean	2.69	2.64
	Std. Dev.	1.210	1.224
My children can go out to play in different weather conditions (shelter from sun, rain, strong wind)[4**]	Mean	1.91	2.07
	Std. Dev.	.860	.951
There are different types of gardens and open spaces where my children can discover and learn new things whilst playing[5]	Mean	2.76	2.68
	Std. Dev.	1.174	1.202
My children have enough routes for walking and cycling[6**]	Mean	2.32	2.58
	Std. Dev.	1.167	1.294
There are well kept bus stops/shelters within walking distance[7**]	Mean	2.87	3.11
	Std. Dev.	1.225	1.212
Places for children are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate[8]	Mean	2.84	2.70
	Std. Dev.	1.145	1.124
There is a need for more pedestrian areas and less areas for cars[9]	Mean	4.14	4.06
	Std. Dev.	.993	.996
The places for play can also be used by children with physical disabilities, young children and parents with pushchairs[10]	Mean	3.17	3.07
	Std. Dev.	1.176	1.155

Note: [1]t(1023)=-12.327, p=0.000, [2]t(799)=-13.702, p=0.000, [3]t(1074)=0.762, p=0.446, [4]t(1071)=-2.786, p=0.005, [5]t(1071)=1.047, p=0.296, [6]t(832)=-3.329, p=0.001, [7]t(1053)=-3.067, p=0.002, [8]t(1048)=1.937, p=0.053, [9]t(1028)=1.177, p=0.239, [10]t(1002)=1.277, p=0.202, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

A one-way ANOVA and post-hoc comparisons using the Games-Howell test revealed significant differences between parents from Gozo, who were more likely to agree that their children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places, compared to those from Southern Harbour (p=0.000), Northern Harbour (p=0.000), South Eastern (p=0.039) and Northern (p=0.017) regions (Table 4.3). Similar analysis using the Games-Howell post-hoc test also revealed that parents from Gozo were more likely to agree that their children can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own, compared with parents from the Harbour regions (p=0.000), Northern Harbour (M=2.10, SD=1.05, p=0.000), South Eastern (p=0.000) and Northern (p=0.000) regions. Meanwhile, parents from the South Eastern region were most likely to agree that their children have enough walking and cycling routes compared to those from the Harbour and Northern regions (p=0.000). Parents from the South Eastern region were also more likely to agree that there are well kept bus stops within walking distance, compared to those from the Northern Harbour (p=0.000), Northern region (p=0.000) and Gozo (p=0.002) (Table 4.3).

A one-way ANOVA and Tukey's range test revealed that parents from the South Eastern region were more likely to agree that their children have enough space for playing games and different sports, compared to those from the Harbour and Northern regions (p=0.000). Parents from the Northern Harbour were less likely to agree that their children can go out to play in different weather conditions, when compared to those from South Eastern (p=0.000), Western (p=0.041) and Gozo (p=0.000) regions. Parents from the South Eastern region were more likely to agree that there are different types of gardens and open spaces where their children can discover and learn new things whilst playing compared to those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.01) and Northern Harbour (p=0.000). Parents from the South Eastern region were also more likely to agree that places for children are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate compared to those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000), Northern region (p=0.020) and Gozo (p=0.003). Parents from the South Eastern region were also more likely to agree that the places for play can be used by children with a physical disability, young children and parents with pushchairs when compared with those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.049), Northern Harbour (p=0.026) and Northern region (p=0.023) (Table 4.3).

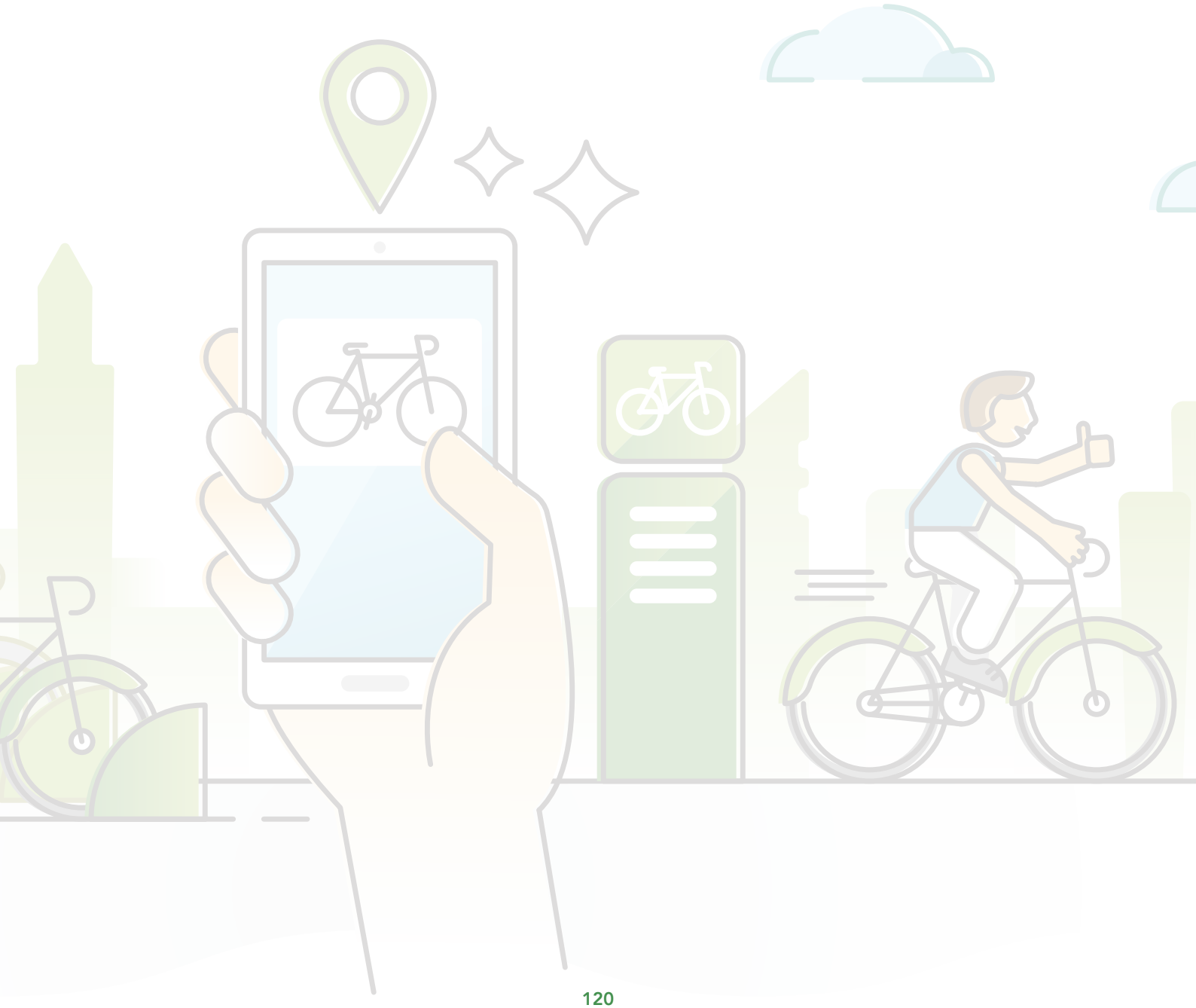

Table 4.3. Play and recreational activities by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
My children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places[1***]	Mean	3.06	3.17	3.35	3.57	3.28	3.64
	Std. Dev.	1.331	1.280	1.225	1.205	1.256	1.227
My children can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own[2***]	Mean	2.03	2.10	2.47	2.67	2.18	2.97
	Std. Dev.	1.099	1.047	1.179	1.147	1.148	1.368
In my locality, my children have enough space for play, games and different sports[3***]	Mean	2.32	2.25	2.96	2.88	2.43	2.88
	Std. Dev.	1.179	1.127	1.197	1.142	1.171	1.230
My children can go out to play in different weather conditions (shelter from sun, rain, strong wind)[4***]	Mean	1.82	1.79	2.07	2.07	1.94	2.07
	Std. Dev.	.816	.783	.873	.889	.924	1.002
There are different types of gardens and open spaces where my children can discover and learn new things whilst playing[5***]	Mean	2.56	2.47	2.90	2.84	2.74	2.76
	Std. Dev.	1.184	1.148	1.168	1.117	1.216	1.210
My children have enough routes for walking and cycling[6***]	Mean	2.03	1.96	2.84	2.63	2.34	2.56
	Std. Dev.	1.063	1.078	1.275	1.301	1.147	1.248
There are well kept bus stops/shelters within walking distance[7***]	Mean	2.99	2.85	3.25	3.00	2.81	2.88
	Std. Dev.	1.244	1.293	1.144	1.193	1.185	1.215
Places for children are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate[8***]	Mean	2.50	2.55	3.09	2.88	2.78	2.76
	Std. Dev.	1.076	1.142	1.105	1.096	1.164	1.127
There is a need for more pedestrian areas and less areas for cars[9]	Mean	4.03	4.25	4.10	4.15	4.18	4.06
	Std. Dev.	1.044	.937	.984	.989	1.013	1.036
The places for play can also be used by children with physical disabilities, young children and parents with pushchairs[10**]	Mean	3.04	3.04	3.34	3.12	3.00	3.08
	Std. Dev.	1.165	1.215	1.094	1.177	1.227	1.176

Note: [1]F(5, 1480)=7.995, [2]F(5, 1486)=26.208, [3]F(5, 1491)=19.481, [4]F(5, 1490)=5.974, [5]F(5, 1490)=5.221, [6]F(5, 1491)=23.973, [7]F(5, 1464)=4.901, [8]F(5, 1461)=10.415, [9]F(5, 1431)=1.727, [10]F(5, 1394)=2.965, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

In the focus group discussions with parents in three different regions of Malta and Gozo, parents consistently complained aboutthe lack of spaces and safe areas where their children could play.

Lacking safe spaces for children to play and cycle. Various parents referred to the general lack of safe spaces for their children to play or ride their bicycle in their town or village. This is partly due to the dangers from traffic or else simply due to lack of space:

"There's nowhere to kick a ball with a young boy of 10 who needs to. The roads are very, very dangerous" (Northern Harbour)

"For small kids to learn how to cycle their bike, either very late in the evening when everybody is watching the news and there are no cars in the streets, or I don't know, somewhere where it is not allowed" (Northern Harbour)

"Sometimes we do like to take the kids for a bike ride even using the car to arrive there. In the vicinity it's really difficult to find such a spot" (South Eastern)

"It-tfal m'għandomx fejn jiġru bir-rota" / "Children do not have anywhere to ride their bikes" (Gozo)

Decreasing spaces for children. Parents mentioned that child-friendly spaces in several towns and villages are decreasing. For example, village squares and streets which were used by children to play and ride their bicycles are no longer a safe option due to the dangers posed by traffic.

"When we were young we used to play in the street because the number of cars at that time was not close to anything today" (South Eastern)

"In the old days when we used to have the square of the village where there would be no cars" (Gozo)

"I used to go with my bicycle everyday on the road when I was young, now I would not allow it, not even one of my children to go there with the bicycle" (Gozo)

Parents in Gozo also feel that spaces to relax as a family are also decreasing in part due to private businesses such as restaurants being given priority over public spaces such as promenades and beaches. Some parents mentioned that more enforcement is needed to avoid private organisations from taking over public land:

"Mainly it's the business mentality which is taking up all spaces from under the child's noses. There's not a single square where I live or where I stay in the summer that has not been occupied by tables from restaurants or bars or pubs" (Gozo)

"There is a small green area in the promenade… My children used to love playing football there because if they fall they do not hurt themselves. Now it's being occupied by tables from a restaurant nearby" (Gozo)

"I would simply like to see more control. Simply a bit of more control with balance between children, the population and the business" (Gozo)

What parents would like to improve

Need for more diverse activities and equipment in playgrounds. Some parents mentioned that the playgrounds available to their children are a replica of each other, with very similar or identical equipment. Furthermore, they do not believe that the equipment is very attractive to children nowadays, and opined that child-friendly spaces such as playgrounds need to provide more play opportunities and be designed to attract children and teenagers away from their computers:

"You know, they put the swings, the play area, the usual four equipment there, but what about the rest? The kids nowadays, today's kids are smart you know, they like technology, innovation" (South Eastern)

"There's a problem that some of the playgrounds are a replica of each other, so if I go to a playground here and I go to one nearby, I might find the same equipment completely" (Northern Harbour)

"The playgrounds that we have are very, very small. There's nowhere to run let alone to ride a bike. Apart from the fact that many of the playgrounds that we have, they put signs up that they cannot ride a bicycle, they cannot play with a ball" (Gozo)

"I would like to see somewhere in the town vicinity also some bicycle tracks or something where you can really go on, a skateboard for example or the rollerblades" (South Eastern)

Need for more spaces for older children and teenagers to meet and socialise. Parents mentioned that there is an urgent need for more spaces for older children and teenagers to meet and socialise, since most of the available places are designed for younger children. Several parents mentioned that teenagers frequently end up going to the playground simply because it is the only option available to them where they can meet with their friends:

"Not only kids do not have enough space where to recreate themselves but it's a bigger problem when we speak about teens… their needs are not being met in the playing fields and sometimes as a result their behaviour starts to get a bit rowdy" (South Eastern)

"I think that especially for teenagers there is not much recreational space in the village at all. For example, this locality has plenty of small playgrounds for the younger ages but as soon as you reach an age, 10+ there is nowhere to go to. I mean I'm talking like somewhere, a basketball hoop, like even items on the playground can be there, like a concrete table tennis" (South Eastern)

"Yes we're going to the playground but they go there literally to sit and to talk because there's nothing else to do"(South Eastern)

Parents from Gozo on the other hand, mentioned that there is a lack of indoor public spaces where children can play and meet their friends in winter.

"…Spaces for children are totally, totally lacking, both indoors and outdoors. I mean indoors is totally zero, nil, in my opinion there's nothing. I mean if it's winter you just have to scratch your head and see how they're going to expend their energy" (Gozo)

"Fix-xitwa nsibha ħafna diffiċli fejn se noħrogom biex jiltaqgħu ma' tfal ohra, fejn jistgħu jqattgħu l-ħin barra u mhux quddiem it-television / "In winter I find it very difficult to think of where to take them out to meet other children, where they can spend some time outside and not in front of the television" (Gozo)

They also underlined the need for more youth groups where adolescents could meet and socialise.

*"Dari kien hawn anki fil-Knisja kien ikollhom ċentri fejn jiġbru ż-żgħażagh u kienu jinghaqdu as a group u kieku jqattgħu ċertu sie*għat flimkien. Illum dawn sparixxew, ma nafx x' ġara… Hawn bżonn enormi ta' dawn l-għaqdiet" /"In my time there were centres within the Church which used to gather teenagers and they used to meet up as a group and spend some hours together. Nowadays, these vanished, I don't know what happened…There is a great need for these groups"(Gozo)

"I would like to see more voluntary youth organisations with the aim not only to avoid substance abuse and such things, but also for better values" (Gozo)

Need to give spaces back to children and families. A good practice shared by some parents was that of closing the village/town square or main streets to traffic either at specific times/days of the week or pedestrianising the square:

"In my locality they also close the road at the weekend, they close the main road and it is really a breath of fresh air, that whilst you are eating at a restaurant your children can run around with the scooters" (Gozo)

"They renovated the square, I felt that it was a step in a positive direction because before the square was basically a parking lot and now it is pedestrianised" (Gozo)

Accessibility

In the FGD, parents raised a number of issues of accessibility of play, recreational and nature areas.
Lack of accessibility around parks and playgrounds. Various participants highlighted the lack of accessibility of the areas surrounding parks and playgrounds:

"Sakemm qed tidħol fil-playground hija accessible u hija accessible for all imma kif toħroġ mix-xatba 'l barra tal-playground tista' tinsiha" / "As long as you are in the playground it is accessible, and it is accessible for all, but as soon as you go out from the playground gate, you can forget it" (South Eastern)

"If you're talking about accessibility, with regards to perhaps to children who make use of a wheelchair, if I'm not mistaken… the only playing field that I'm aware of (in Gozo) that has a swing which is accessible for a wheelchair user is the one in Sannat" (Gozo)

A parent spoke of the need to include spaces for children with an intellectual disability, apart from those with a physical disability:

"In the playing fields here and there we see some equipment which is meant for kids with physical disability, but then there is little to be seen for those that are challenged intellectually, so there isn't much for challenging behaviours or quiet corners where kids have tantrums and

similar situations… that might be a nice step forward to think of quiet corners or quiet areas for kids to calm down when they feel the environment isn't helping them" (South Eastern)

Lack of accessibility in pavements. Parents complained about narrow pavements, construction sites, garage ramps, shop signs or garbage bins blocking the pavement, and a lack of ramps from the pavement to the street level:

"I have a lot of places in walking distance but I just can't go there walking with the children, it's impossible. First of all, half of the pavement is full of construction sites" (Northern Harbour)

"It's really unsafe to walk with a pram let alone for a wheelchair bound person. Because the pavement is used for everything; as a garage ramp, and you have to go down a slope… garbage bags, planters…" (South Eastern)

"I needed a stronger pushchair just because the roads are so bad, the pavements are not wide enough… but it isn't a big thing to widen the pavements or at least a part of it…" (Northern Harbour)

"Ikollom il-boroż fl-art jew inkella l-ilma tal-air condition isir aħdar u jibda jiżloq, mhux l-ewwel darba li tara t-tfal jiżolqu… anki għal-dawn li jkunu bil-pushchairs msieken ikun difficli ħafna, iridu jaqbżu fit-triq u jerġgħu jitilgħu l-bankina" / "They have bins on the ground or else the air conditioner water becomes green and becomes slippery, it's not the first time that you see children slipping… even for those who have pushchairs, it's very difficult, they have to go down on the street and go up onto the pavement again" (South Eastern)

"Regarding accessibility, I take my baby out with the pushchair and the pavements are not accessible anywhere… parts of them have ramps and then there are shop signs on the pavement, door steps, I have to go down on to the road" (Gozo)

"When I was abroad…instead of a pavement they had sort of a railing and sometimes that's a better solution than having a pavement because you don't have to go up and down all the time. If you can't do a ramp at least do a flat surface where you can go with the bike or with the pushchair" (Northern Harbour)

Accessibility limited to car drivers. Some parents mentioned that particular spaces for children are only accessible to parents who have a car and can drive, making them inaccessible on foot or by bicycle:

"L-eqreb ground li għandna jiġifieri bħala park huwa San Anton li fil-każ tiegħi bilfors irrid naqbad il-karozza" / "The closest ground we have, in terms of a park, is San Anton that in my case, I have to go by car" (Northern Harbour)

"I don't really want or wish to get in a car to go somewhere, it should be possible for children to say ok I meet with my friends, we take our bicycle and we go there" (South Eastern)

"The playground is accessible but it's only accessible as long as you go there by car" (South Eastern)

Nature Areas

Just over one half of the parents (51.3%) agreed that there are places in their locality where children can enjoy nature such as gardens, parks, and open areas, and that these places are within 10 minutes' walk from home (52.5%) (Figure 4.2). Most parents did not agree that their children can visit these areas on their own (69.2%) or that these places have public toilets which children could easily use (60.3%) whilst one half did not agree that there are nature trails for children (Figure 4.2).

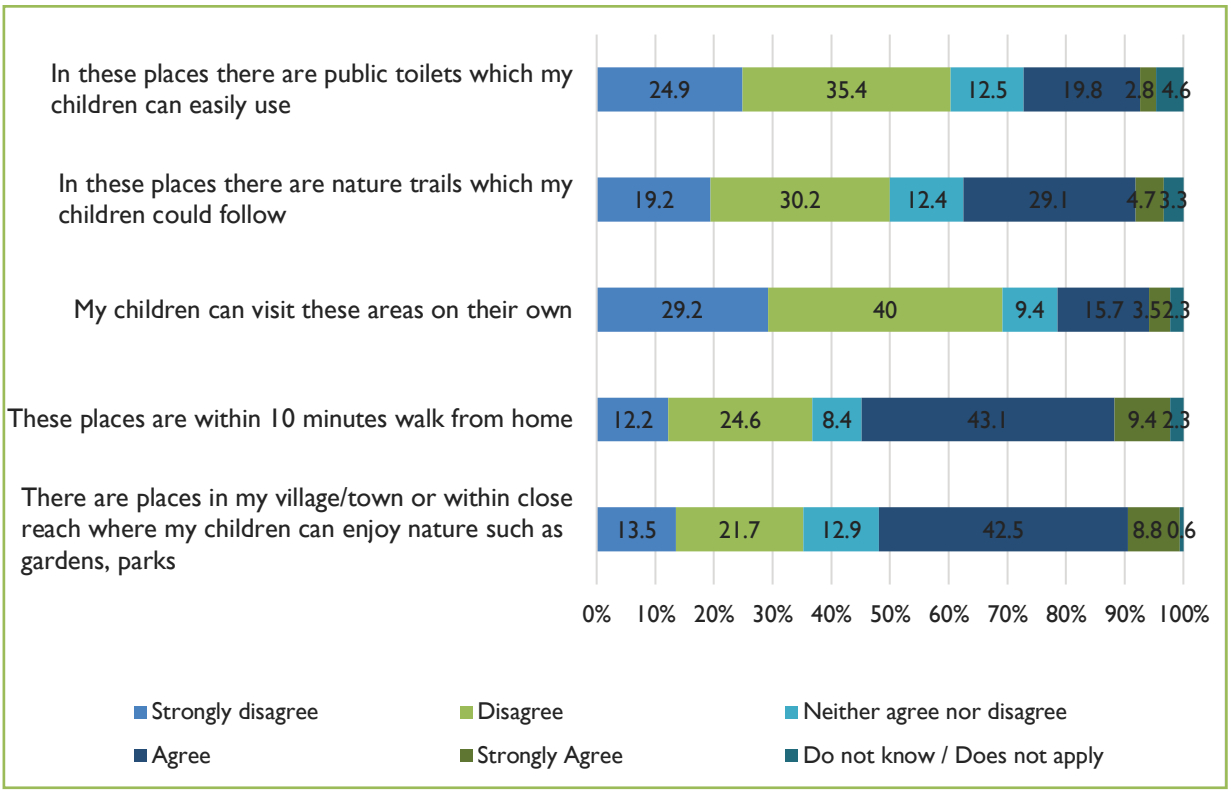

Figure 4.2. Parents' views on nature areas for their children

Parents of older children were more likely to agree than those of younger children, that their children can visit nature areas on their own and that there are nature trails that their children are able to follow in these places (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4. Nature areas for children by age of child

		Age 0-11	Age 12-17
There are places in my village/town or within close reach where my children can enjoy nature such as gardens, parks, natural open areas (trees, plants, water, animals)[1]	Mean	3.21	3.09
	Std. Dev.	1.220	1.233
These places are within 10 minutes walk from home[2]	Mean	3.14	3.20
	Std. Dev.	1.225	1.236
My children can visit these areas on their own[3***]	Mean	1.83	2.87
	Std. Dev.	0.872	1.214
In these places there are nature trails which my children could follow[4*]	Mean	2.68	2,84
	Std. Dev.	1.216	1.249
In these places there are public toilets which my children can use easily[5]	Mean	2.36	2.44
	Std. Dev.	1.180	1.155
Note: [1]t(1067)=1.506, p=0.132, [2]t(1047)=-0.803, p=0.422, [3]t(683)=-15.094, p=0.000, [4]t(1034)=-2.094, p=0.036, [5]t(1022)=-1.016, p=0.310, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001			

Parents of non-Maltese children tended to agree more that their children can visit these green areas on their own than Maltese parents (Table 4.5).

Table 4.5. Nature areas for children by nationality

		Maltese	Non-Maltese
There are places in my village/town or within close reach where my children can enjoy nature such as gardens, parks, natural open areas (trees, plants, water, animals)[1]	Mean	3.11	3.14
	Std. Dev.	1.234	1.255
These places are within 10 minutes walk from home[2]	Mean	3.13	3.14
	Std. Dev.	1.250	1.244
My children can visit these areas on their own[3*]	Mean	2.20	2.44
	Std. Dev.	1.130	1.241
In these places there are nature trails which my children could follow[4]	Mean	2.69	2.66
	Std. Dev.	1.240	1.178
In these places there are public toilets which my children can use easily[5]	Mean	2.37	2.39
	Std. Dev.	1.164	1,138
Note: [1]t(1493)=-0.238, p=0.812, [2]t(1467)=-0.083, p=0.934, [3]t(171)=-2.224, p=0.027, [4]t(1447)=0.296, p=0.767, [5]t(1428)=-0.125, p=0.901, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001			

A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test also revealed that parents from the Western region were more likely to agree that there are places within close reach where their children can enjoy nature compared to those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000) and South Eastern region (p=0.045). Parents from Gozo were more likely to agree that these places are within ten minutes' walk from home, compared to those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000) and that their children can visit these areas on their own, compared with those from all other regions (p=0.000; p=0.049). Parents from the Western region were more likely to agree that in these places there are nature trails which their children could follow, compared with those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000). Finally, parents from the Southern Harbour were most likely to agree that in these places there are public toilets which their children can easily use, when compared with those from the Northern Harbour (p=0.000), who were least likely to agree (Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. Nature areas for children by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
There are places in my village/ town or within close reach where my children can enjoy nature such as gardens, parks, natural open areas (trees, plants, water, animals)[1***]	Mean	2.71	2.63	3.23	3.61	3.45	3.38
	Std. Dev.	1.237	1.222	1.161	1.049	1.172	1.191
These places are within 10 minutes walk from home[2***]	Mean	2.93	2.74	3.18	3.41	3.25	3.44
	Std. Dev.	1.234	1.258	1.233	1.102	1.257	1.198
My children can visit these areas on their own[3***]	Mean	1.90	1.94	2.27	2.33	2.13	2.71
	Std. Dev.	.967	1.012	1.109	1.127	1.089	1.280
In these places there are nature trails which my children could follow[4***]	Mean	2.41	2.17	2.79	3.10	2.97	2.94
	Std. Dev.	1.153	1.101	1.208	1.197	1.250	1.244
In these places there are public toilets which my children can use easily[5***]	Mean	2.54	2.13	2.48	2.47	2.24	2.43
	Std. Dev.	1.212	1.109	1.156	1.162	1.136	1.153

Note: [1]F(5, 1485)=26.96, [2]F(5, 1460)=12.821, [3]F(5, 1458)=20.389, [4]F(5, 1441)=21.040, [5]F(5, 1421)=4.844, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Most parents (65.0%) go to the nature areas on foot, followed by 32.2% who go by car; less than 2% go by bicycle or bus (Figure 4.3). Close to one half (46.6%) visit these places less than once a month, while only one third (33.9%) go there frequently (once per week or more) and 3.3% everyday (Figure 4.4).

