

# FIVE YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION: TUNISIAN CITIZENS EXPRESS THEIR VIEWS

FINDINGS FROM FOCUS GROUPS IN TUNISIA  
Conducted February 20-27, 2016

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## NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE

The National Democratic Institute (NDI) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that responds to the aspirations of people around the world to live in democratic societies that recognize and promote basic human rights. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to support and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government. With staff members and volunteer political practitioners from more than 100 nations, NDI brings together individuals and groups to share ideas, knowledge, experiences and expertise. Partners receive broad exposure to best practices in international democratic development that can be adapted to the needs of their own countries. NDI's approach reinforces the message that while there is no single democratic model, certain core principles are shared by all democracies. The Institute's work upholds the principles enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also promotes the development of institutionalized channels of communications among citizens, political institutions and elected officials, and strengthens their ability to improve the quality of life for all citizens. For more information about NDI, please visit [www.ndi.org](http://www.ndi.org).

### PREFACE

In January 2016, Tunisians marked the fifth anniversary of the citizen-led uprising that toppled the regime of authoritarian leader Ben Ali. More than a year after the parliament and president took office following elections in fall 2014, Tunisia's elected leaders are endeavoring to address the country's pressing economic and security challenges while consolidating its young democracy. The 217-member parliament, the Assembly of People's Representatives (ARP), which first convened in December 2014, has made progress on several legislative priorities, but has also struggled with political infighting and a lack of resources and staffing. With significant economic reforms still forthcoming, most Tunisians continue to feel that the gains of the revolution have yet to meaningfully impact their daily lives. Amidst commemorations of the anniversary of the revolution in Tunis, demonstrations—strikingly similar to those in 2011—spread through the interior regions following the death of an unsuccessful job seeker in Kasserine.

As the transition progresses, local elections are Tunisia's next step towards elected, representative governance at all levels. For the first time in their history, Tunisians will democratically elect the municipal and regional councilors whose decisions directly impact their communities. At the time the research was conducted, municipal elections were expected to be held by the end of 2016; Chafik Sarsar, president of the High Independent Authority for Elections (ISIE), has since announced a date of March 27, 2017. Additional delays are possible, however, as an electoral law—which would set the framework for the election of municipal and regional councils—is still in progress. To bring the current electoral law in line with the constitution, the law would divide the entire Tunisian territory into municipalities, enabling all citizens to vote in municipal elections. The government is concurrently preparing legislation that will create a framework for the decentralization process, which it will submit to parliament in the coming months. The *Code des collectivités locales* [Law on local authorities] is expected to grant new prerogatives to heads of municipalities and to municipal and regional councils, but as the decentralization process will likely be ongoing for years, a limited number of powers may be devolved to local officials by the elections.

**Purpose.** The National Democratic Institute (NDI) organized this round of focus groups in February 2016—five years after the revolution and one year after a newly-elected parliament and president began their respective mandates. Since March 2011, NDI has conducted regular [qualitative research](#) in Tunisia to provide political and civic leaders with objective information about citizens' attitudes. This 15<sup>th</sup> round of research—the fourth organized by NDI since the 2014 elections—sought to gauge the public's evaluation of the performance of the parliament and members of parliament (MPs), as well as citizens' awareness of and expectations for the upcoming decentralization process and municipal and regional elections. Citizens participated in 12 focus group discussions between February 20 and 27, sharing their views on the following topics:

- The direction of the country and priorities that affect citizen's daily lives;
- The performance of the parliament;
- Expectations of members of parliament and preferences for elected representatives to engage with citizens;
- Awareness of and expectations for the decentralization process and its anticipated impacts on the economy, corruption, and security;
- Upcoming local elections, and views of electoral measures currently under consideration by the ARP;
- Priority economic concerns and potential solutions to remedy them; and
- Priorities and obstacles unique to young Tunisians.

The Institute commissioned ELKA Consulting—a marketing and public opinion research firm based in Tunisia—to organize the study in four Tunisian governorates.

**Focus Group Research:** Focus groups are open-ended group interviews directed by a moderator and following pre-set guidelines. The purpose of focus group research is to understand the attitudes, opinions, and experiences of participants who are recruited for the exercise. Focus groups are particularly useful in gaining a deeper appreciation of the motivations, feelings, and values behind participants' reactions. In addition, the group format enables respondents to participate in an exchange of ideas—thus providing a more in-depth understanding of why opinions are held—that may not emerge in individual in-depth interviews or quantitative surveys. Focus group discussions are comprised of a small number of participants, typically eight to 12 per group. Depending on the situation, however, groups may be slightly smaller or larger. For example, a women's group in a more isolated area may benefit from a larger guest list because it is likely that one or more of the participants will refuse to speak at length, even if pressed. Focus group findings are only a snapshot of opinions at the moment the research is undertaken. The conclusions of this report therefore only represent opinions held when research was conducted in late February 2016.

**Method:** Before conducting the research, NDI developed a moderation guide in collaboration with a steering committee comprised of MPs and representatives of ministries, political parties, and civil society, ensuring that research findings would be as relevant as possible to their concerns. From February 20 to 27, 2016, NDI held 12 focus groups with a total of 142 participants in four cities across Tunisia: Greater Tunis, Nabeul, Sidi Bouzid, and Tozeur. To capture the perspectives of a broad cross-section of Tunisian society, NDI divided participants at each location into three distinct demographic groups: 1) mixed gender youth (ages 24–35), 2) women over age 35, and 3) men over age 35. Each group comprised between nine and 12 participants. The gender breakdown was 51 percent men and 49 percent women. Participants were selected and pre-screened to ensure gender parity and a diverse representation of

neighborhoods, socioeconomic backgrounds, education levels, and professions. Additional detail on participants' demographic profiles can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.

**Staffing and Logistics:** The Institute commissioned ELKA Consulting to organize the study in four cities across the country. A Tunisian citizen trained in focus group moderation techniques by NDI and ELKA served as the moderator for all focus groups in the series. All groups were conducted in the Tunisian dialect of Arabic.

**Group Locations:** The 12 focus groups outlined in this report were conducted in four locations throughout Tunisia: Greater Tunis, Nabeul, Sidi Bouzid, and Tozeur (see the map in this section). Locations selected for the study were urban or semi-urban areas. Target cities were selected based on their population size, economic weight, geographical location, and voting patterns in the 2014 elections. Greater Tunis was selected because it encompasses the capital and largest city of Tunis and its surrounding areas, and is the national center for public administration and commerce. Nabeul, a popular tourist destination and the center of Tunisia's pottery industry, is a major city in Tunisia's agriculturally fertile and relatively prosperous Cap Bon region. Sidi Bouzid, the site where protests that resulted in the country's political transition began in 2011, has traditionally been neglected by central government. Despite its natural resources and its tourism infrastructure, citizens of Tozeur feel similarly economically marginalized. In all locations, appropriate venues for focus group discussions were identified to ensure participant privacy and sufficient space for indirect observation by NDI staff.

**Outside Influence:** Every effort was made to ensure there was no undue influence exerted on the participants in the groups. Focus group discussion guides were not shared with local authorities prior to the sessions. In this study, there was no case in which the findings from one or more groups differed radically from overall findings, which suggests that any local influence that may have occurred did not impact the research.



## MAP OF TUNISIA



## Executive Summary

The findings of this report provide insights into public opinion in Tunisia in late February 2016. Based on 12 focus group discussions with 142 Tunisian participants, the report gauges Tunisian citizens' evaluation of the performance of the parliament and MPs, and their preferences for engagement with these leaders. The study focuses in-depth on citizens' awareness of and expectations for the upcoming decentralization process, municipal and regional elections, and local elected officials. Also included are citizens' views on the economy and on the particular obstacles faced by Tunisian youth. A summary of the main findings can be found below. The full results, along with selected quotations from participants, are detailed in the Principal Findings section of this report.

**Direction of the country.** Consistent with recent rounds of focus group research, the majority of Tunisians believe the country is going in the wrong direction, citing the struggling economy, rampant corruption, terrorism and its impacts on tourism and investment, and disrespect and disorder among citizens. Tunisians feel that politicians and government leaders have failed to make serious efforts to address these issues. In addition to tackling rising prices and fostering employment opportunities, respondents hope that the state will establish rule of law, equality of opportunity, and justice. Despite these frustrations, many respondents cite freedom of expression, open political debate, and the electoral experience as positive developments. While opinions are divided, some participants also believe that the security situation has been improving.

Participants in the four cities in the study demonstrate noteworthy differences in how they evaluate the current situation and identify their priorities. Tunis respondents' primary economic concerns are smuggling, the parallel market, and rising prices for food and housing. Respondents in the three other cities share a concern over the declining profitability of farming and call for greater investment in agriculture; declining tourism has hit both Nabeul and Tozeur. Citizens in Sidi Bouzid and Tozeur lament the marginalization of their regions, citing the lack of infrastructure to profit from their governorates' rich natural resources and the need to travel long distances to the capital to access public services and health care. Perceptions of security vary by region: residents of Tunis and Nabeul generally do not feel safe in their cities, while respondents in Sidi Bouzid and Tozeur feel safer but worry about burglary and terrorism.

**Parliament.** Most respondents report that their confidence in parliament has decreased since the legislative elections in 2014. They perceive that MPs prioritize their personal and party interests, that they have failed to fulfill campaign promises, that they are not communicating effectively with citizens, and that they do not accurately represent the diversity of Tunisian society. In their view, MPs are more concerned with partisan turmoil than with their responsibilities towards the population. Though some respondents suggest that MPs are succeeding in their legislating or oversight roles, very few believe

that they are effectively representing their constituents. While some citizens know the MPs from their districts, the majority do not. MPs are seen as out of touch with Tunisians' concerns, and their salaries—particularly following recent salary adjustments—are a source of ire for many.

