

Labour Market Profile Tunisia – 2023/2024



The profile provides a comprehensive overview of the labour market's structures, development, and challenges.

Danish Trade Union
Development Agency



ULANDSSEKRETARIATET – DTDA
DANISH TRADE UNION DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

PREFACE

The Danish Trade Union Development Agency (DTDA) is the development organisation of the Danish trade union movement. This agency was established in 1987 by the two largest Danish confederations – the Danish Federation of Trade Unions (Danish acronym: LO) and the Danish Confederation of Professionals (Danish acronym: FTF). These confederations merged to become the Danish Trade Union Confederation (Danish acronym: FH) in January 2019, and DTDA replaced LO/FTF Council as the name of the development agency.

The work of DTDA is in line with the global Decent Work Agenda (DWA) based on its pillars: creating decent jobs, guaranteeing rights at work, extending social protection, and promoting social dialogue. The overall development objective is to eradicate poverty and support the development of just and democratic societies by promoting the DWA.

DTDA collaborates with trade union organisations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East. The programmes' immediate objective is to assist the partner organisations in becoming change agents in their own national and regional labour market context, capable of achieving tangible improvements in the national DWA conditions and the labour-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Labour Market Profile (LMP) format provides a comprehensive overview of the labour market's structure, development, and challenges. In the framework of DWA and SDGs, LMPs follow several central indicators addressing labour market development aspects, especially the unionism evolution, social dialogue and bi-/tri-partite mechanisms, policy development, and legal reforms status vis-à-vis ILO conventions and labour standards, among others.

Primary sources of data and information for LMPs are:

- As part of programme implementation and monitoring, national partner organisations provide annual narrative progress reports, including information on labour market developments.
- National statistical institutions and international databanks are source for the collection of general data and information, such as ILOSTAT and NATLEX, World Bank Open Data, ITUC Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights, the U.S. Department of State, and other internationally recognised labour-related global indexes.
- Academia and media sources (e.g., Labour Start, national news, among others) are used in research on labour market issues.

The profile is regularly updated; the current version covers 2023 to 2024. Labour Market Profiles for more than 20 countries are available on DTDA's website:

<https://www.ulandssekretariatet.dk/>.

DTDA prepared the Labour Market Profile in close collaboration with the *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT) and affiliated food and tourism federation, municipality federation, and IT and service federation. If any comments arise to the profile, please contact Mr Kasper Andersen (kan@dtdda.dk) from DTDA.

The front-page photo illustrates a market in Tunisia, photographed by Mr. Ahmed Hayman.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The president's autocratic regime has left Tunisia's democratic progress in limbo, stuck to political turmoil and sluggish economic development. The opposition is being suppressed and imprisoned. Public sector reforms are in progress to curb one of the world's highest wage bills and financially unsustainable subsidies. There was no average real minimum wage growth during the last decade, and soaring food prices and shortage of basic commodities caused many workers to balance the poverty line. The situation fuelled public unrest, deteriorating confidence in the political system, and pressure on emigration to Europe.

The labour market's legal framework faces a series of orders and decrees restricting fundamental rights. Just a few positive labour-related law reforms were approved in recent years. The widespread informal economy reflects loopholes in labour and business regulations, visualised by the pervasive child labour and stark gender labour gaps. The government promotes an agenda contributing to the Paris Agreement's global response to the threat of climate change. Still, it alludes to the risks of the Just Transition process to a low-carbon economy for jobs.

Although social dialogue took strides ahead during the 2010s, it dramatically deteriorated at the beginning of the 2020s, triggering massive demonstrations. The country fell to the bottom of the Global Rights Index in 2022. Civil service reform is challenging unionism and the application of collective bargaining. On the positive side, one national agreement in the public sector and one in the private sector were reached in 2022 to wage increases.

The falling youth population will hollow out Tunisia's workforce during the upcoming decade, where they already struggle with joblessness and stalled labour productivity improvement. The country reveals worrisome structural high youth unemployment at 39% in 2022, which links to a mismatch between the labour market's demand and

the education system's supply, concentrated among the more educated. Even a large group, especially women, is economically inactive, side-lined for the active labour market policies, as well as hidden from the employment statistics. Many leave the country to find better jobs, making remittance important for the economy and hovering above the inflow of foreign direct investments. It lacks a clear migration policy and strains with a brittle asylum system.

Tunisia is a forerunner for women's legal rights in the Arab region, and youth has been a driving factor for changes. Tunisian firms have a comparatively high women participation in ownership, but the labour market could improve concerning women's pay and their work after having children. Youth have weak confidence in public institutions and one of the highest NEET rates (i.e., those not in employment, education, or training) among Northern African countries.

Despite improvements in pupil completion rates, education quality has waned, including vocational education and training (VET) need to catch up to achieve performance goals. The VET system has been stuck with a near monopoly on services by public sector institutions, marginalising the private sector. Firms offering formal training fell notably during the last decade. The country was ahead of the information and communication technologies (ICT) education fields in Northern Africa but lost pace.

The relatively well-development social protection system still lacks accessibility and inclusiveness. One out of two is covered by at least one social protection benefit, but a notably high upsurge in persons above retirement age receiving a pension, peaking at 85% in 2020. Universal health coverage improved during the 2010s. The government further strengthened the cash transfers to compensate vulnerable households by changing the financially unsustainable subsidy schemes.

Status of key labour market indicators in the framework of the Decent Work Agenda (DWA) in Tunisia

Creating decent jobs	
Policy reforms addressing creation of decent employment	A civil service strategy to curb the public financial deficit has been initiated but it has faced a delay in carrying out key reforms, including controversial of subsidies, challenged by the slow economic recovery from Covid-19 and deteriorated political ambiance.
ILO standard setting on improvement of status of workers from the informal economy	Tunisia has improved the legal framework to bring a transition for informal to formal employment; for example, in 2020, the auto-entrepreneur law and three institutional structures for the governance. Also, a major step taken towards organising workers from the informal economy was the establishment of UGTT-affiliated union for organising workers from sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia in 2020. Tripartite cooperation is mostly on hold due to the political and economic instability. A tripartite national informal economy forum is not registered.
Guaranteeing rights at work	
Growth in partner trade union members (UGTT) (%)	Approximately 0% from 2019 to 2022.
Violations of trade union rights	Ranking fell from 4 in 2021 to 5 out of 5 (5+ is worst) in 2022. *
Labour legislation is improved according to ILO standards	The Domestic Work Law of 2021 sets the conditions of domestic work. Ratified the ILO's Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (C187) in 2021.
Partner organisations with minimum 30% women representation in decision-making bodies (UGTT)	N/a.
Extending social protection	
Health social protection coverage as % of total population in partner countries	Universal Health Coverage (UHC) service index increased from 68 in 2017 to 70 in 2019. **
Workers from the informal economy have access to national social security schemes	Around 40% of the working population are not affiliated to any social security scheme, classified as informal workers.
Promoting social dialogue	
Trade union density of employees (%)	About 30% in 2022.
Cooperation in labour-employer relations	Ranking 127 out of 141 (1 is best). ***
Number of Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBAs)	In 2022, two national agreements were reached: one in the public and one private sector pointing to wage increases.
Workers' coverage of Collective Bargaining Agreements to employees	N/a.
Bi-/tri- partite agreements concluded	A new Social Contract for Education of 2022 sets a roadmap for the renewal of education and knowledge systems in Tunisia, including key strategic objectives, and concrete commitments for the transformation of education in Tunisia.

* Countries with a rating of 5 are interpreted as "no guarantees of rights": while the legislation may spell out certain rights, workers have effectively no access to these rights and are therefore exposed to autocratic regimes and unfair labour practices.

** Coverage index for essential health services (based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, noncommunicable diseases and service capacity and access). It is presented on a scale of 0 to 100.

*** This indicator is based on data from the Global Competitiveness Index that represents employers' opinion from surveys.

Sources: International Trade Union Confederation; The World Economic Forum; The World Bank; DTDA data collection and own calculations on trade union density.

COUNTRY MAP



Source: National Online Project

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ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE

The 2011 revolution triggered waves of democratic development in Tunisia. Despite some progress, the results of the 2019 elections experienced a fragmentation of the political landscape leading to mounting social tensions. A political deadlock gripped the country in 2020 and the first half of 2021. Demonstrations against the government intensified. The parliament was suspended in August 2021, and in December 2021, a road map for overhauling the country's political system was launched. This plan was criticised and created further political tensions, including opposition parties' boycott of the July 2022 constitutional referendum. Many consider the country at risk of dictatorship.

The country operates with the long-term development vision, Vision 2035, focusing on adaptability to change and a competitive and diversified economy. It links to the Medium-term Development Plan 2023-2025, centring on economic growth, investment, economic recovery, and health crises. The Regional Environment and Sustainable Development Programme is also considered a central agenda. In October 2022, the country got closer to reaching an agreement on a new 48-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

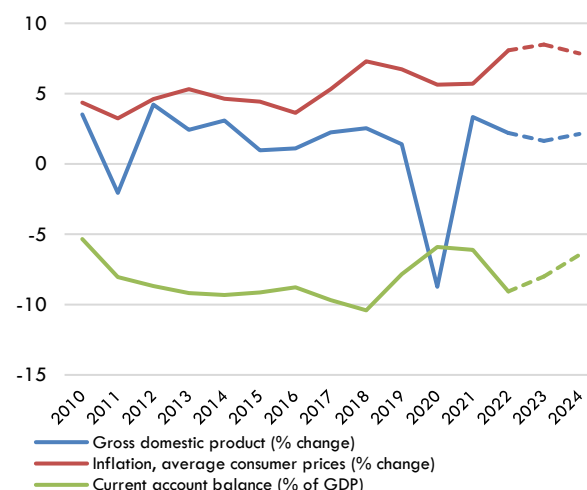
Tunisia is a lower-middle-income country. It has struggled with slow economic growth in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution; for example, drops in productivity growth were observed because of excessive regulation of economic activity, reduced trade orientation, low investment, and limited innovation. This situation echoed in high youth unemployment and pushed the government into an expanding role of unsustainable public spending to promote better livelihoods and curtail social tensions.

The economic growth plummeted due to the global Covid-19 pandemic in 2020; the GDP per capita fell by 10%. It cost national savings and a hike in government expenditure and public debt to keep the economy running. In 2021, the economic growth recovered in travel and business, supported by the

strong performance of mining and manufacturing. But the Russian war against Ukraine in 2022 negatively brought effects on business in Tunisia, echoed in high costs of imports like fuel, wheat, and fertiliser. GDP growth was projected at 1.6% in 2023 (see more in Figure 1 and Appendix Table 16).

Inflationary pressures have increased significantly, hovering above 5% since 2018 and reaching 8.1% in 2022, the highest rate since 1991. This hike is mainly from global markets and higher administered prices. The increased inflation has created additional pressures on public finances, mainly through subsidy spending but also thwarted workers' income purchasing power.

Figure 1: Gross domestic product, inflation, and current account balance trends in Tunisia, %, 2010-2024



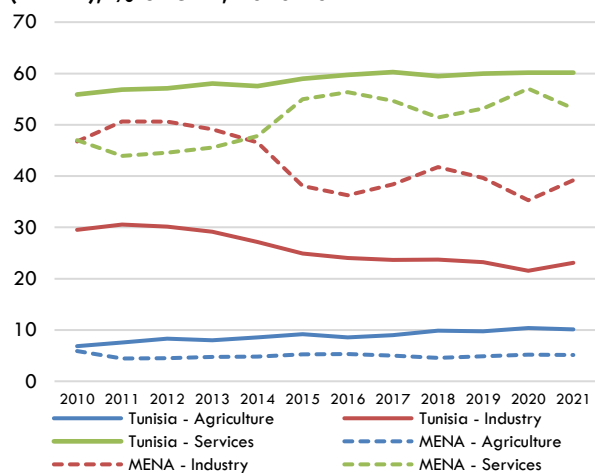
Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2022.

Tunisia has been known as a diverse economy, ranging from agriculture, mining, manufacturing, petroleum products, and tourism. But markets have become increasingly concentrated, thus creating entry barriers. The economy faces hefty government control; for instance, government and state-owned institutions still dominate key economic sectors, such as finance, hydrocarbons, pharmaceuticals, and utilities. At the same time, the costs of doing business remain high, including some cumbersome business regulations and poor access to finance (see more details in Appendix Table 15).

Besides, the market is affected by substantial price regulation and subsidies.

The service sector holds the economic backbone at around 60% of GDP in 2021, with a significantly higher value-added than the regional average. The industry sector represents 23% of a declining trend during the last decade, and the average regional supersedes its value added. This latter sector was particularly hit by the Covid-19 pandemic that affected households and the labour market, including an upsurge in unemployment and lost incomes. The agricultural sector plays a relatively modest role, economically growing on the margin during the last decade representing about 10% of GDP. Still, its value-added is almost double the regional average (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Aggregate sectoral economic changes, value added in Tunisia and Middle East & North Africa (MENA), % of GDP, 2010-2021



Note: Value added is the net output of a sector after adding up all outputs and subtracting intermediate inputs.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Inequality in the distribution of Tunisian family income fell initially from 36 in 2010 to 33 in 2015 (Gini-index 0 represents perfect equality, while 100 represents high inequality), suggesting progress in better equality.¹ However, the economic downturn brought inequality on the rise; the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic projected to bring the Gini Index at least 37 in 2020.² The Human Development Index (HDI) ranked Tunisia as high human development, at 97 out of 191 (1 is best) in 2021, with one step ahead in the HDI ranking from 2015 to 2021.

The aftermath of the 2011 revolution led to poverty reduction: the poverty headcount ratio at national poverty line fell from 21% in 2010 to 15% of the population in 2015. The poverty reduction in Tunisia has not benefitted from real minimum wage hikes but was more due to an upsurge in remittances and generous social protection coverage. The economic ruptures in 2020-2022 brought more Tunisian balancing at the poverty line, just as existing poverty will likely get more severe through the low-income group, directly affected on consumption and the disruption of services (see more in the Working Conditions and Social Protection sections).³

The informal economy is widespread, and the investment environment is marred by endemic corruption. But the country attracts some foreign direct investments, at 2.0% of GDP on average from 2010 to 2021, one percentage point higher than the average of the Middle East & North Africa (excluding high income).

Just Transition

After the 2011 revolution, the challenge of climate change and Just Transition entered the Tunisian policymakers' agenda, essentially based on the shift from fossil fuels to renewable energies. A plan for privatising electricity production from renewable energy sources was launched, making foreign direct investment a central part of the strategy. It led to the 2015 law on producing electricity from renewable energy (modified in 2019), allowing for using agricultural land for renewable projects in a country with acute food dependency. Also, the 2015 Tunisian Solar Plan seeks to reach a rate of 35% of electricity production from renewable energy by 2030. Tunisia, so far, has yet to make progress compared to the forecasts of this solar plan. Overall, the government projects about 12,000 additional jobs in the energy sector during the 2020s.

Despite the positive involvement of social partners in developing legal and policy frameworks dealing with climate change, studies found that trade unions need to deepen their understanding and move beyond the traditional circle of trade union work to

more creative work, such as formulating new avenues of struggle.⁴

The climate-related laws and policies' framework set adaptation and mitigation measures but allude to the risks of the transition to a low-carbon economy for jobs and the welfare of communities. Tunisia is committed to supporting the various sectors in developing resilient activities for job creation. For instance, the government aims to strengthen the guidelines for employability and design of innovative projects in green jobs, small and medium enterprises based on the principles of social economy, and solidarity focused on the environment and adaptation to climate change. How to reach these aspirations are vague; a Just Transition strategy to mitigate impacts on the labour market has not been published.

Like other North African countries, Tunisia is experiencing recurrent severe heatwaves and prolonged droughts, with catastrophic impacts on small-scale farmers and agriculture in general. The effects of shifts are disproportionately experienced by the marginalised in society, especially small-scale farmers, agro-pastoralists, agricultural labourers, and fishermen. The average loss of jobs due to the phenomenon of climate change by 2030 is estimated at 1,000 jobs per year.⁵

Tunisia signed the Paris Agreement in 2015 and is committed to its Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). It aims to reduce the country's greenhouse gas emissions across all sectors by increasing the national carbon intensity reduction target to 45% by 2030, compared to its 2010 level, even though it contributes only 0.07% of global emissions. The implementation of the updated NDC is based on a prioritised action plan, including sectoral actions affecting the six most vulnerable sectors: water resources, agriculture, ecosystems, the coastline, health, and tourism, as well as three new cross-cutting areas of intervention: gender, land use planning, and natural disaster risk reduction.⁶ The NDC has been haunted by a lack of robust instrument to monitor its implementation, nor a system of indicators to monitor adaptation and mitigation measures.