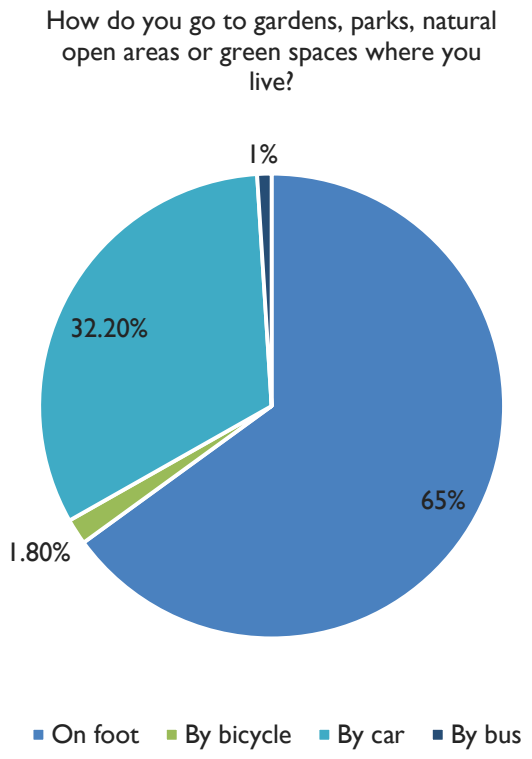

Figure 4.3. Mode of transport to green spaces

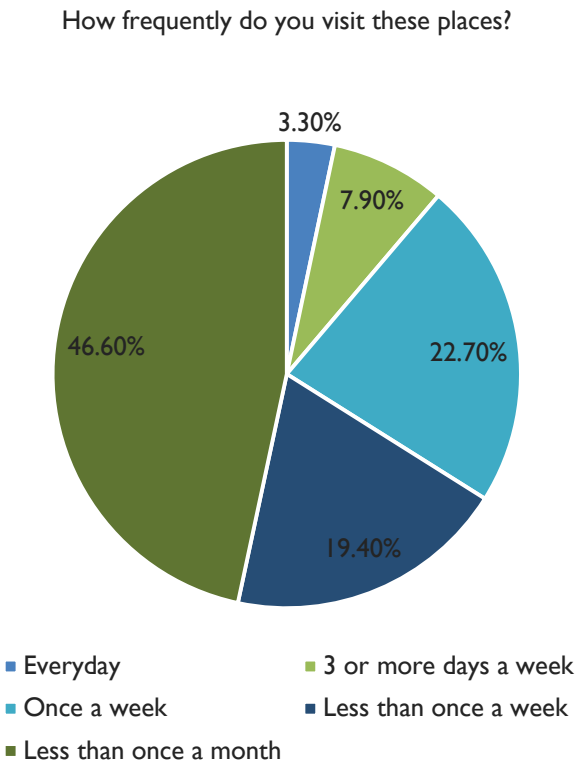

Figure 4.4. Frequency of visits to green spaces

More parents of younger children were likely to visit the nature areas at least once a week or more often, than those with older children (Table 4.7).

Table 4.7. Frequency of visits to green spaces by children's age

		Everyday	3 or more days a week	Once a week	Less than once a week	Less than once a month	Total
Age 0-11	N	20	57	155	123	267	622
	%	3.2%	9.2%	24.9%	19.8%	42.9%	100.0%
Age 12-17	N	18	29	69	68	211	395
	%	4.6%	7.3%	17.5%	17.2%	53.4%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(4, N=1017) = 14.70$, $p = 0.005$							

Over half of non-Maltese parents (57.2%) were likely to visit these places at least once a week or more frequently, compared to just 31.3% of Maltese parents (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Frequency of visits to green spaces by nationality

		Everyday	3 or more days a week	Once a week	Less than once a week	Less than once a month	Total
Maltese	N	36	81	278	244	622	1261
	%	2.9%	6.4%	22.0%	19.3%	49.3%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	11	31	42	30	33	147
	%	7.5%	21.1%	28.6%	20.4%	22.4%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(4, N=1408) = 67.03$, p = 0.000							

Parents in the Northern region and Gozo visited the nature areas the most frequently, whilst those from the Southern Harbour were the least likely to do so (Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 Frequency of visits to green spaces by region

How frequently do you visit green places?							
		Everyday	3 or more days a week	Once a week	Less than once a week	Less than once a month	Total
Southern Harbour	N	5	9	44	41	120	219
	%	2.3%	4.1%	20.1%	18.7%	54.8%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	8	24	47	50	154	283
	%	2.8%	8.5%	16.6%	17.7%	54.4%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	11	22	56	63	147	299
	%	3.7%	7.4%	18.7%	21.1%	49.2%	100.0%
Western	N	5	7	18	28	41	99
	%	5.1%	7.1%	18.2%	28.3%	41.4%	100.0%
Northern	N	6	20	71	37	75	209
	%	2.9%	9.6%	34.0%	17.7%	35.9%	100.0%
Gozo	N	12	29	84	53	117	295
	%	4.1%	9.8%	28.5%	18.0%	39.7%	100.0%
Note: $\chi^2(20, N=1404) = 54.77$, p = 0.000							

When asked which activities they would likely carry out when visiting the nature areas, the three preferred activities were enjoying greenery (58.2%), supervising or playing with children (55.1%) and sitting and relaxing (53.4%). The activities least selected were meeting/socialising with people (21.1%), jogging/running (16.0%) and other sports (11.5%) (Table 4.10).

Table 4.10. Activities engaged by parents in nature areas

	N	%
Enjoy greenery	884	58.2%
Supervise or play with children	837	55.1%
Sit and relax	811	53.4%
Walk (for pleasure, for transport)	707	46.5%
Picnic	603	39.7%
Walk the dog	361	23.8%
Cycle	358	23.6%
Meet/socialise with people	321	21.1%
Jogging/running	243	16.0%
Other sports	175	11.5%

Parents of younger children, compared to those of older children, spend more time supervising or playing with children and enjoying picnics (Table 4.11).

Table 4.11. Activities engaged by parents in nature areas by age of child

	Supervising or playing with children[1]				Picnics[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Age 0-11	N	469	189	658	N	280	378	658
	%	71.3%	28.7%	100.0%	%	42.6%	57.4%	100.0%
Age 12-17	N	107	319	426	N	140	286	426
	%	25.1%	74.9%	100.0%	%	32.9%	67.1%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1084) = 221.26$, $p = 0.000$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1084) = 10.23$, $p = 0.001$								

Non-Maltese parents were more likely than Maltese parents to sit down and relax, walk for pleasure, jog/run, or engage in other sports, and meet and socialise with other people (Tables 4.12, 4.13, 4.14).

Table 4.12. Activities engaged in by parents in nature areas by nationality I

		Sit down and relax[1]				Walk for pleasure[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	715	646	1361	N	618	743	1361
	%	52.5%	47.5%	100.0%	%	45.4%	54.6%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	94	60	154	N	89	65	154
	%	61.0%	39.0%	100.0%	%	57.8%	42.2%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 4.02$, $p = 0.045$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 8.53$, $p = 0.004$

Table 4.13. Activities engaged in by parents in nature areas by nationality II

		Jog/run[1]				Other sports[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	205	1156	1361	N	142	1219	1361
	%	15.1%	84.9%	100.0%	%	10.4%	89.6%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	37	117	154	N	33	121	154
	%	24.0%	76.0%	100.0%	%	21.4%	76.8%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 8.28$, $p = 0.004$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 16.37$, $p = 0.000$

Table 4.14. Activities engaged in by parents in nature areas by nationality III

		Meet and socialise with other people		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	265	1096	1361
	%	19.5%	80.5%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	56	98	154
	%	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%

Note: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 23.64$, $p = 0.000$

More parents from the Northern region walk for pleasure/transport (whilst those from the South Eastern and Harbour regions report doing this the least), play other sports and socialise (those from Gozo report doing this the least) and supervise or play with children (those from the Western region least likely). More parents from the Western region enjoy greenery with those from the Northern Harbour least likely to do so, whilst more parents from the Southern Harbour and Northern regions reported enjoying picnics, with those from Gozo least likely to do so (Table 4.15, Table 4.16, Table 4.17).

Table 4.15. Activities engaged in by parents in nature areas by region (I)

		Walk (for pleasure, for transport)[1]				Other sports[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	101	140	241	N	33	208	241
	%	41.9%	58.1%	100.0%	%	13.7%	86.3%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	132	176	308	N	32	276	308
	%	42.9%	57.1%	100.0%	%	10.4%	89.6%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	130	186	316	N	42	274	316
	%	41.1%	58.9%	100.0%	%	13.3%	86.7%	100.0%
Western	N	56	53	109	N	12	97	109
	%	51.4%	48.6%	100.0%	%	11.0%	89.0%	100.0%
Northern	N	121	99	220	N	35	185	220
	%	55.0%	45.0%	100.0%	%	15.9%	84.1%	100.0%
Gozo	N	165	151	316	N	21	295	316
	%	52.2%	47.8%	100.0%	%	6.6%	93.4%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 18.88$, $p = 0.002$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 13.95$, $p = 0.016$

Table 4.16. Activities engaged in by parents in nature areas by region (II)

	Supervise or play with children[1]				Enjoy greenery[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	145	96	241	N	134	107	241
	%	60.2%	39.8%	100.0%	%	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	178	130	308	N	160	148	308
	%	57.8%	42.2%	100.0%	%	51.9%	48.1%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	167	149	316	N	185	131	316
	%	52.8%	47.2%	100.0%	%	58.5%	41.5%	100.0%
Western	N	50	59	109	N	74	35	109
	%	45.9%	54.1%	100.0%	%	67.9%	32.1%	100.0%
Northern	N	139	81	220	N	137	83	220
	%	63.2%	36.8%	100.0%	%	62.3%	37.7%	100.0%
Gozo	N	156	160	316	N	191	125	316
	%	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%	%	60.4%	39.6%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 17.80$, $p = 0.003$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 11.99$, $p = 0.035$

Table 4.17. Activities engaged by parents in nature areas by region (III)

	Meet/socialise with people[1]				Picnic[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	44	197	241	N	115	126	241
	%	18.3%	81.7%	100.0%	%	47.7%	52.3%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	70	238	308	N	111	197	308
	%	22.7%	77.3%	100.0%	%	36.0%	64.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	70	246	316	N	132	184	316
	%	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%	%	41.8%	58.2%	100.0%
Western	N	21	88	109	N	39	70	109
	%	19.3%	80.7%	100.0%	%	35.8%	64.2%	100.0%
Northern	N	62	158	220	N	98	122	220
	%	28.2%	71.8%	100.0%	%	44.5%	55.5%	100.0%
Gozo	N	54	262	316	N	107	209	316
	%	17.1%	82.9%	100.0%	%	33.9%	66.1%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 11.69$, $p = 0.039$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 16.08$, $p = 0.007$

When asked what features or benefits they like about the nature spaces they frequent, peace and quiet was selected most frequently (61.0%) followed by fresh and clean air (57.4%) and being close to nature (54.1%). Physical exercise was the least selected (25.7%) (Table 4.18).

Table 4.18. What parents like about nature areas

	N	%
Peace and quiet	927	61.0%
Fresh and clean air	872	57.4%
Being close to nature	822	54.1%
Relaxation and winding down	810	53.3%
Appreciating trees, plants, animals and/or wildlife	783	51.5%
Getting away from people and cars	704	46.3%
Physical and mental health	670	44.1%
Physical exercise	390	25.7%

More Maltese than non-Maltese parents chose peace and quiet and relaxation and more often, while the opposite is true in the case of physical exercise and fresh and clean air (Table 4.19, Table 4.20).

Table 4.19. What parents like about nature areas by nationality I

		Peace and quiet[1]				Relaxation and winding down[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	853	508	1361	N	743	618	1361
	%	62.7%	37.3%	100.0%	%	54.6%	45.4%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	72	82	154	N	65	89	154
	%	46.8%	53.2%	100.0%	%	42.2%	57.8%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 14.75$, $p = 0.000$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 8.53$, $p = 0.004$

Table 4.20. What parents like about nature areas by nationality II

		Physical exercise[1]				Fresh and clean air[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	337	1024	1361	N	771	590	1361
	%	24.8%	75.2%	100.0%	%	56.6%	43.4%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	53	101	154	N	100	54	154
	%	34.4%	65.6%	100.0%	%	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 6.75$, $p = 0.009$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1515) = 3.89$, $p = 0.049$.

Parents of younger children chose getting away from people and cars and appreciating trees, plants, animals and/or wildlife, more often than parents of older children (Table 4.21).

Table 4.21. What parents like about nature areas by child's age

		Getting away from people and cars[1]				Appreciating trees, plants, animals and/or wildlife[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Age 0-11	N	309	349	658	N	356	302	658
	%	47.0%	53.0%	100.0%	%	54.1%	45.9%	100.0%
Age12-17	N	173	253	426	N	201	225	426
	%	40.6%	59.4%	100.0%	%	47.2%	52.8%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1084) = 4.22$, $p = 0.040$], Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N = 1084) = 4.96$, $p = 0.026$								

More parents from Gozo frequent nature areas for peace and quiet, with parents from the Southern Harbour least likely to do so, while more parents from the Northern region seek to be close to nature, with those from the Harbour regions least likely to do so (Table 4.22).

Table 4.22. What parents like about nature areas by region

		Peace and quiet[1]				Being close to nature[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	127	114	241	N	117	124	241
	%	52.7%	47.3%	100.0%	%	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	178	130	308	N	152	156	308
	%	57.8%	42.2%	100.0%	%	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	197	119	316	N	169	147	316
	%	62.3%	37.7%	100.0%	%	53.5%	46.5%	100.0%
Western	N	71	38	109	N	63	46	109
	%	65.1%	34.9%	100.0%	%	57.8%	42.2%	100.0%
Northern	N	127	93	220	N	146	74	220
	%	57.7%	42.3%	100.0%	%	66.4%	33.6%	100.0%
Gozo	N	224	92	316	N	173	143	316
	%	70.9%	29.1%	100.0%	%	54.7%	45.3%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 23.33$, $p = 0.000$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 19.81$, $p = 0.001$								

When asked what they would like to improve in the nature spaces, the majority of the participants selected more play areas for young children (52.3%), maintenance (51.9%) and cleanliness (51.6%) (Table 4.23).

Table 4.23 What parents would like to improve in nature areas

	N	%
More play areas for young children	794	52.3%
Maintenance	788	51.9%
Cleanliness	784	51.6%
More nature walking routes	729	48.0%
More plants and flowers	665	43.8%
More animals (ducks, birds)	514	33.8%
More water (e.g. water fountain)	508	33.4%
More seating areas	450	29.6%
More wildlife	422	27.8%

More parents of younger children indicated that they would like more water, animals and play areas for young children (Table 4.24, Table 4.25).

Table 4.24. What parents would like more of by age of child I

		More water[1]				More animals[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Age 0-11	N	229	429	658	N	256	402	658
	%	34.8%	65.2%	100.0%	%	38.9%	61.1%	100.0%
Age 12-17	N	120	306	426	N	102	324	426
	%	28.2%	71.8%	100.0%	%	23.9%	76.1%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi 2(1, N = 1084) = 5.21$, p = 0.022, Note[2]: $\chi 2(1, N = 1084) = 26.17$, p = 0.000

Table 4.25. What parents would like more of by age of child II

		More play areas for young children		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Younger children	N	387	271	658
	%	58.8%	41.2%	100.0%
Older children	N	159	267	426
	%	37.3%	62.7%	100.0%

Note: $\chi 2(1, N = 1084) = 47.77$, p = 0.000

Maltese parents would like to see more improvements in maintenance of nature areas compared to non-Maltese, whilst the latter would like more nature walking routes than the former (Table 4.26).

Table 4.26. What parents would like more of by nationality

		Maintenance[1]				Nature walking routes[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	725	636	1361	N	640	721	1361
	%	53.3%	46.7%	100.0%	%	47.0%	53.0%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	62	92	154	N	88	66	154
	%	40.3%	59.7%	100.0%	%	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi 2(1, N=1515) = 9.38$, p = 0.002, Note[2]: $\chi 2(1, N=1515) = 5.67$, p = 0.017								

More parents from the Northern Harbour selected cleanliness and more animals when compared to the other regions, parents from Gozo were the most to indicate the need for more seating areas, whilst those from the Harbour regions were the most to prefer more plants and flowers (Table 4.27, Table 4.28).

Table 4.27. What parents would like to improve in nature areas by region (I)

		Cleanliness[1]				More seating areas[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	122	119	241	N	57	184	241
	%	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%	%	23.7%	76.3%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	191	117	308	N	105	203	308
	%	62.0%	38.0%	100.0%	%	34.1%	65.9%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	165	151	316	N	82	234	316
	%	52.2%	47.8%	100.0%	%	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%
Western	N	49	60	109	N	31	78	109
	%	45.0%	55.0%	100.0%	%	28.4%	71.6%	100.0%
Northern	N	115	105	220	N	53	167	220
	%	52.3%	47.7%	100.0%	%	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%
Gozo	N	135	181	316	N	118	198	316
	%	42.7%	57.3%	100.0%	%	37.3%	62.7%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 25.44$, p = 0.000, Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 21.48$, p = 0.001								

Table 4.28. What parents would like to improve in nature areas by region (II)

		More plants and flowers[1]			More animals (ducks, birds etc.)[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	117	124	241	N	85	156	241
	%	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%	%	35.3%	64.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	149	159	308	N	125	183	308
	%	48.4%	51.6%	100.0%	%	40.6%	59.4%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	129	187	316	N	94	222	316
	%	40.8%	59.2%	100.0%	%	29.7%	70.3%	100.0%
Western	N	37	72	109	N	32	77	109
	%	33.9%	66.1%	100.0%	%	29.4%	70.6%	100.0%
Northern	N	97	123	220	N	80	140	220
	%	44.1%	55.9%	100.0%	%	36.4%	63.6%	100.0%
Gozo	N	130	186	316	N	94	222	316
	%	41.1%	58.9%	100.0%	%	29.7%	70.3%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 11.18$, $p = 0.048$, Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 12.82$, $p = 0.025$

In the FGD, parents made various recommendations on the need for more family parks where children and families could enjoy nature, frequently referring to Ta Qali National Park as an example of good practice:

"We have to focus as well on the element of design to include more open space, more green areas where the people can run. Something like Ta Qali, Ta Qali you can see the difference." (Northern Harbour)

"Bħal Ta' Qali family park, għaliex il-Gvern ma jagħtix biċċa area fejn jistgħu jiltaqgħu' xi familji, hawnhekk Għawdex" / "Like Ta' Qali family park, why doesn't the Government give an area where families can meet, here in Gozo?" (Gozo)

"In Pieta there is a huge potential of amazing spaces like there's the pinetum... It's an amazing huge area of green.., there's no bins… if there's a bit of supervision there's a lot that could be done and that could be used for recreation in this area" (Northern Harbour)

"But the way it was designed. I can see that it lacks greenery, it lacks water…and I can see that not many people actually use this space. It could be because there is so much concrete and paving that it's just like you are using the road… So we have to focus a little bit on the design to include more green, open space" (Northern Harbour)

"When we're giving permits on development we need to think of green areas" (South East)

Cleanliness and Pollution

Over one half of parent participants (54.0%) agreed that there is a high level of noise and pollution from cars, engines and factories in their locality; close to one half (48.3%) agreed that there is a problem with rubbish, open drains, dust, and dog mess and 38.6% mentioned that public buildings and facilities are frequently vandalised. On the other hand 40% of agreed that places for children such as parks, gardens and playing fields are clean and well kept (Figure 4.5).

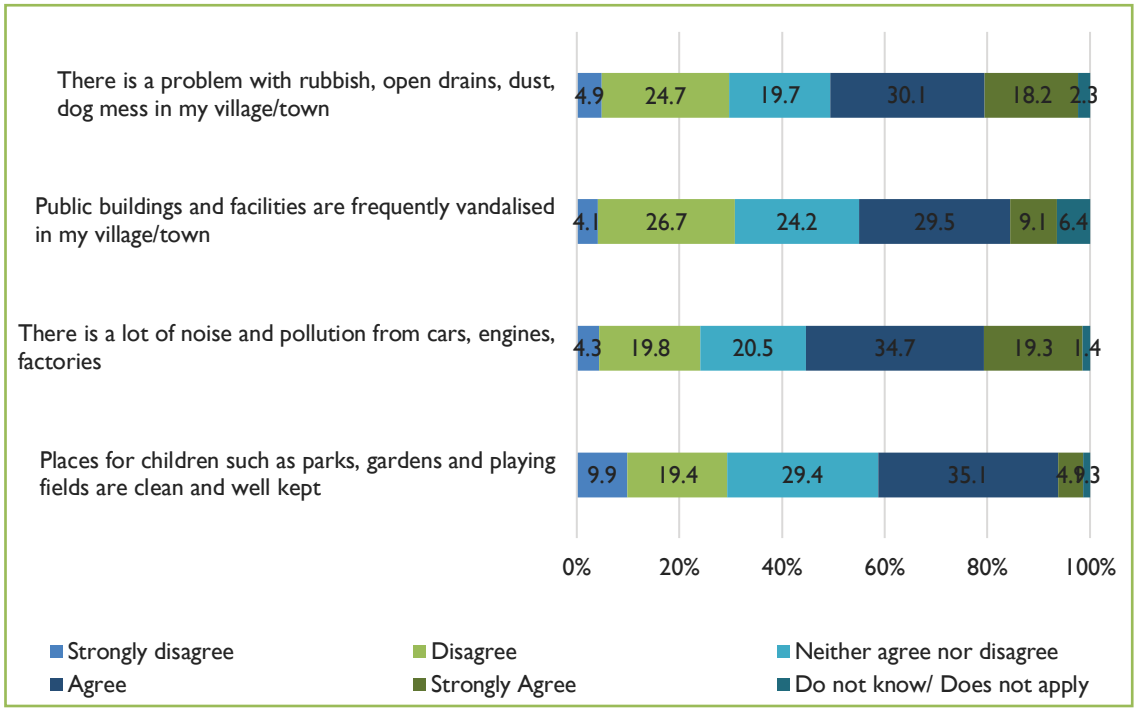

Figure 4.5. Parent's views on cleanliness in their locality

A one-way ANOVA and Tukey's range test revealed that parents from the Western region were more likely to agree that places for children such as parks, gardens and playing fields are clean and well-kept, compared to those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.002) and Northern Harbour (p=0.000) regions, who were least likely to agree (Table 4.29). A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test also revealed that parents from the Northern Harbour were more likely to agree that there is noise and pollution from cars, engines and factories in their area compared with those from the South Eastern, Western, Northern and Gozo regions (p=0.000; p=0.002). Parents from the Southern Harbour were more likely to agree that public buildings and facilities are frequently vandalised in their town or village, compared to those from the South Eastern, Western and Gozo regions (p=0.000; p=0.005). Parents from the Northern Harbour were most likely to agree that there is a problem with rubbish, open drains, dust, or dog mess in their village or town, compared with those from the Southern Harbour, South Eastern, Western and Gozo regions (p=0.000; p=0.049) (Table 4.29).

Table 4.29 Parent's views on cleanliness in their locality by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
Places for children such as parks, gardens and playing fields are clean and well kept[1***]	Mean	2.86	2.80	3.11	3.34	3.14	3.25
	Std. Dev.	1.053	1.060	1.034	.925	1.060	1.105
There is a lot of noise and pollution from cars, engines, factories[2***]	Mean	3.54	3.77	3.42	3.17	3.30	3.32
	Std. Dev.	1.098	1.075	1.161	1.059	1.184	1.163
Public buildings and facilities are frequently vandalised in my village/town[3***]	Mean	3.38	3.34	3.06	2.86	3.34	2.81
	Std. Dev.	1.030	1.083	.997	.935	1.111	1.071
There is a problem with rubbish, open drains, dust, dog mess in my village/ town[4***]	Mean	3.39	3.67	3.20	3.08	3.65	2.94
	Std. Dev.	1.088	1.155	1.219	1.188	1.180	1.092

Note: [1]F(5, 1466)=9.252, [2]F(5, 1466)=8.187, [3]F(5, 1394)=13.604, [4]F(5, 1452)=17.632, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

In the FGD, various parents, most notably those residing in Malta, referred to the issue of pollution for their own and their children's health:

"F'każ ta' pollution, fejn ngħix mimli, għandi tifel minnhom jiena kuljum irid jieħu l-puffs preventer għax inkella jbati bl-użma. It-tabib personali tagħna qal li aħna imissna nużaw il-maskra kuljum mhux minħabba l-COVID biss, tant kemm hawn pollution"/ "With regards to pollution, where I live it is very polluted, one of my sons needs to use an inhaler as he suffers from asthma. Our personal doctor told us that we should be wearing a mask everyday, not just because of COVID, but because there is so much pollution" (Northern Harbour)

"A lot of people walk there, and with the bike, but the exhaust and the quality of air, it's a pity and it's a shame because we're all walking there trying to do our exercise, a half an hour healthy living thing, and probably the effects are not so healthy on us" (South Eastern)

"The noise pollution of the cars when you walk along the promenade, you can't even talk with someone because it's so loud" (Northern Harbour)

Safety and protection

The great majority of parents did not agree that it is safe for their children to walk and cycle on their own (72.1%) or to go out and play on their own (67.1%), and that their locality is safe for children during all times of the day (60.7%). Furthermore between one half to one third disagreed that their children are safe from crime, drugs, violence and abuse (45.9%), that it is safe for their children to use buses or public vehicles in their town/village (40.3%), and that there is adequate street lighting and no dark areas (38.4%). On the other hand, over 40% agreed that there are safe crossings to playing fields, ground parks and schools in their locality, while 30% agreed that their locality is safe from peer bullying and for all children including those with a disability and from other countries (Figure 4.6).

