



Public Opinion Research – Citizens of Tunisia Express Their Views

April 10 – 17, 2014



Research Objectives & Context

- **Compare and contrast attitudes and opinions of women and men in different regions** in Tunisia in order to provide political and civic leadership with timely and objective information.

Key themes include:

- Attitudes about the direction of the country and priorities which affect citizen's daily lives;
- Views on the state of political deliberations, including the care-taker government and current legislative deliberations; and,
- Expectations for political leaders, parties and alliances in light of future elections.



Methodology

- **Focus group research is qualitative**, not quantitative
- **Focus groups are used to understand prevalent attitudes** among various social groups and examine in-depth the reasons for those attitudes
- **Attitudes identified can be attributed only to the participants**; samples are not representative
- **Discussion guide developed by NDI**, in consultation with ELKA Consulting and Tunisian partners



Methodology

- **4 cities selected:** Greater Tunis, Bizerte, Kef, Medenine
- **Participants recruited at 5 sample points** across each city
- **ELKA recruiters selected participants** by engaging pedestrians on the street
- **Selection criteria:**
 - Three groups per city: 1) mixed youth 25-34; 2) women 35+; 3) men 35+
 - Equal distribution was a goal from each sample point



Participant Profiles

- **142 participants** from Greater Tunis, Bizerte, Kef, Medenine
- **Fieldwork** conducted from April 10 - 17
- **Diversity** of ages, professions and neighborhoods within each group
- **Eight to twelve participants** per group

Gender	Count
Female	71
Male	71
Age	Count
25-34	46
+35	96
Profession	Count
Employed	91
Unemployed	28
Homemaker	19
Student	4
Education	Count
University	55
Secondary	47
Primary	33
None	7

Direction of the Country

Political progress in 2014 – including adoption of the constitution and hand-over to a caretaker government – and evidence that security is improving slightly from last year are cited by participants who believe the country is moving in the right direction.

“We have the constitution, we have the ISIE [Independent High Authority for the Elections, the election commission], there is no exclusion like in other countries, so things are going right.” Male, Kef, 41, employed

“Generally speaking the government’s orientations are going right, and particularly after Ennahda stepped down.” Male, Tunis, 39, employed

“The government is tackling security, economic, and social matters. The fact that it is free from party affiliations helps direct the country in the right direction. If one day an independent president takes over, the country would be even better.” Female, Kef, 58, employed

“One million visitors came to Tunisia by the end of March. The Jomaa government’s tourism minister is making this happen – if we continue on this path, we will return to 2010 levels. I also feel that Jomaa is a statesman.” Male, Tunis, 30, employed

“At the time of January 14th [2011], people were paranoid and afraid. On Martyrs’ Day, families were out together, all celebrating peacefully. This change in awareness is a kind of progress.” Female, Tunis, 26, unemployed

“When you move from one place to another, you feel that security is prevailing. The police are present and alert. They are afraid, but they are alert.” Male, Medenine, 50, employed

“Security is going in the right direction. Police are becoming more disciplined and respectful.” Male, Tunis, 52, employed

“As I see things, what is positive about those who head the actual government, there's some agreement between the political parties and civil society about everything. The dialogue that they had will be successful.” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

Direction of the Country

A significant minority of participants believe the country is moving in the wrong direction. Un-checked fluctuating prices, high unemployment – especially among youth – and deterioration of services, including healthcare and education, drive this view.

