

PREFACE

This booklet represents one of the activities carried out under the umbrella of the regional project on the Development of National Gender Statistics Programmes in the Arab Countries (RAB/96/007), which is being funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Development Research Center (IDRC) and executed by ESCWA in nine Arab countries.

The national activities of the project were implemented in Tunisia by the joint collaboration of the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs, the National Institute of Statistics and the Center for Research, Studies, Documentation and Information on Women (CREDIF), with the participation of concerned ministries and governmental organizations. In addition, the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) operating in Tunisia, provided additional support in the implementation of the project at the national level.

This booklet is intended to offer a statistical portrait of the different roles of women and men in Tunisia based on the original Arabic document entitled "Women and Men in Tunisia: Statistical Portrait" that was produced by the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs.

Note: This document has been reproduced without formal editing.

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INTRODUCTION

The Arabic document entitled “Women and Men in Tunisia: Statistical Portrait” aims at portraying the status of women in Tunisia as compared to men by describing gender gaps and evaluating equity trends in all areas, whether social, economic, political or public.

In addition, its objective is to increase awareness among policymakers as to the importance of improving the status of women, through further revolutionary ideas and adoption of corrective measures in women-related issues.

Following the International Conference of Beijing and the recommendations that came out of it, it is important to determine what was achieved in Tunisia in favor of women, and what areas still require efforts to promote gender equity.

The Arabic document was completed within the framework of project for the Development of National Gender Statistics Programmes in the Arab countries”, which is being executed by the Statistics Division of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA).

It effectively presents gender disaggregated statistical indicators and data, along with time trends and stratifications by area of residence. Issues like demographic, health and economic aspects as well as leadership and participation in public life were tackled.

Efforts were made to render the Arabic document as simple as possible and hence to be a user-friendly reference to all parties interested in gender statistics, including the mass media. Data were collected from various sources including the National Statistics Institute, the ‘national department of family and human development’, in addition to a number of ministries.

A number of activities and workshops were conducted in order to complete the Arabic document and these include the following:

- *The First Regional Workshop*, whereby the working group composed of Ms. Leila Ben Ali (Ministry of Women and Family Affairs), Mr. Snaim Ben Abdullah and Ms. Seham El-Najjar (Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes, de Documentation et d'Information sur la Femme, CREDIF), along with Mr. Mahmoud Duraira and Mr. Abdelhamid Ben Murad from the National Statistics Institute, drafted the content of the Arabic document.
- *The First National Workshop*, which aim was to assess the availability of gender statistics, was organized by all the above-mentioned parties in collaboration with UN-ESCWA. It resulted in several recommendations regarding the production of the Arabic document.
- Under the supervision of Mr. Abderrahman Jmour, Director general of Programme Planning and Human Resources Development in the Ministry of Women and Family Affairs, the national Arabic document on *women and men* was completed.
- Ms. Leila Ben Ali was responsible for drafting the contents of the document, including figures.
- *The Second National Workshop* regrouped all parties involved, including users and producers of gender statistics from various institutions and Ministries. In that workshop, all chapters and sections were discussed and criticized to yield helpful suggestions that were taken into consideration for producing the document in its final format.
- *The Second Regional Workshop*, in which the document was presented along with other Arab countries documents, and was conducive to further modifications related to the final format.

Chapter I

THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TUNISIA



THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN TUNISIA

Women in Tunisia are highly privileged, a status favored by political functions. Over the years, the Tunisian woman has gained more power and strength in society, which kept her away from all types of underdevelopment and discrimination, in comparison to men.

The political system granted the Tunisian woman a privileged status and placed her as a top priority in development programs and projected that her status will improve further to reach the level deserved. In addition, she was given full opportunity to participate in development programs and freely express her opinion in all matters related to development. Hence, she was considered be the center of attention and the strategic point for sustainable development.

I. Development of laws

Tunisia has a highly developed legislation system, especially in what concerns taking special actions and structural changes in the area of women's empowerment. Many new laws were introduced by the government in order to improve the status of women within the family and society as a whole, and protect their rights and opportunities. The main source that triggered changes in legislation was the *Civil Status Law*, the effect of which was then enhanced by a number of other events.

A. Civil Status Law

The law was first issued on the 13th of August, 1956 and can be considered as the most important turning point in the history of the Tunisian woman. In addition to being the first legislative

text concerned with woman's issues, it has incorporated modern ideas and goals in family and social matters that are antecedent to what was prevailing in the Arab and Islamic world.

Its main objective was to improve the status of the Tunisian woman within the family and in society, empower her and free her from all types of underdevelopment, injustice or discrimination.

Radical reforms were introduced regarding women-related legislation and the most important principles introduced by the law were:

- (1) Principles related to family building:
 - Prohibiting polygamous marriages.
 - Specifying the minimum age at marriage.
 - Annulment of a father's right to predestine his daughter's marriage.
 - Replace spontaneous divorce with juridical divorce.
- (2) Principles related to marital relationships and responsibilities and child protection in case of marital disruption.

B. Legislative reforms

The items that were introduced by the *Civil Status Law* were continuously renewed and revised in accordance with social developments within the country. As a result, and by the year 1993, modifications were made for a number of items related to family building and marital relationships as follows:

- (i) Mutual respect between spouses: cooperation in family issues and child rearing, which replaced blind obedience of wife to husband.
- (ii) Orientation of underage wives on the outcomes of marriage.

- (iii) Guardianship of children by a mother is legitimate in three cases: emigration of child, his education, and financial matters.
- (iv) Consent of mother to the marriage of her minor or underage child.
- (v) Women may be granted full rights for custody of a child, whenever the father is unable to fulfill his duties as a guardian, or is reluctant to do so.
- (vi) Divorce: No discrimination is made in family juridical plans and in the attempt to restore bonds between married couples.
- (vii) A mother has the right for an alimony supplying her children with the necessary educational costs, even beyond adulthood.
- (viii) Introduction of the alimony and divorce management fund to protect divorced mothers and their children.

In addition to those made to the *Civil Status Law*, revision was undertaken in many other domains:

- (1) *Criminal Law*: Impose a heavy sentence on husbands who were charged with domestic violence.
- (2) *Employment Law*: Enforce non-discrimination between employees and equal pay for equal work.
- (3) *Nationality Law*: Give the right to a woman married to a foreigner to convey her nationality to her children after consent of the husband has been insured.
- (4) *Other legal procedures*: Emphasize on equal rights within the family by establishing common property system and conveying family donations to mothers (e.g. those given to orphans and for housing purposes).

II. Ratification of International agreements

Tunisia participated in all international agreements pertaining to women rights, the most important of which was the convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

This convention was signed in Tunisia by July 9th 1980 and was ratified on the 12th of July 1985 and came up with an official document by 26th of November 1991.

The following table shows a list of these international agreements:

Agreement title and date issued	Date ratified
Women's work at night (1919)	25/04/1957
Revised women's work at night (1948)	25/04/1957
Underground work of women, including mines (1935)	25/04/1957
Paid annual leaves (1936)	25/04/1957
Union freedom and protection of right to union organization	11/06/1957
Income protection (1947)	02/04/1958
Weekly leaves in commerce and office work (1937)	02/04/1958
Night work of children in the industrial sector (1919)	23/12/1958
Elimination of hard work as a penalty (1957)	23/12/1958
Discrimination in employment and occupational areas (1958)	23/03/1959
Hiring policy	21/12/1965
Minimum age accepted for work underground or in mines	16/03/1966
International Convention for the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination (New York, 21/12/1965)	28/11/1966
Equity in income and social security	02/07/1967
Convention on political rights of women (New York, 31 st March, 1953)	02/07/1967
Convention on nationality of married women (New York, 20 th February 1953)	21/11/1967

(Cont'd)

Agreement title and date issued	Date signed
Convention on mutual consent of marriage, minimum age at marriage, and marriage contracts (New York, December 10 th 1962)	21/11/1967
Equity in income between male and female employees for the same task	21/07/1968
Convention on economic, social and cultural rights	29/11/1968
International agreement on civil and political rights	29/11/1968
International convention on preventing discrimination in access to education (UNESCO, Paris, December 1960)	26/07/1969
Medical pre-testing for work in the industry among youth and children.	26/07/1969
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW): Copenhagen, December 18 th 1979	12/07/1985
Additional protocol for Convention number 89, related to women's work at night.	31/11/1992

III. Structural and institutional means of promotion

Following legislative reforms in favor of women, a number of structural changes were made to promote women, in all areas.

A. Ministry of Women and Family Affairs

The introduction of this Ministry represents a major step forward in the history of promoting the status of the Tunisian woman. Consequently, a number of mechanisms have emerged, including the following:

- *Communication and guidance division:* Acts to increase awareness of women's rights and those of the family.
- *Plan of action in favor of the family:* Aims at reinforcing the family's roles and developing relationships between family members.
- *National plan of action on women and development:* This plan was adjusted within the framework of the ninth plan of action.
- *Plan of action in favor of rural woman:* To improve her living conditions and enhance her abilities and integrate her within the dynamics of development.
- *Communication strategy:* To enforce the principles of human rights and women's rights within the family and society and present an ideal family based on the principle of equity and sharing.
- *Mechanism of support to women's economic projects:* Helping women to come up with a new economic project and securing its sustainability, which will allow better integration of women in the process of development.

B. National Council on Woman and Family

This council is composed of a number of consultants from governmental and non-governmental organizations and other experts. It focuses on women's issues and those of the family and coordination of matters related to them. Moreover, it arranges national and international meetings related to these areas of interest.

A committee emerged from the national council under the title "equal opportunities and law enforcement" in order to examine the question of equity in work between women and men.

It also observes the degree of accordance with international legislation specific to equity as well as recommendations stemming from international conferences. A specialized committee was founded to examine the image of women in mass media and another one for national and international meetings specialized for women and the family.

C. National committee on women and development

This is a consulting structure that focuses on the degree of women's contribution to development. It also ensures the formulation of proper recommendations in the framework of planning for additional support to women's role in productive activities and in key areas thus rendering the principle of *equity between social groups* a tangible one.

D. Prestigious employment opportunities for women

In addition to the already present female figures in the parliament, and development councils at the level of all governorates and municipalities, a number of key positions were filed for women such as two Minister posts, a president's consultant for women's issues, a public writer in the parliament, and other employees in diverse ministerial departments. This was planned in order for women to become acquainted with decision-making positions.

E. Centre de Recherches, d'Etudes, de Documentation et d'Information sur la Femme (CREDIF)

The center, inaugurated in 1990, was responsible for conducting studies, research and writing reports on the status of women and providing the media with information to highlight their role and rights.

Women conditions observatory: This observatory was introduced within the CREDIF center and it aimed at providing data as well as indicators on trends in women's status and issues. It also encompassed a statistical database on women and men in a number of different sectors.

F. Non-governmental organizations

Around 20 non-governmental organizations are concerned with women's issues in Tunisia, in addition to the national association of the Tunisian woman, which can be considered as the most deep-rooted women's organization in the Arab world. These organizations work in various areas of development and constitute an important force contributing to the empowerment of women.

Chapter II

STATISTICS AND GENDER

I. Definitions and Concepts

While *sex* conceptualizes stable biological differences, *gender* relates to characteristics that develop over time and differ between women and men.

Gender statistics include all data and indicators related to the status of women in comparison with that of men and are able to highlight differentials in all social, cultural and economic domains.

Gender approach, which is by now a popular concept, is an outcome of several international conferences organized during the 90s, notably the Rio conference in 1992, the Vienna conference on human rights in 1993 and Copenhagen conference in 1995. The concept was also highlighted during the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 and the 4th International Conference on women in 1995.

The concept of gender is based on the principle that the status of women cannot be studied in its isolated form, since it constitutes a product of social norms differentiating between men and women. Hence, unlike the traditional approaches, the gender approach takes interest in unequal access of men and women to power, resources and social roles.

Both gender statistics and the gender approach constitute a primary mechanism for raising interest in women's issues. In addition, sustainable development proved to be unachievable without including the concept of gender within the framework of human rights.

II. Objectives

The main objectives of the activities related to gender are:

- To characterize the status of women in comparison to men, the patterns and differentials observed in socio-cultural and economic areas, and the obstacles that allow such gaps to prevail.
- To highlight the importance of gender issues, thus triggering action towards the improvement of the status of women in relation to that of men, and emphasizing the principle of equity of rights and opportunities between them.
- To create a strategic plan to improve the status of women, by reducing gender gaps between men and women in different areas.

III. Evolving interest in the status of women

Interest in the status of the Tunisian woman has passed through three different phases:

Phase I: Women were thought to be a weak and a marginalized social group. Hence, statistical indicators were focused on their status without any comparative effort. Based on the obtained results, new laws were introduced and political decisions were taken to improve the status of women within the family and the society as a whole. Reducing their daily burdens of life, and promoting them as productive members as well as household heads responsible for their families, was also stressed on.

Phase II: Since 1992, attention became more focused on the link between women and development. The argument behind this change was that women constitute half of the productive force, and hence, an essential element that would modify the structure of development and demographic growth. Consequently, programs and development plans increasingly focused on the labour force participation of women, their household chores, their work in the informal sector as well as the opportunities offered to them in education, health, public life and politics. This engendered a certain degree of awareness regarding the essential role of women in all areas of economic, social and political development. Hence, the empowerment of women was considered as an effective tool for building a civil society. Based on this, statistical indicators on *women and development* were elaborated which concentrated on processes and programs that would reinforce the role of women and enhance development. In addition, several new laws were introduced emphasizing their important position in society.

Phase III: Previously described methods in reducing the *gap between men and women* were refuted. These, however, still prevail in spite of major efforts spent at all levels. It was concluded that women's rights and equity with men require an analysis of the status of both sexes on equal basis. Efforts to do so were initiated by the Ministry of women and family affairs and interest became more focused on gender gaps and gender issues rather than the status of women per se.

IV. Gender Statistics

A. Importance

The demand for collection of sex-disaggregated data and its analysis has become a principal strategy in the Ministry of women and family affairs. A consensus was made on the need for such data among all producers and users of statistics, and the reliance on sex-disaggregated data became a distinct pattern. Based on a needs assessment study conducted on a number of governmental and non-governmental organizations producing statistics in that field (n=50), it was observed that only 10% consider gender statistics to be non-vital in their operational activities. For the majority, gender statistics are an essential tool that they cannot do without.

B. Availability of statistics

In spite of the developments recorded over the past decades, Tunisia still lacks statistics in many areas and domains. These deficiencies were attributed basically to three factors:

- (1) Around half of the organizations that are supposed to produce statistics do not have such a specialized division.
- (2) Most of these rely on the administrative section, which produces statistics as a secondary activity.
- (3) The staff responsible for analyzing data and producing statistics does not have the proper qualifications.

