

# THE IMPACT OF AUSTERITY POLICIES

ON WOMEN AND  
MARGINALIZED  
GROUPS



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In times of economic crises, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other international financial institutions (IFIs) often prescribe developing countries a series of austerity measures. The latter usually aim to address balance of payment problems, such as budgetary deficits and high inflation.

To address these issues, austerity policies mainly involve cutting public spending by canceling certain programs and decreasing the wage bill through hiring cuts, hiring freezes, and wage caps.

The cuts to social spending and the eventual privatization of basic services inevitably lead to inequalities based on socioeconomic status, geographical location, and gender. To address these inequalities, austerity measures are usually accompanied by poverty-targeting “social measures”, generally based on direct cash transfer programs.

However, austerity has proven its failure in Tunisia and abroad.

### Austerity and socio-economic inequalities

The privatization of basic services, such as education and healthcare, is clear. For instance, in tertiary education, enrollment rates in private institutions have increased nearly 20 times, going from 0.65% in 2004 to 12.53% in 2019.<sup>1</sup>

The same pattern of privatization can be observed in the healthcare sector, where the number of private healthcare establishments has risen by 23.69% between 2011 and 2019, going from 2406 to 2976 structures. In the same period, the number of public sector establishments stagnated, rising only by 3.66%.<sup>2</sup>

Healthcare services become more and more unaffordable for low-income groups, as prices for services soared, with margins of profits by private clinics sometimes reaching 300%.<sup>3</sup> The pursuit of profit also makes private services available only in high-income areas. As it stands, over 90% of private clinics exist in coastal areas, leaving interior regions under-served.<sup>4</sup>

With the rise in private sector establishment, we observe a decrease in the quality of public sector services, which are becoming more and more underfunded and understaffed. Close to 660, 000 adults in Tunisia have expressed that they have experienced a medical need, but have not received

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<sup>1</sup> World Bank. “Education Statistics-All Indicators.” DataBank. Accessed January 30, 2023.

<https://databank.worldbank.org/source/education-statistics-%5e-all-indicators#>

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Health, Healthcare Fact Sheet 2019, April 2021, page 23,

<http://www.santetunisie.rns.tn/images/statdep/Carte-sanitaire-2019-finale.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> Cours des Comptes. “Supervision Et Contrôle Des Cliniques Privées.” courdescomptes.nat.tn, February 12, 2021.

[http://www.courdescomptes.nat.tn/Fr/thematiques\\_58\\_4\\_-1\\_0\\_0\\_0000\\_0000\\_supervision-et-controle-des-cliniques-privées\\_281#?](http://www.courdescomptes.nat.tn/Fr/thematiques_58_4_-1_0_0_0000_0000_supervision-et-controle-des-cliniques-privées_281#?) Page 219

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. Page 212



any healthcare services from public health establishments, mainly due to the inaccessibility of care.<sup>5</sup>

## Austerity and gender

The inequalities stemming from austerity are not gender-neutral. The neoliberal model of economics, the bedrock of austerity, blatantly disregards gender dynamics in its analyses. As such, it fails to consider how these policies disproportionately affect women and girls.

For example, among its theoretical tenets, there is the assumption that decisions within a household are made in a participative way between household members, and that resources are distributed equally between members of a household, even though numerous studies have shown that women, children, and the elderly are often receiving a smaller portion of these resources.<sup>6</sup> In fact, women are particularly affected by austerity.

Women, in Tunisia, are already economically disempowered. For instance, only 19.3% of women have their own income, as opposed to 55.9% of men. Only 3% of women own real estate, against 12% of men.<sup>7</sup> Despite contributing to 80% of all food production, and despite accounting for 70% of agricultural workers, women's participation rate for agricultural projects only comes in at 3%.<sup>8</sup>

Public spending cuts thus further entrench these inequalities and disempowerment, by having women bear a triple cost. By cutting public sector jobs and services, women suffer from a loss of jobs, a loss of access to services, and a higher burden of unpaid work.<sup>9</sup>

Austerity, particularly in the form cutting public employment disproportionately affects women because of the phenomenon of discrimination against them in the private sector. For example, in the private sector, when it comes to blue-collar jobs, there seems to be a preference for male candidates in 45,2% of cases. This percentage increases to over 47% in industries, over 55% in commerce and vehicle repairs, and over 70% in construction. As such when the state cuts public jobs, it is cutting women's jobs.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> "Enquête Nationale Sur La Perception Des Habitants Envers La Sécurité, Liberté et La Gouvernance Locale En Tunisie 2021 | INS." Accessed October 6, 2022. <http://www.ins.tn/publication/enquete-nationale-sur-la-perception-des-habitants-envers-la-securite-liberte-et-la-0>. Page 23

<sup>6</sup> Perez, Caroline Criado. *Invisible women: Data bias in a world designed for men*. Abrams, 2019.

<sup>7</sup> Ministère des Finances, Ecole Nationale des Finances, La budgétisation sensible au genre, Octobre 2021, Page 7-8

<sup>8</sup> Ministère des Finances, UNICEF, Sep 2022, Rapport d'analyse budgétaire selon le genre (2010-2021), Page 18

<sup>9</sup> United Nations General Assembly. "Report of the Independent Expert on the Effects of Foreign Debt." Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights Impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women's human rights, July 18, 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/229/04/PDF/N1822904.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>10</sup> International Labor Organization, Transition vers le marché du travail des jeunes femmes et hommes en Tunisie : résultats de l'enquête auprès des entreprises, 2015

Additionally, because they are the main care worker for vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, women are more likely to seek out basic services such as healthcare and education.<sup>11</sup> Women are also more likely to be poor, and thus more likely to need such services. Over 80% of households in Tunisia are headed by a male.<sup>12</sup> However, in *PNAFN (Programme national des Familles Nécessiteuses)*, families headed by a woman constitute 60% of the households subscribed to the program.<sup>13</sup> By cutting funding to the public sector, the government is essentially cutting funding for vital services, which disempowered women in need.

Austerity measures also increase women's share of unpaid work. In Tunisia, men only spend 3 hours a week doing care work, while women dedicate an average of 17 hours to such tasks.<sup>14</sup> The unpaid care work shouldered by women is made worse by austerity measures. When healthcare is privatized and people are reluctant to seek medical help for illnesses, it is women who will stay at home to take care of the sick child or the sick elderly. In the cases of long-term illnesses and conditions, women will be the ones forced to leave their employment in order to care for the ill person. The same is true in the case of the privatization of education. If preschool or pre-kindergarten are even more costly than her monthly salary, it will usually be the mother who leaves her employment to take on the unpaid work of educating her child.

### Recommendations:

In order to create jobs and support women, the state needs to invest further resources in the underfunded and under-staffed public sector, particularly in care work sectors such as healthcare and education. This includes care services for the elderly, as well as preschool and If preschool or pre-kindergarten are provisions to children. Social protection programs need to be updated through a life-cycle approach that is universal, inclusive, and adequate. This would include programs such as unemployment insurance, universal child benefits, etc.

These reforms must also be gender-responsive and prioritize human rights. In order to achieve that, care work needs to be distributed not just within the family unit, but also between individuals and the state.

Care work considerations should also be included in policy-analyses and data-gathering by both the national authorities and IFIs.

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<sup>11</sup> "Enquête Nationale Sur La Perception Des Habitants Envers La Sécurité, Liberté et La Gouvernance Locale En Tunisie 2021 | INS." Accessed October 6, 2022. <http://www.ins.tn/publication/enquete-nationale-sur-la-perception-des-habitants-envers-la-securite-liberte-et-la-0>.

<sup>12</sup> Sofiane Ghali, University of Tunis; Micheline Goedhuys. "Women's and Youth Empowerment in Rural Tunisia - An Assessment Using the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)." Working paper, May 1, 2018. [http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS\\_627210/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS_627210/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>13</sup> Ministère des Finances, UNICEF, Sep 2022, Rapport d'analyse budgétaire selon le genre (2010-2021), Page 17

<sup>14</sup> UN Women, THE CARE ECONOMY IN TUNISIA: TOWARDS RECOGNIZING, REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID CARE WORK, December 2020, [https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English\\_PolicyBrief\\_Tunisia.pdf](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English_PolicyBrief_Tunisia.pdf)



In order to promote tax justice and equality and fund these care services, policymakers need to adopt progressive taxation measures such as more progressive income tax, a wealth tax, and higher corporate income tax. To ensure tax equity, authorities should also lessen their reliance on regressive indirect taxes such as the VAT and other consumption taxes.



## INTRODUCTION

Economic gender equality and empowerment involve many aspects of economic life. Empowerment, particularly, is a multidimensional concept that includes factors such as asset ownership, participation in economic decision making within the household and outside of it, access to credit, time for leisure, etc. Gender equality in labor market contains several indicators such as “labor force participation, employment, earnings, and job quality in terms of benefits, rights, opportunities for skills development.”<sup>15</sup>

However, the pursuit of unfettered growth, as pushed for by current economic models, has resulted in extensive environmental and ecological degradation, as well as soaring levels of inequality. Austerity, through both its revenue collection policies and public spending policies, has historically resulted in unemployment, deindustrialization, and agricultural collapse.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, it has shifted the cost of these policies and their failure to the most vulnerable groups, meaning those who can least afford it.

Tunisia has not escaped this fate. For decades, the country has implemented austerity measures, privatized vital sectors, and made sweeping public sector cuts. All these policies have failed to trigger sustainable, inclusive economic growth. In fact, Tunisia is still in an ongoing economic crisis that has lasted for over a decade now. And women have paid the steepest price.

This report attempts to explore how austerity measures have entrenched inequalities, especially for women and girls.

First, the report introduces the goals of austerity, and how it translates into actual public policies, as well as its underlying logic. The report then briefly discusses how austerity measures have resulted in the expansion of unaffordable healthcare and education sectors. It also touches upon the question of how spending cuts have caused public sector services to be underfunded and understaffed.

The report then investigates the gender-specific repercussions of austerity policies and how they bear a triple cost for women. Particularly, it delves into how cuts to public sector employment hurt women the most, how women are disproportionately affected by the decrease in access to state-provided care services, and how austerity increases the burden of unpaid work for women.