“There is corruption everywhere which requires structural reforms. Media is not going in the right direction. We need a major change of mentality to progress.” Male, Kef, 46, employed

“The high cost of living is very difficult. Merchants put the prices they like, and you get rotten vegetables with a mistaken weight.” Female, Tunis, 55, homemaker

“We are badly in debt. We get loans to pay for the wages, instead of opening factories and making projects. We borrow to eat.” Male, Medenine, 48, employed

“Laws must be firmly implemented to stop smuggling which is hurting the economy. We need to focus on job creation and industry which will have fast, high impact. This is the best thing to do because the government cannot be burdened by pricey solutions.” Male, Tunis, 39, employed

“Authorities should find solutions for smugglers who are trying to make a living. Just preventing them from selling goods in this way is no solution. Once this is done, you can punish those who transgress the law. I heard that these salesmen are going to be provided with a space.” Male, Bizerte, 45, employed

“I work in a supermarket. I get the price lists and notice that prices are increasing in an unprecedented manner. Previously, textile prices increased once a year. Now, they increase once a month!” Female, Bizerte, 40, employed

“The most important thing is employment. In my family, I do voluntary work, my sister is unemployed and we still have siblings in high school. My father is a pensioner. He gets 150 TND each month.” Female, Bizerte, 27, employed

Citizen Priorities

Participants identify Tunisia's biggest challenges as critical shortages of jobs, high prices, and the need for broad reforms, and say their concerns are going unheard by politicians.

“Economically speaking, things are getting more difficult. Teacher salaries have not increased in two years. Cost of living is rising, and other sectors are getting pay increases, like the police.” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“My husband is unemployed. In addition to poverty, most people are renting houses and we also have to pay electricity and water bills; that's too much!” Female, Medenine, 40, homemaker

“There are no gains. They are only filling their pockets. Yesterday I was watching a program about the aid Tunisia took from Qatar. Where is that money?” Female, Bizerte, 31, employed

“We are not feeling secure. We have neither stable jobs nor health insurance (CNSS) and people are even unable to feed their kids!!” Male, Tunis, 49, employed

“My family pressure is hard. Once I graduated, they expected me to find a job, support the family, get married. It's been three years and I haven't achieved any of this.” Male, Kef, 25, unemployed

“The problem started within the administrations¹ and took the form of strikes, lockouts, and sit-ins. You go to the administrations and you find them empty. We're putting the blame on the government, but we forgot to blame ourselves for not working and not producing.” Female, Kef, 45, employed

“How come they approved the constitution without a referendum? As a citizen I have elected deputies to write the constitution and after doing so they should assess my overall satisfaction about this constitution through a popular vote. They need to have my approval too because I elected them to represent me in the NCA [National Constituent Assembly].” Male, Tunis, 39, employed

¹ A term used by participants to refer to government generally, and most often to local officials at municipalities and at the governorate.

Citizen Priorities

Participants rate service delivery in three key areas – education, health, and security – as fair-to-poor.

“Education, health services, the economy. All we see are quick fixes, but these are not addressing the root problems.” Male, Bizerte, 26, unemployed

“Concerning education, schools should improve. Private tuition should be decreased and our children should rely on themselves in order to get good results.” Female, Bizerte, 48, homemaker

“Before the baccalaureate exam, educators need to help students determine if there will be jobs in those specialties.” Female, Bizerte, 25, unemployed

“Last time I went to Charles-Nicolle² in Tunis, I found the staff on strike, so I had to return to Bizerte with nothing. What a waste!” Male, Bizerte, 30, employed

“The worst thing that they’ve done is CAPES.³ I am an engineer, and I accepted to participate in CAPES, but the Ministry did not accept my candidature along with 13,000 other candidates. We had to pay the 10 dinar fee. This is just a way for the government to make money.” Male, Kef, 25, unemployed

“Unemployment is what ignited the revolution. This domain is going backward. I haven’t seen any recruitment since the revolution.” Female, Tunis, 35, employed

² A public hospital in Tunis

³ The Contest of Aptitude for Secondary Education Teachers, the government’s teaching certification program, seen by many as a source of corruption under the Ben Ali regime.

Citizen Priorities

Municipal elections are of great interest, and are expected to help solve local problems.

