DIOCESE OF GOZO

Faith, Religious Practice, and Attitudes in Gozo

Survey Report

September 2026

This report is intended for pastoral planning purposes.

All responses were collected anonymously and confidentially.

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2026, the Diocese of Gozo commissioned a comprehensive scientific survey of faith, religious practice, and attitudes across the resident population of Gozo. Using a professionally managed telephone methodology, trained volunteers contacted registered residents aged 16 and over, with the sample proportionally weighted by age and sex to reflect the demographic composition of the islands. A total of 439 people responded, 436 in Maltese and 3 in English. This report presents the full findings, including detailed cross-tabulations by age and gender, as well as a thematic analysis of participants' qualitative responses.

The Ten Most Important Findings

1. Faith in Gozo is strong, but the future is uncertain.

70.6% of respondents attend Sunday Mass every week without exception, and a further 17.7% attend often. Core Catholic beliefs are held near-universally. Yet two-thirds (68%) believe that the life of faith in Gozo will decline over the next decade. This tension — between a living faith today and a sobering outlook for the future — is the central theme of this report.

2. Faith is deeply personal, not merely institutional.

92% of respondents say they would continue to believe in God even if they stopped attending church. Only 28% say they participate in religious activities mainly out of habit, and 72% explicitly reject the idea that they are religious because of family expectation. For most, faith is genuinely personal.

3. Pastoral Attention is to be given mostly to the Younger Age-Group

Mass attendance among the under-35s, while still significant at 55% declaring to attend always, is markedly lower than among the over-55s (83% always). Trust in the Church is also lower among younger respondents. Parish satisfaction for youth activities is the lowest of all eight dimensions measured.

4. Lifestyle — not scandal — is the main driver of religious decline.

Among those who have become less religious, the dominant reason by far is a fast-paced lifestyle and lack of time (47.5% of those who answered). Disconnection from Church teaching comes second. Scandals and personal negative experiences each account for only 8 mentions. The primary pastoral challenge is the competition for time and attention, not institutional crisis.

5. Trust in priests is remarkably and consistently high.

93% of respondents have a positive impression of priests in Gozo, and 93% find them available for personal help. This is one of the most consistently positive findings across the entire survey and a significant pastoral asset.

6. The religious dimension of festas is widely perceived as being lost.

Nearly 80% of respondents believe the religious aspect of village festas is being eroded (37% “yes, a lot”, 43% “yes, somewhat”). Most respondents (54%) want a balance maintained between the parish and the associations; 31% want the parish more centrally involved.

7. Parish communication and priest availability are the highest areas of satisfaction.

72% are satisfied with parish communication, and 72% with priest availability. These are the two strongest satisfaction scores across all eight parish dimensions measured.

8. Activities for young people and families are the weakest areas.

Satisfaction with youth activities (49%) and family programmes (49%) is significantly lower than for other dimensions, with high “no opinion” rates suggesting a communication gap as much as a programming one.

9. There is strong, mainstream appetite for reform and lay involvement.

65% agree the Church in Gozo needs to renew and modernise itself. Majorities support greater lay responsibility, more consultation with parishioners, and more formal roles for women. These are not minority positions.

10. The community speaks with a rich, engaged, and demanding voice.

194 respondents provided open-ended comments (44% of the sample). Recurring themes include the quality of homilies, youth engagement, the character of the festas, the role of individual clergy, and the importance of a Church that listens.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose

The Diocese of Gozo serves the islands of Gozo and Comino, a community of approximately 37,000 people with a long tradition of Catholic faith and practice. While Gozo has long been regarded as one of the most religiously observant communities in Europe, pastoral leaders have increasingly noted signs of change: declining engagement among younger generations, a widening gap between cultural identification with Catholicism and active participation, and broader social trends, including secularisation, changing lifestyles, and reduced deference to institutional religion, that are reshaping religious life across the Mediterranean.

In response to these observations, the Diocese of Gozo commissioned this survey to provide a clear, evidence-based picture of where the community stands today on faith, practice, and attitudes towards the Church. The survey was intended to inform pastoral planning for the coming years and to provide a foundation for dialogue between the Diocese and the people it serves.

This report presents the full findings. It is written to be accessible to a wide audience, from diocesan leadership and pastoral councils to interested members of the general public.

1.2 Survey Design and Distribution

The Diocese of Gozo Pastoral Secretariat developed the survey instrument and piloted it before final release. It comprised 35 questions across eight thematic sections, covering demographics, religious identity, practice, parish life, festas, beliefs, attitudes toward the Church, and the future of faith. The final question invited open-ended written responses.

An official company specialising in social research provided the survey sample. Trained volunteers contacted respondents by telephone, that is, Maltese citizens eligible to vote in a general election and registered as residents of Gozo and Comino aged 16 and over. Responses were collected proportionally across age groups and sex to reflect the demographic composition of the registered population. This proportional design makes this a scientifically weighted survey, one whose findings can be considered representative of the Gozitan resident population within the stated margin of error.

The survey was administered in both Maltese and English, with the Maltese version generating the vast majority of responses (n=436 in Maltese, n=3 in English). All figures in this report draw on the combined dataset of 439 respondents.

1.3 Sample Size, Margin of Error, and Confidence Level

A total of 439 complete responses were received. The sample was constructed to be proportional to the Gozitan resident population by both age and sex, meaning the results are statistically representative of the population as a whole, within the stated margin of error. Based on the estimated adult resident population of Gozo and Comino of approximately 30,000 people, a sample of 439 yields a margin of error of approximately ±4.7 percentage points at a 95% confidence level.

What this means in practice: when this report states that, for example, 70.6% of respondents attend Sunday Mass "always", the true figure for the Gozitan adult resident population lies within a range of roughly 65.9% to 75.3%, with 95% probability. Sub-group analyses by age or gender carry larger margins of error and should be interpreted with appropriate caution

1.4 Limitations

While the proportional design of this survey is a significant methodological strength, several contextual limitations should be borne in mind:

- The sample is limited, by design, to Maltese citizens who are registered voters on the islands. Foreign nationals residing in Gozo, seasonal workers, and visitors are not represented, regardless of how long they may have lived on the island. This is a standard and accepted feature of scientifically conducted telephone surveys.
- Self-selection among those contacted: While the sample was drawn from the registered population as a whole, those who chose to complete the Diocese of Gozo survey are likely to have had some prior familiarity with or interest in the Church, as they agreed to respond. Those who declined to participate are not represented. This is a natural feature of any voluntary survey and should be borne in mind when interpreting the results, particularly on questions of religiosity.
- Religious composition: All 439 respondents identified as Roman Catholic. This is consistent with the overwhelmingly Catholic character of the Gozitan resident population and is not in itself a methodological concern. It does mean, however, that the survey cannot speak to the experiences of non-Catholic residents, who represent a small but growing minority of the population.
- Sub-group margins of error: The under-35 sub-group (n=77) carries a margin of error of approximately ±11.2 percentage points. Findings for this group should be read as indicative rather than definitive.

1.5 How to Read this Report

This report is organised into nine substantive sections, each addressing a different theme. Each section begins with a summary of key findings before presenting the data in detail. Percentages are rounded to one decimal place and may not always sum to exactly 100%. Cross-tabulations by age group (Under 35, 35–54, and 55 and over) and by gender are presented throughout. Section 10 presents selected qualitative responses from the open-ended question, identified by age group and sex only. Section 11 presents the conclusions and pastoral recommendations.

2. Demographic Profile of Respondents

2.1 Age Distribution

The survey attracted respondents across all age groups. Over half of all respondents (50%) are aged 55 or above, with the 65-and-over cohort being the single largest group. This age profile is broadly consistent with the demographic structure of Gozo, which has a notably older population than the EU average, and reflects the proportional weighting by age applied in the survey design.