Export Processing Zones

Tunisia promoted Export Processing Zones (EPZs) to increase foreign exchange and create jobs. The country has two EPZs in Bizerte and Zarzis. These zones are managed privately. Companies in EPZs are exempt from taxes and customs duties and benefit from unrestricted foreign exchange transactions. Inputs enjoy limited duty-free entry into Tunisia for transformation and re-export. Companies that export at least 80% of their products benefit from a total exemption of company tax for ten years and a reduced rate of 50% after that; companies exporting less than 80% benefit from a partial exoneration. Generally, the nature of SEZs in MENA is changing; for example, in Tunisia, Technology Parks were initiated in recent years.

Updated data of workers operating in EPZs are scarce but covered about 260,000 at the end of the 2000s, which equalled around 38% of employees.⁷ The EPZ programmes are frequently cited as examples of robust, job-creating programmes that have remained enclaves with few linkages to their host economies. Workers in EPZs are excluded from the right to bargain collectively, depriving them of essential workers' rights.⁸ The zones are criticised for hampering a diversification of the national economy, and the zones remain enclaves of activities without linkages with domestic activities.

NATIONAL LABOUR LEGISLATION

In the aftermath of the 2011 revolution (known as the 'Arab Spring' or 'Jasmine Revolution'), Tunisia is, so far, the only example of a democratic transition in the Arab world. After major progress in political freedoms and constitutional reform, a new era emerged, with countless uncertainties stemming from opposition and populism. The evolution confronts a series of destabilising factors since 2011, such as economic slowdown bringing pressure in social and political demands, security context and proximity to Libya's crisis. Thus, Tunisia is still searching for a workable government system amid a deeply polarised atmosphere, not to mention a

degradation of the rule of law in progress is detected.⁹

Tunisia's labour market's industrial relations are covered by a comprehensive legal framework representing 25 central legal instruments (Appendix Table 13). In recent years, a wide range of labour-related legislation was approved, mainly from orders and decrees, but they did not deal with new central reforms of the Labour Code (see Appendix Table 12). On the positive side, the new Domestic Work Code of 2021 sets the conditions of domestic work, including a benefit from a guaranteed minimum wage, working hours not exceeding 48 hours per week and a weekly rest day. On the negative side, dismissals of a series of orders and decrees restricted fundamental rights and freedoms in Tunisia; for instance, Circular No. 2 forbids negotiations with unions without the prime minister's permission. The latter contravenes ILO Convention 98, which guarantees the right to collective bargaining (see more in the Ratified ILO Conventions sub-section).

The country follows central labour policies and strategies. The latest is the National Employment Strategy launched in 2017, linked to the National Development Plan and the national strategy for entrepreneurship development initiated in 2018. This strategy is the result of the National Employment Dialogue held in 2016 and attended by the UGTT, the UTICA, members of civil society, and political parties. Employment was a top priority since it is a vital challenge for the country's development. In January 2023, the national strategy for improvement of business climate was announced to improve the "doing business" in the country. What is significant about such an approach is the measures for regulating new forms of employment: working from home, freelancing, student jobs, and part-time jobs.

The status of the main labour laws is summarised below.

Constitution

A new constitution was approved in 2014. It enshrined the right to freedom of association, the

right of collective bargaining and the right to strike. It includes that work is a right for every citizen, male and female. The state shall take the necessary measures to guarantee work based on competence and fairness, not to mention all citizens shall have the right to decent working conditions and a fair wage.

Parts of the relatively new constitution entered limbo triggered by a road map for overhauling the country's political system, leading to a referendum in July 2022 on controversial constitutional reforms. This phase led to dissolving the democratically elected parliament, the dismantling of the Supreme Judicial Council, and engagement in a series of politically targeted arrests. Opposition parties boycott the referendum. Only 31% voted, but a majority of those backed the reform. The new 2022 constitution gave the president expansive powers, centralising executive control while removing checks from the legislative and judicial branches. This situation led to demonstrations and worrisome political developments, rolling back many democratic gains.

Labour Code

With several amendments, the Labour Code of 1966 sets the framework for a collective agreement. It protects the fundamental rights of workers, including the right to organise and guarantee minimum wages and social security, as well as working hours, overtime, leave, occupational safety and health, foreign employees, vocational training, apprenticeships, and protection of women workers. It also prohibits child labour and subterranean and night work for workers under 18 years.

The code prohibits anti-union discrimination by employers and retribution against strikers. It established the employment agency, the labour inspectorate system, and industrial tribunals, not to mention it regulates strikes, lockouts, trade unions, and individual and collective labour disputes. It is worth noting that strikes must be approved by the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT). Although the labour code covers temporary workers,

enforcement efforts are weaker than for permanent workers.

The law has been criticised for distorting the creation of good quality jobs as hindering investment in higher value-added activities and innovation, resulting in abusive types of labour arrangements.¹⁰ The code is also analysed for not fundamentally altering the balance of power between organised labour and capital.¹¹

Observations on labour legislation

The labour legislation framework needs some fixing with international standards on the right to organise, the right to collective bargaining, and the right to strike. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has registered several factors, including:¹²

- Restrictions on trade unions' right to establish branches, federations, and confederation or to affiliate with national and international organisations.
- Undue or excessive privileges granted to certain organisations: All strike action must be approved by the Central Workers Union to be legal.
- Restrictions on the right to elect representatives and self-administer in full freedom.
- Workers between the ages of 16 and 18 may only join trade unions with the consent of their father or guardian.
- Absence of criteria or discretionary, unclear, or unreasonable criteria for determining representative organisations.
- Absence of recourse to an independent body declaring whether an organisation may negotiate or not.
- Prohibition or limitation of collective bargaining at a certain level (local, regional, territorial, national; enterprise, industry, sector or general).
- Authorities' or employers' power to unilaterally annul, modify or extend the content and scope of collective agreements.
- Endorsed collective agreements are not regarded as legally binding or enforceable.

- Restrictions for the type of strike action (e.g., pickets, wildcat, working to rule, sit-down, go-slow).
- Authorities' or employers' power to prevent or end a strike by referring the dispute to arbitration.
- Excessive civil or penal sanctions for workers and unions involved in non-authorized strike actions.
- Excessive sanctions for damages caused by strike actions.
- Discretionary determination or an excessively long list of "essential services" in which the right to strike is prohibited or severely restricted.

The government generally enforces applicable labour laws and respects the right to strike in public enterprises and services. Since the informal economy is widespread in the country, many workers are not protected by labour regulations in practice, often due to a lack of awareness or incentives (see more in the Informal Economy sub-section).

Ratified ILO Conventions

International Labour Organization's (ILO) conventions enumerate international principles and rights at work: Tunisia ratified 64 conventions, of which 49 are in force. Appendix Table 14 shows that nine out of ten fundamental conventions and three out of four Governance Conventions are ratified, and 15 out of 176 Technical Conventions are Up-To-Date and actively promoted. The latest ratified convention was the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention (C187) in 2021.

The independent ILO body, known as the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), has observations and direct requests for several conventions. For example, in 2021, CEACR's comments dealing with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (C087) concerned bringing the Labour Code in line with international standards, particularly to guarantee the right of workers' organisations to elect their representatives

in full freedom, including from among foreign workers at least after a reasonable period of residence in the country. The committee also had observations concerning the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (C098) and expressed a need to specify the criteria applied in practice by the Secretariat of State for Youth, Sports and Social Affairs to grant approval or to annul a collective agreement.

The Sustainable Development Goal indicator 8.8.2 seeks to measure the level of compliance with fundamental labour rights. Based on ILO textual sources and national legislation, Tunisia ranked 1.65 in 2020 (0 out of 10; 0 is best), significantly better than the neighbouring countries (Table 1). This ranking most likely deteriorated in 2021-2023 due to the previously mentioned political turmoil.

Table 1: Level of national compliance with labour rights among Tunisia and neighbouring countries, 2020

Country	Value
Northern Africa	7.19
Algeria	2.48
Egypt	10.00
Libya	10.00
Tunisia	1.65

Note: The value ranges from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with freedom of association and collective bargaining (FACB) rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACB rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation).

Sources: ILO, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Trade Agreements

Tunisia is active in international trade, an important part of the economy. At the regional level, Tunisia's trade agreements were initially with Arab countries, starting with the Arab Maghreb Union (AMU) in 1989, the Greater Arab Free Trade Area (GAFTA) in 1998, and the Agadir Agreement that came into force in 2007. At the end of the 2010s, Tunisia moved towards other African areas, ratifying the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in 2018 and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) in 2019 with labour provision. Recently, Tunisia became a party to the relatively new African Continental Free

Trade Area (AfCFTA) in 2020, signed and ratified by 43 African Union countries. The Tunis declaration from September 2022 by trade unions from 39 African countries stresses the inclusion of labour provisions in the AfCFTA agreement to ensure compliance with international labour standards and the decent work agenda.¹³ Furthermore, the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) seeks to enhance its capacity to engage with matters relating to the AfCFTA agreement.

Broader studies argue that the measures of labour conditions (i.e., mean real monthly earnings, mean weekly work hours per employee, fatal occupational injury rate, and the number of the ILO's Fundamental Conventions ratified) found no evidence for possible pro-labour-condition effects of RTA labour clauses overall.¹⁴

The country has signed bilateral trade agreements with approximately 81 countries to facilitate trade and guarantee investments and trade in goods. Its Association Agreement in industrial products with the European Union (EU) is the most significant. As an expansion of the collaboration between Tunisia and the EU, negotiations for a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) were launched in October 2015. DCFTA aims to build on the current Association Agreement and targets to support ongoing economic reforms in Tunisia and bring the Tunisian legal framework closer to that of the EU in trade-related areas. The latest full round of the EU-DCFTA negotiations occurred in Tunis in 2019. Still, negotiations have been put on hold due to Tunisia's critical political and social circumstances. Studies of the expected economic impacts of DCFTA suggest adverse GDP effects and minor employment effects in Tunisia in the case of full tariff liberalisation and extensive harmonisation of the regulatory frameworks.¹⁵

Tunisia has benefited from the United States Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme that provided nonreciprocal, duty-free tariff treatment to certain products imported to the United States. However, legal authorisation for the GSP programme expired on December 31, 2020, and U.S. Congress has yet to reauthorize it.¹⁶

Trade agreements generally have been criticised for paying less attention to the interests of labour standards and core labour rights.¹⁷

SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social partners are central to promoting the realisation of core labour rights and social justice for workers by protecting freedom of association and collective bargaining in bi- and tripartite functions. These partners usually represent government institutions, trade unions, and employers' organisations.

Government

The framework for formulating policies on labour and employment issues and monitoring the implementation of labour law is divided into several institutions.

The Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) manages the government's social promotion, social and health security, labour relations, and migrant and Tunisians abroad. It includes implementing the national social policy to achieve balanced social development and support social welfare by contributing to workers' values and self-reliance in employment. MAS prepares draft legislative texts and proposes necessary reforms; develops programmes ensuring equal opportunities and resisting all forms of exclusion and social marginalisation; supports the social dialogue such as the tripartite group that has operated in creating the National Council for Social Dialogue. In addition, the ministry is responsible for enforcing health and safety standards at the workplace, not to mention the competent authority responsible for labour issues and relations with the ILO.

The Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MVTE) has broad responsibility for initial and continuing vocational training, employment, and immigration and foreign labour. The ministry includes undertaking studies to support policies of employment, integration and reintegration into the labour market and the promotion of self-employment; to execute labour agreements with

other countries; to elaborate legislative and regulatory provisions relating to the employment of foreign labour and ensure their application; and to participate, with the structures concerned, in the preparation and monitoring of the execution of international cooperation programs and agreements designed to promote the development of employment and placement abroad. MFPE ensures establishment of partnership relations with professional organisations, bodies, and associations related to employment (see more in the Vocational Training sub-section).

The National Observatory for Employment and Qualifications (NOEQ) is a component of the national statistics system that supports decision-making in employment and skills. Its mission is to collect labour market statistics, analyse employment and skills data using relevant indicators and issue regular reports on labour market trends.

The National Employment Fund (NEF) aims to facilitate the integration of young people and jobseekers facing difficulties in the labour market regardless of age, education level or region. NEF supports young people in acquiring better training and improving job access opportunities, as well as sponsors specific programmes to support Tunisia's economic development.

In December 2021, the government issued circular No. 20 to all ministries and government institutions that prohibit anyone from negotiating with the unions without the formal and prior authorisation of the Head of Government.

Trade unions

The Labour Code provides workers the right to organise, form and join unions and protects the right to bargain collectively. The right to strike extended to civil servants with some exceptions. The Framework Collective Agreement in the agricultural sector of 2015 recognises the freedom of all workers to join a trade union organisation and to participate in its activities within the framework of the legislation in force.

There are four central-level trade union organisations in Tunisia: *Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (UGTT), *Confédération Générale Tunisienne du Travail* (CGTT), *Union des travailleurs tunisiens* (UTT), and *Organisation tunisienne du travail* (OTT). UGTT is the largest organisation followed by OTT, CGTT, and UTT (Table 2). They have (sector) federations.

Table 2: Status of central trade union organisations members in Tunisia

Trade Union Organisations	Total Members
Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT)	700,346
Confédération Générale Tunisienne du Travail (CGTT)	90,000
Union des Travailleurs Tunisiens (UTT)	60,000
Organisation Tunisienne du Travail (OTT)	150,000

Note: The membership rates range from 2016 to 2022.
Source: DTDA research.

The trade union membership rate was on a fast rise at the beginning of the 2010s in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. Based on data from the National Institute of Statistics, it increased by 33% from 2010 to 2011, peaking in 2012 at 865,000 members. It resulted from the emergence of new trade unions, driving changes in unionism's landscape. The increasing number of organised workers benefitted from campaigns against subcontracting labours and advocating for increasing standard employment. Official updated data on the aggregated membership rate are scarce but approximately one million workers (Table 2). The trade union density of employees was projected at 30%, which appears relatively high compared to the neighbouring countries.¹⁸ Trade union membership has been concentrated in the public sector; unionisation in the private sector was estimated at around 15%.¹⁹ Another trend of unionism is that women superseded men, reaching a gender gap of about 25% during the 2010s.

The union membership appears relatively stable despite Covid-19 and the government's willingness to reform the public sector. It was mainly for the case of UGTT, which agreed to ensure a joint vision on public sector reform in 2021, as well as another

agreement on wage increase in the public sector and a similar deal with UTICA in the private sector in 2022. However, the political atmosphere worsened in 2022 and the beginning of 2023. The IMF loan Tunisia has been seeking by the government, when concluded, could hit hard on the trade union movement, as it includes terms of privatisation of public institutions.

The trade union movement operates in a highly complex environment. The government holds organised collective bargaining negotiations only with the UGTT. Representatives from CGTT, UTT and OTT have formed joint statements complaining that their labour organisations are ignored and excluded from tripartite negotiations.²⁰ In February 2019, the Administrative Court's verdict supported the unions. They now have the right to participate in social dialogue at all levels based on proportional representation, not restrictive. They also have the right to be members of the National Council for Social Dialogue and their right to grants and secondments (see more in the Social Dialogue sub-section).

The trade union movement brought attention to enhance its capacity to engage with the AfCFTA agreement (revisit the Trade Agreements sub-section). For instance, it has potential risks for organised workers in the manufacturing sector. Unions can expect to confront government-backed capital interests, labour violations and stifling union activity in the industries most exposed to free trade.²¹

The status of the four central trade union organisations is summarised below.

Tunisian General Labour Union

The Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) was established in 1946. It participated in the fight for independence from France. UGTT is a potent central actor in Tunisian society and has extended its activities to its members' working conditions and getting involved in the broader political agenda. The UGTT is affiliated with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU).

The organisation's membership is concentrated in the service sector (71%), 21% in industries, and 8% in agriculture. It is spread out among 24 regional entities, 19 sectoral organisations, and 20 trade unions.²²

As an impact of the 2011 revolution, UGTT's membership rate increased significantly from 500,000 in 2012 to 700,000 in 2019.²³ A civil service reform strategy to curb the public financial deficit has been initiated and will most likely challenge the membership rate in the public sector. Towards the end of 2021, a cabinet resolution was issued to limit the negotiation with the union in the public sector to be conditioned to prior approval from the prime minister. The UGTT rejected the resolution and considered it a violation of ILO conventions. Currently, the government seeks to reach a deal with the IMF, including privatising public enterprise conditions and freezing wage increases for civil servants. This situation threatens unionism, especially UGTT, which has most of its members in the public sector (around 500,000) and their dues are automatically deducted.

The UGTT went through a process of internal reform. It opened access for organised women and young workers to management positions. One woman was registered in the board's management for the first time in 2017 since the country's independence. Soon after, two other women integrated the centre's governance structures: the bylaws and financial control committees. The UGTT's women's committee currently has 24 branches throughout the country.