C. Availability of gender statistics

As mentioned, a general statistical database is still a luxury in Tunisia, let alone gender statistics. It seems that the current structures available for the production of statistics are not able up till today to provide gender data or statistics in a holistic or detailed manner. Time trends and coverage of all areas of interest, in spite of rising demand by interested users, is still unachievable.

V. Limitations in gender statistics

Gender statistics in Tunisia suffer from major limitations that demote efforts to design a program for improving the status of women. Reduction of such limitations is a major challenge.

Based on the previously mentioned study, the current status of gender statistics can be summarized as follows:

(1) Many of the statistics are available but are not analyzed by gender.

Around one quarter of the organizations producing statistics do not list data by gender. This is, primarily, due to the non-availability of sex-disaggregated data (e.g. Ministry of Health) or to the low interest of producers (technical training agency and employment agency) or even to the scarcity of human resources.

In addition, though data on gender is collected during fieldworks, it is rarely taken into account when analysis is done.

Many research organizations claim to have gender statistics available in their publications, however, further evaluation shows that these statistics are less represented in comparison to other types of statistics (Ministry of Agriculture).

Based on the needs assessment study previously described, it was found that the Ministry of Justice for instance provided data on human resources and various population-related activities with no gender disaggregation. Similarly, the Ministry of Public Health has a wealth of information that lacks gender disaggregation (hospital and dispensary data, morbidity and causes of death). In addition, information on certain diseases inflicted on women in particular, such as certain types of cancer, is completely missing.

Also the Ministry of technical training and employment had a project to build an 'employment observatory' with a database covering a number of indicators without taking into consideration the concept of gender. In addition, many of its related agencies do not emphasize the status of women and men, even though its data has the potential to do so.

In fact, in the field of technical training, no clear or detailed statistics on gender are available to depict gaps in the accessibility to work and training opportunities within the modern sector.

In addition to these important domains (employment, health and justice), many other areas lack gender-disaggregated data, or if ever up-to-date figures.

All in all, the needs assessment study has shown that around 40% of the surveyed units reported not having gender statistics at all.

(2) In some cases, gender statistics are available but in a scattered form:

Because some of the data available are scattered, it is difficult for consumers to make use of them. This applies to the fields of employment and income, public life and politics, living conditions and material possessions, cultural activities and sports, as well as violence and social security.

(3) Data is sometimes left unexploited:

Lack of promotion of the gender concept or the inaccessibility to certain database has left some data unexploited. These include health-related registries (hospital/dispensary records and health cards), housing data and social services data such as that on insurance coverage.

VI. Causes of limitations

The previously discussed limitations are primarily caused by the following factors:

(1) The methods used are relatively old

Data are often collected in a traditional manner, leading to unreliable results, especially in the case of cross-sectional surveys. These traditional methods often result in the marginalization of women's status such as in the case of employment and development activities. In fact, a woman's work is often confined to the household and agriculture or to unpaid family work, employment in the traditional industrial or in the informal sectors. All these are often not included or underrepresented in national statistics.

In addition, traditional statistical methods consider a person to be unemployed if he/she has not worked during the week preceding the interview and is looking for a job. Women often do not openly report their desire to have a job, probably due to their lack of hope to find one. In some cases, work among women may be perceived as a degrading element in the society's point of view.

Because of these limitations, a new method was devised in surveys whereby women were asked to describe their *time partitioning* so as to have a better idea about their economic activities, especially those that are unpaid.

(2) Difficulties and limited possibilities

In many cases, limitations in gender statistics are caused by priorities placed by each organization in terms of statistical activities, given the needs and the limitation of resources. This applies to the areas of health, agriculture, employment and technical training as well as justice. In that domain, 31% of the interviewees clearly identified these difficulties as the main cause for limited gender statistics.

(3) Poor sensitization of producers

One of the main causes of limitations in gender statistics are the poor sensitization of producers to the importance of gender as a concept that should be applied to all statistical processes, including data collection, analysis and use.

Hence, producers must become more communicative with users in order to develop better quality statistics that are able to pinpoint gender gaps in all areas of interest. In order to do that, and based on the fact that 66% of those interviewed were never in contact with any type of activity related to gender statistics, it is important to organize training sessions that would allow them to value this approach and be able to use it in a proper manner.

(4) Poor communication between producers and users

Another important cause for these limitations is the poor communication process that usually occurs between producers of gender statistics and their users. Hence, the needs of the users must be clearly channeled towards producers, in order for them to be taken into account during data collection, analysis and publication.

Chapter III

POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

POPULATION AND HOUSEHOLDS

I. Population size and composition

A. Sex distribution

Based on the 1994 population and housing census, the 1999 population and employment survey as well as demographic indicators extracted from vital statistics, the total population in Tunisia is estimated to be around 9,442,900 in 1999, out of which 4,761,900 (50.4%) are men and 4,681,000 are women (49.6%). According to **Table 1**, in all population censuses, men slightly outnumbered women. For instance, in 1994, the difference amounted to 92,000 men, most of whom were aged less than 15 years (n=73,700).

Table 1 Trends in sex distribution

	1966	1975	1984	1994
Women (%)	48.9	49.2	49.1	49.4
Men (%)	51.1	50.8	50.9	50.6

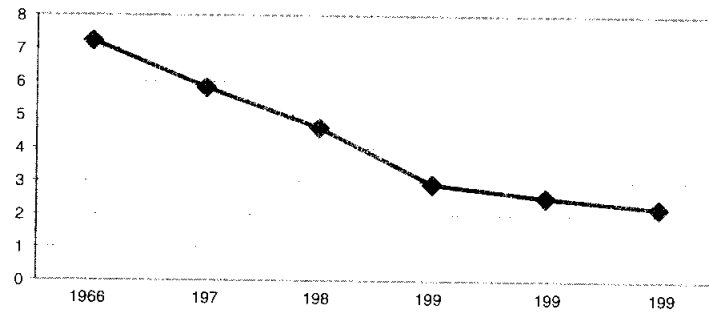
Sources: Results of population censuses, 1966-94/National Institute of Statistics

B. Age distribution

Tunisia has witnessed major demographic changes over the past decades leading to a decrease in population growth and important alterations of the population pyramid particularly in terms of reduction in the proportion of children less than five and those less than 15 years, compensated by a marked increase

in the proportion elderly (**Figure 2**) which was influenced by fertility decline (**Figure 1**) and lowering of mortality rates.

Figure 1 Trend in total fertility rates; 1966-1998

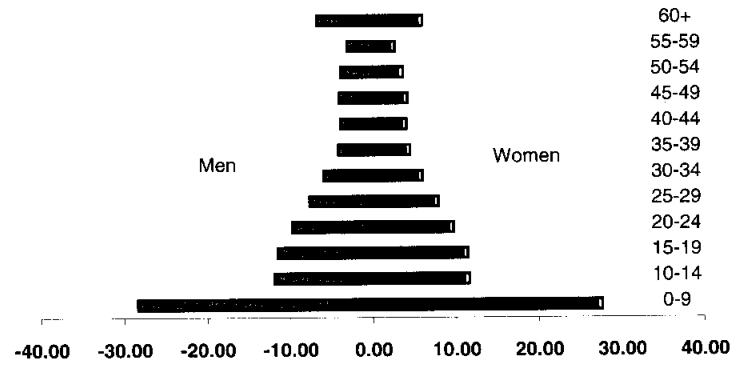


Source: National Institute of Statistics - national department of family and human development.

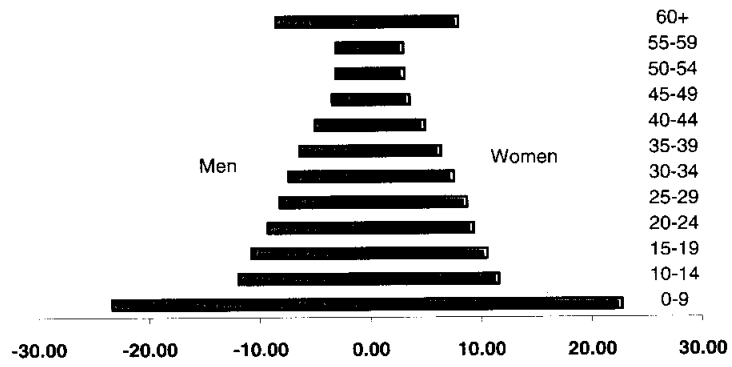
Figure 2 Population pyramid of Tunisia: 1975-1994



1984



1994



Sources: Results of population censuses, 1975-94/National Institute of Statistics

In spite of the young aspect of the Tunisian population, both male and female (more than two thirds are below age 15 years), the shape of the pyramid has evolved markedly over the past decades, whereby the base has narrowed down significantly. In fact, the proportion under 15 years has decreased from 44% in 1975 to 35% in 1994 to 31% in 1999, a 13-point difference in three decades.

C. Dependency

If we consider the youth aged 15 years or less and the older segment of the population aged 60 years or more as a burden on the economically active population, we find that the young dependency ratio (or the young over the active population) has reached a value of 51.4% by the year 1999. As for the old-age dependency ratio, it was estimated at 15.0% in the same year. It is worth noting, however, that the overall dependency ratio has improved over the years as a direct result of an increase in the proportion of the active population from 48% in 1966 to 57% in 1994 and 60.1% in 1999(**Table 2**).

Table 2 Distribution of the population by age and sex; 1975-1994

Age group	Year of Census								
	1975			1984			1994		
	W	M	T	W	M	T	W	M	T
0-14	44.0	44.0	44.0	39.0	40.0	39.0	35.0	35.0	35.0
15-59	51.0	49.0	50.0	55.0	53.0	54.0	57.0	56.0	57.0
60+	5.0	7.0	6.0	6.0	7.0	7.0	8.0	9.0	8.0
Dependency ratio									
Young	...	...	88.0	...	...	72.2	...	...	61.40
Old	...	...	12.0	...	...	13.0	...	...	14.0
Total	...	...	100.0	...	...	85.0	...	...	75.4
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: Results of population censuses, 1975-94/National Institute of Statistics

II. Fertility and reproduction

A marked decrease was noted in the proportion of the youngest age groups (namely those aged less than 5 years) from 18.5% in 1966 to 16% in 1975, 11% in 1994 and 9% in 1999. This could be directly linked to fertility decline and reduction in crude birth rates over the past decades (**Table 3**). This trend in turn was triggered by the better access to education and the delayed age at marriage as well as the family planning programs.

Table 3 Trends in demographic indicators

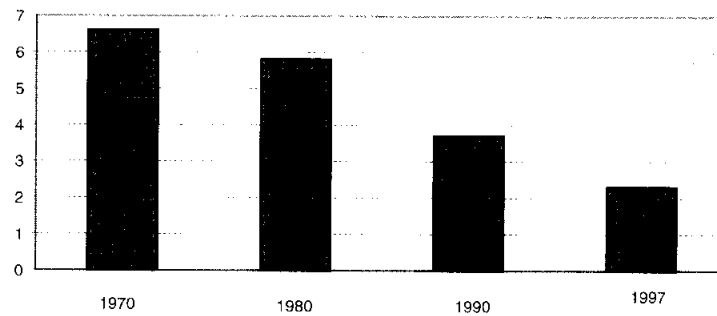
Indicator	Year						
	1956	1966	1975	1984	1994	1996	1998
Total fertility rate	...	7.2	5.8	4.6	2.9	2.5	2.2
Crude birth rate (per 1000)	...	45	37	32	23	20	18
Crude death rate (per 1000)	25.0	15.0	10.0	6.5	5.7	5.5	5.6
Infant mortality rate	200	120	77	51	33	29	28.9
Population growth rate (%)	...	3.0	2.7	2.6	1.7	1.4	1.2
Life expectancy at birth	...	51	59	67	71	72	71.9
Women	...	52	59	69	73	73	...
Men	...	51	58	66	69	70	...

Source: National Institute of Statistics – national department of family and human development.

The major change that was noted over the past decades in the age structure of the Tunisian population was also triggered by an increase in the life expectancy at birth among both men and women. In fact, crude death rate was about five times higher in 1966 as compared to its current value in 1998.

According to **Figure 3**, the proportion of births that were delivered at an early age among women (i.e. between 15 and 19 years) was reduced to less than half of its value in 1970.

Figure 3 Proportion of births delivered among women aged 15-19 years out of total births (%)



Source: National Institute of Statistics

It is worth noting that fertility rates have declined among women in all age groups (**Table 4**), particularly among those in their earlier and later reproductive stages (15-19, 20-24 and beyond 40 years).

Table 4 Trends in age specific fertility rates (ASFR) per 1000

Age group	Year		
	1970	1995	% reduction
15-19	43.9	13.6	69.0
20-24	256.9	93.0	64.0
25-29	306.5	151.6	51.0
30-34	275.3	144.2	48.0
35-39	207.6	89.7	57.0
40-44	97.3	33.5	80.0
45-49	38.3	7.7	80.0
TFR	6.1	2.7	65.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics

The age of mothers at first birth was simultaneously increased from 22 years in 1966 to 28 years in 1994.

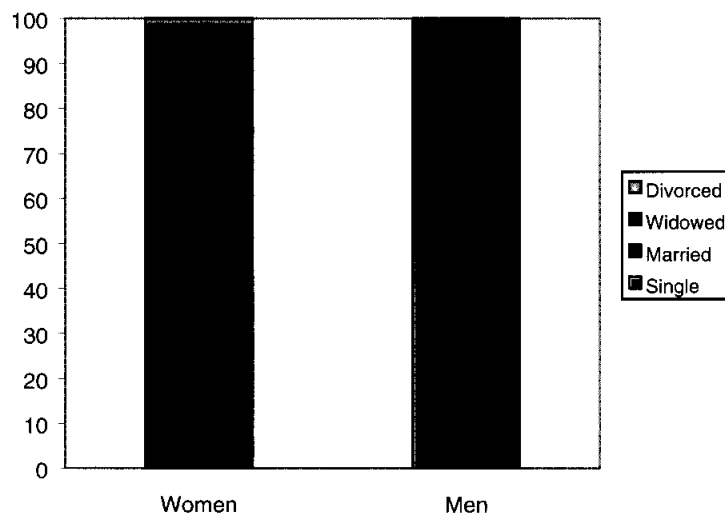
III. Nuptiality

A. Marital status

The 1999 survey has shown that the proportion single was higher among men as compared to women (46.3% vs. 37.4%). In contrast, the widowed and divorced proportion was more inflated among women (8.2% vs. 1.0% and 1.4% vs. 0.4%); (Figure 4).