Age Group	Number	% of Total
Under 18	3	0.7%
18–24	21	4.8%
25–34	53	12.1%
35–44	61	13.9%
45–54	80	18.2%
55–64	85	19.4%
65 or over	136	31.0%
TOTAL	439	100%

For cross-tabulation analysis, age groups are consolidated as: Under 35 (n=77, 17.6%), 35–54 (n=141, 32.1%), and 55 and over (n=218, 50.4%).

2.2 Gender

Women make up a majority of respondents (56.7%), with men representing 43.1%. This gender split is consistent with patterns observed in religious surveys across Europe, where women tend to engage at higher rates.

Gender	Number	% of Total
Female	249	56.7%
Male	189	43.1%
Prefer not to say	1	0.2%

2.3 Locality

Respondents were drawn from across all fourteen localities of Gozo as well as a small number from Comino and non-residents. Victoria (Rabat), as the largest population centre, accounts for the highest proportion of respondents, followed by Xagħra, Nadur, and Għajnsielem.

It is important to note, however, that this survey was designed and conducted to be representative of Gozo and Comino as a whole. The sample was proportioned to reflect the island's total resident population — not by village or parish. The absolute number of responses from any individual locality is therefore too small to support statistically reliable analysis at the parish level. The findings in this report should be read exclusively as reflecting the views of the Gozitan resident population as a whole, and should not be interpreted as, or used to compare, the situation within individual parishes or villages.

2.4 Education

The sample is notably well-educated: nearly half hold a degree-level qualification or above (32.6% university degree, 9.9% diploma), and a further 14.4% have post-secondary qualifications. Secondary school leavers are the single largest group (35.2%). Only 7.5% have primary school education only. This educational profile may be somewhat skewed upward relative to the general Gozitan population, reflecting the higher engagement of more educated citizens in survey participation of this nature.

Education Level	Number	% of Total
Primary school	33	7.5%
Secondary school	154	35.2%
Post-secondary / 6th Form	63	14.4%
Diploma (MCAST)	43	9.8%
University Degree	143	32.6%
Prefer not to say	3	0.7%

2.5 Employment Status

The majority of respondents are in employment (51.4%), with retired persons forming the second largest group (32.6%). The self-employed account for 8.0%, and students and unemployed persons each represent smaller proportions. A small number of respondents described themselves as homemakers or carers — roles not captured by the standard options but included in the "Other" category.

2.6 Length of Residence

An overwhelming 72.4% of respondents have lived in Gozo their entire lives, with a further 16.4% having resided there for more than ten years. Less than 8% have lived in Gozo for less than five years, and 3.4% fall into the non-resident or seasonal category. This deep-rootedness is an important contextual factor: the views expressed in this survey are predominantly those of lifelong members of Gozitan communities. The small 'non-resident / seasonal' category refers to Maltese citizens who remai n on the Gozo electoral register but whose primary day-to-day residence is currently elsewhere — for example, those who have moved to Malta for work or study but retain their registration in Gozo.

Length of Residence	Number	% of Total
All my life	318	72.4%
More than 10 years	72	16.4%
5–10 years	14	3.2%
Less than 5 years	20	4.6%
Non-resident / seasonal	15	3.4%

3. Religious Identity

3.1 Religion

All 439 respondents identified as Roman Catholic. This reflects the overwhelmingly Catholic composition of the Gozitan resident population. It is also worth noting the context in which the survey was conducted: respondents were contacted by telephone by volunteers acting on behalf of the Diocese of Gozo. While the survey was offered to all registered residents regardless of religious affiliation, those who chose to participate are likely to have had some familiarity with or connection to the Church. Those who preferred not to engage are not represented in the data.

3.2 Self-described Religious Identity

When asked to describe themselves, respondents reflect a community with a strong sense of dual religious and spiritual identity: 68.8% describe themselves as both religious and spiritual (attending Sunday Mass and also speaking to God often in their daily lives). A further 24.8% describe themselves as religious in the more traditional, practice-based sense (attending Sunday Mass). Only 2.3% describe themselves as spiritual but not religious, and 1.4% as neither.

3.3 Raised in a Religious Household

An overwhelming majority of respondents were raised in religious households: 83.5% describe their upbringing as “strongly religious”, with a further 15.4% describing it as “somewhat religious”. Only 1.1% say they were not raised in a particularly religious environment. This near-universal religious upbringing provides important context for understanding the community’s relationship with faith.

3.4 How Faith Has Changed Over Time

When asked how their faith life has changed since childhood, the largest group report that it has stayed roughly the same. A meaningful minority — corresponding to approximately 80 respondents, or around 18% of the sample — indicated they have become less religious over time. A smaller group has become more religious.

Approximately 80 respondents — around 18% of the total sample — have become less religious since childhood. This is a significant cohort that warrants careful pastoral attention.

3.5 Reasons for Reduced Religiosity

Among those who have become less religious, the survey asked them to identify the main reasons. The findings carry important pastoral implications:

Reason	Mentions	% of those who answered
Fast-paced lifestyle / lack of time	38	47.5%
Church teaching feels disconnected from real life	19	23.8%
Scandals in the Church (abuse, financial, etc.)	8	10.0%
Loss of faith / personal doubt	8	10.0%
Church's position on social issues (divorce, LGBTQI+, etc.)	6	7.5%
Negative personal experience with Church or clergy	6	7.5%
Moved away from Gozo or the community	2	2.5%
Influence of friends, partner, or family	1	1.3%

The dominant finding is both clear and instructive: nearly half of all those who have drifted from regular religious practice cite the pressure of modern life, a fast-paced lifestyle and lack of time, as the primary reason. This is not hostility to faith or to the Church. It is the competition for time and attention in a busy world.

The primary driver of reduced religiosity is not doubt, scandal, or rejection of the Church, it is the pace of modern life. Many of those who have drifted may be reachable through approaches that meet them where they are, rather than asking them to add another commitment to their schedule.

Open-ended responses add texture to this picture. One respondent reflected on personal questioning rather than hostility:

"I haven't become less religious, but I no longer believe everything as I was told, I like to question things and not just believe what I am told." — 55–64, Female

4. Religious Practice

4.1 Sunday Mass Attendance

Sunday Mass attendance is notably strong among this sample. Overall, 70.6% of respondents attend every week without exception, and a further 17.7% attend often. While these are encouraging figures, particularly in a European context where weekly Mass attendance has declined sharply in many countries, it is worth noting that the sample is drawn from the electoral register and those who agreed to respond to a survey by the Diocese, which may mean that more committed practitioners are somewhat over-represented

Frequency	Overall	Under 35	35–54	55 and over
Always	70.6%	54.5%	60.3%	83.0%
Often	17.7%	31.2%	22.7%	9.6%
Rarely	6.9%	9.1%	10.6%	3.7%
Never	4.8%	5.2%	6.4%	3.7%

The age gradient is significant and consistent. Among the over-55s, 83.0% always attend, compared to 54.5% of the under-35s. Notably, younger respondents who do attend are more likely to do so "often" rather than "always" (31.2% of under-35s), suggesting a more flexible, less rigidly habitual engagement with Sunday practice.

By gender, attendance is broadly similar: women attend "always" at 71.8% and men at 69.5%.

4.2 Personal Prayer

Personal prayer is widely practised across all age groups: 52.8% pray daily and a further 34.9% pray often. Only 2.8% report never pray. This high rate of personal prayer outside the formal church setting is one of the clearest indicators of internalised faith in the survey.

Age Group	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
Under 35	22.1%	55.8%	19.5%	2.6%
35–54	40.4%	45.4%	9.2%	5.0%
55 and over	71.6%	20.6%	6.4%	1.4%

The age gradient in daily prayer is particularly striking: only 22% of under-35s pray every day, compared to 72% of those over 55. However, 56% of younger respondents pray "often", meaning 78% of under-35s pray at least regularly. The intensity of private devotional life is clearly generational, even when the practice itself remains widespread.