In recent years, UGTT has been campaigning to end subcontracting and instead organise standard employment for government workers in Tunisia to avoid labour exploitation.²⁴ Additionally, an upsurge of 'wildcat' strikes emerged, ignoring the usual procedure for strikes endorsed by the UGTT hierarchy. It has questioned if the organisation's historical legitimacy has been weakened. The transparency of UGTT's funding sources also has been recommended to be revised.²⁵

In 2021, UGTT expressed concern regarding the exclusion of factions of the union confederation that oppose actions, specifically the decision to change UGTT electoral bylaws to allow the Secretary-General to run for a third term in February 2022. The factions vying for this action were reportedly targeted by UGTT leadership. They received threats, had their membership frozen, and faced other disciplinary measures.²⁶ In 2021, the organisation signed an agreement with the government for 47 sectoral wage increases in 27 public sectors to be phased in over two years. However, the president suspended parliament in July 2021, and an increase due in September did not go into effect. In April 2021, the UGTT Electricity and Gas Federation denounced the government's decision to increase the salaries of engineers working for ministries because the raises excluded those working for state-owned enterprises (SOEs). In June 2021, UGTT announced an agreement with the government to increase the guaranteed minimum wage by 6.5% for the public and private sectors. Most public-sector employees were paid well above the minimum wage, so this primarily targeted the private sector. The agreement was not implemented by year's end.²⁷

UGTT rallied in March 2023 in what appeared to be the biggest protest yet against the government in a demonstration of its strength after its recent crackdown on opponents (see more in the Trade Union Rights Violations section).

Tunisian General Confederation of Labour

The Tunisian General Confederation of Labour (CGTT) has been awaiting registration since 2006, and it was finally launched in 2011. The organisation experienced fast growth of members, reaching an estimated 30,000 in 2013 up to around 90,000. GCTT advocates trade union pluralism. The general secretary is the former leader of the UGTT.

Political rifts with the government have marred the confederation during the 2010s after being deprived of participation in central tripartite structures and social dialogue institutions. In June 2015, the administrative court ruled to allow the CGTT to deduct earnings from pay checks for dues,

a labour right previously granted only to UGTT. The decision could be interpreted as affirming union pluralism in the country.

Tunisian Workers' Union

The Tunisian Workers' Union (UTT) was launched in 2011 and advocated trade union pluralism. At the beginning of 2013, the organisation had around 10,000 members. It snowballed, reaching 50,000 at the end of 2013. Currently, the media suggest it will be up to 60,000 in 2018.

Tunisian Labour Organisation

The Tunisian Labour Organisation (OTT) was established in 2013. It partially justified its establishment as a counterpoint to UGTT. OTT was criticised for not serving the country's interests and for lack of transparency. OTT was alleged to affiliate with *Ennahda* (an Islamist party) that aligns the Islamist political representative in the trade union movement. The organisation declared around 150,000 members in 2015, and no confirmed, updated data were available.²⁸ Media suggest that the organisation is fragmented due to internal conflicts.

Employers' Organisations

Projections from the International Labour Organization (ILO) suggest that 7% of the total employment covers employers in Tunisia, which was in line with Northern Africa at 7%.

The Global Competitiveness Index provides the employers' view on several aspects, including pillar eight, dealing with labour market efficiency. Information is based on surveys among employers and other statistical data. Tunisia was measured at the low level, ranking 133 out of 141 countries (1 is the best) in 2019 (Table 3). Out of the 12 labour market efficiency indicators, the best scoring is in the labour tax rate (65). Worst rankings are in the ease of hiring foreign labour (141), cooperation in labour-employer relations (127), pay and productivity (127), and hiring and firing practices (126).

Table 3: Employers' view of the labour market efficiency in Tunisia, 2019

Indicator	Rank
Total	133
Redundancy costs (weeks of salary) **	99
Hiring and firing practices *	126
Cooperation in labour-employer relations *	127
Flexibility of wage determination *	124
Active labour market policies *	98
Workers' rights *	65
Ease of hiring foreign labour *	141
Internal labour mobility *	91
Reliance on professional management *	104
Pay and productivity *	127
Ratio of wage and salaried female workers to male workers **	118
Labour tax rate **	109

* Survey data. ** Ranked by per cent. Note: Rank from 1 to 141 (1 is highest).

Note: Rank from 1 to 141 (1 is best ranking).

Source: The Global Competitiveness Report, 2019, 8th pillar: Labour market efficiency.

Based on the list of 35 risks listed by the Global Risks Report 2023, the five risks that are the most likely to pose the biggest threat to Tunisia in the next two years are debt crises, state collapse, severe commodity supply crises, cost-of-living crisis, and rapid and/or sustained inflation.²⁹

The status of the leading employers' organisation is summarised below:

Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts

The Tunisian Confederation of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA) is based on decision-making structures and supported by specialised commissions. The organisation is structured in 17 federations, 24 regional unions, 216 local unions, 370 national union chambers and 1,700 regional union chambers.³⁰ According to UTICA, around 120,000 companies are members. The number might be lower since many companies still need to pay membership fees, and affiliation varies during election cycles. Others suggest that UTICA has between 6,000-7,000 companies.³¹

UTICA operates with a broad mandate of social affairs involving economic, social, and international developments and industrial relations. It also promotes vocational training, collective bargaining, services for members, national negotiations, and interest representation.

After the 2011 revolution, UTICA underwent internal reform. The organisation argued that the emergence of labour union pluralism complicated collective bargaining negotiations. The organisation contends that illegal vendors are destroying their members' businesses and promoted initiatives to stop these stalls. The government launched crackdowns on removing illegal vendors, but they often return rapidly.

UTICA operates with the Centre for Young Directors, which aims to form young managers and innovation and represent young corporate managers as a component of dialogue and negotiation. In addition, the Chamber of Women Entrepreneurs gathers women entrepreneurs and heads of institutions in all activities and sectors to gather energies, exchange experiences, and break the isolation and ambition to contribute actively and effectively to the national economy.

In recent years, UTICA condemned general strikes in the private sector, arguing it further harmfully affects the complicated situation the country is currently going through. They warned against the negative consequences that salary increases could further increase inflation, the decline of the competitiveness of companies, increased debt, and the imbalance of public finances. The confederation expressed its concerns dealing with the 2023 national budget, arguing that it will worsen the crisis in Tunisia connected to a tax and public accounting law that could negatively impact the business and investment climate. Instead, the confederation called for devising an urgent programme to rescue the economy based on substantial measures.

Confederation of Tunisian Citizen Enterprises

The Confederation of Tunisian Citizen Enterprises (CONNECT) was launched in September 2011 as a employers' organisation. It operates in several

sectors and all regions. It promotes itself as an entrepreneurial partner that supports constructive initiatives for social and economic development, as well as registered four associated members in January 2023.³²

CONNECT has participated in meetings with CGTT to support common demands for recognition and participation in the national social dialogue institutions alongside the traditional partners UTICA and UGTT.

In recent years, CONNECT emphasised the need to improve the business environment in Tunisia. The organisation has argued that more measures should be implemented to achieve economic growth targets, which makes local and international investors reluctant to initiate projects.

In recent years, CONNECT criticised several strikes scheduled in the private sector; for example, in October 2022, the owners of bakeries affiliated to it would not take part in strikes, and its concern at the strike carried by revenue officers, finance and control offices that began in April 2021, without warning, taking businesses captive in a situation of crisis. Further, they draw attention to the obstacles hindering the development of the renewable energy sector, put the required mechanisms to develop the transport sector and improve the competitiveness of the industrial textile sector.

SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Social dialogue is a central factor in any modern industrial relations system. Tunisia has ratified the international Tripartite Consultation Convention (C144) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention (C098) (revisit Appendix Table 14).

The 2014 constitution initiated a transition of fundamental social rights and preconditions for constructing a welfare State. The new constitution left out the principle of social dialogue and the freedom of collective bargaining. On the other hand, the Regulation of Wages and Industrial Relations Act of 1971 provides for collective

bargaining that must take place in trade group negotiating councils, each of which had an equal number of employer and worker representatives. As mentioned, the law has flaws in collective bargaining to international standards.

Social dialogue has close links with the political environment in Tunisia. UGTT and UTICA are the dominant social partners in social dialogue with the government. They influence national policies and support the progress of the labour market. Social partners became more active and independent during the last decade, supported by legal reforms. Four parties, known as the Quartet, including UGTT and UTICA, received the 2015 Nobel Peace Prize for their decisive contribution to building a pluralistic democracy in the wake of the 2011 revolution. Formal structures still need to be fully in a place haunted by a lack of consistency, continuity, follow-up, and compliance. A centralised management structure has generated some frustrations, reflected in social tensions and 'wildcat' strikes (see ahead).

The three main tripartite social partners signed a Social Contract in January 2013. It aims to control the country's political turmoil. Although progress in establishing the National Council for Social Dialogue (NCSD) created a significant improvement in letting people's voices and accountability heard by the authorities, the mutual trust between civil society and the state has continued to be fragile (see more in the Central Tripartite Institutions sub-section). Also, in 2016, the Tunis Declaration for Employment was launched, setting a roadmap as part of a common approach that helps address challenges and unite efforts to push for development and growth.

Social dialogue at the company level has been through consultation and exchange of information via Advisory Committee or collective bargaining between the employer and the company trade union. Company supervision has been established within the inspectorate of labour and reconciliation in all Tunisian regions. An absent legal framework to regulate social dialogue at this level kept it underdeveloped. Survey data at the company level

detected some lack of awareness of the employees' representatives' election procedures and the deprivation of human resources officials in some companies. A company with at least 40 permanent employees should establish an advisory committee or employ between 20 and 30 permanent employees to set up the employees' representation.³³ Taking into consideration that most enterprises operate as informal micro- or small enterprises (see more in the Workforce section).³⁴ Nevertheless, the Act No. 2017-54 amended the provisions of the Labour Code concerning the representation of personnel at the enterprise level. It took new initial steps ahead in social dialogue. For example, a staff delegate is elected in enterprises employing 20 or fewer permanent workers. Due to the importance of occupational health and safety issues and their technical nature, a technical sub-committee should be set up within the company advisory committee known as the Health and Safety Committee.

Tunisia tends to offer collective bargaining rights to workers in the public sector. Generally, employees' coverage of collective bargaining was slightly above 50%. Many collective agreements adjust wages in line with inflation to protect real wages. Some sectoral agreements are achieved by automatically indexing negotiated wages to the consumer price index (CPI) (see more in the Working Conditions section). Single-employer bargaining at the enterprise level is predominant in shaping working conditions and relations between employers and workers, at least in the private sector. Besides, the level of collective bargaining is mainly inter-professional and sectoral in Tunisia.³⁵

In 2022, two national agreements were reached: one in public and one private sector. For the public sector, the deal involves a 5% annual hike to public sector wages every year until 2025. The breakthrough comes after arduous negotiations and a general strike in June 2022. The agreement is attempting to secure the enforcement of previous agreements that the government did not respect. A critical issue is that the public finances are strained to cover the cost of such an agreement, and

simultaneously seeks the IMF loan, which according to the terms, cannot be used for a wage increase.

On the other hand, to avoid the subsector agreements in the private sector, which has been a significant demand for the workers, the UTICA agreed with the UGTT to have a national framework agreement that includes wage increases for all the workers in the private sector. The UGTT had to accept that because of the economic crisis; however, the challenge remains to enforce such an increase at the enterprise level since the employers, even members of UTICA, do not all conform to the national policy of the employers' organisation. The subsector negotiation is postponed to 2024.

Wages agreed in CBAs are usually higher than the minimum guaranteed wage. Many workers need to gain awareness of how their payments are calculated or the wages are paid later than legally specified. Collective agreements may also apply different taxes on income to each category, e.g., wholesalers are taxed on their actual income. In contrast, retailers may be subject to a flat rate.

The legal framework still needs to improve in international standards concerning the right of collective bargaining. The agreements' compliance is different from one company to another. A study argued that despite the Labour Code and the collective bargaining framework in employment relations in the garment industry, more flexible employment is applied to avoid the regulations, e.g., employers often hire workers through short-term contracts.³⁶ By the same token, Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) from ILO argued that the authorities had intervened in the collective bargaining system. It has the effect of cancelling or modifying the content of collective agreements freely concluded by the social partners contrasting the principle of free and voluntary negotiation. It is worth mentioning that the informal economy is widespread in the private sector, dominated by micro and small enterprises that are side-lined for collective agreements.

Central Tripartite Institutions

The Labour Act of 2003 sets the tripartite consultation bodies to promote social dialogue, represented in eight institutions to regulate and advice on a wide range of subjects such as labour policy, minimum wages, occupational safety and health and social dialogue:

- Council for Vocational Training.
- High Committee for Employment.
- Labour Committee.
- Occupational Safety and Health Committee.
- Regional or Central Commission for Control of Dismissals.
- Consultative Commission on Collective Bargaining Agreements.
- Central or Local Commission for Salaries.
- National Commission for Social Dialogue.

The leading institution is presented below:

National Council for Social Dialogue

After two years of negotiation, the National Council for Social Dialogue's (NCSD) mandate and mode of operation were approved in 2017 and inaugurated in November 2018. The council's general assembly included an equal number of representatives from the government, the most representative trade unions, and employers' organisations in both the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors. The council ran into hurdles regarding the nomination of the members. As a part of a long-standing process, the Ministry of Labour is taking steps towards adopting a decree establishing criteria for trade union representativeness at the national level to make it possible to designate the most representative organisation.³⁷ The council has held meetings and focused on establishing its bylaws and discussions on forming an unemployment fund and national platform for social protection (see more in the Social Protection section).

Other bi/tripartite organs

- Tunisian National Social Security Fund.
- National Health Insurance Fund.
- National Pension and Social Providence Fund.

- Supreme Council for Education and Training.
- Supreme Council for Occupational Safety and Health.
- Higher Council of Human Resources.
- National Committee of Professional Training.
- Regional Professional Training Committees.

Labour dispute resolution system

In Tunisia, conciliation and mediation mechanisms for disputes come from industrial relations functions. Any difficulty arising between the employer and the workers, which could lead to a collective dispute, must be submitted to the corporate consultative committee to find solutions that are amenable to both parties. If the conflict still needs to be resolved within the company, it must be submitted to the Regional Conciliation Office or, failing that, to the territorially competent Labour Inspectorate. There are no voluntary mediation or legal conciliation provisions.

Arbitration mechanisms for collective disputes also function via conciliation panels with equal labour and management representation, including tripartite regional commissions to arbitrate disputes. Reports found that these commissions function. However, representatives from UGTT's smaller rival labour unions (CGTT and UTT) complained their organisations were ignored and excluded from the tripartite commissions because a drafted decree law explicitly aimed at banning the smaller unions from the social dialogue. The smaller unions accused UGTT of denying the rights of labourers to choose the union best representing their interests freely.³⁸ In addition, the mediation field still suffers due to courts' congestion and judges' inadequate training to handle this kind of non-adversarial dispute resolution mechanism.

The Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) system relates to the social partners' engagement in social dialogue and conflict resolution structures.

In the absence of agreement, every party involved retains a right of appeal to the court of the relevant jurisdiction. They specialised labour tribunals of tripartite composition from the court with jurisdiction

over individual labour disputes (*Conseil de prud'hommes*). Appeals from its decisions are to courts of general jurisdiction.³⁹ Claims regarding abusive dismissal before the court competent for labour issues have a time limit of one year. On appeal, the court may definitively fix the payable redundancy compensation concerning the laws in force. The intervention of the Discipline Council does not preclude the worker's right to appeal against dismissal to the courts of the relevant jurisdiction. The decision of the Council does not bind the courts.

Several administrative and legal obstacles concerning trade unions and employers' organisations' role in the judicial system thwart the scope of strike action. Proposals were presented to improve the workers-employers organisations' performance in the legal system. It initiated a process of reforming the law concerning the appointment of labour court members to facilitate the procedures taken in the relevant methods proposed.⁴⁰ However, the political instability in Tunisia made it almost impossible to maintain the progress achieved. In recent years, protests erupted in main towns and cities across the country over issues related to the cost of living, taxes, and deteriorated political ambience. Unions often did not advance approval to strike due to excluding several federations in tripartite institutions. It spurred wildcat strikes (i.e., those not authorised by union leadership) in workplace sit-ins. It mirrors that the dispute resolution system is facing a problematic bearing.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

Tunisia's Global Rights Index ranking dropped from 4 in 2021 to 5 out of 5 (5+ is worst) in 2022, i.e., no guarantees of rights: while the legislation may spell out certain rights, workers effectively have no access to these rights and are therefore exposed to autocratic regimes and unfair labour practices.⁴¹

The International Trade Union Confederation registered several cases of systematic violations of rights in recent years, dealing with the 2011 revolution's tenth-anniversary protests repressed by the police and the police broke a strike at the main

public television channel in 2022; president prohibited negotiations with unions without his prior approval in 2021, none cases were detected in 2020 mainly due to closing down the society of the Covid-19 pandemic; two trade unionists prosecuted for their trade union activities, trade unionist black-listed, press freedom under threat, clashes during a demonstration in 2019.⁴² Recently, a senior union official was detained in February 2023 for organising a strike by highway tollbooth operators

Reports listed that UGTT representatives alleged that some private-sector businesses targeted union leaders and fired them once they led strikes or made demands on behalf of the workforce. UGTT made allegations of other anti-union practices by private-sector employers, including firing union activists and employing temporary workers to deter unionisation. In specific industries, including textiles, hotels, and construction, temporary workers accounted for a majority of the workforce, a practice reportedly aimed at minimising the risk of union-related disruptions of business.⁴³

Tunisia ranked number 126 out of 167 countries (1 is best) in the latest Global Slavery Index from 2018. This index measures modern slavery, i.e., slavery-like practices (such as debt bondage, forced marriage and sale or exploitation of children), human trafficking and forced labour. Around 25,000 people live in modern slavery in the country, making it more challenging to reach the global Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on Decent Work (see Appendix Table 11, Indicator 8.7.1).