Despite their frustrations with their elected leaders, Tunisians do hope to be engaged and consulted by MPs, and seek better information on the parliament's activities. Some are aware of the requirement that MPs devote one week each month to constituent outreach and hope MPs will live up to this obligation. This report also presents respondents' suggestions for MPs to engage them, including establishing constituency offices, holding local consultations, and hiring staff. Some respondents had attempted to contact MPs, but most of those who succeeded were not satisfied with how their issues were addressed. Participants hope to receive information that would help them better understand parliament's roles and procedures—but many emphasize that concrete achievements are most important to them. Women generally feel that women's issues are not discussed by parliament, and some note that when they are, they tend to be issues of greater interest to privileged women.

**Decentralization.** Respondents were queried about their awareness of the upcoming decentralization process, and the effects they anticipate it having on corruption and public administration. Some citizens have heard of decentralization, but question exactly what it will entail with regards to the distribution of wealth and power. Most respondents support the idea of decentralization, believing it is crucial to deepening democracy, ensuring better representation for citizens, and promoting regional development and justice. In their view, it will empower officials who are closer to the people and better able to solve their problems without waiting for permission from Tunis.

Tunisians are divided on the effect that decentralization would have on corruption—which affects all aspects of their lives, whether they are seeking services from the municipalities and public administrations, applying for jobs and loans, or interacting with the police. Some believe that giving local officials greater decision-making authority would reduce corruption, making it easier for citizens to monitor their work and hold them accountable. Many respondents, however, point to existing corruption in the municipalities as reason for skepticism, suggesting that decentralization may serve to further empower officials who will make decisions based on their local connections. Respondents generally agree that the effectiveness of the decentralization process depends on creating effective oversight mechanisms for local officials.

**Local Elections.** While some respondents are familiar with the broad outlines of the forthcoming decentralization process, there is less awareness about upcoming municipal and regional elections. Some see local elections as more important than national ones, but others are disillusioned with past electoral experiences and believe that the municipal elections will result only in more of the same class of politicians who

have disappointed citizens in Tunis. Participants hope to elect local officials who will tackle roads, local infrastructure, sanitation, and regulation of local markets after they take office. Respondents suggest a variety of means by which they would like to be engaged by local councils, including open meetings and neighborhood commissions. They suggest that the municipalities use SMS messages and Facebook posts, as well as offline means such as posters and local radio stations, to provide information about meetings and decisions and to engage citizen input in decision-making.

NDI asked focus group participants about two measures included in the current draft electoral law: a requirement that Tunisians update their physical address on their ID cards and a provision that each list include a youth candidate in one of the top three spots. Many believe citizens should be able to vote based on their current address, but some respondents believe that the requirement to change their IDs would be overly cumbersome and serve as an obstacle to voter turnout. While a few respondents doubt that young candidates have the experience to lead, there is strong support across all demographics for the measure to guarantee youth inclusion on electoral lists. Voter education efforts by the election commission and civil society, and outreach by political parties and candidates, would increase turnout in local elections, according to respondents.

**Economy.** As in previous rounds of focus group research, unemployment and rising prices continue to be principal economic concerns for Tunisians. Citizens, especially in Sidi Bouzid and Tozeur, discuss the shortcomings of temporary jobs, which provide low-wage, unstable employment. Frustrations with poor employment prospects are exacerbated by perceptions of corruption; Tunisians lament the role of bribery and nepotism in finding jobs and slow and opaque processes for securing loans and starting projects. Respondents worry about the increasing expense of providing for their families' basic needs and securing affordable housing. Tunisians propose various potential solutions to the country's economic ills, suggesting that the government distribute unused lands, invest in projects, and promote entrepreneurship to create opportunities, especially for young people.

**Youth.** Respondents believe that youth priorities—centered on employment and economy issues—have not changed significantly since the revolution, but that youth have become increasingly desperate in the interim. Respondents generally feel that those in power are not effectively addressing youth priorities, but some praise specific policies such as the army's new recruitment drive and an initiative intended to provide more loan financing. To tackle these problems, respondents hope to see more youth in political leadership roles. They highlight the need for the government to provide comprehensive solutions to youth concerns, including creating a more favorable climate for investment and furnishing loans to young people to start projects.

**Other citizen priorities.** Robberies are the primary security concern for most respondents. Views are mixed on the effectiveness of policemen, but respondents view the police more positively compared to previous rounds of focus group research. Citizens in every region complain that policemen don't respond quickly enough to calls, while some acknowledge that police are doing their best and making improvements. Many respondents express a need for education reform, and several appreciate recent steps by the government towards that end. Citizens, especially in interior regions, lament the difficulties of accessing affordable, quality health care. Numerous respondents express frustration with their dealings with public administration, describing situations when local bureaucracy has prevented them from receiving loans, starting jobs, and obtaining necessary administrative papers.

While respondents look to political leadership for more effective solutions—notably in reforming education and providing opportunities for youth—many also affirm that ordinary citizens bear responsibility for improving Tunisia. In their view, Tunisians should work together for the benefit of the country and respect their fellow citizens.

## PRINCIPAL FINDINGS

This study evaluates Tunisian citizens' evaluations of the situation facing the country approximately one year after the seating of a new president and parliament, and five years after the revolution. NDI conducted 12 focus groups with 142 participants throughout Tunisia in late February 2016. The findings, drawn from participants' comments, are detailed below.

### I. Direction of the Country

A majority of respondents believe the country is going in the wrong direction, citing the state of the economy (particularly unemployment and rising prices), rampant corruption, the impact of terrorism on tourism and investment, and disrespect and disorder among Tunisian citizens. They feel that politicians and government leaders have failed to make serious efforts to address these issues. Some believe that strikes and protests are contributing to disorder and stymying progress. In addition to tackling rising prices and fostering employment opportunities, respondents hope that the state will establish rule of law, equality of opportunity, and justice.

*"I dream of a country where prices are low, purchasing power is strong, unemployment is reduced to the lowest percentage, there's no terrorism and there are no reasons for people to turn into terrorists, and all of the political leaders we have here wouldn't exist anymore!" (Female, Tunis, 31, employed)*

*"As long as there is corruption and nepotism, our country won't be reformed. The other day, I heard a policeman from the present generation asking a lorry driver to give him 10 dinars. When I looked and saw he was a young person, I felt really bad. This is the new generation. Where are they taking the country?" (Male, Nabeul, 56, employed)*

*"The revolution slogans were employment, freedom and social dignity. We haven't been able to achieve anything from these slogans... Nothing is going in the right direction. There is no employment, no freedom and no social dignity." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 29, employed)*

*"[There is no] strong political will that is able to cope with the problems that originate out of the revolution." (Male, Tunis, 32, unemployed)*

*"Tourism has been destroyed because of the lack of security. We don't have tourism and investments any more so how would new jobs be created for the new graduates?" (Female, Tozeur, 58, employed)*

## FIVE YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION

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*"I want to see that the law is equally applied to the president of the republic as well as to all citizens." (Female, Tunis, 39, housewife)*

*"There is no real will to implement the law. There is no justice. Sometimes, the citizen abstains from taking his case to justice because he feels this is useless. There isn't any administration in which the law and justice are applied." (Female, Tozeur, 54, housewife)*

*"Administrations, which represent the cultivated people theoretically, are always on strike; the teachers want pay raises; the security forces want pay raises although they know exactly the situation of the country." (Female, Nabeul, 48, employed)*

*"The strikes and sit-ins. People who have jobs should be content because they have a salary." (Female, Nabeul, 37, employed)*

Respondents cite freedom of expression, open political debate, and the electoral experience as positive developments since the revolution, with some calling for patience with Tunisia's democratic transition. Some participants also believe that the security situation has been improving.

*"Even if the pace of this change is not regular—sometimes we make two steps [forwards] and four backwards—there are still elements of constant change... There's still hope of a better future; at least we now know that we'll have elections in four years." (Male, Tunis, 25, employed)*

*"We were living under a dictatorship but now we have many parties, we have political debates and there is political opposition." (Female, Tunis, 52, employed)*

*"There is some credibility in the elections i.e. I can go and choose the candidate I want. Nobody imposes his choice on me. There is a secret ballot and fingerprints. There are people who doubt the transparency of the elections but, personally, nobody pressured me; I went to vote deliberately and I voted." (Female, Tozeur, 29, unemployed)*

*"Freedom of expression is what we really gained most from the revolution. We have overcome the fear that we used to live in. We used to open our mouths only at the dentist...Now, we have more freedom. We can speak about football, religion, and especially about politics. And everybody understands what politics is about." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 28, unemployed)*

*"You can express yourself freely to the media, to politicians or to the president." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 30, housewife)*

*“Several other countries have gone through revolutions, and change didn't happen in those countries overnight.” (Male, Tozeur, 54, employed)*

*“People's minds have been able to unchain themselves from the old citizen's mentality. Before the revolution, people had frozen minds. Now they can actually think.” (Male, Tozeur, 54, employed)*

### TUNIS

Residents of Tunis generally agree that they do not feel safe in the city. Their major economic concerns include smuggling, the parallel market, and rising prices for food and housing, though some argue that smuggling is necessary for low-income Tunisians to make ends meet.

*“Smuggling is a real problem. For instance, before, only one or two sellers were selling the imported red apples; now, every green grocer even in rural areas is selling these apples at 8TD/kg! They're smuggled from Algeria... all these goods are smuggled and sellers are monopolizing the market. Common people are unable to buy these products.” (Male, Tunis, 33, employed)*

*“Those who smuggle these goods are actually people living among us. I know them. Why do people trade in smuggled goods? There are no other solutions. The state is responsible to provide for its people or at least decrease the prices... In case it is not capable of doing this, it should allow trade in smuggled goods.” (Female, Tunis, 31, employed)*

*“I think that the economic situation improved when they stopped smuggling. The Tunisian products are consumed by Tunisians. Smuggling led to the increase of prices. For example, the prices of peppers increased because they were sold in Libya.” (Female, Tunis, 43, employed)*

*“In the South, you buy three kilos from the farmer and they cost only one dinar. But since these products go through many middlemen before arriving at the markets in Tunis, we find that the same product costs three dinars.” (Female, Tunis, 43, employed)*

*“We have organized crime: there are people who take public transportation early in the morning so as to rob people who got their salaries especially at the beginning of the month. Besides, there's sexual harassment in public transportation and the problem is that no one moves a finger to stop what is happening or to save the victim.” (Female, Tunis, 25, student)*



*"I live alone in the capital. I can't go out by myself; I feel insecure. Even when I have something very important to do, I don't go out to do it when I'm not accompanied by my friends." (Female, Tunis, 25, student)*

### **NABEUL**

Respondents in Nabeul are concerned about the receding tourist industry, which has in turn impacted the pottery industry for which the area is known, and about the declining profitability of farming. While some acknowledge that the security and terrorism situation is better than in other regions, many Nabeul residents do not feel safe, citing robberies and slow police responses.