It is worth noting that an increase in the proportions of singles is observed in the age groups 25-29 and 30-34 years among both men and women. The latter age group has witnessed a doubling in the proportion single between 1984 and 1994 (Figure 5). Among the elderly, the proportion of currently married is much higher for men than for women. In fact, a significant proportion of old women are widowed.

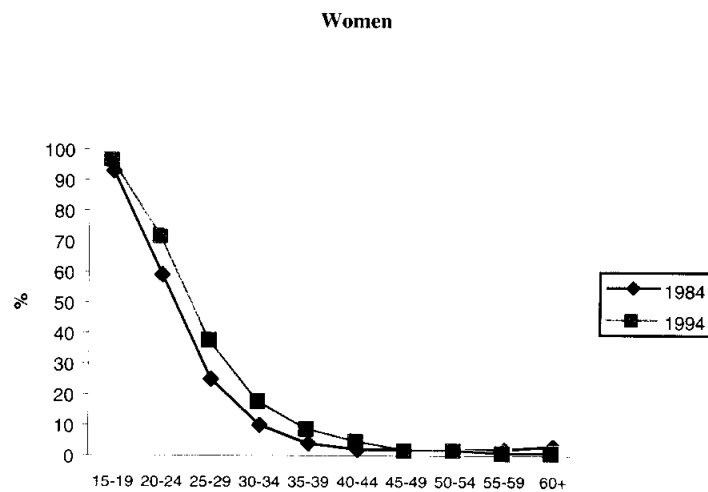
Figure 4 Distribution of the adult population (15 years or more) by marital status and gender; 1999



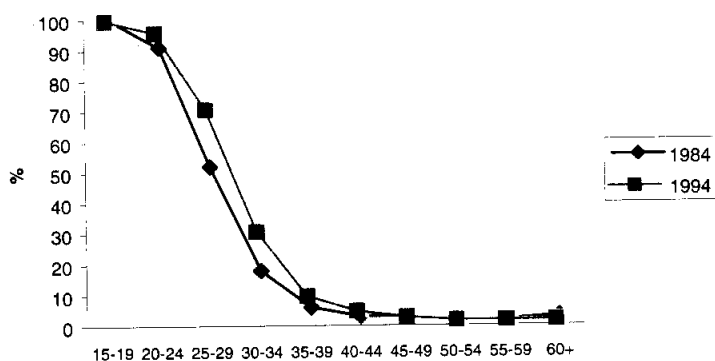
B. Place of residence and marital status

The general patterns observed in the Tunisian population with respect to marital status vary significantly by area of residence. In fact, we observe that the proportion single *among women* was slightly higher in rural areas, while the proportion widowed was larger in urban settings. *Among men*, differences were less marked, whereby the proportion single in urban areas was slightly higher than in rural ones (45.0% vs. 44.4%). In the case of divorce and widowhood, no differences can be detected due to their low rate of occurrence among the male population.

Figure 5 Trends in the proportion single by age; 1984-1994



Men



Sources: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses, 1984 and 1994.

Currently, no gender difference is notable in terms of proportion married within rural settings, in contrast with other marital status categories. This is not the case for urban settings, whereby gender gaps are still significant in that respect (Table 5).

Table 5 Distribution of the population by marital status, gender and rural-urban area of residence, 1994

	Marital Status				Total
	Single	Married	Widowed	Divorced	
Urban					
Women	34.8	55.2	9.3	1.7	100.0
Men	45.0	53.2	1.0	0.5	100.0
Rural					
Women	36.2	55.1	7.9	0.8	100.0
Men	44.4	54.0	1.3	0.3	100.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population census, 1994

C. Mean age at first marriage

Many indicators have shown that women and men in Tunisia are gradually and increasingly delaying their age at marriage. In fact, for the age group 30-34, one person out of four remained single in the year 1994 (one out of three among men), whereas this proportion within that same age group did not exceed 13.7% in 1984. Even among women, around 18% chose to remain single up till the ages of 30 to 34 years (**Figure 4**). This may be associated with a number of socio-economic factors, such as workforce participation and education.

This behavior explains the increase in mean age at marriage among women from a value of 19 years at the inception of independence (1956) to reach a value of 27 years in 1994; (**Table 6**).

Table 6 Trends in mean age at first marriage by gender; 1970-1997

Age at marriage	Year					
	1970	1980	1991	1994	1996	1997
Women	21.5	23.4	23.9	24.5	24.9	25.1
Men	27.6	27.4	29.2	30.0	30.4	...

Source: National Institute of Statistics – Population census, 1994

It is worth noting that rural-urban differentials with respect to mean age at marriage were distinctly reduced, since in both settings women and men married on average at the age of 26 years. One definite phenomenon in nuptiality patterns is that both women and men are more and more delaying entry into marriage more and more over the years.

IV. Household headship

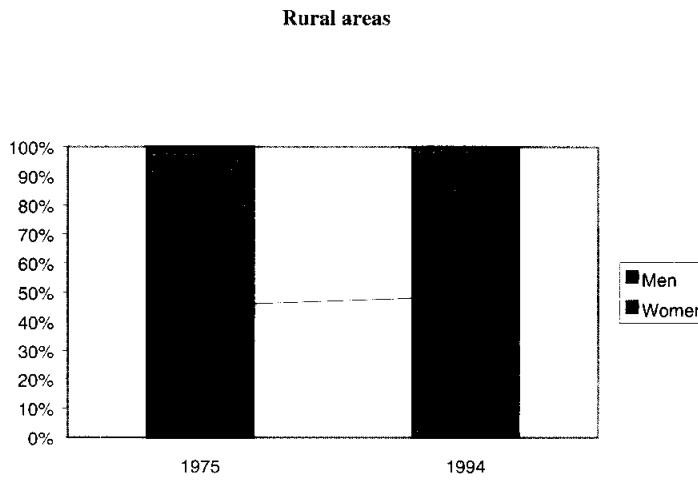
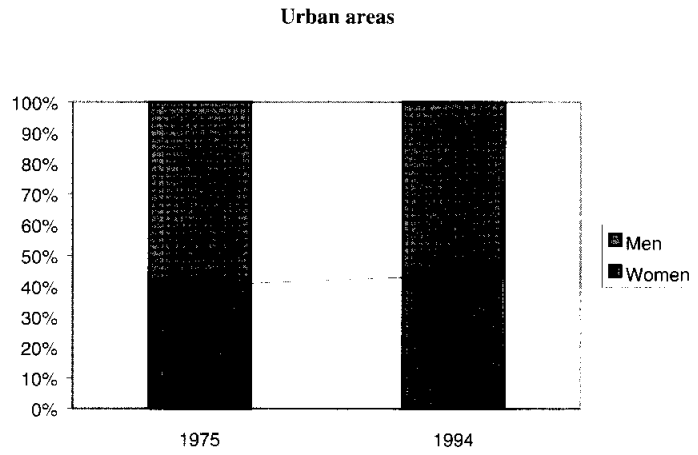
Based on the 1975 and 1994 population censuses, no real changes were observed when it came to household headship rates. In fact, in both years, the proportion of woman-headed households was estimated at 11% with a small variability noted across areas of residence. This phenomenon of female headship is mostly prominent in single person households (48% in 1994), and more so in rural areas (Table 7 and Figure 6).

Table 7 Trends in the proportion of woman-headed households; 1975-1994

Area of residence	Year			
	1975		1994	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Urban	12.0	88.0	12.0	88.0
Rural	9.0	91.0	10.0	90.0
Total	11.0	89.0	11.0	89.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Figure 6 Proportion of single-person households by gender and rural-urban area of residence; 1975-1994



Source: National Institute of Statistics

The national population census that was conducted in 1994 showed that the majority of women heads (41%) were in the old age category (60 years and over), as shown in **Table 8**.

Table 8 Trends in the percent distribution of woman-headed households by age

Age (years)	Year	
	1975	1994
15-24	15.0	2.0
25-44	19.0	27.0
45-49	42.0	30.0
60+	24.0	41.0
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics

V. Population and area of residence

During the past decades, Tunisia has witnessed continuous reconstruction and urbanization movements, and the urban population has grown from 40% in 1966 to reach 61% in 1994. In addition, the annual growth rate of the urban segment of the population has also increased to reach 4% in 1994, in comparison to 0.4% for the rural segment growth rate. This trend was observed equally among men and women, whereby the percent urban was 61.2% among men and 60.8% among women in 1994 (**Table 9**).

Table 9 Trends in urbanization; 1966-1994

	Year			
	1966	1975	1984	1994
Urban				
% of population size	40.0	48.0	53.0	61.0
Growth rate	...	4.3	3.7	3.8
Rural				
% of population size	60.0	52.5	47.2	39.0
Growth rate	...	0.9	1.3	0.4

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Table 10 shows the trend in age distribution by area of residence. It can be noted that even though the youth still constitute the majority of the Tunisian population in rural areas, their proportion has decreased gradually, leaving behind a relatively larger elderly segment, a direct consequence of population ageing that has affected both areas of residence.

Table 10 Trends in age distribution by area of residence; 1975-1994

Age (years)	Urban			Rural		
	1975	1984	1994	1975	1984	1994
0-4	14.0	13.1	10.3	18.0	16.1	12.1
5-14	28.0	23.3	22.6	27.5	27.2	25.6
15-59	52.3	56.9	59.1	48.5	50.0	53.5
60+	5.7	6.7	8.0	6.0	6.7	8.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics

VI. Migration movements

The 1994 census has clearly shown that 21% of the Tunisian population (both women and men), has undergone internal migration. Most of these movements (15%) were from small towns to larger cities, often leading to the displacement of whole families from a region to another (**Table 11**).

Table 11 Migration movements between 1987 and 1994 among women and men

Type of movement	Women	Men
None	78.9	79.0
Rural to urban areas	0.8	0.8
Rural to rural areas	3.6	3.8
Urban to rural areas	1.1	1.1
Urban to urban areas	15.1	14.8
Outside to urban areas	0.4	0.4
Outside to rural areas	0.1	0.1
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics

Chapter IV

HEALTH AND REPRODUCTION

HEALTH AND REPRODUCTION

I. Health policy

Prior to independence, the health situation in Tunisia was relatively poor, with a crude death rate over 25 per 1000 and an infant mortality rate around 200 per 1000. In addition, the doctor to person ratio did not exceed one per 5,900 citizens and the total number of hospital beds was less than 7000. A wide gap existed between rural and urban areas with respect to the overall health status of the population.

Since the earlier days of independence, Tunisia has strived to develop the health sector, which became one of its primary targets along with the sector of education. Consequently, fund raising was initiated in order to develop national programs for health prevention, health sector reform, and improvement of health care services along with the dissemination of vaccines. This initiative had a significant impact on health indicators in the country, whereby mortality rates were markedly reduced, especially those of infants, children and mothers. In addition, a number of communicable diseases were completely eradicated particularly water borne infections.

Health coverage by primary care centers has increased from 50% in 1985 to 90% in 1998, resulting in 20 health centers per 100,000 Tunisian citizens. In addition, the number of doctors per 10,000 citizen was also increased from 3.6 in 1976 to 10 in 1998.

Health sector reform was accompanied by a wider participation of women in that arena, with an overall proportion of 48.6% in 1998 and 42% working within the medical field.

II. Life expectancy at birth

Life expectancy at birth is one of the key indicators in development, particularly with respect to the health sector. This indicator has scored a significant improvement since the country's independence, increasing from 47 years in 1956 to 72 years in 1999.

This improvement was more noted among women as compared to men, since the increase in life expectancy between 1966 and 1999 was nearly 22 years among women and 19 years among men.

This gender differential in life expectancy increase, can be correlated with the special care that was granted to women in the areas of reproductive health, pregnancy-related complications and other women's health issues.

Women are observed to outlive men in Tunisia by an average of 2.8 years since 1975, as shown in **Table 12**.

Table 12 Trends in life expectancy at birth; 1966-1999

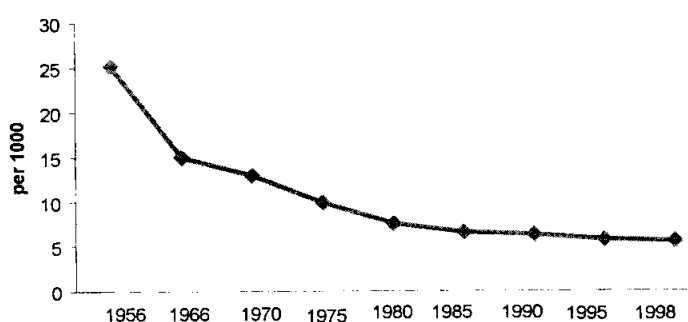
Gender	Year					
	1966	1975	1984	1990	1994	1999
Women	52	59	69	70	73	74
Men	51	58	66	67	69	70

Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses, surveys and demographic estimates

III. Mortality

The distinctive achievement related to health sector reform in the country, particularly with respect to primary and preventive health care, has contributed significantly to the decline of the mortality rate. In fact, crude death rate was reduced from 25 per 1000, at the onset of independence, to 5.6 per 1000 by the year 1998, as is shown in **Figure 7**. It is worth noting that crude death rate in the age group 15-49 years drastically decreased from 1.6 per 1000 in 1985 to 0.66 per 1000 in 1994. This was noted to a greater extent among women as compared to men.

Figure 7 Trend in crude death rates (CDR); 1956-1998



Source: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses and demographic estimates

IV. Maternal mortality

Maternal mortality rate has declined to half its value in 1994 when compared to that observed in 1970 (69 per 100,000 vs. 140 per 100,000 live births). Nevertheless, it varied significantly by geographical location, whereby the highest rates were found in the North Eastern and Mid-Western regions of Tunisia (**Table 13**).

Table 13 Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000) by geographical location, 1994

Geographical location	Maternal mortality rate per 100,000 births
Greater Tunisia	40
North East	50
North West	94
Mid West	106
Mid East	58
South East	62
South West	93
Overall	69

Source: Ministry of Public Health

In addition, the most common underlying causes of maternal deaths are as follows:

Table 14 Causes of maternal deaths (%) in 1993-94

Cause of maternal death	%
Hemorrhage/bleeding	32.0
Hypertension	19.0
Purpureal infection	11.0
Vascular disease	11.0
Other causes	18.0
Unknown causes	9.0
Total	100.0

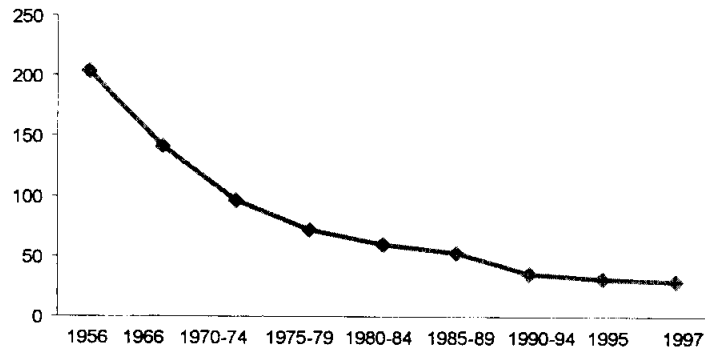
Source: Ministry of Public Health National survey 1993-1994

The decline in maternal deaths can be directly linked with efforts to promote awareness among women as to the importance of continuous prenatal care and professionally assisted delivery.