4.3 Sacrament of Confession

The Sacrament of Confession is practised far less frequently than Mass attendance or personal prayer, a pattern consistent with findings from Catholic surveys across Europe. Overall, only 7.3% go always (regularly throughout the year) and 35.1% go often, while 43.6% go rarely and 14.0% never go at all. The combined "rarely or never" figure of 57.6% represents a significant sacramental gap, particularly set against the near-universal Mass attendance.

	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
Overall	7.3%	35.1%	43.6%	14.0%
Under 35	1.3%	23.4%	61.0%	14.3%
35–54	1.4%	25.5%	55.3%	17.7%
55 and over	13.3%	45.4%	29.8%	11.5%
Male	8.6%	27.8%	44.4%	19.3%
Female	6.5%	40.3%	43.1%	10.1%

The age gradient is the most pronounced in the survey: 58.7% of over-55s go to Confession always or often, compared to just 24.7% of under-35s and 26.9% of the 35–54 group. Women practise Confession more regularly than men: 46.8% of women go always or often, compared to 36.4% of men.

The data suggests that Confession is increasingly being understood as an occasional or crisis sacrament rather than a regular spiritual practice, particularly among younger and middle-aged Catholics.

4.4 Other Religious Activities

Beyond Mass, prayer, and Confession, respondents were asked about their participation in four other religious activities. The results reveal a community with a rich devotional life, though with clear generational patterns:

Activity	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
Reading the Bible / religious material	7.6%	22.5%	32.3%	37.2%
Religious content TV / radio / online	16.5%	33.9%	27.3%	21.8%
Special Masses / Novenas	45.0%	24.8%	15.1%	15.1%
Processions / outdoor devotions	31.7%	16.7%	21.8%	29.4%

Attendance at special Masses and novenas is notably high, 45.0% always attend and a further 24.8% often do, giving a combined figure of 69.8%. This is close to Sunday Mass attendance levels and underlines the strong devotional culture of Gozo, where feast-day Masses, novenas of Christmas and the patron feast, and other liturgical occasions remain widely observed.

Participation in processions and outdoor devotions is also significant: 31.7% always participate and 16.7% often do (combined 48.4%), though 29.4% never participate. Bible and religious reading is the least practised activity: 37.2% never read religious material, with older respondents significantly more likely to do so than younger ones.

Consumption of religious content through television, radio, and online platforms shows an interesting age pattern: only 1.3% of under-35s watch or listen to religious content always, compared to 25.7% of over-55s. Among younger respondents, "often" (35.1%) is more common than "always", suggesting sporadic rather than habitual digital religious engagement.

Special Masses / Novenas by Age	Always	Often	Rarely	Never
Under 35	50.6%	32.5%	6.5%	10.4%
35–54	39.7%	22.7%	22.7%	14.9%
55 and over	46.3%	23.4%	13.3%	17.0%

One of the most notable findings in this section is that younger respondents attend special Masses and novenas at a higher rate than the 35–54 group, 83.1% of under-35s always or often attend, compared to 62.4% of the middle-aged group. This suggests that the Gozitan feast and novena tradition retains a genuine hold on younger generations, even as weekly Sunday practice shows more variation.

4.5 Barriers to Sunday Mass Attendance

Among respondents who attend Mass rarely or never (approximately 51 respondents, 11.7% of the sample), the most cited barriers to more frequent attendance were:

- Work or family commitments (the most frequently cited barrier)
- Not feeling welcomed or connected to the parish community
- Finding Mass uninspiring or feeling it is irrelevant to their lives
- Poor quality of homilies
- Disagreement with Church teaching

These findings are echoed in the open-ended responses, where the quality of preaching is the single most frequently raised concern across all age groups. One respondent wrote:

"Homilies need to be more adapted to modern times, shorter, interesting and to the point. They go around in circles and never end.", 45–54, Female

Another respondent highlighted the practical constraints of modern life:

> *"I work in Malta and this affects my ability to attend Mass in Gozo."* — 25–34, Male

5. Parish Life and Community

5.1 Connection to Parish

Nearly three-quarters (73.6%) of respondents feel at least somewhat connected to their local parish or the parish they attend. 40.1% feel "a lot" connected, a strong result that speaks to the continued social and spiritual centrality of parish life in Gozo. However, 25.8% feel not very connected or not connected at all, pointing to a meaningful cohort of nominal Catholics who maintain attendance but feel limited sense of belonging.

Connection Level	Number	% of Total
A lot	179	40.1%
Somewhat	147	33.5%
Not very much	86	19.6%
Not at all	27	6.2%

5.2 Active Parish Involvement

29.4% of respondents take an active part in their parish. By age group, the under-35s show marginally higher active involvement (35.1%) than the 35–54 cohort (25.5%), with the over-55s at 29.8%. The relatively lower involvement of the 35–54 group is consistent with the pressures of career and family that peak in midlife, the same pressures identified as the primary barrier to religious practice more broadly.

5.3 Forms of Involvement

Among the 128 respondents who are actively involved in their parish, liturgical ministry is the most common form of participation, followed by prayer groups, catechesis, and youth ministry. Open-ended responses reveal additional informal forms of involvement not captured in the main options, including church cleaning, sacristan duties, bulletin distribution, and participation in the Legion of Mary.

Form of Involvement	Mentions
Liturgical ministry (reader, choir, altar server, Eucharistic minister)	51
Prayer or Bible groups	25
Catechesis / religious education	23
Youth group or youth ministry	21
External festa organisation	21
Parish pastoral or administrative council	19
Communications (radio, social media, magazine)	15
Caritas or charity work	7

5.4 Reasons for Non-Involvement

By far the most cited reason for not being involved in the parish is lack of time: 183 respondents (42.0% of the total sample) gave this as their reason. This reinforces the finding from Section 3 that lifestyle pressures are the primary barrier to religious engagement. Beyond time constraints:

- 6.9% say they are not aware of opportunities to get involved
- 4.4% feel their skills or contribution would not be valued
- 2.5% do not feel welcomed or included
- 1.1% disagree with how the parish is run

A significant theme in the free-text responses is the role of age and health among older respondents, many of whom note previous active involvement that they can no longer sustain:

"I used to help with distributing the bulletin but stopped for the same reasons mentioned in M13."
— 65 or over, Female

One respondent expressed a more structural concern:

"There are certain people who take over everything, a closed circle, and they do it all themselves. People like that push me away." — 65 or over, Male

5.5 Satisfaction with Parish Life

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with eight aspects of parish life. The overall picture is one of high satisfaction, with important variations between dimensions:

Aspect of Parish Life	Satisfied	Neutral	Not Satisfied	No Opinion
Parish communication	72.5%	16.7%	3.9%	5.5%
Priest availability	71.6%	16.5%	6.2%	5.5%
Sense of community and togetherness	67.0%	19.7%	6.4%	6.7%
Quality of homilies / preaching	61.2%	24.1%	8.9%	5.0%
Activities and catechism for children	53.9%	13.3%	5.3%	27.3%
Activities for elderly and sick	48.6%	16.5%	3.9%	30.7%
Activities for families	49.3%	16.3%	3.7%	30.5%
Activities for young people	48.6%	14.4%	5.7%	31.2%

Two patterns stand out from this table. First, the highest satisfaction is consistently with priest availability and parish communication, areas where the Diocese has clearly invested well. Second, the lowest satisfaction areas (youth, families, elderly) also carry the highest "no opinion" rates, often above 30%, suggesting that many respondents are simply unaware these activities exist. This point to a communication challenge as much as a programming gap.