*"If we compare Nabeul with other regions, the situation here is much better... We are third in employment rates after Sfax and Sousse. But if you take the example of the craft industry, I think we have a serious problem to cope with." (Female, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"Nabeul does not have a powerful industrial network. It is full of craftsmen and it relies totally on tourism and also on agriculture, which depends on rain." (Male, Nabeul, 43, employed)*

*"Where is tourism? Nabeul relies on tourism but the hotels are closed now." (Female, Nabeul, 37, employed)*

*"The situation has deteriorated a lot. We are no longer selling our products in pottery. Nabeul is famous for pottery and tourism... From my own experience, I can tell you that we used to sell a lot more than now." (Male, Nabeul, 29, employed)*

*"[Farmers] complain about the expensive prices of pesticides. The government no longer subsidizes pesticides; that is why prices have sharply increased. They argue that they get no support from the state and that there are many expenditures and a lot of hard work needs to be done throughout the year... Now, even agriculture which used to be a good source of money is no longer a lucrative business." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

*"[The problem of stickups is a major security problem in Nabeul] especially for women who are out on their own. If a woman doesn't have a car she can have a stickup at any time and the wrongdoers are usually on motorbikes." (Female, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

*"In Nabeul, the [terrorism] situation is not that bad. However, those who live in remote areas and in the mountains live in very bad conditions." (Male, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"There is no security... Boys usually go back home no later than 9 or 10 pm. Girls, generally speaking, go back home no later than five or six o'clock in the afternoon." (Male, Nabeul, 26, student)*

### **SIDI BOUZID**

Respondents feel both that their governorate has suffered from structural disadvantages, and that they face discrimination on an individual level as residents of Sidi Bouzid. While some argue that Sidi Bouzid has made improvements or is less corrupt than other governorates, others critique the dominance of local businessmen in public affairs. Citizens lament the lack of infrastructure needed to profit from the governorate's agricultural resources, declining profits for farmers, and the lack of opportunities for youth. Residents generally feel secure, but are worried by reports of theft and terrorism.

*"Sidi Bouzid is badly perceived by many Tunisian people. Someone from Sidi Bouzid brilliantly succeeded in the Baccalaureate exam and was planning to study abroad. An employee in the administration discovered that he was from Sidi Bouzid... he accused him of being a trouble maker and tore up his original baccalaureate certificate." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 25, unemployed)*

*"Some businessmen in Sidi Bouzid monopolize the market. They don't let anyone else start a new project. Wherever you go to find a solution to your problem, you find that these businessmen have a hand there." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 35, unemployed)*

*"I think that things got better. They have started building up hospitals, they are fixing the roads. They are working in the rural zones." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 55, employed)*

*"Sidi Bouzid is much cleaner than many other governorates. I have been to different areas in the country and I can tell you that corruption in Sidi Bouzid is not as alarming or high as in other areas in Tunisia like Kasserine, Béja, Jendouba and even Tunis." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 50, retired)*

*"Our land is very fertile and rich but we don't know how to exploit our resources... The big projects are planned in the north. However, Sidi Bouzid and the south lack such big projects." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 25, employed)*

*"We cannot build a good economy without good infrastructure. Businesspeople would not invest millions of dinars in a place that has no roads or streets. Should we expect them to build the roads, too?!" (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 29, employed)*

*"Even the sector of raising cattle is deteriorating because the farmer sells for a very low price and the consumer gets it for a very high price." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 48, employed)*

*"I work at 4 a.m. every day. I go out and see policemen working. I don't feel afraid." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 38, employed)*

*"Security improved but we are still afraid a little when, as they said, we hear on TV about sheep being stolen and about terrorists in the mountain and terrorists who entered inside houses." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 55, employed)*

*"There is no entertainment for the youth in Sidi Bouzid. The culture house is just an old building, an archaic institution that works with primitive and obsolete techniques without any motivation. They don't attract the youth." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 59, employed)*

### **TOZEUR**

Residents of Tozeur cite the twin challenges of declining tourism and agriculture, particularly the date crop on which the governorate relies. They point to lack of agricultural infrastructure and the need for investment, and are frustrated that dates and salt produced in Tozeur are refined and exported—and therefore generate profits—in coastal regions. Some citizens of Tozeur say they feel safe, while others express worries over burglary.

*"Tozeur relies on tourism and agriculture. Many people work in tourism. The crop is close to nothing as agriculture lacks water wells to irrigate the palm trees and the state doesn't make efforts to export the dates." (Male, Tozeur, 63, retired)*

*"Last year, 13 companies exported dates and the price was at 2.8 euros. This year, only seven companies are selling their dates abroad at only 1.9 euros." (Male, Tozeur, 42, employed)*

*"The solution is to provide capital, even by contributing sums with a group, to form a company that plays the role which is now played by outsiders. People who have capital now take dates away from Tozeur and provide jobs for their workers all through the year in Cap Bon although it is very far from the Jrid." (Male, Tozeur, 40, employed)*

*"Our salt is exploited by foreigners. Why don't we exploit our salt or get the revenues of selling it? Those revenues can also be used to set up a factory in which they would hire people from Tozeur to work. Our salt is taken to Tunis or Nabeul; they refine it there and get the revenues there and we don't get anything." (Female, Tozeur, 29, unemployed)*

*"When you ask: which governorate exports more dates? The expected answer is: Tozeur but the correct answer is Nabeul. The agricultural situation is catastrophic. Development depends on two things: manpower and the infrastructure. When the investors come here, they don't find anything. How can investments survive here?" (Male, Tozeur, 54, employed)*

*"The state could have motivated [businessmen] to stay here by reducing taxes for example... but there remains the problem of transportation." (Male, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

*"The security on the regional level is relative. Compared with the regions up north, we have fewer problems. Women can go out at night. We go to wedding parties at night. However, we have robberies that prevent us from feeling secure at home." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"There are many policemen now. There is stability and security." (Male, Tozeur, 43, employed)*

*"We feel safe as far as our bodies are concerned but we feel unsafe as far as our properties are concerned." (Male, Tozeur, 57, employed)*

## II. Parliament

While a few respondents counsel patience, noting the considerable challenges MPs face so soon after Tunisia's revolution, most respondents report that their confidence in parliament has decreased since the legislative elections in 2014. They cite perceptions that MPs prioritize their personal and party interests, that they have failed to fulfill campaign promises, that they are not communicating effectively with citizens, and that they do not accurately represent the diversity of Tunisian society. Many citizens suggest that business interests are over-represented in the parliament and that MPs are out of touch with the priorities of ordinary citizens.

*"People's trust in the parliament broke down just like what happened with the constituent assembly." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"Trust decreased because they serve the interests of their parties, not the interests of citizens." (Male, Tunis, 37, employed)*

*"It is not a matter of confidence. I can see they are working but there is a terrible slowness... Their slowness is not convenient in the phase we are going through right now. We have just had a revolution and half of the country is still broke and we have many problems that need to be addressed like joblessness, etc. I think that we need rapidity. You can pass a law in 36 hours if you have competent people in the specialty." (Male, Nabeul, 64, retired)*

*"During the elections, they were all here delivering their speeches on a platform in the market: [a national party leader] was shouting on this side, the other was shouting on the other side and after the elections nobody remembered us. We are totally forgotten. They haven't talked about Tozeur at all since 2011." (Male, Tozeur, 34, employed)*

*"If I met one of the MPs, I would ask him only one question. 'Have you fulfilled even one of all the promises that you are making on TV? Why can't you implement what you have promised? Is it because you don't have enough power to change things? Or what is exactly the problem?'" (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

*"These candidates, in their campaigns, promised to find jobs for people and freedom for citizens but have not fulfilled their promises." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 25, employed)*

*"I think that [MPs] need more time and we have to understand them. They didn't have enough time. It's a revolution just like a baby." (Male, Tunis, 43, employed)*

*"2011's parliament is different from this one... it did include instructors, teachers, and all categories of the people; but this one includes businessmen who only care about protecting their business, they pass laws in order to protect their own companies. There are small parties inside this parliament which are just companies." (Male, Tunis, 25, employed)*

*"Why do all the MPs belong to the upper class especially in the present parliament? There is no one from the poor class there." (Male, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

When asked about the roles and prerogatives of parliament and the extent to which it is fulfilling them, very few respondents believe that MPs are effectively representing their constituents, though some suggest that the parliament is succeeding in its legislating or oversight roles. MPs are criticized for making false promises and for lacking seriousness in their work in parliament.

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*"They are just doing an administrative job and there aren't any achievements on the ground." (Female, Tunis, 39, housewife)*

*"In terms of representing the people, they did not really do their job properly except for a few of them. They're actually doing their technical job which is accrediting bills of laws and such. Their role remained technical but not political." (Male, Tunis, 25, employed)*

*"Passing the laws in the parliament requires the presence of the MPs but they don't attend. First, since the MP is absent, he doesn't participate in making any law. Second, he doesn't convey the opinion of people who voted for him about that law. Third, the question is whether that law that was enacted would benefit the region or not." (Male, Tozeur, 42, employed)*

*"Now there is a substantial amount of work on laws being done every day by the commissions. However, the problem is that the country is waiting for particular laws." (Male, Nabeul, 32, unemployed)*

*"The parliament should pass the laws. This is their first task and they are not doing it. The constitution has remained just a paper. The constitution is made up of articles and articles of laws. Where are those? Where is the constitutional court? There is nothing now and the old constitution was swept away so now there are no laws." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 57, employed)*

*"I agree that parliament is overseeing the government. It is trying to focus on the ministers' mistakes, but it is not caring about the people or representing them." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 25, employed)*

*"People protested peacefully in Kasserine and other regions, but they were responded to with the same fake promises that politicians keep making... The reason for this might be that there is actually no solution to these problems. So, the only way that remains is trying to calm the people down. (Male, Tunis, 29, employed)*

*"They appear on TV to talk, to shout and to applaud. After the show they kiss one another and their dispute ends there. This is cinema." (Male, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

While some respondents know the MPs from their districts—often because of a personal connection or contact during the election campaign—the majority do not, citing their disillusionment with or lack of interest in politics, or the failure of politicians to engage with them following elections. A few respondents suggest that voting for lists, rather than individual candidates, makes it harder for citizens to know their district's MPs.