The report ends with a series of recommendations for states and IFIs to take into consideration when looking at economic reforms for sustainable, inclusive growth.

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<sup>15</sup> Anastasiou et al. “Economic Recession, Austerity and Gender Inequality at Work. Evidence from Greece and Other Balkan Countries | Elsevier Enhanced Reader.” Accessed January 1, 2023. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)00610-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00610-3). Page 42.

<sup>16</sup> OHCHR. “OHCHR | The Impact of Economic Reform Policies on Women’s Human Rights.” Accessed January 2, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-foreign-debt/impact-economic-reform-policies-womens-human-rights>., Page 1.



## UNDERSTANDING AUSTERITY

### The Goals of Austerity

To understand the effects of austerity, it is important to first understand what austerity means, what it strives to achieve, what is the logic that drives it, and how it is translated into public policies.

The goal of austerity is not to address social issues, nor is it to improve the living standards of people. Austerity measures, sometimes also referred to as “fiscal consolidation” by the IMF, are focused mostly on macroeconomic indicators and aim to address balance of payment problems.

One such indicator is the budgetary deficit reduction.<sup>17</sup> The latter is the difference between the domestic revenues of the state and its expenditure. To fill this gap, states usually borrow from domestic and international financial markets. Austerity policies aim to close this gap and prevent future borrowing, mainly by reducing spending although austerity also includes policies that reduce revenues.

Another indicator is debt repayment.<sup>18</sup> International Financial Institutions (IFIs), as creditors, are naturally concerned with being repaid. As such, they ensure that states are prioritizing repaying loans in budgetary processes, even if it means putting social spending on the back burner. IFIs argue that missing payments or even the threat of missing payments might have reputational risks for a country, preventing it from being able to access credit at affordable prices and interest rates in the future. As such, IFIs consider debt repayment to be the top priority in public spending. Tunisia is no exception to that rule, as debt service is, by far, the highest expenditure for the state. (Figure [1](#))

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<sup>17</sup> OHCHR. “OHCHR | The Impact of Economic Reform Policies on Women’s Human Rights.” Accessed January 2, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-foreign-debt/impact-economic-reform-policies-womens-human-rights>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

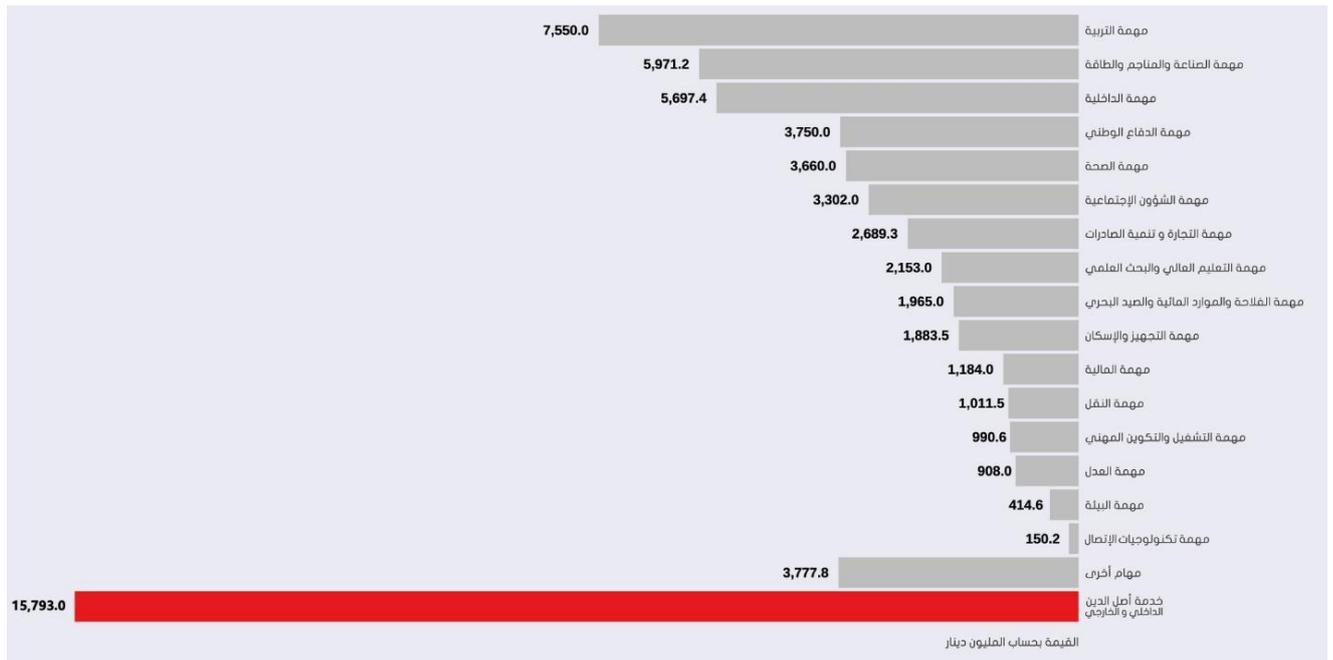


Figure 1: Distribution of national budget expenditure-finance law 2023 (Source: Al Bawsala)<sup>19</sup>

The third main indicator of concern for austerity is keeping inflation low.<sup>20</sup> The latter serves the other two goals. Instituting independent central banks whose only mission is to keep inflation low and pursuing anti-inflationary measures would, theoretically, keep payments such as debts interest and imports low. However, this would require that the government not resort to its own central bank for financing. Nonetheless, it should be noted that IFIs, especially the IMF, do push for currency liberalization in Tunisia, which would decrease the value of the dinar.

Another underlying principle of austerity and neoliberal ideology in general is the belief that the private sector is always more effective and efficient than the public sector. As such, the state is encouraged to reduce its role and its expenditure, and make space for private investment. The latter is seen as the main engine of economic growth.

### Austerity and Public Spending

To achieve these goals, the IMF encourages certain austerity policies. While the IMF insists that its policy recommendations are context-specific, the truth is, many of these policies are prescribed to most countries under IMF loan programs. Tunisia is no exception.

<sup>19</sup> Al Bawsala, Distribution of National Budget Expenditure-Finance law 2023, Facebook.com, Posted December 27, 2022, <https://www.facebook.com/AlBawsala/photos/6254436621255778>

<sup>20</sup> OHCHR. "OHCHR | The Impact of Economic Reform Policies on Women's Human Rights." Accessed January 2, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-foreign-debt/impact-economic-reform-policies-womens-human-rights>.

التوصية	2012 <sup>1</sup>	2013 <sup>2</sup>	2014 <sup>3</sup>	2015 <sup>4</sup>	2016 <sup>5</sup>	2017 <sup>6</sup>	2018 <sup>7</sup>	2019 <sup>8</sup>	2020 <sup>9</sup>
تقليص كتلة الأجور في القطاع العام	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
مرونة أكبر في سعر الصرف	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	
الإصلاح الضريبي على الشركات (تخفيض الضرائب)	X	X		X					
إصلاح القطاع البنكي	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
إعادة هيكلة البنوك العمومية	X	X	X	X	X				
إصلاحات على مستوى البنك المركزي	X		X	X	X	X			
تقليص النفقات على الخدمات العمومية			X	X	X	X	X		
التخلص التدريجي من دعم الطاقة	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
التشجيع على الشراكات بين القطاع العام والقطاع الخاص			X	X	X	X			
إصلاح الشركات المملوكة للدولة / المؤسسات العامة (الخصخصة)		X	X	X	X	X			

الجدول 1: موجز توصيات صندوق النقد الدولي (2012-2020)

Figure 2: IMF recommendations 2012-2020 (Source: Al Bawsala)<sup>21</sup>

As it can be seen by figure 2, one of the main policies that is often prescribed is cutting public expenditure. This can be accomplished in many ways. In Tunisia, this translates into cuts in subsidies and cuts to the wage bill through mechanisms such as hiring freezes or wage freezes.

Because public sector activities are seen as inefficient and market-distorting, austerity measures also include privatizing institutions and infrastructure, through the liberalization of entire sectors, or the privatization of state-owned enterprises (SOE).

These cuts to public services and privatization reduce the state's care provision, and result in economic barriers to accessing basic services as a result of price increases. To address these increased inequalities, austerity approaches often call for the use of poverty-targeting measures such as targeted social safety nets based on direct cash transfers to vulnerable households. An example of such a policy is the current suggestion of replacing universal food subsidies with direct cash transfers to the poor.

### Austerity and Domestic Resource Mobilization

While austerity often relies on public spending cuts to address balance of payment problems, it also advocates for low taxation that may further reduce revenues for the state.

<sup>21</sup> Kais Attia, A decade of Austerity, Al Bawsala, November 2022, <https://www.albawsala.com/ar/publications/rapports/20225523>. Page 6

Particularly, austerity calls for low taxation on corporations and on high-income individuals. The assumption behind this is that by taxing capitals and profits less, they would be reinvested back into the economy and stimulate further growth in the private sector, creating jobs, encouraging the integration of the informal sector into the formal sector, and enlarging the tax base. The latter is assumed to make up for the lost revenues caused by the lower tax rates.

Another tax cut often advocated for by supporters of austerity concerns tariffs. These taxes on imports are seen as a distortion to international trade markets. To keep markets competitive, the IMF and other IFIs call for the dismantling of most tariff “barriers”, considering them unnecessarily protectionist.

To make up for the loss of revenues from lower tax rates, austerity encourages a reliance on consumption taxes and other indirect taxes such as the value-added tax (VAT).

In conclusion, austerity measures are a way to address the budgetary deficit of the state, and maintain low levels of inflation while repaying loans. To achieve this, the public sector must cede space to private sector-led growth. The latter is incentivized through low taxation, while the public sector is reduced in size and in sectors of intervention.

Certain measures are recommended to address poverty and inequalities that inevitably stem from such policies. Poverty-targeting safety nets for instance are recommended by the IMF for Tunisia as a replacement for universal food subsidies.

It is important to address how austerity-related taxation policies perpetuate inequalities, particularly towards vulnerable groups such as the poor, women, and children. **A bibliography of recommended readings** is provided at the end of the report.

However, the current paper will mainly address the question of how spending-related austerity measures create and entrench inequalities and vulnerabilities in communities.