“Municipal elections have a cardinal historical importance in relation to regional development, environment, infrastructure and investment. This is where corruption has started, and where citizens need to focus.” Male, Tunis, 32, employed

“They are very important. Rubbish and mosquitoes are everywhere and now summer is coming so things will be worse. Now they skip two or three days before they come to collect the garbage.” Female, Tunis, 46, homemaker

“Municipal elections are even more important than legislative elections because they are related to the area and the environment where citizens live.” Male, Tunis, 61, retired

“We see cows crossing the streets; we also see rubbish everywhere. Bizerte became very dirty; people can no longer live here because of dirt. The municipality is responsible for addressing these problems.” Female, Bizerte, 45, employed

“Municipal and regional councils are most important since we don’t really have a direct relationship with the center. Regionally speaking, the closer authority is the municipality that the citizen needs to deal with on a daily basis.” Male, Kef, 46, employed

“Municipal elections are the most important. This is the base. We need to lay a strong foundation with clean people who will take care of issues which matter most to people.” Male, Medenine, 60, employed

The Constitution

Participants have little knowledge about the adopted constitution but express a clear desire to understand its provisions and practical application, in order to be responsible citizens.

“They are organizing meetings – not to raise awareness about the constitution, but to launch their election campaigns.” Male, Tunis, 27, unemployed

“I don’t necessarily think this is the Assembly’s role or political parties. This is our responsibility to read the constitution and engage with associations to understand how it will be applied in our lives.” Male, 34, unemployed

“More freedoms are granted and that’s quite reassuring. What matters most is the implementation of laws because also the constitution of 1959 included important laws but that was only on paper; a theory that wasn’t really put into practice.” Male, Tunis, 35, employed

“Nothing; I just know that they changed and added things.” Female, Bizerte, 40, employed

“I am not well informed in politics, but I wished that the constitution of [Habib] Bourguiba had remained. In that way, we wouldn’t have wasted all that money for nothing.” Female, Kef, 46, employed

“We’ve heard only one thing about the constitution. That it is sold for two dinars.” Female, Kef, 25, employed

“Normally there should be some effort to talk about the new constitution and explain the difference between the new and the old one, but nothing is done.” Male, Kef, 25, unemployed

Electoral Framework and Process

Citizens indicate low awareness of ISIE leadership and potential steps in electoral process.

“We don’t know him. We only know the name.” Female, Medenine, 35, homemaker

“[Chawfik] Sar Sar [head of the ISIE] has a huge responsibility – in this life and the afterlife. His role in organizing the next election will be crucial in the eyes of citizens and God alike, because this process will allow the country to focus on urgent needs for economic and political stability.” Male, Tunis, 32, employed

“Mr Chawfik seems like a competent professor. He said once ‘let me work’ and this proves his sense of responsibility. I do really appreciate him but the question here: would they provide him with the adequate background to lead transparent elections?” Male, Kef, 61, retired

“He [Sar Sar] should have introduced himself, for example, this would not be a bad idea if he shows up once a week. For how long has he been head of the ISIE? Two months? If he goes every week to a governorate and some people are invited to attend, it's going to be from mouth to ear. We would have known something about him. Is he maybe 40 years old?” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

“We aren’t sure what will come next. The good news is that citizens can observe all aspects of the process to ensure it stays on track.” Female, Bizerte, 26, unemployed

“The ISIE is composed of 9 members but the problem here is that we do not really know who would be its representatives in the elections so that to trust them.” Male, Kef, 39, employed

Electoral Framework and Process

Views are mixed about the potential for a future ISIE to carry out free elections in a transparent manner.