*"I don't know them because they are neither active nor efficient. If they had been doing what they had been elected for in the parliament, everybody would know them." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 25, employed)*

*"I don't know them because I don't watch TV and have no time for this." (Female, Tunis, 27, employed)*

*"I know [local MP] ... through TV. He has never held a meeting or come to see the bad living conditions of the people. They are only on TV and they do not even attend general meetings in the parliament." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

*"[When MPs] talk about a subject they don't introduce themselves. It's very rare to see a representative starting by telling the viewers about the region that he represents." (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

*"When they run for elections, they did their utmost to communicate with us; they even sent delegates to our homes in order to convince us to vote for certain candidates... Afterwards, they did not seem to be concerned with our problems." (Female, Tunis, 28, employed)*

*"We saw the candidates on the lists but are they active in their districts? Not really! I have never heard one of them holding a public meeting." (Female, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"They don't have offices so you don't know where to find them." (Female, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

*"The electoral law to vote for lists doesn't help people to vote for their representatives. I want to vote for individuals not for lists." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

A few citizens nevertheless cite individual MPs who they believe have been working effectively on their behalf. Several respondents in Tozeur appreciate the efforts of their MP to be present in his district and to advocate on constituents' behalf in parliament.

*"Some MPs are working hard and doing their best to serve the interests of citizens but the problem is that they don't listen to them. We don't trust them but we can't generalize. Some people are working hard. For example, [local MP] opened so many files but he couldn't do anything." (Male, Tunis, 46, employed)*

*"[Local MP] is present in all the different manifestations.... [Other local MP] is trying also to be active. As the president of the general union for the blind, I*

*attend the regional council and I see both of them attend the local meetings and they are trying to make our voices heard." (Male, Tozeur, 54, employed)*

*"The oasis of Tozeur was left with only 50% of water supplies because people didn't pay their bills. One of the MPs intervened with the STEG [the Tunisian Company of Electricity and Gas], they managed to postpone the deadlines of payments and water was brought back." (Male, Tozeur, 65, employed)*

*"I know one of them. He is from Chebbia. He is our neighbor. Depending on what I watch on TV, I can see he talks, discusses and defends us... The other day, when there was a sit-in, he defended us; he entered to talk to the governor and he presented our demands." (Female, Tozeur, 29, unemployed)*

Respondents seek to be consulted by their MPs, and propose a variety of means for MPs to better solicit their opinions. As in previous focus group research, citizens contrast candidates' frequent presence in their districts during the election campaign with their absence since the polls. A few are aware of the requirement that MPs devote one week each month to constituent outreach and hope MPs will live up to this obligation.

*"[MPs] have to go out of their offices, leave their comfortable working conditions and try to live with simple people." (Female, Tunis, 39, housewife)*

*"Honestly, we need someone like Bourguiba. Bourguiba used to pay visits to the population, he even gave speeches in the street. He was close to the population. He spent most of his time in the street, not in the castle... We need someone like him, someone who communicates with citizens." (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

*"Sometimes I feel the parliament doesn't represent us. To talk on my behalf, you have to listen to me first. But how and where can I see you to make you listen to what I want to say? They listen to one person or two and say 'we listen to the people.'" (Female, Nabeul, 56, housewife)*

*"He has to be present in his region. The MPs should free themselves to represent the people... He should free his time to get in touch with the authorities and with the civil society and discuss his region's problems... He should at least pay monthly visits to his region." (Female, Tozeur, 58, employed)*

*"The MP for Sidi Ali ben Oun needs to speak to the people in Sidi Ali ben Oun. Personally, I saw [the MP] only once during the election campaign. I was drinking a cup of coffee in a café, she came and talked to me for about half an hour. Since then, I have never seen her again except on television. Why doesn't she*



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come back to the region and talk to the people now?" (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 27, employed)

"I met [the MP] once in the governorate. She held a meeting in the governorate but ... some people don't come to meetings." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 50, employed)

"The governorate doesn't inform people about the meetings. They don't tell us that an MP is coming." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 50, employed)

"You have to go into direct contact with the people. Leave Facebook alone!" (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 29, employed)

"Their internal law stipulates that they come to the governorate for a week every month. I haven't seen any MP do that. They are always absent even from the parliament so how can you expect them to be present in their governorates." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 36, unemployed)

MPs' salaries—particularly recent salary adjustments—are a source of frustration for many respondents, who believe the money would better be spent to support struggling citizens. Only a minority of respondents were aware that salary adjustments are meant to cover costs associated with MPs' housing and meals.

"[The MPs] disagree with each other about everything except the increase of their salaries." (Male, Tunis, 29, employed)

"They gave themselves 900 dinars and refused to give 200 dinars for the unemployed people on the same night. In the same parliamentary session, they signed for the increase in their own salaries and refused to give 200 dinars to jobless people!" (Female, Tunis, 55, employed)

"They are getting salaries, chauffeurs, cars, etc. and they keep telling us on TV 'we will do that thing,' 'we will add that thing' but they only add to their salaries. The 900 dinars that they added for themselves can provide for two families." (Male, Tozeur, 34, employed)

"If they worried about the people and defended the people's interests, they wouldn't have thought about a salary increase of 900 dinars. Some people are starving from poverty." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 25, employed)

"The problem of the parliament is that they are not communicating well with the people. For example, the 900-dinar salary increase has not been well-explained... They used to spend much more than 900 dinars for their stays in

hotels... Now, the MPs are given 900 dinars but they have none of these previous advantages. They used to spend six million dinars now they only spend four million dinars. The problem is that there are those who deserve these 900 dinars and those who do not." (Male, Nabeul, 25, employed)

"They say that the 900-dinar increase is for transportation fees when they go back to their regions, etc. Transportation fees for what?! Do they think that we know nothing?! In my own district, nobody has ever been visited by an MP. Our district MPs have never visited the poor or solved any issues that people suffer from." (Male, Nabeul, 29, employed)

Respondents offer a number of suggestions for how MPs can better engage them, including establishing constituency offices, holding local consultations, and hiring staff. A few respondents suggest that MPs need not necessarily make direct contact with citizens, but should draw on their existing knowledge or on contacts with local officials who are aware of citizen concerns.

"In every region there should be an office for the representatives of the region from all the parties. Let's call it the office of the representatives of the region so that people can have reference points. If someone has a problem, he can prepare a record including all the information that he wants to tell the representative about and submit it to that office. They should also give a phone number and an email address so that people can contact them." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)

"The best thing for them to do is to have a permanent office in which they can meet the people at least once a month." (Female, Nabeul, 50, housewife)

"I know someone who hires someone to follow the citizen's problems and inform him about them. He sits for a long time in the café and he does so for a salary from the MP." (Male, Tozeur, 27, employed)

"They can make a referendum through the media, Facebook or the internet and ask the people about their opinion on the various issues that need to be faced. People may reply or send emails to express their opinions." (Male, Nabeul, 25, employed)

"There are institutions, employees, and officers that represent the state and all of them know about the problems that exist in their districts and regions." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)

"As far as communication with the people is concerned, it is difficult for them to communicate with everybody so they can hire a consultant who can be an

*engineer in agriculture, a lawyer or an investor to help them in this concern." (Male, Tozeur, 42, employed)*

*"[My MP] doesn't have to bring me to his discussion table. He just has to contact an official authority here. And then he can get an idea of my problems and others' problems. But he won't get that just by sitting in his chair, picking up the phone and saying: 'hey, what's going on there?'" (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 41, employed)*

*"Members of the parliament and the local authorities should work together in fact. However, this is not what happens. The governor doesn't know anything about the MPs and the MPs don't know anything about the governorate." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 59, employed)*

Even when political leaders acknowledge their concerns, respondents feel that politicians fail to respond effectively to them. Some respondents had attempted to contact MPs, but even those who succeeded were not satisfied with how their issues were addressed.

*"Even when I tried to meet one of [the MPs] in his office, he treated me as if I was begging him or I was rejected on the claim that he was not there. Simply, they should read the note I leave to them; I don't need to meet with any of them." (Female, Tunis, 28, employed)*

*"I know MPs who are available; one of them watches football matches with us in the local café. So, he's available and he's ready to listen, when he does not have work to do or a parliamentary session to attend. There are many MPs who are available. The problem is we keep thinking that only MPs who belong to the leading party are able to solve our problems." (Male, Tunis, 25, employed)*

*"Even when they give us the chance to be heard, they just listen and do nothing about what concerns us." (Female, Tunis, 25, student)*

*"I had a problem and I talked to the representative of Ben Arous. She gave me her phone number but whenever I call, her secretary answers the phone and tells me that she's in a meeting and that she'll call me later. I kept calling but she never called me back." (Female, Tunis, 53, employed)*

*"I went to meet the MP but this is the fourth week I have been trying now and I haven't been able to meet him. They are always saying he is in a meeting and that we should come back next Wednesday." (Male, Nabeul, 65, retired)*

*"I talked with an MP just after she was elected. She said that she wanted to do something for the youth in order to engage them and listen to them. I told her that I was ready to help. She saw me once in the street so she stopped her driver and told me that she had never forgotten that project. But nothing has happened since then." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 28, unemployed)*

Respondents seek better communication from MPs and the parliament on the ARP's activities. Participants hope for information that would help them better understand parliament's roles and procedures—but many emphasize that concrete achievements are most important to them.