## Increasing General Inequalities

As mentioned previously, the diminished ability to mobilize domestic resources, in addition to the logic of private sector-led growth, naturally advances policies of public spending cuts. This chapter explores the results of austerity policies in public spending, particularly its impact on social inequalities.

Cuts in public funding inherently lead to a loss of access to public services. Some services disappear, such as what is currently going on with food subsidies, while others deteriorate in quality, as they are prevented from keeping and recruiting the necessary human resources needed to maintain adequate standards of service. This issue has been particularly evident in the cases of healthcare and education.

As publicly provided services disappear or decrease in size, the private sector steps in to make up for the gap between supply and demand.

### The Privatization of Basic Services

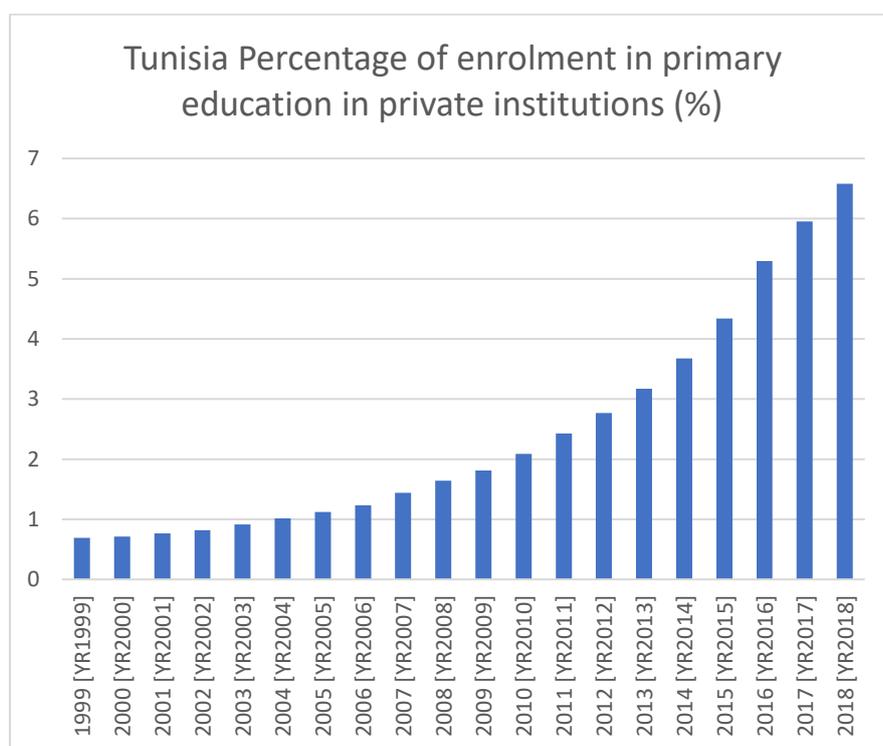


Figure 3: Percentage of enrollment in primary education in private institutions (Source: World Bank)<sup>22</sup>

<sup>22</sup> World Bank. "Education Statistics - All Indicators." DataBank. Accessed January 30, 2023. <https://databank.worldbank.org/source/education-statistics-%5e-all-indicators#>.



Figure 3 clearly shows the ongoing process of privatization of education. The rate of enrollment of students in private institutions in primary education went from 0.69% in 1999 to 6.58% in 2018. That is a ten-time increase in less than two decades. The exponential rise in the number private educational institutions shows no sign of stopping. An even steeper increase is found in tertiary education, where enrollment rates in private institutions have increased by nearly 20 times, going from 0.65% in 2004 to 12.53% in 2019.

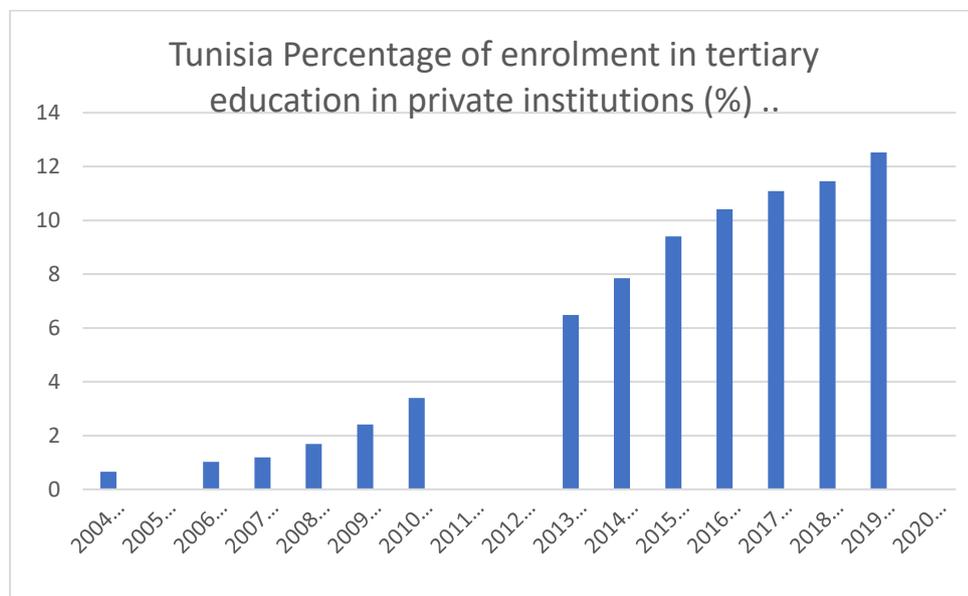


Figure 4: Percentage of enrollment in tertiary education in private institutions 2004-2019 (Source: World Bank)<sup>23</sup>

For secondary education (Figure 5), enrollment rates in private institutions have also risen, especially after the 2011 revolution. Additionally, the rate of privatization is significantly higher for pre-primary education such as kindergartens, where the percentage of enrollment in private institutions is 79.23% (2016).<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

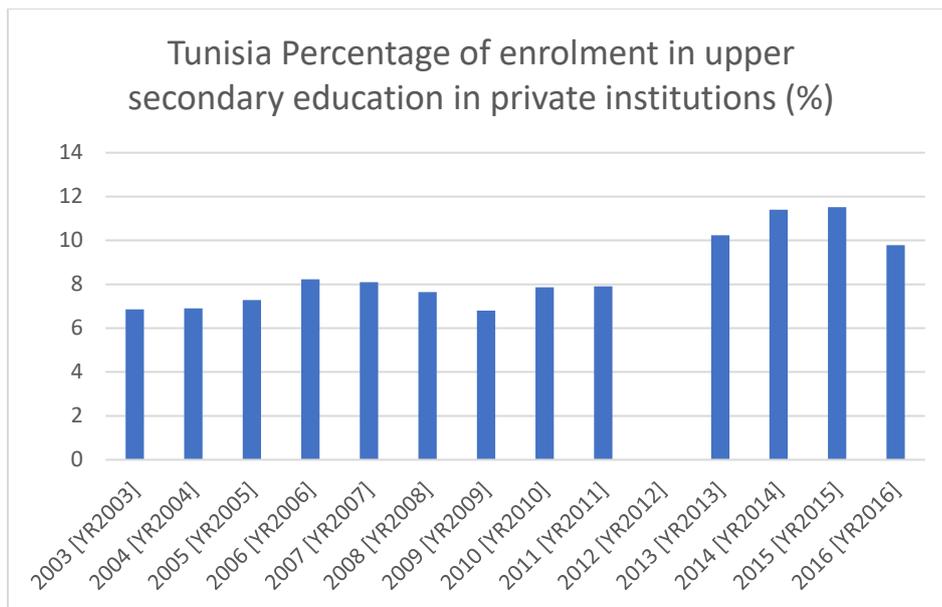


Figure 5: Percentage of enrollment in upper secondary education in private institutions 2003-2016 (Source: World Bank)<sup>25</sup>

The same pattern of privatization can be observed in the healthcare sector, where the number of private healthcare establishments has risen by 23.69% between 2011 and 2019, going from 2406 to 2976 structures. In the same period, the number of public sector establishments stagnated, rising only by 3.66% (Figure 6).

Secteur	Niveau	Ettablissement	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Secteur Public	1 <sup>ère</sup> ligne	Groupements de santé de base	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28	28
		Centres de santé de base	2 091	2 098	2 104	2 109	2 123	2 135	2 157	2 161	2 176
		Hôpitaux de circonscriptions	109	109	108	108	108	108	108	110	110
	2 <sup>ème</sup> ligne	Hôpitaux Régionaux	33	33	35	35	35	35	35	31	31
	3 <sup>ème</sup> ligne	Hôpitaux universitaires et centres spécialisés	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32	32
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2 293</b>	<b>2 300</b>	<b>2 307</b>	<b>2 312</b>	<b>2 326</b>	<b>2 338</b>	<b>2 360</b>	<b>2 362</b>	<b>2 377</b>	
Secteur Privé		Officines	1 902	1 935	1 972	1 975	2 006	2 038	2 050	2 127	2 172
		Laboratoires médicaux privés	324	358	392	415	453	486	511	544	581
		Centres d'hémodialyse	99	99	99	106	111	115	115	116	117
		Cliniques privées	81	81	82	88	91	90	98	102	106
		Centres d'imagerie médicale	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	312
	<b>Total</b>	<b>2 406</b>	<b>2 473</b>	<b>2 545</b>	<b>2 584</b>	<b>2 661</b>	<b>2 729</b>	<b>2 774</b>	<b>3 201</b>	<b>2 976</b>	
Secteur Parapublic		Polycliniques de la CNSS	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
		Centres d'hémodialyse	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
		Hôpitaux militaires	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
		Hôpitaux des forces de sécurité intérieure	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
		Groupements de médecine de travail	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24	24
	<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>40</b>	

Tableau 8: Evolution des structures sanitaires des secteurs public, privé et parapublic

Figure 6: Evolution of healthcare sectors 2011-2019 (Source: Ministry of Health)<sup>26</sup>

## Inaccessible Private Services

The privatization of vital services, such as healthcare and education, inevitably leads to deepening inequalities.

The public sector loses service recipients, as well as human resources, to the private sector. Especially with imposed cuts and wage freezes, the quality of service in the public sector would inevitably decrease, causing problems such as long waiting periods in hospitals, late school year starts in public schools, etc.