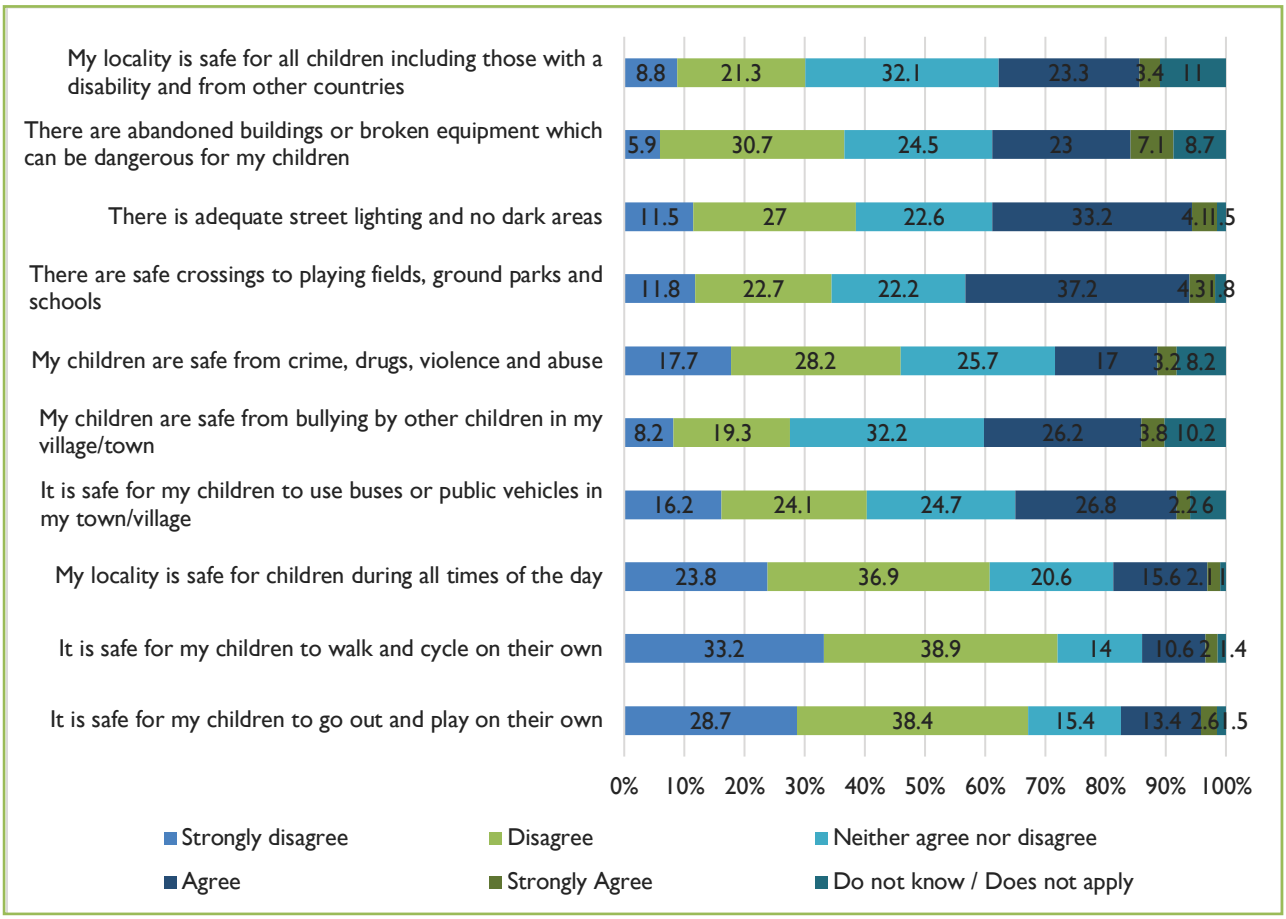

Figure 4.6. Parents' views on safety and protection for their children

Parents of non-Maltese children were more likely to agree than those of Maltese children, that it is safe for their children to go out and play and to walk and cycle on their own, that their locality is safe for children during all times of the day, that it is safe for their children to use public vehicles, and that children are safe from crime, drugs, violence and abuse. Maltese parents on the other hand, were more likely to agree that there are safe crossing to playing fields, parks, and schools than non-Maltese ones (Table 4.30).

Table 4.30. Parents' views on safety and protection by Nationality

		Maltese	Non-Maltese
It is safe for my children to go out and play on their own[1***]	Mean	2.16	2.78
	Std. Dev.	1.046	1.286
It is safe for my children to walk and cycle on their own[2***]	Mean	2.04	2.49
	Std. Dev.	1.001	1.287
My locality is safe for children during all times of the day[3***]	Mean	2.28	2.92
	Std. Dev.	1.034	1.239
It is safe for my children to use buses or public vehicles in my town/village[4***]	Mean	2.69	3.10
	Std. Dev.	1.109	1.144
My children are safe from bullying by other children in my village/town[5]	Mean	2.97	3.04
	Std. Dev.	1.012	1.104
My children are safe from crime, drugs, violence and abuse[6***]	Mean	2.49	3.18
	Std. Dev.	1.075	1.148
There are safe crossings to playing fields, grounds, parks and schools[7**]	Mean	3.03	2.72
	Std. Dev.	1.116	1.175
There is adequate street lighting and no dark areas[8]	Mean	2.92	2.88
	Std. Dev.	1.110	1.145
There are abandoned buildings or broken equipment which can be dangerous for my children[9]	Mean	2.92	3.09
	Std. Dev.	1.072	1.097
My locality is safe for all children including those with a disability and from other countries[10]	Mean	2.90	2.97
	Std. Dev.	1.014	1.076

Note: [1]t(169)=-5.735, p=0.000, [2]t(169)=-4.165, p=0.000, [3]t(172)=-6.025, p=0.000, [4]t(1400)=-4.105, p=0.000, [5]t(1339)=-0.773, p=0.440, [6]t(1371)=-7.072, p=0.000, [7]t(1465)=3.172, p=0.002, [8]t(1467)=0.382, p=0.703, [9]t(1356)=-1.754, p=0.080, [10]t(1318),=-0.814, p=0.416 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Parents of older children were more likely to indicate, than those of younger children, that it is safe for their children to go out and play and to walk and cycle on their own, that their locality is safe for children during all times of the day, that it is safe for children to use buses and public transport, that their children are safe from bullying by other children, that their children are safe from crime, drugs, and violence and that there are safe crossings for their children to go to playing fields, parks and school (Table 4.31).

Table 4.31. Parents' views on safety and protection by age of children

		Age 0 – 11	Age 12 – 17
It is safe for my children to go out and play on their own[1***]	Mean	1.89	2.74
	Std. Dev.	.913	1.135
It is safe for my children to walk and cycle on their own[2***]	Mean	1.80	2.56
	Std. Dev.	.860	1.121
My locality is safe for children during all times of the day[3***]	Mean	2.16	2.62
	Std. Dev.	1.022	1.061
It is safe for my children to use buses or public vehicles in my town/village[4***]	Mean	2.38	3.19
	Std. Dev.	1.059	1.026
My children are safe from bullying by other children in my village/town[5**]	Mean	2.88	3.09
	Std. Dev.	1.023	1.029
My children are safe from crime, drugs, violence and abuse[6**]	Mean	2.45	2.65
	Std. Dev.	1.092	1.071
There are safe crossings to playing fields, grounds, parks and schools[7***]	Mean	2.90	3.21
	Std. Dev.	1.155	1.052
There is adequate street lighting and no dark areas[8]	Mean	2.95	2.95
	Std. Dev.	1.131	1.113
There are abandoned buildings or broken equipment which can be dangerous for my children[9]	Mean	2.93	2.96
	Std. Dev.	1.086	1.024
My locality is safe for all children including those with a disability and from other countries[10]	Mean	2.87	2.97
	Std. Dev.	.991	1.057

Note: [1]t(749)=-12.845, p=0.000, [2]t(722)=-11.757, p=0.000, [3]t(851)=-6.994, p=0.000, [4]t(998)=-12.014, p=0.000, [5]t(946)=-3.183, p=0.002, [6]t(973)=-2.853, p=0.004, [7]t(935)=-4.565, p=0.000, [8]t(1050)=-0.087, p=0.931, [9]t(971)=-0.377, p=0.706, [10]t(943)=-1.461, p=0.144, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test revealed that:

- Parents from Gozo were more likely to agree that it is safe for their children to go out and play or walk and cycle on their own compared with those from the Harbour, South Eastern and Northern regions(p=0.000).
- Parents from the Western region were the most likely to agree that their locality is safe for children during all times of the day, compared with those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000), South Eastern (p=0.011) and Northern (p=0.002) regions.
- Parents from the Northern Harbour were the least likely to agree that it is safe for their children to use buses or public vehicles in their town or village, compared to those from South Eastern (p=0.019), Western (p=0.000) and Gozo regions (p=0.000) (Table 4.32).

A one-way ANOVA and Tukey's range test revealed that:

- Parents from Gozo were most likely to agree that their children are safe from bullying by other children in their town or village, compared with those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.020), Northern Harbour (p=0.031) and South Eastern regions (p=0.009). They were also most likely to agree that their children are safe from crime, drugs, violence and abuse compared with those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000).
- Parents from the South Eastern region were the most likely to agree that there are safe crossings to playing fields, parks and schools compared with those from the Harbour, Northern and Gozo regions (p=0.000; p=0.005).
- Parents from the Northern region were the most likely to agree that there are abandoned buildings or broken equipment which can be dangerous for their children compared with those from the South Eastern (p=0.004) and Western (p=0.005) and Gozo regions (p=0.000).
- Parents from the Western region were the most likely to agree that their locality is safe for all children including those with a disability and those from other countries, compared with those from Southern Harbour (p=0.002), Northern Harbour (p=0.000) and the Northern regions (p=0.025) (Table 4.32).

Table 4.32. Parents' views on safety and protection for children by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
It is safe for my children to go out and play on their own[1***]	Mean	1.86	1.93	2.26	2.35	2.20	2.67
	Std. Dev.	.887	.985	1.002	1.075	1.091	1.219
It is safe for my children to walk and cycle on their own[2***]	Mean	1.81	1.84	2.14	2.23	2.02	2.44
	Std. Dev.	.867	.960	1.006	.977	1.029	1.177
My locality is safe for children during all times of the day[3***]	Mean	2.06	2.01	2.43	2.83	2.33	2.64
	Std. Dev.	1.006	.976	1.013	1.064	1.123	1.085
It is safe for my children to use buses or public vehicles in my town/village[4***]	Mean	2.59	2.46	2.75	3.04	2.59	3.04
	Std. Dev.	1.137	1.124	1.076	.994	1.090	1.117
My children are safe from bullying by other children in my village/ town[5***]	Mean	2.86	2.89	2.86	3.31	2.96	3.15
	Std. Dev.	.959	1.041	1.009	.870	.997	1.077
My children are safe from crime, drugs, violence and abuse[6***]	Mean	2.12	2.27	2.63	3.13	2.64	2.86
	Std. Dev.	1.031	1.034	1.007	1.055	1.132	1.105
There are safe crossings to playing fields, grounds, parks and schools[7***]	Mean	2.95	2.85	3.30	3.13	2.86	2.91
	Std. Dev.	1.123	1.119	1.024	1.177	1.109	1.172
There is adequate street lighting and no dark areas[8]	Mean	2.90	2.83	3.00	3.13	2.80	2.95
	Std. Dev.	1.105	1.121	1.071	1.100	1.114	1.147
There are abandoned buildings or broken equipment which can be dangerous for my children[9***]	Mean	2.97	3.07	2.84	2.73	3.20	2.79
	Std. Dev.	1.107	1.077	1.014	.948	1.141	1.065
My locality is safe for all children including those with a disability and from other countries[10***]	Mean	2.74	2.69	3.06	3.23	2.83	3.00
	Std. Dev.	1.046	.984	.958	.932	1.025	1.063

Note: [1]F(5, 1467)=21.836, [2]F(5, 1467)=15.083, [3]F(5, 1469)=19.727, [4]F(5, 1391)=10.969, [5]F(5, 1328)=5.505, [6]F(5, 1362)=22.545, [7]F(5, 1455)=6.916, [8]F(5, 1458)=2.069, [9]F(5, 1347)=5.571, [10]F(5, 1309)=7.259, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

As in the case of the focus groups with children, the issue of safety was discussed at length by the parents during the three focus groups.

Traffic. Parents mentioned the considerable safety risks experienced by children and young people due to traffic in their locality:

"The roads are very, very dangerous and the traffic is unbelievable even with the sleeping policemen" (Northern Harbour)

"The pavement is really narrow and they are driving at great speed" (Northern Harbour)

"No zebra crossings to cross to the playing field, so it's dangerous to cross the street" (Gozo)

Parents also spoke of the traffic posing safety risks to children riding their bicycles:

"I wish I could take my kids with their bikes for example to the playground but I have two kids with their bikes and one in a pushchair, I do not risk it because there are so many cars on the road, and not only cars but irresponsible driving, I feel that there isn't a sense of responsibility, fast driving, narrow streets" (Gozo)

"I'm scared to even take them across the road because it's really dangerous, and with their bikes forget it…" (Northern Harbour)

A long-term plan to reduce the number of cars and amount of traffic in the roads was considered essential to increase the safety of children:

"U rigward il-karozzi iktar nara li hija xi ħaġa li jkun hawn inqas karozzi u biex ikun hawn tibdil, irid ikun hawn a change in mentality li wieħed jibdel it-tip ta' transport li juża" / "With regards to the cars, I would like to see a reduction in the number of cars but this requires a change in mentality about the type of transport one uses" (Gozo)

*Play areas***.** A number of safety risks in playgrounds were mentioned by various parents particularly from Gozo, such as lack of maintenance of equipment:

"The playgrounds here are unsafe. The slide needs repair, there are some screws coming out, the plastic area on the slide is broken and has not been repaired. Things are not maintained" (Gozo)

"There is an issue of gates, a lack of gates that children can just rush out of the playground and end up on the street" (Gozo)

"There should be procedures about maintenance, because it makes no sense to have a playground, a play area, or whatever if it's not maintained properly because then it's unsafe and so I think it's very, very important…" (Gozo)

Some parents also mentioned that groups of teenagers meet up in playgrounds, with potential risk for younger children:

"Unfortunately playgrounds are also areas for these gangs to start meeting up… we really need some sort of community centres that start doing something with our youth" (Gozo).

Strangers. Participants mentioned that there is a considerable safety risk for children from strangers. They mentioned how some open spaces, which children and young people could potentially enjoy, are sometimes used for loitering by adults:

"The thing is that when you want to take your kids out, there is nowhere that is really, really safe, even if you're there with them, you have to watch out for 'peculiar types'" (Northern Harbour)

"Some of the open spaces in this area are used for loitering.. the whole day people are drinking so there is nowhere for me to go and sit down because if I'm a woman or a young teenager, 13, 14 year old girl, and I want to go and sit down, I'm going to be stared at or I'm not going to feel safe" (Northern Harbour)

Substance use. Drug use in certain localities was mentioned by some participants as another safety risk for their children:

"Several times already in the playgrounds I've found syringes…" (Northern Harbour)

"When it comes to safe spaces, I live in a locality where drugs are common, I find syringes" (Gozo)

"A particular locality there is a huge problem with drugs and it's been there for years and many people know about it but not really something is happening about it" (Gozo)

Hunters. One parent mentioned the safety risk encountered when riding the bike in the countryside with their child due to the presence of hunters:

"They were surrounded by hunters, they're moving around with their bike and literally lead is falling on to them, that my husband had to pack immediately and return back home….I consider that as something unsafe both because of the lead and because in these cases I feel quite threatened, you know, somebody with a gun" (South Eastern)

Supervision and security cameras. Parents recommended safer, supervised places for their children, such as CCTV cameras or the presence of security personnel:

"We do need to have places that are supervised, with cameras" (Gozo)

"Even if there are cameras it doesn't seem to actually deter people from going there and doing this kind of activity. So maybe it would make sense to send someone sometimes, or to have like a security (guard)" (South Eastern)

"Sometimes there are teenagers who do vandalism in there… there is a lot of bad language and for the young children it's not good. It would be good if there is a security to go around and see what is going on… There needs to be a security for the children to be safe otherwise they have to go with their parents" (South Eastern)

"Hija xi ħaġa sabiħa li tara l-cameras, tgħid ghallinqas jekk ġara xi ħaġa seta' wieħed jirreferi għal-footage" / "It is positive to see [CCTV] cameras, because at least if something happens, one can refer to the footage" (South Eastern)

Children's participation in their locality

Over half of parent participants (53.9%) agreed that in their locality, all children are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability. However, only 36.3% agreed that their children have opportunities to participate in projects or activities organised in their locality (outside school) and 48.2% disagreed that their children have opportunities to give their opinion about projects for in their locality (Figure 4.7).

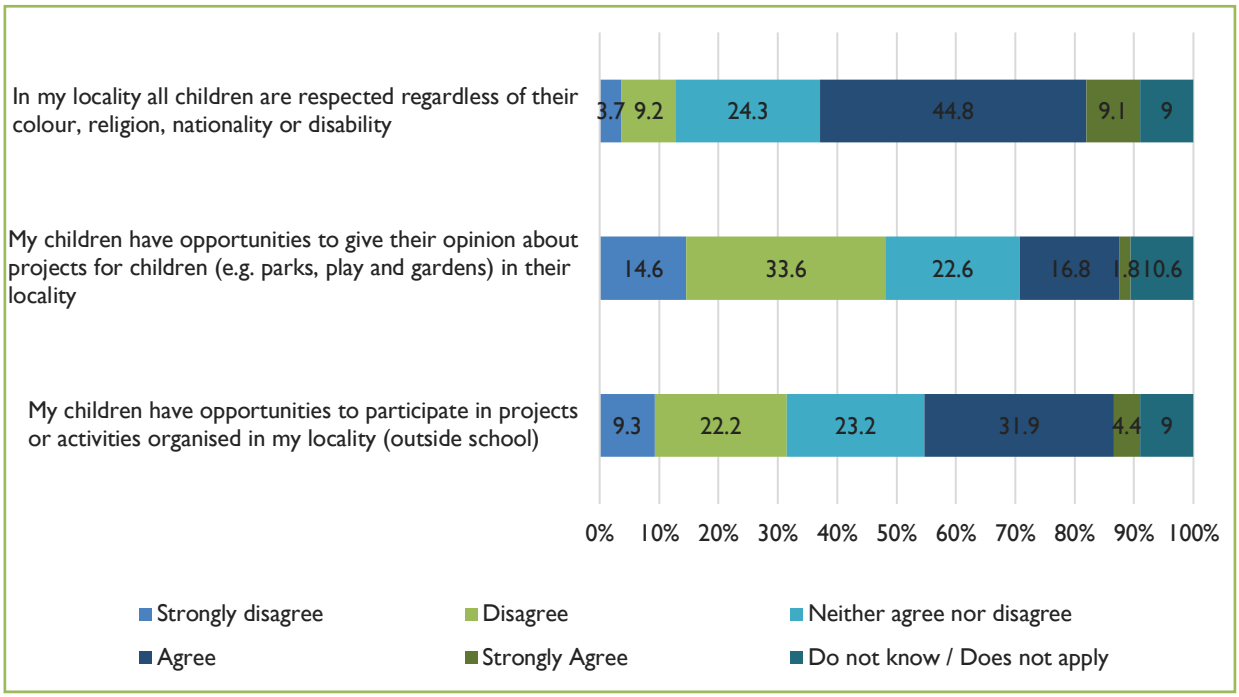

Figure 4.7. Parents' views on life for children in their locality

Parents of younger children were more likely to agree that in their locality, all children are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability when compared to those of older children (Table 4.33).

Table 4.33. Parents' views on life for children in their locality by age of child

		Ages 0-11	Ages 12-17
My children have opportuniries to participate in projects or activities organised in my locality (outside school)[1]	Mean	3.05	2.96
	Std. Dev.	1.083	1.116
My children have opportunities to give their opinion about projects for children (eg parks, play and gardens)[2]	Mean	2.59	2.52
	Std. Dev.	1.067	0.993
In my locality all children are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability[3*]	Mean	3.60	3.44
	Std. Dev.	0.900	0.959

Note: [1]t(967)=1.338, p=0.181, [2]t(831)=0.964, p=0.335, [3]t(785)=2.524, p=0.012, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

A one-way ANOVA and Tukey's range test revealed that parents from Gozo were more likely to agree that their children have opportunities to participate in projects or activities organised in their locality, compared to those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.046), Northern Harbour (p=0.001) and Northern regions (p=0.000). Parents from the South Eastern region were most likely to agree that their children have opportunities to give their opinion about projects for children compared to those from the Harbour regions(p=0.004; p=0.000) (Table 4.34). A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test revealed that parents from the Western region were most likely to agree that all children in their locality are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability compared to those from the Harbour regions (p=0.022; p=0.007) (Table 4.34).

Table 4.34. Parents' views on life for children in their locality by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
My children have opportunities to participate in projects or activities organised in my locality (outside school)[1***]	Mean	2.94	2.86	3.09	3.11	2.71	3.22
	Std. Dev.	1.111	1.104	1.048	.973	1.110	1.095
My children have opportunities to give their opinion about projects for children (eg parks, play and gardens)[2***]	Mean	2.50	2.39	2.71	2.51	2.30	2.64
	Std. Dev.	1.033	1.044	1.036	.932	1.050	1.023
In my locality all children are respected regardless of their colour, religion, nationality or disability[3**]	Mean	3.42	3.39	3.53	3.74	3.44	3.65
	Std. Dev.	.933	.972	.910	.743	.956	.993

Note: [1]F(5, 1345)=6.832, [2]F(5, 1316)=5.206, [3]F(5, 1345)=3.781, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

In the FGD, parents acknowledged the importance of giving children the opportunity to express themselves and voice their opinions on how they can improve their locality as these are often different to the ones expressed by adults:

"Meta tinvolvihom it-tfal u tistaqsihom x'jixtiequ, joħorġu b'ħafna ideat li inti lanqas bħala adult ma jiġuk forsi f'moħħok u tismagħha mil-perspettiva tagħhom… U dejjem joħorġu b'ideat ġodda li huma iktar suitable għalihom f'dawn iż-żminijiet għax forsi li kont nagħmel meta kont tifla, illum il-ġurnata m'għadux applikabbli. Jiġifieri dejjem huwa important li tieħu l-opinjonijiet tagħhom" / "When you involve children and you ask them what they want, they come up with many ideas that we would not have thought of as an adult, so it's important you listen to their perspective… They always come up with new ideas that are more suitable for them these days because maybe what I used to do when I was young is no longer applicable today. So it is always important to listen to their opinions" (Northern Harbour)

"Some of the playgrounds are a replica of each other… that might come because children are not involved in this" (Northern Harbour)

"We do not give them the opportunity to express themselves as far as I know. We never consult with them on official things such as designing playing fields or what sports they would like to see in Gozo" (Gozo)

"The only involvement they do is drawing competitions and sometimes they organise lessons at the civic centre but it's not an active voice" (Northern Harbour)

One parent gave an example of what can be done by referring to a community project which took place in one locality, with children actively involved in the design of a new space:

"I was involved in a project called Proġett Komunitarju, and the children were actually involved in meetings, what they would like to see in the space that was going to be developed, so it was quite interesting to see the ideas of the children… I think that was very positive and in fact now that we are designing the space, we are taking on board the suggestions made by the children. So I think this kind of initiative needs to happen frequently and in all localities." (Northern Harbour)

Satisfaction and areas for improvement

In most instances, the majority of the parents were not satisfied with their locality's physical and social spaces for their children, such as safety from cars and traffic (63.5%), adequate space where children can go out to play and cycle (61.3%) and play different games, sports and physical exercise (55.8%), clean and healthy environment (52.8%), and opportunities for their children to express their opinion and for these to be taken seriously (52.3%). Forty percent and over were also not satisfied that there are sufficient green areas where children can enjoy nature (48%), clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children (44%), safety from crime, drugs and violence (44%), opportunities for children to participate in social activities organised in their locality (40.1%), and suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others (40%) (Figure 4.8, Table 4.35).