“I do have confidence in the ISIE but I don’t have in the NCA because it deliberately delayed the electoral law while it was already ready.” Male, Tunis, 39, employed

“A key point here, which is the transparency of funding and of course we need to know the sum of money that the government would grant to parties before the elections as well as the amount they would collect from their members. It’s crucially important to make sure that political parties don’t receive money from overseas.” Male, Tunis, 64, retired

“It seems to me that the first ISIE is better than the second one because under the circumstances in which it was done there wasn’t any belonging to any party and parties weren’t known or anything.” Male, Bizerte, 45, employed

“I don’t believe that the ISIE is the guarantee of free and transparent elections. There are also some international organizations that are going to observe these elections that will not allow any fraud to take place. During the previous elections, for example, even though Kamel Jandoubi, president of ISIE, was known for his affiliation to the left, he could not influence the results of the elections.” Male, Kef, 32, employed

“Postponing elections beyond 2014 would be the first violation of the constitution, and as such, would be a blow against its credibility.” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“Contending parties must abide by a certain set of ethics. The second thing: The issue of illiterate people and the person that they must be accompanied with, constitutes a real problem.” Male, Medenine, 40, employed

Electoral Framework and Process

Thresholds could help consolidate party representation in a future parliament, although some fear this will disenfranchise some voters and parties.

“I prefer a small number of parties so that we can understand what they are saying. When they are big, there will be no problems between them and we can understand what they say.” Female, Tunis, 35, employed

“This is a good idea, because, in the previous elections, we saw that many political parties took 50 million from the government, but then failed to gain any vote. The threshold would save money for the government.” Male, Medenine, 40, employed

“I think that the threshold is very logical because we are not really living in a divided society ideologically speaking. The majority of Tunisians are Muslims and the rest either they belong to the left or to the right, this is not really a big deal. So I don’t think that the threshold would affect negatively the electoral process.” Male, Tunis, 35, employed

“Now in the NCA, there is a dispersal of votes. There are lists that got seats only with one person. Look at Slim Riahi⁴ for example. What is the value he added to the parliament? Nothing.” Female, Bizerte, 26, unemployed

“I’m for the idea of having few parties and many coalitions with a clear political agenda that addresses social, economic, and political issues.” Male, Tunis, 35, employed

“I prefer that the parliament contains three dominant political blocs.” Male, Tunis, 39, employed

“A ship that has fifty captains drowns. Many parties with dissenting ideas cripple things. Even within the same party there are disagreements.” Male, Bizerte, 60, employed

“Thresholds are good because if a party has more votes, it will have more representatives in the parliament.” Female, Bizerte, 40, employed

⁴ Businessman and NCA member for the Free Patriotic Union party, which he founded in 2011.

Electoral Framework and Process

Citizens have mixed views on excluding certain segments of Tunisian society from running as candidates or voting. Supporters indicate that criteria should be applied to determine which individuals should be excluded, rather than excluding entire groups or parties, with the exception of security forces.

“The subject of exclusion should be managed like a football game – when a football player commits a mistake he would get a red card. This means that everyone who was responsible or an RCD member in the government of Ben Ali, would be banned from participating for 5 or 10 years.” Male, Tunis, 35, employed

“We need to exclude those who held positions of responsibility in the former regime. The secretary general of the former regime is now in Nidaa Tounes. So what was the revolution about? Of course, we cannot exclude 2 million people who belonged to the former ruling party – just those who were responsible for killing or corruption.” Male, Kef, 25, student

“When you exclude Essebsi, this benefits the people who made the law of exclusion because they know they will lose against him. This policy of exclusion is not meant to punish those who did wrong things in the past but to eliminate competitors in order to have a bigger chance of winning.” Male, Bizerte, 26, unemployed

“The military shouldn’t vote, because they shouldn’t belong to any political party.” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“Only criminals, thieves and those who exploited people should be excluded.” Female, Bizerte, 67, homemaker

Electoral Framework and Process

Opponents of exclusion believe the decision should be made by the voter.