V. Infant Mortality

In addition to the observed decline in maternal mortality, probability of dying in the first year of life as well as infant mortality have significantly dropped off during the past few decades (**Figure 8**).

Figure 8 Trends in infant mortality rates; 1956-1997



Source: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses 1956-1994;
National Family Department: Survey on Maternal and Child Health, 1995

It was also reported, as expected, that boys under one year of age were at higher risk of dying as compared to girls in 1995 (34 per 1000 vs. 27 per 1000). Moreover, rural areas of Tunisia had, all through the study period, a higher infant mortality rate than urban regions. The gap, however, became narrower with every passing decade.

Table 15 Trends in infant mortality rates by gender and area of residence; 1970-1994

Infant mortality rate	Year		
	1970-74	1980-84	1990-94
Gender			
Girls	83	64	32
Boys	107	55	39
Area of residence			
Urban	80	44	22
Rural	118	80	50

Source: National Office for Family and Population -- Survey on Maternal and Child Health, 1995

VI. Child mortality

Parallel to the decline in infant mortality rates, child mortality decreased markedly from a value of 60 per 1,000 during the early 70s to no more than 9 per 1,000 at the onset of the 90s. This trend was particularly important among girls to such an extent that the gender gap narrowed down to only 2-point difference in 1980-84 and 1990-94. In addition, the decline was steeper and more rapid in urban areas, and the differential in child mortality rates between areas of residence is still significant until now (**Table 16**).

Table 16 Trends in child mortality rates by gender and area of residence; 1970-1994

Child mortality rate	Year		
	1970-74	1980-84	1990-94
Gender			
Girls	64	16	10
Boys	55	18	8
Area of residence			
Urban	53	10	5
Rural	71	27	13
Overall	60	17	9

Source: National Office for Family and Population - Survey on Maternal and Child Health, 1995

VII. Family Planning

Tunisia is one of the few countries that have initiated nationwide programs that had a direct impact on reproductive behavior.

The national family planning program interacted with improvements in socioeconomic conditions, and resulted in higher use of contraceptives among married women (34.1% in 1978 to 41.1% in 1983 and 60% in 1994). The most recent figures (1998) indicate that 65% of women in their reproductive age are currently using any form of contraceptives. **Table 17** shows that the gap in contraceptive use between rural and urban areas has slowly shifted from 22 point-difference in 1978 to 9-point difference in 1994, a direct consequence of efforts made to increase accessibility and acceptance of these family planning methods and enhance their coverage all over the country.

Table 17 Trends in use of family planning methods by area of residence, 1978-1998

Area of residence	Year				
	1978	1983	1988	1994	1998
Urban	42	50	61	65	...
Rural	20	29	35	51	...
Total	34	41	50	60	65

Source: National Office for Family and Population

VIII. Birth spacing

It is commonly known that excessive childbearing exposes both the mother and the infant to major life-threatening risks and has a negative effect on their health. Previous studies were able to prove that infant mortality is strongly associated with small birth intervals, the age of the mother and birth order of the child.

In 1989, a study has shown that infant mortality rate approached 84 per 1000 when birth interval are less than two years, and was reduced to 28 per 1000 when women had two consecutive children with a birth spacing of four years.

In addition, infant mortality rates increase with the age of the mother to around 110 per 1000 among those aged 40-49 years, in comparison to 52 per 1000 for those aged 30-39 years.

Over the past few decades, birth spacing became more and more a common practice all over the country, particularly in rural areas (**Table 18**).

Table 18 Trends in mean birth intervals (months) by area of residence; 1978-1998

Area of residence	Year					
	1978	1983	1988	1994	1997	1998
Urban	31.4	41.1	49.8	59.7	61.2	65.6
Rural	20.3	28.9	34.6	51.4	55.0	...

Source: National Office for Family and Population

IX. Health care utilization

Whereas prenatal care has increased to a high and sufficient level, post-natal services remain underutilized (**Table 19**).

Table 19 Indices of pre and post-natal care per 100 births

Indices	Year		
	1986	1992	1997
Prenatal*	70	160	200
Post-natal**	4	16	34

*Number of prenatal visits per 100 births; ** Number of post-natal visits per 100 births.

Source: National Office for Family and Population

Human health resources and the general infrastructure have markedly improved over the years resulting in 1,850 primary care centers available to the public, or around one center per 5,000 residents and one center per 700 women in their reproductive years. In addition, it was estimated that one midwife served each 1,000 women, and to every 1,260 residents there was one doctor available. In addition, a total of 54 centers in the country offered reproductive health services (**Table 20**).

Table 20 Population per doctor and per primary care center

Population	Year				
	1966	1975	1984	1994	1999
Per Doctor	6,800	4,700	2,400	1,600	1,260
Per Primary care center	8,900	9,800	7,500	5,800	4,886

Source: Ministry of Public Health

In addition, per capita expenditure on health care has climbed markedly over the years (**Table 21**).

Table 21 Per capita health care expenditure (in Dinars)

Per capita health care expenditure	Year				
	1966	1975	1984	1994	1997
Public health care	1.7	5.9	24.6	43.1	52.2
Preventive health care	0.4	7.2	33.0	90.3	...

Source: Ministry of Public Health

IX. Women's health indicators

Table 22 presents a summary of indicators reflecting the health status of women in Tunisia. It is worth noting that these indicators varied across rural and urban settings. Currently, for instance, the mean age at first birth in rural areas does not exceed 22 years.

Table 22 Trend in selected women's health indicators; 1966-1997

Indicators	Year		
	1966	1994	1997
Life expectancy at birth	52	73	74
Age at first marriage	21	25	25
Mean age at first birth	22	28	...
Total fertility rate	7.2	2.9	2.3
Maternity period	24	10	...
Breastfeeding period	18	6	...
Mean age at last birth	...	35	...

Source: National Office for Family and Population

The proportion of medically assisted births – i.e. those delivered in health care institutions – has tripled over the past three decades from 30% in 1970 to 83% in 1997 (**Table 23**).

Table 23 Trends in maternal health indicators; 1970-1997

Indicators	Year			
	1970	1984	1994	1997
Medical consultation prior to delivery	...	54	79	85
Medically assisted births	30	56	80	83
Medical consultation after delivery	...	...	23	53
Maternal mortality rate (per 100,000 births)	140	...	69	...

Source: Ministry of Public Health

X. Nutrition and health risk factors

Indicators of nutritional deficiencies suggest that there are no gender differences in that respect, as is the case in most other countries. In fact, as shown in **Table 24**, men are slightly more undernourished.

In the case of children, obesity was found to be more prevalent among girls as compared to boys with a 10-point difference gender gap (19% vs. 9%). In addition, anemia was experienced by women to a greater extent than men, since it usually affects one out of three pregnant women. The first underlying causes of hospitalization are cardiovascular diseases for both men and women and on an equal basis.

Table 24 Prevalence of malnutrition by gender (%)

Malnutrition	Women	Men
Mild nutritional deficiency	14	16
Severe/moderate acute nutritional deficiency	2	4
Mild chronic nutritional deficiency	27	27
Severe/moderate chronic nutritional deficiency	19	17
Mild over-nutrition	10	10
Severe/moderate over-nutrition	4	3

Source: Ministry of Public Health – National survey on nutrition

Chapter V

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

I. Educational policy

Since independence, the sector of education was among the top priorities in Tunisia. The government invested a large portion of its budget on educational reform. This interest encompassed both boys and girls on an equal basis.

A marked improvement in the educational indicators, particularly when it comes to school enrollment of girls and their potential level of achievement was noted. Gender gaps in education-related data narrowed down, leading ultimately to gender equity.

II. Illiteracy

A. Gender differentials

Efforts that were made by the country to improve the educational sector had a direct impact on the illiteracy rate. A decrease was noted among men and women, in all age groups and in both rural and urban regions.

The latest figures obtained from the 1999 population and employment survey suggest that illiteracy rates decreased to one third the value reported in 1956, notably from 85% to 27%.

Nevertheless, when compared to illiteracy in developed countries, the current level of illiteracy rate in Tunisia remains elevated. This is basically attributed to a relatively high prevalence of illiteracy among women, the rural population, and the elderly segment (**Table 25**).

Table 25 Illiteracy rates (in the population aged 10 years or more) among women and men by area of residence, 1999

Gender	Area of residence		
	Urban	Rural	Total
Women	26.0	53.0	36.0
Men	12.0	28.0	18.0
Gender gap (W-M)	+14.0	+25.0	+18.0
Total	17.0	41.0	27.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population and employment survey, 1999

Gender gaps in illiteracy rates are still relatively wide, in spite of efforts made to achieve equity in that respect. In fact, the 1999 figure for women (36%) is double that of men (18%) and is comparable to men's illiteracy rate 19 years earlier (i.e. in 1975); (Table 26).

Table 26 Trend in illiteracy rates in the population aged 10 years or more; 1956-1999

Gender	Year					
	1956	1966	1975	1984	1994	1999
Women	96.0	82.0	68.0	58.0	42.0	36.0
Men	75.0	54.0	42.0	35.0	21.0	18.0
Gender gap (W-M)	+21.0	+28.0	+26.0	+23.0	+21.0	+18.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses and survey 1956-1999

The decline pattern in illiteracy among women is less steep than the one observed among men. Since independence until 1994, illiteracy rates dropped by 56% and 72% among women and men, respectively. Even though both women and men have experienced an equal net drop of 54-points in that period, women are still lagging behind men in that respect by 21-points of difference (Table 27).

Table 27 Decline in illiteracy rates (in point-difference); 1956-1994

Gender	Year					
	1956-66	1966-75	1975-84	1984-94	1956-94	
					Points	%
Women	-14.0	-14.0	-10.0	-16.0	-54.0	56.0
Men	-21.0	-12.0	-7.0	-14.0	-54.0	72.0

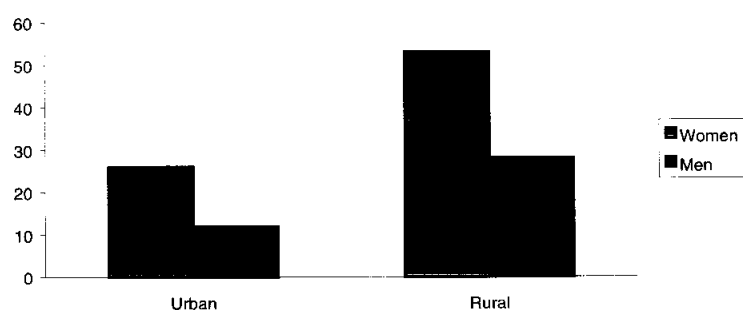
Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses 1956-1994

B. Rural-urban differentials

Illiteracy is still widespread in rural areas in spite of efforts made over the past two decades aiming at eradicating this social phenomenon and developing the rural infrastructure as a whole especially in the underserved regions.

In addition, the urban-rural gap is still wide for both women and men as shown in **Figure 9**. The rate of illiteracy in rural areas is nearly double the level found in urban regions.

Figure 9 Illiteracy rate by gender and rural-urban area of residence, 1999



Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population and employment survey, 1999

The gap between rural and urban areas was found to be less important among men as compared to women (**Table 28**).

Table 28 Trends in illiteracy and its decline among women and men, by place of residence; 1966-1994

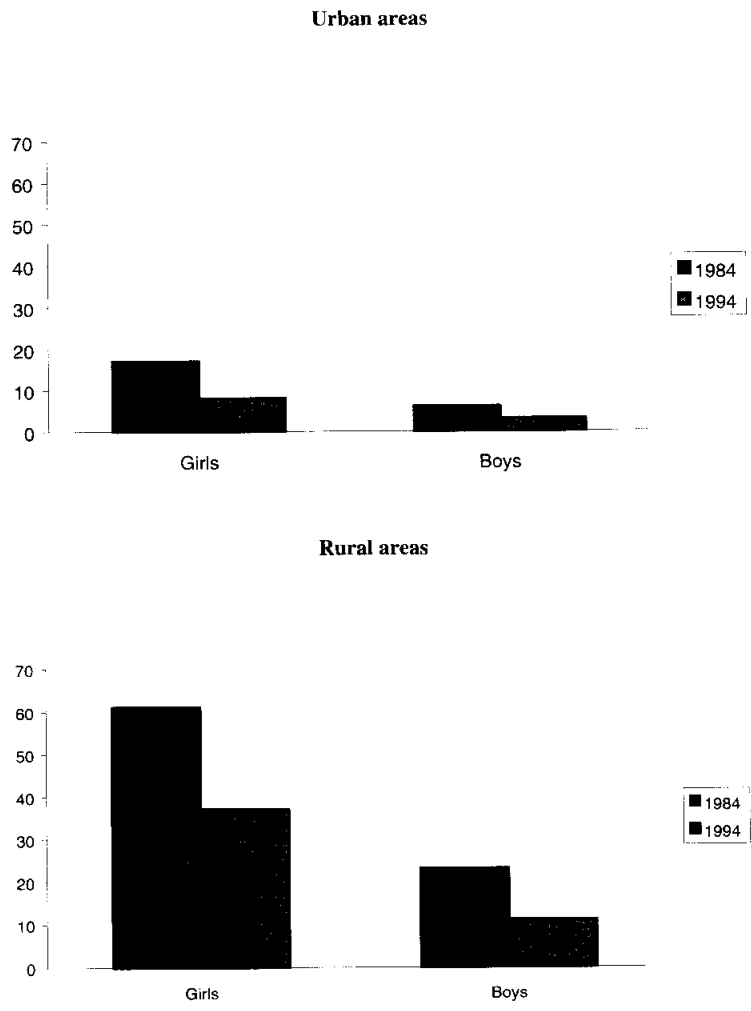
Gender	Urban				Rural			
	1966	1975	1984	1994	1966	1975	1984	1994
Women	68.0	53.0	43.0	32.0	92.0	84.0	76.0	60.0
% decline	...	-15.0	-10	-12.0	...	-8.0	-8.0	-16.0
Men	39.0	30.0	24.0	15.0	65.0	54.0	48.0	32.0
% decline	...	-9.0	-6.0	-9.0	...	-10	-7.0	-16.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses 1956-1994

C. Age differentials

The population aged 45 years and above is shown to be the most prone to illiteracy. In the younger group (10-29 years), however, illiteracy rate did not exceed 14% in 1984 and 6% a decade later among boys. For girls in that same age group, illiteracy rate is higher, amounting to 37% in 1984 and 20% in 1994. Hence, efforts made in the last decade resulted in lowering illiteracy among the youth by 50% their original value in both rural and urban areas (**Figure 10**).