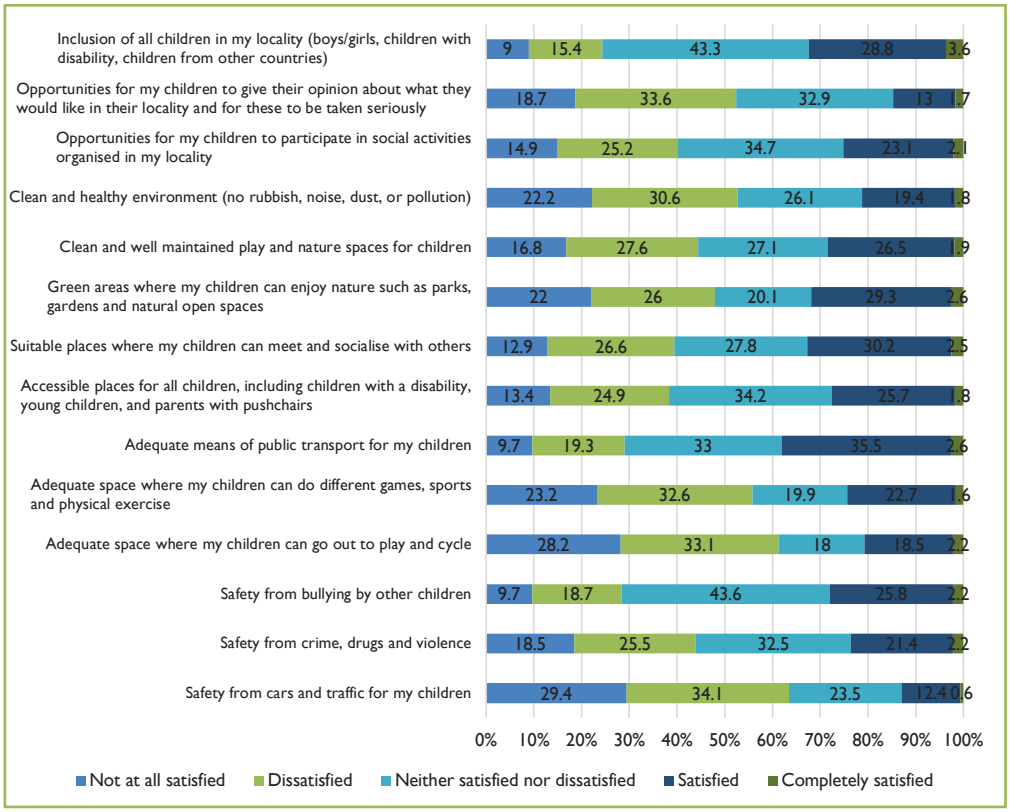

Figure 4.8. Parents' satisfaction with various aspects in the locality for their children

Table 4.35. Parents' most and least satisfied aspects in the locality for their children

Most satisfied (Completely satisfied & satisfied)			Least satisfied (Not at all satisfied & dissatisfied)		
	%	R		%	R
Safety from bullying by peers	63.9%	1	I have opportunities to give my opinion on what I would like in my town/village	41%	1
Buses and public transport in my village/town	61.9%	2	My opinions are taken seriously when I say something	36.6%	2
Safety from dangerous and abandoned buildings	61.3%	3	The environment is clean and healthy (no rubbish, noise, dust, pollution)	33.5%	3
All children and young people are included (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from different countries)	59.1%	4	I have opportunities to give my opinion on what I would like in my town/village	27.4%	4
Adequate places where I can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle	55.6%	5	Safety from cars and traffic	26.9%	5

Parents of older children indicated that in comparison to those of older children, they were more satisfied with safety from cars and traffic for their children and with adequate means of public transport for their children (Table 4.36).

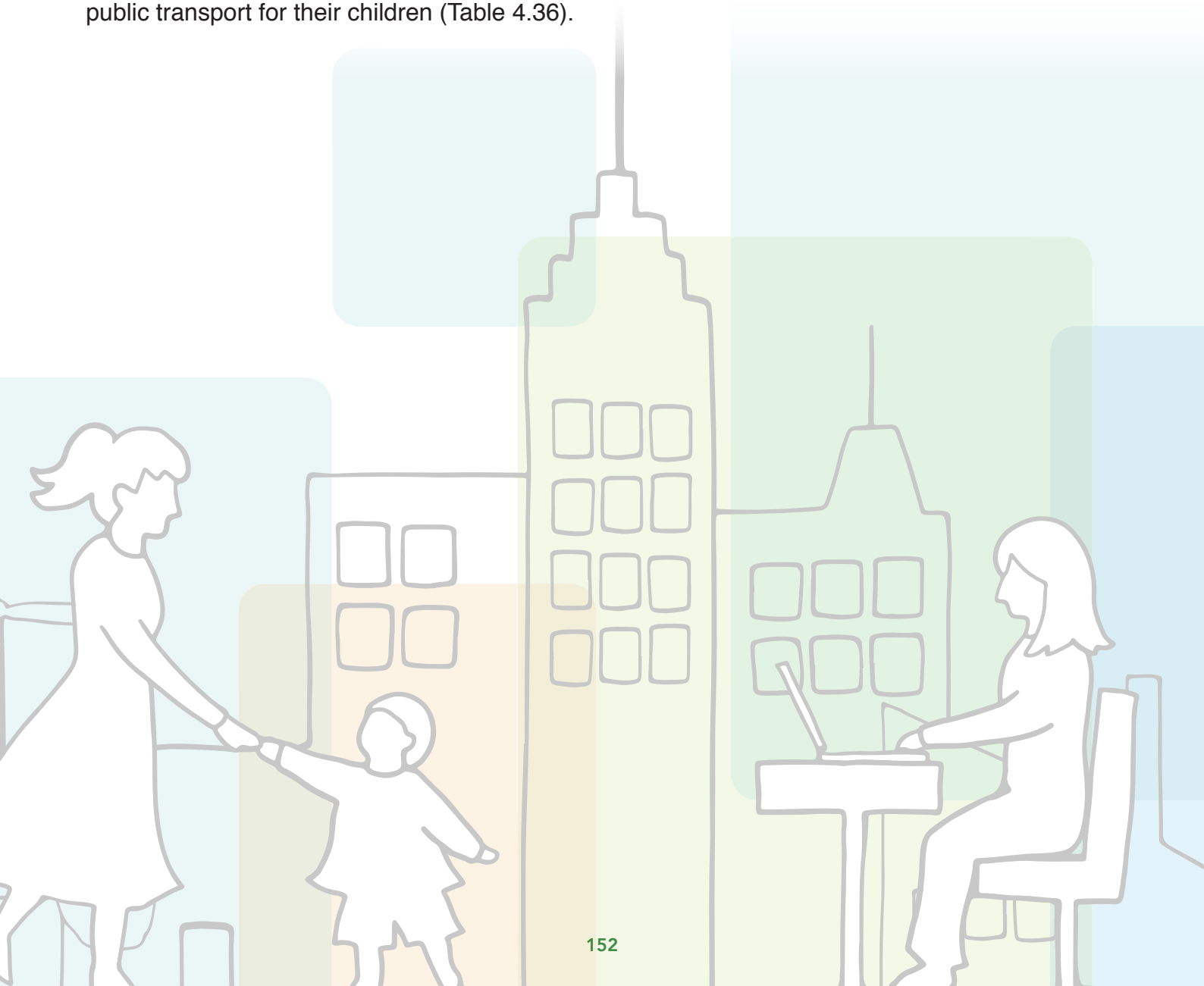

Table 4.36. Parents' satisfaction with various aspects in the locality by age of children

		Ages 0-11	Ages 12-17
Safety from cars and traffic for my children[1**]	Mean	2.14	2.37
	Std. Dev.	.980	1.068
Safety from crime, drugs and violence[2]	Mean	2.62	2.68
	Std. Dev.	1.064	1.104
Safety from bullying by other children[3]	Mean	2.93	2.96
	Std. Dev.	.940	1.011
Adequate space where my children can go out to play and cycle[4]	Mean	2.36	2.41
	Std. Dev.	1.117	1.160
Adequate space where my children can do different games, sports and physical exercise[5]	Mean	2.48	2.51
	Std. Dev.	1.098	1.159
Adequate means of public transport for my children[6***]	Mean	2.91	3.24
	Std. Dev.	1.009	1.038
Accessible places for all children, including children with a disability, young children, parents with push-chairs[7]	Mean	2.78	2.83
	Std. Dev.	1.006	1.044
Suitable places where my children can meet and socialise with others[8]	Mean	2.89	2.87
	Std. Dev.	1.031	1.120
Green areas where my children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens and natural open spaces[9]	Mean	2.68	2.66
	Std. Dev.	1.156	1.229
Clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children[10]	Mean	2.70	2.65
	Std. Dev.	1.082	1.127
Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust or pollution)[11]	Mean	2.49	2.53
	Std. Dev.	1.077	1.107
Opportunities for my children to participate in social activities organised in my locality[12]	Mean	2.77	2.75
	Std. Dev.	1.056	1.056
Opportunities for my children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality and for those opinions to be taken seriously[13]	Mean	2.53	2.46
	Std. Dev.	.995	1.015
Inclusion of all children in my locality (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from other countries)[14]	Mean	3.15	2.97
	Std. Dev.	.925	1.010

[1]t(775)=-3.429, p=0.001, [2]t(987)=-0.839, p=0.401, [3]t(985)=-0.510, p=0.610, [4]t(990)=-0.665, p=0.506, [5]t(989)=-0.408, p=0.683, [6]t(812)=-4.859, p=0.000, [7]t(986)=-0.712, p=0.477, [8]t(777)=0.269, p=0.788, [9]t(790)=0.204, p=0.838, [10]t(980)=0.746, p=0.456, [11]t(983)=-0.577, p=0.564, [12]t(980)=0.211, p=0.833, [13]t(978)=1.088, p=0.277, [14]t(973)=2.808, p=0.005, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Non-Maltese parents scored significantly higher than Maltese parents on their satisfaction with safety from crime, drugs and violence for their children (Table 4.37).

Table 4.37. Parents' satisfaction with various aspects in the locality by nationality

		Maltese	Non-Maltese
Safety from cars and traffic for my children[1]	Mean	2.21	2.20
	Std. Dev.	1.005	1.148
Safety from crime, drugs and violence[2***]	Mean	2.57	3.16
	Std. Dev.	1.052	1.161
Safety from bullying by other children[3]	Mean	2.90	3.08
	Std. Dev.	0.943	1.063
Adequate space where my children can go out to play and cycle[4]	Mean	2.34	2.35
	Std. Dev.	1.133	1.165
Adequate space where my children can do different games, sports and physical exercise[5]	Mean	2.48	2.40
	Std. Dev.	1.120	1.158
Adequate means of public transport for my children[6]	Mean	3.01	3.11
	Std. Dev.	1.010	1.077
Accessible places for all children, including children with a disability, young children, parents with pushchairs[7]	Mean	2.79	2.65
	Std. Dev.	1.030	1.045
Suitable places where my children can meet and socialise with others[8]	Mean	2.83	2.84
	Std. Dev.	1.067	1.148
Green areas where my children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens and natural open spaces[9]	Mean	2.64	2,68
	Std. Dev.	1.184	1.235
Clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children[10]	Mean	2.69	2.70
	Std. Dev.	1.089	1.127
Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust or pollution)[11]	Mean	2.49	2.40
	Std. Dev.	1.090	1.092
Opportunities for my children to participate in social activities organised in my locality[12]	Mean	2.73	2.68
	Std. Dev.	1.038	1.075
Opportunities for my children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality and for those opinions to be taken seriously[13]	Mean	2.46	2.47
	Std. Dev.	0.981	1.096
Inclusion of all children in my locality (boys/ girls, children with a disability, children from other countries)[14]	Mean	3.03	3.02
	Std. Dev.	0.956	1.080

Note: [1]t(165)=-0.119, p=0.906, [2]t(1390)=-6.251, p=0.000, [3]t(166)=-1.876, p=0.062, [4]t(1393)=-0.117, p=0.907, [5]t(1392)=0.810, p=0.418, [6]t(1387)=-1.012, p=0.312, [7]t(1378)=1.504, p=0.133, [8]t(1388)=-0.169, p=0.866, [9]t(1388)=-0.325, p=0.745, [10]t(1379)=-0.057, p=0.955, [11]t(1384)=0.938, p=0.349, [12]t(1378)=0.561, p=0.575, [13]t(165)=-0.156, p=0.877, [14]t(1365)=0.099, p=0.922 *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test revealed that:

- Parents from the South Eastern region were more satisfied with safety from cars and traffic for their children compared to those from the Northern Harbour and the Northern region (p=0.000).
- Parents from the South Eastern region were also more satisfied with adequate space where their children can go out to play and cycle compared with those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000), and the Northern region (p=0.004).
- Parents from the Northern Harbour were the least satisfied with having adequate space where their children can play different games, sports and physical exercise in comparison with those from all other regions (p=0.042; p=0.000; p=0.003).
- Parents from Gozo were the most satisfied with having adequate means of public transport for their children compared with those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.008), Northern Harbour (p=0.000), South Eastern (p=0.045) and Northern (p=0.009) regions (Table 4.38).

A one-way ANOVA and Tukey's range test revealed that:

- Parents from Gozo were the most satisfied with safety from crime, drugs and violence compared with those from the Harbour regions (p=0.000).
- Parents from the Western region were the most satisfied with safety from bullying by other children, in comparison with those from the Harbour, South Eastern, and Northern regions (p=0.000; p=0.003) regions.
- Parents from the South Eastern region were the most satisfied with accessible places for all children, including those with a disability, young children and parents with pushchairs, compared with those from the Northern Harbour and Northern regions (p=0.000; p=0.025).
- Parents from the Western region were the most satisfied with suitable places where their children can meet and socialise with others, in comparison with those from the Northern Harbour (p=0.000) and Southern Harbour (p=0.012) regions (Table 4.38).

A one-way ANOVA and Games-Howell post-hoc test revealed that:

- Parents from the Western region were the most satisfied with green areas where their children can enjoy nature, compared with those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.002) and Northern Harbour (p=0.000) regions, with having a clean and healthy environment compared with those from the Harbour (p=0.000) and Northern regions (p=0.011).
- Parents from Gozo were the most satisfied with opportunities for their children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality and for these opinions to be taken seriously compared to those from the Northern Harbour (p=0.000) and Northern regions (p=0.002) (Table 4.38).

A one-way ANOVA and Tukey's range test revealed that:

- Parents from the Western region were the most satisfied with clean and well maintained play and nature space for children compared with those from the Southern Harbour (p=0.001) and Northern Harbour regions(p=0.000).
- Parents from Gozo were the most satisfied with opportunities for their children to participate in social activities organised in their locality compared with those from the Harbour and Northern region (p=0.000 p=0.015).
- Parents from the Western region were the most satisfied with the inclusion of all children in their locality, compared with those from the Northern Harbour region (p=0.002), who were the least satisfied (Table 4.38).

Table 4.38. Parents' satisfaction with various aspects in the locality for their children by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
Safety from cars and traffic for my children[1***]	Mean	2.26	1.89	2.42	2.24	2.04	2.37
	Std. Dev.	1.040	.857	.993	1.021	.992	1.105
Safety from crime, drugs and violence[2***]	Mean	2.26	2.30	2.71	3.15	2.67	2.94
	Std. Dev.	1.099	.995	.964	1.009	1.099	1.070
Safety from bullying by other children[3***]	Mean	2.83	2.76	2.83	3.36	2.92	3.07
	Std. Dev.	.986	.955	.926	.828	.994	.925
Adequate space where my children can go out to play and cycle[4***]	Mean	2.14	1.94	2.61	2.56	2.24	2.58
	Std. Dev.	1.081	1.010	1.120	1.094	1.123	1.191
Adequate space where my children can do different games, sports and physical exercise[5***]	Mean	2.34	2.07	2.74	2.74	2.44	2.61
	Std. Dev.	1.057	1.029	1.092	1.148	1.150	1.151
Adequate means of public transport for my children[6***]	Mean	2.97	2.76	3.05	3.12	2.97	3.28
	Std. Dev.	1.050	1.080	.967	.955	1.014	.950
Accessible places for all children, including children with a disability, young children, parents with pushchairs[7***]	Mean	2.79	2.48	2.99	2.86	2.70	2.86
	Std. Dev.	.993	.995	1.017	.957	1.071	1.054
Suitable places where my children can meet and socialise with others[8***]	Mean	2.65	2.48	3.04	3.07	2.86	2.98
	Std. Dev.	1.042	1.094	1.025	1.018	1.071	1.061
Green areas where my children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens and natural open spaces[9***]	Mean	2.45	2.12	2.76	3.00	2.92	2.87
	Std. Dev.	1.115	1.069	1.167	1.175	1.171	1.204
Clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children[10***]	Mean	2.47	2.30	2.75	2.98	2.86	2.96
	Std. Dev.	1.095	1.054	.999	1.097	1.096	1.082
Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust or pollution)[11***]	Mean	2.22	2.09	2.66	2.84	2.38	2.81
	Std. Dev.	1.028	1.006	1.012	1.091	1.106	1.111
Opportunities for my children to participate in social activities organised in my locality[12***]	Mean	2.65	2.58	2.85	2.76	2.50	2.95
	Std. Dev.	.975	1.054	1.022	.975	1.015	1.086
Opportunities for my children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality and for those opinions to be taken seriously[13***]	Mean	2.39	2.25	2.63	2.49	2.28	2.64
	Std. Dev.	.972	.948	.943	.843	1.034	1.055
Inclusion of all children in my locality (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from other countries)[14***]	Mean	2.95	2.81	3.12	3.24	3.02	3.12
	Std. Dev.	.945	.981	.910	.813	1.017	1.020

Note: [1]F(5, 1386)=11.351, [2]F(5, 1383)=21.957, [3]F(5, 1377)=8.185, [4]F(5, 1386)=16.404, [5]F(5, 1385)=13.902, [6]F(5, 1380)=8.153, [7]F(5, 1379)=7.942, [8]F(5, 1381)=12.036, [9]F(5, 1381)=20.127, [10]F(5, 1370)=15.547, [11]F(5, 1376)=20.168, [12]F(5, 1371)=6.972, [13]F(5, 1368)=8.058, [14]F(5, 1357)=4.985, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

When asked which aspects of their locality they would like to improve, the most frequently chosen areas were safety from cars and traffic for children (74%), adequate space where children can go out to play and cycle (63.7%) and play different games, sports and physical exercise (61.9%), green areas where children can enjoy nature (61.9%), and safety from crime, drugs and violence (59.1%). In contrast, adequate means of public transport and the inclusion of children were the least mentioned, with less than one third of the participants suggesting the need for improvement in these areas (Table 4.39).

Table 4.39. What parents would like to have more in their locality

	N	%
Safety from cars and traffic for my children	1124	74.0%
Adequate space where my children can go out to play and cycle	968	63.7%
Adequate space where my children can do different games, sports and physical exercise	940	61.9%
Green areas where my children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens and natural open spaces	940	61.9%
Safety from crime, drugs and violence	898	59.1%
Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust, or pollution)	894	58.9%
Clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children	859	56.6%
Suitable places where my children can meet and socialise with others	743	48.9%
Accessible places for all children, including children with a disability, young children, and parents with pushchairs	659	43.4%
Opportunities for my children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality and for these to be taken seriously	631	41.5%
Opportunities for my children to participate in social activities organised in my locality	606	39.9%
Safety from bullying by other children	591	38.9%
Inclusion of all children in my locality (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from other countries)	452	29.8%
Adequate means of public transport for my children	365	24.0%

Maltese parents reported more frequently than non-Maltese ones that they would like more safety from crime, drugs and violence, and more adequate means of public transport for their children. On the other hand, more non-Maltese than Maltese parents would like more adequate space where their children can play different games, sports and physical exercise, and more opportunities for their children to participate in social activities organised in their locality (Table 4.40, Table 4.41).

Table 4.40. What parents would like more of by nationality I

		Safety from crime, drugs and violence[1]				Adequate means of public transport for children[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	838	523	1361	N	342	1019	1361
	%	61.6%	38.4%	100.0%	%	25.1%	74.9%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	57	97	154	N	21	133	154
	%	37.0%	63.0%	100.0%	%	13.6%	86.4%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=1515) = 34.52$, p = 0.000, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=1515) = 10.03$, p = 0.002								

Table 4.41. What parents would like more of by nationality II

		Adequate space where children can play different games, sports and physical exercise[1]				More opportunities for children to participate in social activities organised in their locality[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Maltese	N	825	536	1361	N	529	832	1361
	%	60.6%	39.4%	100.0%	%	38.9%	61.1%	100.0%
Non-Maltese	N	113	41	154	N	75	79	154
	%	73.4%	26.6%	100.0%	%	48.7%	51.3%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=1515) = 9.55$, p = 0.002, Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=1515) = 5.58$, p = 0.018								

Parents of younger children, in contrast to those of older children, were more likely to suggest improvements in the safety from cars and traffic for their children and adequate space where their children can go out to play and cycle (Table 4.42).

Table 4.42. What parents would like to have more in their locality by children's age

		Safety from cars and traffic for my children[1]				Adequate space where my children can go out to play and cycle[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Age 0 – 11	N	500	158	658	N	435	223	658
	%	76.0%	24.0%	100.0%	%	66.1%	33.9%	100.0%
Age 12 – 17	N	288	138	426	N	240	186	426
	%	67.6%	32.4%	100.0%	%	56.3%	43.7%	100.0%
Note[1]: $\chi^2(1, N=1084) = 9.153$, p = 0.002; Note[2]: $\chi^2(1, N=1084) = 10.509$, p = 0.001								

Tables 4.43 - 4.47 show that:

- More parents from the Western, Northern and Northern Harbour regions indicated a need for improvement in safety from car traffic, with those from the Southern Harbour the least likely to do so;
- More parents from the Southern Harbour were concerned about safety from crime and violence, with those from the Western region being least concerned;
- More parents from the Northern Harbour indicated the need for an improvement in public transport (Gozo parents were the least concerned) and accessibility (Parents from the Western region were the least concerned);
- More parents from both sides of the Harbour area expressed the need for more green areas, with those from the Western region being the least concerned;
- More parents from the Northern region indicated the need for cleaner and healthier environment, with those from Gozo least to express such concern;
- More parents from the Northern and the Harbour regions underlined the need for clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children, with parents from the Western region least likely to express need for improvement;
- More parents from the Northern Harbour and Northern regions indicated a need for more play and cycling areas, with parents from Gozo and Western region least likely to do so;
- More parents from the South Eastern region indicated a need for less bullying, with those from the Western region least to express concern.

Table 4.43. What parents would like to have more in their locality by region I

	Safety from cars and traffic for my children[1]				Safety from crime, drugs and violence[2]			
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	168	73	241	N	174	67	241
	%	69.7%	30.3%	100.0%	%	72.2%	27.8%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	241	67	308	N	198	110	308
	%	78.2%	21.8%	100.0%	%	64.3%	35.7%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	227	89	316	N	200	116	316
	%	71.8%	28.2%	100.0%	%	63.3%	36.7%	100.0%
Western	N	88	21	109	N	43	66	109
	%	80.7%	19.3%	100.0%	%	39.4%	60.6%	100.0%
Northern	N	172	48	220	N	122	98	220
	%	78.2%	21.8%	100.0%	N	55.5%	44.5%	100.0%
Gozo	N	224	92	316	%	160	156	316
	%	70.9%	29.1%	100.0%	N	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 12.15$, $p = 0.033$; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 50.89$, $p = 0.000$

Table 4.44. What parents would like to have more in their locality by region II

		Safety from bullying by other children[1]				Adequate space where my children can go out to play and cycle[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	89	152	241	N	160	81	241
	%	36.9%	63.1%	100.0%	%	66.4%	33.6%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	126	182	308	N	220	88	308
	%	40.9%	59.1%	100.0%	%	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	147	169	316	N	171	145	316
	%	46.5%	53.5%	100.0%	%	54.1%	45.9%	100.0%
Western	N	29	80	109	N	67	42	109
	%	26.6%	73.4%	100.0%	%	61.5%	38.5%	100.0%
Northern	N	90	130	220	N	154	66	220
	%	40.9%	59.1%	100.0%	N	70.0%	30.0%	100.0%
Gozo	N	110	206	316	%	192	124	316
	%	34.8%	65.2%	100.0%	N	60.8%	39.2%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 18.09$, p = 0.003, p = 0.029; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 26.49$, p = 0.000

Table 4.45. What parents would like to have more in their locality by region III

		Adequate space where my children can do different games, sports and physical exercise[1]				Adequate means of public transport for my children[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	149	92	241	N	50	191	241
	%	61.8%	38.2%	100.0%	%	20.7%	79.3%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	200	108	308	N	88	220	308
	%	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%	%	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	174	142	316	N	87	229	316
	%	55.1%	44.9%	100.0%	%	27.5%	72.5%	100.0%
Western	N	60	49	109	N	29	80	109
	%	55.0%	45.0%	100.0%	%	26.6%	73.4%	100.0%
Northern	N	159	61	220	N	57	163	220
	%	72.3%	27.7%	100.0%	N	25.9%	74.1%	100.0%
Gozo	N	193	123	316	%	52	264	316
	%	61.1%	38.9%	100.0%	N	16.5%	83.5%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 19.77$, p = 0.001, p = 0.029; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 17.77$, p = 0.003

Table 4.46. What parents would like to have more in their locality by region IV

		Accessible places for all children, including children with a disability, young children, parents with pushchairs[1]				Green areas where my children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens and natural open spaces[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	111	130	241	N	167	74	241
	%	46.1%	53.9%	100.0%	%	69.3%	30.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	149	159	308	N	212	96	308
	%	48.4%	51.6%	100.0%	%	68.8%	31.2%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	143	173	316	N	189	127	316
	%	45.3%	54.7%	100.0%	%	59.8%	40.2%	100.0%
Western	N	33	76	109	N	55	54	109
	%	30.3%	69.7%	100.0%	%	50.5%	49.5%	100.0%
Northern	N	101	119	220	N	131	89	220
	%	45.9%	54.1%	100.0%	N	59.5%	40.5%	100.0%
Gozo	N	119	197	316	%	182	134	316
	%	37.7%	62.3%	100.0%	N	57.6%	42.4%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 16.68$, p = 0.005, p = 0.029; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 21.51$, p = 0.001

Table 4.47. What parents would like to have more in their locality by region V

		Clean and well maintained play and nature spaces for children[1]				Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust or pollution)		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	153	88	241	N	157	84	241
	%	63.5%	36.5%	100.0%	%	65.1%	34.9%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	195	113	308	N	197	111	308
	%	63.3%	36.7%	100.0%	%	64.0%	36.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	160	156	316	N	174	142	316
	%	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%	%	55.1%	44.9%	100.0%
Western	N	50	59	109	N	56	53	109
	%	45.9%	54.1%	100.0%	%	51.4%	48.6%	100.0%
Northern	N	140	80	220	N	152	68	220
	%	63.6%	36.4%	100.0%	N	69.1%	30.9%	100.0%
Gozo	N	156	160	316	%	152	164	316
	%	49.4%	50.6%	100.0%	N	48.1%	51.9%	100.0%

Note[1]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 31.14$, p = 0.000, p = 0.029; Note[2]: $\chi^2(5, N=1510) = 36.24$, p = 0.000

5 Stakeholders' Voices

Satisfaction in exercising their role in relation to children and young people

Figure 5.1 shows that the majority of stakeholders (58.6%) did not feel satisfied with the spaces available for children to walk and cycle in their locality. Over one half were not satisfied that their locality enjoys a clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust, or pollution), while 46% to 44% were not satisfied with the space where children can play and do different sports, the green areas available for children, the level of safety from traffic for children, and the accessibility of places for children with a disability, young children and parents with pushchairs. On the other hand, close to one half of the participants were satisfied with the opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations (46.2%), the inclusion of all children in the locality (45%), and the opportunities for children to participate in social activities organised in the locality (44.7%). A substantial percentage were also satisfied that there are clean and well-kept places and facilities to be used by children in their locality (43.9%), that there are suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others (43.5%), with the safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse (39.6%), safety from bullying by other children (38.9%), the public transport available for children (38.8%), and the opportunities for children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality (34.3%) (Figure 5.1).