*"I want the MPs to give us their planning. What do they do during the day? What are their activities?" (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"I want to see the results. I want to see achievements. I don't want to know anything about activities or visits without results." (Female, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"I want to know what happens in the backstage [of the parliament], the plans and objectives they intend to achieve especially in the south which is forgotten in general." (Female, Tozeur, 46, employed)*

*"I want to know the exact duties of the parliament so that I can evaluate it." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"They should set up an association that tells us at least once a month what's going on and what we should do." (Female, Tozeur, 25, unemployed)*

*"We want useful information. We don't eat politics; we need bread and school for our children." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 49, housewife)*

### **Women in Parliament**

Women generally feel that women's issues are not discussed by parliament, and some note that when they are, they tend to be issues of greater interest to privileged women. Respondents are eager for women MPs to play a more active role in discussing women's concerns.

*"We watch debates about women on TV and we also listen to debates on the radio, but we don't see the deputies discussing matters concerning women." (Female, Tunis, 39, housewife)*

*"On the contrary, instead of reinforcing the personal status code with new laws which are our rights we have moved backward and we are now defending the already existing laws." (Female, Tozeur, 54, housewife)*

*"All the MPs are males. If there was at least a woman, she would have defended women a little bit. Besides, the ministry of women is not doing anything. We don't see any activities being done by the minister of women. She is not defending women even on the national level let alone the regional level." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"We have many women in the parliament and we have a ministry for women's problems so, theoretically, they should feel sympathy for women and they should know about women's problems in the regions and at least about the violence against women. Unfortunately, we don't hear female MPs talking about this violence against women in the parliament." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"We don't hear them talking about women's causes. I would like to hear women and their rights and to see their voice is heard." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"They talk about women but I feel that all those debates about women and their liberties do not serve the interests of all women. This serves the cultivated woman and the 'dame de société' but not the woman who struggles in the dark. That woman is neglected. They will never talk about her and she can't do anything. Simple women and women in rural zones wouldn't understand their kind of discourse." (Female, Nabeul, 56, housewife)*

*"Women have families, children, they know all these issues so they should talk about this." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 55, housewife)*

### **III. Decentralization**

Some citizens have heard of the process of decentralization, but even those who are aware of the process question exactly what it will entail, particularly with regards to the distribution of wealth and power.

*"[Decentralization means] making decisions at the level of regions. Decision-making is no longer related to the center, the capital." (Male, Tunis, 46, employed)*

*"It is meant to bring services closer to the citizen so that they don't remain concentrated only in the northern cities." (Female, Tozeur, 35, employed)*

*"Decentralization is giving more power to regional authorities especially concerning regional development. This has been mentioned in the constitution through giving more power to the local and regional assemblies." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 28, unemployed)*

*"The regional authority would have more power than the central authority on the level of the ministries or administrations." (Male, Tozeur, 57, employed Men)*

*"I just want to know if decentralization will concern all the ministries and all the sectors or not. I know that the regions will take decisions concerning the budget but are we going to vote for the governors and the regional councils? The governor is the head of the regional council but he's appointed. So are we going to elect a governor too?" (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"When these general principles would be implemented through laws, there is a lot of confusion. For example, how to deal with the issue of distribution of wealth. We don't know much about the budgets of the different regions. It says that there will be a budget for each region according to its needs for development. In addition, they will get the support of the central authority depending on its ranking on the poverty scale. The problem is that who is going to do the ranking and on what basis?" (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 28, unemployed)*

Most respondents support the idea of decentralization, believing it is crucial to deepening democracy and ensuring better representation for citizens. In their view, it will empower officials who are closer to the people and better able to solve their problems without waiting for permission from Tunis. Especially in interior regions, citizens are enthusiastic about the prospect of not having to travel to the capital to visit the administrations or access services. Some participants expect that the decentralization process will promote regional development and regional justice.

*"If I have a problem with the street in front of my house, I have to go to the municipality, then the municipality will tell the ministry, then the ministry will make a decision... now it may become easier for the municipality to solve these problems because they can act directly without the intervention of the ministry." (Female, Tunis, 53, employed)*

*"It will succeed because the regional official knows the problems of the region, he understands what's going on, he knows the inhabitants and all their concerns." (Male, Tunis, 46, employed Men)*

*"Every region will have a sort of independence in terms of budget, priorities, decision-making, etc. This is very good because services will be closer to citizens." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"Of course it will be good. We don't have anything in Sidi Bouzid. We have to take transportation to have any paper from any administration. It will be really great if we have offices here especially because they keep telling you to come back tomorrow. If you go to Tunis for any paper, you'll have to stay one month there." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 35, unemployed)*

*"Decentralization means bringing the authority that makes decisions closer to the citizen. The governor will have more prerogatives. The delegate also will have more prerogatives so we will no longer be obliged to wait for the answer from the capital." (Male, Tozeur, 32, unemployed)*

*"We will avoid going to Tunis. This is really tiring and, besides, they wouldn't listen to us in Tunis... The governor would listen better." (Male, Tozeur, 34, employed)*

*"Many things will be better especially in the deprived regions. The middle and the southern regions, for example, should be given more importance and projects should be established there so as to create new job opportunities." (Male, Tunis, 33, employed)*

*"I think that decentralization is related to economic projects. I mean that concerning investment, we can't focus on a particular region without considering that another region has the priority." (Female, Tunis, 39, housewife)*

*"We would like to establish decentralization so that our goods remain here." (Female, Tozeur, 43, employed)*

In a discussion of the impact of corruption on their daily lives, respondents describe corruption as affecting all aspects of Tunisians' lives, whether they are seeking services from the municipalities and public administrations, applying for jobs and loans, or interacting with the police. Some respondents emphasize that Tunisian citizens are implicated in corruption for agreeing to pay bribes.

*"Corruption is widespread now more than it was under Ben Ali because, from top to bottom, everybody accepts bribes." (Male, Nabeul, 65, retired)*

*"Corruption is everywhere. Corruption exists among security forces who take bribes. It's among administrative officials who don't do their job appropriately, it's among responsible officials who don't accept to meet citizens and solve their problems. Corruption is even among citizens who don't do their duties." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"If you have connections, things go well but if you don't, nobody will help you."  
(Male, Sidi Bouzid, 25, unemployed)*

*"We look at corruption as something normal. Personally, I do everything in different administrations such as in the Social Security, electricity company and the customs in Sidi Bouzid through phone interventions of some of my friends. After that, I just have to go and only give my name. This is the only way you can do things fast."  
(Male, Sidi Bouzid, 27, employed)*

*"We hope that the current government which has been formed through the elections starts fighting corruption on all levels and takes this as its top priority."  
(Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

Respondents are divided on the effect decentralization would have on corruption. Some believe that giving local officials greater decision-making authority would reduce corruption, making it easier for citizens to monitor their work and hold them accountable.

*"The main reason behind corruption is centralization of decision-making. Centralization is the main reason behind appointing local governors who are loyal to the central one; in this case, corruption became a system in which every local responsible takes bribes that would go to the central one in the end."  
(Male, Tunis, 25, employed)*

*"On the regional level, people know one another so it is clear who deserves the jobs better than others, for example, so nobody would be obliged to pay a bribe to get his son a job."  
(Female, Tozeur, 58, employed)*

*"It has an impact. When the person in office is close to me, I can go and talk to him so he can decrease his corrupt behavior. On the contrary, when he is far from me, I can't do anything so I remain silent."  
(Male, Tozeur, 34, employed)*

*"The cases of corruption could be addressed more seriously and the task would be easier when each case is addressed at the regional level. They can also work faster."  
(Female, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"Decentralization reduces corruption to some extent. The local authorities would have the power to make financial and political decisions so we would know where our money is and we would know where our decision is... I know the person who would do the job and the person who hinders the processes so corruption goes down."  
(Male, Tozeur, 32, unemployed)*



Many respondents, however, point to existing corruption in the municipalities as reason for skepticism that decentralization will improve the situation. In their view, decentralization may serve to empower officials who will make decisions based on their local connections. Some see outside authorities as more objective and better able to make decisions based on merit.

*"There will be more theft. In the past, the municipality had a budget and the governorate had a budget but they did nothing for the regions even though we were governed by Ben Ali. They were afraid of him but they still stole the money. How will they use the money appropriately now?" (Female, Tunis, 55, employed)*

*"On the reverse, now they're only responsible for minor decisions regarding building licenses or water supply and they don't feel ashamed of asking for bribes. Let alone serious matters! . . . I prefer that the central government decides for all the regions because in case decentralization is implemented and every region decides for itself, it will total chaos and an occasion for corruption to spread more and more." (Female, Tunis, 28, employed)*

*"With the absence of centralization, employees here would prioritize their friends and relatives. It would be particularly dangerous to give financial prerogatives to the regions. I know the candidates are mainly opportunistic people." (Male, Tozeur, 40, employed)*

*"I prefer centralization here because when we vote for someone, he will care about his relatives and friends first. However, when we get an outsider who doesn't know us and we don't know him, he would certainly satisfy the demands of people who really need them." (Female, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

Irrespective of their views on corruption, respondents generally agree that the effectiveness of the decentralization process depends on creating effective oversight mechanisms for local officials, including from central authorities and elected local and regional councils.

*"Decentralization can either decrease corruption or increase it. We have to find a solution in order to make people respect the law." (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

*"The decisions should not come from above. The regional council has to be elected. We have to organize elections for the regional council which are similar to any other kind of elections." (Male, Nabeul, 43, employed)*

*"The ministry should play the role of the supervisor. Every two or three months they should supervise the budget given to the governorate." (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

*"If the governor feels that he is under surveillance, and that there is an authority above him, we'll have a successful decentralization." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 41, employed)*

*"If there is not national coordination and supervision, decentralization won't work." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 59, employed)*

*"[Regional managers] can be outsiders to the region and there must be an elected regional council to control the decentralization otherwise it would be catastrophic." (Male, Tozeur, 54, employed)*

*"There is a system that was used under Ben Ali and that was successful to some extent. This is the idea of the 'citizen inspector.' I think there must be an elected regional council that controls decentralization and that establishes a system for administrative inspection like the 'citizen inspector.'" (Male, Tozeur, 42, employed)*

### IV. Local Elections

While some respondents are familiar with the broad outlines of the forthcoming decentralization process, there is little awareness about upcoming local and regional elections. Citizens seek to be informed about all aspects of the elections, including the timeline and requirements for voting and candidacy.

