

Tunisian Post-Election Survey
Presentation of Initial Results

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We are pleased to present the initial findings from the Tunisian Post-Election Survey. The survey was conducted among a representative sample of 1200 men and women in 16 electoral districts October 10 – November 30, 2012.¹ The Post-Election Survey gauges the political participation of citizens in elections before and after the revolution, experiences with different government institutions, attitudes toward the political transition and expectations toward the future.

The Post-Election Survey was developed by Lindsay Benstead (Assistant Professor of Political Science at Portland State University) and Ellen Lust (Associate Professor of Political Science at Yale University). The survey was implemented in collaboration with Dhafer Malouche (Ecole Supérieure de la Statistique et de l'Analyse de l'Information), who served as the survey manager, and Kaouther Ben Bchir, Imen Ben Khalifa, Héla Mallek and Ibtihel Rebhi, who served as field supervisors. The survey was funded by generous contributions of the National Science Foundation, Portland State University and the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government, the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center for International Studies at Yale University, the Luce Foundation, the Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies, the Center for Maghrib Studies in Tunis (CEMAT) and the Project on Middle East Political Science at George Washington University.²

Representivity of the Sample

Probabilistic sampling was used to obtain a representative sample of the Tunisian population. An analysis of the sample finds that key demographic variables match the distribution in the Tunisian population.

Demographics. The sample is comprised of 30.6% aged 18-33 years, 32.5% aged 33-48, 24.7% aged 48-63 and 12.2% aged 63-79. It represents 47% males and 53% females, of which 66.5% are married and 60.4% identify as middle class. The distribution of education in the sample is 20% illiterate/without study, 28.7% with primary school education, 37% with secondary school education and 14% university educated.

¹ See Appendix for more detailed sampling information.

² Additional support for dissemination activities was provided by the Embassy of the United States in Tunis, the Middle East Studies Center (Portland State University) and the Council on Middle East Studies (Yale University).

Activity. With regard to economic activity, 13.3% are employed in the public sector, 33.5% in the private sector, 1.3% in both private and public sectors and 51.2% not work outside the home. Asked whether they pray, 66.7% pray, 12% pray occasionally, 17% do not pray and 4.7% refused to answer. Use of social media and communications is limited: 69.1% never use Facebook, 16% use it sometimes and 14.3% use it on a daily basis; 63.6% never use the internet, 18.6% use it occasionally and 16.9% use it on a daily basis.³

Past Political Participation

Respondents were asked about their participation in demonstrations and elections both before and after the revolution.

Comparable proportions of Tunisians participated in protests since December 18, 2010 as participated in the years before the revolution. The survey finds that 86.7% had never participated in a protest before the revolution, 4.6% participated one time, 3.3% two times, 1.2% three times, 0.05% four times and 2.8% five or more times; 85.9% did not participate in a protest after December 18, 2010, 4.0% participated one time, 3.7% two times, 1.6% three times, 1.3% four times and 2.4% five or more times.

The survey finds that 52.4% report voting in the October 23, 2011 Constituent Assembly elections and 47.3% did not. Of voters, 40.1% decided whom they would support at the beginning of the campaign, 20.5% decided in the middle of the campaign, 13.5% in the last week and 21.5% on Election Day.

Most Tunisians rate the October 23rd elections as relatively free and fair. When asked “To what extent do you think that the October 23, 2011 elections were free and fair? On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is not at all free and fair and 10 represents completely free and fair,” the survey found 1, not free and fair (10.5%), 2 (8.7%), 3 (22%), 4 (18.2%) and 5, completely free and fair (29.6%).

Evaluation of the Current Situation

Tunisians generally express deep dissatisfaction with the current situation. Asked if Tunisia is better off, worse off or about the same as before the revolution, 26.0% see it as better off, 46.9% as worse off and 25.7% see no change. Asked about their personal financial situation, 16.9% are better off, 30.2% are worse off and 52.2% as the same.

Tunisians heavily disapprove of the current leadership. They express dissatisfaction with the way the current government is handling the country’s affairs: 2.5% are very satisfied, 17.0% somewhat satisfied, 26.5% somewhat dissatisfied and 51.2% are very dissatisfied, while 2.4% do not know. And, when asked how their current local council is performing its services, 56.0% evaluate them as poor, 29.7% as fair, 7.9% as good and only 0.6% as excellent; 5.6% did not know.