The age gradient in homily satisfaction is notable: 64.2% of over-55s are satisfied with preaching, compared to 51.9% of under-35s, among whom 13.0% are explicitly dissatisfied. This is consistent with the qualitative data, which shows preaching quality and relevance as particularly important to younger and middle-aged respondents.

6. Festas and Religious Culture

6.1 Participation in External Festas

Around 12.8% of respondents are actively involved in the organisation of the external festa, while 38.8% attend and follow it. A further 11.7% attend occasionally. However, 36.7% attend rarely or never.

Participation	Overall	Under 35	35–54	55 and over
Active (organiser / activist)	12.8%	24.7%	10.6%	10.1%
Attends and follows	38.8%	49.4%	51.1%	27.1%
Occasionally	11.7%	5.2%	12.1%	13.8%
Rarely	12.8%	7.8%	12.8%	14.7%
Never	23.9%	13.0%	13.5%	34.4%

A striking age pattern emerges: younger respondents are far more likely to be actively involved in festa organisation (24.7% of under-35s), while older respondents are more likely to never attend (34.4% of over-55s). This may reflect the social and entertainment character of the external festa, bands, fireworks, and outdoor gatherings, which appeal to different generations in different ways.

6.2 Motivations for Festa Participation

Among those who participate, religious devotion and faith are the primary motivation (38.5%), followed closely by cultural identity and tradition (33.7%). The sense of community and parish togetherness (26.8%) and entertainment and recreation (20.4%) are also significant. Several respondents used the free-text option to mention specific motivations including the fireworks display and attendance with family.

6.3 The Religious Dimension of Festas

The most striking finding in this section is the near-universal perception that the religious dimension of festas is being eroded:

Response	Number	% of Total
Yes, a lot	160	36.4%
Yes, somewhat	188	42.8%
No, it remains strong	74	16.9%
I don’t know	17	3.9%
TOTAL	439	100%

Nearly 80% of respondents believe the religious dimension of Gozitan festas is being lost, 36.4% "yes, a lot". Only 16% feel the religious aspect remains strong. This view is held consistently across all age groups and both genders.

Open-ended responses give vivid voice to this concern:

"The external festas worry me. I feel the Church is distancing itself from taking responsibility for the external festas and there is no sense of religion in them, in fact there is great paganism. This is in great contrast to what happens inside the church during the feast week. There are arguments, insults, drugs and alcohol." — 35–44, Female

"The external festas have taken over the religious ones. Too much importance is being given to the external elements." — 55–64, Female

6.4 The Role of the Parish in Festas

Despite these concerns, respondents do not want the parish to step back. 54.1% believe a balance should be kept between parish involvement and the associations. 31.0% want the parish more centrally involved. Only 3.9% think the parish should reduce its role and let the associations lead entirely. This is a clear mandate: Gozitans want their Church to remain present and visible in the celebration of their patronal feasts, and to exercise that engagement more actively.

One respondent noted a positive local development:

> *"The parish is trying to revive the religious aspect of the festas."* — 35–44, Female

7. Beliefs

7.1 Core Catholic Beliefs

Core Catholic beliefs are held with remarkable consistency. Belief in God is near-universal (97.7% yes, 1.8% unsure). Belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God (97.0%) and in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist (95.2%) are similarly strong. These results point to a community whose doctrinal formation has been deeply effective, even as some dimensions of behavioural practice show generational weakening.

Belief	YES	Not Sure	No
Belief in God	97.7%	1.8%	0.5%
Jesus Christ is the Son of God	97.0%	2.5%	0.5%
Real presence of Christ in the Eucharist	95.2%	3.2%	1.6%
The Pope leads the Church	90.1%	6.4%	3.4%
Life after death	85.1%	11.9%	2.5%
Miracles	81.9%	11.9%	5.5%
Heaven and Hell	78.9%	14.7%	6.0%

There is a consistent age gradient that belief in heaven and hell and miracles, with younger respondents showing higher rates of uncertainty. This does not necessarily indicate shallower faith, it may reflect a more theologically questioning engagement that develops with education and life experience. One respondent made this explicit:

> *"I believe in Heaven, but not in Hell, because I feel that Hell is already here."* — 45–54, Female

Belief in heaven and hell by age group reveals this pattern clearly:

Belief in Heaven and Hell	Under 35	35–54	55 and over
YES	75.3%	70.2%	85.8%
Not Sure	20.8%	21.3%	9.2%
No	3.9%	8.5%	5.0%

7.2 Personal Faith Statements

Respondents were asked how much they agree with five statements about their personal faith. The results paint a picture of deeply internalised, personally owned belief:

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Faith influences my daily decisions and behaviour	87%	9%	3%
I feel close to God in daily life, not only in church	88%	10%	2%
I would continue to believe even if I stopped attending	92%	4%	3%
I participate mainly out of habit, not genuine belief	28%	22%	49%
I am religious because of family expectation	16%	11%	72%

The single most striking finding here is that 92% say they would continue to believe in God even if they stopped attending church. This is the defining characteristic of the Gozitan Catholic: faith that is personal, deeply held, and independent of institutional participation.

The "habit" statement reveals a clear age gradient: 33.8% of under-35s acknowledge participating mainly out of habit, compared to 24.3% of over-55s. This does not indicate shallower faith among the young, it may reflect greater self-awareness about the role that social habit plays alongside genuine conviction.

8. Attitudes Toward the Church

8.1 Overall Impression

The overall impression of the Catholic Church in Gozo is predominantly very positive. 48.6% describe their impression as “very positive”, and a further 44.3% as “somewhat positive”, giving 92.9% who hold a positive view. Only 7.1% have a negative impression.

Overall Impression	Under 35	35–54	55 and over	Overall
Very positive	46.8%	46.1%	50.9%	48.6%
Somewhat positive	49.4%	47.5%	40.4%	44.3%
Somewhat negative	1.3%	5.7%	8.3%	5.7%
Very negative	2.6%	0.7%	0.5%	1.4%

8.2 Trust in the Church

Trust levels closely mirror the impression data. 45.9% trust the Church “a lot”, and 46.6% “not bad”, giving a combined 92.5% who trust the Church at least moderately. The age gradient in trust is one of the most significant demographic fault lines in the survey:

Trust Level	Under 35	35–54	55 and over	Overall
A lot	28.6%	39.7%	56.0%	45.9%
Not bad	54.5%	50.4%	39.0%	46.6%
Not very much	10.4%	8.5%	3.7%	6.2%
Not at all	6.5%	1.4%	1.4%	2.5%

Trust in the Church rises sharply with age: only 29% of under-35s trust it “a lot”, compared to 56% of over-55s. This near doubling of deep trust across generations represents one of the most significant pastoral challenges in the survey. The institution is trusted, but that trust is shallower and more conditional among younger Gozitans.

For 70.0% of respondents, trust has stayed roughly the same in recent years. 15.4% now trust the Church more than before, while 12.8% trust it less, and 1.8% say they never had much trust.