The fact is the logic of a “fair and competitive” market does not work for such essential services. The laws of supply and demand state that, if the price of a service or a product is too high, a consumer can choose not to buy. If the price is too low, the supplier can back out of selling. However, in the case of healthcare, consumers do not have a choice. If someone needs a consultation, an urgent medical intervention, or life-saving medication, they cannot opt out of the service. The demand is thus rigid. As such, the private sector would be able to fix any price it deems fit.

Certain regulations were passed by the state to curb some of this excessively high pricing. For instance, some laws exist to fix the margin of profits that private clinics can make on certain services and products. However, studies have shown that these regulations continue to be ignored by the private sector. A report, undertaken by the court of auditors, found that margins of profits used by private clinics can reach 300% on some services. On certain products where the maximum legal margin of profits allowed by law was 10%, it was found that clinics actually implemented margins ranging between 26% and 160%.<sup>27</sup>

Some individuals and households that have the resources to turn to the private sector might not lose access to these essential services. However, those who are most vulnerable and cannot afford the elevated prices of the private sector will be the ones left behind, having to deal with understaffed and underfunded institutions.

The pursuit of profit also makes private services only available in high-income areas. over 90% of private clinics exist in coastal areas, leaving interior regions under-serviced.<sup>28</sup>

However, even for those who live in affluent areas and can somewhat afford private healthcare, this expense would still eat away at much of their income and resources. In this sense; data show that the average domestic private healthcare expenditure per capita, adjusted to purchasing power parity, more than doubled between 2000 and 2019, going from \$142 to \$335 in current international dollars (2019). This means that private healthcare is now costing twice as much for Tunisians than it did two decades prior.

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<sup>26</sup> Ministry of Health, Healthcare Factsheet 2019, April 2021, page 23, <http://www.santetunisie.rns.tn/images/statdep/Carte-sanitaire-2019-finale.pdf>

<sup>27</sup> Cours des Comptes. “Supervision Et Contrôle Des Cliniques Privées.” courdescomptes.nat.tn, February 12, 2021. [http://www.courdescomptes.nat.tn/Fr/thematiques\\_58\\_4\\_-1\\_0\\_0\\_0000\\_0000\\_supervision-et-contrrole-des-cliniques-privées\\_281#?](http://www.courdescomptes.nat.tn/Fr/thematiques_58_4_-1_0_0_0000_0000_supervision-et-contrrole-des-cliniques-privées_281#?) Page 219

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Page 212



## Domestic private health expenditure per capita, PPP (current international \$) - Tunisia

World Health Organization Global Health Expenditure database ([apps.who.int/nha/database](https://apps.who.int/nha/database)). The data was retrieved on January 30, 2022.

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Figure 7: Domestic private healthcare expenditure per capita in current international \$ (Source: World Bank)<sup>29</sup>

### Underfunded and Understaffed Public Sector Services

Cuts to spending inevitably lead to inequalities in access to public services. This, in large part, comes as a result of IMF policies that pushed for public spending cuts, regardless of what strategic sectors need in terms of human resources. These cuts, spending caps, and wage freezes are non-discriminatory. They are thus not based on any concrete diagnostic effort aiming to identify where redundancies in the public sector actually lie (if there are any).

As a result of the arbitrary cuts, strategic sectors have been running into more problems, due to a lack of appropriately distributed human resources.

One such crisis is the lack of doctors and nurses that has been painfully felt during the pandemic and continues to be felt today. Indeed, “there is a shocking shortage of doctors in Tunisia, especially in certain medical and surgical specialties. [...] The number of specialist doctors [in the public sector] has seen a sharp decline in the same time period from 3339 to 2318 (0.19 per 1000). The shortage in human resources also includes the specialist surgical workforce. Their national average is 11.54 per 100,000 inhabitants (2014), well below the world average of 30.53 (2015), as well as below those of other countries such as Honduras (60 in 2014), Finland (76 in 2014), and

<sup>29</sup> World Bank. “Domestic Private Health Expenditure per Capita, PPP (Current International \$) - Tunisia.” Data. Accessed January 30, 2023. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.XPD.PVTD.PP.CD?locations=TN>.

Cuba (100.89 in 2017).”<sup>30</sup> This shortage in specialized doctors is inequitably distributed between regions, with interior ones having a significantly lower density of specialized doctors than coastal areas.

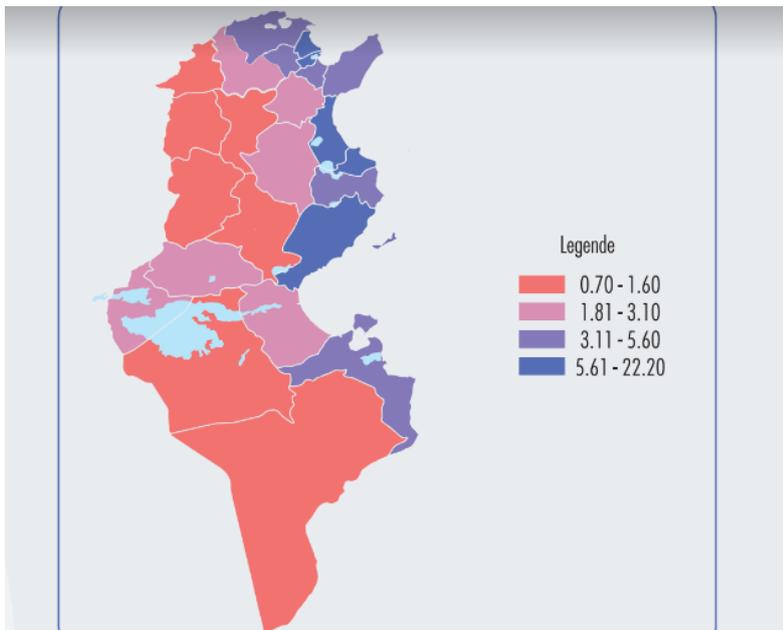


Figure 8: Doctor density per 10 000 inhabitants in 2019 (Source: Ministry of Health)<sup>31</sup>

A similar shortage exists for nurses and midwives. In fact, the average number of nurses and midwives per 1000 inhabitants in Tunisia falls well below the world average and below the WHO recommended ratio. For instance, this average in Cuba reached 7.5 in 2018, whereas the world average is estimated at 3.8 in that same year. In Tunisia, this ratio is calculated at 2.5 (2017), which is a drop from 2.65 and 2.64 in 2015 and 2016 respectively. The ratio is clearly weak, especially when compared with the recommended WHO ratio of 4/1000.”<sup>32</sup>

Another example of crises caused by arbitrary hiring and wage freezes is the recent ongoing teacher debacle. In an effort to not directly recruit teachers, the government became more and more reliant on substitute teachers. Rather than having long-term contracts, these teachers have limited-time contracts, allowing the state to let them go at will. This is in line with the state’s

<sup>30</sup> Sahar Mechmech, Housseem Chammem, Austerity: A Chronic Condition of Public Health, Al Bawsala, Page 8-9. <https://www.albawsala.com/en/publications/20225498?fbclid=IwAR18iwKZZPDXdGAi4L0AFWcgISFFZzFoC7PH9DwC250GRsPZjF0LWvFMxjA>

<sup>31</sup> Ministry of Health, Healthcare Factsheet 2019, April 2021, page 105, <http://www.santetunisie.rns.tn/images/statdep/Carte-sanitaire-2019-finale.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> Sahar Mechmech, Housseem Chammem, Austerity: A Chronic Condition of Public Health, Al Bawsala, Page 10. <https://www.albawsala.com/en/publications/20225498?fbclid=IwAR18iwKZZPDXdGAi4L0AFWcgISFFZzFoC7PH9DwC250GRsPZjF0LWvFMxjA>

strategy to lower the wage bill by either not replacing retiring public sector workers, or replacing them with short-term contract hires rather than long-term ones.

Precarious employment conditions, delays in announcing placement information, as well as delays in providing salaries have pushed the increasing number of substitute teachers to delay the start of the school year,<sup>33</sup> delay the exams for the first semester, and recently to withhold the release of students' grades until their work conditions are improved.<sup>34</sup>

The unstudied, arbitrary nature of cuts tends to create and entrench socio-economic and regional inequalities. They also affect the living standards of public sector employees who either lose their job or lose purchasing power, especially considering the high inflation levels in Tunisia.

A report by the United Nations called these generalized cuts or freezes “a blunt tool which leads to incoherent behavior and should have no place in the planning or thinking of Ministries of Finance or the IMF.”<sup>35</sup>

## Failure of Proposed Solutions

### *The failure of prioritizing infrastructure over other types of social spending*

The IMF is not always opposed to public spending. In some circumstances, in order to promote economic growth, it does encourage it.

However, rather than investing in human resources or social spending, states are encouraged to invest in infrastructure e.g., a road leading to an industrial zone. While investments in certain infrastructures such as hospitals, schools, and public transportation<sup>36</sup> are essential to ensuring sustainable, inclusive economic growth, those structures would not be productive and efficient without people operating them and actually providing the services that are needed.

In fact, investing in social spending might actually create more jobs than investing in material infrastructure. For instance, “according to the UK-based Women’s Budget Group, investing 1% of

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<sup>33</sup> Rfi, Lilia Blaise. “Tunisie: Les Enseignants Remplaçants En Grève Contre Leurs Conditions De Travail Précaires.” RFI. RFI, October 31, 2022. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20221031-tunisie-les-enseignants-rempla%C3%A7ants-en-gr%C3%A8ve-contre-leurs-conditions-de-travail-pr%C3%A9caires>.

<sup>34</sup> “جريدة المغرب”. “تنسيقية الأساتذة النواب تقرر مواصلة مقاطعة الدروس وحجب الأعداد.” *جريدة المغرب*, January 30, 2023. [shorturl.at/sAQW6](https://shorturl.at/sAQW6)

<sup>35</sup> United Nations. “Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly, Entitled ‘Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century.’” In Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on the Fifty-Eighth Session (15 March 2013 and 10-21 March 2014), by United Nations, 53–85. Official Records (United Nations Economic and Social Council). UN, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.18356/6e4ab32d-en>. Page 40

<sup>36</sup> Stéphanie Pouessel, Stéphanie. “Femmes et Transport En Tunisie : L’insécurité Du Quotidien. L’épreuve Générée Des Déplacements Du Quotidien En Contexte Urbain et Rural.” *Aswat Nissa*, n.d.