*"I heard they will happen by the end of 2016 and then the ISIE changed their mind. They haven't specified a date yet." (Female, Tozeur, 54, housewife)*

*"I hear about them in all types of the media but when they finish talking, nothing remains retained in my mind." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"I hope they organize these elections quickly so that municipalities start working." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 50, employed)*

*"The elections could take place even in a month and remain unnoticed and unknown." (Male, Nabeul, 65, retired)*

*"I've heard that youth will be more present in the election lists and many may even become mayors." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 27, employed)*

*"I've heard that women will have more opportunities to be elected as mayors."  
(Female, Sidi Bouzid, 30, housewife)*

*"The objective is to have more municipalities to cover the zones that are not municipal yet."  
(Male, Tozeur, 69, retired)*

*"I know that we are going to elect the members of the regional council and the members of the local councils. The local councils are like the one that exists in the municipalities and the regional one cares about the governorate as a whole."  
(Male, Tozeur, 32, unemployed)*

*"Who are the candidates and what are the required criteria for them to present themselves to the elections?"  
(Female, Sidi Bouzid, 35, unemployed)*

*"We want to know the local council, the head of the municipality, the members, who has the right to candidacy."  
(Female, Tozeur, 58, employed)*

*"Their programs, how do they intend to improve the country, i.e. the streets and everything."  
(Male, Nabeul, 47, unemployed)*

Some respondents see local elections as more important than national elections. Others, however, are disillusioned with past electoral experiences and believe that the municipal elections would result only in more of the same class of politicians who have disappointed citizens in Tunis.

*"The municipal elections are the first step to build the whole state. We have spent five years without municipalities. The municipality is the first nucleus of the state and then comes the governorate. We learned that the governors will be elected from now on so we will have more confidence in them."  
(Male, Nabeul, 43, employed)*

*"These elections are more important for the citizen than the elections of the prime minister or president."  
(Male, Tozeur, 69, retired)*

*"I don't care about who will be the president or the prime minister but I care about municipal elections."  
(Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"I've only heard negative things about [the elections]. The laws regulating these elections are inadequate to the situation; it will only serve the interests of specific lobbies."  
(Male, Tunis, 32, unemployed)*

*"I really feel frustrated from the last elections. I participated in the elections and I was the president of a polling station... We saw money in the station, we*

*declared that and we even took photos of those who tried to buy votes but at the end we found different results. No one was punished." (Female, Tunis, 55, employed)*

*"I will never vote again. There must be some selection criteria for candidates. They must have some minimum qualifications." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 29, employed)*

*"I hope it would not lead to the appearance of politicians like those we have now; they keep giving promises they never keep." (Female, Tunis, 27, employed)*

Expressing frustration with the party system, some respondents would prefer to vote for individuals rather than for party lists. Respondents generally hope to elect candidates who are from the regions and will work hard on behalf of their fellow citizens, though a minority hold that it is better to have local leaders who hail from outside the regions.

*"They should change the law on lists. People should no longer vote for parties because parties failed. People should vote for individuals because they know they are trustworthy." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"We fear party factionalism. The citizens, away from the parties, should have independent lists and let people participate." (Male, Tozeur, 69, retired)*

*"What is said in the streets is that the parties are no longer trustworthy. What would succeed in Sidi Bouzid are the independent lists if the big Sidi Bouzid families choose competent people to guide the country." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 59, employed)*

*"The most important thing about the municipal elections is the electoral law... I hope that a referendum or dialogues on the level of the regions will be organized... Those who theorize and those who write the constitution are not in touch with the regions so the municipal election law has to spring from the municipalities." (Male, Tozeur, 54, employed)*

*"In case these elections prove to be successful, I hope that people would work hard for the improvement of their regions." (Male, Tunis, 32, unemployed)*

*"Before taking the position as head of the municipality, he has to declare his properties/belongings so that he doesn't go there to serve his own interests." (Male, Nabeul, 49, unemployed)*

*"We want the head of the municipality of Nabeul to be from another region and not from Nabeul. He should be independent." (Male, Nabeul, 65, retired)*

## FIVE YEARS AFTER THE REVOLUTION

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Citizens hope local officials will improve roads, local infrastructure, sanitation, and regulation of local markets after they take office. Some respondents also stress the importance of setting, implementing, and remaining accountable to clear plans and budgets.

*"Concerning the municipality, the services are cleaning the streets, lighting, and other administrative services." (Female, Tunis, 55, employed)*

*"They shall improve things at least on the regional and local level as far as cleanness is concerned along with the lighting and the roads. They shall launch some projects so that young people find jobs." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"Some vendors started working in a place but they can't take shops because we don't have a president of the municipality. When will they give them licenses?" (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 39, employed)*

*"I hope they stop illegal trade. We can't even walk on the sidewalks because they sell their merchandise there." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 43, employed)*

*"Some people don't have electricity and water supply so we expect the municipality to improve their conditions." (Female, Nabeul, 42, employed)*

*"The municipality is responsible for improving the living conditions of the people. It may also have many other activities such as recreational or cultural activities. Second, it may start some small projects that can improve the district and offer some job opportunities." (Male, Nabeul, 25, employed)*

*"In the past, [the sports club in Nabeul] used to get grants from the governorate, from the municipality and other people even under Ben Ali. Now the club doesn't have money to survive. Associative work is very important for the children." (Male, Nabeul, 43, employed)*

*"To me the municipal plans should extend not only to 3 or 5 years but to 20 and 30 years." (Male, Nabeul, 64, employed)*

Respondents suggest a variety of means by which they would like to be engaged by local councils, including through open meetings and neighborhood commissions. They suggest that the municipality use SMS messages and Facebook posts, as well as offline means such as posters and local radio stations, to provide information about meetings and decisions and to engage citizen input when making decisions and drafting plans.

*"The municipality should organize a local consultation. They should send people in the streets to take people's opinions." (Male, Nabeul, 43, employed)*

*"Not everybody has a mobile. The idea of posters is a good one because we read posters when we walk around, like advertisements." (Female, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

*"The use of the internet depends on the type of the problem or issues you are going to debate. You cannot discuss agricultural issues on the net for example. Farmers like my father do not know how to use the Internet." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

*"They should go to the administrations and inform people." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 39, employed)*

*"Take a loudspeaker in a car and go around in all Sidi Bouzid neighborhoods. Sidi Bouzid is not that big so they can do this quickly." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 42, employed)*

*"They are able to inform us about things that interest them like the obligation of paying bills so why can't they in the same way send us invitations to these meetings to take our opinions?" (Female, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

*"In all cities there are different neighborhoods. They can choose a representative from each neighborhood to be present in the meetings." (Female, Tunis, 52, employed)*

*"There should be neighborhood commissions that specify the particular problems of neighborhoods and write to the municipality about them." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 59, employed)*

Respondents suggest that voter education efforts by the election commission and civil society, and outreach by political parties and candidates, would increase turnout in local elections.

*"A positive factor would be clever advertisements in the media especially the unbiased channels, mainly radio. Political parties could also play a major role in convincing people of the importance of participation in those elections... Candidates should provide detailed plans and voters should study these plans quite well before deciding for whom to vote." (Male, Tunis, 32, unemployed)*

*"If they present us with a good and clear program and tell the youth about their objectives, the youth would be encouraged to vote. They should show the citizen the objectives of the municipality and why he should vote in the municipal elections." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"[Voter turnout will decrease] if people are not informed. We know better about the elections now thanks to our meeting. Others would see no interest and argue that it is like any other elections and that it would change nothing. When someone knows what it is and what changes it might bring, he is a little bit more motivated." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

### **Draft Electoral Law**

The current draft electoral law requires Tunisians to update their physical address on their ID cards—a lengthy process requiring citizens to collect their papers, to pay 20 dinars if their current IDs are broken, and to wait while the ID is processed—in order to vote based on their residence. Many respondents believe citizens should be able to vote based on their current address—though a minority prefer to vote in their hometowns—but some respondents believe that the requirement to change their IDs would be cumbersome and serve as an obstacle to voter turnout. A few suggest that if they were required to update their IDs, they would not vote in municipal elections.

*"For people who work or those who are students, they need to travel to their hometowns in order to vote. Many people would not do it... People prefer to go to vote in the place nearest to them." (Female, Tunis, 25, employed)*

*"I'm for this kind of updating of the ID cards. If someone is from Bizerte but has been living here for the last two years, he would move to Bizerte in case his ID card is not updated and go to vote for a mayor in Bizerte and then come back to live in Tunis. In this case, he would elect someone he has no interest in and the people of Bizerte will be governed by someone they didn't vote for. For this reason, updating ID cards is necessary." (Male, Tunis, 25, employed)*

*"Some people don't have money to vote in their hometowns because they have to take means of transport. So, it's better to vote according to your address." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 49, housewife)*

*"Now I live [in Tunis] but this is not my residence... I will give up voting because I don't have an opinion concerning who will win the elections since I don't live [in Tunis]." (Male, Tunis, 46, employed)*

*"There are 30% of the Tunisian people whose ID cards are broken. They will never be ready to pay 25 dinars to renew their IDs in order to participate in the municipal elections." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 28, unemployed)*

*"I live in a rented house but I don't have a lease and I don't want to have a lease. How will they change my address on my identity card?" (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

*"My ID is from Beja and I don't want to change it. . . I wouldn't participate in the elections." (Female, Nabeul, 42, employed)*

*"One can have a job that obliges him to move from one place to another so they have to rely only on the number of the ID and to facilitate things by letting people vote anywhere." (Male, Tozeur, 42, employed)*

*"Any proof that the voter lives in Nabeul – an ID, the electricity bill, etc. I think that updating IDs will be an obstacle. Personally, I would not be ready to update my ID in order to vote. I'd have to pay 25 dinars, in addition to the paperwork and wait until it is ready." (Male, Nabeul, 25, unemployed)*

While a few respondents doubt that young candidates have the experience to lead, there is strong support, across all demographics, for a measure to guarantee youth inclusion on electoral lists. Respondents generally believe that young people should be given a chance to lead, and would bring energy and enthusiasm to their roles.