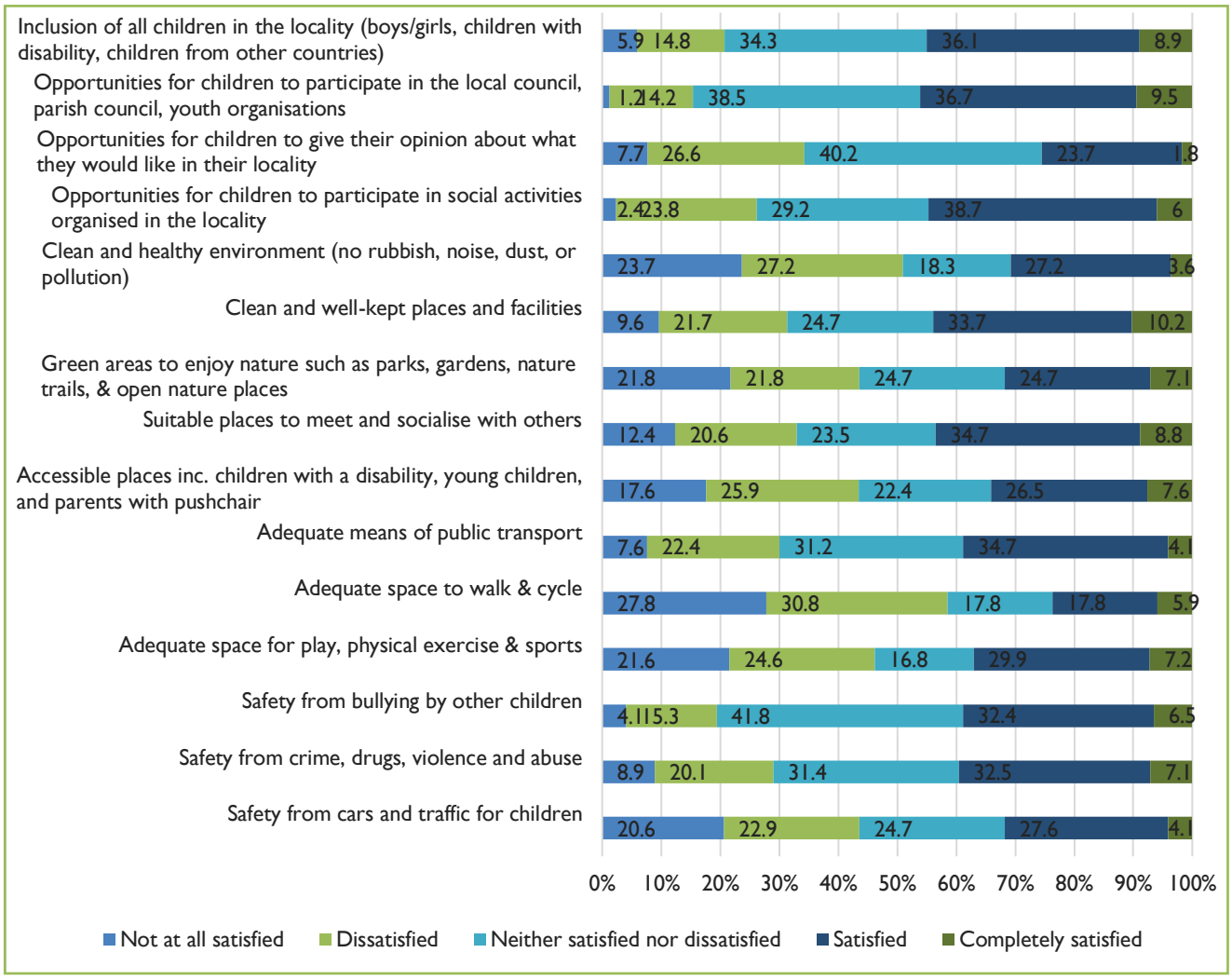

Figure 5.1 Stakeholders' satisfaction with the locality for children and young people

Participants from the Western region and Gozo were the most satisfied with safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse while those from the Harbour regions were least satisfied. Stakeholders from Gozo were also more likely to be satisfied with a clean and healthy environment and with opportunities for children to participate in social activities in the locality, whilst those from the Harbour regions were the least satisfied (Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Stakeholders' satisfaction with life for children in the locality by region

		Southern Harbour	Northern Harbour	South Eastern	Western	Northern	Gozo
Safety from cars and traffic for children[1]	Mean	2.60	2.60	2.87	2.83	2.82	2.92
	Std. Dev.	1.241	1.374	1.014	1.239	1.124	0.900
Safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse[2**]	Mean	2.77	2.80	3.45	3.54	3.32	3.42
	Std. Dev.	1.060	1.067	1.057	0.833	1.156	0.900
Safety from bullying by other children[3]	Mean	3.03	3.18	3.22	3.54	3.36	3.25
	Std. Dev.	0.954	0.931	0.998	0.884	0.826	0.754
Adequate space where children can play and do different physical exercise and sports[4]	Mean	2.77	2.51	2.91	2.71	2.93	2.91
	Std. Dev.	1.308	1.449	1.125	1.122	1.357	1.044
Adequate space where children can walk and cycle[5]	Mean	2.09	2.46	2.87	2.21	2.61	2.42
	Std. Dev.	1.222	1.430	0.920	1.103	1.315	0.793
Adequate means of public transport for children[6]	Mean	2.94	2.93	3.43	3.00	3.18	3.33
	Std. Dev.	1.056	1.095	0.945	1.103	0.819	0.778
Accessible places for children, including children with a disability, young children, parents with pushchairs[7]	Mean	2.86	2.55	2.91	2.50	3.04	3.33
	Std. Dev.	1.353	1.413	1.125	1.022	1.138	0.985
Suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others[8]	Mean	2.97	2.95	3.30	2.92	3.18	3.58
	Std. Dev.	1.294	1.218	1.063	1.248	1.188	0.669
Green areas where children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens, nature trails, and open nature places (trees, plants, water, animals)[9]	Mean	2.51	2.63	2.83	2.63	3.00	3.17
	Std. Dev.	1.337	1.334	1.072	1.135	1.333	1.030

Clean and well-kept places and facilities used by children[10]	Mean	2.89	2.90	3.27	3.38	3.36	3.55
	Std. Dev.	1.278	1.252	0.985	1.013	1.096	0.934
Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust or pollution)[11**]	Mean	2.11	2.40	2.87	2.71	2.79	3.50
	Std. Dev.	1.078	1.236	1.058	1.233	1.371	0.798
Opportunities for children to participate in social activities in the locality[12*]	Mean	3.09	2.95	3.39	3.26	3.39	3.91
	Std. Dev.	0.951	1.037	0.722	0.864	0.916	0.831
Opportunities for children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality[13]	Mean	2.74	2.75	2.87	2.88	3.04	3.33
	Std. Dev.	0.950	0.954	1.058	0.900	0.744	0.778
Opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations[14]	Mean	3.29	3.31	3.61	3.38	3.54	3.75
	Std. Dev.	0.893	0.731	0.839	0.924	0.962	0.965
Inclusion of all children in the locality (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from other countries)[15]	Mean	3.26	3.13	3.43	3.13	3.50	3.67
	Std. Dev.	0.950	0.978	0.945	1.116	1.072	0.888

Note: [1]F(5, 156)=0.360, [2]F(5, 155)=3.202, [3]F(5, 156)=1.041, [4]F(5, 153)=0.480, [5]F(5, 155)=1.449, [6]F(5, 156)=1.133, [7]F(5, 156)=1.318, [8]F(5, 156)=0.884, [9]F(5, 156)=0.876, [10]F(5, 153) = 1.436, [11]F(5, 156)=3.243, [12]F(5, 154)=2.438, [13] F(5, 156)=1.067, [14]F(5, 155)=0.964, [15]F(5, 155)=1.020, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001.

Table 5.2 shows that local councils were the most satisfied amongst the stakeholders with various aspects of the locality, such as safety from crime, violence and abuse, adequate space where children can play and do sports, green areas such as parks and nature trails, accessibility of places for children, suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others, cleanliness and maintenance of places and facilities used by children, clean and healthy environment, opportunities for children to participate in social activities in the locality, and to give their opinion. On the other hand, religious leaders were the least satisfied with safety from crime, violence and abuse, adequate space children can play and do sports, and adequate space where children can walk or cycle. Leaders of social and cultural organisations were the least satisfied with accessible places for children and with opportunities for children to participate in social activities in the locality. Leaders of sports organisations were the least satisfied with suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others, green areas for children, clean and well-kept places and facilities, clean and healthy environment, opportunities for children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality and to participate in the local organisations.

Table 5.2. Stakeholders' satisfaction with life for children in the locality by role

		Local council	Religious leader	Business or industry	Leaders of social or cultural organisations	Leaders of sports organisations	Head of School
Safety from cars and traffic for children[1]	Mean	3.39	2.52	2.62	2.58	3.18	2.63
	Std. Dev.	0.698	1.184	1.098	1.300	1.334	1.113
Safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse[2***]	Mean	3.39	2.38	3.62	3.12	3.13	3.19
	Std. Dev.	1.037	0.979	0.941	1.111	0.957	0.906
Safety from bullying by other children[3]	Mean	3.50	2.97	3.27	3.30	3.35	3.23
	Std. Dev.	0.707	0.778	0.827	0.951	0.786	0.996
Adequate space where children can play and do different physical exercise and sports[4***]	Mean	3.88	2.17	2.77	2.82	2.59	2.78
	Std. Dev.	1.111	1.227	1.243	1.131	1.326	1.255
Adequate space where children can walk and cycle[5*]	Mean	3.22	2.00	2.65	2.24	2.12	2.57
	Std. Dev.	1.114	1.225	1.198	1.226	1.054	1.233
Adequate means of public transport for children[6]	Mean	3.56	2.76	3.04	3.09	3.00	3.14
	Std. Dev.	0.705	0.988	0.999	1.071	1.000	1.082
Accessible places for children, including children with a disability, young children, parents with pushchairs[7*]	Mean	3.67	2.62	2.58	2.55	2.59	2.95
	Std. Dev.	1.138	0.942	1.270	1.277	1.121	1.272
Suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others[8*]	Mean	3.83	2.76	2.92	3.09	2.65	3.23
	Std. Dev.	1.043	1.057	1.230	1.042	1.320	1.212

Green areas where children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens, nature trails, and open nature places (trees, plants, water, animals)[9**]	Mean	3.50	2.62	2.46	2.58	2.00	3.02
	Std. Dev.	1.295	1.049	1.174	1.275	1.118	1.225
Clean and well-kept places and facilities used by children[10***]	Mean	4.28	2.86	3.15	2.88	2.75	3.12
	Std. Dev.	0.575	1.177	1.084	1.040	1.342	1.159
Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust or pollution)[11**]	Mean	3.67	2.45	2.46	2.39	2.24	2.65
	Std. Dev.	0.907	1.242	1.240	1.197	1.251	1.110
Opportunities for children to participate in social activities in the locality[12*]	Mean	3.83	3.07	3.08	2.97	3.12	3.44
	Std. Dev.	0.383	0.979	0.977	0.967	0.857	0.983
Opportunities for children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality[13***]	Mean	3.78	2.66	2.77	2.58	2.29	3.12
	Std. Dev.	0.428	0.769	0.951	0.936	0.772	0.905
Opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations[14**]	Mean	4.00	3.28	3.23	3.42	2.94	3.50
	Std. Dev.	0.686	1.066	0.815	0.969	0.659	0.707
Inclusion of all children in the locality (boys/ girls, children with a disability, children from other countries)	Mean	3.89	3.38	3.04	3.30	3.06	3.21
	Std. Dev.	0.758	1.049	1.113	1.015	1.029	0.951

Note: [1]F(5, 159)=4.877, [2]F(5, 157)=4.325, [3]F(5, 159)=3.024, [4]F(5, 160)=2.766, [5]F(5, 160)=2.724, [6]F(5, Note: [1]F(5, 160)=2.124), [2]F(5, 159)=4.877, [3]F(5, 160)=0.979, [4]F(5, 157)=4.325, [5]F(5, 159)=3.024, [6]F(5, 160)=1.451, [7]F(5, 160)=2.766, [8]F(5, 160)=2.724, [9]F(5, 160)=3.696, [10]F(5, 157)=5.009, [11]F(5, 160)=3.726, [12]F(5, 158)=2.883, [13]F(5, 160)=7.707, [14]F(5, 159)=3.263, [15]F(5, 159)=1.903, p>0.05, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001

Areas for improvement

Over half of the stakeholders agreed that in their locality there was a need for improvement in green areas where children can enjoy nature (57.1%), safety from traffic for children (52.4%) and adequate space where children can walk and cycle (51.2%). Having a clean and healthy environment (45.3%), adequate play and sports spaces (43.5%) and safety from crime, violence and abuse (42.4%) were considered as needing urgent action by over 40% of participants. Safety from bullying, opportunities for children to participate in the locality and improvement of the public transport were the least mentioned (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3. Stakeholders' views on the areas for improvement in their locality

	N	%
Green areas where children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens, nature trails, and open nature places (trees, plants, water, animals)	97	57.1%
Safety from cars and traffic for children	89	52.4%
Adequate space where children can walk and cycle	87	51.2%
Clean and healthy environment (no rubbish, noise, dust, or pollution)	77	45.3%
Adequate space where children can play and do different physical exercise and sports	74	43.5%
Safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse	72	42.4%
Accessible places for children, including children with a disability, young children, and parents with pushchairs	57	33.5%
Clean and well-kept places and facilities used by children	52	30.6%
Opportunities for children to give their opinion about what they would like in their locality	48	28.2%
Suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others	47	27.6%
Inclusion of all children in the locality (boys/girls, children with a disability, children from other countries)	43	25.3%
Safety from bullying by other children	39	22.9%
Opportunities for children to participate in social activities organised in the locality	38	22.4%
Opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council, youth organisations	34	20.0%
Adequate means of public transport for children	22	12.9%

Stakeholders from the Northern Harbour region were more likely to agree that safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse was one of the most urgent issues to be addressed in their locality, whilst those from the Western region were the least concerned. More participants from the Southern Harbour region agreed that green areas where children can enjoy nature were urgently needed (in contrast to those from the Northern region who were the least to agree) and that there was an urgent need for clean and well-kept places and facilities for children (in contrast to those from the Western region who were the least to agree) (Table 5.4, Table 5.5).

Table 5.4. Stakeholders' views on the areas for improvement by region

		Safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse[1]				Green areas where children can enjoy nature such as parks, gardens, nature trails and open spaces[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	17	18	35	N	27	8	35
	%	48.6%	51.4%	100.0%	%	77.1%	22.9%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	24	16	40	N	27	13	40
	%	60.0%	40.0%	100.0%	%	67.5%	32.5%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	10	13	23	N	11	12	23
	%	43.5%	56.5%	100.0%	%	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%
Western	N	5	19	24	N	11	13	24
	%	20.8%	79.2%	100.0%	%	45.8%	54/2%	100.0%
Northern	N	9	19	28	N	10	18	28
	%	32.1%	67.9%	100.0%	N	35.7%	64.3%	100.0%
Gozo	N	4	8	12	%	6	6	12
	%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%	N	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%

Table 5.5. Stakeholders' views on the areas for improvement by region

Clean and well-kept places and facilities used by children				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	19	16	35
	%	54.3%	45.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	11	29	40
	%	27.5%	72.5%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	7	16	23
	%	30.4%	69.6%	100.0%
Western	N	1	32	24
	%	4.2%	95.8%	100.0%
Northern	N	8	20	28
	%	28.6%	71.4%	100.0%
Gozo	N	4	8	12
	%	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%

More participants from the local councils agreed that there is an increased need for opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations compared to participants occupying other roles (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6. Opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations by role

Opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Local council	N	9	9	18
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
Religious leader	N	9	20	29
	%	31.0%	69.0%	100.0%
Leaders of social or cultural organisations	N	6	27	33
	%	18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
Head of School	N	6	37	43
	%	14.0%	86.0%	100.0%
Leaders of sports organisations	N	2	15	17
	%	11.8%	88.2%	100.0%
Business or industry	N	2	24	26
	%	7.7%	92.3%	100.0%

In the FGD, the stakeholders mentioned the lack of adequate public spaces and made various recommendations on how to ensure better quality and safer play and nature areas, and more participation of children and young people in their locality.

Need for more child and family friendly areas. "The huge majority of property here in Gozo is privately owned, so it's not that easy to just obtain a parcel of land and transform it into a playing field" (Mayor, Gozo)

"This continuous drive to make everywhere accessible by car is completely damaging our built environment… If you had to look at the percentage of land use which is designated for people, it's minimal considering how much is designated for cars" (Girl Guides Leader 1, Northern Harbour)

Some stakeholders mentioned the importance of taking children's and family's needs into consideration when designing and developing new projects:

"It should be family-friendly, because here we're talking about playgrounds but you can't just take the child to the playground, leave him or her there, and come back… We have tried to find something which is family-friendly… It has benches for the senior members of the family, spring loaded [gates] so nobody goes out onto the streets" (Mayor, South Eastern)

"We have to keep in mind as well when designing open spaces, the elderly and the children, and the mothers, the parents, the grandmas maybe they go with the children" (Girl Guides Leader 2, Northern Harbour)

In another locality, stakeholders explained how different playgrounds within the locality were aimed at different age groups, with age-appropriate equipment, as well as equipment for people with a disability and some sports equipment.

"We only have four parks and what we're trying to do is to put different age groups in different parks. So in a park we've put equipment that can be used by people with a disability, we put an outdoor gym as well in one of the parks. In another park we're planning a park to be used by 0 to 4 years so you can maybe try to group children" (Mayor 1, Northern Harbour).

Participants also underlined initiatives to pedestrianise town and village squares and streets so to give spaces back to families and children:

"We introduced the closure of the square in the summer months two years ago, so as to have all our families enjoy a closed, pedestrianised square on Saturday evenings" (Mayor, Gozo)

"There is a project called 'Slow Streets'… it's meant to slow down traffic purposely to let people make use of the streets, walk to the shops and not use cars.. and on certain days even stopping traffic from accessing certain areas" (Mayor 1, Northern Harbour)

*Need for more nature areas for children and families***.** Some stakeholders emphasised the need for children and families to have green areas in or in the vicinity of their locality:

"Open spaces are a must for children especially in the earlier years of childhood. There are countless studies that show that exposure to nature and open spaces are an essential part of early childhood development, and especially in Malta where we have to work hard to have children experience what it means to be in nature" (Scout leader, South Eastern)

"A green area is not a park with benches and concrete planters and swings and skateboard ramps or whatever. To me, a green area is that just, a green area. It's grass under your feet and trees around you… There's no need for any particular infrastructure other than maybe some lighting" (Scout leader, South Eastern)

"We are in fact hopefully going through the last process of turning a former landfill into, hopefully, in a couple of years' time, a family park" (Mayor, Gozo)

Some stakeholders suggested that alternative green spaces, such as roof gardens on public buildings are to be considered in those localities which lack the space for the development of new green spaces:

"The reality for example of this locality, there is nowhere you can identify a place that can be turned into an open space for children short of knocking down a block and replacing it with open area which is not likely to happen… you'd have to try and find some sort of alternative… The state schools have large areas that may be invested into open spaces even during school times but then… could be used by the general public after school hours, monitored and controlled" (Girl Guides Leader 2, Northern Harbour)

"This project of having rooftop gardens could also be extended to these public buildings… you have to make use of what you've got" (Girl Guides Leader 1, Northern Harbour.)

Need for more responsible behaviour to keep public places clean. Stakeholders highlighted the problem of littering in both residential areas, as well as in green and picnic areas:

"We have the bulky refuse but people throw things outside not within pickup schedule, so we end up with our workers doing extra work, picking up the rubbish" (Mayor 2, Northern Harbour)

"Every 200 metres there is a dog bin but you still find people not using it, and also the pizza boxes at the two picnic areas… the dustbin is there but some leave them on the table, the dustbin is just 2 metres away" (Mayor, South Eastern)

"If the planning authority keeps on giving permits for buildings without the place where to put their garbage, what can you do?" (Mayor 1, Northern Harbour)

Ensuring safety in the streets and local areas. As in the case of parents, stakeholders also mentioned the considerable safety risks experienced by children and young people due to the number of cars in their localities and the need for more pedestrian areas:

"Our locality is full of sleeping policemen and people keep requesting even more. They are all there at the request of people, but people tend to drive very fast." (Mayor 1, Northern Harbour)

"It's true, where the park is you have to cross the main roads" (Mayor 2, Northern Harbour)

Need for maintenance, upkeep and supervision of open spaces to prevent risks and damage:

"One big flaw in everything, is the upkeep, the maintenance, the vigilance… The continuous maintenance that has to be done, not when things become dangerous and they're about to fall apart" (Girl Guides Leader 1, Northern Harbour)

"We have approved the installation of a new CCTV in the playing field because we have experienced some recent vandalism, unfortunately usually done by youngsters as well" (Mayor, Gozo)

"In the playground there is an encircled fence with spring-loaded gates so if you're talking and somebody gets distracted you don't have to worry that the children have gone out" (Mayor, South Eastern)

"We have introduced community policing… I think the safety in the locality has been improved" (Mayor 1, Northern Harbour)

"What is needed is to start introducing the idea of park rangers so you'd have somebody who's responsible for the maintenance of the area and who would be able to first of all educate the people who are using that area to make sure that they are using it responsibly and in a way that respects and conserves the nature of the area, and also we'd be able to enforce if the need arises…any contraventions such as littering or excessive noise or troublemaking in general" (Scout leader, South Eastern).

*Need for more accessible parks and playgrounds***.** Another issue raised by some stakeholders was the lack of accessibility of the areas surrounding parks and playgrounds:

"The important thing with accessibility is that we don't see it in isolation. Ok, the parks have ramps and you can get to the park, but can you get to the part where the park is? Because the pavements surrounding it are not accessible at all… can you cross the road from the other side

of the pavement, can you walk along the pavement to get to the ramp?" (Girl Guides Leader 1, Northern Harbour)

"If you're lucky to find a parking place that is, when you get there with the car… But imagine driving somewhere because you want to go for a walk and very often you end up turning all the way back home because there is nowhere to park" (Girl Guides Leader 2, Northern Harbour)

*Need for a stronger children's voice and participation in the locality***.** Various stakeholders acknowledged that more needs to be done to involve children and young people in the life of the community and to ensure they are listened to and their ideas taken into consideration:

"We have to engage with youths, definitely, it's extremely important to listen to them" (Mayor 1, Northern Harbour)

"Children are on the receiving end of the whole process… ignoring completely their sense of agency and their sense of citizenship" (Girl Guides Leader 1, Northern Harbour)

"L-unika involviment li jkollom f'dawn il-parks huwa biex jiġu inawgurat il-post… l-involviment tagħhom għandu jkun from the planning stage, mhux meta kollox lest" / "The only involvement they have with regards to these parks is during the inauguration of the place… their involvement should start from the planning stage, not when everything is done" (Girl Guides Leader 2, Northern Harbour)

"If they're involved in the process of defining these spaces they will take ownership and they will also want to take care of it" (Girl Guides Leader 1, Northern Harbour)

"We're active with active agers but we are finding it difficult to communicate or get close to youngsters. Every locality can appoint its own youth ambassador who is a child, someone between the ages of 16 and 18… and we haven't been able to find anybody who is willing to participate… it's a real pity because this is a young community" (Mayor 1, Northern Harbour)

Active participation in the implementation of the project

Figure 5.2 shows that 76% of the participants foresee their participation if the project to make localities more child-friendly was to be implemented in their locality, but only 21.8% were definite about it. All participating local councils saw themselves as actively contributing to this project, followed by 83.3% of leaders of social or cultural organisations, 80.0% of leaders of sports organisations, 77.7% of heads of schools, 73.9% of religious leaders and 63.1% of businesses (Table 5.7). Most see their involvement mainly at the planning stage (41.2%) followed by the implementation stage (25.9%), but only 8.80% saw themselves involved at the maintenance stage. Only 22.40% expected to be involved in all the stages (Figure 5.3). More local councillors would be interested in getting involved in the maintenance stage or all stages of the project than the other stakeholders (see Table 5.8).