GDP in childcare versus construction would create 2.7 times as many jobs, more than a third of which would be in industries outside of childcare.”<sup>37</sup>

### ***The failure of targeted social safety nets***

In order to address the inequalities created by a model of growth driven by the private sector, one solution that is often prescribed by the IMF is targeted social safety nets. Such is the case with the system of universal food subsidies that are set to be replaced with direct cash transfers to low-income households.

According to international financial institutions, the main issue with the current subsidies system is its large inclusion errors. This means that many people that do not need subsidies, such as high-income households, restaurants, hotels, etc., are benefitting from it. This inflates the cost of the program and unfairly distributes public funds. Their solution is to reallocate most of the funds to a direct cash transfer program for low-income households.

However, while universal programs might have inclusion errors, targeted programs, especially in the context of developing countries, often suffer from exclusion errors. Exclusion errors mean that households and individuals that do need the program often get left out of it. Tunisia is no exception to these types of errors.

Tunisia’s only current cash transfer program is *the Programme National d’Aide aux Familles Nécessiteuses* (PNAFN) (*National Program of Aid to Indigent Families*). This program suffers from targeting problems and major exclusion errors. As an illustration, “only 12 percent of Tunisia’s poor (based on a threshold of US\$2 per day) benefit from the national cash transfer program for needy families. Among those receiving benefits, which account for nearly 23 percent of all Tunisians, only 40 percent are in the lowest income quintile which represents the poor (considered using a threshold of approximately US\$2 per day).”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> ActionAid International. “The Public Versus Austerity: Why Public Sector Wage Bill Constraints Must End.” Accessed January 7, 2023. <https://actionaid.org/publications/2021/public-versus-austerity-why-public-sector-wage-bill-constraints-must-end>, Page 36.

<sup>38</sup> World Bank, *Consolidating Social Protection and Labor Policy in Tunisia: Building Systems, Connecting to Jobs*, Policy Note, World Bank Group, December 2015, Accessed 6 December 2022, Page xi



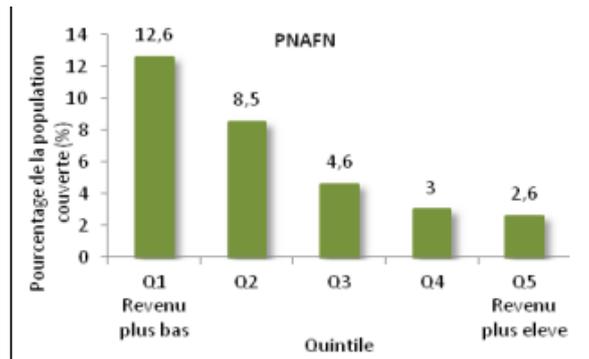


Figure 9: Coverage Rate of Cash Transfer Program, PNAFN, by Quintile-percent (Source: World Bank)

In terms of targeting, this puts Tunisia behind countries such as Chile, Palestine, and El Salvador.

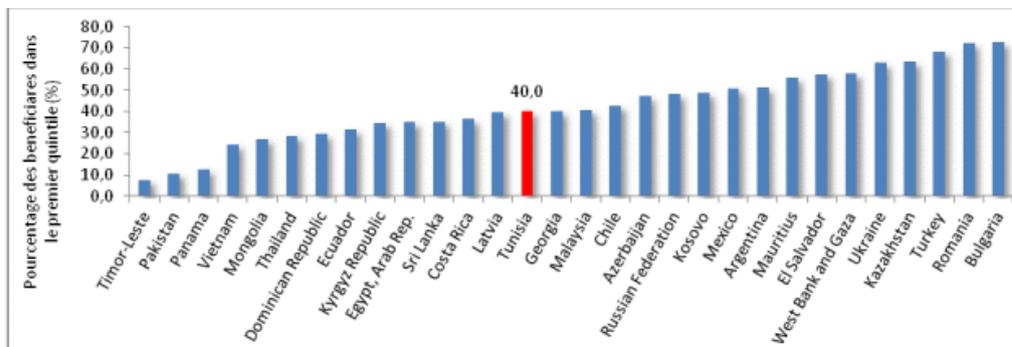


Figure 10: Share of Beneficiaries of Cash Transfers (unconditional) in the First Quintile (lowest income group) (Source: World Bank)

It is essential to understand that the negative effects of austerity are not distributed equally between the members of a community. Vulnerable groups are often harder hit than others by the cuts to social spending.

The next section explores how women, in particular, are disproportionately affected by austerity measures related to public expenditure.

## Increasing Gender Inequalities

The neoliberal model of economics, the bedrock of austerity, blatantly ignores gender dynamics in its analyses. As such, it fails to consider how these policies disproportionately affect women and girls.

For example, it assumes that decisions within a household are made in a participative way between household members. Current economic models also look at poverty from a household perspective, assuming that resources are distributed equally between members of a household, even though numerous studies have shown that women, children, and the elderly are often receiving a smaller portion of these resources.<sup>39</sup>

## The Economic Disempowerment of Women

Women in Tunisia are victims of many forms of violence and discrimination. A study in 2016 showed that over half of women in Tunisia have suffered from some form of violence in the public space. Additionally, data from the Ministry of Women indicate that incidences of gender-based violence were multiplied seven-fold during the lockdown of March-April 2020 following the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>40</sup>

So, it comes as no surprise that women and girls in Tunisia are not economically empowered. This lack of empowerment comes in many forms, including being excluded from participation in decision-making in the household, lacking asset ownership, being time-poor, etc. For instance, only 19.3% of women have their own income, as opposed to 55.9% of men. Only 3% of women own real estate, versus 12% of men.<sup>41</sup>

Despite contributing to 80% of all food production, and despite accounting for 70% of agricultural workers, women's participation rate in agricultural projects only reaches 3%.<sup>42</sup>

Additionally, in a study that looked at economic disempowerment factors such as input in productive decisions, access to credit, control of income, workload, and leisure, it was found that both Tunisian men and Tunisian women were disempowered. However, women were significantly more so. According to the study, 95% of rural women were found to be disempowered versus 74% of rural men.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Perez, Caroline Criado. *Invisible women: Data bias in a world designed for men*. Abrams, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> Ministère des Finances, UNICEF, Sep 2022, Rapport d'analyse budgétaire selon le genre (2010-2021), Page 19

<sup>41</sup> Ministère des Finances, Ecole Nationale des Finances, La budgétisation sensible au genre, Octobre 2021, Page 7-8

<sup>42</sup> Ministère des Finances, UNICEF, Sep 2022, Rapport d'analyse budgétaire selon le genre (2010-2021), Page 18

<sup>43</sup> Sofiane Ghali; Micheline Goedhuys. "Women's and Youth Empowerment in Rural Tunisia - An Assessment Using the Women's Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI)." Working paper, May 1, 2018.

[http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS\\_627210/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS_627210/lang--en/index.htm).

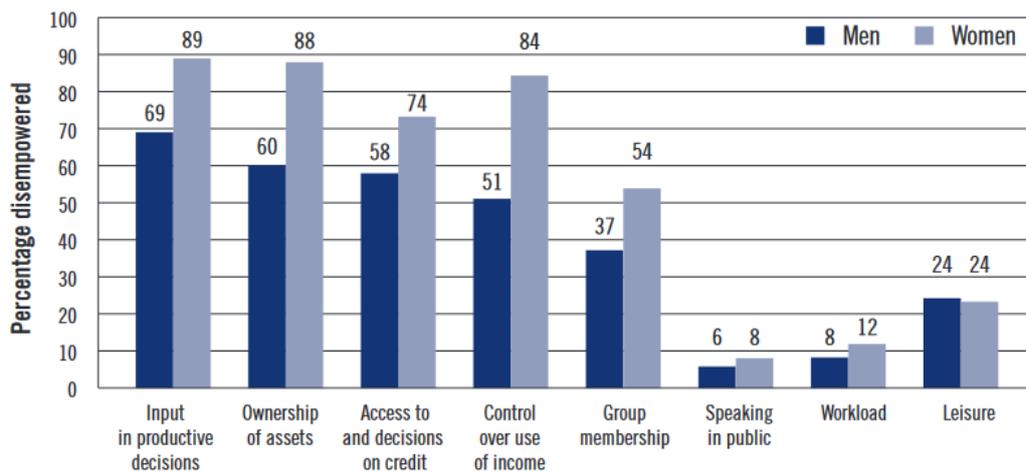


Figure 11: Percentage of men and women disempowered, by indicator (Source: WEAI Tunisia Survey, 2017)<sup>44</sup>

The disempowerment of these women comes primarily from factors such as lack of input in productive decisions and lack of control over use of income.