Figure 10 Trends in illiteracy rates among children and youth (10 to 29 years) by place of residence; 1984-1994



Sources: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses, 1984 and 1994.

Illiteracy rates are still elevated among the youth, especially among girls in rural areas (37% vs. 8% among girls in urban areas). It is also worth noting that the current figure among boys in urban areas does not exceed 3%.

III. Educational attainment¹

In addition to the marked decline observed in illiteracy, population censuses have clearly shown that the educational attainment has also improved over the years at all levels and stages and among all social groups (Table 29).

Table 29 Trends in educational attainment (among those aged 10 years or more); 1966-1994

Educational attainment	Year			
	1966	1975	1984	1994
Illiterate	67.9	54.9	46.1	31.7
Primary/informal	26.2	32.8	34.7	40.2
Secondary	5.2	10.4	17.1	24.3
Higher education	0.6	0.9	2.1	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: National Institute of Statistics -- Population censuses 1966-1994

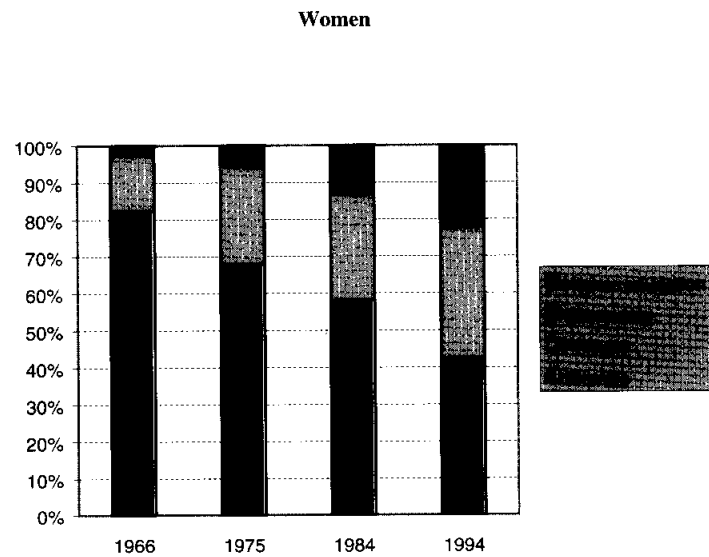
In spite of the overall progress, gender gap in educational attainment is still a burden. In fact, in addition to the gap previously described for illiteracy, the proportion reaching primary education was estimated at 36% among women in 1994, as compared to 45% among men.

¹ Note: Ever since the decision to increase the scope of basic education to the first 9 years in 1991, the label "primary education" was rectified to become "the first stage of basic education". "Secondary education" was divided into "the second stage of basic education" and "secondary level of education".

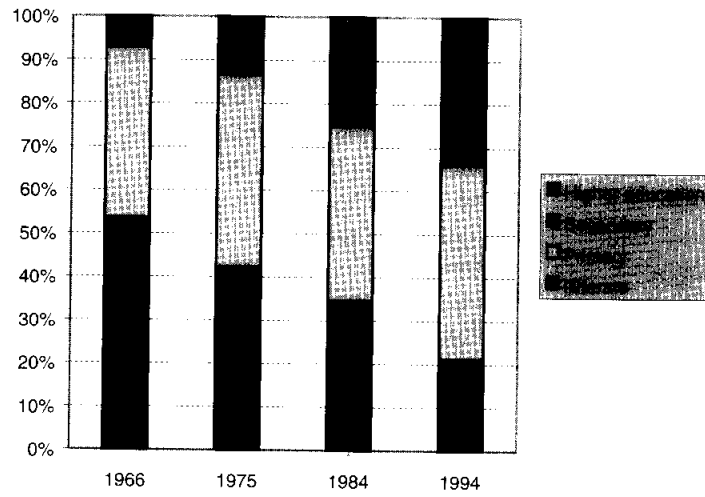
In terms of secondary level completion, figures obtained were 20% among women and 29% among men and those for higher education were 2.5% and 5%, respectively (**Figure 11**).

In addition, this gap is more accentuated when results of the 1994 population census are stratified by area of residence. It was concluded that women living in rural areas were the most disadvantaged group in terms of educational attainment, whereby only 8% had attained a secondary level of education and 0.4% had higher levels, such as university and graduate studies. In contrast, men in urban areas were the most advantaged since 43% of them had attained primary education, 35% had a secondary level and 7% completed higher studies (**Figure 12**).

Figure 11 Trends in educational attainment by gender (among those aged 10 years or more); 1966-1994

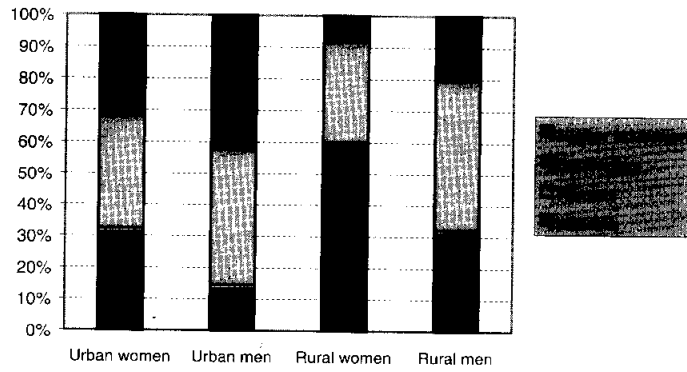


Men



Sources: National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses, 1966-1994

Figure 12 Educational attainment by rural-urban area of residence and gender, 1994



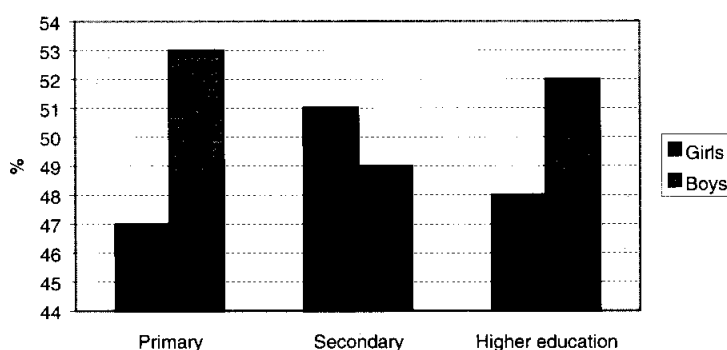
Source: National Institute of Statistics - Population census, 1994

IV. School enrollment

A number of indicators on schooling demonstrate the existence of a marked progress with respect to the number of girls enrolled in schools and their overall level of achievement. Gender gaps narrowed down significantly. Dropping out of school, an incident that was formerly common among girls in rural areas, decreased especially after 1991, when schooling became compulsory at the basic education level.

Figure 13 shows that the sex ratio of children currently enrolled in schools at the primary and higher levels is more to the advantage of boys as compared to girls. However, no gender difference was noted in secondary education.

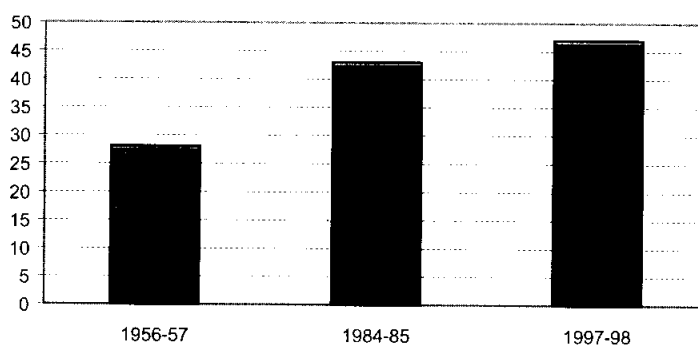
Figure 13 Proportion of boys and girls enrolled in schools by level of education; 1999-2000



Sources: Ministry of education and Ministry of higher education

The proportion of girls enrolled in school has markedly increased, rising from 28% in 1956 to 47% in 1998 (**Figure 14**).

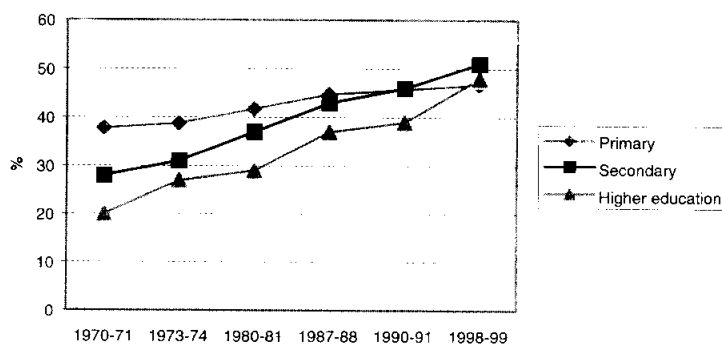
Figure 14 Trends in school enrollment of girls, 1956-1998



Sources: Ministry of education and Ministry of higher education

In addition, the proportion of girls among students enrolled in the primary level has increased from 38% in 1970 to 47% in 1999, whereas in the year of independence it did not exceed 23%. During the same period (i.e. 1970-1999), the proportion of girls enrolled in the secondary level has markedly increased from 28% to 51% and in higher studies from 20% to 48%; (Figure 15).

Figure 15 Trends in the proportion of girls enrolled in schools by level of education; 1970-1999



Sources: Ministry of education and Ministry of higher education

In 1998, a slightly higher proportion of students enrolled in schools were girls in urban areas as compared to rural ones (48% vs. 46%).

Schooling at the age of six has become almost universal (99%) by the year 1998 for both boys and girls and gender gaps narrowed down over the years in that respect.

Among girls aged between six and twelve years, schooling had a continuously increasing trend, particularly during the last decade whereby gender gaps decreased distinctly from 14 point-difference in 1984-85 to 0 point-difference in 1999-2000 (**Table 30**).

Table 30 Trends in schooling in the first stage of basic education (%); 1984-1998

Schooling at six years	Year			
	1984-85	1987-88	1990-91	1999-2000
Girls	87.0	87.0	94.0	99.0
Boys	96.0	95.0	99.0	99.0
Total	92.0	91.0	96.0	99.0
Schooling at ages 6-12 years				
Girls	77.0	80.0	84.0	92.0
Boys	91.0	92.0	92.0	92.0
Total	84.0	86.0	88.0	92.0

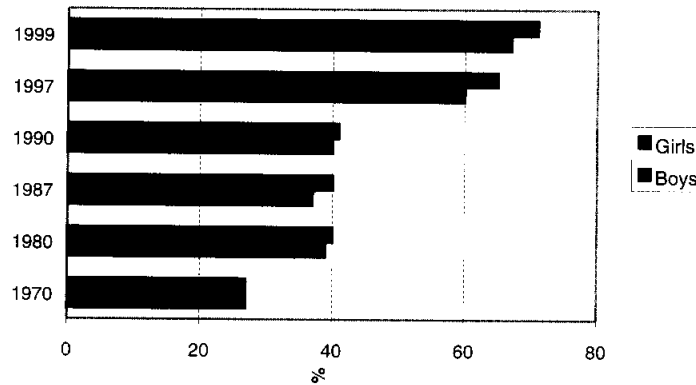
Source: Ministry of education

V. School achievement

Girls were found, in general, to be higher achievers than boys in various fields of specialization.

In secondary education (or second stage of basic education), we find that girls have a higher chance of succeeding than boys, a phenomenon mostly observed after the year 1980 (**Figure 16**).

Figure 16 Trends in the probability of entering the first year of secondary level education among boys and girls (%); 1970-1999



Source: Ministry of education

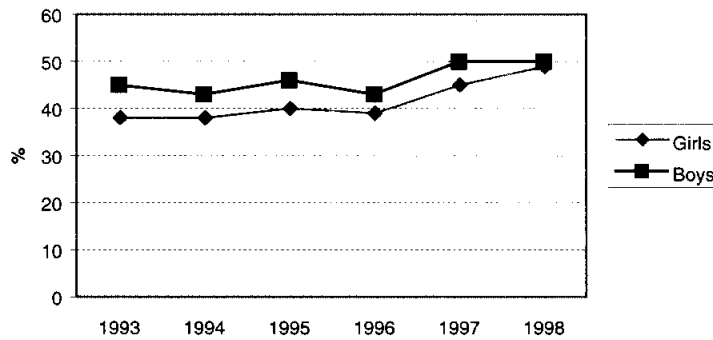
Moreover, girls were more likely to graduate with distinction or an honorable grade point average. In fact, in 1998, whereas 15% of the girls were accepted in prestigious educational institutions at the secondary level, this proportion did not exceed 12% among boys.

Similarly, with respect to completion of basic education, success rates during the academic year 1998-99 were more important among girls as compared to boys (83% vs. 79%).

It is worth noting that even in technical training, girls were more likely to succeed than boys, and success rates in 1997 amounted to 94.2% for girls and 93.6% for boys.

As is shown in **Figure 17**, the gender gap in passing the baccalaureate official examination is becoming narrower each year, at the advantage of girls, from 7 point-difference in 1993 to 1-point difference in 1998.

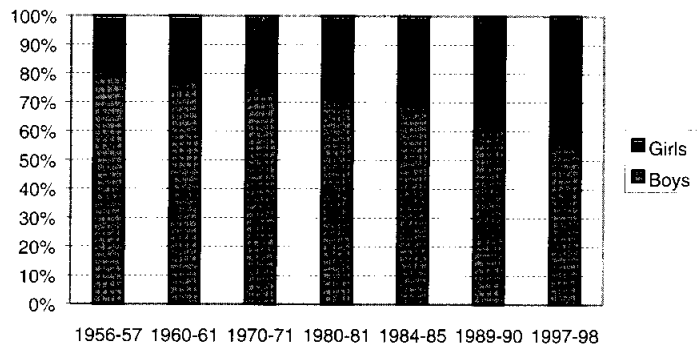
Figure 17 Trends in success rates among boys and girls in the official baccalaureate examination; 1993-1998



Source: Ministry of education

As far as higher education is concerned, whereas only 19% of those holding higher education degree were girls at the onset of independence, this proportion has increased in a linear fashion to reach 44% in the academic year 1997-98 (**Figure 18**).