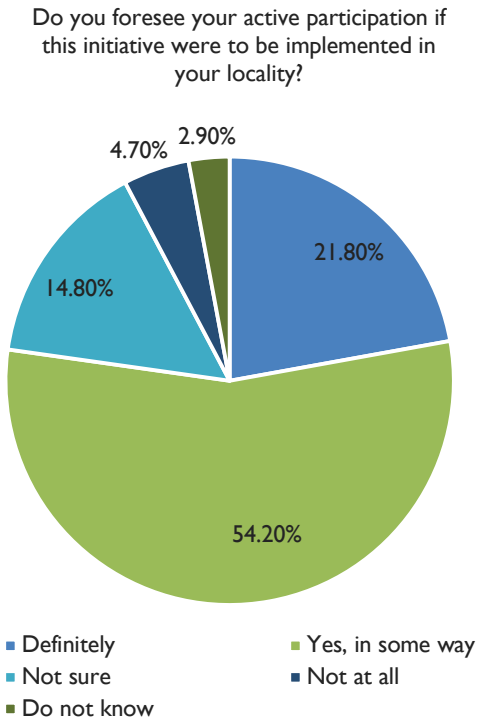

Figure 5.2: Expected participation by the stakeholders in the project

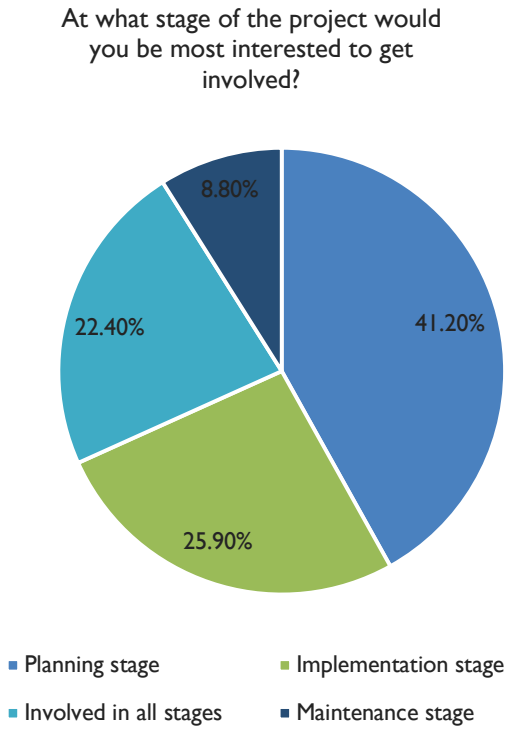

Figure 5.3: Stage of stakeholders' involvement in the project

Table 5.7. Active participation in the project by role

		Do you foresee your active participation if this initiative were to be implemented in your locality?					
		Definitely	Yes, in some way	Not sure	Not at all	Do not know	Total
Local council	N	12	3	0	0	0	15
	%	80.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Religious leader	N	3	14	3	2	1	23
	%	13.0%	60.9%	13.0%	8.7%	4.3%	100.0%
Business or industry	N	2	10	2	2	3	19
	%	10.5%	52.6%	10.5%	10.5%	15.8%	100.0%
Leaders of social or cultural organisations	N	4	21	5	0	0	30
	%	13.3%	70.0%	16.7%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Leaders of sports organisations	N	6	6	3	0	0	15
	%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Head of School	N	4	23	6	3	1	37
	%	10.8%	62.2%	16.2%	8.1%	2.7%	100.0%

Table 5.8. Project phase participants would be most interested to be involved

		Maintenance stage[1]				All stages[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Local council	N	5	13	18	N	11	7	18
	%	27.8%	72.2%	100.0%	%	61.1%	38.9%	100.0%
Religious leader	N	2	27	29	N	2	27	29
	%	6.9%	93.1%	100.0%	%	6.9%	93.1%	100.0%
Business or industry	N	0	26	26	N	4	22	26
	%	0.0%	100.0%	100.0%	%	15.4%	84.6%	100.0%
Leader of social or cultural organisations	N	5	28	33	N	5	28	33
	%	15.2%	84.8%	100.0%	%	15.2%	84.8%	100.0%
Leader of sports organisations	N	1	16	17	N	8	9	17
	%	5.9%	94.1%	100.0%	%	47.1%	52.9%	100.0%
Head of School	N	1	42	43	N	8	35	43
	%	2.3%	97.7%	100.0%	%	18.6%	81.4%	100.0%

When asked about their concerns about supporting or participating in this project, the major constraint was lack of time (58.2%) followed by financial limitations (37.1%), lack of resources (28.8%) and lack of consultation (20.6%) (Table 5.9). More leaders of sports organisations and local councils agreed that financial limitations were their biggest concern in supporting or participating in this project, while more Heads of Schools and leaders of social or cultural organisations were concerned about the lack of consultation or being excluded when compared with other stakeholders. Stakeholders from the Northern Harbour appeared to be the most concerned about the lack of consultation or being excluded while those from the Northern and Western regions were the least concerned (Table 5.10, Table 5.11).

Table 5.9 Challenges to participation

	N	%
Time constraints	99	58.2%
Financial limitations	63	37.1%
Lack of resources	49	28.8%
Lack of consultation/being excluded	35	20.6%
Organisational restrictions	28	16.5%

Table 5.10. Stakeholders' concerns about supporting or participating in this project by role

		Financial limitations[1]				Lack of consultancy/being excluded[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Local council	N	9	9	18	N	2	16	18
	%	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%	%	11.1%	88.9%	100.0%
Religious leader	N	4	25	29	N	1	28	29
	%	13.8%	86.2%	100.0%	%	3.4%	96.6%	100.0%
Business or industry	N	8	18	26	N	5	21	26
	%	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%	%	19.2%	80.8%	100.0%
Leader of social or cultural organisations	N	14	19	33	N	9	24	33
	%	42.4%	57.6%	100.0%	%	27.3%	72.7%	100.0%
Leader of sports organisations	N	11	6	17	N	2	15	17
	%	64.7%	35.3%	100.0%	%	11.8%	88.2%	100.0%
Head of School	N	16	27	43	N	15	28	43
	%	37.2%	62.8%	100.0%	%	34.9%	65.1%	100.0%

Table 5.11. Stakeholders' concerns about supporting or participating in this project by region

Lack of consultancy / being excluded				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Southern Harbour	N	5	30	35
	%	14.3%	85.7%	100.0%
Northern Harbour	N	16	24	40
	%	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
South Eastern	N	4	19	23
	%	17.4%	82.6%	100.0%
Western	N	3	21	24
	%	12.5%	87.5%	100.0%
Northern	N	3	25	28
	%	10.7%	89.3%	100.0%
Gozo	N	3	9	12
	%	25.0%	75.0%	100.0%

The majority of participants (84.6%) agreed that they can actively contribute to the local community through this project, though only 28% were certain about their commitment (Figure 5.4).

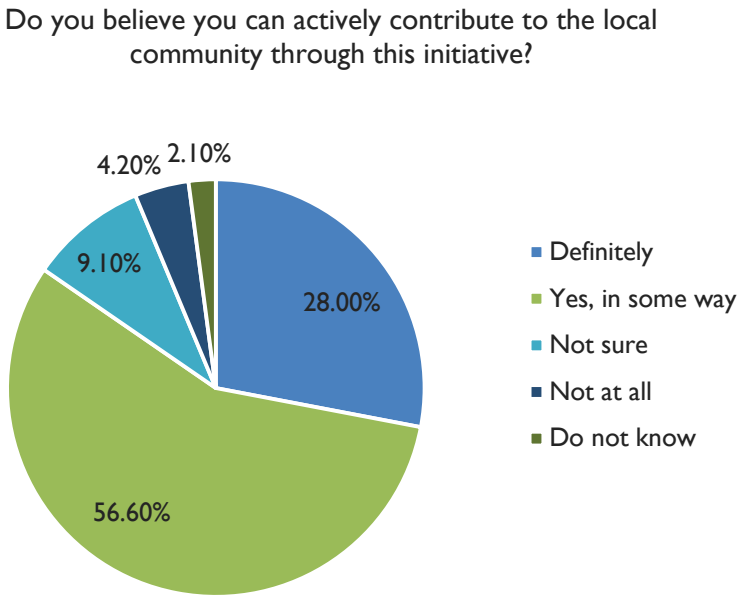

Figure 5.4. Stakeholders' contribution to the project

When asked how they see this project supporting their own activities, 41.8% said that it enables them to work with other stakeholders in the community and 40% mentioned that it makes it more possible for them to work directly with children and young people. Around one third mentioned that it brings more needed resources to the locality and supports the initiatives they are undertaking in this area and enables them to participate in initiatives which they are unable to do on their own (34%-31.2%) (Table 5.12). Participants from local councils, social or cultural organisations and sports organisations were more likely to agree that such an initiative supports their activities by making it more possible for them to work directly with children and young people than the other stakeholders (Table 5.13).

Table 5.12. How the project supports the stakeholders' own activities

	N	%
It enables us to work with the other stakeholders in the community	71	41.8%
It makes it more possible for us to work directly with children and young people	68	40.0%
It brings more needed resources for the locality	58	34.1%
It supports the initiatives we are undertaking in this area	58	34.1%
It enables us to participate in initiatives which we are unable to do on our own	53	31.2%

Table 5.13. How the project supports stakeholders' activities by role

It makes it more possible for us to work directly with children and young people				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Local council	N	11	7	18
	%	61.1%	38.9%	100.0%
Religious leader	N	7	22	29
	%	24.1%	75.9%	100.0%
Leaders of social or cultural organisations	N	19	14	33
	%	57.6%	42.4%	100.0%
Head of School	N	15	28	43
	%	34.9%	65.1%	100.0%
Leaders of sports organisations	N	9	8	17
	%	52.9%	47.1%	100.0%
Business or industry	N	7	19	26
	%	26.9%	73.1%	100.0%

When asked what they expect to be different when the project will be completed, half of the participants (50%) expected there to be more nature areas and a cleaner and healthier environment for children, 44.7% more adequate play spaces, 40.6% more participation of children in the life of the locality, 39.4% safer streets and public spaces for children and 28.8% more protection of children from bullying, violence and crime (Table 5.14). Local councillors and leaders of sports organisations were the most to expect more participation of children in the life of the locality, while business or industry stakeholders were the least likely to agree. (Table 5.15).

Table 5.14. What stakeholders expect to be different on completion of the project

	N	%
More nature areas for children	85	50.0%
Cleaner and healthier environment for the children	85	50.0%
More adequate play spaces for children	76	44.7%
More participation of children in the life of the locality	69	40.6%
Safer streets and public spaces for children	67	39.4%
More protection of children from bullying, violence and crime	49	28.8%

Table 5.15. What stakeholders expect to be different when the project is completed by role

More participation of children in the life of the locality				
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Local council	N	11	7	18
	%	61.1%	38.9%	100.0%
Religious leader	N	8	21	29
	%	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%
Leaders of social or cultural organisations	N	16	17	33
	%	48.5%	51.5%	100.0%
Head of School	N	17	26	43
	%	39.5%	60.5%	100.0%
Leaders of sports organisations	N	10	7	17
	%	58.8%	41.2%	100.0%
Business or industry	N	6	20	26
	%	23.1%	76.9%	100.0%

When asked about their concerns about the implementation of such a project in their locality, just under half of participants (48.8%) mentioned the lack of upkeep and maintenance, followed by the lack of adequate funding and resources (42.4%) and delays in implementation and completion (39.4%) (Table 5.16). Leaders of social or cultural organisations were the most to express concern about the lack of consultation with local stakeholders in planning (local councillors were the least concerned) and about children not given a real voice in the project (religious leaders were the least concerned) (Table 5.17).

Table 5.16. Concerns about the implementation of the project

	N	%
Lack of upkeep and maintenance	83	48.8%
Lack of adequate funding and resources	72	42.4%
Delays in implementation and completion	67	39.4%
Lack of consultation with local stakeholders in planning	65	38.2%
Lack of participation and interest from the local community	52	30.6%
Children not given a real voice in the initiative	47	27.6%

Table 5.17. Stakeholders' concerns about the implementation of the project by role

		Lack of consultation with local stakeholders in planning[1]				Children not given a real voice in the initiative[2]		
		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total		Ticked/ Selected	Not ticked/ Not selected	Total
Local council	N	4	14	18	N	3	15	18
	%	22.2%	77.8%	100.0%	%	16.7%	83.3%	100.0%
Religious leader	N	8	21	29	N	2	27	29
	%	27.6%	72.4%	100.0%	%	6.9%	93.1%	100.0%
Business or industry	N	8	18	26	N	5	21	26
	%	30.8%	69.2%	100.0%	%	19.2%	80.8%	100.0%
Leader of social or cultural organ-isations	N	20	13	33	N	18	15	33
	%	60.6%	39.4%	100.0%	%	54.5%	45.5%	100.0%
Leader of sports organisations	N	5	12	17	N	3	14	17
	%	29.4%	70.6%	100.0%	%	17.6%	82.4%	100.0%
Head of School	N	18	25	43	N	16	27	43
	%	41.9%	58.1%	100.0%	%	37.2%	62.8%	100.0%

6 Understanding Urbanism from a Child Perspective Designing with children in Ħamrun

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Introduction

Cities are often associated with young and able-bodied adults. In Western post-industrial urban contexts, infrastructure is largely dominated by ideals that oscillate towards an androcentric ideology and its policies that tend to privilege masculine traits of prosperity and success (Hayden, 1985). This dominant heteronormative ideology often results in side-lining or failing to 'recognise difference' (Fraser, 2000) such as the lived experiences of children, women, older people, sexual and gender minorities and persons with disabilities (Scicluna, 2017; Buffel and Richardson, 2019; Formosa & Scicluna, 2020).

In light of the above, this chapter aims to practically address issues related to the way infrastructure fails to recognise 'difference' based on diverse identities and communities dwelling in cities and urban neighbourhoods. Here, we contend that both difference and recognition need to be integrated in the way infrastructure is thought, developed and implemented. It is only in this manner that voice can be given to minorities that are often forgotten, silenced or side-lined by dominant discourses. By developing the full complexity of social identities it will be possible to take, for example, the lived experiences of children seriously instead of being erased from plain sight. This position was also triggered by the fact that this research was part of a larger project within the Faculty for the Built Environment under the aegis of the Commissioner for Children entitled, Child-friendly Towns and Villages.

The framework adopted takes a practical approach in how to implement 'difference' through collaboration with children, government bodies and third sector stakeholders. Additionally, 'collaboration as method' (Scicluna, 2015) is explored through an ethnographic approach where the researchers worked *with* children as collaborators and as real persons with their own culture. Through such collaborative methods we offer reflexive insights into how design, research and policy recommendations can offer a deep understanding of urban precarity from a child's worldview. Additionally, through this interdisciplinary and collaborative approach, we also offer solution-oriented and inclusive strategic recommendations on how urban planning can be developed according to the needs of children living within an urban and densely populated context.

Doing Research during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Doing research amidst the Covid-19 pandemic provided its own challenges, but also spurred creative methods which were inspired by the open-ended method of anthropology (Okely, 2012). The research project was conducted during 2020 and 2021, hence we were faced with pandemic-related conditions and restrictions were a 'constant' in the way we developed our field techniques as the research unfolded in real time. The dominant rhetoric of the pandemic asked people to deconstruct all that as human beings took for granted, that is, to undo intimacy at the level of daily encounters by keeping distance. Such alteration in people's everyday lives posed difficulties in how to conduct research and collect data which is so reliant on the 'extraordinary encounter' in anthropological methods (Smith, Staples & Rapport, 2015). Due to such extraordinary circumstances, most of the qualitative research was conducted virtually. The above virtual arrangements were mainly organised by the Local Council and the Children's Local Council, in collaboration with the parents and guardians of potential participants, and with the Office of the Commissioner for Children, under whose aegis the research was being held. This resulted in some initial difficulty in recruiting children who were willing to participate in the research and also manifested itself in the longer length of time it took to build a relationship of trust between the participants and the researchers.

Though this research project successfully brought together children and adult stakeholders in both virtual and physical environments, participant rates suffered, with several guardians stating that the children spent too much time online for schooling for them to be able to participate in online debates after school hours. Others prohibited their children from attending group events in person, despite the researchers assuring them that health regulations such as group size and social distancing would be rigorously adhered to.

However, it is also important to highlight that to some extent this method suited the children who were very familiar and comfortable with virtual technology and platforms. In fact, the children who ultimately participated in the research engaged willingly and put forward their views about their locality. This aspect of capacity-building or virtual participant observation was important, if not core to the success of the final outcome, since researchers had the opportunity to learn how to engage with children who often shied away from voicing their own observations. This was resolved through gentle prompting using a language that the children identified with. Once they had actually elaborated upon what they wanted to say, it was often the case that they asked their parents or guardians for approval of what they said to the researcher. This 'asymmetrical relation' between child-adult dyad will be discussed further below.

Such methodological endeavours were only possible through the continual involvement of the children who informed and influenced our field techniques but also through their experiences of place-making as the project unfolded. Additionally, there was a relatively small age gap between the children and the students who interpreted their observations during the project conceptualisation, which was advantageous as the students were able to translate the children's world better than the older adults that took part in this project. This type of endeavour fitted into the open-ended methodology which was seen as ideal to work with children and in a context that was constantly changing due to the pandemic.

An enabling infrastructure, children and visibility: a critical approach

Since the late 1990s, research across the disciplines mainly of anthropology, sociology, feminist, queer and gender studies, sought to 'give voice' to 'muted' populations (Rich, 1984; Fraser, 2000). This critical positionality addressed the way research methods were conducted from a positivist and ethnocentric perspective, which was couched in an asymmetric dyadic relation of power between the researched-and-the-researcher (Oakley, 1974; Okely, 2012; Smith et al., 2015).

This eventually led for social scientists to the focus on 'voice' in the new anthropology of childhood which comes as both a critique to the existing literature and research methods that is seen as 'adultist' (Galman, 2018), and to post-industrial urban contexts where infrastructure is largely dominated by androcentric ideals and its policies that privilege masculine traits of prosperity and success. Such dominant ideals find their way in how researchers and urban practitioners conceptualize space, more often than not failing to recognise children as real persons, including the way children dwell within urban space. Hence, in this chapter we extend this critical positionality to how grand-city projects are largely developed with a specific audience in mind, mainly that of the young able-bodied adults and often designed for and by the rich (Hayden, 1985; Scicluna, 2017).

Additionally, we explore innovative research methods that are based on 'collaboration as method' (Scicluna, 2015) as a way to address "adults' 'voicing over' children's perspectives and experiences" (Luttrell, 2010). Following the call by scholars to work *with* children (James & Prout 1997; Thorne, 1993, 2002; Mayall, 1994; Hallett & Prout, 2003; Orellana, 2009), we sought to develop a local 'urban walk' with the children. This was based on their daily rhythms

and outdoor activities. Giving children the opportunity to co-develop the urban walk was a way of seeing children as "agentive beings who learn, resist, adapt and create culture and their own ways of being in the world" (Galman, 2018: 7). This co-creation sought to consciously ensure that children remain the protagonists of this project while acknowledging their full presence and to be represented in an explicit way in the research project. This reflexive stance was also important to rethink and acknowledge our adultist perspective and to see children as real persons and not as "containers for future economic productivity" (ibid: 8). In fact, according to Ridge (2013) who looked at economic uncertainty and recession on UK government policy from a children's perspective stated,

> "Childhood is increasingly commodified and opportunities to take part in clubs, sports and other leisure activities are dictated by cost and other access factors such as the availability of transport to travel to out of town facilities, and the accessibility of after-school clubs and leisure centres."

The link between visibility, late capitalism and urbanism has long been associated with cities resulting in various forms of urban precarity. The shift towards neoliberal grand city projects has further intensified the visibility of minorities such as older people, people with disabilities, children, the LGBTIQ community and women inhabiting urban environments. For instance, the pull of modernisation often leads to social change within urban communities. According to Buffel and Richardson (2019), gentrification studies have shown how incoming groups or those forced to leave have a huge impact on the experiences of older residents who have lived most of their lives in the same locality. Such experiences have been ignored by gentrification research. Further, Buffel and Richardson (2019: 14) in their study argue that gentrification poses daily challenges and exclusionary pressures in how active older people are in creating a sense of belonging in a neighbourhood undergoing social change. They conclude for the need of urban interventions which "promote the 'age-friendliness' of communities and ensure that older people have a space to be seen and heard in their neighbourhood."

The dislodging and exclusion of older people from new infrastructural developments often leads to precarious existence for especially older women, single female-led households, and low-income families. As Campbell and Laheij (2021) argue "urban precarity" is a multifaceted condition that encapsulates legal and economic deprivation, including moral, spiritual, political, and health-related uncertainties. Despite such significant critiques, children remain largely absent from the literature on gentrification, urbanism and urban precarity. Although, developing an age-friendly neighbourhood may address issues related to mobility, security and safety, it does not consider the way children dwell within, what they desire to see and experience in their urban neighbourhoods.

For instance, play, wonder, joy and curiosity are aspects largely associated with childhood. Hence, a gendered or age perspective might not shed light on how urban planners and designers can make space for play in their strategic plans. In a recent report titled, "If Kids Built A City" (2018) the organisations Trying Together, the Playful Pittsburgh Collaborative, and the Grable Foundation explore the many ways to play in the city. The report further highlights how the time children spend playing has decreased by around 25% in recent decades. According to this report,

> "We're missing out on the power of play, both as individuals who thrive through playful interaction and as a society seeking greater harmony." (ibid:1)

Similar to promoting age-friendliness which addresses 'erasure' of older people through age-friendly initiatives (Kelly et al., 2019), a community that takes a child's perspective on safety

and joy will be better for everyone, especially as communities are accommodating a rapidly urbanising world where by 2050 it is estimated that half of the global population will migrate and live in cities (UN, 2015). To date, children are largely left out of the debate on urbanisation and urban research which leads to their needs being neglected from development projects.

Therefore, in this chapter we reimagined how urban neighborhoods can place children's own wellbeing and their expressed needs and concerns at the centre of the research process as a way into urban policy change to attain the child's wellbeing. As highlighted at the outset, key to this approach is to see children as collaborators with their own culture, as agentive beings and as members of society in their own right (Galman, 2018). This child-centred approach was significant to better understand the challenges faced by children in their everyday life and the way they negotiate the experience of their surrounding environment. Urban policies may fail to take account of children's needs and how important it is to have a safe, playful, secure, aesthetically pleasing and inclusive infrastructure during childhood.

In this respect, the routes from the children's homes or schools were considered as a core aspect of the research project itself in order to intentionally co-create and carve out a safe and secure environment for children within an already existing urban context of Ħamrun, Malta. Thus, as outlined above the emphasis on collaborations with children was intentional to counteract the adultist perspective and its wider implications on how design, research and policy recommendations can be co-developed and implemented in order to truly address the needs, desires and aspirations of children living in a dense urban environment. Only such an approach can promote an enabling infrastructure that truly seeks to see children flourish as real people in modern life.

Collaborative Design and Ethnography: Carving Safety and Playfulness

In the following section, we explore the relationship between collaborative design and ethnography, and how both types of design influenced each other. Data collection through the eclectic ethnographic field techniques (Devine and Heath 1999) of virtual focus groups, stakeholder meetings, the urban walk and participatory mapping preceded the design (see Figure 1). This was important as the final design was developed with children in mind from the start. In what follows, we outline how the research design was developed and what the children told us during this phase of the project. Then we explore how the emergent themes can be translated into design.

Designing Collaborative Research

Designing a collaborative research project requires a continuous flow of communication. Hence, the open-method and flexible design of the anthropological approach is ideal to work across disciplinary and sectoral boundaries (Scicluna, 2015). Such an approach is never without its challenges and tensions may arise, however, the latter exchange should be taken as an opportunity leading towards creativity. For instance, challenges that were related to land ownership provided a fertile entry point into how the existing space could be moulded into a 'cocoon' (see Figure 2 and 3). Such intimate spaces exert a sense of domestic familiarity which creates a sense of homeliness and connectedness for the children, including the adults. In fact, this also led the built environment students to think of intergenerational spaces without collapsing spatial boundaries according to the needs of the children (see below). Children, for instance, longed for safe and secure spaces where they can play freely away from the adult gaze. In what follows, we outline how the design was developed and then discuss the final research outcomes.

The Process: Collaboration as Method

Initiating the project, the Commissioner for Children approached the Faculty of the Built Environment, since they had a vision of piloting a project that prioritises children's aspirations in the design of spaces in the built environment that they inhabit. Academics from the Department of Architecture and Urban Design, and from the Department for Infrastructure and Spatial Planning were asked to participate in the project. Together, the team thus formed started to discuss a way forward in which students from the Faculty could attempt to design a series of child-friendly spaces.To this aim, Third Year students were asked to work on this project as part of their Thezina, a design project which they engage in for a period of thirteen weeks and through which they are expected to analyse, vision and design a space according to a given brief.