“There are two kinds of exclusion - moral exclusion of those who worked with Ben Ali should make an oath not to participate, while the second is an exclusion made by the voter through the voting booth. I do personally prefer to vote for individuals and not for lists because this gives us direct choice over who represents us.” Male, Kef, 46, employed

“Exclusion isn't acceptable. If you know someone who has committed crimes, present him to the court.” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

“I've got a problem with Ennahda, but I am against exclusion. I want everyone to be there and to participate, because if they are excluded, they will appear as the victim like they used to be before.” Female, Kef, 38, employed

“The soldier is also a civilian. I don't see why he couldn't [vote]. He's got his own point of view as a person. After work, he takes off his uniform and becomes again like any citizen.” Male, Bizerte, 42, employed

“Let's suppose Jomaa's government continues to be successful and improves the situation. When elections come, would you accept starting over with people who we don't know and haven't proven themselves?” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“Military are Tunisians just like any one else. They should be allowed to vote.” Female, Medenine, 47, employed

Electoral Framework and Process

Participants agree that Tunisia's progressive legacy of women's rights is commendable, but women's participation in politics – including in future election campaigns and as office-holders – garners modest support.

“Women should be represented, and only women could understand the needs of women, defend them and protect their rights. But at the moment, these are only words on paper.” Female, Kef, 56, employed

“We are for parity as far as serving our community is concerned. Of course, this must be within limits set by our religion and without any transgressions...As our prophet Mohammed said ‘there is no good in a community led by a woman.’” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“I am with parity if it is not to the detriment of the family. When a woman leaves her house for the sake of parity this is no good.” Female, Tunis, 66, retired

“Vertical parity could be applied if all the candidates have the same educational level. Do you think countryside women could represent the people and fight for their rights?” Male, Kef, 61, retired

“The problem here is that these women might be incompetent to occupy such position but they're present only to ensure parity. Perhaps after four or five elections from now, women will be more motivated to genuinely get involved in these councils.” Male, Tunis, 64, retired

“When half of the members are women, we win. Women are less liable to be involved in financial corruption.” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

“It's better to focus on competence than on total parity.” Female, Bizerte, 42, employed

“I'm not against women, but I think they shouldn't impose parity. It can be 60% women and 40% men, but it should not be imposed. To ensure parity in electoral lists, sometimes women who understand nothing in politics are included to fill in the places.” Male, Kef, 32, employed

Electoral Framework and Process

Observers are viewed as a critical component to safeguard the electoral process and protect against election infractions by parties, which are widely anticipated.

“I was one of these observers in the previous elections, and it was a good experience; we went from school to school; we were watching over the elections procedures, and we observed that there were lots of transgressions. Of course we wrote reports.” Female, Kef, 50, employed

“Party agents mustn’t interfere. He must only observe and he doesn’t have the right to talk with electors.” Female, Tunis, 66, retired

“Party agents are good if they don't interfere. They shouldn’t express any opinion. My only concern is that their presence could influence illiterate voters.” Male, Bizerte, 45, employed

“Their [party agents] role is to check the results achieved by his/ her party. If they try to influence the vote, they are put out.” Male, Kef, 25, student

“The contribution of international observers is crucially important to market a positive image about democracy in Tunisia, but they should demonstrate a thoroughly professional performance.” Male, Kef, 61, retired

“It is likely that when a party wins, another party would not accept the result so the international observer can settle the dispute because he is neutral.” Male, Medenine, 40, employed

“They cost us a lot of money while they are here just as an image to show up in front of the world. They are irrelevant because we have competent people who are jobless and who can carry out the mission. What do these international observers add to us, nothing.” Male, Medenine, 30, employed

Electoral Framework and Process

Most participants say they are committed to voting in the next elections because it will provide them the opportunity to bring change, though some express disillusionment with the value of voting.