Figure 18 Trends in gender distribution of those achieving a higher education degree; 1956-1998

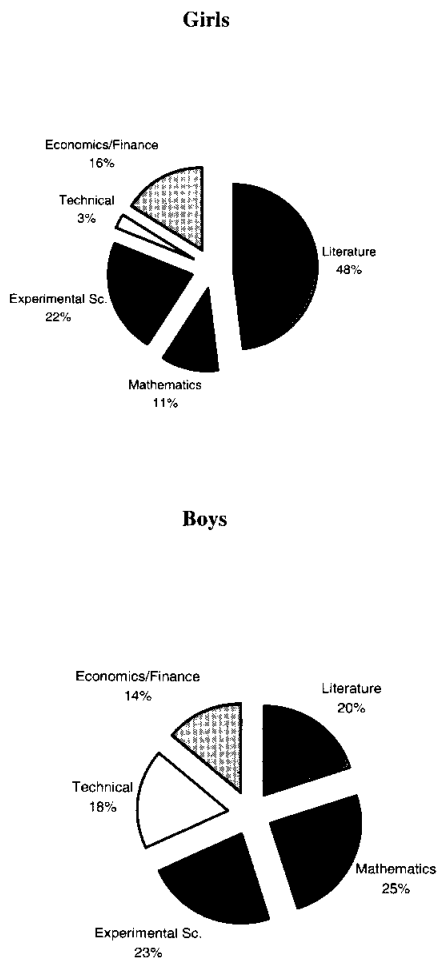


Source: Ministry of higher education

VI. Career guidance

Even though all types of specialization are open to boys and girls in Tunisia on an equal basis, the vast majority of girls were traditionally directing their interests towards literature and humanities. However, with time and proper career guidance, the presence of girls became more and more important in other fields such as technical training, experimental sciences, mathematics, economics and finance (**Figure 19**).

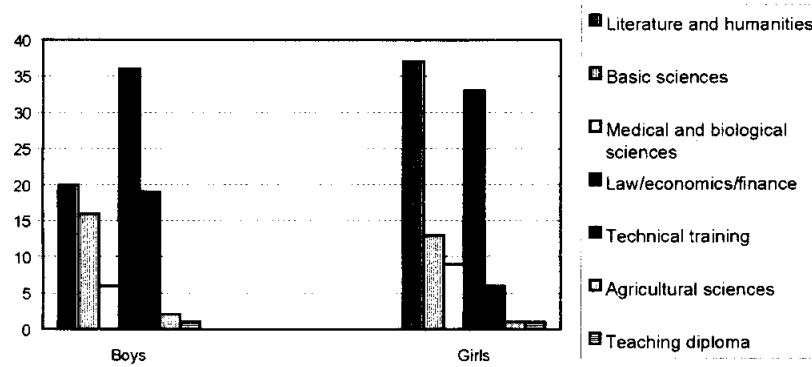
Figure 19 Distribution of seventh year secondary school students by branch and gender 1998-99



Source: Ministry of education

Concerning technical training, girls are mostly directed toward the art of tailoring, hairstyling, esthetics, accounting and other handicrafts. On the other hand, boys are well represented in all domains of technical training (**Figure 20**).

Figure 20 Distribution of students in higher education by branch or field specialization; 1998-99



Source: Ministry of higher education

VII. School dropouts

Over the years, the problem of school dropouts has become increasingly limited in importance, especially since the 1990s. In addition, whereas the majority of school dropouts used to be girls in rural areas, such a phenomenon is now more prevalent among boys and at all educational levels.

Table 31 Trends in school dropouts by gender and by educational level: 1975-1997

Educational level	Year				
	1975	1980	1984	1993	1997
Primary					
Girls	9.1	7.3	5.8	4.4	3.1
Boys	7.9	6.3	5.4	4.9	3.5
Secondary					
Girls	11.5	7.5	6.4	8.1	8.2
Boys	12.2	7.3	8.3	10.5	11.5

Source: Ministry of education

The same trend was observed in higher education, whereby a higher proportion of boys have dropped out as compared to girls (9% vs. 6%) in 1991. During the academic year 1998-99, girls constituted only 43% of the total dropping out from higher education institutions.

School dropping out is expected to decrease further with time, since actions have been taken to this end, which include imposing basic education, limiting the number of study hours per week in certain rural areas, distributing stationary and books for the needy and equipping schools in rural areas with the necessary tools.

VIII. Technical training

Technical and vocational training centers in Tunisia (n=880) were able to take in a large number of women and men in many fields of specialty. Between 1992 and 1997, around 57,235 individuals graduated from these institutions out of which 15,179 were women (27%). In particular, those who received degrees in the industrial and services sectors amounted to 42,788 and 9,785 of them were women (23%).

In terms of handicrafts work, 62,464 women received training between 1987 and 1998, constituting 85% of the total graduates.

With respect to continuous education, 67,061 individuals were trained by the year 1997, 12,609 of whom were women distributed as follows: 35% top management, 23% assistant managers and 42% assistant executives.

Within the public sector, between the years 1997 and 1998, 1,843 women were able to participate in training sessions out of a total of 2,083 trainees in the national school of management (i.e. 40% of the total).

Chapter VI

WORK AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

WORK AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

I. Economic activity

Legal texts dealing with work and employment issues insured the right of women in Tunisia to participate in the labour force and strived to eliminate all form of discrimination against working women. Consequently, women became gradually more integrated in the labour market. The structure of the *active population* (aged 15 years or more, working or unemployed) was significantly altered especially during the 1970s and 1980s.

In fact, the size of the active female population has increased tenfold over the past three decades from 66,500 in 1966 to 773,900 in 1999. It is worth emphasizing that during that same period, the total female population has only doubled in size (from 2,218,900 to 4,681,000). Conversely, the number of active men has only doubled during that period from 1,027,200 to 2,370,000 (**Table 32**).

Table 32 Active population size (in 1000s) by gender; 1966-1999

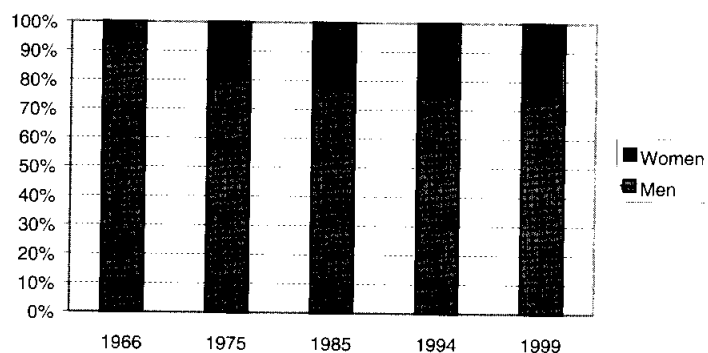
Gender	Year				
	1966	1975	1985	1994	1999
Women	66.5	303.5	455.5	653.1	773.9
Men	1,027.2	1,318.5	1,681.7	2,119.3	2,370.0
Total	1,093.7	1,621.8	2,137.2	2,772.4	3,143.9

Sources: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses 1966-1994 and the Population and employment survey 1999.

II. Active population and gender

The proportion of women out of the total active population has been increasing in a linear fashion over the years from 6% in 1966 to 18.7% in 1975 and 21.3% in 1985, approaching a value of 1/4 by the year 1999 (24.6%) (Figure 21).

Figure 21 Trends in the distribution of active population by gender ; 1966-1999



Sources: National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses 1966-1994 and Population and employment survey 1999.

Moreover, the annual growth rate in the active population was higher among women as compared to men (Table 33).

Table 33 Annual growth rate in the active population by gender (%); 1975-1994

Gender	Period		
	1975/84	1984/94	1975/94
Women	4.6	3.7	4.1
Men	2.7	2.3	2.5
Total	3.1	2.6	2.9

Sources: National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses, 1975, 1984 and 1994.

III. Economic activity rate

It is defined as the number of economically active members of society aged 15 years or more over the total in that age group. This rate has reached a value of 48% by 1999: 73% among men and 24% among women.

Economic activity rate did not exhibit any clear increasing trend over the years and was relatively stable during the 1970s and 80s. This pattern was attributed to higher educational attainment, delaying, hence, the labor market entry.

Moreover, one may observe that the activity rate has varied to a greater extent among women, increasing from 6% in 1966 to 24% in 1999 (Table 34).

Table 34 Trends in activity rates by gender; 1966-1999

Gender	Year				
	1966	1975	1984	1994	1999
Women	6	19	22	23	24
Men	86	81	79	74	73
Total	46	50	51	48	48

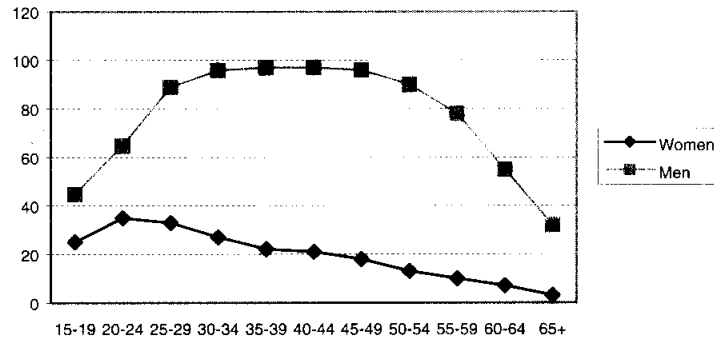
Source: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses, 1966-1994 and Population and employment survey, 1999.

IV. Economic activity and age

Patterns of activity varied by age. Gender differentials in each age group were also observed. Among men, economic activity increased at the age of 25 and reached 96% in the age group 30-50 years. It then started to decline gradually to reach 32% among the elderly group (65+).

Among women, the pattern is completely different, since the peak of economic activity is reached between the ages 20 to 30 years (around 34%), reflecting the pre-marital stage, which often allows women to join the labor force to a greater extent than the later stages. In fact, after the age of 30, activity rates among women start to drop gradually reaching 3% among the elderly (10 times lower than the one observed among the elderly men) ; (Figure 22).

Figure 22 Economic activity rates by age and gender ; 1994



Source : National Institute of Statistics – Population census, 1994

V. Economic activity and area of residence

Economic activity varies also by area of residence. For instance, in 1994, whereas one fifth of women in rural areas were active, 25% of them were active in urban areas. This proportion has even reached the value of 40% among urban women aged 20 to 30 years. It is possible, however, that the activity rate among rural women was underestimated as a result of the omission of the traditional agricultural and industrial sectors of activity which are highly common in rural areas.

In contrast, activity rates among men were higher in rural areas, a pattern that can be explained by the time needed to complete the educational process, which is often longer in urban regions (Table 35).

Table 35 Trends in activity rates by area of residence ; 1975-1994

Area of residence	Year					
	1975		1984		1994	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Urban	22.0	79.0	23.0	76.0	25.0	73.0
Rural	16.0	84.0	21.0	83.0	20.0	76.0
Total	19.0	81.0	22.0	79.0	23.0	74.0

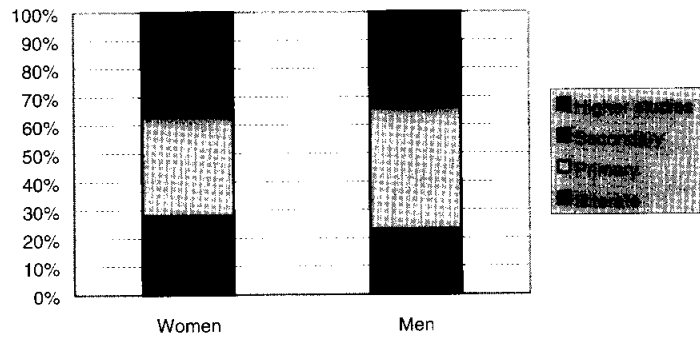
Sources: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses, 1975-1994.

VI. Economic activity and educational level

The improved literacy and educational attainment of women is the main factor behind their increased participation in the labour force over the years. In addition, we notice that the educational level of working women is in general higher than that of men, as shown in **Figure 23**, based on the 1994 population census data.

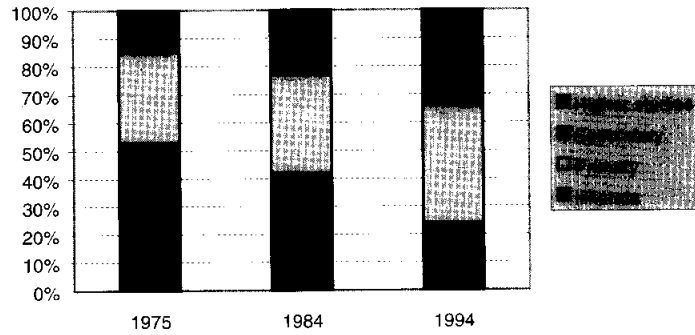
It was also observed that the educational level of the labour force has improved markedly over the years, with a doubling in the proportion having completed higher studies between 1975 and 1994, and an increase of 15% of those with secondary levels of education. In addition, illiteracy among the labour force has been reduced by 55% within the same study period (**Figure 24**).

Figure 23 The labour force distribution by educational level and gender, 1994



Source : National Institute of Statistics – Population census, 1994.

Figure 24 Trends in educational level of the labour force; 1975-1994

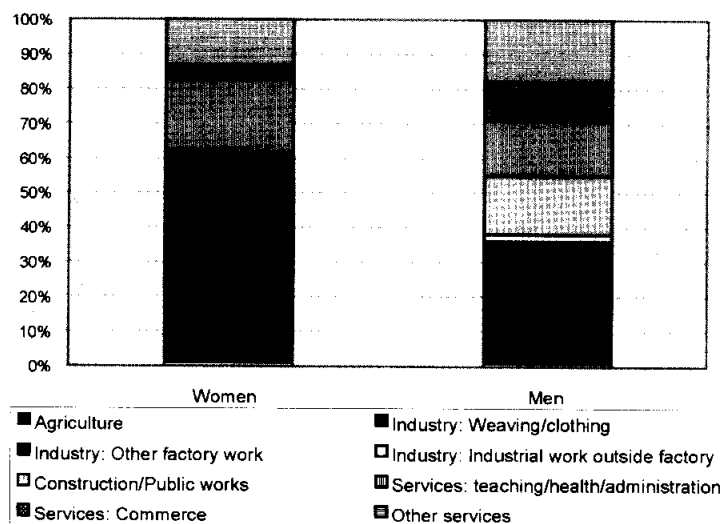


Sources : National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses, 1975-1994.

VII. Work and economic sectors

Whereas economically active men are evenly distributed over the whole array of economic sectors, women are usually concentrated in certain specialized occupations such as weaving, clothing, teaching, health, administration and agriculture. The latter is the most common type of work among women in rural areas. In fact, all these listed sectors employed more than three quarters of the female workforce in 1994 (77%), and the remaining quarter is distributed among various other sectors such as social and cultural services, commerce and traditional industrial work (Figure 25).