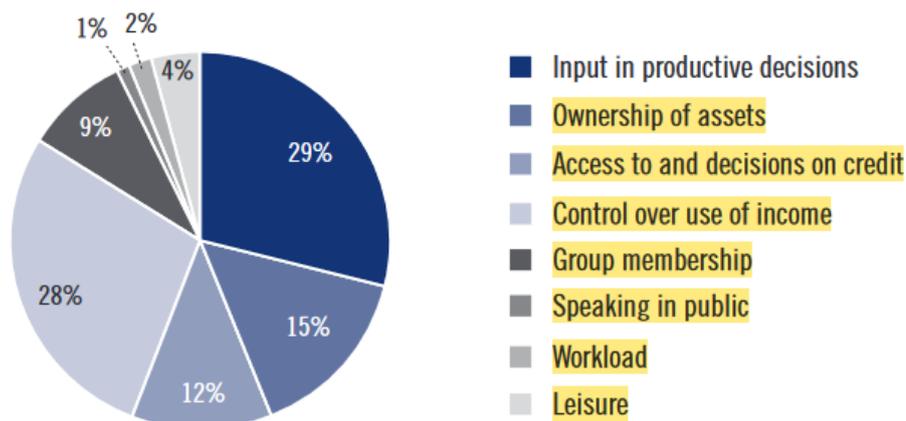


Figure 12: Contribution of each indicator to disempowerment, women (Source: WEAI Tunisia Survey, 2017)<sup>45</sup>

The levels of disempowerment are worse for women in Tunisia than they are in other countries with lower GDP per capita such as Guatemala, Bangladesh, and Uganda. Such higher levels of disempowerment are proof that whatever economic growth happened in Tunisia, women were left behind throughout it. “This apparent puzzle may, however, be explained by high reservation

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.



wages and working conditions among Tunisian women, induced by strong religious and cultural norms that expect women to do most, if not all, of the household chores.”<sup>46</sup>

Instead of decreasing, these gaps in economic equality stagnated. In the global gender gap index developed by the World Economic Forum, for example, Tunisia ranked 97 out of 115 countries in economic participation and opportunity with a score of 0.48. In 2022, its score decreased to 0.445, ranking it 140 out of 146 countries.<sup>47</sup>

	2006		2020		2021	
	Score	Rang	Score	Rang	Score	Rang
<i>Participation et opportunités économiques</i>	0.48	97	0.434	142	0.445	144
<i>Niveau d'éducation</i>	0.959	76	0.97	106	0.97	108
<i>Santé et survie</i>	0.966	98	0.971	107	0.969	91
<i>Autonomisation politique</i>	0.11	53	0.201	67	0.212	69
<i>Indice mondial de l'écart entre les sexes</i>	0.629	90	0.644	124	0.649	126

Figure 13: Global Gender Gap Index (Source: World Economic Forum)<sup>48</sup>

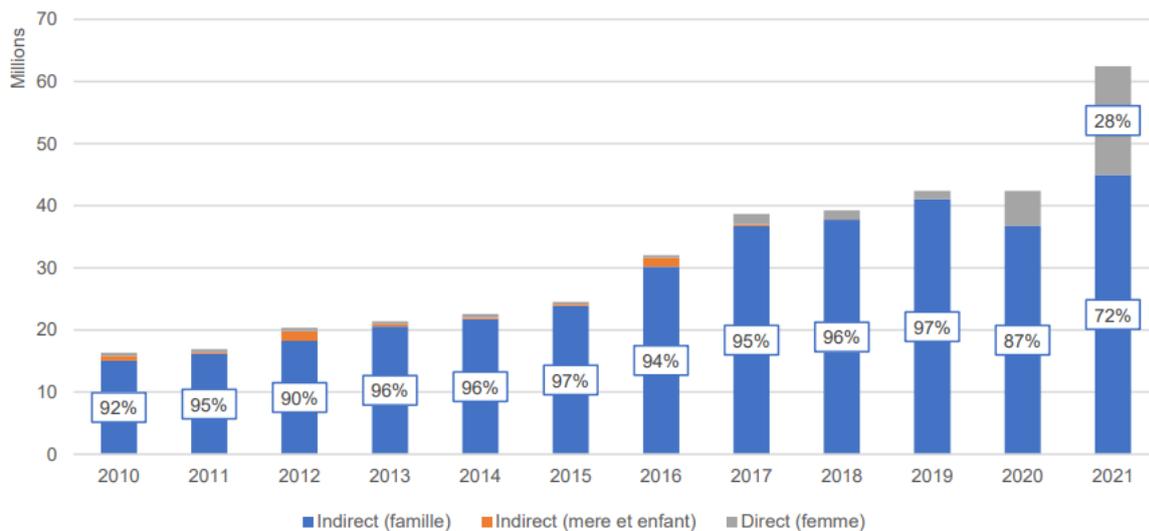


Figure 14: Total Expenditure Targeting Women in Millions of Dinars (Source: UNICEF, Ministry of Finance)<sup>49</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2022, Insight Report, July 2022

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Page 17-18

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. Page 26.

Despite the need to address these inequalities, the state has failed to provide the financial resources necessary to address them. Moreover, it was not until 2019 that the Tunisian government developed an approach to gender-sensitive budgeting.<sup>50</sup> Until 2020, most of the spending that can be considered gender sensitive was indirect, with 90% of it going to families. This again assumes that resources given to families are distributed equitably between the members.

In 2021, the budget allocated to women reached over 60 million dinars, which is a 47% increase from the amount allocated in 2020. However, when looking at The actual financial resources spent for women, between 2017 and 2020 there was actually a decrease of 3%. Notwithstanding the 39% increase in real money spent on women in 2021, these expenditures remain insignificant.<sup>51</sup>

Although the percentage of funds allocated to women directly increased during 2020 and 2021 to reach 28% of all funds considered gender sensitive, this funding remains very weak and accounts for less than a third of a percent of all public spending. Over 98% of public spending remains gender-neutral.

*Tableau 3: Répartition des lignes budgétaires : ciblant les femmes de façon directe, indirecte ou neutres/aveugles*

	<b>Cible directement les femmes</b>	<b>Cible indirectement (famille ou enfant)</b>	<b>Dépenses neutres ou aveugles</b>
<b>2010</b>	0.06%	2.63%	97.32%
<b>2011</b>	0.05%	2.46%	97.49%
<b>2012</b>	0.05%	2.19%	97.76%
<b>2013</b>	0.10%	1.98%	97.92%
<b>2014</b>	0.09%	2.17%	97.74%
<b>2015</b>	0.07%	2.35%	97.58%
<b>2016</b>	0.07%	2.07%	97.86%
<b>2017</b>	0.08%	2.06%	97.86%
<b>2018</b>	0.08%	2.12%	97.80%
<b>2019</b>	0.13%	1.06%	98.81%
<b>2020</b>	0.28%	1.15%	98.57%
<b>2021</b>	0.31%	1.29%	98.40%

*Figure 15: Distribution of budgetary lines (Source: UNICEF, Ministry of Finance)<sup>52</sup>*

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. Page 19

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. Page 24

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. Page 23

Public spending cuts further entrench these inequalities and disempowerment, by having women bear a triple cost. When the state cuts public sector jobs and services, women suffer from a loss of jobs, a loss of access to services, and a higher burden of unpaid work.<sup>53 54</sup>

The next section explores the different aspects of the “super-exploitation”<sup>55</sup> of women by austerity measures.

### The Loss of Jobs for Women

Unemployment in general has been on the rise. However, the rate of female unemployment is higher than its male equivalent. This is especially the case for highly educated young women. In fact, in the second trimester of 2022, the male unemployment rate was recorded at 13.1%, while the female one was at 20.5%. This gap is even wider when Highly educated job seekers are taken into account. For college graduates, the unemployment rate in the third trimester of 2022 was 17.6% for men and 40.7% for women.<sup>56</sup>

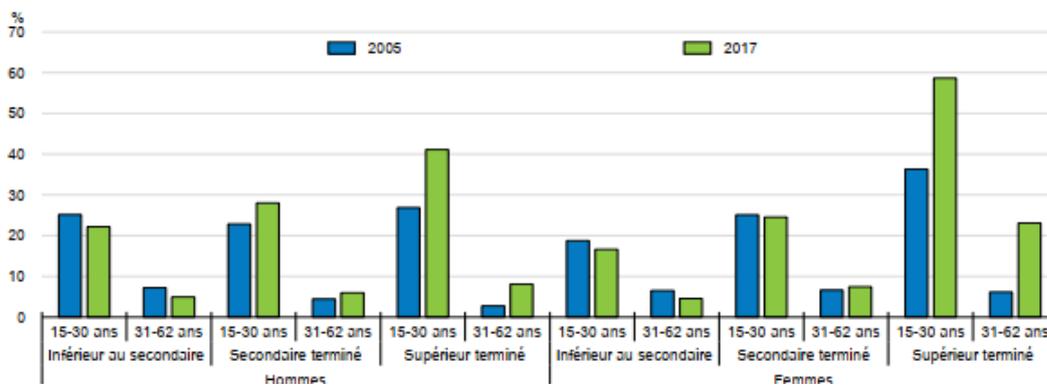


Figure 16: Unemployment by gender, education level, and age bracket, 2005 and 2007 (Source: OECD)<sup>57</sup>

In addition to having higher unemployment in general, women are also more likely to have experienced longer periods in unemployment status. For instance, in 2011, 11.3% of unemployed women experienced an unemployment period longer than three years vs. 5.2% of unemployed

<sup>53</sup> ActionAid International. “The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity,” October 10, 2022. <https://actionaid.org/publications/2022/care-contradiction-imf-gender-and-austerity>. Page 4

<sup>54</sup> United Nations General Assembly. “Report of the Independent Expert on the Effects of Foreign Debt.” Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights Impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women’s human rights, July 18, 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/229/04/PDF/N1822904.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>55</sup> ActionAid International. “The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity,” October 10, 2022. <https://actionaid.org/publications/2022/care-contradiction-imf-gender-and-austerity>. Page 27

<sup>56</sup> National Statistics Institute. “Statistiques.” Accueil. Accessed January 15, 2023. <http://www.ins.tn/statistiques/153>.

<sup>57</sup> Grundke and Cassimon, Etudes Economiques de l’OCDE, Améliorer les compétences et les perspectives d’emploi en Tunisie, OECD

men.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, in times of crises such as those Tunisia has been going through since 2011, women are more likely to lose their jobs or not be hired. For instance, during the pandemic between the first and second trimesters of 2020, 3.92% of men lost their jobs as opposed to 6.14% of women. The same happened during the revolution. Between 2010 and 2011, the number of male employees fell by 2.59% while the number of female employees fell by 9.01%, more than 3 times the rate of men.