8.3 Reasons for Decreased Trust

Among those whose trust has decreased, the most commonly cited reasons reveal that trust is built and lost at the local, personal level:

Reason for Decreased Trust	Mentions
Behaviour of particular priests	38
Abuse scandals in the Church	19
Church positions on social issues	12
Financial transparency concerns	9
Feeling ignored or unheard	8

The behaviour of individual priests, not institutional scandal, is the single largest driver of reduced trust. This is consistent with the broader finding that the clergy are the Church's most important human asset: when individual clergy fall short of expectations, the institution as a whole loses credibility. Several respondents elaborated:

"Some priests behave like businessmen rather than shepherds of the flock. They should be more dedicated to the needs of people." — 65 or over, Male

"Certain priests should be more careful about how they behave and what they say. Some bring politics into their preaching." — 55–64, Male

8.4 Agreement with Broader Statements About the Church

Respondents were asked how much they agree with seven statements about the Church's role in Gozitan society:

Statement	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Church plays a positive role in Gozitan society	84%	14%	2%
Church supports vulnerable people in the community	84%	13%	3%
Church teaching still makes sense today	76%	17%	6%
Church needs to renew and modernise itself	65%	23%	11%
Young people feel less connected to the Church	70%	22%	7%
Too focused on tradition, not people's needs	30%	32%	38%
Church too involved in politics	15%	20%	64%

Several findings stand out. First, the Church's positive social role is near-universally acknowledged (84%). Second, a clear majority (65%) call for renewal and modernisation, this is a mainstream position, not a fringe one. Third, 70% recognise that young people are becoming less connected. Fourth, the "too focused on tradition" statement divides opinion almost evenly, reflecting genuine diversity of views. Fifth, and perhaps most significantly, 64% explicitly reject the idea that the Church is too involved in politics. This is a direct counter-narrative to the view sometimes heard that Gozitans want a more politically silent Church.

8.5 Impression of Priests

The impression of priests in Gozo is very positive and consistent across the sample: 92.6% have a positive view, 45.6% very positive and 47.0% somewhat positive. Only 7.3% have a negative impression.

Satisfaction with the availability of priests for personal help is equally high: 53.9% find priests very available and 38.8% somewhat available. Only 7.4% feel priests are insufficiently available.

With 93% holding a positive impression of priests and 93% finding them available for personal help, the Gozitan clergy are the single strongest and most trusted face of the institutional Church. Several respondents praised the Bishop by name, as well as individual priests who have made a difference in their communities. This trust is a pastoral asset of the first order.

Open-ended responses, while mostly positive, highlight the variability in individual performance:

"The qualities and gifts of the parish priest have a big effect on the life of the parish. This person is very happy with the parish priest." — 65 or over, Male

"The question about priests — it depends who. Some preach well and others do not. There is no yes or no." — 25–34, Female

9. The Future of Faith in Gozo

9.1 Outlook for the Next Ten Years

Despite the broadly positive picture of current faith and practice, respondents are soberly pessimistic about the future trajectory of faith in Gozo:

How will faith change in the next 10 years?	Under 35	35–54	55 and over	Overall
It will decrease	70.1%	70.2%	65.1%	67.7%
Not sure	13.0%	17.0%	19.3%	17.4%
It will stay roughly the same	11.7%	12.1%	14.7%	13.3%
It will increase	5.2%	0.7%	0.9%	1.6%

Two-thirds of respondents expect the life of faith in Gozo to decline over the next decade. This pessimism is shared across all age groups and both genders, but is slightly more pronounced among younger respondents, who have more direct visibility of the trends affecting their own generation. By gender, women predict decline at a marginally higher rate (69.0%) than men (65.8%).

This finding is significant precisely because it comes from a sample that is in itself predominantly committed to faith. These are weekly Mass-goers, daily prayers, people whose faith is personal and internalised. Their pessimism about the future is not personal disaffection but a clear-eyed assessment of the cultural trends they observe around them.

9.2 Reform, Renewal, and the Future Church

Respondents were asked how much they agree with five statements about the future of the Church. The results reveal a community that is active in its expectations:

Statement about the Future	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Laypeople should take greater responsibility in the Church	~65%	~22%	~13%
Diocese should consult parishioners more before making decisions	~67%	~20%	~13%
Women should have more formal / important roles in the Church	~55%	~25%	~20%
Church should take clear public positions on social justice	~60%	~23%	~17%
I feel the Church in Gozo is interested in my voice and opinion	~45%	~30%	~25%

The most significant finding here is the last one: only around 45% of respondents feel the Church in Gozo is genuinely interested in their voice and opinion. This is the lowest agreement score across the entire survey, and it represents a clear pastoral challenge. Open-ended responses return repeatedly to this theme:

"I would like to see the Diocese listen more to the needs of parishioners and understand what they need, rather than always deciding for them." — 45–54, Female

"The voices of parishioners should be heard more, their ideas and how they can help." — 55–64, Female

10. Voices from the Community

The final question of the survey invited respondents to share anything else they wished the Diocese to know. 194 respondents, 44.2% of the total sample, took up this invitation. The breadth and depth of these responses speaks to a community that is deeply engaged with its faith and its Church. They are presented here thematically, with representative quotations identified by age group and sex.

10.1 Homilies and Preaching

The quality and relevance of homilies is the single most frequently recurring theme across all age groups, both genders, and all localities. Respondents across the spectrum call for preaching that is shorter, better prepared, more relevant to modern life, and more engaging.

"Homilies need to be more adapted to modern times, shorter, interesting and to the point. They go around in circles and never end." — 45–54, Female

"In my opinion, homilies should be more adapted to life today, shorter, and even modern music in church would attract more people and young people." — 25–34, Female

"I would like better quality homilies, because in some Sunday Masses there are poor homilies. There is a shortage of priests in the parish." — 55–64, Female

"Priests need to be well prepared when they preach. Those who speak in a vacuum waste their time and the people's time. Young people with university degrees will not go to church to listen to someone who is not prepared." — 55–64, Male

"Preaching, less theory, based on stories and situations related to life today. The length of the homily and the Mass needs to be balanced." — 25–34, Female

A recurring sub-theme is the significant variation in preaching quality between individual priests, with many respondents noting that their satisfaction depends entirely on who is presiding:

"The homilies vary a lot from priest to priest. The quality differs." — 65 or over, Female

"Quality of poor preaching — not from all priests, depending on who." — 35–44, Male

10.2 Youth Engagement

Youth engagement is the second major theme, and arguably, the one expressed with the greatest sense of urgency. Respondents across all age groups — including older Gozitans — identify reaching and retaining young people as the Church's most critical challenge.

"There need to be more things adapted for young people. The Church should accept those who have doubts." — 18–24, Female

"Certain priests need to be more open-minded in order to draw more young people." — 18–24, Female

"Young people should not be forced to contribute to the parish — for example, being made to play the piano by force — because this pushes them away from the Church. They need to be left free." — 25–34, Female

"I am looking at the issue of the young — I feel there is a need for more activities and investment in them." — 55–64, Male

"There is a beautiful youth centre in Nadur, but they keep changing the priest. This bothers me — when something is working well, there is no need to change it." — 35–44, Female

10.3 The Festas

Concern about the external festas and the Church's relationship to them is strongly expressed, echoing and enriching the quantitative finding that nearly 80% believe the religious dimension is being eroded.

"The external festas worry me. I feel there is no sense of religion in them — in fact great paganism. This is in great contrast to what happens inside the church during the feast week. There are arguments, insults, drugs and alcohol, and I feel the Church should take joint responsibility with the associations." — 35–44, Female

"The external festas have taken over the religious ones. Too much importance is given to external elements." — 55–64, Female

"Please reduce the use of loud fireworks during festi, especially those at 8am. They disturb people and neighbours and make no sense." — 55–64, Male

"The Church should take complete responsibility for the external festas because they have become pagan." — 65 or over, Female

10.4 Priests and Clergy

Responses about priests are predominantly positive, consistent with the quantitative data. Where criticism emerges, it is generally targeted at specific behaviours — particularly involvement in politics, the behaviour of individual clergy, and the rotation of priests away from parishes where they have built strong relationships.

"The qualities and gifts of the parish priest have a big effect on how the parish functions. This person is very happy with the parish priest." — 65 or over, Male

"Certain priests are seen only when saying Mass and not involved otherwise." — 65 or over, Male

"Priests should not bring politics into their preaching." — 55–64, Male

"When I see young priests being ordained and then sent far away from our country, I feel betrayed. We need them here. When I see that many of Gozo's priests are elderly and many young ones are far away, it is no wonder that young Gozitans feel they have no one left." — 45–54, Male

"I am very pleased with the leadership of the Bishop of Gozo and the practical way he delivers his messages. I am convinced he is doing a great deal of good." — 65 or over, Male

10.5 Church Reform and Openness

A consistent thread across age groups is the desire for a Church that is more open, more consultative, and more willing to engage with the realities of modern life — without abandoning its core values.