Tunisia has no active Freedom of Association cases via ILO's complaints procedures. There are two follow-up cases, all raised by trade unions. Firstly, the complainant organisation denounces obstacles to the free exercise of the right to organise in enterprises, its exclusion from national social dialogue, and the failure of the Government to establish the social dialogue bodies provided for in the Labour Code. Secondly, the complainant organisation denounces anti-union acts, which the authorities have committed against it, thereby preventing trade union pluralism in the country.

WORKING CONDITIONS

In Tunisia, several minimum wages are regulated: Minimum wage rates for agricultural (SMAG) and non-agricultural (SMIG) sectors are determined and revised by the government in a decree after consultations with the most representative employers and workers' organisations. In those sectors where collective agreements do not define minimum wages, these can be fixed by the minimum wages. The country excludes domestic workers from the minimum wages.

The latest nominal minimum wage increase was 6.8% from 2020 to 2021, reaching TND 439 (US\$142) on average. Although these more regular adjustments were undertaken, more was needed to compensate for consumer price increases. It led to a decline in real minimum wages at the margin. The devaluation of the Tunisian currency has led to a rise in prices and an unprecedented inflation rate, negatively affecting the workers' income purchasing power (Table 4 and Figure 3). But the labour productivity increased slightly, suggesting that employees' payment did not benefit from this improvement (see more in the Workforce section). Social security contributions for a single minimum wage earner with no children reached 9% of the gross minimum wage, which was at the middle level in the world; there is no contribution for personal income tax. Besides, Tunisia's gross monthly minimum wage is at the high level among African countries.⁴⁴

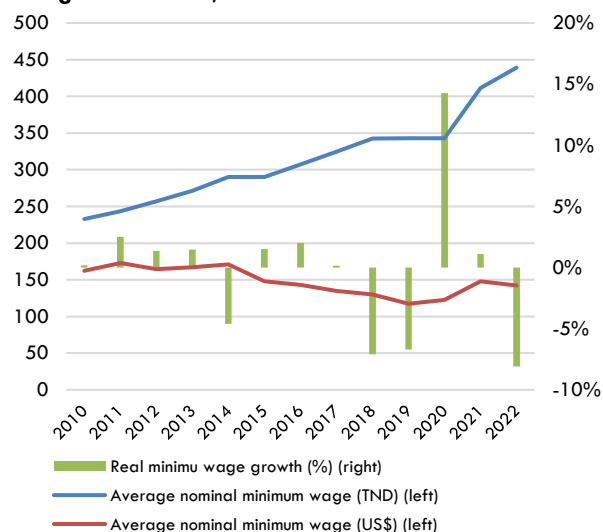
Table 4: Status of wages per month in Tunisia, 2022

	Current Dinar	Current US\$
Typically earning (2023)	3,910	1,265
Minimum wage for agricultural sector workers (SMAG)	477	155
Minimum wage (non-agricultural) in 40 Hours System (SMIG)	387	125
Minimum wage (non-agricultural) in 48 Hours System (SMIG)	454	147
Real minimum wage growth average, 2010-2022	-0.1%	

Note: Minimum wage regulations set a maximum standard 48-hour workweek for manual work in the industrial and agricultural sectors. For administrative jobs in the private and public sectors, the workweek is 40 hours.

Source: SalaryExplore; WageIndicator.org.

Figure 3: Tunisia's minimum wage average and its real growth trends, 2010-2022



Note: The measurement is based on the average of minimum wage rate for agricultural (SMAG) and non-agricultural (SMIG) sector.

Source: own calculations on real minimum wage growth.

Interestingly, the SMAG turned higher than the SMIG at the beginning of the 2010s, reaching around 5% higher in 2022. The Ministry of Social Affairs, the UGTT, and the Tunisian Union of Agriculture and Fishing agreed to improve labour conditions and salaries for agricultural work to match those in the industrial sector. The deal was geared to protect rural women against dangerous employment conditions, set safety standards for handling hazardous materials, and give tax incentives for agricultural employers to provide training for workers.

Based on data from 2020, more than half of the surveyed respondents reported a decrease in their household income since February 2020; 38% lost more than 25% of their income. Additionally, informal waged workers were three times more affected by job losses than formal waged workers (see more in the Informal Economy sub-section).⁴⁵

The government has pushed through programmes to curb financial instability and stabilise the economy, including freezing public-sector wages; in 2020, the total salary bill was nearly 70% of the state's yearly resources. Generally, the status of salaries has triggered many strikes and sit-ins every year since 2011. Some strikes took place in 2022, but the most prominent was the one in June 2022. For

2023, the public transport strike was postponed to March after talks between UGTT and the government, just before the strike was launched. However, the arrests among trade union leaders on the background of trade union activism and calls for strikes pushed UGTT to launch a series of regional strikes across the country between February and March 2023. These strikes are still ongoing. On the other hand, the state took severe measures against UGTT, including expelling the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) president and banning entry of European trade union leaders on their way to solidarity missions in Tunisia.

The government needs to adequately enforce the minimum wage law, particularly in the widespread informal economy where workers are haunted by a lack of awareness or incentives to comply with the labour regulations, not to mention weaknesses of the labour inspection system. The prohibition against excessive compulsory overtime is not always enforced.⁴⁶

The Ministry of Social Affairs enforces workplace health and safety standards. Enforcement of these measures is often inadequate. The legislation covers all workers, including those in the informal economy, with the same occupational safety and health protections.

The number of labour inspectors peaked in 2014 at around 500 but fell to 328 in 2021.⁴⁷ It suggests that around one inspector per 11,000 employed. The ILO recommended one inspector per 10,000 workers in industrial market economies and one per 20,000 workers in transition economies.⁴⁸

Tunisia's labour regulations do not provide for any special recruitment rules or impose any method. The provisions of fair competition limit freedom of recruitment. Non-competitive clauses can be inserted into employment contracts if they are limited in time and space.

The country's labour market applies eased hiring regulations. Using fixed-term contracts, which were used to end subcontracting in the public sector during the 2010s, has become a standard

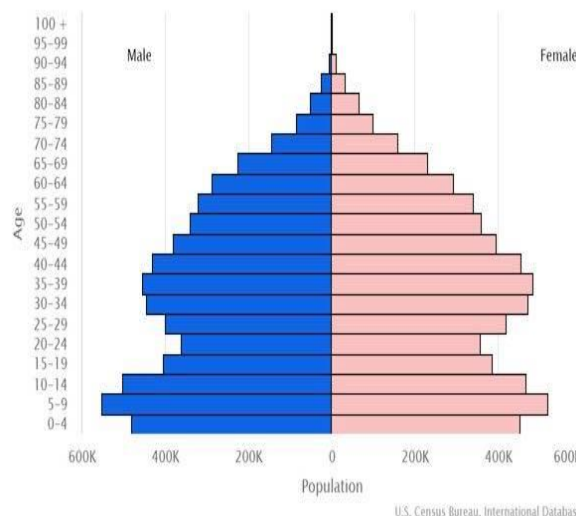
mechanism for hiring workers. It has created unnecessary labour turnover. The difference between subcontracting agencies and working directly for an employer under a short-term contract is often indistinguishable. Firms need to enter an open-ended contract to keep the staff for more than four years that, instead, cause firing rigidity.⁴⁹ These contractual controversies have negatively affected job quality. Large-scale usage of flexible, temporary contracts has triggered more informality, lower salaries, and a lack of social or job security. Temporary contract labourers often complained about not being accorded the same protections as permanent employees.

WORKFORCE

Geographically, Tunisia is the smallest North African country. Its population growth slowed from 2.5% in the 1980s to 0.9% at the beginning of the 2020s, and the population is rapidly ageing. They represented 11.8 million in 2022. The fertility rate fell from 5.1 in 1980 to 2.1 births per woman in 2020, slightly lower than the average of the Middle East & North Africa (excluding high-income) at 2.7. It resulted from a national family planning programme from the 1960s to promote socio-economic development. Tunisia's life expectancy increased from 64 years in 1980 to 75 in 2020, slightly higher than the regional average of 72.

The population pyramid in Figure 4 visualises how demographic shifts are evolving. Some observations are the current youth segment up to 30 years old is remarkably low, echoed in the tumbled birth rate in the 1980s and 1990s. During the last two decades, conservatism and religious fundamentalism resurged in women's childbearing role. There was also an increase in the birth rate in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. This situation puts pressure on the upcoming years' public finances on the country's health, education, and social protection services expenditure. Around 38% of the population is below 25 years old; 66% are of working age (15-64); 8.9% are 65 years and over.

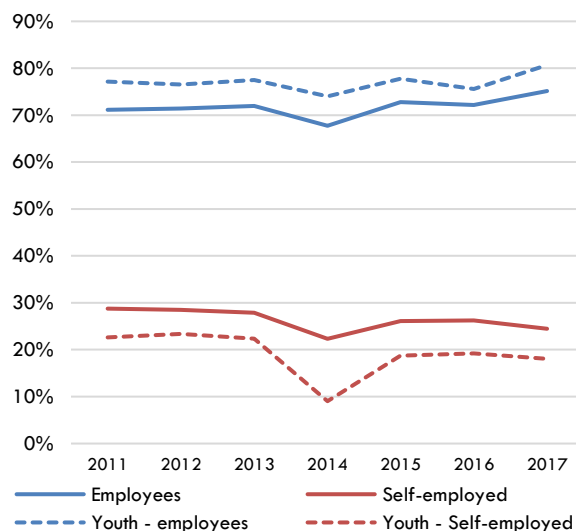
Figure 4: Population pyramid based on the age-sex structure of the population in Tunisia, 2022



Source: Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, Tunisia.

Based on the latest available national labour force survey data, around 3.6 million Tunisians are in employment, with a ratio of employment-to-population at 40%. Men dominate the labour market, representing 74% of total employment, while women of 26% (see more in the Gender sub-section). Around 8% of employed operate in the public sector, while 92% are in the private sector. Data suggest that the more formal employees' group is slightly on the rise while the self-employed somewhat drop in the margin (see more in Figure 5).

Figure 5: Tunisia's employment by status in employment trend, Age total 15+ and youth 15-24, %, 2011-2017

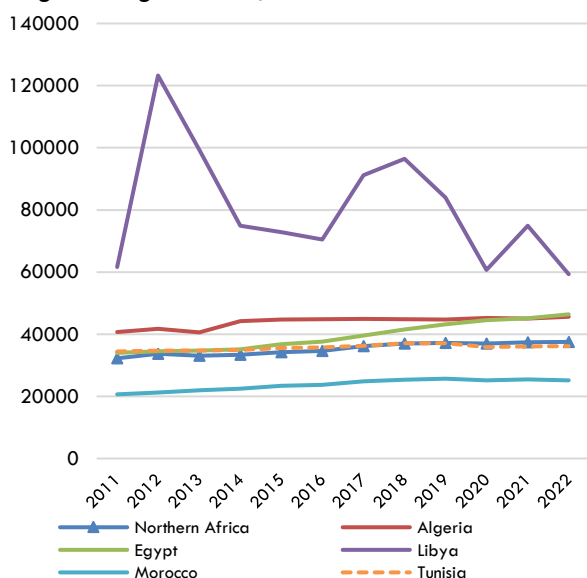


Source: LFS - Enquête Nationale sur la Population et l'Emploi.

Shifts are detected in the aggregated sectoral employment. Projections suggest that jobs in the agricultural sector's share of total employment fell from 19% in 2009 to 14% in 2019. Instead, employment in the industrial sector rose from 32% to 34% and the service sector from 49% to 53%.⁵⁰ This situation is reflected by the abovementioned status of employment shifts, rising urbanisation and waning population growth. Tunisia's manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment has been stable at 18% during the 2010s and stood significantly higher than the African average at 7.3%.

Figure 6 below shows that the labour productivity in Tunisia has stalled since the end of the 2010s, standing in line with Northern Africa's average but superseded by Egypt. Annual growth rate of output per worker started to fall in 2019 as a part of the social-economic ruptures. It even plummeted in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic. A mismatch between labour supply and demand also links to the population's unmet need for employment. This feeble labour productivity development challenges the SDGs (see more in Appendix Table 11, indicator 8.2.1).

Figure 6: Output per worker trend for Tunisia and neighbouring countries, 2010-2021



Note: Output per worker is based on GDP constant 2017 international \$ at PPP.

Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Tunisia's labour share of national income benefitted from a minor tailwind during the 2010s, reaching 48% in 2019, hovering above other Northern African countries' average. It was mainly protected by an upsurge of the employees' group, inflow in remittances, and application of universal subsidies. However, the deteriorated political, social and economic environment at the beginning of the 2020s has brought a headwind to improve the labour share of national income. A transformation involving the rising power of new technology, globalisation, and the widespread informal economy further questions Tunisia's capacity to reach the SDG dealing with better equality (see more in Appendix Table 11, Indicators 10.4.1).

Another issue is that Tunisian firms represent around 97% are microenterprises with five or fewer employees. A majority of them operate in the informal economy.⁵¹ Although the country has a relatively high-medium ease of doing business environment (revisit Appendix Table 15), the economic and political instability harmed the enterprises' ecosystem, including weak job creation, not to mention decades of corruption, clientelism, and the absence of strategic planning.

Fuelling the Tunisian population's vision of democracy during the post-2011 revolution has been challenged by the economy that did not spark massive decent job creation. This situation is reflected in the relatively high youth unemployment rate (see more in the Unemployment sub-section). Instead, the state has promoted public employment creation initiatives and implemented large consumer and subsidy programmes, but it will not tackle the root of the labour market's insufficient job creation.

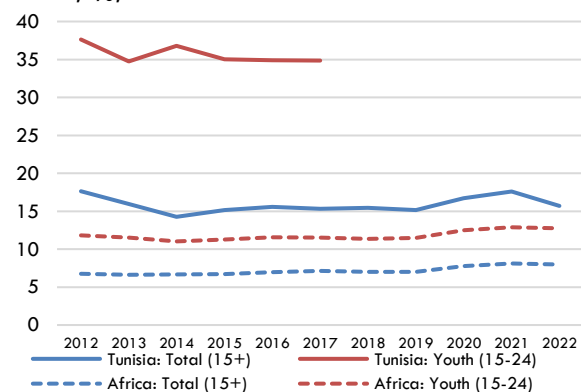
Active labour market policies (ALMPs) have been implemented over decades in Tunisia. It includes Employability Improvement Cheque, Employment Support Cheque, Support to Small Business Entrepreneurs, Local Community Partnerships to Foster Employment, and Programme to Foster Employment.⁵² These programmes reduce the gap between labour market needs and education at all levels. It includes providing complementary training that enables jobseekers to join the labour market

with better knowledge and relevant skills or build businesses and become self-employed. Studies argue that ALMPs have a minimal impact on the labour markets in Tunisia, reflected by low insertion rates. The absence of an integrated approach with the demand side has limited it. Agencies argue that stand-alone supply interventions are unlikely to increase employment when firms are not creating more job opportunities. ALMPs, including wage subsidies, have had low retention rates given that firms are not growing enough to employ additional workers.⁵³ Part of the challenges is that the supply of employment services is a monopoly of the National Agency for Employment and Self-Employment (ANETI). Nevertheless, the agency's capacity to provide effective intermediate services is limited.⁵⁴

Unemployment

A critical challenge of Tunisia's labour market is to create more decent jobs. Its scope is reflected in the structurally high unemployment rate, standing steady at around 15% during the end of the 2010s. The Covid-19 pandemic economic rupture sparked an upsurge in the employment rate, peaking at 18% in 2021. It pushed many workers to balance the poverty line. Official data suggest that Tunisia's unemployment rate fell in 2022 and moved towards its previous 2010s level in 2023 (Figure 7).

Figure 7: The unemployment trends in Tunisia and Africa, %, 2012-2022



Source: Tunisia National Institute of Statistics; International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Tunisia's unemployment rate is substantially above the African average and stuck to youth, women, and

the more educated population (see more in the Gender and Youth sub-sections).

Tunisia's high unemployment rate compared to the African average is linked to the relatively well-developed social protection system. The country does not provide unemployment insurance, leaving workers who lose their jobs without adequate support. Instead, severance pay is minimal, and income support is provided to first-time job seekers (see more in the Social Protection section).