	Effectif (en mille)						En %					
	2010			2011			2010			2011		
	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
< à un an	204.2	115.2	<b>319.4</b>	278.3	137.1	<b>415.4</b>	69.4	61.0	<b>66.1</b>	68.3	50.8	<b>61.3</b>
>1an et ≤2 ans	59.2	42.8	<b>102.0</b>	81.9	71.3	<b>153.2</b>	20.1	22.6	<b>21.1</b>	20.1	26.4	<b>22.6</b>
>2ans et ≤3ans	17.7	16.6	<b>34.3</b>	26.1	31.0	<b>57.1</b>	6.0	8.8	<b>7.1</b>	6.4	11.5	<b>8.4</b>
> 3ans	13.2	14.3	<b>27.5</b>	21.2	30.5	<b>51.7</b>	4.5	7.6	<b>5.7</b>	5.2	11.3	<b>7.7</b>
Non déclarés	6.0	2.6	<b>8.6</b>	16.3	11.2	<b>27.5</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	300.3	191.5	<b>491.8</b>	423.8	281.1	<b>704.9</b>	100	100	<b>100</b>	100	100	<b>100</b>

Source : INS

Figure 17: Distribution of the unemployed population by length of unemployment and gender (Source: ITCEQ)<sup>59</sup>

Employed women, at least in the formal sector, tend to be concentrated in the public sector where they represent around 36% of all public employees, whereas they represent 26% of the general employed population. (Figure 18)

This is not exceptional. Worldwide, women tend to work disproportionately in the public sector, as it is “one of their few sources of relatively good-quality jobs”. As such, “women have [globally] been hard-hit by cuts to public employment”.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>58</sup> Mouldi Ben Amor, Le chômage des jeunes : déterminants et caractéristiques, Institut Tunisien de la compétitivité et des études quantitatives, Notes et analyses de l’ITCEQ N°05-2012, 2012

<sup>59</sup> Mouldi Ben Amor, Le chômage des jeunes : déterminants et caractéristiques, Institut Tunisien de la compétitivité et des études quantitatives, Notes et analyses de l’ITCEQ N°05-2012, 2012

<sup>60</sup> OHCHR. “OHCHR | The Impact of Economic Reform Policies on Women’s Human Rights.” Accessed January 2, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-foreign-debt/impact-economic-reform-policies-womens-human-rights>. Page 2

Tableau 2- Évolution des effectifs des agents de la fonction publique et des ministères pilotes par sexe, 2010-2015

		2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Fonction publique tunisienne dans son ensemble	Femmes	171 888	177 262	194 868	206 458	215 445	219 020
	Hommes	263 599	267 643	338 201	351 979	375 728	385 143
	Total	435 487	444 905	533 069	558 437	591 173	604 163
	Pourcentage de femmes (%)	39.5	39.8	36.6	37.0	36.4	36.3

Figure 18: Evaluation of public sector employees by gender 2010-2015 (Source: OECD)<sup>61</sup>

In Tunisia, just like in other countries women tend to be overrepresented in the public sector. So, by cutting public sector jobs, the state is effectively cutting women's jobs.

	Quatrième trimestre 2018	Première trimestre 2019	Deuxième trimestre 2019	Troisième trimestre 2019	Quatrième trimestre 2019	Première trimestre 2020	Deuxième trimestre 2020	Troisième trimestre 2020
Evolution de la population active occupée	3507.6	3520.4	3527.9	3543.6	3566.4	3565.5	3404.5	3511.6
Masculin	2582.5	2590.7	2594.5	2603.2	2613.7	2615.2	2512.6	2581.9
Féminin	925.1	929.7	933.4	940.4	952.7	950.3	891.9	929.8
%								
FEMMES	0.2637416	0.2640893	0.2645767	0.2653798	0.2671321	0.2665264	0.2619768	0.2647796
S	16	93	67	98	21	64	68	96

Figure 19: Evolution of the employed active population 2018-2020 (Source: INS)<sup>62</sup>

There are, in fact, many factors that might explain the high unemployment of women and their concentration in the public sector.

One of them is the education of women, as they are more likely to pursue higher education. By being college graduates, women might be making themselves over-qualified for the domestic market that mostly offers jobs where a university degree is not required. This level of education also increases their reservation wages, making them less likely to apply for or accept jobs offering less than these reservation wages.

<sup>61</sup> OECD, LA PARTICIPATION DES FEMMES À LA PRISE DE DÉCISION DANS L'ADMINISTRATION PUBLIQUE EN TUNISIE, 2018, Page 20

<sup>62</sup> INS, population occupée, Accessed 30 January 2023, <http://www.ins.tn/statistiques/152>



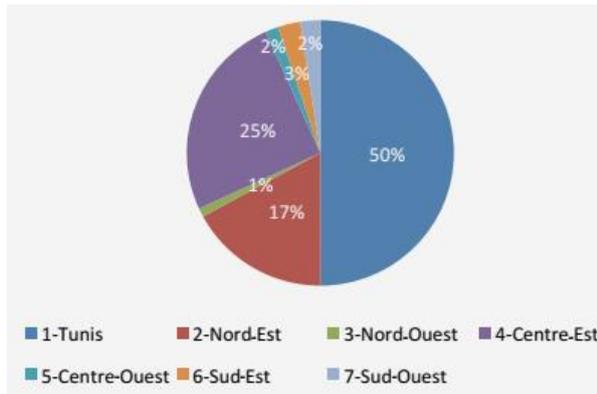


Figure 20: Vacant posts by region 2014 (Source: ILO)<sup>63</sup>

Another reason might be a lack of mobility due to social and cultural norms. As jobs are concentrated in the capital and in coastal regions, women might not be able to move as easily as men to these regions in search of employment. (Figure 20)

Niveau d'éducation	Secteur d'activité					
	Commerce, réparation d'automobiles et de motocycles	Construction	Industries	Production et distribution d'électricité, de gaz, de vapeur et d'air	Services	Ensemble
École élémentaire	6.7	14.5	9.0	21.1	5.0	8.0
Collège	18.1	10.3	16.8	25.4	7.6	14.2
Secondaire	46.6	22.5	18.3	23.3	30.0	27.8
Formation professionnelle	20.0	44.3	52.9	28.3	19.1	36.1
Université	8.6	8.3	3.0	1.9	38.3	13.9
Doctorat	0.0	4.2	7.1	2.9	1.3	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Figure 21: Education, recruitment, and sector of activity for production workers and other elementary jobs, % 2014 (Source: ILO)<sup>64</sup>

However, a bigger factor for female unemployment and the overrepresentation of women in the public sector might be how they are discriminated against in the labor market, particularly in the private sector. As Figure 22 shows, the main private sectors of employment in Tunisia are industry with 38.8% of vacant jobs, services with 31%, construction with 18.6%, and the commerce and vehicle repair with 11.2% of vacancies.

<sup>63</sup> International Labor Organization, Transition vers le marché du travail des jeunes femmes et hommes en Tunisie : résultats de l'enquête auprès des entreprises, 2015

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Activité de l'entreprise	Nombre d'entreprises	Postes	
		Nombre	%
Commerce; réparation d'automobiles et de motocycles	550	3 325	11,2
Construction	463	5 545	18,6
Industries	2 273	11 543	38,8
Production et distribution d'électricité, de gaz, de vapeur et d'air	21	97	0,3
Services	1 679	9 231	31,0
<b>Total</b>	<b>4 986</b>	<b>29 741</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Figure 22: Vacant posts by sector or activity 2014 (Source: ILO)<sup>65</sup>

In these sectors, employers seem to have a distinct preference for male candidates. For instance, when it comes to office jobs and management positions, a third of employers in the commerce and vehicle repair sector preferred candidates to be male. In industries, a quarter has a male preference. This preference increases to over 43% in construction. (Figure 23)

Secteur d'activité	Féminin	Masculin	Indifférent	Total
<b>Les dirigeants / professionnels</b>				
Commerce; réparation d'automobiles et de motocycles	6,3	33,8	59,9	100,0
Construction	2,5	43,2	54,2	100,0
Industries	15,0	24,7	60,3	100,0
Production et distribution d'électricité, de gaz, de vapeur ...	3,2	28,0	68,8	100,0
Services	6,8	21,7	71,5	100,0
<b>Ensemble</b>	<b>9,7</b>	<b>27,5</b>	<b>62,7</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Figure 23: Gender as a factor in recruitment of managers by activity sector 2014 (Source: ILO)<sup>66</sup>

This preference for male candidates is even more pronounced in lower-level jobs (which are most of the jobs available). When it comes to blue collar jobs, there seems to be a 45.2% preference overall for male candidates. This percentage increases to over 47% in industries, over 55% in commerce and vehicle repairs, and over 70% in construction. (Figure 24)

<sup>65</sup> International Labor Organization, Transition vers le marché du travail des jeunes femmes et hommes en Tunisie : résultats de l'enquête auprès des entreprises, 2015

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

Secteur d'activité	Féminin	Masculin	Indifférent	Total
<b>Travailleurs de production / professions élémentaires</b>				
Commerce; réparation d'automobiles et de motos	8,3	55,8	35,9	100,0
Construction	1,1	71,1	27,8	100,0
Industries	23,1	47,2	29,8	100,0
Production et distribution d'électricité, de gaz, de vapeur ...	9,6	45,6	44,8	100,0
Services	15,6	23,6	60,8	100,0
<b>Ensemble</b>	<b>16,0</b>	<b>45,2</b>	<b>38,8</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Figure 24: Gender as a factor in recruitment of managers by activity sector 2014 (Source: ILO) <sup>67</sup>

Employer preferences are an expression of societal and cultural norms that value the employment of men significantly more than they do the employment of women. When asked by the World Value Survey, if men should have more of a right to a job than women when jobs are scarce, over 60% of Tunisians agreed. (Figure 25)

	Number of cases	%/Total
Agree strongly	496	41.1%
Agree	285	23.6%
Neither agree nor disagree	233	19.3%
Disagree	146	12.1%
Disagree strongly	48	4.0%
<b>(N)</b>	<b>(1,208)</b>	<b>100%</b>

Selected sample: Tunisia 2019 (1208)

Figure 25: Answer to question 33: Jobs Scarce: Men should have more right to a job than women 2019 (Source: World Values Survey)<sup>68</sup>

As such, the public sector is one of the very limited spaces in which women can apply and work in Tunisia with relatively lower discrimination. As such, when cuts are made to the public sector, it will mostly affect women who have significantly lower chances of employment in the private sector.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. World Values Survey: Round Six - Country-Pooled Datafile Version: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWV6.jsp>. Madrid: JD Systems Institute.