"Even though the Church needs to update itself, what is wrong should remain wrong." — 35–44, Female

"The Church needs to be less afraid of stepping on someone's toes. It should speak clearly and straight to the point." — 25–34, Male

"The Church should listen more to the lay faithful — their ideas and how they can help parishioners." — 25–34, Male

"The faith in Gozo is stronger than in Malta, where I grew up." — 25–34, Male

"To believe in God does not mean you have to approve of everything priests do or say. I am very religious but I do not agree with some priests." — 55–64, Male

11. Conclusions and Pastoral Recommendations

11.1 Conclusions

This survey presents the Diocese of Gozo with a complex but ultimately hopeful picture of faith in the islands. The community that emerges is one of deep and largely personal faith — expressed through near-universal Catholic identification, high rates of Mass attendance and prayer, strong doctrinal belief, and a genuine sense of connection to the local parish. These are not incidental features. They represent a living inheritance of faith that the Diocese must both cherish and actively cultivate.

At the same time, the data is honest about the challenges ahead. Two-thirds of respondents — including the most committed and engaged Catholics — expect the life of faith in Gozo to decline over the next decade. Trust and attendance are significantly lower among younger generations. The religious dimension of the festas is perceived as eroding. And a community that is broadly supportive of the Church is also calling, clearly and consistently, for renewal, greater lay involvement, and a Church that listens more and speaks more relevantly.

Five foundational conclusions stand out:

The crisis is one of engagement and relevance, not of belief.

Gozitans believe deeply and personally. 92% say they would continue to believe in God even if they stopped attending church. The challenge is not to restore faith from scratch but to connect an existing, internalised faith to structures and practices that resonate with contemporary life.

Time is the primary competitor.

The most cited reason for reduced religiosity and non-involvement is the pace of modern life. Pastoral approaches that work with this reality — rather than competing against it — are most likely to succeed.

Youth engagement is the defining challenge.

The gap between older and younger Gozitans in every dimension of religious life — attendance, prayer, trust, satisfaction with parish programmes — points to a generational fault line that will shape the Church's future. This is not a new problem; it is an intensifying one.

Priests are the Church's greatest human asset.

The near-universal positive impression of priests, and the high satisfaction with their availability, is a remarkable and underutilised resource. The quality of individual pastoral relationships is the single most important lever available to the Diocese.

The community wants to be heard.

Only 45% of respondents feel the Church in Gozo is genuinely interested in their voice. This survey has given the community a voice. The Diocese now has the opportunity — and arguably the obligation — to demonstrate that it was listening.

11.2 Pastoral Recommendations

The following eight recommendations flow directly from the survey data. They are offered as starting points for diocesan and parish-level discussion.

1. Invest in the quality of preaching.

The single most consistent call from respondents is for homilies that are more relevant, shorter, better prepared, and more connected to the realities of contemporary life. Ongoing formation in preaching — including structured feedback mechanisms and peer review — should be a diocesan priority.

2. Develop a coherent, long-term youth strategy.

The data indicates a significant and growing gap between the Church's provision for young people and their expectations. This requires dedicated programming, youth-friendly communication, and genuine involvement of young people in decision-making — not as beneficiaries of Church activities but as agents of their own faith community.

3. Re-engage the middle generation.

The 35–54 age group — often lost to career and family demands — represents the largest single cohort of under-represented parishioners. Flexible, low-commitment pathways into parish life may be more effective for this group than traditional programme-based approaches.

4. Articulate a clear diocesan position on festas.

Given that nearly 80% of respondents believe the religious dimension of festas is being eroded, and most want the parish more centrally involved, the Diocese should develop and communicate a clear vision for the relationship between the liturgical and external dimensions of the feast — and engage the associations as genuine partners in implementing it.

5. Create meaningful and permanent channels for lay consultation.

The finding that only 45% feel the Church is interested in their voice should be taken seriously. The Diocese should establish ongoing, structured mechanisms for parishioner consultation — not as a one-off exercise but as a permanent feature of diocesan governance.

6. Communicate more effectively about what exists.

The high "no opinion" rates in parish satisfaction questions — particularly for youth, family, and elderly activities — suggest many respondents are simply unaware of what their parish offers. Investment in communication is as important as investment in programming.

7. Leverage the asset of priestly trust.

The near-universal positive impression of priests is a resource that is not being fully utilised. Strategies that increase the visible presence of priests in community life — beyond the sanctuary — are likely to generate significant pastoral returns.

8. Address the time deficit creatively.

If the primary barrier to engagement is time, the Church should explore approaches that meet people where they are — digital resources, brief high-quality content, and integration of faith into existing community rhythms — rather than requiring them to add another commitment to their schedule.

12. Comparison with Previous Research

12.1 Overview of Available Research

This survey is the most recent comprehensive, scientifically weighted study of faith and religious practice specifically designed for the registered resident population of Gozo. It exists, however, within a broader landscape of earlier research. We are considering two previous studies provide partial but significant context for understanding where Gozo stands today and how its profile has evolved over time.

The first is the Sunday Mass Attendance Census conducted in 2005 by Discern, the Institute for Research on the Sign of the Times, on behalf of the Archdiocese of Malta[1]. This census used a physical headcount methodology, counting individuals who attended any Sunday Mass across all parishes in Malta and Gozo during a designated census Sunday, and expressing the result as a proportion of the total registered population. Its figures therefore measure actual attendance relative to the whole population, not self-reported behaviour among survey respondents.

The second is the Research on Religious Affiliation study published by Discern in July 2025, conducted by MISCO between June and August 2024[2]. This was a national telephone survey of 400 respondents, proportionally weighted by gender, age, and region, with a stated margin of error of ±5 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. Unlike the 2005 census, it relied on self-reported responses about attendance and religious affiliation. It included a Gozo regional sub-sample of approximately 30 respondents, which, while too small for detailed sub-analysis, provides a directional indicator of where Gozo stood in 2024.

Three important methodological differences must be borne in mind when reading this section. First, the 2005 census measured physical attendance as a proportion of the total population; the 2025 and 2026 surveys measure self-reported attendance among those who agreed to participate. Second, the 2025 national study was not designed to be representative at the island level; its Gozo figures carry a margin of error of approximately ±17 percentage points and should be read as indicative only. Third, the three studies use different attendance categories and response scales, making direct numerical comparison unreliable. What the data can support is a general directional reading across two decades.

12.2 Sunday Mass Attendance: A Twenty-Year Perspective

Despite the methodological differences outlined above, the three data points available for Gozo paint a broadly consistent picture of a community that has remained significantly more observant

[1] *Sunday Mass Attendance Census 2005.* Discern — Institute for Research on the Sign of the Times, Archdiocese of Malta

[2] Bonello, P. (2025). *Research on Religious Affiliation.* Discern — Institute for Research on the Sign of the Times, Archdiocese of Malta.

than both the national average and the wider European context — while showing signs of the same gradual generational transition that is visible across Catholic Europe.

In 2005, the Discern census recorded a Sunday Mass attendance rate of 81.4% for Gozo, compared to a national figure of 52.6% for Malta as a whole. Gozo's attendance rate was therefore approximately 29 percentage points above the national average — the highest of any region in the country.

In 2024–25, the Discern national survey recorded that 80.0% of Catholic respondents in Gozo attend Mass "always or nearly always" — again the highest regional figure in Malta, and significantly above the national average of 45.5% for Catholic respondents nationally. The 2025 study explicitly notes: "The first outstanding statistic is that of Gozo, where a much higher percentage of Catholics attend Mass always or nearly always." This finding, though drawn from a small sub-sample, is directionally consistent with the 2005 census and suggests that Gozo's relative position at the top of the national distribution has been maintained.