Tunisians are also dissatisfied with the general performance of the National Constituent Assembly: 53.4% saw it as poor, 29.3% as fair, 6.3% as good and 1.0% as excellent, while 9.8%

³ When non-response (i.e. don’t know or refuse to answer) is less than 1%, it is not noted.

did not know. This is slightly more positive than assessments of the 2009-2011 Parliament, which 58.0% rated as poor, 18.9% as fair, 6.6% as good and 0.4% as excellent. (15.7% did not know.)

Tunisians generally do not see their representatives as helping them. Asked if they believed the parliamentarian would help if they had a special problem, 46.4% said that they would not be helpful. 27.5% said they would be somewhat helpful, 22.8% did not know and only 3% expected they would be very helpful.

Political parties fare poorly as well. Tunisians know the political parties: 46.7% correctly identify the leader of CPR, 41.5% name the leader of Popular Petition, 38.4% for Ettakatol, 30.3% for PDP and 72.0% for En-Nahda. But, they do not believe parties are effective:

- Asked if the parties help citizens in need to a large extent, somewhat, a little or not at all, 22.9% believe CPR aids citizens to a large extent or somewhat, 14.1% for Popular Petition, 19.6% for Ettakatol, 15.2% for PDP and 33.4% for En-Nahda.
- The percentage of Tunisians believing the parties are to a large extent or somewhat capable of achieving goals is small: CPR (24.6%), Arida (15.0%), Ettakatol (21.8%), PDP (15.3%) and En-Nahda (38.7%).
- Most Tunisians do not believe parties have a clear political platform. The percentage saying they have a clear platform to a large extent or somewhat is small: CPR (24.9%), Popular Petition (13.9%), En-Nahda (36.6%), PDP (17.0%) and Ettakatol (21.8%).

Indeed, when asked to place each party's political position with regard to social and economic issues, most Tunisians are unable to do so. And there is generally wide disagreement between Tunisians over the party's position, suggesting that it has not established or communicated a clear position:

- When asked, "On a scale of 1 to 9, 1 being a gradual and slow processes of reform and change and 9 being radical and revolutionary change, how would you rate each of the following parties?" a large percentage don't know: CPR (35.8%), Nahda (29.0%), Ariday (43.6%), Ettakatol (42.2%) and PDP (49.5%). Those who do place the parties generally see them as favoring gradual change. Indeed, 23.0% of respondents placed CPR at "1," 24.4% did so for Nahda, 20% for Popular Petition, 19% for Ettakatol and 18.5% PDP.
- A similar question asking that respondents place parties on a scale of 1 to 9, 1 being a strict socialist system with the state running all economic affairs and 5 being a full-fledged free market capitalist system, found high percentages answering 'don't know': CPR (49.6%), En-Nahda (44.5%), Popular Petition (55.2%), Ettakatol, (52.6%) and PDP (53.8%). Those who did place the parties did so on positions spread across the spectrum.
- More Tunisians can place parties on a scale of 1 to 9, 1 being a strictly religious political party and 5 being a strictly secular party. The percentage of don't know for CPR was 35.1%, En-Nahda was 21.2%, Popular Petition was 42%, Ettakatol was 41.6% and PDP was 42.9%. Citizens also differentiate the parties more on this spectrum. For instance, the percentage placing the party at 1 (religious) was 1.2% for CPR, 26.8% for Nahda, 3.2%

Popular Petition, 1.6% Ettakatol and 1.7% PDP. This reflects the politicization of and focus on religion during and following the October 2011 elections.

Nevertheless, Tunisians evaluate their country as relatively democratic. Asked to assess the extent Tunisia is democratic, 12.9% felt it was not democratic at all, 21.8% that it was somewhat undemocratic, 55.1% that it was somewhat democratic and 12.9% entirely democratic. 6.2% do not know.

Attitudes toward Political Institutions

Tunisians remain committed to participation in democratic institutions, despite the dissatisfaction with the current situation.

When asked the extent to which they agree with the statement: Democracy may have its problems but is better than any other form of government, 40.7% strongly agree, 37.4% agree, 9.2% disagree, 3.9% strongly disagree and 8.6% do not know.

They differ, however, in their definition of democracy. When prompted, “People often differ in their views on the characteristics that are essential to democracy. If you have to choose only one thing, what would you choose as the most important characteristic?” 26% chose an “Opportunity to change the government through elections,” 28% chose “Freedom to criticize the government/those in power,” 6.3% chose “A small income gap between rich and poor” and 33.1% chose “Basic necessities like food, clothing, shelter for everyone.” 6.2% did not know.