*"Let the youth take their chance to take the country forward. Why should only the adults be allowed? The young brains have young mentality and everything is more open-minded." (Female, Nabeul, 52, housewife)*

*"I would like them to impose two young people. One with a high degree and another one without." (Male, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

*"They always think that the adults only have mature minds because they have been through many experiences. However, you sometimes find youth who have energy and ideas that would never occur to adults even after 100 years of experience. It would do no harm if they put a young member in the municipality." (Female, Nabeul, 48, employed)*

*"It is a good idea to have a mayor and his deputy from two different generations... There can be a lot of collaboration between the two generations if that happens." (Female, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"People who are less than 35 know better. They know the youth. Unlike those old people, a young person can be met in a café; he can understand you." (Male, Tozeur, 27, employed)*



*"This is something positive not only in the municipal elections but in the other types also. It should be there in the parliamentary and presidential elections."  
(Female, Tozeur, 54, housewife)*

*"They should also fix a maximum age." (Female, Tunis, 53, employed)*

*"The candidate under the age of 35 will be assigned the third spot in 70% of the lists. So, there will be almost no chances for these candidates to be elected."  
(Male, Sidi Bouzid, 28, unemployed)*

*"A person of that age is still a kid! Even at the age of 40 or 50, there are people who have no sense of reasoning." (Female, Tunis, 25, student)*

*"We are not against engaging the youth, we are against imposing them." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 57, employed)*

## V. Economy

As in previous focus group research, unemployment and rising prices continue to be principal economic concerns for respondents. Many respondents affirm that the middle class has been vanishing since the revolution and is overburdened by taxes.

*"We have the upper class and the lower class. We became like Egypt, there's no middle class. Under Ben Ali's government I was in the middle class, we could live. One kilo of onions cost 300 millimes. I could buy everything I needed for cooking for just 15 dinars. Now, if you have 50 dinars, you won't be able to buy anything."  
(Male, Tunis, 56, unemployed)*

*"Who is paying taxes? 80% of the budget of the whole country comes from taxation. But who pays these taxes? Poor people are paying taxes, teachers, nurses, workers, cleaners; these people are paying taxes but not rich people. All the others do not pay taxes. Rich people don't pay taxes." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

*"The poor are the ones paying the taxes. Lawyers and doctors, people who actually earn a rather significant sum of money, do not pay much for the taxes."  
(Male, Tozeur, 37, unemployed)*

*"If all the capitalists pay their taxes, the whole country would be fine and no one would be poor." (Female, Nabeul, 56, housewife)*

Unemployment is the major concern for most respondents. Citizens, especially in Sidi Bouzid and Tozeur, discuss the shortcomings of temporary jobs, which provide low-

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wage, unstable employment. Some express frustration with the role of bribery and favoritism in securing employment.

*"[The youth study hard and then they graduate to stay at home or in the café. They are obliged to sell vegetables or juice in the streets. A member of my family had studied and got a master's degree but now he is selling vegetables and fruits in a rented car." (Female, Nabeul, 48, employed)*

*"I would like to wake up in the morning to find that all the Tunisians have jobs. We shall not continue to spend our time in the cafes like now... I would like to see empty cafes. Now, I see overcrowded cafes wherever I go." (Male, Nabeul, 49, unemployed)*

*"The most important problem is unemployment. When you go to the café, you can see five young people sipping the same expresso. The state is partly responsible for many bad things that the youth commit because it doesn't provide jobs." (Male, Nabeul, 65, retired)*

*"University graduates work in building sites, we don't have factories, we don't have companies. All the people work in building sites. We have 3500 people in building sites and they work in very bad conditions." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 46, housewife)*

*"Even when they employ someone, they don't give him his due. They exploit him. In the construction sites for instance, they use you and then they give you a scanty wage." (Male, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

*"One feels obliged to borrow money in order to bribe the person who will help in their employment. Afterwards, the person who takes the bribe disappears forever and he doesn't care at all about the other person who needs that job to provide for a whole family." (Female, Tunis, 25, student)*

*"People who have diplomas remain jobless and people who have connections get the jobs." (Female, Nabeul, 42, employed)*

Rising prices are a major concern for respondents, who worry about the increasing expense of providing for their families' basic needs. The problem is attributed primarily to middlemen who buy cheap goods from farmers and producers but raise the price for consumers. Many respondents also discuss the difficulty of securing affordable housing.

*"Before, the breadwinner could buy the necessities for his family for 10TD. Now, this same amount is insufficient for one person to spend on half a day: a pack of cigarettes and a coffee and that's it!" (Male, Tunis, 25, unemployed)*

*"I dream of the day when the prices are announced on television to have been cut by half, purchasing power is much better and all people are living happily." (Male, Tunis, 33, employed)*

*"500 or 600 TD are insufficient to provide for a family; in case there is no rent, that amount is insufficient to pay the water and electricity bills.... Before, in the time of Ben Ali, 320 or 350 TD a month was enough." (Male, Tunis, 25, student)*

*"Farmers are tired, they work hard but at the end middlemen buy the products with cheap prices. For consumers, the products are very expensive because middlemen increase the prices." (Female, Tunis, 39, housewife)*

*"As a farmer, I sell you my products for 200 millimes/kg and you take them elsewhere to sell at 700/kg. The consumer is the biggest loser here." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 41, employed)*

*"There is no control. Everybody sets his own prices as he will. Everything is expensive: the construction materials, the food ...etc. because control is absent and bribery is everywhere." (Male, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

*"Rents are becoming very expensive... A small house with only one a bedroom and a living room costs 350 dinars per month. It's not even equipped and you find a problem of humidity. The landlord asks you to pay additional 5% of the rent every year and if you don't they sue you. The law says 5% but sometimes, they ask you to pay 10%." (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

*"People are drowning. They can't make ends meet. At the end of the month, they are bewildered and they would do anything to pay the rent." (Male, Nabeul, 47, unemployed)*

Respondents propose various potential economic solutions, suggesting that the government distribute unused lands, invest in projects, and promote entrepreneurship to create opportunities, especially for young people. They call on the state to freeze prices and on fellow citizens to boycott expensive goods.

*"The ministry of agriculture should at least take actions. It should divide the plots of land that belong to the state among our children to work on them." (Female, Tozeur, 58, employed)*

*“There is a problem with the state lands. It is a problem of real estate in Sidi Bouzid. There is a large land in Sidi Bouzid that the government could give to young graduates.” (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 29, employed)*

*“The state has to invest in projects that can offer jobs to the people.” (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 25, unemployed)*

*“The budget that you are giving to the coastal regions such as Sfax or Monastir should be given to Sidi Bouzid and other poor regions.” (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 25, student)*

*“The government should exert pressure to freeze the prices and pressure to stop demands for higher wages.” (Male, Tozeur, 69, retired)*

## VI. Youth

Respondents believe that youth priorities—centered on employment and economy issues—are the same as before the revolution, but that youth have become increasingly desperate in the interim.

*“The youth have lost hope in everything: education, jobs, future... There is nothing to encourage the youth to dream of the future. Employment remains the first priority because it ensures stability.” (Female, Tunis, 25, student)*

*“The priority of the youth is illegal immigration.” (Male, Tunis, 37, employed)*

*“The political parties used the youth as a card in this game and then they discarded it. This is the biggest cause of bitterness. Personally, I am convinced that I made no revolution but those who made a revolution and died, they lost their lives for nothing... The youth made the revolution and the youth got nothing from the revolution.” (Male, Tozeur, 57, employed)*

*“When the youth go to work to find that those who are less educated have better salaries, they give up on everything. They study hard and then they find out that those who have studied in the private universities are the ones who make it thanks to money.” (Female, Nabeul, 42, employed)*

Respondents generally feel that those in power are not effectively addressing youth priorities. A few respondents praise specific policies such as the army's new recruitment drive and an initiative intended to provide more loan financing, suggesting that similar measures in other institutions would help create opportunities for youth.

*"The Tunisian authorities do not really care about Tunisian youth. If they cared about them and they believed that youth are the future of the country, they would have thought of creating jobs for them. Every year you get a new number of graduates that would need to find jobs. If they cared about youth, they would not have revolted. It is all Tunisian youth that have expressed their anger. Why do we still need connections to get a job? Or need to know someone who is close to the authorities." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

*"The state of our economy makes it difficult to provide [employment] to our youth. There are no programs that make you expect the demands of the youth would be met as far as employment is considered let alone the other demands like entertainment and so on." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 59, employed)*

*"In the recent events, all the people moved because they knew that a second revolution is going to take place. The prime minister himself said that they are going to find a solution for the problem of unemployment. Just one day after the events of unrest, he was on TV and spoke to us." (Female, Tunis, 55, employed)*

*"Every representative of a region should convey the voices of the youth in that region." (Female, Tozeur, 35, unemployed)*

*"The project of employment in the army, recently launched, has welcomed a number of youth. The reward is not very significant (200TD a month and free lodging) but it solved part of the problem." (Male, Tunis, 33, employed)*

*"The only positive thing that the government has achieved for the youth is the monthly salary of 100 or 200 dinars in return for joining the army. This has reduced the tension a little bit and it would relatively reduce joblessness." (Female, Tozeur, 47, employed)*

*"The new measures that they have announced recently – that they would give loans to encourage graduates start their own projects for example. For me, such a measure is much better than giving 200 dinars for unemployed graduates for nothing... Such projects may offer jobs to a number of people who may also create more job opportunities for others." (Female, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"Concerning self-financing, they found a solution for this problem for people who want to start their own projects. In the BTS, people ... will get 200 dinars [while receiving professional training] and in case they want to start a new project, they receive a loan of 40,000 dinars [after completing training] for those who are not university graduates and for university graduates, the amount depends on the project." (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

To tackle these problems, respondents hope to see more youth in political leadership roles. They highlight the need for the government to create a favorable climate for investment, and to provide loans to young people to start projects. A few respondents believe that youth should take more responsibility by working harder, accepting jobs outside their chosen fields, or starting initiatives rather than striving for government employment.