Figure 25 Distribution by sector of activity, 1994



Source : National Institute of Statistics – Population census, 1994.

It is important to note that the traditional industrial sector provided employment for around 25,000 handicraft workers, of whom 80% were women.

A. Agricultural sector

The agricultural sector employs a major part of the female active population, although the proportion of women within this sector is underestimated due to the failure to distinguish between housework and agricultural activity.

In addition, most women in agriculture are family workers (67% in 1975, 69% in 1984 and 59% in 1994) ; (Table 36). Their work in that sector often covers the whole spectrum of agricultural activities between tilling the land and cultivating the crops.

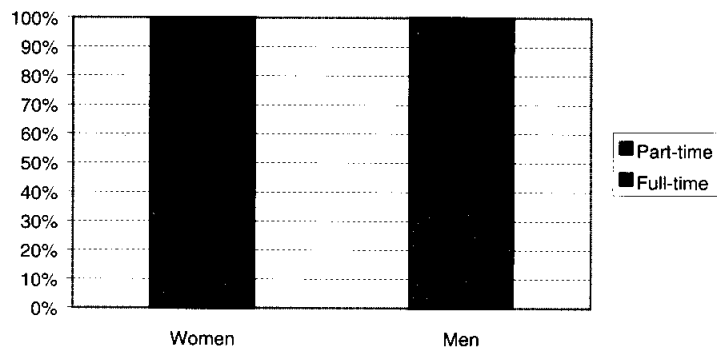
Table 36 Employment status of agricultural workers ; 1975-1994

Employment status	Year					
	1975		1984		1994	
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
Employer	16.0	50.0	23.0	50.0	21.0	46.0
Employee	17.0	40.0	8.0	44.0	20.0	44.0
Family worker	67.0	10.0	69.0	6.0	59.0	10.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Sources: National Institute of Statistics – Population censuses, 1975-1994.

In addition, women employed in that sector often participate less frequently than men and hence, the nature of their work can be described as seasonal (Figure 26).

Figure 26 Gender distribution of agricultural workers by type of work; 1995



Source: Ministry of Agriculture

B. Weaving and clothing sector

The weaving and clothing sector incorporates a large number of women representing 77% of the labour force in that sector and 35% of the total active female population working in all sectors. This high level of representation in that sector was, on the other hand, poorly rewarded in terms of wages and financial security.

C. Teaching

Women teachers currently represent over one third of the total, and their proportion is increasing with time, as shown in **Table 37**. It is worth noting that urban women teaching in the primary level represent a higher proportion than their male counterparts.

Table 37 Trends in the proportion of women and men working as teachers by level of teaching ; 1970-1999

Teaching level	Year									
	1970/71		1980/81		1990/91		1997/98		1998/99	
	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W	M
Primary	19	81	27	71	45	56	49	51	49	51
Secondary	22	78	31	69	38	62	44	56	45	55
Higher studies	15	85	18	82	21	76	28	72	29	71

Sources : Ministry of education and Ministry of higher education

D. Health

The proportion of women working in the health sector, has attained 38% among medical doctors, 62% among dentists, 71% among pharmacists, 68% among veterinarians and biologists, and 55% in paramedical fields. Overall, the proportion of women in the health sector amounted to 52% in 1997 (**Table 38**). This feminization process of the health field can be contrasted with all other fields and occupations that are mainly viewed as men's work.

Looking specifically at the medical body, we find that the number of female doctors has evolved from 632 out of 2,967 in 1984 (21%) to reach 1,246 out of 3,591 in 1998 (35%).

As far as the nursing field is concerned, the proportion of women has increased from 37% to 45% within that same study period.

Findings also suggest that feminization has mostly struck upon dentistry and pharmacy, since the proportion of women in these fields has reached 67% and 69%, respectively by the year 1998.

Table 38 Women and men in the public health sector

Specialty	Year			
	1992		1997	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
Medical doctors	33	67	38	62
Dentists	57	43	62	38
Pharmacists	63	37	71	29
Veterinarians/Biologists	18	82	68	32
Paramedical	52	48	55	45
Subtotal	...	...	52	48
Health inspectors	33	67	13	87
Medical engineers	9	91	29	71
Financial managers	24	76	29	71
Total	46	54	48	52

Source : Ministry of Public Health

E. Juridical authority

Over the past five years, the presence of women in all juridical functions has evolved both in numbers and in quality. In fact, women constituted 23% of judges in the country in 1992, a proportion that has increased to 24% in 1997 (**Table 39**). Among lawyers, women represented 10% of the total in 1997 and 19% in 1998. As for Law executives, women constituted 2% of the total in 1997 and 3% in 1998. In addition, the proportion of women among sworn translators has reached 15% in 1998.

Table 39 Frequency and percent distribution of judges by gender ; 1992-1998

Year	Number		Percent	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
	1992	231	786	23	77
1997	265	885	23	77
1998	291	921	24	76

Source : Ministry of Justice

The qualitative aspect of women's presence and participation in the field of justice mostly appears in terms of taking on important responsible positions, such as heading courts since 1993, representing the court's president, or chairing departments. In addition, new positions were tailored in that respect such as family and child judge, based on a new law (number 1011) that was issued on May 27th, 1996. This trend shows that women have achieved an optimal level of success in the field of justice and were able to surpass all obstacles that did not allow them in the past to participate in public and private life.

F. Women entrepreneurs

Women in Tunisia are currently competing with men on small projects and are imposing their presence on the entrepreneurial scene. In fact, the number of women entrepreneurs has increased over the years to reach 4,850 who are mainly involved in traditional and non-traditional industrial activities (85%). The rest, however, are into commerce and services (8% and 7%, respectively).

Within the agricultural sector, women constitute 6% of the total employers (n=26,000), and even though this number is non-significant, it is expected to increase further with time.

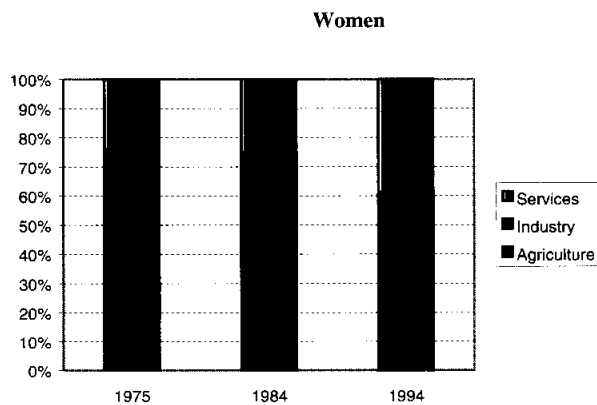
G. Public employment

Within the public sector, women represent around 28% of employees, and one third of the employees in the ministries. The majority of these women are aged between 20 and 44 years and form around 11% of the top level management personnel, 32% of assistant managers, 43% of assistant executives and 16% of lower-level employees.

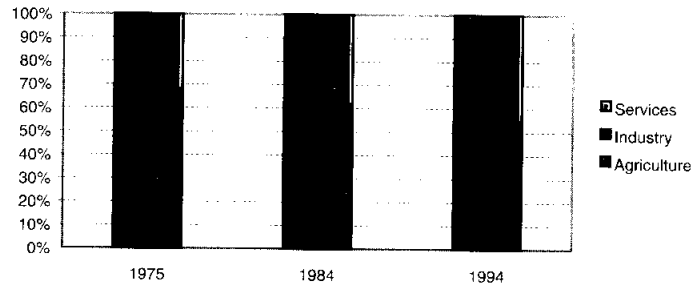
H. Trends in activity within economic sectors

The expansion of the services sector has attracted a huge number of employees over the two decades. In contrast, a reverse trend was observed in the agricultural sector (**Figure 27**).

Figure 27 Trends in the distribution of the workforce by economic sectors among women and men ; 1975-1994



Men



Sources : National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses, 1975-1994

VIII. Work and employment status

Wage-earning employees constitute around 70% of the total workforce, with no significant gender differentials. Besides, the other proportion of working women can be divided as such : 14% are employers or self-employed, 15% are family workers and 1% are trainees. In contrast men family workers constitute a very small portion of the total male workforce.

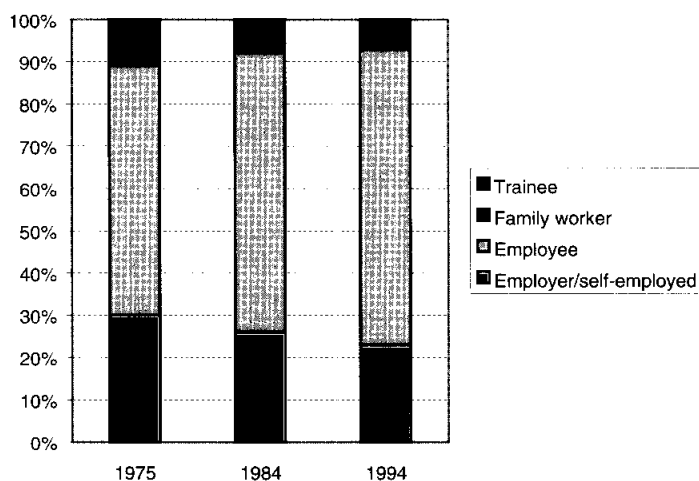
Time trends indicate that the proportion of wage-earning employees has increased at the expense of other types of employment (Table 40 and Figure 28).

Table 40 Percent distribution of working women and men by employment status ; 1994

Employment status	Gender	
	Women	Men
Employer/self-employed	14.0	25.0
Employee	70.0	71.0
Family worker	15.0	3.0
Trainee	1.0	1.0

Source : National Institute of Statistics - Population census, 1994

Figure 28 Trends in the distribution of workforce by employment status ; 1975-1994



Sources : National Institute of Statistics - Population censuses, 1975-1994

IX. Unemployment

Gender gaps in unemployment are very small, even when studied for each age group alone. In general, unemployment rates are elevated for the younger age groups (18-24) with slightly lower proportions among women. The mean age of the unemployed segment of the population is estimated at 31 years for men and 28 years for women. **Table 41** shows the unemployment rates across age, gender and rural-urban settings.

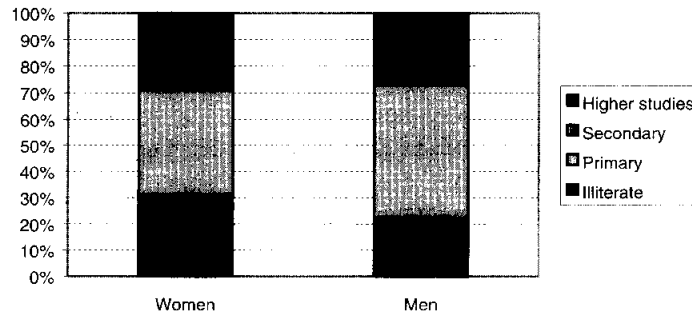
Table 41 Unemployment rates by age, gender and rural-urban area of residence ; 1994

Age	Area of residence			
	Urban		Rural	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
18-19	22.0	30.0	33.0	31.0
20-24	22.0	27.0	28.0	26.0
25-29	16.0	16.0	24.0	20.0
30-34	12.0	10.0	22.0	18.0
35-39	9.0	7.0	18.0	17.0
40-44	8.0	6.0	16.0	16.0
45-49	6.0	6.0	12.0	15.0
50-54	8.0	8.0	13.0	15.0
55-59	9.0	9.0	11.0	14.0
Total (15-59)	15.0	13.0	23.0	20.0

Source : National Institute of Statistics - Population census, 1994

The 1994 population census and the 1999 population and employment survey have shown that around one half of the unemployed had a primary level of education (51% for men, and 40% for women), and around one quarter had secondary levels (27% for men and 26% for women). Only a tiny proportion of the unemployed had completed higher studies (Figure 29).

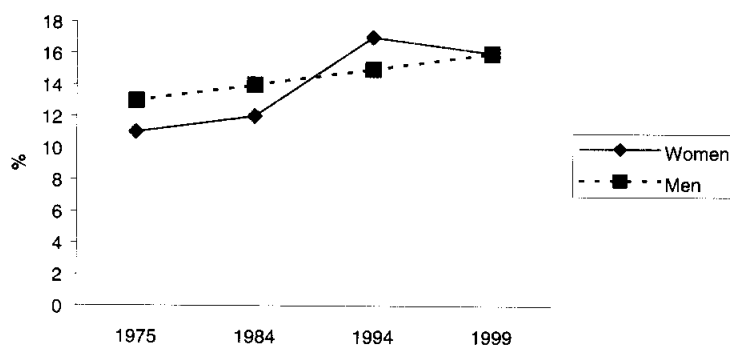
Figure 29 Distribution of the unemployed population by educational attainment and gender ; 1994



Source: National Institute of Statistics - population census, 1994

As shown in **Figure 30**, unemployment rates have increased in a sizeable manner over the period 1975-1994, especially among women. This trend was mainly attributed to the seasonal nature of women's work which is often missed out in surveys and censuses. In addition, the amendments that have occurred on the overall structure of the economy have triggered a small recession limiting work opportunities for women.

Figure 30 Trends in unemployment by gender ; 1975-1999



Source: National Institute of Statistics - population censuses, 1975, 1984 and 1994; Population and employment survey 1999.

X. Gender and poverty

There is little doubt that the level of poverty in Tunisia has been distinctively reduced over the years as a result of the government's efforts and the social development programs devised for needy families. Consequently, more than 54% of those currently benefiting from governmental aid programs, are women. In fact, many development programs were initiated

over the past two decades covering the needs of Tunisian men and women on an equal basis. These included the following :

- *Productive family program* : Between 1981 and 1986, the program was able to cover around 33,000 families, half of which consisted of woman-headed households.
- *Rural Development Program and Integrated Rural Development Program* : These programs targeted families with the lowest standards of living. They helped them develop income-generating activities having a production-like aspect, mainly within the agricultural sector and in the handicrafts and traditional industrial sectors.

An important number of women were able to profit from these projects, especially those concerned with agriculture (such as planting fruitful trees, and growing sheep or cattle). Within the same framework, some women were granted weaving machines for wool products, as well as material aid to develop other income-generating projects.

During the first phase of the program (1984-1989), only 3% of the projects that were funded (22 out of 770) concentrated their interest on weaving and embroidery/needlework.

In its second phase (1994-1999), the program devoted most of its efforts on financing around 100 projects. It is expected that the first 54 projects will create 20,000 work opportunities, 7,000 of which are specifically devised for women (30%).