Following deliberation with different stakeholders, the locality of Ħamrun was chosen to pilot the project, which centered upon a collaborative approach to the design of public spaces designed *for* and *with* children. A number of reasons led to the choice of locality, foremost amongst which was the fact that Ħamrun boasts a Children's Local Council and a dedicated Local Councillor for Children's Affairs in the locality. Secondly, the Local Council is actively carrying out projects to better the environment in Ħamrun, with a clear focus on urban greening and community-centred projects. The stage was, thus, set for a project prioritising children's needs and their wellbeing, as proposed by the Commissioner for Children.

During this time, a parallel research project was being conducted by the Centre for Resilience and Socio-Emotional Health under the aegis of the Commissioner for Children with the support of ERA. A series of virtual focus groups with children from Ħamrun were organised to gather children's views on their locality, these acted as a 'springboard' for the built environment students to inspire their design project. A student was present during the online focus groups and then reported the key outcomes from each to all students in the design team. This ensured that the children from Ħamrun informed the design process from its earliest stages, and which were central to the conceptualisations that ensued. Indeed, the research outcomes were corroborated by the urban design analysis carried out by the built environment students, in which personal safety and perceived threats featured as the primary issue of concern.

Why is Ethnography Ideal to Work with Children?

Generally, the choice of methodology is crucial, as it is the backbone of a successful and grounded project. In order to attain realistic goals, the chosen research techniques took a rapid ethnographic approach (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson 2020). This specific approach was chosen due to its creative, flexible, and open-ended method which is mutually shaped by the group, participants, and the researchers (Okely, 2012). It is thus not prescriptive, but offers guidance or themes which can be used as tools to think with, making it ideal to work with minorities and in a pandemic scenario. Hence, we sought to capture both general constructive reflections on what has not worked to date in this neighbourhood, and to offer solution-oriented outcomes based on the day-to-day obstacles that professionals and practitioners encounter while engaging with urban projects and policies. These solution-oriented outcomes are presented below under the section, Translating the social into spatial planning.

This specific methodology was especially suitable to mould during the Covid-19 pandemic where online meetings were held with the stakeholders and the children too. Through its open-communication techniques, it was still possible to build trust and a rapport with the children especially as they were familiar with the virtual world more than the adult researchers as outlined above. This is an important aspect as children tend to be shadowed by adults as 'we' make

assumptions to what children need and require. The openness of this ethnographic method (Okely, 2012) allowed for the adults to learn from children while valuing the child as a complete person in the now (Galman, 2018). Hence, the ethnographic method and its reflexive stance helped the researcher rethink its adultist assumptions while taking the role of the researcher as learner (ibid).

With this creative and flexible method we sought to offer a meaningful account of childlife instead of providing a generic script that reduces children to an anecdote that appeals to adults. Thus, moving away from institutional settings like schools to which children are often associated with, we explored the daily rhythms and experiences of children in the outdoors beyond family and school settings. This open-ended and participatory method was also important as different researchers had the opportunity to reflect upon the collected data while being able to engage with carving out a safe, secure and playful urban environment.

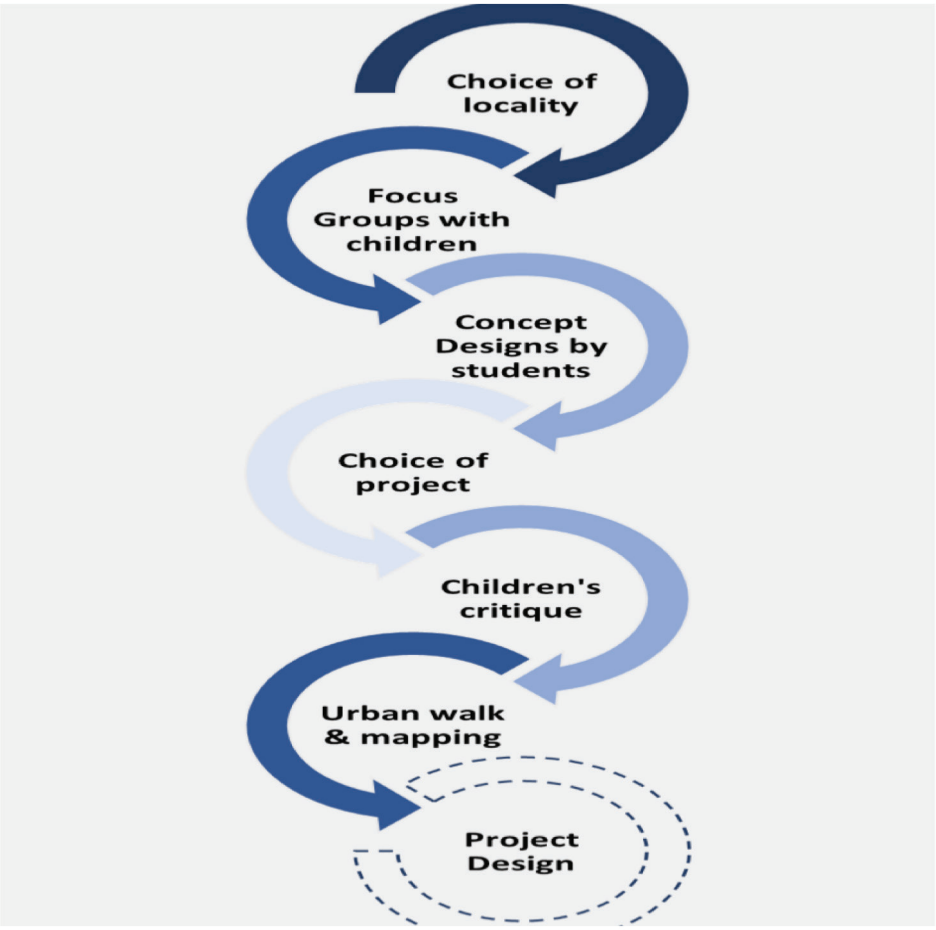

Figure 6.1 Process diagram for the project

Rapid, Relevant and Responsive Ethnographic Data

As stated above, in order to attain realistic goals during the pandemic, the chosen research techniques took a rapid ethnographic approach to data collection and analysis. This specific methodology was purposely chosen due to the need to disseminate information in a timely way. The timeliness of information is no less critical than its accuracy (McNall et al., 2004) but in the political (or medical) realms, timeliness influences the utility of research. More often than not, only findings shared at particular moments can inform decision-making. In our case, the Commissioner for Children could not afford a mismatch between policy and evaluation due to its timeliness (Nunns, 2009). Hence, our adopted methodology sought to be rapid, relevant and

responsive (Vindrola-Padros, Brage & Johnson, 2019).

Therefore, the underlying concepts within our adopted methodology were based on:

- Critically addressing our insider's perspective of the child;
- Intensive teamwork with stakeholders to problematise the data collected;
- Intensive teamwork for data analysis and additional data collection;
- Open-ended research methods in order to search for insight into the perspectives of participants.

This open-ended and collaborative framework analysis as our chosen method enabled the team to identify trends and emergent patterns through data collection. In order to achieve all the above, after long discussions we came up with solution-oriented reflections – these are not absolute or definite – but are 'tools to think with' (Levi-Strauss, 1964; Scicluna, 2017) to help us understand better children in today's modern society and to also guide us in planning and managing urban zones in Malta. This approach is based on flexible and open-ended research techniques that are moulded according to the group under study; hence flexibility was a key characteristic of this research technique.

The role of PGIS in doing research with children

The rapid ethnographic approach adopted was supported by participatory mapping, used as an ethnographic tool in planning research as it enables the researcher to gather data about local traditional knowledge, especially in cases when the research is based on analysing complex socio-spatial contexts (Haklay & Francis, 2017). This also complemented the open-ended methodology that was chosen for this research. Observation and engagement with the experience of mapping constitutes the way in which meanings and significance of subjects are understood during the ethnographic practice (Pink et al., 2015). It has also been found that participatory mapping is a useful tool for the participating community to understand the multitude of values held amongst them and therefore aids in the building of trusted relationships both within the group and with the researchers themselves, ultimately enhancing their social capital (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010).

Overall, participatory mapping has been somewhat under-recognised as an ethnographic tool, especially in situations where spatial planning is concerned. This seems to be a significant omission, especially when viewed in the light of maps as social constructs. Taking the matter further, the analysis of the way in which a map is developed can also provide insights into the socio-political contexts that produced them (Duhr, 2014).When undertaken within a GIS platform, participatory mapping is termed PGIS and is carried out through the context of digital media. Mapping software is programmed in a manner which allows high degrees of usability to participants, using a range of digital hardware with which to populate the map (Brown & Kyttä, 2014). Indeed, it is sometimes the case that both participatory mapping on paper maps and digital maps are used concurrently.

Participatory mapping was also an ideal tool for research during the pandemic as it aided dialogue, understanding and mapping of local traditional knowledge. During the research carried out with children in Ħamrun, the PGIS platform used was Mapping for Change, a social enterprise under the aegis of University College London (Mapping for Change, 2018). The remit of the mapping initiative was to enable children to voice their perceptions of the environment through which they are walking on their way from their home or school to the venue, which are mapped by the researcher.

What did the children tell us?

The protagonists of this research project were children aged between 7-15 years. The majority came from medium-income families and lived in Ħamrun or the vicinity. In total, we had 6 children participating, with 3 girls and 3 boys, who were accompanied by the Councillor for Children. They attended local schools in Ħamrun and frequented extra-curricular activities in the neighbourhood too. The creation of an urban walk with the children was seen as a key ethnographic tool in enabling us to understand as closely as possible the challenges, obstacles and successes of the neighbourhood from their perspective. This was also a way of building a rapport with the children as during the urban walk they opened up to us by recounting their experiences in living in a densely populated and overly built neighbourhood. In the following sections, we outline the main emergent themes that came out through the qualitative focus groups and the urban walk.

Safety. The issue of safety emerged as a key theme, where children perceived both social and spatial threats while walking unattended in Ħamrun. This meant that children are socialised into a social sphere which they identify with as their neighbourhood but somehow felt excluded from 'dwelling' within it. Therefore, they felt uneasy with those who are outside their social sphere, possibly encouraged to be so, intentionally or otherwise, by parents and guardians who teach them to beware strangers. Since Ħamrun is multi-ethnic, this learned social exclusionary mechanism may have repercussions throughout the social fabric of the locality and was reflected in the perceptions of the children.

Risk, Danger and Exclusion. Besides ethnic differences, children also mentioned that public spaces are generally designed for adults. Therefore, they feel excluded from them by design. The physical characteristics of the spaces and the uses they are designed to support are exclusively for adults. In fact, children expressed how their actions and play was perceived as deviant from the expected norm for the space, which promotes adultlike behaviour. This experience was further juxtaposed to the presence of the community police which enhanced the children's perception of danger. The feeling of being unwelcome was thus heightened and further associated with adult foreigners. This also emerged as a vicious cycle that propagates ethnic and intergenerational social exclusion which hinders community-building in a diverse locality like Ħamrun.

Play, Gender and Inquisitiveness. Several other essential elements of public space were, however, highlighted by the children when speaking of their experience of the built environment. Another common theme that emerged was the fact that public spaces were experienced as overly standardised and organised through regulatory use. This understanding was indicative through the children's experiences who repeatedly mentioned use of spaces such as the football stadium and the Girl Guides premises. This may suggest that public spaces are largely designed for generic use instead of instilling serendipitous play, engagement or personalisation of the neighbourhood. To them, this inhibited inquisitiveness.

Another drawback that the children perceived in such spaces is that activities tended to be gender specific, with boys encouraged to do activities entirely separate from girls. This seemed to create a sense of gender-based exclusion, if not confusion since it did not reflect their daily realities of attending mixed-gender schools. Additionally, the participation of some extracurricular activities is against payment. This financial barrier made it difficult for those coming from low-income families to access certain spaces or activities. This further reinforces class and ethnic divisions with the neighbourhood.

Child-friendly Neighbourhood, Accessibility and Walkability. Another characteristic mentioned by children was physical accessibility which is hindered over the course of their route to the local schools and back to their homes. This factor may alter their perception of distance, making the routes seem longer and, therefore, less walkable. This perception further resonates with the larger contemporary discourse of their hesitation to walking, while privileging car use even within the locality itself. In fact, children wished to have more protection and safety along the routes by introducing measures which support walking, scooting and cycling which will significantly improve their experience of public space.

When asked about the characteristics of public space related to open spaces, the children highlighted the current lack of dedicated child-friendly urban furniture. They specifically mentioned that there were also no social spaces for children to hang in and enjoy with friends and their pets. A common denominator was that the children longed to experience safe and secure spaces which they would be allowed to frequent away from the adult gaze. This interest in the design of such spaces was an important factor that ensued from the sessions and was taken forward by the project team in the ensuing stages of the design process.

Translating the social into spatial planning

The built environment students correlated the emergent themes of safety, walkability, physical and financial accessibility, human-animal relations, and gender-neutral and age-specific spaces, with their own ongoing spatial analysis. The students worked in groups to identify a series of potential projects within Ħamrun, for which they could develop conceptualisations in line with the aspirations of the children. Students were asked to design in a practical way, with children in mind and the above emergent themes. They were encouraged to vision public spaces in Ħamrun unhindered by issues of ownership, in order to put forward proposals that pushed at restrictive boundaries of private and public space.

Given such parameters, the students came up with twelve innovative proposals for different places within Ħamrun, grouped into three overarching projects which each encompassed a number of proposals in the vicinity of each other. The predominant concept for the proposals was that they could function as safe, playful and inclusive public spaces that were appropriate for children both from within and without the locality. Consequently, all the proposals thus manifested a number of key design criteria, foremost amongst which were:

- *Inclusive, Accessible and Safe Public Spaces* by introducing features in public spaces that are inclusive and intergenerational by catering for all demographics through their design;
- *Gender- and Child-Friendly Neighbourhoods* which promote social cohesion in Ħamrun through the promotion of community involvement in the running and upkeep of public spaces;
- *Promoting Conviviality of Diverse Communities* by using overlooked spaces as opportunities for reinforcing positive social interaction;
- *Reuse and Adaptation of Industrial Heritage and Abandoned Spaces* through the optimal utilisation of the built fabric, identifying vacant buildings as opportunities for adaptive reuse, being innovative in the uses proposed for the spaces, both indoors and outdoors, and celebrating the industrial heritage of Ħamrun as a key element of the identity of the locality;
- *Walkability*, through the provision of spaces with active frontages and clear lines of sight to increase surveillance and promote safety, pedestrianisation-priority links to and from the site, especially from other identified places of interest, and shifting the priority away from the private vehicle;

- *Urban Greening and Aesthetically Pleasing Places* to and within the site both at ground and rooftop level, and including vertical greening on building facades; also by visualising connections through the dense urban fabric of Ħamrun that do not currently exist, rethinking borders and boundaries;
- *Community Upkeep* of existing landmarks and places of interest to the children, with an emphasis on upkeep of the principal routes to, through and from Ħamrun.

After the students had developed their ideas into project conceptualisations, each of the projects were presented to the project team which was accompanied by an expert fro the Planning Authority in order to shortlist those project which were most likely to be able to continue to fruition. The team together with the mayor of Hamrun will explore possibilities for the implementation of one of the projects.

Mapping for Change

The project team set up a mapping platform in order to map routes children would likely take within Hamrun. Mapping for Change was used as the mapping platform, which was designed as an aid to the urban walks that were to be held with the children who attended the Local Council session (See Appendix 4). Programmed in both English and Maltese, the children were able to answer the following questions through the platform:

- **Spaces you use**
  - Would you like to spend more time here?
  - What is stopping you from doing so?
  - How would *you* design this space?
- **Routes you use**
  - Where to and from where do you use this route?
  - What do you like and dislike about the route?
  - How would *you* design this route?

Figure 6.2 The Mapping for Change platform used during the urban walk

An urban walk designed by children was held in July 2021 with four children, some of whom were accompanied by their parents. A representative from the Office of the Commissioner for Children was also present, as was a Hamrun Councillor and the coordinator of the project on behalf of the Faculty for the Built Environment. Together, the group walked from the vicinity of the children's homes through various streets in Hamrun while discussing issues related to the streets that were being traversed, and the children's aspirations for such routes. All the information was mapped accordingly in order to retain a repository of what the children mentioned while they were walking along the route. The table below documents those perceptions that the children cited referring to the routes they were experiencing.

Table 6.1 Participants' views on the use of routes

What do you like along this route?	There is shade along the southern aspect of the street in the afternoon
What don't you like along this route?	Bird droppings make it unsafe to use the pavement, and prompt people to walk in the street, which is heavily trafficked
	Planters used as bins
	People using the High Street unnecessarily as a through route instead of the bypass
	The facade is uninviting, and the route does not feel safe when dark
What would you like the route to have?	Wide pavements with room for planters
	Vacant properties along the route can be re-developed into areas for play without undue restrictions on their use
	A water feature for children to play in, in the garden
	Safety barriers at the corners of the streets
	A clean and mended pavement, with pigeon spikes to eliminate bird droppings
	Rerouting of traffic to side streets so that main street can be used for walking and playing
	More zebra crossings

The outcomes of the urban walk were triangulated with the qualitative research outcomes, bringing the exercise round full circle and confirming in real time and on-site that which the children had mentioned virtually from memory. In this case, it was the physical space that inspired and prompted the children to voice their opinions about the spaces that they often used and experienced. Indeed, they were very willing to let the adult members of the urban walk know about the challenges that they faced and what they wished they could experience in the spaces they were walking through. It was encouraging to see that they offered several recommendations, and they were proactive with their suggestions rather than being simply critical of the spaces.

Concluding reflections: Compassionate governance and socially-aware design

From the above, it becomes clear that more often than not urban infrastructure does not always accommodate or reflect the lived experiences of children, including the adults that care for them. As the literature suggests, children do live in a world that is designed by adults, with their voices muted and their experiences erased by an adultist worldview. What we sought to achieve is a socially-aware design by including 'social thinking from the start' in the built environment (Baldwin 2014, Baldwin 2017). According to Baldwin and King (2018), "government sustainability and resilience plans tend to prioritize the 'hardware' of cities, but change is needed. Adopting a socially-aware planning process will make cities more robust and responsive to the needs of their residents."

Therefore, our collaborative research design was purposely aimed at developing a spatial design that addressed the needs of children and their significant others by treating them as equal partners from the start where we, as adults, learned from them as the project emerged. This research outcome was insightful in making recommendations for how the Commissioner for Children could adopt a counter-narrative to 'design as commodity' and instead promote wellbeing and human flourishing as one of its milestones. Moreover, this link between lived experience and design can assist in developing a 'wellbeing design' in order to counteract precarity, that is, to understand the urban context and its infrastructure from a wellbeing perspective, not only through material scarcity or maximisation of space. Having this understanding embedded in any spatial plan is a significant way forward in giving voice to children while attending to their needs.

Additionally, by adopting a methodology that privileges the process it becomes possible to build a rapport based on trust with different stakeholders. This was evident in how the built environment students engaged with the children's needs in how they translated their needs into developing safe spaces in the final project, The Green Lung. In fact, this conceptualisation was spatially developed through the cocoon-like shape of the space that exudes an aura of safety which through careful design, it can support an optimal balance of openness, playfulness and seclusion. This was also achieved through the participatory and collaborative approach which led to the shortlisting and choice of this specific project which the Office of the Commissioner for Children championed throughout the process.

Another significant part of the project was the committed leadership of the Commissioner. This came out through the spirit of 'compassionate leadership' and 'participatory governance' that was carried out through to a series of discursive meetings held with various stakeholders whose agendas may have differed, yet they put children at the centre. Capacity-building was therefore at the heart of the project. It was only through these collaborative field research techniques that it was possible for the researchers to untangle the relationship between urbanity, children's lived experiences and precarity in the local neighbourhood of Ħamrun, Malta.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary of findings and implications

Children and adolescents

The survey findings from both the children and adolescents clearly indicate that they would like a cleaner, healthier environment, free from cars, traffic, pollution and littering with more spaces reserved for play and social activities. Around half of the participants were dissatisfied with the adequacy of the play and physical activity areas in their locality, such as places for walking and cycling, whilst they would also appreciate more opportunities where they can engage in more varied and creative activities. The younger children visit sports centres and nature areas less than once a week; while the majority of adolescents visit playing fields, sports centres, nature and open areas and football grounds less than once week. Adolescents would also like more spaces tailored to their needs including youth centres, malls, and cafés. Several play and recreational areas are not fully accessible for wheelchairs and pushchairs.

The participants expressed a desire for more accessible nature areas close to where they live. Having nature trails and facilities for exercise and sports at close proximity would help them participate actively in sports and enjoy the outdoors. This would facilitate a much-needed culture change where regular physical activity and nature visits would become an intrinsic part of children's, young people's and parents' regular routine. Travelling by bike and public transport is restricted to a minority of children, partly due to a perceived lack of safety. Play and recreational areas are mainly accessible in good weather. Shelter and protection in these areas are required to make them accessible all year round.

Issues related to safety were raised by both age groups. Of particular concern were issues associated to strangers, drugs, crime and violence as well as risks from lack of maintenance in play areas, broken equipment and construction sites. Although children and adolescents feel they belong in their community, they would like to be more involved and to have stronger participation in decision making especially about projects which concern them directly.

The areas that younger children would like to improve most in their locality include safety on the roads, clean and pollution-free places, more parks, gardens and open areas where they can enjoy nature, places where they can play and do sports, more accessible play and nature areas, more cycling lanes, and safety to protect them from strangers and other adults.

The areas the adolescents would like to improve most in their locality, include having suitable places where they can meet and socialise with friends, clean and pollution-free environments, traffic safety, adequate places where they can go out to walk, play sports or cycle, parks, gardens and nature areas. More female participants would like more safety from abuse by strangers and other adults, suitable places where they can meet with friends, and a clean and healthy environment. Participants from the Harbour region were the most to indicate the need for more adequate places where they can go out to walk, play, do sports or cycle and a cleaner and healthier environment.

The best places overall for children and young people to live and grow up healthily and happily with adequate facilities and opportunities appear to be Gozo, the Western region and South Eastern region. However, there are variations within these regions which need to be taken into consideration; for instance there may be towns and villages within a region which vary considerably from the general trend within that region. Consequently one needs also to look at individual towns and villages as being recommended in the recommendations in the next section.

The FGD reinforced the survey findings but highlighted those areas which children where most concerned about such as the lack of play areas, pollution and issues of safety and included specific recommendations on what may be improved in their locality.

Parents

The great majority of parents agreed on the need for better play and recreational areas for their children, including more pedestrian areas and less spaces occupied by cars. The majority of parents did not think that their children can go out to play all year round, that they can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own, that they have enough routes for walking and cycling, and that they have enough space to play games and different sports in their locality. Close to half of the parents did not think that there are different types of open spaces where their children can explore, discover and learn new things whilst playing.

In contrast to parents of younger children, parents of older children were more likely to believe that their children can walk to shops, play areas, church and other public places, can go out to play, walk or cycle on their own irrespective of weather conditions, have enough routes for walking and cycling, and that there are well kept bus stops within walking distance. Parents of younger children however were more likely to agree that in their locality there are places for children that are colourful, easy to use and age-appropriate. In the FGD, parents consistently complained about the lack of spaces and safe areas where their children could play and cycle and the lack of accessibility around parks and playgrounds and on pavements. They underlined the need for more diverse activities and equipment in playgrounds, for more spaces for older children and teenagers to meet and socialise, more safety measures for their children when in public places, and for more indoor spaces for winter.

Just over half the parents agreed that there are places in their locality or within close reach where children can enjoy nature, and that these places are within walking distance from home. Most parents however, did not agree that their children could visit these areas on their own, that there are nature trails which children could follow, or that there are public toilets which children could easily use. Parents of older children were more likely to agree than those of younger children, that their children can visit nature areas on their own and that there are nature trails that their children are able to follow in these places.

Most parents agreed that there is a park or natural open area, either in their locality or within reach, and that they visit these places on foot or by car, with few parents using the bicycle or pubic transport. Only one third of parents, however, visit these places frequently, while close to one half go there less than once a month. In particular, parents seek nature areas for peace and quiet, fresh and clean air, and to be close to nature. When asked about what they would like to improve in the nature areas, around one half of the parents selected more play areas for young children and their maintenance and cleanliness. In the FGD, parents underlined the need for more family parks where children and families could enjoy nature, frequently referring to Ta Qali National Park as an example of good practice.

Most parent participants mentioned that there is a high level of noise and pollution in their locality, while close to one half said there is a problem with rubbish, open drains, dust, and dog mess. In the FGD, various parents, most notably those residing in Malta, referred to the risks of pollution for their own and their children's health.

The majority of parents did not believe that it is safe for their children to play, walk and cycle on their own whilst safety from crime, violence and abuse in the locality was another issue mentioned by many parents. On the other hand, many parents believed that there are safe crossings to playing fields, ground parks and schools in their locality. Parents of younger

children were less likely to agree than those of older children that their locality is safe for children, while parents from the Harbour and Northern regions were generally more concerned about safety issues. In the focus group discussions, parents raised various issues related to the safety of their children particularly about traffic, maintenance and supervision of play areas.

Less than one half of the parents believed that their children have opportunities to participate in projects or activities organised in their locality or that their children have opportunities to give their opinion about projects. In the FGD, they underlined the importance of giving children the opportunity to express themselves and voice their opinions on how they can improve their locality.