The ratio of employment-to-population at 40%, which includes the unemployment segment, keeps statistically out of a massive group of the economically inactive population, reflected in women's low participation rate. It has shadowed the fact of 'hidden' unemployment in the economy. Despite Tunisia's falling-off population growth, it continues to face intense labour supply pressures due to the rapidly growing number of higher-educated graduates. They face a mismatch between the skills produced by the education system and those needed by the labour market.⁵⁵ These frustrations further fuelled the Tunisian youth's social discontent that is, at times, violently expressed.

Migration

Tunisia has adopted several international, regional, and sub-regional conventions and protocols for protecting migrant rights, such as the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Migrants. It still needs to sign the four ILO migrant-specific instruments.

In the aftermath of the 2011 revolution, the country took steps ahead in its legal framework dealing with refugee protection and migration. It still lacks, though, a clear migration policy and a proper asylum system that fails to meet the needs of asylum seekers and refugees through reception and integration.⁵⁶ Other recent reports noted that Tunisia's securitised migration policies have remained essentially unchanged after the 2011 revolution.⁵⁷ The migration system has been challenged by political instability and economic

downturns, as well as EU policies fed political resistance to reforms.

Tunisia's migration flow links to the origin, transit, and destination with complex factors and changes during the last decades. The probability of internal migration in Tunisia is mainly in search of job opportunities or educational reasons, but climate changes are emerging as a push factor. Rural-to-urban migration dynamics increased the urban population from 40% in the 1960s to around 70% today. It is still lower than the closest neighbouring countries, e.g., Algeria (74%) and Libya (81%). The evolving urbanisation process sparked more pressure on the social service demand, access to housing, and clean drinking water. On the other hand, Tunisia's labour market faces a pressing shortage of agricultural workers that have come to rely on around 60,000 migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who, in general, work for lower pay in demanding, seasonal jobs, saving money for their hazardous journey to Europe.⁵⁸ Youth migration further reinforces existing regional disparities and urban-rural divisions.

Other factors of internal migration concern Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). In Tunisia, displacement associated with disasters is mainly from floods and wildfires: close to 18,000 persons were registered during the last ten years, particularly with an upsurge in 2020. Displacement associated with conflicts and violence has been minimal; just four persons were registered as IDP in 2019.⁵⁹

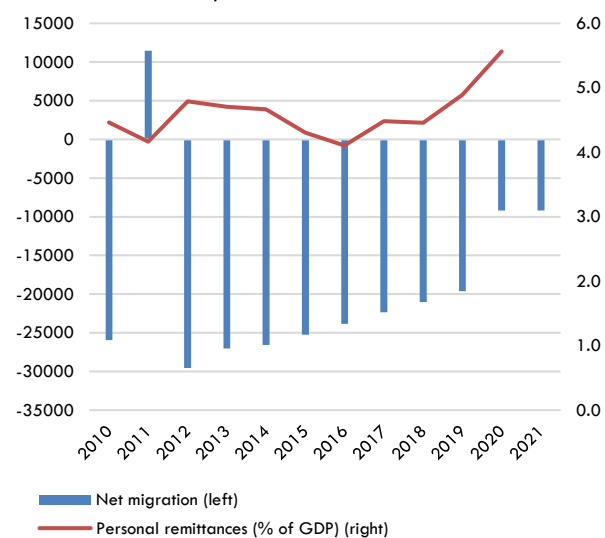
Central drivers of emigration (out-migration) link to better employment opportunities and working conditions abroad. About 6.9% of the Tunisian population live abroad, with three out of four (77%) living in Europe. This massive emigration led to a 'brain drain' migration and raised concerns about losing trained and qualified workers in the health, engineering, and information technology sectors. A rising emigration flow emerged towards the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States and countries in the Middle East during the last decade, mainly attracting young, unskilled, and less educated Tunisian emigrants. Besides, Tunisia is an important

transit country for African migrants attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe.

In recent years, Tunisians attempting to migrate to Europe has increased significantly. Many of them are a victim of fraud and subjected to abuse at the hands of smugglers. Other protection concerns for migrants include the risk of deportation and restricted access to services because of the absence of a formal national asylum system.

Figure 8 below shows that more people left than entered Tunisia during the last two decade, except it remarkably reverted in 2011 due to the 2011 revolution and the Libyan crisis that started in early 2011. Generally, the net migration flow has slowly become more balanced due to tightening EU countries' migration policies and a growing number of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers from other countries arriving in Tunisia to travel elsewhere, often to Europe. The migration flow slowed down at the beginning of the 2020s due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Figure 8: Tunisia's net migration and personal remittances trends, 2010-2021



Note: Net migration is the total number of immigrants minus the annual number of emigrants, including both citizens and noncitizens.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Personal remittances received have been a central part of Tunisia's economy, reaching 4.5% of GDP on average during the 2010s; even increased significantly in 2020 despite the pandemic impact. These remittances are notably higher than the

Middle East & North Africa (excluding high income) at 3.2% of GDP, as well as higher than foreign direct investments (FDI); for example, a 2.4 percentage point gap in the 2010s, with FDI at 2.1% of GDP on average.

Tunisia undersigned the Refugee Convention and its Refugee Protocol but needs a domestic legal framework governing asylum and refugee issues. Many refugees and asylum seekers consider Tunisia a transit country to Europe. The country hosted over 9,700 refugees and asylum seekers in May 2022, primarily from the Ivory Coast and Syria. Migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers in Tunisia face restricted access to healthcare, shelter, and employment, as well as exposure to protection risks such as human trafficking and scams caught by the absence of a formal national asylum system guaranteeing access to services and documentation.

Informal Economy

The informal economy is widespread in Tunisia. According to Tunisia's Labour Force Survey, the proportion of informal employment in total employment reached 61%, somewhat lower than the Northern Africa average at 67%. The proportion of informal employment in the non-agricultural got 57%. Taking into consideration the high structural unemployment, no progress in the manufacturing employment rate, and high out-migration flow point that the high share of informal employment in Tunisia is struggling to reach progress for the SDG dealing with development-oriented laws and policies that support the employment formalisation (see Appendix Table 11, Indicator 8.3.1). A study from the International Monetary Fund shows that the country's size and development of the informal economy burst in the 2011 revolution but started to fall, reaching around 31% in 2015. This level was higher than Algeria (24%) but lower than Libya (38%) and Egypt (33%).⁶⁰ However, Tunisia's informal economy size is most likely to be rebounded at the beginning of the 2020s due to the political turmoil, reforming the public sector, and economic downturn. Table 5 summarises the status of Tunisia's informal economy.

Table 5: Status of Tunisia's informal economy

Indicator	Per cent
Proportion of informal employment in total employment (2014)	61%
Proportion of informal employment in total employment (non-agriculture) (2014)	57%
Size of the informal economy (2015)	31%

Sources: International Labour Organization, *Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM)*; International Monetary Fund, *Shadow Economies Around the World: What Did We Learn Over the Last 20 Years?*, 2018.

Informal workers operate through loopholes in labour and business regulations, often due to a lack of awareness or incentives. For example, informal workers are often side-lined for the minimum wages; since many social protection schemes are tied to formal employment, they also face difficulties, and often exclusion, accessing social security and medical insurance schemes; avoiding paying taxes. This adverse environment obscures industrial relations, organising workers, and performing collective bargaining through social dialogue structures that weaken labour rights coverage. Informal workers often work without formal contracts or ambiguous forms, complicating defending their fundamental rights in courts.

Tunisia has taken strides to improve the legal framework to transition from informal to formal employment. For example, the 'auto-entrepreneur' law adopted in 2020 seeks to create a more regulated status for informal workers through registration and simplifying tax and administrative procedures. Also, the 'social and solidarity economy (SSE)' law approved in 2020 outlines three institutional structures for the governance and development of the SSE: the Supreme Council for Social and Solidarity Economy, the Tunisian Commission for Social and Solidarity Economy, and the representative structures of social and solidarity economy organisations.

The government has promoted employment creation programmes, social security, and employment contract; for instance, in recent years addressing professional adaptation and integration contracts, labour market reintegration contracts, and employment solidarity contract.⁶¹ The still high

proportion of informal employment suggests that these programmes and contracts have a modest coverage. The government has struggled to implement a combined system to monitor the informal economy since 2013 via labour and micro-enterprise surveys. This system faces high non-response rates of survey data at the micro-enterprises level.

Although there are labour inspectors who monitor the informal economy in central cities, the system still needs more resources to monitor the informal economy throughout the country adequately.

Urban informal workers often comprise contributing family workers, casual wage workers, home-based workers, and street vendors. Most of these are primarily self-employed persons. Their actions cover small-scale activities and enterprises that use low and simple technologies and employ few persons. On the other hand, the ease of entry and exit into this segment and the use of low-level or no technology make it an easy avenue for employment creation but with low labour productivity.

Covid-19 disproportionately impacted Tunisian informal workers. Unlike workers in the formal sector, informal workers found themselves at the margin of the negotiations and efforts to support workers during the pandemic. For instance, informal wage workers outside establishments and self-employed individuals experienced the largest income declines affected by the general lockdown measures. The decline in income has been more persistent for the self-employed. Informal workers lacked a unified voice to claim concrete assistance from the state.⁶²

Studies found a link between trade liberalisation and formalisation. For instance, the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) could push formal SMEs and large firms into informal production processes to remain competitive in Tunisia; formalisation and illegal immigration feed off each other. This situation has spurred concerns regarding unionism.⁶³

The role of trade unions in protecting workers in the informal economy is underdeveloped. For example, the UGTT press releases and statements contain from time-to-time references to decent work conditions and prevention of precarious employment in the informal sector, but this is scarcely translated into action. The foremost step taken towards organising workers from the informal economy was establishing a UGTT-affiliated union for organising workers from sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia in 2020. A tripartite national informal economy forum is not registered.

Child Labour

Around 25% of Tunisia's population is 0-14 years old. The country has ratified the major international conventions on children and child labour, including ILO's Conventions on Minimum Age of Employment (C138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour (C182) (see Appendix Table 14).

Several national laws address child rights, including prohibiting and criminalising all the worst forms of child labour and providing for a minimum employment age. The domestic workers' law of 2021 prohibits employing children in domestic work. The law protects children from exploitation in the workplace, including limitations on working hours, occupational safety, and health restrictions.

Although the government has established institutional mechanisms for enforcing laws and regulations on child labour, as well as coordinating its efforts, gaps persist within the operations of the enforcement agencies. Reports registered that national agencies took actions to address child labour but still struggle with financial penalties too low to serve as an adequate deterrent.⁶⁴

The government has established policies related to child labour, such as the Child Labour National Action Plan (2015–2020), which is not updated, and the National Strategy for the Combat of Trafficking in Persons (2018–2023). They launched several programmes directed to both children and parents to discourage children from entering the informal labour market, including via vocational

training and promoting education attainment. Dropouts remained high, especially among low-income families (see more in the Education section).

The root of child labour is linked with poverty. Although laws protect children, many Tunisian children still work; around 7.9% of children are engaged in child labour (Table 6). It was slightly higher than the Arab States' average of 5.8% while lower than Africa's average of 22% in 2020.⁶⁵ There are more boys than girls in child labour, but girls are more likely to be engaged in household chores than boys. Child labour is also dominated by hazardous work.

Table 6: Status of child labour in Tunisia

Country/ Region	Type	Rate
Tunisia (2017)	Child labour	7.9%
	Hazardous work	76%

Note: Child labour – work that is mentally, physically, socially, or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling. Hazardous work – children in dangerous and unhealthy conditions that can lead to a child being killed, injured, or made ill because of poor safety and health standards or employment conditions.

Sources: INS and ILO: Enquête Nationale sur le travail des enfants en Tunisie de 2017.

Child labour occurs in the informal economy. Most economically active children are unpaid family workers involved in agriculture, livestock, forestry, and fishing, except in the Greater Tunis area, where approximately half of the working children work in commerce. Children sometimes worked up to 10 hours per day without benefits or written contracts and faced health problems from dangerous and arduous work environments. An impact of the Covid-19 pandemic cost many families to lose their jobs and close schools, suggesting that many families could resort to sending their children to work.

Gender

Tunisia is frequently cited as being at the forefront of women's rights in the Arab world. Generally, the country operates with one of the most modern legal frameworks for women's rights in the Arab world; for instance, the right to equal pay for the same work as men; prohibits employers from dismissing a worker because of her pregnancy; paid maternity leave, not to mention the right to abortion on

demand and access to contraceptives. The country has ratified most central international conventions dealing with gender rights. Approval of the relatively new Convention Violence and Harassment (C190) concerning eliminating violence and harassment in work is pending.

Since the Personal Status Code (PSC) enactment in 1956, Tunisian women have played a greater role in the country's development, including during the democratic transition in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution. Even in September 2021, the Arab world's first-ever woman prime minister was accepted in Tunisia. Still, many legal provisions and practices discriminate against women, particularly on matters of inheritance in penal code provisions and participation in public life. Many Tunisian organisations have reiterated calls on state authorities to open debate on reforming laws on equality in inheritance and individual freedoms, hoping to speed up its approval.

Tunisia's laws and regulations around the life cycle of a working woman score 68 out of 100 (100 is best), higher than the regional average observed across the Middle East & North Africa (52). It scores very high on mobility, workplaces, and pension. In contrast, it could still improve concerning women's pay, restrictions related to marriage, laws affecting women's work after having children, constraints on women's starting and running a business, and gender differences in property and inheritance.⁶⁶ For example, according to the Tunisian National Institute of Statistics, women are paid, on average, between 20 and 30% less than men, which is violating the right to equal pay for the same work as men.

Tunisia has created institutions supporting the improvement of women's status and formulated a range of policies that bring women a priority. It includes the Peer Council for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, an advisory body set in 2016.

Gender characteristics are still rooted in a conservative patriarchal system depriving women in the labour market, particularly in rural areas. These

women’s decision to pursue employment outside the home may be considered subversive and diminish their marriage prospects. Men are unrestricted in their choice of jobs, while women are often restricted to work within education and nursing. A woman often must carefully weigh the financial and professional benefits of seeking employment against the potential social consequences for herself and her family. It is reflected in the fact that only 23% of new housing loans are granted to women, and women continue to be victims of violence such as physical, sexual, and/or psychological. It leads many Tunisian women to turn economically inactive; educated young women are hardest hit by unemployment; disadvantages in access to credit, land ownership, and financial products. In addition, sociocultural prescriptions about gender roles have changed less than the secular nature of the state might suggest.

On a broader gender equality view, the Global Gender Gap Index 2022 from the World Economic Forum – gender-based gaps along specific dimensions (health, education, economy, and politics) – ranks Tunisia 120 out of 146 countries (1 is best). The best scoring was in political empowerment (68) and health and survival (85), but worse in dealing with educational attainment (115) and economic participation and opportunities (140). Similarly, the Gender Inequality Index from the United Nations Development Programme – focuses on maternal mortality, adolescent birth, the share of seats in parliament, population with at least some secondary education, and workforce participation – placing the country 61 out of 170 countries (1 is best) in 2021. These relatively high rankings suggest that Tunisia has achieved some strides to improve gender equality, hovering above Algeria (126) but superseded by Libya (61).

Table 7 visualises key labour-related indicators’ gender gaps that remain stark in the country. The latest national survey data illustrate that just one out of four (27%) Tunisian workers are women, linked with the previously mentioned cultural gender circumstances. Women have a higher rate as employees than men and lower as self-employed. Women struggle with a substantially higher

unemployment rate than men, and this disparity is even more exacerbated in the country’s interior regions.

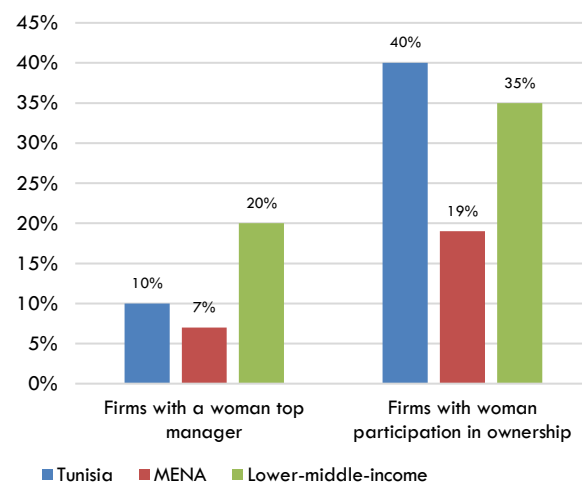
Table 7: Key indicators for labour gender gaps in Tunisia, 2019

	Men	Women
Employment share	73%	27%
Unemployment rate	12%	22%
Employees rate	72%	85%
Self-employed workers rate	28%	14%

Source: LFS - Enquête Nationale sur la Population et l’Emploi, 2019.