*"The youth should be in power; they have the right... People who are 55 or 60... should leave the place to younger people who are more competent and who are able to make changes." (Female, Tunis, 31, employed)*

*"We should let them participate. All the members of the government are old people." (Male, Tozeur, 42, employed)*

*"At least one or two decision makers should be young people." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 35, unemployed)*

*"Why can't [older teachers] retire, leaving their positions to the youth who need these jobs? What the authorities did is that they increased the age of retirement!" (Male, Tunis, 25, unemployed)*

*"They should create new job opportunities for young people. They have to employ people and train them at the same time." (Female, Tunis, 55, employed)*

*"When young people want to launch a project, they have the idea and we have the money so we should finance them. Why do you save your money in banks while other people have good ideas but do not have to pay even for bread? We should mediate and let the youth launch projects and employ people." (Female, Nabeul, 56, housewife)*

*"The businessmen, the capital owners, our expatriate compatriots and rich people who spend millions in summer vacations only should invest in the country and take the youth into consideration." (Female, Nabeul, 48, employed)*

*"The state has to provide security to encourage those people to invest." (Female, Nabeul, 58, housewife)*

*"The government can't provide all of [the youth] with jobs because the number of unemployed people is very large. Young people should also look for other solutions. They shouldn't keep waiting for the government to give them jobs." (Male, Tunis, 46, employed)*

## VII. Additional Citizen Priorities

### Security and the Police

Robberies and thefts are the primary security concerns for most respondents. Views are mixed on the effectiveness of policemen; respondents in every region complain that policemen don't respond quickly enough to calls, while some acknowledge that police are doing their best and making improvements. A few respondents question the effectiveness of the police unions, suggest better training for recent recruits, or raise concerns about corruption in the police.

*"They called the police but they did not come. They came only to the hospital when someone was killed. There is a serious lack of security and lack of organization... The police used to patrol the neighborhood very late at night – for example at 1 or 2 am. Now, there is no security." (Male, Nabeul, 26, student)*

*"The biggest problem is that when you call the police they tell you 'don't complain until after the dispute is over and people die.' When two families fight, women get beaten, lives get ended, children get violated and everything gets messy and then they tell you to come to the police station and complain. Can't one complain unless there is a dead body?" (Male, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

*"The security forces are working and we feel more comfortable now. We feel safer than before. We used to worry a lot when we walk in the streets." (Female, Nabeul, 52, housewife)*

*"Security forces in Sidi Bouzid are working very hard all the time and they are really doing their best. They work day and night. When we're sleeping we hear their car in the streets." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 39, employed)*

*"It is true that there are some good policemen. There are also some senior officers that are very humble and give you a very good impression about police forces. However, there are plenty of irregularities especially from those who have been recruited after the revolution." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

*"The academic training of the police forces after the revolution also needs to be reconsidered. In my opinion, six months are not enough." (Male, Nabeul, 25, employed)*

*"There is a lot of corruption in the police. When they stop someone, he either has to give a bribe or will have to pay a traffic ticket." (Female, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"The security system is not clear, they have many unions. Even the unions have problems among them. This means that they have internal problems. They have the right to have a union but it should only be one union." (Male, Tunis, 50, employed)*

### **Education**

Many respondents expressed a need to reform Tunisia's education system, emphasizing its role in preparing students for employment and shaping an informed citizenry. Several appreciate reforms made by Minister of Education Neji Jalloul, such as efforts to make the baccalaureate exam more challenging and therefore more credible.

*"School cannot provide basic things for our children such as computers that most children have access to at home! How can we expect good results from such schools!" (Female, Nabeul, 28, employed)*

*"The reforms have to start from the roots i.e. from the primary education. Even the system they intend to implement now is also wrong. If the education remains as it is now, the country will achieve nothing." (Female, Tozeur, 40, housewife)*

*"I want to focus on the new generations in the kindergartens, in clubs and in primary schools." (Female, Nabeul, 56, housewife)*

*"If we had good universities, there would be no need to send our students to study abroad. This is something which is very costly and which results in big losses for our country and encourages brain drain. We need to improve the level of education in our country and care about our national certificates such as the baccalaureate which is losing its credibility around the world." (Female, Nabeul, 25, student)*

*"I am happy with what is going on in the sector of education five years after the revolution. Many people didn't like [Minister of Education] Neji Jalloul's work but I do like what he is doing... The schools have become more disciplined unlike before." (Female, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

*"Neji Jalloul has started from the top. However, he would never succeed to make a change this way." (Male, Tozeur, 54, employed)*

*"Neji Jalloul is working strategically to reform education. He achieved some points although people and unions stood against him... The system of education applied for 20 years and the university degrees that equal nothing in the market are the cause behind all the problems we are facing now." (Male, Nabeul, 43, employed)*



*"There are some reforms in the education like eliminating the 25%." (Female, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

*"The education of our kids is everybody's responsibility inside the educational institution and outside because they represent the future of the country." (Female, Tozeur, 45, employed)*

### **Health Care**

In Sidi Bouzid and Tozeur, respondents lament the difficulties of accessing affordable, quality health care, particularly from medical specialists, and the necessity to travel long distances to Tunis to receive care.

*"I want to wake up and find that Sidi Bouzid hospital has new doctors, specialists so that people don't die before arriving at the hospital. Doctors don't want to come to Sidi Bouzid. When the troika was governing, they ordered them to come to Sidi Bouzid, they went on strike and didn't agree to come. We have to stop forcing poor people to pay money in the hospital of Sidi Bouzid." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 50, employed)*

*"Now when you go to the hospital even at 10 or 11 o'clock, you don't find the doctors." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 42, employed)*

*"We don't have medicines. Doctors don't work well. They take the first fifteen people and he tells the rest to come back another day. We don't have equipment... The government is responsible for this because of the lack of supervision. If they were supervising work in the hospital, this wouldn't happen." (Female, Sidi Bouzid, 46, housewife)*

*"We don't have specialized doctors... We don't have a bone and joints physician. There are specialties unavailable in the interior regions...Why should one go so far to look for a doctor? Do you think that someone who is jobless or who is a poor worker can afford to go to Tunis to see a doctor?" (Male, Tozeur, 27, employed)*

*"The health care is in a catastrophic situation. You watch us on TV every day talking about the disasters that take place in the hospitals. The minister doesn't know about our situation, about the circumstances in the hospitals." (Female, Tozeur, 45, employed)*

*"Can you imagine that in the whole region there isn't any ophthalmologist? If one needs a surgery in the eye, he has to wait at least for one year. The doctor*

*who used to do the surgeries here left Tozeur for good and went to Tunis... The ophthalmology department in Tozeur's hospital is very poor. The same is true for the gynecology department." (Female, Tozeur, 35, unemployed)*

### **Public Administration**

Numerous respondents express frustration with their dealings with public administration, citing the refrain of "come back tomorrow," the poor work ethic of public servants, and favoritism for those with personal connections. They describe situations when local bureaucracy has prevented them from receiving loans, starting jobs, and obtaining necessary administrative papers.

*"Everything in the Tunisian administration is wrong. When my father died I needed a death certificate and I had to struggle to get it whereas we all know that it can be done in five minutes." (Female, Tunis, 36, employed)*

*"The managers are there and people in the bases have no training, no inspection... at 9 or 10, if you go to an administration, you find the employees are either in cafés or absent. To have the simplest paper, you need two days. (Male, Tozeur, 57, employed)*

*"My license was given to another person because he paid a bribe." (Male, Tunis, 45, employed)*

*"The company that took advantage of citizens after the revolution is the STEG. You have to pay a bill every two months. Now, they send their officers but they throw the bills so that you don't get the bill and consequently you consume more electricity and you pay more." (Male, Tunis, 37, employed)*

*"Under Ben Ali, all the fines used to be annulled, but now, they send a bailiff to pursue you and they don't let you pay little by little." (Male, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

*"Citizens come to the administrations; sometimes old ladies come out from remote areas, walking the whole way, just to get a paper done. They tell them to come back tomorrow." (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 59, employed)*

*"I know the workers of the municipality and I know their children. When the first ones left their jobs and had their pensions, 90% of them were replaced by their children. Contest exams take place and those people succeed and nobody hears about that. They get the jobs although the best among them doesn't even have the baccalaureate diploma." (Male, Nabeul, 50, employed)*

### Proposed Solutions

While respondents look to political leadership for more effective solutions—such as reforming education and providing opportunities for youth—many also affirm that ordinary citizens bear responsibility for improving Tunisia. In their view, Tunisians should work together for the benefit of the country and respect their fellow citizens.

*“We have a problem of conscience in the country. If everyone does his job appropriately, our country will be in a better situation but unfortunately many people don't do this.” (Female, Tunis, 43, employed)*

*“I want to wake up and find that the mentality of the Tunisian people—from the ordinary citizen to the president of the country—has changed. A mentality that does not accept corruption, that focuses on working for the interests of the people not his personal interests, and that focuses on our true values.” (Male, Sidi Bouzid, 28, unemployed)*

*“I hope to wake one morning to find that the Tunisian citizen abides by the law starting from people in the top of the hierarchy to those in the lowest step of the ladder. In addition, I hope that the Tunisian citizen respects the Tunisian citizen and this will certainly happen when he respects the law.” (Male, Nabeul, 64, retired)*

*“We need a lot of time to fix the country. This would not be done by political authorities but by the citizens themselves.” (Female, Tunis, 31, employed)*

## APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS

- **142 total participants** from Greater Tunis, Nabeul, Sidi Bouzid, Tozeur
- **Ten to thirteen participants** per group
- **Diversity** of ages, professions and neighborhoods within each group

Gender	Count
Female	73
Male	69
Age	Count
25-34	46
+35	96
Profession	Count
Employed	93
Unemployed	24
Retired	5
Homemaker	11
Student	9
Education	Count
University	68
Secondary	54
Primary	15
None	5