

# FWF GENDER FACT SHEET - TUNISIA

## FACTS & FIGURES

- Human Development Index: 95 of 189 countries (UNDP 2018)
- Gender Inequality Index: 63 of 160 countries (UNDP 2018)
- Global Gender Gap Index: 119 of 149 countries (WEF 2018)
  - Economic Participation & Opportunity 135
  - Educational attainment 108
  - Health & Survival 105
  - Political empowerment 55
- Women who have been subjected to sexual violence: 15.2% (ENVEFT 2010:6)
- Maternal Mortality Ratio: 62 per 100,000 live births (2015)
- Child Marriage: 2%

### General:

- Population: 11.7 million (2018)
- Primary school enrolment: males 99%, females 98% (1999-2015)
- Life expectancy: 75.5 years (2015)
- Urban population: 67% (rural 23%) (2015)
- Poverty: 9.1% (2015)
- Economically active population (over 15): 46% (2010)

## COUNTRY CONTEXT

Despite being on the forefront in modernising legislation on women's rights, **old patriarchal structures and the cultural tendency to consider boys/men superior to girls/women** remain.

### Employment:

Of the total population, 23% of Tunisians are under 14 and only 8% over the age of 65.

- While important progress has been made on the political transition to an open and democratic system of governance, economic transition has not kept pace.
- **Unemployment had been high** for a long period. **Youth and women** have been particularly affected by the lack of economic opportunity.
- Tunisia is one of the few countries where **a higher level of education decreases employability, in particular for women.**
- While the **Tunisian welfare system** covers illness, motherhood, accidents at work, work-related illness, disability, old age, and family costs, provision is often fragmented and uneven. The main gap in the system remains the **lack of comprehensive unemployment insurance.**
- Private networks of solidarity and the informal sector are relied upon. **This lack in social services** keeps women strongly attached to their traditional domestic roles (Ben Salem 2010).

### Gender inequality:

- In spite of progress in legislation to reduce gender inequality and the expansion in female education (particularly tertiary education), Tunisia still has **low participation of women in the labour force. Women's share of the labour force is 25%** (National Institute of Statistics).
- Women are concentrated in certain sectors, particularly in **agriculture**, which is often not considered economically active since it falls under domestic work.
- **Cemented gender roles within the family** also have a negative effect on women's labour market participation. Tunisian women take more responsibility in the household and have a greater workload than men regardless of their professional situation.
- **Representation of women at higher levels is limited.** For example, the civil service has 50,000 employees of whom 59% are men and 41% women. Women make up 25-33% of the lower categories, but only 11% of the highest position: the General Secretaries (Labidi 2011).

### Gender-based violence (GBV):

- Violence against women and girls is a serious concern. The first national survey on violence against women in Tunisia (ENVEFT) was conducted in 2010.
  - The survey asked a **representative sample of the Tunisian women (3,873 women aged 18-64)** about the experiences of four different types of violence: physical violence, psychological violence, sexual violence, and economic violence.
  - According to the survey, **31.6% of the Tunisian women had sometime during their life been subjected to physical violence, and 1 out of 5 Tunisian women had experienced violence within the private sphere.**
  - The vast majority of the violence against Tunisian women takes place within the private sphere, and **the intimate partner is the main aggressor** (47% of physical

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violence, 69% of psychological violence, 78% of sexual violence, 78% of economic violence).

- Although there are no official statistics available on the level and extent of sexual harassment, evidence suggests that women are often **subjected to sexual harassment in public institutions and in the workplace** (see Kheififi 2012).
- **Violence against women also appears to be increasing** with the resurgence of certain Islamist ideologies, which can view women as second-class citizens.
- However, sexual harassment is generally not reported. **The low report rate** is likely due to a lack of awareness or resources by law enforcement to conduct objective investigations or protect victims, and domestic violence being considered a private issue (Ben Salem 2919:496). In addition **government is slow to react**, gender-based violence laws are currently still sitting in parliament and have yet to be signed into law.
- Some women are **victims of incest** practiced by fathers, uncles, cousins or brothers. Besides the physical and sexual forms of incest, **many women suffer from economic violence** since they are banned from working while others have their wages confiscated.

### LEGAL CONTEXT

#### National legislation:

- Article 46 of the Constitution defines the State's commitment to **protecting women and girls from gender-based violence**. Article 46 also calls for **gender equality**, including equal opportunities for women and men.
- **Sexual harassment** and "offenses against morality" have been criminalised since 2004 and according to Article 226 of the Penal Code the perpetrator risks one year in prison.
- **Rape is considered to be a serious crime in the Penal Code** and the perpetrator risks a life sentence or even the death penalty in violent cases (Code Pénal, Articles 227-229). However, it does not explicitly prohibit rape or sexual violence within marriage.
- In Article 28 the Constitution obliges the State to **ensure the safety and quality of the healthcare system as well as access for all citizens**.
- In 2016, Tunisia's parliament approved an amendment to ensure a **greater representation of women in local politics**.
- Although the Personal Code gives Tunisian women the possibility to **negotiate their marital rights**, in practice social pressure influences this matter more than the law.
- **Women's right to own property (including land) is guaranteed by law**. However, Tunisian women are rarely able to exercise this in practice due to the persistence of Islamic traditional laws transferring the ownership of land and real estate from father to son.
- In 2017, Tunisia's parliament approved a **landmark law on violence against women, which included progressive provisions on domestic violence and marital rape**. The law permits women and men to have an equal inheritance, contradicting the Qur'anic verse which states the share of women's inheritance is half that of men's. The law will also guarantee a freedom of choice between following the Constitution or the Sharia Islamic law.

#### International legislation:

- Tunisia signed and ratified the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** in 1985 and submitted the 5th and 6th periodic reports in 2009. However, like several other Arab countries, Tunisia made reservations.

CEDAW that has urged Tunisia to put in place a comprehensive strategy to eliminate patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes that discriminate against women. As well as raised concerns that disadvantaged groups of women and girls (e.g. rural women) suffer from multiple forms of discrimination, such as lack of access to education, employment, and healthcare, lack of protection from violence, and lack of access to justice (UN Human Rights Council 2012b:6,12,7).

#### Sources:

BTI, Tunisia Country Report: <https://www.bti-project.org/en/reports/country-reports/detail/itc/TUN/>

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UNDP Human Development Report 2018: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/GII>,

UN Women, 'Global Database on Violence against Women': [http://evaw-global-](http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/fr/countries/africa/tunisia)

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WEF Global Gender Gap Index 2018: <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2018/>

World Bank: <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/tunisia/overview>