According to Tunisia’s latest Enterprise Survey 2020, relatively few firms have women in top management compared to lower-income countries average but remarkably high ownership (Figure 9). This situation is intertwined into the well-knitted legal and policy framework but haunted by conservative cultural gender biases. Women entrepreneurs in the rural interior have been targets of intimidation and violence, even though they enjoy the right to transform natural resources into high-value-added products.⁶⁷

Figure 9: Status of Tunisian firms’ women top management and ownership, %, 2020



Source: The World Bank, Enterprise Survey, Tunisia 2020.

Youth

Tunisia’s youth (15-24 years old) represent 13% of the population and around 10% of the total employment, signalling a small-scale upcoming new generation of Tunisian workers (revisit Figure 4). The

youth was a driving factor for the 2011 revolution in the country. Although it experienced general social and political progress, including young Tunisians continues a largely uncompleted development.

The 2014 constitution introduced youth engagement and inclusion. It modified its electoral code in 2014, bringing a youth quota with a mandatory representation of youth on electoral lists for local elections. Research suggests that the country has no specific national youth policy to reduce barriers to youth inclusion and facilitate youth contributions to Tunisian society. Instead, youth policies are spread amongst the governorships and rely on the youth centre network to transmit information on infrastructure for young people's use. Developing a national youth, security, and peace strategy is in progress. Besides, livelihood programmes and social safety nets grab many young people (see more in the Social Protection section).

The institutional framework dealing with youth is linked with the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Physical Education, in charge of the implementation of youth policies, with assistance from the Ministry of Women, Children and Family for the protection of children and youth up to the age of 18; the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment for those having reached the age of majority. Several other ministries are also involved in youth-related issues. In addition, a National Youth Observatory organises regular consultations designed to chart development plans.

Studies established that Tunisia's youth population has been unable to secure a role in the government structure. They often feel they are not consulted on issues that directly affect them. They have very low confidence in public institutions, just as community and civic engagement through formal institutions continue to be slender and feel socially undervalued. They frequently lack the skills, information, and confidence to challenge exclusionary practices.⁶⁸

The high unemployment rate for young people at 39% in the first quarter of 2022 echoes economic

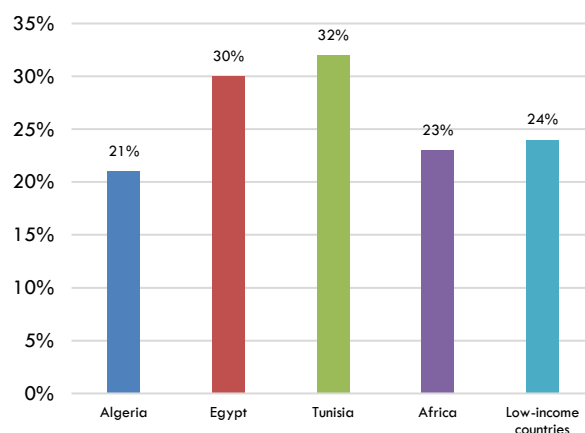
exclusion. This elevated rate exemplifies a mismatch between the number of graduates and the number of suitable jobs.

The chances for young people to find jobs depend primarily on their family background. Most start in the informal economy; less than one out of three young workers have a formal work contract and access to social protection. Many of Tunisia's youth are unsatisfied with their current jobs: 32% of employed youths believe their qualifications or skills exceed those required. In contrast, many workers hold positions for which they do not have the necessary capabilities. Only a small percentage of employed youths get jobs that exactly match their qualifications or diploma.⁶⁹

The country's latest ranking on the Global Youth Development Index was 81 out of 181 countries (1 is best) in 2020, a better position than the neighbouring countries like Algeria (94) and Libya (110).

Tunisia's NEET rate (i.e., those not in employment, education, or training) was 32%, higher than neighbouring countries (Figure 10). Young women have a higher NEET rate of 35%, while men of 29%. Although affected by exclusion, highly educated youth constitute less than one-fifth of all NEETs. Early school leavers are the most highly represented in the NEET subgroup, irrespective of gender.

Figure 10: Proportion of youth (aged 15-24 years) not in education, employment or training in Tunisia and neighbouring countries, %, latest data



Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market.

Studies detected that NEETs exemplify youth inactivity and discouragement, a more worrisome condition than youth unemployment, which does not include disengaged youth who have given up looking for formal sector employment.⁷⁰ The economic downturn in 2020 caused by the Covid-19 pandemic will most likely create an upsurge in the NEET rate.

Due to social distancing policies, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the youth in various aspects, such as health and well-being, education, employment, and civic activities. For example, youth are the most vulnerable to job layoffs.

EDUCATION

Tunisia has ratified most international and regional treaties that protect the right to education. At the national level, the 2014 constitution sets education shall be mandatory up to the age of sixteen years, as well as the state guarantees the right to free public education at all levels. More specific central education laws are: i) Act No. 80 of 2002 that education is a fundamental right guaranteed to all without discrimination; ii) Act No. 10 of 2008 aims to integrate people from all social and professional backgrounds into working life, including young people who are at risk of failure or exclusion. These two laws are somewhat outdated. The national Dialogue on Education reform was initiated in 2015, leading to the Education's White Paper of 2016 and the most recent Education Strategic Plan 2018-2022, aiming at reforming the education system. A comprehensive education reform has not yet been realised. A new Social Contract for Education was launched in December 2022, setting common ambitions, key strategic objectives, and concrete commitments for transforming education. The limited role of trade unions in the educational system is part of their transformation during the 2010s, making the current political order increasingly tricky and ineffective.

Several central ministries are responsible for various aspects of inclusive education, including the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Employment & Vocational Integration of Youth, Ministry of Higher

Education & Scientific Research, Ministry of Youth, Sport & Physical Education, and Ministry of Labour & Professional Training. The higher institutes of special education and the Tunisian National Commission for Education, Science and Culture are also involved in this inclusive education.

The government expenditure in the education sector fell significantly during the 2010s: from 18% in 2016 to 13% as a share of total government spending in 2019; it rebounded to 16% in 2020, triggered by the Covid-19 impact but again dropped to 13% in 2021.⁷¹ Other data suggest that Tunisia is still in line with the international Education 2030 Framework for Action as a critical benchmark for government financing of education, allocating at least 4% to 6% of GDP.

The investment in education has kept Tunisia's literacy rate for the population aged 15-24 years high at around 96%, three percentage points higher than the MENA (excluding high-income) average of 93%. This relatively high level has benefited the education sector's legal framework.

Concerning employment by education, around 8.7% had less than basic education, while at least one out of three (35%) had basic education. The intermediate and advanced levels were 37% and 18%, respectively, not to mention showing remarkable gender gaps (see Table 8).

Table 8: Status in employment and education in Tunisia, by sexes, %, 2017

	Less than basic	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Total	8.7%	35%	37%	18%
Men	7.9%	39%	39%	14%
Women	11%	25%	33%	32%

Source: LFS - Enquête Nationale sur la Population et l'Emploi, 2017.

Tunisia's pupil completion rate improved during the 2010s, especially at the secondary level; for example, lower secondary education increased from 69% in 2012 to 74% in 2018, while higher secondary education increased from 44% to 49%. These rates most likely were challenged in 2020 and 2021 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

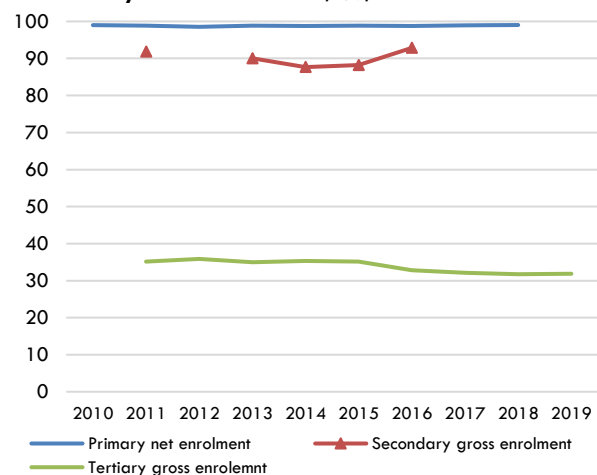
Figure 11 below shows the school enrolment rate trend at all levels. Based on the official data availability, net enrolment in primary education is high, stable, and close to 100%.

Gross enrolment in secondary education has been above 90%, notably higher for females at 99% while males at 87%, not to mention hovering 16 percentage points above the Middle East & North Africa (excluding high income) average.

Gross enrolment in tertiary education has somewhat lost pace and with a stark gender gap of close to double as high for females compared to males, 42% and 23%, respectively.

School-to-work transition is not easy, especially for university graduates. Estimations suggest that it takes six years on average for university graduates to find a stable job.⁷²

Figure 11: School enrolment at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in Tunisia, %, 2010-2019



Source: The World Bank, DataBank, Education Indicators.

The latest international Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) demonstrated some worrisome results for Tunisia: PISA student performance has deteriorated in all subjects and scores below the MENA average. Student performance is more than three years of schooling below the OECD average. Over two-thirds of the students still need to meet the basic proficiency level, which places them at risk of exclusion. Some of the reasons for these results are reflected in its rock bottom score of the Disciplinary Climate Index

amongst all PISA participating countries, indicating critical classroom disruptions due to noise, disorder, and other factors.⁷³ Other studies detected that the poor quality of education at all levels had created a deterrent for youth inclusion and job creation.⁷⁴

To tackle the Covid-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education introduced distance learning at the end of October 2020. Most children were back to school by February 2021. Online education was modest due to limited internet access and a shortage of digital devices in rural and peripheral regions compared to urban ones. The burden put on households, particularly on women, in terms of childcare increased with the return to classes.⁷⁵

Vocational training

Tunisia has built up one of the most advanced vocational education and training (VET) systems in Northern Africa, drawing from international best practices, including the 'dual system' model characterised by employer partnerships and substantial on-the-job training.

Tunisia's VET is regulated via the Law 1993-12 of 1993. It deals with training and education programmes to prepare trainers to exercise their functions and adapt to technological and didactic evolutions. Also, the Law 2008-10 of 2008 regarding professional development constitutes a component of the national system for human resource development with directives and laws that define responsibilities for the key actors. This legal VET framework is not entirely up to date. Still, it has initiated substantial reforms to modernise its education and training systems to make them compatible with lifelong learning strategies.

The VET system falls under the supervision of the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE), operating through four public agencies:⁷⁶

- The Tunisian Agency for Vocational Training (ATFP) manages 136 VET centres. It operates across 13 economic sectors and trains more than 80% of all trainees in initial vocational training.

- The National Centre for Instructor Training and Training Methodology (CENAFFIF) oversees curricula development and trains instructors.
- The National Centre for Lifelong Learning and Professional Development (CNFCPP) offers continuous vocational training to individuals and companies, mainly from non-formal learning. Roughly 9,000 people were enrolled in professional development courses in 2016. Almost 80% of these were registered for distance courses, and about two-thirds were pursuing higher education.
- The National Agency for Employment and Self-employment (ANETI) is the public employment service responsible for labour market intermediation and active labour market programmes.

The governance system is centralised at the national ministerial level, and there is a predominance of public VET institutions in terms of enrolment share. Public VETs heavily rely on payroll tax funding. Private VET institutions are mainly located in urban areas, often operating in isolation from the public VET system, especially delivering training to students directly in enterprises.

A strategic National Development Plan 2016-2020 and the 2014–2018 VET reform placed regionalisation at the centre of their reform efforts. It aims to strengthen the role of the private and public sectors in customising TVET to the needs of the market, as well as improving the social perception of VET and training centres equipped with observatories of the local labour market to respond better to local needs.

Data are scarce to assess these reforms' results. Still, recent studies found that Tunisia's VET is limited in labour market outcomes because of the concentration of the Tunisian economy in low-productivity and low-paid jobs.⁷⁷ Others found there is a limited collaboration between VET institutions and employers in designing training programmes for youth.⁷⁸ Generally, the VET system could benefit from updated plans and strategies.

Employer and trade union representatives have a strong role at the national level in the advisory and management of vocational education colleges. They are represented in regional vocational training committees and, over time, developed the capacity and assigned resources needed to monitor and engage in activities in the field of VET. The Tunisian Hotels Federation has set up a commission for VET activities. Regional federations are responsible for monitoring any training programmes and actions related to their sector of activity, as well as supervising or establishing new TVET centres.⁷⁹

The VET system is mainly funded by public expenditure through the MFPE, whose budget is shared between active labour market programmes and VET. Most of the latter are channelled into the ATPF's training centres. Tunisia's vocational training tax is the oldest continuing education instrument in Northern and sub-Saharan Africa, and its origins date back to the beginning of its independence in 1956. Based on data availability limitations, government expenditure on secondary and post-secondary non-tertiary vocational education reached about 0.3% of GDP in 2014.

The number of students in vocational education for the study year 2022/2023 was 35,000 in 196 vocational training centres.⁸⁰ Tunisia's ratio of pupils in vocational training to all pupils in secondary education was lower than the regional average, 9.1% vs 11% respectively.

Generally, the VET sector suffered since the education models have relied heavily on face-to-face learning using equipment and other experiential learning strategies. These learning standards do not lend themselves easily to online interventions and, as such, are affected by school closures. The Covid-19 pandemic turned industries' apprenticeships abruptly closed.

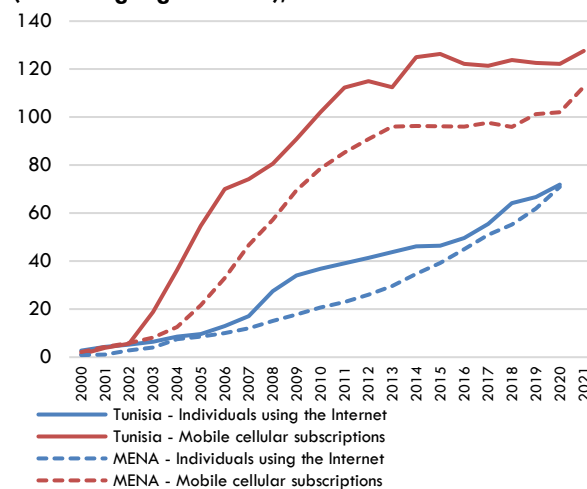
Skills formation is fundamental to the country's economic development, but firms are characterised by low dynamism, contributing to the slow job creation rate. It is worrisome to detect that Tunisia's firms offering formal training programmes fell from 29% in 2013 to 19% of their permanent, full-time

employees in 2020, ending in line with the Middle East & North Africa (excluding high-income) average at 19%.⁸¹ Formal firms continue being a small group compared to the widespread informal micro and small enterprises.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) introduces disruptions in the labour market: job losses due to digitisation are becoming more urgent, just as upskilling and retooling are putting pressure on the TVET system. Tunisia has one of the most developed information and communication technologies (ICT) infrastructures in Northern Africa, with some of the continent's highest communications infrastructure penetration rates. In 2019, ICT was estimated to contribute 4.5% of GDP, representing about 1,800 companies and 200 university degrees in ICT-related fields. Although Tunisia invested in ICT in years past, it made meagre improvements in student learning or teacher classroom practices. Prior investments in ICT did not closely align with teacher and student needs. Insufficient support and training have been provided to enable teachers to integrate the new technology into their daily classroom practice effectively. The country plans to produce graduates who can contribute to the creation of a tech industry and digital education edition across the country.⁸²

During the last two decades, Tunisia's population has experienced a growing application for ICTs aspects. Only four of Africa's 54 countries, including Tunisia, have E-Government Development Index values above the world average.⁸³ Data show that individuals using the internet increased from 2.8% in 2000 to 72% of the population in 2020, hovering above the MENA (excluding high-income) for an extended period but the gap faded. The country's demand for mobile cellular subscriptions also soared, superseding the MENA average, but again it is gradually closing the difference (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Individuals using the Internet (% of population) and mobile cellular subscriptions (per 100 people) in Tunisia and Middle East & North Africa (excluding high income), 2000-2021



Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

SOCIAL PROTECTION

Tunisia's social protection system is well-developed compared to other Arab countries. Since its independence, it has offered free and universal services, such as healthcare and education, subsidised food and energy, and public sector job guarantees for graduates. However, economic and structural reforms of the 1980s and 1990s gradually hollowed out the middle class, the concentration of poverty and unemployment in interior regions, and the emergence of the informal economy, which side-lines a large part of the population from any form of formal social insurance. This deteriorated situation was also visualised in public frustrations, leading to social tension and protests such as the 2011 revolution and other massive demonstrations.⁸⁴

The country has ratified several international conventions that require the extension of social security to specific population categories, including one of ILO's fifteen up-to-date ILO Social Security conventions, the Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention (C118) and two other health-oriented ILO conventions (Appendix Table 14).

Tunisia's 2014 constitution recognises the right to social protection for all. Although the social insurance system settled in legal references, they

are somewhat outdated: The social protection regulations are linked to the 1990s and 2000s, none since 2010, except the extension of the legal age for retirement in the public sector by Law No. 37 of 2019 relating to the civil and military pension system for retirement and survivors.⁸⁵ Thus, the implementation of a comprehensive and inclusive social protection system has continued a legal challenge for Tunisia.