“I am not a member of a party, so what I am about to say is not an advertisement for one side. We all have to express our opinion through voting, and encourage our mothers, fathers, friends to make their choice. If we don’t vote, someone we don’t like may make it to power.” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“Voting is not only a right but a duty. If we are not comfortable with the current situation, this is our main opportunity to change things at the ballot box.” Female, Medenine, 37, employed

“I did vote the last time, but nothing has really changed. So why should I have to vote again?” Male, Tunis, 35, employed

“I’m going to vote because last time I made a mistake and I regret it! This time I have an idea about whom I’m going to vote for and God willing I’ll vote for him.” Female, Bizerte, 54, employed

“Everybody has to vote so that, first, we have to avoid what happened last time when unknown lists appeared from nowhere and second I have to give my voice so that it is not stolen indirectly.” Female, Bizerte, 26, unemployed

“I want to make my voice heard, even with a blank paper.” Male, Medenine, 40, employed

Political Process and Actors

Participants are disappointed and angered by what they view as unnecessary debates that are delaying the political process. These tensions are negatively affecting daily life.

“As the saying goes neither should the wolf starve nor should the shepherd complain, that is, everybody is satisfied. Thus we can solve this problem through mutual understanding.” Male, Bizerte, 45, employed

“Politicians are no longer respected. They are well-known even to the young children because media portrays their ambitions to be president. Their behavior in the NCA, debates on TV – it’s embarrassing.” Female, Bizerte, 26, student

“Politics affect our lives – not just at home, but also at work. If your boss belongs to a political party, and you to another one, he will punish you.” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“Political parties should respect each other and they should construct a genuine and authentic relationship with citizens.” Male, Kef, 46, employed

“I am not literate but I stopped watching films and started following the news every day to know what is going on. I have become addicted.” Female, Tunis, 55, homemaker

“When I want to laugh, I log on to Facebook or watch videos about politics on YouTube. Politics to me means jokes because the degree of civility is so low and politicians lack basic manners.” Female, Medenine, 27, employed

“Besides the fact that Ennahda failed in managing the country, what’s the role of the opposition? Did they suggest a program to rescue the country when the majority of parties failed to do so? Or they’re just there to oppose!!” Male, Tunis, 52, employed

“Frankly speaking, politics affects our lives all the time. All these political affiliations created a friction between the different classes.” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

Political Process and Actors

While some political parties are present in their communities, they are viewed as talking ‘at’ citizens.

“I’m dreaming that one day political parties organize events or initiate a program to raise people’s awareness about politics, instead of calling us only to vote for them.” Male, Tunis, 25, employed

“We constantly see fights between party supporters in cafes. The parties are waging early election campaigns, which is proof of their selfishness. Supporters are only arguing, and no parties are asking what matters to us.” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“Last week Ennahda organized a meeting here, and Popular Front also did for Martyrs’ Day. Even Nidaa Tounes held a meeting.” Male, Kef, 41, employed

“Nejib Chebbi came to Ras Ejebel. I told him that I am jobless but have money, so he doesn’t start promising things.” Male, Bizerte, 26, employed

“I went to a political party meeting yesterday. They had food and drinks and lots of talk. They didn’t ask anything about our problems.” Male, Bizerte, 27, employed

“Show the shortcomings of the past and take them into account to set up a program to show it is knowledgeable about the situation of the country.” Female, Tunis, 35, employed

“Why don’t parties visit people in their homes? Some people can’t attend public meetings.” Female, Medenine, 35, homemaker

“When a party works only from its office in Tunis it cannot propose reasonable solutions for Beni Khedech, for example. They should move and go ask people about their opinion.” Male, Medenine, 60, employed

Political Process and Actors

Participants' main advice to political parties is to consult more with the Tunisian people, to treat all citizens with respect, and to focus on finding concrete solutions.