In 2026, this survey records that 70.6% of Gozitan adult residents attend Sunday Mass every week without exception, with a further 17.7% attending often — giving a combined figure of 88.3% attending at least regularly. The survey uses a self-report methodology comparable to the 2025 Discern study, and its "always" figure of 70.6% is lower than the 80.0% combined "always or nearly always" figure from the 2025 study. This is partly explained by the different response categories used: the 2025 Discern study combines "always" and "nearly always" into a single measure, while this survey distinguishes "always" from "often". When the 2026 figures are combined in a similar way (always + often = 88.3%), the result is broadly consistent with prior measurements.

Across three studies spanning twenty years, Gozo has consistently recorded the highest Sunday Mass attendance of any region in Malta, at roughly double the national average. The 2026 survey confirms this position is still intact — while also revealing a significant generational gradient: 54.5% of under-35s attend always, compared to 83.0% of those aged 55 and over.

12.3 Religious Affiliation and Catholic Identity

The 2005 census did not collect data on religious self-identification separately from attendance; its primary metric was the physical headcount of Mass attendees. However, the context it provided, an attendance rate of over 80% in Gozo, implies an overwhelmingly Catholic-identifying population.

At the national level, the 2025 Discern study found that 85.2% of the Maltese population identifies as Catholic in some form: 39.5% as practising Catholics, 31.7% as practising irregularly, and 14.0% as non-practising. A further 6.4% identify as non-believers and 7.2% as adherents of another religion.

In the 2026 Gozo survey, all 439 respondents identified as Roman Catholic. As noted in Section 1.4, this reflects both the overwhelmingly Catholic composition of the Gozitan registered population and the self-selection of those who agreed to participate in a survey conducted by the Diocese. It does not necessarily mean that every registered Gozitan voter identifies as Catholic, but it is consistent with the picture of a community where Catholic identity remains the near-universal norm among those engaged with parish and community life.

12.4 Gozo in Context: Resilience and the Generational Challenge

Taken together, the three studies tell a consistent story: Gozo has been, and in 2026 remains, the most religiously observant region in Malta, with Mass attendance rates approximately double the national average over the period measured. This relative position has proved remarkably stable across two decades of social change, a period that has seen significant secularisation in Malta as a whole and across Catholic Europe more broadly.

The factors most commonly associated with Gozo's relative religious resilience — the strength of local parish community, the cultural centrality of the festas, a deep intergenerational transmission of faith, and the social embeddedness of Church life in village communities — are themselves reflected in the 2026 survey data. High satisfaction with parish communication and priest availability, strong participation in devotional activities, and a faith that respondents describe as genuinely personal rather than merely habitual all point to structural conditions that continue to support religious practice.

At the same time, the 2026 survey reveals a generational gradient that the earlier studies — working at a higher level of aggregation — could not capture in the same detail. The gap between the 54.5% of under-35s who attend Mass always and the 83.0% of over-55s who do so is the most significant structural finding of this survey. If that gap persists as younger cohorts age, it will gradually reshape Gozo's overall attendance profile. The primary pastoral challenge is therefore not a crisis of the present but a question about the future: whether the conditions that have sustained Gozo's religious resilience can be maintained and renewed for a generation whose relationship with institutional faith is more varied, more conditional, and more questioning than that of their parents and grandparents.

Gozo's religious profile has proved resilient across twenty years of social change. The primary question for the next twenty years is whether the generational gradient visible in the 2026 data represents a passing phase or a structural shift, and what pastoral strategies can best address it.

Appendix A: Methodology and Technical Notes

A.1 Survey Instrument

The survey comprised 35 questions across eight thematic sections: Demographics (M1–M6), Religious Identity (M7–M11), Religious Practice (M12–M13), Parish Life and Community (M14–M18), Festas and Religious Culture (M19–M22), Beliefs (M23–M24), Attitudes Toward the Church (M25–M31), and the Future of Faith (M32–M34), with a final open-ended question (M35). The survey was administered in both Maltese and English.

A.2 Distribution and Data Collection

The survey was conducted by an official social research company. Trained volunteers contacted registered residents of Gozo and Comino aged 16 and over by telephone. Responses were collected with proportional weighting by age and sex to reflect the demographic composition of the resident population. The survey ran from late June to mid-August 2026. All responses were anonymous — no personally identifiable information was collected.

A.3 Margin of Error

With a combined sample of n=439 and an estimated adult resident population of approximately 30,000 from Gozo and Comino, the margin of error at the 95% confidence level is approximately ±4.7 percentage points for full-sample findings. The Under 35 sub-group (n=77) has a margin of error of approximately ±11.2 percentage points; the 35–54 sub-group (n=141) approximately ±8.2 percentage points. Sub-group findings should be read as indicative.

A.4 Data Analysis

Data was analysed using Python and Excel. Percentage figures are rounded to one decimal place. Cross-tabulations by age group and gender were computed for all major questions; selected results are presented throughout the report. Open-ended responses were reviewed in full, translated where necessary, and coded thematically. All quotations are drawn directly from the responses and are presented in English translation, identified by age group and sex only.

A.5 Ethical Considerations

The survey was designed and conducted in accordance with principles of research ethics applicable to social and pastoral research. Participation was voluntary and informed. All responses were stored securely and used solely for pastoral planning and research purposes as stated in the survey introduction. No data that could identify individual respondents has been published or shared.

Appendix B: Survey Questionnaire

The following is the full text of the survey questionnaire administered to respondents, presented here for transparency and to enable readers to interpret the findings in light of the exact wording used. The survey was administered by telephone in both Maltese and English.

Diocese of Gozo

Faith, Practice and Religious Attitude in Gozo

We are calling you from the Church/Curia of Gozo because we are carrying out a survey to better understand faith and religious practice in Gozo. Your answers are completely anonymous and confidential. There are no right or wrong answers — we simply want to hear your honest experience and opinion.
The survey takes about 10 minutes.
Would you be willing to help us by answering a few questions?
(All answers will be used solely for pastoral planning and diocesan development.)

Section A — About You

Q1. How old are you?

- Under 18
- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45–54
- 55–64
- 65 or over

Q2. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary / other
- Prefer not to say

Q3. Which village or parish do you live in? (Select the one that applies most)

- Victoria (Rabat)
- Xagħra

- Nadur
- Xewkija
- Għajnsielem
- Għarb
- Għasri
- Munxar
- Qala
- Sannat
- San Lawrenz
- Fontana
- Kerċem
- Żebbuġ
- Other / I do not live in Gozo: _____

Q4. What is the highest level of education/schooling you have completed?

- Primary school
- Secondary school
- Post-secondary (6th Form)
- Diploma (MCAST)
- Degree (University)
- Prefer not to say

Q5. What is your current employment status?

- Employed (full-time or part-time)
- Self-employed
- Student
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Other: _____

Q6. How long have you lived in Gozo?

- All my life
- More than 10 years
- 5–10 years
- Less than 5 years
- I do not live in Gozo (seasonal / visiting)

SECTION B — Religious Identity

Q7. What is your religion, if any?

- Roman Catholic
- Other Christian denomination
- Muslim
- Jewish
- No religion
- Other religion: _____

Q8. Which of the following best describes you?

- Religious (I attend Sunday Mass)
- Spiritual but not religious (I speak to God often but do not go to Church)
- Both religious and spiritual (I attend Sunday Mass and speak to God often)
- Neither religious nor spiritual (I neither go to church nor speak to God)
- Not sure

Q9. Were you raised in a household of religious belief?

- Yes, very religious
- Yes, somewhat religious
- Not particularly

Q10. How has your faith life changed since you were young?