The central social protection institutions are summarised below:

- National Pension and Social Insurance Fund is a public body under the Ministry of Social Affairs' supervision. The fund covers public-sector workers (local authorities' workers and employees of state-owned enterprises) and monitors four plans.
- National Social Security Fund is a public establishment with financial autonomy overseen by the Ministry of Social Affairs. This fund has nine legal social security systems intended for professionals in the private sector.
- National Health Insurance Fund is managing a unified health insurance system. The fund is a non-administrative public establishment, with financial autonomy, under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs. It oversees the health insurance system for insured public and private sector workers. Further, it is geared in three aspects: public medical, expense recovery, and special processing, not to mention the compensation system for damages resulting from work-related accidents and occupational diseases. The fund covered more than eight million individuals, including workers and their dependents, in 2018, equivalent to 70% of the total population.

These social protection funds function with administrative boards whose members are appointed tripartitely among the labour social partners. They also participated in a government campaign to reform the social security system to bring informal workers into the fold of social insurance.

Social insurance schemes protect the formal working population and their dependents, social assistance in the form of universal subsidies, targeted cash transfers and social health insurance. But social insurance dominates the public sector, while the private sector is troubled by informal workers who frequently do not have permanent employers. Although non-discriminatory in principle, Tunisian social security excludes temporary migrants and undocumented migrants.

The government has promoted initiatives to broaden social security coverage, including protecting workers from the agricultural sector. It was part of a new social security system that allowed seasonal workers in agriculture, fishing, and other workers to subscribe on the condition that they pay the inscription fees and that they shall not benefit from it unless they pay their inscriptions over the whole period of their work types. The government launched a resolution on establishing special procedures for people with an irregular income to encourage them to join the tax and social security systems in 2020.

Tunisia's expenditure on social protection, including health, was 12% of GDP in 2020 and 7.5% when excluding public healthcare. The latter was lower than Algeria (8.9%) and Egypt (9.5%).⁸⁶ The social protection system faces several challenges, including improving effective coverage, reducing inequalities in parallel schemes, improving the effectiveness of targeted programmes, and expanding support for the unemployed and other excluded categories.

Table 9 below provides more details of Tunisia's scope of social protection coverage; for example, just one out of two (50%) Tunisian are aided by at least one social protection benefit, which is 16 percentage points higher than the Northern African average at 34% in 2020. Some remarkable coverage improvements are persons above retirement age receiving a pension increased from 34% in 2015 to 85% in 2020 but with a significant gender gap, men of 94% and women of 17%, respectively. Mothers with new-borns receiving maternity benefits also grew from 12% in 2016 to

25% in 2020. On the other hand, households receiving family cash benefits fell from 48% in 2017 to 29% in 2020, just as 21% of vulnerable persons are covered by social assistance, and 5.0% of persons with severe disabilities collect disability social protection benefits.

Table 9: Proportion of population covered by social protection in Tunisia, %, 2020

Indicator	Coverage
Persons covered by at least one social protection benefit	50%
Persons above retirement age receiving a pension	85%
Persons with severe disabilities collecting disability social protection benefits	5.0%
Mothers with newborns receiving maternity benefits	25%
Employed covered in the event of work injury	29%
Children and households receiving child and family cash benefits	29%
Poor persons covered by social protection systems	66%
Vulnerable persons covered by social assistance	21%

Source: International Labour Organization, SDG labour market indicators.

Social protection programmes have been haunted by poor targeting of benefits, fragmented and expensive; for example, only 40% of all Tunisia's social safety net beneficiaries were officially people living below the national poverty line.⁸⁷ Besides, the application of untargeted fuel subsidies has been criticised for being too expensive and inequitable as it primarily benefits the middle and high-income population that have access to cars.⁸⁸

Tunisia's 2014 constitution guarantees preventative health care and treatment for every citizen and provides the means necessary to ensure the safety and quality of health services. Current health expenditure reached 6.6% of GDP on average during the 2010s, peaking at 7.0% in 2019. It was 0.8 percentage points higher than the Middle East & North Africa (excluding high-income) average at 5.8%, superseding the World Health Organization's minimum threshold of 4% of GDP.

Tunisia's health expenditure per capita has been slightly higher than the regional average.

Table 10: Status of expenditure on health in Tunisia and Middle East & Northern Africa (excluding high income) (MENA), average 2010-2019

Service	Tunisia	MENA
Total health expenditure, % of GDP	6.6%	5.8%
Current health expenditure per capita	US\$ 258	US\$ 255
Universal Health service coverage index (2019)	70 *	-

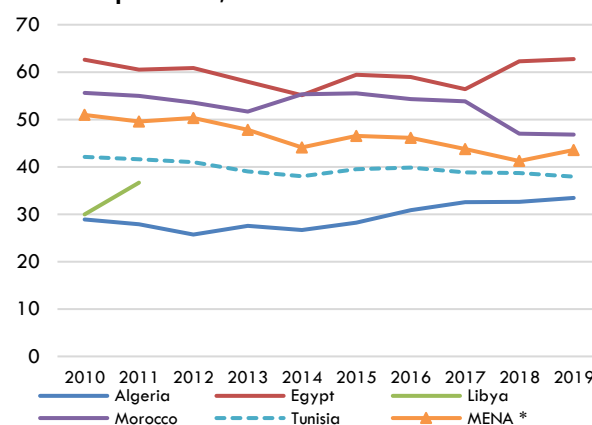
* Coverage index for essential health services (based on tracer interventions that include reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health, infectious diseases, noncommunicable diseases and service capacity and access). It is presented on a scale of 0 to 100.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

The health service agenda must be fully up to date to reach universal health coverage (UHC). The National Health Insurance Fund attempted to curb high user fees affecting the poorest people in rural and working environments. Data show that the UHC service index steadily increased from 63 in 2010 to 70 in 2019 (Table 10).

Figure 13 below depicts Tunisia's healthcare expenditure financed by private households' out-of-pocket payments only slowly fell during the 2010s standing below the regional average.

Figure 13: Out-of-pocket expenditure on health in Tunisia and neighbouring countries, % of current health expenditure, 2010-2019



* Middle East & North Africa (excluding high income).

Note: Out of pocket expenditure is any direct outlay by households, including gratuities and in-kind payments, to health practitioners and suppliers of pharmaceuticals, therapeutic appliances, and other goods and services whose primary intent is to contribute to the restoration or enhancement of the health status of individuals or population groups. It is a part of private health expenditure.

Source: The World Bank, World Development Indicators.

Modest health improvements are projected in central indicators: The maternal mortality rate fell from 46 in 2010 to 43 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2017, but it stood significantly lower than the regional average at 62. The under-five mortality rate fell only from 18 to 17 per 1,000 live births from 2010 to 2014 onwards; again, it stood significantly lower than the neighbouring countries.

Tunisia's relatively generous universal subsidies – especially on energy, food, and transport – have been a central part of the social protection system. But it has also been financially unsustainable for the state and has relied on untargeted subsidies and programmes that did not have a similar effect on reducing inequalities. The subsidies introduced price distortions that generated overconsumption and underinvestment in subsidised sectors. The increase in international commodity prices has created additional pressures on public finances through subsidy spending and weakened the current account balance (revisit Figure 1 and Appendix Table 16).

The government took steps to start to gradually phase out generalised price subsidies through regular price adjustments that link domestic prices to international prices while providing adequate targeted protection to vulnerable segments. The government further has attempted to strengthen the social safety net by increasing cash transfers and expanding it to compensate vulnerable households for the impact of higher prices.⁸⁹ However, these reforms have been heavily criticised for lacking any transparency or public debate by the trade union movement fuelling protests and accelerating social tensions.

Tunisia's national legislation provides 30 days of maternity leave. As previously mentioned, the share of mothers with new-borns receiving maternity benefits rose to 25% in 2020 (revisit Table 9). It is remarkably lower than the Northern Africa average at 47%. Many women do not receive this

benefit as they work in the informal economy or are economically inactive. Private sector employees are entitled to 10 days of paternity leave, which must be availed within seven days of the child's birth and paid through the Social Security Institution.

The social insurance system does not offer unemployment benefits for people who lose their jobs in Tunisia. On the other hand, severance pay exists, although very limited, and income support is provided to first-time job seekers with high qualifications under the AMAL (Arabic for "Hope") programme. Reports found that even with the financial assistance, healthcare, and family allowances provided to the unemployed during periods of job loss or crisis, the conditions for receiving benefits are quite restrictive. Only those who lose their jobs for economic and technological reasons and have worked for at least three years in the same company can benefit. Other procedural conditions make it difficult for the unemployed to obtain support; for instance, in case of job loss, the employer is responsible for managing the support request of their former employees. Such conditions lead to a low coverage rate.⁹⁰

The Covid-19 pandemic pushed the government to adopt a series of economic support and social protection policies to alleviate the effects of the crisis on firms and households. The emergency response cost 2.3% of GDP. The response included several measures, including vulnerable groups of people receiving emergency cash transfers to cope with the crisis. Support relied on regular social protection schemes targeting households enrolled in the national anti-poverty cash transfer programme and subsidised health insurance schemes; some received one-off transfers, mainly during the full lockdown period. The Central Bank also postponed household loan payments for three to six months in the Spring of 2020 to support middle-class workers who did not benefit from cash transfers.⁹¹

APPENDIX: ADDITIONAL DATA

Table 11: Status of key Sustainable Development Goals in labour market related issues in Tunisia

Indicators	Value	Year	SDG Targets
1.1.1: Working poverty rate (percentage of employed living below US\$1.9 PPP)	0.1%	2021	By 2030, eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere, currently measured as people living on less than \$1.9 a day
1.3.1 Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems	50% *	2020	Implement nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, including floors, and by 2030 achieve substantial coverage of the poor and the vulnerable
5.5.2: Proportion of women in senior and middle management positions	17%	2014	Ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic, and public life
5.5.2: Women share of employment in managerial positions	11%	2014	
8.2.1: Annual growth rate of real GDP per employed person (based on annual growth rates of labour productivity).	2.4%	2021	Achieve higher levels of economic productivity through diversification, technological upgrading and innovation through a focus on high-value added and labour-intensive sectors.
8.3.1: Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment	57%	2014	Promote development-oriented policies that support productive activities, decent job creation, entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation, and encourage the formalisation and growth of micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises, through access to financial services
8.3.1: Women	57%	2014	
8.3.1: Men	54%	2014	
8.5.1: Average hourly earnings of women and men employees	-	-	By 2030, achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men, including young people and persons with disabilities, and equal pay for work of equal value.
8.5.2: Unemployment rate (Total)	15%	2019	
8.5.2: Youth unemployment rate	35%	2017	
8.6.1: Proportion of youth (15-24 years) not in education, employment, or training)	32%	2014	By 2030, substantially reduce the proportion of youth not in employment, education or training
8.7.1: Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labour (Total)	-	-	Take immediate and effective measures to eradicate forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025, end child labour in all its forms
8.8.1: Frequency rates of fatal occupational injuries	-	-	Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment
8.8.1: Frequency rates of non-fatal occupational injuries	-	-	
8.8.2: Level of national compliance with labour rights (freedom of association and collective bargaining)	1.65 **	2020	The exact measurement method and scoring for this indicator needs to be developed.
9.2.2: Manufacturing employment as a proportion of total employment	18%	2017	Promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and, by 2030, significantly raise industry's share of employment and gross domestic product, in line with national circumstances, and double its share in least developed countries
10.4.1: Labour income share as a percent of GDP	28%	2019	Adopt policies, especially fiscal, wage and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality

* Population covered by at least one social protection benefit (see more in Table 9).

** The value has a range from 0 to 10, with 0 being the best possible score (indicating higher levels of compliance with FACB rights) and 10 the worst (indicating lower levels of compliance with FACB rights based on ILO textual sources and national legislation).

Source: International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market (KILM).

Table 12: List of approved labour related legislations in Tunisia, 2018-2022

Year / Type	Law / decrees
2018	
General provisions	Arrêté du ministre des finances du 13 avril 2018, modifiant et complétant l'arrêté du 18 janvier 2012, relatif à la fixation du montant maximum du micro-crédit et des conditions de son octroi par les institutions de micro-finance.
	Loi organique n° 2018-51 du 29 octobre 2018 relative à l'Instance des droits de l'Homme.
	Loi n° 2018-52 du 29 octobre 2018 relative au Registre national des entreprises.
	Loi organique n° 2018-29 du 9 mai 2018, relative au Code des collectivités locales.
Elimination of child labour, protection of children and young persons	Décret Présidentiel n° 2018-5 du 15 janvier 2018, portant ratification de l'adhésion de la République Tunisienne à la Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur la protection des enfants contre l'exploitation et les abus sexuels (Lanzarote).
Labour administration	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-972 du 29 novembre 2018, portant création du ministère de la Fonction publique, de la Modernisation de l'Administration et des politiques publiques.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-395 du 23 avril 2018, fixant l'organisation et les attributions des Directions régionales du ministère de la justice.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-334 du 6 avril 2018, modifiant et complétant le décret n° 2010-3152 du 1er décembre 2010 portant organisation du ministère de la justice et des droits de l'Homme.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-166 du 13 février 2018, modifiant le décret n° 2013-4064 du 19 septembre 2013, portant organisation du ministère des Affaires de la femme et de la Famille.
Social security (general standards)	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-306 du 27 mars 2018, complétant le décret n° 85-1025 du 29 août 1985, fixant la liste des établissements publics à caractère industriel et commercial et des sociétés nationales dont les personnels sont affiliés à la caisse nationale de retraite et de prévoyance sociale.
	Arrêté du ministre des affaires sociales du 19 février 2018, relatif à la fixation du barème d'actualisation des salaires pris en compte dans le calcul des pensions de vieillesse, d'invalidité et de survivants.
Specific categories of workers	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-228 du 6 mars 2018, fixant des dispositions exceptionnelles relatives aux agents et ouvriers temporaires ainsi que les agents contractuels de l'Etat, des collectivités locales et des établissements publics à caractère administratif.
	Loi n° 2018-5 du 23 janvier 2018, relative au départ volontaire des agents' publics.
Equality of opportunity and treatment	Loi organique n° 2018-50 du 23 octobre 2018, relative à l'élimination de toutes les formes de discrimination raciale.
	Guide de dépistage à l'infection du VIH dans la région du Magreb.
Tripartite consultations	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-676 du 7 août 2018, portant fixation du nombre des membres du Conseil national du dialogue social.
Conditions of employment	Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-674 du 7 août 2018, portant majoration des salaires dans les secteurs non agricoles régis par le Code de travail et non couverts par des conventions collectives sectorielles ou par des statuts particuliers.
Occupational safety and health	Arrêté du ministre des affaires sociales et du ministre de la santé du 29 mars 2018, modifiant et complétant l'arrêté du 10 janvier 1995, fixant la liste des maladies professionnelles.
International agreements	Loi organique n° 2018-33 du 6 juin 2018, portant approbation de l'adhésion de la République tunisienne au Protocole de la charte africaine des droits de l'Homme et des peuples relatif aux droits des femmes en Afrique.
2019	
General provisions	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-1196 du 24 décembre 2019, portant création d'un comité national pour l'harmonisation des textes juridiques relatifs aux droits de l'homme avec les dispositions de la constitution et avec les conventions internationales ratifiées et fixant ses missions, sa composition et ses modalités de fonctionnement.
	Loi organique n° 2019-60 du 9 juillet 2019 relative à l'Instance du développement durable et des droits des générations futures.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-401 du 6 mai 2019, fixant les conditions et procédures de la mise en oeuvre des mécanismes de démocratie participative prévus par l'article 30 du Code des collectivités locales.