They also have important differences in their visions of political institutions. When asked what role parliament should play in the future, 54.7% said it should legislate, 22.8% believed it should advise the government, 9.7% believed there should be no parliament and 12.8% did not know.

There is also disagreement, although less, over the role that religious leaders should play in politics. Asked about their agreement with the statement, “Religious leaders should have no influence over the decisions of the government,” 41.8% strongly agree, 25.4% agree, 18.4% disagree, 8.5% strongly disagree and 5.4% don’t know.

The Future

Deep grievances remain with both the present and the past. Indeed, 90.5% of Tunisians believe members of the previous regime should be tried for corruption, 6.8% believe they should not and 2.3% do not know. But Tunisians remain engaged in the political process. Indeed, the vast majority (70.9%) say they would vote in elections if they were held tomorrow, with 15.1% saying they would not vote and 13.6% undecided.

Changing allegiances is not surprising, given that most Tunisians are not committed to a political party early in the democratic transition. Asked “Which of the following best describes you?” 1.5% were an active member of a political party; 1.1% were a member of a political party but not active in party affairs; 22.3% were not a member of a political party but someone who generally supports a certain political party; 44.6% said they were someone who supports different parties depending on current circumstances; and 24.7% described themselves as someone who does not care about political parties.

It is therefore difficult to know how the future is likely to unfold. On the one hand, there is deep frustration with the present economic and political failings of the government and a great deal of indecision about preferences for the next elections. Of those who plan to vote in the next elections, 13.6% are undecided and 36.7% do not know. When asked whether Jebali – the head of the government -- or Béji Caïd Essebsi -- former Minister of Foreign Affairs under Bourguiba – will provide better leadership for the problems that Tunisia faces today, 24% stated Jabali, 34.9% chose Essebsi, 19.5% said “someone else,” 15.9% refused to answer and 5.9% did not know. Yet, among decided voters, En-Nahda remains by far the strongest political party. The survey finds 12% of Tunisians would vote for En-Nahda, compared to 6.8% who would vote for Nida Tunisi, with remaining votes split among the smaller parties.

Tunisians remain largely optimistic even as they face an uncertain future. When asked, “Generally speaking, how would you describe your feelings towards Tunisia’s future?” 10.1% are very optimistic, 43.1% are optimistic, 23.1% are neutral, 14.8% are pessimistic and only 6.8% very pessimistic. (2.0% do not know.) This optimism reinforces the high level of interest in voting in the next elections and suggests that Tunisians are likely to be engaged in shaping the future of their country.

Appendix A: Detailed Methodological Information

Conducted among a representative sample of 1200 men and women in 16 electoral districts October 10 – November 30, 2012, the Post-Election Survey is a nationally-representative survey of political attitudes and behaviors conducted October 7- November 30, 2012. 1200 Tunisian residents, 18 years and older, took part. The survey was conducted face-to-face and took approximately 40 minutes to complete. 60 interviewers worked on the study. A two-day interviewer training program and five controllers ensured high quality data collection.

Sampling

A multi-stage sampling design was employed. First, a random stratified sample of 16 of 27 domestic electoral districts, the primary sampling units, was selected using the regions of the country as a stratum. Second, probability proportional to size (PPS) sampling was used to select clusters, which included 54 mu'tadiyat (urban communes) and 20 immadayat (rural communes), respecting the distribution of the population in urban and rural areas. The block size was 15. Third, systematic methods were used to select a starting address within the selected communes. A random start and random walk pattern were used to select households and, finally, random within household selection using Kish tables was implemented. A respondent was randomly selected in a household and he or she could be interviewed by an interviewer of either sex.

Detailed sampling and refusal information was maintained on the cover sheets. The minimum response rate was 56%, calculated based on cover pages which recorded data on both completed as well as non-completed contacts (e.g. refusals and non-residential units).⁴ A comparison of the distribution of gender, age, level of education, and income in the sample with estimates provided by the Tunisian census bureau indicates that the respondent pool is representative of the Tunisian population. Results reported are drawn from the data, weighted by demographic characteristics. Details are available upon request.

⁴ Preliminary response rate calculated based on AAPOR standard definition, Response Rate 1. This response rate is lower than some surveys conducted in Arab world (e.g. Arab Barometer), likely because random within household selection was used instead of quota sampling. Random methods of within household selection should result in a more representative sample, but also higher non-participation rates because the interviewer must return to interview only one selected member of the household, not any available member of the household.