- I have become more religious
- It has stayed roughly the same
- I have become less religious

→ If "less religious": continue to Q11. Otherwise skip to Q12.

Q11. If you have become less religious, what are the main reasons? (Select all that apply)

- Negative personal experience with the Church or clergy
- Scandals in the Church (abuse, financial, etc.)
- Church teaching feels disconnected from real life
- Fast-paced lifestyle / lack of time
- Loss of faith / I have doubts
- Influence of friends, partner, or family
- Moved away from Gozo or the community
- The Church's position on social issues (divorce, LGBTQI+, etc.)
- Other: _____

SECTION C — Religious Practice

Q12. How often do you take part in the following activities?

Always / Often / Rarely / Never

a. Sunday Mass [Always] [Often] [Rarely] [Never]

b. Personal prayer [Always] [Often] [Rarely] [Never]

c. Sacrament of Confession [Always] [Often] [Rarely] [Never]

d. Reading the Bible or religious material [Always] [Often] [Rarely] [Never]

e. Watching or listening to religious content (TV, radio, online) [Always] [Often] [Rarely] [Never]

f. Attending other special Masses besides Sunday Mass (such as Christmas and Feast Novenas) [Always] [Often] [Rarely] [Never]

g. Taking part in religious processions or outdoor devotions [Always] [Often] [Rarely] [Never]

→ If "rarely" or "never" for Q12a (Sunday Mass): continue to Q13.

Q13. If you do not attend Sunday Mass or do not go often, what keeps you away the most? (Select all that apply)

- Work or family commitments
- Health or mobility
- I do not feel welcomed or connected
- I disagree with Church teaching
- I do not find Mass inspiring or feel it is irrelevant
- Poor quality of homilies
- Nothing keeps me away — I attend as often as I wish
- I no longer wish to attend
- Other: _____

SECTION D — Parish Life and Community

Q14. How close do you feel to your parish, or the parish you attend?

- A lot
- Somewhat
- Not very much
- Not at all

Q15. Do you take an active part in your parish, or the parish you attend?

- Yes
- No

→ If "Yes": answer Q16. If "No": skip to Q17.

Q16. In what way do you take part? (Select all that apply)

- Liturgical ministry (reader, choir, altar server, Eucharistic minister)
- Parish pastoral or administrative council
- Youth group or youth ministry
- Catechesis / religious education
- Caritas or charity work
- External festa organisation
- Prayer or Bible groups
- Communications (radio, social media, magazine)
- Other: _____

Q17. If you do NOT take part, what are the main reasons? (Select all that apply)

- Lack of time
- I do not feel welcomed or included
- I am not aware of opportunities to get involved
- I do not feel my skills or contribution would be valued
- I disagree with how the parish is run
- Poor communication from the parish
- Other: _____

Q18. How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your parish?

Satisfied / Neutral / Not Satisfied / No Opinion

a. The quality of homilies (preaching) [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

b. The sense of community and togetherness in the parish [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

c. Activities and catechism for children (duttrina) [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

d. Activities and meetings for young people [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

e. Activities and meetings for families [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

f. Activities, meetings and visits for the elderly and sick [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

g. The availability of priests [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

h. How well the parish communicates with parishioners [Sat.] [Neut.] [Not Sat.] [No Op.]

SECTION E — Festa and Religious Culture

Q19. Do you take part in external festas?

- Yes, actively (involved in organisation and activities)
- Yes, I attend and follow the festa
- Occasionally
- Rarely
- Never

→ If "rarely" or "never": continue to Q21.

Q20. What motivates you to take part in festas? (Select all that apply)

- Religious devotion and faith
- Cultural identity and tradition
- The sense of community and togetherness in the parish
- Entertainment and recreation
- Other: _____

Q21. Do you think the religious aspect of festas is being lost?

- Yes, a lot
- Yes, somewhat
- No, it remains strong
- I don’t know

Q22. What should be the role and involvement of the parish in the village festa celebrations?

- The parish should be more centrally involved
- A balance should be kept
- The parish should reduce its role and let the associations lead
- No opinion

SECTION F — Beliefs

Q23. What is your belief regarding the following?

Yes / Not Sure / No

a. Do you believe in God? [Yes] [Not Sure] [No]

b. Do you believe in life after death? [Yes] [Not Sure] [No]

c. Do you believe in heaven and hell? [Yes] [Not Sure] [No]

d. Do you believe in miracles? [Yes] [Not Sure] [No]

e. Do you believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God? [Yes] [Not Sure] [No]

f. Do you believe in the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist? [Yes] [Not Sure] [No]

g. Do you believe the Pope leads the Church? [Yes] [Not Sure] [No]

Q24. Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statements about your personal faith:

Agree / Neutral / Disagree

a. Your faith influences your decisions and behaviour in daily life [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

b. You take part in religious activities mostly out of habit rather than because you believe in them [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

c. You consider yourself religious mainly because of what your family expects of you [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

d. You feel close to God in your daily life, and not only in church [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

e. You would continue to believe in God even if you stopped going to church [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

SECTION G — Attitudes Towards the Church

Q25. What is your overall impression of the Catholic Church in Gozo?

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

Q26. How much do you trust the Catholic Church in Gozo?

- A lot
- Not bad
- Not very much
- Not at all

Q27. Has your trust in the Church changed in recent years?

- I trust it more than before
- It has stayed roughly the same
- I trust it less than before
- I never had much trust

→ If "less than before" or "never had much trust": go to Q28.

Q28. If your trust has decreased, or you never had trust, what are the main reasons?

- Abuse scandals in the Church
- The behaviour of particular priests
- The Church's positions on social issues
- I feel ignored or unheard
- Concerns about financial transparency
- Other: _____

Q29. How much do you agree with the following:

Agree / Neutral / Disagree

a. The Catholic Church plays an important, positive role in Gozitan society [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

b. The Church in Gozo is too focused on tradition and not on what people need [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

c. Church teaching still makes sense today [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

d. The Church in Gozo supports the needs of people in need in the community [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

e. The Church is too involved in politics and political affairs in Gozo [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

f. Young people feel less connected to the Church [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

g. The Church in Gozo needs to renew and modernise itself [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

Q30. What is your overall impression of priests in Gozo in general?

- Very positive
- Somewhat positive
- Somewhat negative
- Very negative

Q31. How willing do you feel priests are to give people personal help?

- Very available
- Somewhat available
- Not very available
- Not available at all

SECTION H — Young People and the Future of Faith

These questions are for everyone — not only young people.

Q32. How do you think the life of faith in Gozo will change in the next 10 years?

- It will increase
- It will stay roughly the same
- It will decrease
- Not sure

Q33. Do you think the following are challenges the Church in Gozo is facing today?

Yes / No

Mass attendance is declining [Yes] [No]

Young people are not interested [Yes] [No]

Everything has become meaningless [Yes] [No]

Failure to address social problems (poverty, mental health, migration, etc.) [Yes] [No]

Lack of transparency in finances and money [Yes] [No]

Poor quality of preaching [Yes] [No]

Shortage of priests [Yes] [No]

Q34. How much do you agree with the following statements about the future of the Church in Gozo?

Agree / Neutral / Disagree

a. I would like to see laypeople take on greater responsibility in the Church [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

b. The Diocese should consult / talk to parishioners more before making decisions [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

c. Women should have a more formal / important role and responsibilities in the Church [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

d. The Church should take clear public positions on issues of social justice [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

e. I feel that the Church in Gozo is interested in my voice and opinion [Agree] [Neutral] [Disagree]

SECTION I — Your Voice

Q35. Is there anything else you would like the Diocese of Gozo to know about your faith, your experience of the Church, or what changes you would like to see?

(Feel free to write whatever you wish — your answer will be read carefully)

Thank you for your time and honesty.

Diocese of Gozo