"I want them to stop their quarreling, to improve the quality of their arguments, and raise the level of their debates. It is improper that we as normal citizens have to watch our elites arguing like children." Male, Tunis, 32, employed

"Parties should go out to the street, like you did. They should ask people 'What are your suggestions?'. This should be televised too – with people responding." Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

"Create committees for young people and women." Female, Bizerte, 25, unemployed

"Be realistic and promise possible solutions. Don't pretend a loaf of bread will be 100 milliemmes and health care will be free." Male, Medenine, 40, employed

"We would like to see parties having a role in our daily life, because they are there only during the electoral campaigns. We want them to care for our needs and concerns. When pollution was rampant, who cared about us? No one; we collected garbage and cleaned our neighborhoods by ourselves." Female, Kef, 38, employed

"We want politicians to care for our youth. Young people are using drugs and committing suicide; we've reached a time when our young men burn themselves because of unemployment and deprivation." Female, Kef, 45, employed

"They are boasting and behaving as if they did us a favor by completing the constitution. They hold meetings only to congratulate themselves. When are they going to start focusing on what matters to the rest of Tunisians?" Male, Medenine, 25, employed

Advice to Tunisia's Next President

“Three things – learn the lessons of what happened to other dictators (Ben Ali, Saddam Hussein, Ghaddafi); be bold and strong; and don't let others influence your decisions.” Male, Tunis, 31, employed

“I would tell him that we elected you regarding your political agenda so don't stray and try to effectively apply it.” Male, Tunis, 35, employed

“I want the next president to understand how the state functions, and communicate well to Tunisians and abroad. He should have the fox's cunningness and the lion's strength.” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

“I want him to be young but with political experience. I don't want someone old who will be like a marionette, like Bourguiba.” Female, Bizerte, 42, employed

“He has to visit rural areas because we don't feel politicians are close to our daily realities.” Female, Bizerte, 42, employed

“He shouldn't have too many family members!” Female, Kef, 46, employed

“He should address three things – healthcare, education and youth.” Female, Kef, 45, employed

“Declare all your income and property when you take office!” Male, Kef, 25, student

“He should be a genuine democrat, and serve the country.” Male, Medenine, 60, retired

“Here in Medenine, participation in politics is a family heritage, rather than a choice. Anyone who wants to rule justly should understand our mentality.” Male, Medenine, 26, unemployed

Tunis - Priorities

- **Reducing air pollution caused by factories and traffic congestion.**
- **Implementing regular garbage collection.**
- **Addressing inflated costs of goods and services.**

“The economic situation in Tunis is worse than other regions – I mean the cost of living for average citizens. Tunis is over-populated and there is a race for consumption. This is why merchants profit and raise prices.”
Male, Tunis, 32, employed

“My salary is 250 TND, 180 of which go as rental fees for the house where I live with my daughter. I suffer from a chronic disease (asthma). I wish a house for every citizen and the wellbeing for all the country, not only for myself.” Female, Tunis, 42, employed

“There is a crisis of housing in Tunis now and the reason behind it is that many buildings are empty but their owners refuse to offer them to needy people.” Male, Tunis, 49, employed

“Smuggling and the black market are major issues negatively affecting the economy. The fuel, which was sold in border areas, now has reached the capital too. Smuggling after all appears to be like the antidote of the government’s failure to provide jobs for its people and it does actually benefit only a small minority while it harms badly the economy. If the government doesn’t stop these practices the economy will seriously go toward the abyss and smugglers should be severely penalized.” Male, Tunis, 64, retired

Bizerte - Priorities

- **Increasing quality of services and equipment at local hospitals.**
- **Addressing access challenges related to the bridge.**
- **Encouraging investors to re-open factories closed since 2011.**

“The health sector is deteriorating. Medicines are not available. The CNAM⁵ is not informing people about payment options. You can’t get special treatments in Bizerte.” Female, Bizerte, 35, unemployed

“Education is also steadily deteriorating. They have so many books and notebooks. And then we have private tuition. If you don’t pay for private tuition courses your children won’t get good marks. Education has become a business.” Female, Bizerte, 40, employed

“Some companies in Mater hire taxis to drive their employees. For example, my wife has a problem of transportation.” Male, Bizerte, 28, employed

“As for roads, they’re bad, there are holes everywhere. As for security, security is less than needed in Bizerte.” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