In many instances, most parents were not satisfied with the physical and social spaces for their children, such as safety from cars and traffic, adequate space where children can go out to play and cycle and play different games, sports and physical exercise, suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others, clean and healthy environment, and opportunities for children to express their opinion and for these to be taken seriously. When asked which aspects of their locality they would like to improve, the most frequently chosen areas were safety from cars and traffic for children, adequate space where children can go out to play and cycle and play different games, sports and physical exercise, green areas where children can enjoy nature, and safety from crime, drugs and violence.

Stakeholders

The majority of stakeholders did not feel satisfied with the spaces available for children to walk and cycle in their locality or that their locality enjoyed a clean and healthy environment. Close to half did not feel satisfied with current spaces available where children can play and do different sports, the green areas, the safety precautions with regard to traffic and the accessibility of places for children with a disability, young children and parents with pushchairs. On the other hand, close to half of participants were satisfied with the opportunities for children to participate in the local council, parish council and youth organisations, the inclusion of all children in the locality, and the opportunities for children to participate in social activities organised in the locality.

A substantial percentage were also satisfied that there are clean and well-kept places and facilities used by children in their locality, suitable places where children can meet and socialise with others, safety from crime, drugs, and abuse, safety from bullying by other children, and the public transport available for children. More participants from the Harbour region were dissatisfied with safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse, a clean and healthy environment and opportunities for children to participate in social activities. Local councillors appeared to be the most satisfied amongst the stakeholders with most of the aspects in their locality.

More than half of the stakeholders agreed that there is a need for improvement in green areas where children can enjoy nature, safety from traffic and adequate space where children can walk and cycle. A substantial number also underlined the need for a clean and healthy environment, adequate space where children can play and do sports and environments free from crime, drugs, violence and abuse. Protection from bullying, opportunities for children to participate in the locality and improvement of the public transport were the least problematic aspects according to the stakeholders. Stakeholders from the Northern Harbour in particular referred to safety from crime, drugs, violence and abuse as one of the urgent issues to be addressed while those from the Southern Harbour underlined the need for more green areas and clean and well-kept places and facilities for children.

In the FGD, various recommendations were made about what needs to be done to ensure better quality, safe and healthier play and nature areas, including more child- and family-friendly recreational and nature areas, maintenance and supervision of open spaces to prevent risk and damage, safety in the streets and local areas, increasing the accessibility of parks and playgrounds, and opportunities for children and adolescents to be more active and have a stronger voice in their locality.

Whilst most stakeholders saw themselves participating in similar projects if they were to be implemented in their locality, less than one fourth were convinced about their participation. Local councils appeared the most committed to participate in similar projects. Half of the respondents would be interested in offering their support to the project and more than 40% in actively participating in it. When asked what they expected in relation to outcomes following a project, half the participants expected more nature areas and a cleaner and healthier environment for children, followed by more adequate play spaces, more participation of children in the life of the locality, safer streets and public spaces for children and more protection of children from bullying, violence and crime. When asked about their concerns in supporting or participating in this initiative, most stakeholders mentioned time constraints, followed by financial limitations and lack of resources. Local councils and sports organisations mentioned financial limitations as their biggest concern in supporting or participating in similar projects, while Heads of school and leaders of social or cultural organisations appeared to be more concerned about lack of consultation.

Recommendations for action

1. Develop mandatory guidelines within a children's rights framework on how the voice of children and young people is to be heard and taken into consideration in policy and project development related to children and families. The Commissioner for Children in collaboration with children and young people themselves, may publish such guidelines which may also be extended to other aspects of children's lives, such as education, use of social and health services, and issues related to child protection and welfare. Children have a recognised right to their views being heard in policy actions and decisions regarding their welfare and wellbeing and this right needs be acknowledged and supported by the stakeholders involved. Children's and adults' views do not always concur, as we can also see from some of the differences between children's and young persons' views and those of parents and stakholders in this study, and children's needs can only be adequately addressed when their views and perspectives are actively taken into consideration.

2. Launch a collaborative needs analysis in each locality to establish how the locality may be transformed into a more child-friendly one. The needs analysis may be led by the local councils in collaboration with the children, young people, families, community leaders, business leaders and other stakeholders involved. Annex 2 presents a flexible needs-analysis tool on how local councils may organise this activity.

3. Establish national indicators of child-friendly towns and villages leading to the award of a quality label for localities which reach the required criteria. An intersectoral committee led by the Commissioner for Children and the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights, in collaboration with the Local Councils Directorate, the Local Council Association, ERA, MCCA, University of Malta, Aġenzija Żgħażagħ and the Children's Council, is being set up to develop these indicators. The findings provided in this report provide a good indication of what children, young people, parents and community stakeholders would like to see in their towns and villages. These include: more play and open areas which are free of traffic and pollution, are well maintained and safe, and provide opportunities for varied and

developmentally appropriate play and physical activity; more spaces for walking and cycling and other physical activity; more social places where to meet; more green areas and nature trails; a cleaner and healthier environment free from littering, traffic pollution and construction; a safer environment from traffic, regular maintenance of equipment in play areas; protection from strangers violence and crime; more accessible play and open spaces (both in terms of physical accessibility as well as extended opening hours throughout the year); more meaningful and varied community activities for children and young people, and more opportunities for children to make their voice heard in the community and in their contributions to the running of the locality.

Box 1 Example of broad indicators of child-friendly communities in Australia (from Woolcock and Steele, 2008, p.15-16)

1. Welcome and Connection - learning how to listen, plan and take action with local children
2. Value – recognising that local children and their families are valuable contributors to community life
3. Safety – providing safe places to play close to home and connecting communities with the care of children
4. Meaningful Action and Self-Determination – developing a joint community vision and imagining together what a child-friendly community will look like locally
5. Space - designing creative spaces for and with children and providing people with a reason to come into those spaces and use them
6. Learning and Development – recognising that learning and development happens in everyday places and in many different ways and that it is important to utilise these places, and to document the processes and outcomes for children as they learn and grow in everyday spaces
7. Support - establishing practical and friendly pathways for families to get services they need
8. Time - taking time and making time when working with children to counter the idea that consultation with children is a one-off event

4. Appoint a designated member in each local council responsible for policy actions on how to make the locality more child- and family-friendly and to establish formal procedures on how to include the voices of children and young people in projects for children and young people in the locality. This should be done through the setting up of Children's Local Councils.

5. Strengthen and celebrate green, blue and eco initiatives being undertaken in several localities across Malta and Gozo, such as child-friendly streets, pedestrianised squares, zones, and hubs, opening of recreational and educational areas and parks in the community for children and families, streetscaping, soundscaping, cleanliness, and regulation of building construction. This will also help children and families to spend more time engaged in play, exercise and recreation in healthy and safe environments, thus improving their quality of life and contributing to physical and mental health Annex 3 presents examples of *Playful learning* projects which make positive use of the built environment to facilitate children's healthy development and education through play.

6. Prioritise environmental education from the early years up to tertiary education (for example, training of related professions such as architects, engineers, technicians, construction workers, developers, business community) as well as lifelong education, such as community education programmes through the local councils, to ensure an eco-friendly approach and responsible decision-making in policy and project development at national, local and neighbourhood levels, as well as individual responsibility in promoting and preserving a sustainable and healthy environment and establish a better relationship with nature.

> "Children are born with a sense of wonder and an affinity for nature. Properly cultivated, these values can mature into ecological literacy, and eventually into sustainable patterns of living." Zenobia Barlow

7. Empower local communities to actively participate and contribute towards the quality of the environment in their towns and villages as well as in feeling more responsible for, and taking care of, their neighbourhood and the environment as part of a global approach towards the preservation of the planet. Local councils with the support of the central government and other governmental and non-governmental agencies, may lead such initiatives.

8. Raise awareness through research, education and training amongst all stakeholders including educators, policy makers, professionals, spatial planners, politicians and councillors, on the relationship between the environment and wellbeing, and how nature, including both green and blue spaces as well as urban planning and residential areas, contribute to improving wellbeing and mental health. The local councils with the support of the central government, research institutions, health promotion organisations and other state and non-state entities, may take the lead in ensuring that information reaches all the citizens in their locality.

Universal charter for National Park Cities (https://npc-universal-charter.netlify.app/)

We Are Working Together For Better:
*Lives, Health and Wellbeing
*Wildlife, Trees and Flowers
*Places, Habitats, Air, Water, Sea and Land
*Time Outdoors, Culture, Art, Playing, Walking, Cycling & Eating
*Locally Grown Food and Responsible Consumption
*Decisions, Sharing, Learning and Working Together
*Relationships with Nature and With Each Other

Conclusion

This study gave children and adolescents, as well as parents and community stakeholders, an opportunity to express their views and suggestions on what needs to change in their locality for it to become a more stimulating, safe, and healthy environment where they can grow and thrive cognitively, physically, socially and emotionally. In seeking to put children's and young people's recommendations into practice, it is equally important that they are given a key role in planning, designing and implementing the actions steps to be taken. Lundy's (2005) framework 'Voice is not enough' underlines the need to ensure that children's voices are not only heard but also acted upon in collaboration with children themselves (see Annex 1). Having children as key actors in designing spaces and places for themselves and their families, will help to safeguard the rights of children to be safe and healthy in community public places and to be provided with stimulating play, recreational and nature spaces which promote their development and wellbeing. It will also serve to illustrate the value and relevance of giving children a voice, a practice which needs to become more ingrained in Maltese society.

If we want children to flourish, to become truly empowered, then let us allow them to love the earth before we ask them to save it.
David Sobel

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Annex 1

Voice is not enough (Lundy, 2005)[4]

Space

How: Provide a safe and inclusive space for children to express their views

Have children's views been actively sought?

Was there a safe space in which children can express themselves freely?

Have steps been taken to ensure that all children take part?

Voice

How: Provide appropriate information and facilitate the expression of children's views

Have children been given the information they need to form a view?

Do children know that they do not have to take part?

Have children been given a range of options as to how the might choose to express themselves?

Audience

How: Ensure that children's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

Is there a process for communicating children's views?

Do children know who their views are being communicated to?

Does that person/ body have the power to make decisions?

Influence

How: Ensure that children's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate.

Were the children's views considered by those with the power to effect change?

Are there procedures in place that ensure that children's views have been taken seriously?

Have the children and young people been provided with feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?

4 Adapted from Ireland's National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making 2015-2020

Annex 2

A Needs Analysis Tool for Local Councils

One of the recommendations to create a child-friendly locality is for the local council to undertake a needs analysis of the locality to draw an action plan to improve the locality. Local councils in collaboration with children and young people as well as parents and other key stakeholders in the locality may use the following eight step framework in undertaking the needs analysis; this may be adapted according to the locality's needs and context (Figure A1). The voices of children and young people need to be given particular attention during all the steps in this exercise. Please refer to Annex 1 on the four areas to be taken into consideration in this process: space (children must be given the opportunity to express a view), voice (children must be facilitated to express their views), audience (children's views must be listened to) and influence (children's views must be acted upon, as appropriate).

Figure A2.1. A needs analysis tool

Step 1: Defining the goal on how the locality may become more child-friendly where children can grow up safely, happily and healthily with adequate and safe play, recreational, and nature spaces, free of traffic and pollution. (What do we need to do to make the play, recreational and open spaces more child-friendly, adequate, safer, more accessible, cleaner, well maintained, providing more varied activities?). How can we ensure that these spaces provide children a sense of welcome and belonging? What can we do to increase the play, nature and social areas for children and young people and decrease traffic and pollution? How can we have more open and nature areas for children and young people in or close to our locality? How can we make our locality safe for our children and young people? How can our children and young people become more active in the life of our community and have a stronger voice in decisions?

Step 2: Establishing the team: setting up a working group with representatives of children, young people, parents, community leaders and other NGO representatives with the aim to establish the child and family areas which need to be improved in their locality. All members of the locality, including minorities, need to be included. The terms of reference of the working group including the role of the members, the duration of the activity, the mode of working, etc. need to be clarified from the beginning (Are children and young people in our locality well represented on this team? Is the team inclusive and representative of the various groups in our locality? Do all the members know exactly what the team is expected to do and how? Do all members of the team, including children and young people, have a voice in what happens and the decisions being made?)

Step 3. Identifying areas for improvement: what are the needs of the locality so that it becomes more child- and young people- friendly in relation to the play and recreational spaces, open and nature spaces, cleanliness and pollution in these areas? How safe are these areas for children and young people? (from traffic, pollution, broken equipment, adult strangers, crime and violence, bullying). In seeking to identify the areas for improvement, the working group needs to go back to the community and ask the key stakeholders themselves, namely children and young people as well as parents, other community leaders such as religious leaders, leaders of social, cultural and sports organisations for children and young people, business leaders (eg supermarkets), Heads of school, early childhood centres and other educational institutions, and other NGOs in the community.

The consultation may be held both qualitatively such as Focus Group discussions with children and young people, and round table discussions with parents and community leaders, as well as quantitatively such as a brief survey (preferably online to facilitate the process of data collection). At the end of this Annex we give an example of some activities from a focus group discussion with children developed purposely to provide children with child-friendly tools to enable them to express their opinion freely and authentically. In its Child-friendly Cities Initiative, UNESCO provides a number of open access self assessment tools for children, young people, parents/ carers and other stakeholders which may be used in this exercise; these may be accessed at https://childfriendlycities.org/?popuppress=building-a-cfci-assessment. These tools are provided as examples of what may be done to collect the data, but they may adapted according to the needs of the local context.

Step 4: Identifying existing resources: What resources (physical, financial, human) do we already posses which we may utilise to reach our goal? What other resources do we need? How are we going to get them?

Step 5: Identifying potential challenges: What challenges are there which need to be addressed in order to reach our goal? How can we overcome them? (eg lack of responsible behaviour in littering or driving, lack of maintenance and upkeep of play areas and equipment, lack of financial resources, lack of participation by young people in particular activities).

Step 6: Planning the intervention: Develop an implementation plan with clear goals, action steps, and assigned ownership (What exactly are we going to do? How are going to do it? Who is going to be involved and in what role? When are we going to start? When will the project be completed?).

Step 7:Implementing the intervention: implement the intervention as planned, making room for adaptation and flexibility

Step 8: Monitoring and evaluating: How do we check that the intervention is being implemented as planned? Who is going to do this? Are there any unforeseen challenges which need to be addressed to make sure the implementation process is a smooth as possible? Do we have a risk management plan? Have we made provisions for upkeep and maintenance, including supervision if necessary? How do we know whether we have been successful in our efforts? What do children and young people think? What do parents and other stakeholders think?

In evaluating the intervention similar tools as in Step 3 may be used but with a greater focus on how satisfiedchildren, young people, parents (and where appropriate other stakeholders) are with the project and any recommendations they might have to improve it.

Annex 2A

Activities from a focus group with children

1. Mapping important aspects of your locality

Now we're going to do a map activity. You will be working in groups for this task. Each group will receive a big white paper where you draw or glue pictures or photos or Lego of:

- The important play, walking and cycling areas for you where you live
- The areas where you can enjoy nature (trees, plants, animals, water,…)
- The places where you can meet friends and enjoy yourself
- Other important areas for you in the village or town where you live

Please show others your map and describe what's on it. You can add things to your map anytime you like.

Now let us talk about these places in your village or town

i. What do you like about these areas?
ii. What do you not like about these areas and other areas for children in your village/town?
iii. How good are these places for children? (easy to use, colourful, safe to use, etc.)?
iv. How easy to use are these for all children (young children, children with a disability, boys and girls, children from different countries)?
v. How safe do you feel in your village/town (traffic, abuse from adult people/strangers, bullying by other children, violence and fighting)
vi. How clean is the area where you live (from dust, pollution, rubbish)?
vii. How well kept are play areas, including equipment in playing fields?
viii. How involved are children/young people in the social and cultural activities in your village/town? Do they have opportunity to contribute and share their opinions on projects for children?

2. Changing important aspects of your locality

I'd like you to imagine that you have a magic wand and you could change anything you like in your village/town. When you look at your map, what would you like to change? [play areas, walking, cycling, recreational areas for children; nature areas; cleanliness and pollution, safety, accessibility for all children; inclusion of all children]-
DRAW A RED CIRCLE ON THOSE THINGS WOULD LIKE TO CHANGE.
Discussion:

- What are the important aspects in your village/town you would like to improve to make it a better place for you and children/young people?
- How can you have more voice on the life of the locality, particularly in projects and activities designed for children/young people?

3. Poster – your ideal locality

As a whole group, design a poster of your village/town as you would like it to be for you and other children; include the areas you discussed earlier on how you would like to change your village/town (play, walking, cycling, recreational areas for children; nature areas; cleanliness and pollution, safety, accessibility for all children, inclusion of all children)

Then write 5 words that would describe your village/town as you would like to be.

Annex 3

Playful Learning: Leaning Landscapes Project (from Hassinger-Das et al, 2018)[6]

"If we want our kids to have happy, productive, moral lives, we must allow more time for play, not less" -Peter Gray, professor in psychology

Learning Landscapes is an initiative to promote playful learning through child-directed play activities within the built environment. It is particularly targeted for children and families from low SES communities, transforming unusual places such as bus stops and walkways into opportunities for playful learning. It is built on the premise that changing public spaces leads to a change in children's behaviour and focuses on public places in cities as opportunities for learning, given that 80% of children's time is not spent at school (Hassenger-Das et al, 2018). Learning Landscapes includes various projects, such as Supermarket Speak (signs posted in supermarket encourage parents and children to engage in rich interactions during 'trapped time' to promote language development and mathematical skills), Parkopolis (a life-size board game in a public space that is aimed an developing STEM skills) and Urban Thinkscape which seeks to transform public buildings such as bus stops, street corners, squares and sidewalks, into opportunities for learning through play.

1. Urban Thinkscape Project

The Urban Thinkscape project in Philadelphia, turned a bus stop and its surrounding area into a playful learning hub consisting of various designated areas of interactive playful learning promoting language development, spatial and mathematical skills, and reasoning and memory skills. **The Puzzle Bench** (Figure A2a/b) transforms the back wall of the bus stop into a set of puzzles which children with the support of their parents, can try to solve while waiting for the bus to arrive (spatial and mathematical skills).

Image credit: Sahar Coston-Hardy

Image credit: Sahar Coston-Hardy

Figure A3.1a/b Puzzle Bench

In the **Stories** design (Figure A3) children have to balance from one narrative cue to another to create a story from the various cues (narrative skills, language skills).

Figure A3.2 Stories Design

In the **Jumping Feet** design (Figure A4) children have to jump from one shoe print pattern to another (cognitive processes such as working memory, flexible thinking, problem solving and planning).

Figure A3.3 Jumping Feet

In the **Hidden Figures** design (Figure A5), children have to identify in the metalwork images of food, animals, and other objects. On sunny days various images are reflected on the ground at different times of the day according to the sun's position (problem solving, creativity, spatial skills).

Image credit: Sahar Coston-Hardy

Figure A3.4 Hidden Figures

2. Parkopolis Project

Parkopolis is based on game based learning through the use of public spaces. It is a life-size board game where children roll a fraction dice to skip and move forward in ½ and ¾ leaps on the board (the spaces on the game board are divided into fourths, so that players can move two and a half, or three and three-quarters spaces). With each roll of the dice, players also draw large cards that engage them in different practical games and activities involving fractions. (Figure A6a/b). Parkopolis helps to promote STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills, spatial skills and executive functioning (working memory, flexibility, problem solving, planning) as well as physical movement and gross motor skills.

Image credit: Hassinger-Das, B., Bustamante, A. S., Hirsh-Pasek, K., & Golinkoff, R. M. (2018). Learning landscapes: Playing the way to learning and engagement in public spaces. Education Sciences, 8(2), 74.

Image credit: Kenny Lewis

Figure A3.5a/b Parkopolis Board game

Annex 4

Hamrun Case Study: Organisation of the Urban Walk

The urban walk was designed in order for the children to have the opportunity to discuss the spaces they are familiar with, while being in those same spaces; thus so that they are not drawing upon memory when stating their opinion, but from direct experience. In the run-up to the urban walk, several factors were considered, namely:

1. Data gathered from Focus Groups is to be analysed for information on:

    - Spaces and routes mentioned by the participants
    - Memories, stories and anecdotes told by the children
    - Use and frequency of attendance in these spaces or lack of use
    - Perceptions on gender bias, time of use, quality, class etc.

2. The preparation for the urban walk is to be include:

    - Definition of the aims for the walk
    - Drafting and testing a route to be followed during the walk
    - Compilation of a list of thematic areas to guide observation during the walk

3. The urban walk is to be organised, including amongst others details of:

    - Which adults and how many are to accompany the children
    - The method of data gathering during the walk
    - Potential pitfalls and their mitigation

Categories

The categories used in the development of the map have been designed to gather qualitative data, thus encouraging the participants to describe their experience of the space in their own words rather than use quantitative data to categorise their observations. The content of the mapping platform was designed in both English and Maltese, in order to promote inclusion on the basis of language. It is good to note that the platform can also be used in both languages since it is programmed to do so.

Two categories were programmed into the mapping platform, reflecting the two key spaces which form the focus of the research. These are the spaces that the children use and the routes that they take to go to and from the spaces. The spaces were mostly mapped during the session of the Children's Council, information which was then used to design the route of the urban walk. The observations relating to the routes were then mapping during the urban walk based on the children's observations.

Category 1

Spaces you use
Postijiet li tuża

- Would you like to spend more time here?
- Tixtieq tuża dan il-post aktar ta' spiss?

- What is stopping you from doing so?
- X'qiegħed iwaqqfek milli tagħmel dan?

- How would *you* design this space?
- *Inti*, kif kieku tiddisinja dan il-post?

Category 2

Routes you use
Rottot li tuża

- Where to and from where do you use this route?
- Minn fejn sa fejn tuża din ir-rotta?

- What do you like and dislike about the route?
- X'jogħġbok u jdejqek fuq din ir-rotta?

- How would *you* design this route?
- Inti, kif kieku tiddisinja din ir-rotta?

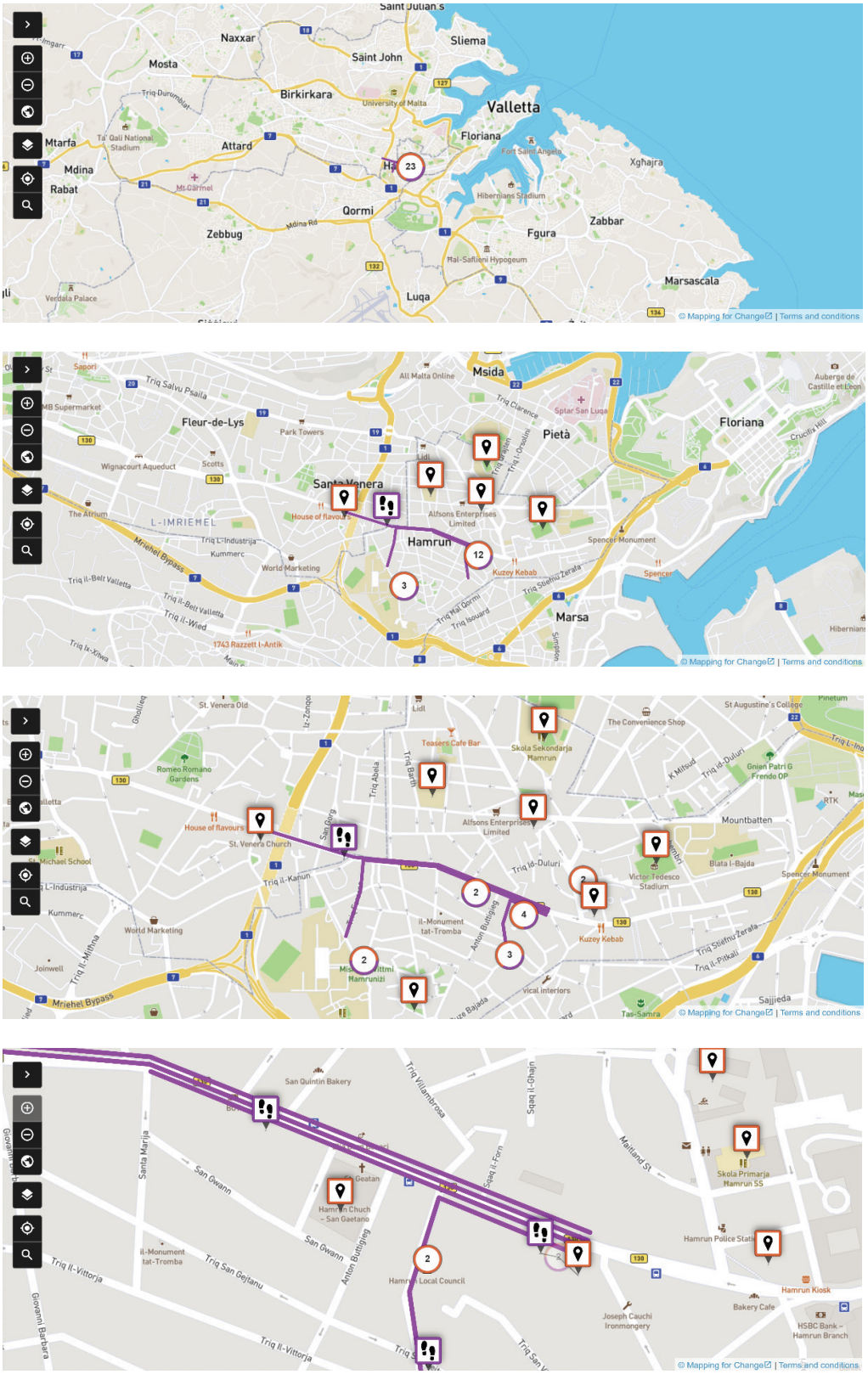

Figure A4.1 Images from the online mapping platform at different scales

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