Equality of opportunity and treatment	Stratégie nationale sur les droits humains et le VIH/Sida (2019-2023).
Education, vocational guidance and training	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-876 du 15 août 2019, portant création du Centre national d'enseignement pour adultes et fixant ses attributions et son organisation.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-802 du 15 août 2019, fixant l'organisation, le fonctionnement des établissements de formation professionnelle relevant de l'Agence tunisienne de la formation professionnelle.
Conditions of employment	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-456 du 28 mai 2019, portant majoration des salaires dans les secteurs non agricoles régis par le Code du travail et non couverts par des conventions collectives sectorielles ou par des statuts particuliers.
Conditions of work	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-1118 du 3 décembre 2019, portant modification du décret n° 81-817 du 11 juin 1981 relatif à l'indemnité pour travail de nuit.
Social security (general standards)	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-972 du 28 octobre 2019, fixant les modalités de prise en charge des maladies de longue durée, la composition, les attributions et les modalités de fonctionnement des commissions médicales des maladies de longue durée, d'invalidité et d'usure prématurée de l'organisme auprès de la Caisse nationale d'assurance maladie.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-905 du 16 octobre 2019, modifiant le décret n° 98-1812 du 21 septembre 1998, fixant les conditions et les modalités d'attribution et de retrait de la carte de soins gratuits.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-379 du 22 avril 2019, modifiant et complétant le décret n° 2002-916 du 22 avril 2002, relatif aux modalités d'application de la loi n° 2002-32 du 12 mars 2002, relative au régime de sécurité sociale pour certaines catégories de travailleurs dans les secteurs agricole et non agricole.
	Loi organique n° 2019-10 du 30 janvier 2019 relative à la création du Programme "AMEN SOCIAL"
Specific categories of workers	Loi n° 2019-37 du 30 avril 2019, modifiant et complétant la loi n° 85-12 du 5 mars 1985, relative au régime des pensions civiles et militaires de retraite et des survivants dans le secteur public.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2019-168 du 18 février 2019, portant création des commissions médicales des congés de maladie et fixant leurs composition, attributions et modalités de leur fonctionnement.
2020	
General provisions	Arrêté du ministre de la santé du 19 août 2020, complétant l'arrêté du 1er décembre 2015, fixant la liste des maladies transmissibles à déclaration obligatoire.
	Loi n° 2020-30 du 30 juin 2020, relative à l'économie sociale et solidaire.
	Décret-loi du Chef du Gouvernement n° 2020-33 du 10 juin 2020, relatif au régime de l'auto-entrepreneur.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2020-318 du 26 mai 2020, modifiant le décret gouvernemental n° 2020-208 du 2 mai 2020 relatif à la fixation des prescriptions de confinement ciblé.
	Décret-loi du Chef du Gouvernement n° 2020-17 du 12 mai 2020, relatif à l'identifiant unique du citoyen.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2020-208 du 2 mai 2020, portant fixation des prescriptions de confinement ciblé.
	Décret-loi du Chef du Gouvernement n° 2020-12 du 27 avril 2020, complétant le Code de procédure pénale.
Elimination of child labour, protection of children and young persons	Arrêté du ministre des affaires sociales du 1er avril 2020 fixant les types de travaux dans lesquels l'emploi des enfants est interdit.
Equality of opportunity and treatment	Décret gouvernemental n° 2020-126 du 25 février 2020, portant création de l'Observatoire national pour la lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes et fixant son organisation administrative et financière et les modalités de son fonctionnement.
Education, vocational guidance and training	Arrêté du ministre de la jeunesse, des sports et de l'intégration professionnelle du 23 novembre 2020, fixant les modalités et les conditions de la formation professionnelle initiale à distance.
Conditions of employment	Décret gouvernemental n° 2020-1069 du 30 décembre 2020, fixant le salaire minimum interprofessionnel garanti dans les secteurs non agricoles régis par le Code du travail.

	Décret gouvernemental n° 2020-1070 du 30 décembre 2020, fixant le salaire minimum agricole garanti.
Social security (general standards)	Arrêté du ministre des affaires sociales du 23 juin 2020, relatif à la fixation du barème d'actualisation des salaires pris en compte dans le calcul des pensions de vieillesse, d'invalidité et de survivants.
	Arrêté conjoint du ministre des affaires sociales et du ministre des finances du 19 mai 2020, fixant le mode de calcul et le montant des transferts monétaires directs au profit des catégories pauvres bénéficiant du Programme «AMEN SOCIAL».
Migrant workers	Arrêté du ministre de la Formation professionnelle et de l'Emploi du 12 mai 2020 révisant le modèle d'imprimé administratif du contrat de travail d'un travailleur étranger et fixant le modèle d'imprimé administratif relatif au visa du contrat de travail d'un travailleur étranger.
Specific categories of workers	Décret gouvernemental n° 2020-767 du 18 septembre 2020, portant augmentation des salaires au profit des agents de l'Etat, des collectivités locales et des établissements publics à caractère administratif et la fixation de ses montants.
	Décret n° 2020-724 du 31 août 2020, fixant les conditions de l'exercice de l'activité de transport des travailleurs agricoles et les conditions du bénéficiaires de ce service.
	Loi 2020-38 du 13 août 2020 dispositions dérogatoires pour le recrutement dans le secteur public.
	Décret n° 2020-315 du 19 mai 2020 relatif à la mobilité fonctionnelle des agents publics au profit des collectivités locales.
2021	
Equality of opportunity and treatment	Décret gouvernemental n° 2021-203 du 7 avril 2021, fixant les modalités de création de la Commission nationale de lutte contre la discrimination raciale, ses attributions, son organisation, son mode de fonctionnement, ses mécanismes de travail et sa composition.
Education, vocational guidance and training	Décret gouvernemental n° 2021-57 du 13 janvier 2021, portant la création d'un établissement public appelé «Ecole de la deuxième chance » et la fixation de son organisation administrative et financière ainsi que ses modalités de fonctionnement.
Conditions of work	Décret présidentiel n° 2021-223 du 7 décembre 2021, fixant les jours fériés donnant lieu à congé au profit des personnels de l'Etat, des collectivités locales et des établissements publics à caractère administratif.
Social security (general standards)	Décret gouvernemental n° 2021-318 du 4 mai 2021, modifiant le décret n° 2007-1367 du 11 juin 2007, portant détermination des modalités de prise en charge, procédures et taux des prestations de soins au titre du régime de base d'assurance maladie.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2021-153 du 12 mars 2021, fixant les modes, procédures et méthodes d'échange automatisé et instantané des informations entre la Caisse nationale de retraite et de prévoyance sociale et l'employeur public concernant le suivi de la carrière professionnelle des agents affiliés à la caisse et la tenue de leurs comptes individuels.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2021-67 du 12 janvier 2021, modifiant le décret n° 98-1812 du 21 septembre 1998, fixant les conditions et les modalités d'attribution et de retrait de la carte de soins gratuits.
Specific categories of workers	Décret présidentiel n° 2021-223 du 7 décembre 2021, fixant les jours fériés donnant lieu à congé au profit des personnels de l'Etat, des collectivités locales et des établissements publics à caractère administratif.
	Loi n° 2021-37 du 16 juillet 2021 relative à la réglementation du travail domestique.
	Loi n° 2021-27 du 7 juin 2021, complétant la loi n° 83-112 du 12 décembre 1983, relative au statut général des personnels de l'Etat, des collectivités locales et des établissements publics à caractère administratif.
	Décret gouvernemental n° 2021-153 du 12 mars 2021, fixant les modes, procédures et méthodes d'échange automatisé et instantané des informations entre la Caisse nationale de retraite et de prévoyance sociale et l'employeur public concernant le suivi de la carrière professionnelle des agents affiliés à la caisse et la tenue de leurs comptes individuels.
2022	
General provisions	Décret-loi n° 2022-35 du 1er juin 2022 complétant le décret-loi n° 2022-11 du 12 février 2022, relatif à la création du Conseil supérieur provisoire de la magistrature.

	Décret-loi n° 2022-30 du 19 mai 2022, relatif à la création de «l'Instance nationale consultative pour une nouvelle République».
	Décret présidentiel n° 2022-309 du 30 mars 2022 portant dissolution de l'Assemblée des représentants du peuple.
	Décret-loi n° 2022-11 du 12 février 2022, relatif à la création du Conseil supérieur provisoire de la magistrature.
	Décret-loi n° 2022-4 du 19 janvier 2022, portant modification de la loi organique n° 2016-34 du 28 avril 2016, relative au Conseil supérieur de la magistrature.
Labour administration	Décret présidentiel n° 2022-488 du 12 mai 2022, portant modification du décret n° 2006-898 du 27 mars 2006, portant organisation du ministère de l'environnement.
Education, vocational guidance and training	Décret-loi n° 2022-46 du 24 juin 2022, portant création de l'Agence tunisienne de l'évaluation et de l'accréditation dans l'enseignement supérieur et la recherche scientifique.
Conditions of work	Décret Présidentiel n° 2022-310 du 5 avril 2022, portant organisation du régime de télétravail pour les agents de l'Etat, des collectivités locales et des établissements, entreprises et instances publics.
Social security (general standards)	Décret présidentiel n° 2022-542 du 13 juin 2022, fixant les catégories concernées, les procédures, les modalités et les délais d'application du programme spécifique pour la mise à la retraite avant l'âge légal.
	Décret présidentiel n° 2022-441 du 25 avril 2022, fixant les attributions, la composition et les modalités de fonctionnement du Conseil supérieur de développement social.
	Arrêté du ministre des affaires sociales et de la ministre des finances du 1er avril 2022, fixant les situations d'octroi et le montant des allocations familiales mensuelles au profit des catégories pauvres et des catégories à revenu limité bénéficiant du programme «AMEN SOCIAL».
	Arrêté de la Cheffe du Gouvernement du 24 mars 2022, fixant les attributions, la composition et les modes de fonctionnement de la Commission de suivi du système relatif au suivi de la carrière professionnelle des affiliés à la Caisse nationale de retraite et de prévoyance sociale et la tenue de leurs comptes individuels.
	Arrêté du ministre des affaires sociales du 21 février 2022 relatif à la fixation du barème d'actualisation des salaires pris en compte dans le calcul des pensions de vieillesse, d'invalidité et de survivants.
	Décret-loi n° 2022-8 du 31 janvier 2022, complétant la loi organique n° 2019-10 du 30 janvier 2019, relative à la création du programme «AMEN SOCIAL».
Specific categories of workers	Décret présidentiel n° 2022-542 du 13 juin 2022, fixant les catégories concernées, les procédures, les modalités et les délais d'application du programme spécifique pour la mise à la retraite avant l'âge légal.
	Décret présidentiel n° 2022-387 du 18 avril 2022, relatif à la mobilité fonctionnelle des agents publics, au profit des ministères et des établissements publics à caractère administratif.
	Arrêté de la Cheffe du Gouvernement du 24 mars 2022, fixant les attributions, la composition et les modes de fonctionnement de la Commission de suivi du système relatif au suivi de la carrière professionnelle des affiliés à la Caisse nationale de retraite et de prévoyance sociale et la tenue de leurs comptes individuels.

Source: International Labour Organization, NATLEX, Tunisia.

Table 13: Status of Tunisia's legal framework for the industrial relations

National legal framework
• Constitution du 27 janvier 2014.
• Organic Law 2018-47 of 7 August 2018 on common provisions for independent constitutional bodies
• Code du Travail.
• Loi n° 2017-54 du 24 juillet 2017, portant création du Conseil national du dialogue social et fixant ses attributions et les modalités de son fonctionnement.
• Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-675 du 7 août 2018, portant organisation administrative et financière du conseil national du dialogue social
• Décret gouvernemental n° 2018-676 du 7 août 2018, portant fixation du nombre des membres du conseil national du dialogue social
• Arrêté du ministre des affaires sociales du 26 septembre 2018, portant fixation des critères pour déterminer l'organisation syndicale la plus représentative à l'échelle nationale pour la composition du conseil national du dialogue social 2018
• Government Decree 2016-86 of 11 January 2016 laying down the terms and conditions for the State to meet the cost of retirement pension contributions and the basis of calculation for the regularization of periods of interruption to the employment of members of the internal security forces and customs who were integrated in 2011
• Social Contract (Contrat social).
• Convention collective cadre.
• Framework Collective Agreement of 2015 in the agricultural sector.
• Décret-loi n° 2011-51 du 6 juin 2011, portant modification du Code du travail.
• Décret n° 2010-2768 du 25 octobre 2010 fixant le statut particulier des agents du corps de l'Inspection du travail et de conciliation du ministère des affaires sociales, de la solidarité et des tunisiens à l'étranger.
• Décret n° 2014-2861 du 15 juillet 2014, fixant le statut particulier aux membres du comité général d'inspection du travail et d'administration des conflits du travail du ministère des affaires sociales.
• Loi n° 2007-19 du 2 avril 2007 portant modification de certaines dispositions du Code du travail.
• Loi n° 2007-15 du 12 mars 2007, portant approbation de la convention internationale du travail n° 135 concernant les représentants des travailleurs 20070313.
• Loi n° 2002-24 du 27 février 2002, modifiant la loi n° 96-101 du 18 novembre 1996, relative à la protection sociale des travailleurs.
• Décret no 95-30 du 9 janvier 1995 relatif à la composition et au fonctionnement de la commission consultative d'entreprise et aux modalités d'élection et d'exercice des missions des délégués du personnel.
• Decree 95-539 of 1 April 1995 on the functioning of regional councils and the central arbitration board in trade disputes 19950414.
• Loi n° 83-112 portant statut général des personnels de l'Etat, des collectivités publiques locales et des établissements publics à caractère administratif.
• Décret n°94-195 du 24 janvier 1994, fixant la composition et les modalités de fonctionnement du conseil national de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi, des commissions permanentes spécialisées et des conseils sectoriels et régionaux de la formation professionnelle et de l'emploi.
• Law 82-70 of 6 August 1982 on the general status of the internal security forces, together with all texts that amended or supplemented it, in particular Law 2006-58 of 28 July 2006.
• Decree 78-50 of 26 January 1987 regulating the state of emergency.
• Law 67-20 of 31 May 1967 on the general status of military personnel.
• Decree No. 95-538 of April 1, 1995, relating to the fixing of rates of contributions to the compensation scheme for injuries resulting from accidents at work and occupational diseases 19950414.

Source: International Labour Organization, IRLX – Legal Database on Industrial Relations, Tunisia, 2019.

Table 14: Ratified ILO Conventions in Tunisia

Subject and/or right	Convention	Ratification date
Fundamental Conventions		
Freedom of association and collective bargaining	C087 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, 1948	1957
	C098 - Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949	1957
Elimination of all forms of forced labour	C029 - Forced Labour Convention, 1930	1962
	C105 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957	1959
Effective abolition of child labour	C138 - Minimum Age Convention, 1973	1995
	C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999	2000
Elimination of discrimination in employment	C100 - Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951	1968
	C111 - Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958	1959
Occupational safety and health	C155 - Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981	-
	C187 - Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006	2021
Governance Conventions		
Labour inspection	C081 - Labour Inspection Convention, 1947	1957
	C129 - Labour Inspection (Agriculture) Convention, 1969	Not ratified
Employment policy	C122 - Employment Policy Convention, 1964	1966
Tripartism	C144 - Tripartite Consultation (International Labour Standards) Convention, 1976	2014
Technical Conventions (Up-to-Date)		
Working Time	C014 - Weekly Rest (Industry) Convention, 1921	1957
Protection of children and young persons	C077 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Industry) Convention, 1946	1970
	C124 - Medical Examination of Young Persons (Underground Work) Convention, 1965	1967
Wages	C095 - Protection of Wages Convention, 1949	1958
Working time	C106 - Weekly Rest (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1957	1958
Social Security	C118 - Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962	1965
Occupational safety and health	C120 - Hygiene (Commerce and Offices) Convention, 1964	1970
	C135 - Workers' Representatives Convention, 1971	2007
Freedom of association	C151 - Labour Relations (Public Service) Convention, 1978	2014
	C154 - Collective Bargaining Convention, 1981	2014
Vocational guidance and training	C142 - Human Resources Development Convention, 1975	1989
Labour Administration and inspection	C150 - Labour Administration Convention, 1978	1988
Employment policy and promotion	C159 - Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983	1989
Seafarers	C185 - Seafarers' Identity Documents Convention (revised), 2003	2016
	MLC - Maritime Labour Convention, 2006	2017

Note: Fundamental Conventions are the ten most important ILO conventions that cover five fundamental principles and rights at work. Equivalent to basic human rights at work. Governance Conventions represent four instruments that are designated as important to building national institutions and capacities that serve to promote employment. In addition, there are 73 conventions, which ILO considers "up-to-date" and actively promoted.
Source: International Labour Organization, NORMLEX, Country Profiles: Tunisia.

Table 15: Ease of Doing Business Ranking in Tunisia, 2020

Topics	2020
Overall	78
Starting a Business	19
Dealing with Construction Permits	32
Getting Electricity	63
Registering Property	94
Getting Credit	104
Protecting Minority Investors	61
Paying Taxes	108
Trading Across Borders	90
Enforcing Contracts	88
Resolving Insolvency	69

Note: Doing Business 2020 indicators are ranking from 1 (best) to 190 (worst) among other countries. The rankings tell much about the business environment, but do not measure all aspects of the business surroundings that matter to firms and investors that affect the competitiveness of the economy. Still, a high ranking does mean that the government has created a regulatory environment conducive to operating a business.

Source: World Bank, Ease of Doing Business 2020 in Tunisia.

Table 16: Tunisia's key economic data, projections, 2019-2024

Values	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
GDP (current, US\$)	42bn	43bn	47bn	46bn	46bn	48bn
GDP per capita (US\$)	11,814	10,802	11,515	12,490	13,034	13,479
Total investment (% of GDP)	20%	12%	14%	16%	16%	16%
Gross national savings (% of GDP)	12%	6.4%	8.2%	6.9%	8.3%	9.8%
General government expenditure (% of GDP)	30%	35%	33%	35%	34%	31%
Government gross debt (% of GDP)	69%	83%	82%	89%	89%	87%

Source: International Monetary Fund, World Economic Outlook Database, October 2022.

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