“The Scomina ship repair factory used to be in Menzel Bourguiba [a town in Bizerte]. It employed 3000 to 4000 employees for our region. Now it's closed, because of all the strikes and the roads are an awful condition. Neighborhoods are also full of filth.” Male, Bizerte, 38, employed

“Bizerte's pet peeve is the drawbridge. The drawbridge stands as the symbol of Bizerte, but the delays hurt commerce and transport.” Male, Bizerte, 42, employed

“Bizerte is a wonderful place to live – just one thing: finish the marina!” Male, Bizerte, 33, employed

“STIR⁶ and the steel factory caused all the damage to the roads – they should be responsible for repairs.” Female, Bizerte, 25, unemployed

⁵ La Caisse nationale d'assurance-maladie or the National Health Insurance Fund.

⁶ The Tunisian Society of Refining Industries, a public company that imports and refines crude oil.

Kef - Priorities

- **Improving healthcare services, including drug prevention and treatment programs targeted for youth.**
- **Encouraging investment in processing plants for wheat and milk.**
- **Improving road infrastructure to increase safety for residents and reduce travel times between Tunis and coastal cities.**

“Because of migration to the coast for jobs our children don’t see people investing in their home. We need to start with improving the infrastructure and encouraging investment.” Male, Kef, 46, employed

“Kef produces wheat but the factory of flour is in Sfax. A question mark here and you can understand the rest.” Male, Kef, 46, employed

“The roads damage our cars. The infrastructure is the principle cause behind the lack of projects. No investor would come to such a place where there is no home gas.” Female, Kef, 38, employed

“There is a proverb which says that each country is served by its men. Here in Kef there are treasures. We are known here in Kef by the fact that our women work harder than our men. We have everything, but we did nothing with it.” Female, Kef, 46, employed

“If you look at youth in the region, they are all addicted to drugs. They live day to day. We aren’t looking for jobs because there is no investment here.” Male, Kef, 25, unemployed

“Most of the youth in el-Kef are in prison because of affiliation to Salafi ideology. Those who have some money, they spend it in drugs and alcohol. There is nothing else to do here.” Male, Kef, 27, employed

“Kef is an agricultural region, but we are not taking full advantage. We could have factories for milk production for example.” Male, Kef, 27, unemployed

Medenine - Priorities

- **Regulating trade with Libya to allow local residents to operate legally and safely.**
- **Reducing arms flows from Libya to reinforce local and national security.**

“The situation with the border being closed and opened is a problem. We need proper regulation so goods won’t be smuggled. People feel forced into this business because the economy is weak. The prices for basic utilities – electricity and water – should be reduced as well.” Female, Medenine, 37, employed

“If he [Jomaa] closed Ras Jedir, this was in order to organize trade. We need this to stop illegal weapons coming into the area. I see that Jomaa is making an effort but we need time to see results.” Female, Medenine, 55, homemaker

“Medenine is a quiet volcano. We have been silent for too long, and we haven’t taken any of our rights yet. We haven’t seen anything, neither before the revolution, nor after it. Because we are silent, ethical, well-behaved, and we don’t want to provoke troubles. We are all relatives here in Medenine, and we don’t have problems with each other.” Male, Medenine, 39, employed

“I prefer unrest and protests to illegal arms trade. The quantity of confiscated weapons is huge. I prefer social protests to this. Concerning unrest, it depends on the neighborhood.” Female, Medenine, 35, homemaker

“Hashish became so widespread and there are no policemen. If you go out at midnight, no one will arrest you.” Female, Medenine, 45, homemaker

“Stick-ups took place even before but maybe we didn’t hear about them before. Maybe the number of stick-ups was even more significant. Now we hear about everything. Now everybody is free to express himself. Some people use freedom of expression in the wrong way. Some people think we can say everything but I think we have to choose what we say.” Female, Medenine, 40, homemaker