- *Integrated Urban Development Program* :
This program concentrated mainly on two points :
 1. Establish and support activities in the area of traditional manufactured products.

2. Empower women to use capital resources for financing these activities.

This program covered 1,210 women by the year 1996, and was able to achieve around 331 projects, the costs of which were estimated at 452,000 dinars.

In addition to promoting small projects and traditional manufacturing activities for women, the program had a positive impact on the basic elements of infrastructure (roads, schools, drinking water, electricity and primary health care centers) as well as on the standards of living for both men and women in Tunisia.

- *The Regional Development Program:* Activities specifically targeted for women were initiated in 1987, under the framework of the Regional Development Program, by donating the necessary equipment for weaving and other similar handicrafts. Moreover, training programs devoted for the youth were organized in various industrial and agricultural domains, in addition to fishery and services. The overall number of girls profiting from these programs ranged between 4000 and 5000 per year.
- *The National Program of Assistance to Needy Families:* Families benefiting from this program were awarded on a yearly basis a donation of at least 400 dinars. Half of these families are constituted of women that are living on their own (widowers or divorcees) and have a large number of children. During the year 1998, around 108,000 have received donations from this program.

- *National Solidarity Fund Program (26-26)* : Women and men were able to benefit from this program through the execution of projects aiming at the rehabilitation of the nation's infrastructure (electricity, drinking water and roads). Since 1994, and under the framework of creating income-generating activities in small professions and agriculture, women were provided with proper materials and were trained on how to market their products. Between 1994 and 1996, productive programs covered around 21,500 individuals.

- *Non-Governmental Organizations programs* : A number of non-governmental organizations are active in development programs for men and women, and these include the following :
 1. National Union of Tunisian Women
 2. Association for the Promotion of Employment and Housing
 3. Association for Rural Development and Revitalization
 4. Al Kaf Association for Regional Development
 5. Tunisian Foundation for Collective Development
 6. Tunisian Association for Self-Development and Solidarity (ATLAS)
 7. Association for the Promotion of Self-Development
 8. Tunisian Union for Social Solidarity

Chapter VII

PUBLIC LIFE AND LEADERSHIP

PUBLIC LIFE AND LEADERSHIP

I. Parliament and municipality

Women were able to impose their presence more and more over the years in all elected committees and councils. In fact, within the parliament, 11.5% of the total members were women in 1999 as compared to only 1.1% during the period of independence (Table 42). This increasing trend in women's presence was even more remarkable with respect to municipality councils, since their proportion has increased from 1.3% in 1957 to 16.7% in 1995 and 20.6 in 2000 (Table 43).

Table 42 Membership in the parliament by gender; 1957-1999

Gender	Year										
	1957	1959	1964	1969	1974	1979	1981	1986	1989	1994	1999
Women	1	1	1	4	3	2	7	7	6	12	21
Men	89	89	89	97	109	119	129	118	135	163	162
Women	1.1	1.1	1.1	0.4	2.7	1.7	5.1	5.6	4.3	7.0	11.5

In addition, the number of women in 1994 voting in the parliament elections reached 1,300,000 as compared to only 300,000 in 1989. In addition, women joined up the municipality councils, as consultants, and their number has increased markedly between 1957 and 2000 from 10 to 852. They currently represent 20.6% of the council (Table 43).

Table 43 Membership in the municipality council: 1957-2000

	Year										
	1957	1960	1965	1969	1972	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Women (N)	10	19	10	80	23	117	129	464	521	677	841
Women (%)	1.3	...	...	...	...	...	...	13.1	13.3	16.6	20.0

As for the economic and social council, women represented 8.4% of the members (9 out of 107) elected in the latest electoral session (1998-99).

II. Decision-making

The Tunisian government currently has four women ministers among its executive authorities against 37 men. In addition, 23 women are currently acting as heads of ministerial departments.

The proportion of women among diplomatic authorities has increased from 9% in 1993 to 11% in 1997.

Moreover, within the constitutional democratic association, which is the ruling party in the country, women represented 21% of the total members in the *central commission* by 1998, as compared to only 3% in 1957. In addition, women constituted an important portion of the *divisions* and *university* structures of the party by the year 1998 (16% in the former and 20% in the latter). These figures can be contrasted with 3% and 2%, respectively, in 1988 (**Table 44**).

Table 44 Gender distribution of the constitutional democratic association; 1988-1998

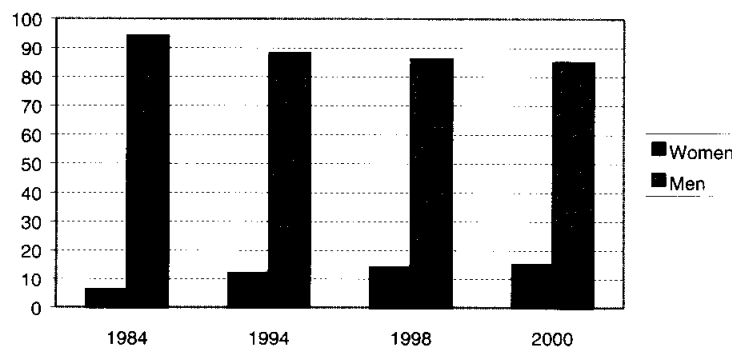
Structures	Year					
	1988		1994		1998	
	W	M	W	M	W	M
Divisions	3	97	6	94	16	84
Universities	2	98	5	95	20	80
Coordinating commissions	0	100	0	100	0	100
Central commission	10	90	11	89	21	79
Political office	0	100	10	90	10	90
Conferences	3	97	10	90	18	82

Source : Constitutional Democratic Rally

A. Employment in the public sector

Currently, around 15% of high-level employees in the public sector consist of women. Their positions at work range between heads of division and general managers. **Figure 31** shows that this proportion has more than doubled since 1984.

Figure 31 Women and men in high-level employment (%)



Source: Prime Ministry

Nevertheless, gender gaps still persist especially in terms of electing or nominating women in important positions in the government. In fact, 3% of women candidates were elected in comparison to 12% among nominated men.

In addition, eight women were in the chief director general position in the year 1998.

B. Women and men in juridical power

As was stated earlier, women are increasingly being appointed in important positions, since 1993, such as heading courts, representing the court's president, or chairing various departments. The following table shows the composition of juridical power by gender during the year 1997 (Table 45).

Table 45 Juridical power by gender, 1997

Type of judge	Gender			
	Women		Men	
	No.	%	No.	%
Administrative court judges	40	80.0	10	20.0
Accounting department judges	67	82.0	15	18.0

Source: Ministry of Justice

C. Women and project support programs

- *National funding program for promoting traditional manufactured goods and small crafts:* During the period of 1982-1994, projects created by women constituted around 14% of the total number of projects.
- *Interchangeable money fund for traditional manufactured products:* Loans granted by this funding program between 1988-1998 were divided between craftswomen and craftsmen by a ratio of 4:1.
- *Fund for support and industrial decentralization:* In this case, women constituted only 5% of the total individuals benefiting for this program, and 7% of the total individuals for which work opportunities have been created.

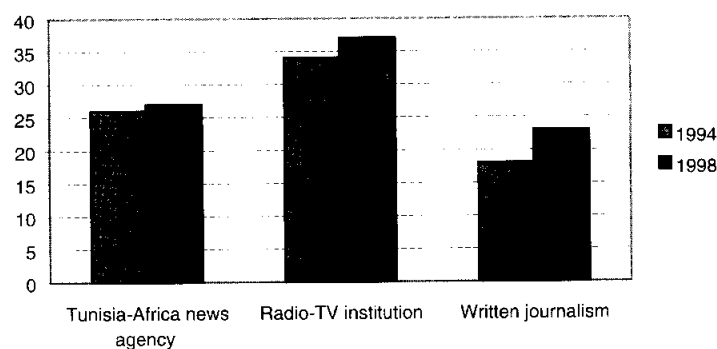
D. Women in the agricultural sector

The latest investigations regarding the structure of the agricultural sector in 1995 shows that the number of women managing agricultural lands amounts to 26,000 or 6% of the total individuals in that field. This proportion, however, shows that major deficiencies exist in data gathering with respect to women since their degree of responsibility within the agricultural sector is often underestimated.

III. Mass media

Women currently represent one quarter of the total number of professional reporters. The Tunisia-Africa news agency has a woman to man ratio of 27/73, while the radio-TV institution has a ratio of 37/63. Finally, the proportion of women in written journalism has markedly increased between 1994 and 1998 from 18% to 23% of the total staff (**Figure 32**).

Figure 32 Trends in the proportion of women within the mass media; 1994-1998



IV. Unions and associations

Women participate nowadays in various types of unions. Their proportion has reached 55% in the sector of weaving and clothing, 23% in teaching, 12% in postal and communication systems, and 4% in agriculture.

In addition, they are active participants in specialized non-governmental associations for women, and the number of these associations has markedly increased over the past 15 years or so, from only one during the 80s to twenty in 1995. These associations take interest in many domains including the social, developmental, research and cultural.

V. Cultural activity and sports

A. Cultural activity

Over the past decade, women have become more and more prominent in many cultural spheres such as fine arts, movies, music, dancing and composition. In addition, a number of honorary prizes were given to around 11 women and between the years 1987 and 1998, 96 women have received a diploma for higher studies in music.

We may also note that the proportion of women in musical and dancing groups ranged between 20% and 50%. Drama and theatrical arts diplomas were received by 35 women out of 172 (20%).

Movie production among women has increased over the years to reach a total of six long and fourteen short films. Finally, fine arts have witnessed the most significant increase in women's contribution over the years. **Table 46** presents the number of women and men in external cultural commissions.

Table 46 Women and men in external cultural commissions; 1993-1998

Year	Gender			
	Women		Men	
	No.	%	No.	%
1993	11	41.0	16	59.0
1994	17	77.0	5	23.0
1995	13	48.0	14	52.0
1996	10	46.0	12	55.0
1997	8	31.0	18	69.0
1998	255	52.0	232	48.0

Source: Ministry of Culture

B. Sports

Women's sports activities in Tunisia have been extensively encouraged over the years, as shown in **Table 47**.

Table 47 Women's sports; 1993-1997

	Year	
	1993/94	1996/97
Number of women's sports teams	17	28
Number of women's sport associations	171	164
Number of women licensed in sports education	7,488	8,346
Number of men licensed in sports education	53,619	59,902
% women among those licensed in sports education	12.25%	12.22%

Source: Ministry of Youth, Children and Sport

Investments placed on sport localities in 1997 are as follows:

- Overall number of licensed localities: 26
- Number of licensed localities managed by men: 16
- Number of licensed localities managed by women: 10

In addition, women currently constitute around one quarter of the personnel involved in physical training and sports education at both elementary and secondary school levels (**Table 48**).

Table 48 Physical trainers in schools by gender and school level; 1997-98

	School level					
	Elementary		Secondary		Total	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Women	279	27.0	773	23.0	1,052	24.0
Men	751	73.0	2,612	77.0	3,363	76.0
Total	1,030	100.0	3,385	100.0	4,415	100.0

Source: Ministry of Youth, Children and Sport

Finally, the number of boys and girls who have received degrees in school and university physical training in two academic years is shown in **Table 49**. It is worth noting that women selectively practice certain sports activities more than others such as jogging, gymnastics, handball and basketball. Overall, girls licensed in 1997 in that domain amounted to 23,700.

Table 49 Trends in the number of girls and boys licensed in school and university physical training; 1992-1998

	Year			
	1992		1998	
	No.	%	No.	%
Girls	41,462	71.0	62,778	70.0
Boys	16,687	29.0	27,071	30.0
Total	58,149	100.0	89,949	100.0

Source: Ministry of Youth, Children and Sport

HIGHLIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

All these figures and indicators prove that, in comparison to man, the status of the Tunisian woman has and will continue to improve with time. Sex-disaggregated data previously displayed in full detail can be summarized as follows:

I. Population and households

In spite of its young aspect, the population of Tunisia is witnessing an increase in the proportion of the economically active segment and a more prominent elderly segment with a narrowing down of the pyramid's base and decline in the young dependent population. This may lead to an overload in workforce supply to the country, which entails action on the part of the government to provide social and insurance coverage.

The main factors behind these demographic changes are the rapid fertility decline among women in their reproductive age, and a drop in the crude mortality rate which has triggered the increase in life expectancy at birth. A gender gap was noted in that particular indicator, whereby women were shown to outlive men by around 3 years. In addition, these changes were also affected by a delay in the age at marriage and an increase in the proportion single among women and men in all age groups.

II. Health and reproduction

A sizeable progress was achieved at the level of health care that had its impact on the overall demographic profile of the population. This progress provided a better preventive and health care coverage for both women and men and for all age groups. In fact, by the year 1998, primary health care centers were able to cover services for 90% of the Tunisian population. Consequently, infant and child mortality rates have dropped significantly and a similar trend was observed for maternal mortality. All these factors resulted in a greater life expectancy among women and men. In addition, reproductive behavior among women and men has also been altered from a spontaneous to a well-regulated behavior

III. Education and training

Major changes were observed in Tunisia in terms of illiteracy, schooling, educational attainment and achievement in school among others. In addition, gender equity was reached in many education-related indices such as school enrollment at the age of six, which has become quasi-universal (99%), schooling in all levels of education, and the proportion of girls to that of boys at school.

All these changes produced a marked improvement in the educational attainment of both women and men, even though it was more important among women. In addition, girls were observed to be better achievers than boys in all important examinations and in all domains. Their proportion has increased in technical and scientific specialties over the years.

IV. Work and economic activity

Women currently represent one quarter of the workforce and their level of education is reported to be higher than their male counterpart. They were mostly active, to a greater extent than men, in areas of weaving and clothing, medical and paramedical sciences. In addition, their presence has become more sensed in the educational and administrative sectors as well as in agriculture.

V. Public life and leadership

Women have increasingly become active participants in various councils including the parliament and the municipalities. Other decision-making positions were also granted to the Tunisian woman. Important positions were taken on by women in the public sector, policy department, and the central commission of the ruling party. The Tunisian woman has also become more prominent within the most important mass media institutions and agencies as well as in cultural activities and sports.

VI. Conclusions and recommendations

Gender gaps are still significant in all domains and this requires more efforts and brainstorming in order to find new solutions, which aim at reducing these differentials and achieving equal opportunities between women and men.

It appears to us that at the beginning of the new century, a new era is awaiting us, whereby the status of the Tunisian women will be improved in a sensible manner. This will entail conducting surveys and in-depth analysis on issues where gender gaps are still significant and related statistics are scarce, such as, school drop-outs, the feminization of certain economic sectors (health, education, ...), the informal sector, the effect of globalization on women's economic participation, violence and participation in public and political life.

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