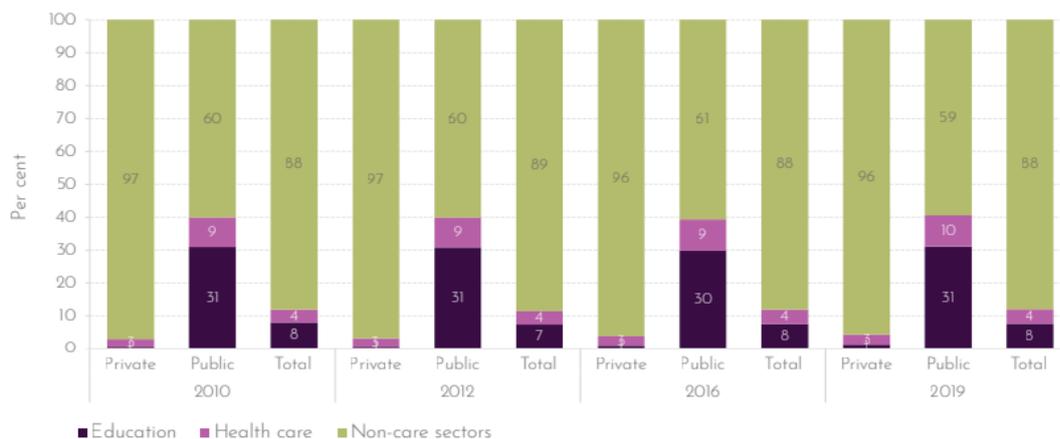


Figure 26: The distribution of care and non-care sectors in total employment, by institutional sector, 2010-2019 (Source: UN Women)<sup>69</sup>

In the public sector, women are particularly overrepresented in care services. These services such as healthcare and education are mostly concentrated in the public sector. 41% of employment in the public sector is in care sectors versus 4 percent in the private sector. Women make up a high percentage of employees in these sectors, as they constitute 61% of healthcare workers and 56% of education workers.<sup>70</sup>

The overrepresentation of women in the public sector, particularly in providing public services, is not limited to Tunisia. Paid care work globally is gendered. For example, 90 percent of nurses are women.<sup>71</sup> They also constitute over two thirds of primary school teachers<sup>72</sup>. However, research by ActionAid, Public Services International and Education International “found that IMF austerity cuts in just 15 countries between 2016 and 2021 have blocked the recruitment of over 3 million nurses, teachers and other essential public sector workers.”<sup>73</sup>

Consequently, austerity measures have resulted in increased gender inequality at work. If women want to work, they would have to settle for much fewer earnings than men in order to be

<sup>69</sup> UN Women, THE CARE ECONOMY IN TUNISIA: TOWARDS RECOGNIZING, REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID CARE WORK, December 2020,

[https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English\\_PolicyBrief\\_Tunisia.pdf](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English_PolicyBrief_Tunisia.pdf), Page 5

<sup>70</sup> UN Women, THE CARE ECONOMY IN TUNISIA: TOWARDS RECOGNIZING, REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID CARE WORK, December 2020,

[https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English\\_PolicyBrief\\_Tunisia.pdf](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English_PolicyBrief_Tunisia.pdf), Page 5

<sup>71</sup> ActionAid International. “The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity,” October 10, 2022.

<https://actionaid.org/publications/2022/care-contradiction-imf-gender-and-austerity>. Page 19

<sup>72</sup> World Bank. “Primary Education, Teachers (% Female).” Data. Accessed January 28, 2023.

<https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.TCHR.FE.ZS>.

<sup>73</sup> ActionAid International. “The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity,” October 10, 2022.

<https://actionaid.org/publications/2022/care-contradiction-imf-gender-and-austerity>. Page 19



competitive in the private sector. This is because they compete against men whose employment is already preferred by employers and society as a whole.<sup>74</sup>

Yet, it is not just the lack of jobs in the public sector that affects women. Evidence from other countries in which austerity measures were imposed also showed that wage freezes and cuts “have reduced the incomes and mobility of women who were already among the lowest paid, more and more women are working in insecure jobs with long hours, low pay, and poor working conditions to support their family income”.<sup>75</sup>

Even when austerity measures are lifted when crises happen and social spending is used to stimulate the economy a rare occurrence in Tunisia with the exception of the period of the pandemic, it is usually industry and services dominated by men that receive fiscal stimuli. Meanwhile, sectors where women dominate face spending cuts and are left to flounder in an uncertain domestic and international market.

For instance, in agriculture, where women are overrepresented (and employed mostly in the unsustainable informal sector), the lifting of subsidies, the liberalization of prices, the lifting of trade protections, and currency devaluation have left the sector in crisis and have created job losses and lower wages globally.<sup>76</sup>

### The Loss of Access to Services

Because they lack their proper resources due to economic disempowerment, and because they are often the main caregivers of other vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, women are more likely to be the recipients of social programs and public services. For instance, women are more likely to have contact with public education establishments and public health institutions.<sup>77</sup>

Women are also more likely to be poor, and thus more likely to need such services.

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<sup>74</sup> Anastasiou at al. “Economic Recession, Austerity and Gender Inequality at Work. Evidence from Greece and Other Balkan Countries | Elsevier Enhanced Reader.” Accessed January 1, 2023. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)00610-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00610-3). Page 41

<sup>75</sup> Anastasiou at al. “Economic Recession, Austerity and Gender Inequality at Work. Evidence from Greece and Other Balkan Countries | Elsevier Enhanced Reader.” Accessed January 1, 2023. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671\(15\)00610-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2212-5671(15)00610-3). Page 42.

<sup>76</sup> United Nations General Assembly. “Report of the Independent Expert on the Effects of Foreign Debt.” Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights Impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women’s human rights, July 18, 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/229/04/PDF/N1822904.pdf?OpenElement>. Page 8

<sup>77</sup> “Enquête Nationale Sur La Perception Des Habitants Envers La Sécurité, Liberté et La Gouvernance Locale En Tunisie 2021 | INS.” Accessed October 6, 2022. <http://www.ins.tn/publication/enquete-nationale-sur-la-perception-des-habitants-envers-la-securite-liberte-et-la-0>.

Over 80% of households in Tunisia are headed by a male.<sup>78</sup> However, according to the *PNAFN (Programme national des Familles Nécessiteuses)*, families headed by a woman constitute 60% of the households enrolled to the program.<sup>79</sup>

Women and women-headed households are clearly more likely to be poor and in need of state-provided resources. Particularly, vulnerable women include unemployed women, rural women, and women working in the informal sector.

By cutting funding to the public sector, the government is essentially cutting funding for vital services that empower women in need.

As mentioned before, even when public spending is approved, it is often invested in infrastructure aimed at private sector use. “Many a time, public services and goods that mostly have an impact on women and girls (such as maternal care) are the least profitable and as a result, priority is put on mega infrastructure projects like tolled mega highways.”<sup>80</sup>

Another gendered aspect of the loss of public healthcare resources due to austerity is a shortage in contraceptives and the decrease in their use, due to the inability of the Central Pharmacy of Tunisia to provide them. The Dinar has been steadily losing value for over a decade now, partly because of the ongoing economic crisis, and partly because of the devaluation of the currency. Hence, imports of medicine such as contraceptives have seen a sharp decline.<sup>81</sup>

		1988	1989	1994	2001	2006	2012	2018
Rates of prevalence of contraceptives	%	49.8	49.8	59.7	63.0	60.2	62.5	50.7

Figure 27: Prevalence of the use of contraceptives 1988-2018 (Source: INS)<sup>82</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Sofiane Ghali, University of Tunis; Micheline Goedhuys. “Women’s and Youth Empowerment in Rural Tunisia - An Assessment Using the Women’s Empowerment in Agriculture Index (WEAI).” Working paper, May 1, 2018. [http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS\\_627210/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/youth-employment/WCMS_627210/lang--en/index.htm).

<sup>79</sup> Ministère des Finances, UNICEF, Sep 2022, Rapport d'analyse budgétaire selon le genre (2010-2021), Page 17

<sup>80</sup> United Nations. “Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the Twenty-Third Special Session of the General Assembly, Entitled ‘Women 2000: Gender Equality, Development and Peace for the Twenty-First Century.’” In Report of the Commission on the Status of Women on the Fifty-Eighth Session (15 March 2013 and 10-21 March 2014), by United Nations, 53–85. Official Records (United Nations Economic and Social Council). UN, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.18356/6e4ab32d-en>

<sup>81</sup> Abdo, Nabil. “The Gendered Impact of IMF Policies in MENA: The Case of Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia.” Oxfam, October 8, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.21201/2019.5143>. Page 13-14

<sup>82</sup> Office National de la Famille et de la Population. “Portail De Données De La Tunisie, Analyse De Données.” Taux de prévalence contraceptive, Novembre 24, 2022. <http://dataportal.ins.tn/fr/DataAnalysis?8h3Nffjc5EDb8jBhc9Lzg>.

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Le nombre d'utilisations du Condom	71,295.0	58,576.0	58,275.0	59,951.0	58,977.0	67,014.0	71,638.0	61,533.0	52,714.0	65,250.0	52,526.0	58,410.0
Le nombre d'utilisations des Injectables	56,944.0	41,804.0	20,165.0	36,896.0	40,570.0	40,987.0	42,790.0	43,223.0	46,762.0	44,413.0	36,977.0	40,146.0
Le nombre d'utilisations du Cycle de Pilule	276,165.0	255,360.0	268,916.0	252,052.0	240,305.0	232,432.0	224,305.0	215,414.0	256,892.0	199,034.0	149,837.0	141,661.0
Le nombre d'utilisations des DIU	60,405.0	53,011.0	51,124.0	47,471.0	47,050.0	45,914.0	49,110.0	33,095.0	32,306.0	39,940.0	27,317.0	27,659.0
Le nombre d'utilisations des Spermicides	31,972.0	26,991.0	26,518.0	20,434.0	20,898.0	20,287.0	17,124.0	16,954.0	15,681.0	15,514.0	12,981.0	13,308.0
Le nombre d'implants utilisés	2,561.0	2,564.0	3,727.0	3,367.0	3,255.0	3,331.0	3,616.0	4,009.0	3,233.0	3,588.0	2,791.0	3,890.0
Le nombre d'opérations de ligature des trompes réalisées	833.0	551.0	193.0	141.0	54.0	68.0	133.0	222.0	94.0	83.0	64.0	73.0
Nombre total de bénéficiaires des services de planification familiale	501,097.0	439,549.0	429,665.0	421,997.0	412,084.0	410,953.0	410,005.0	375,653.0	408,764.0	368,580.0	283,226.0	286,327.0

Figure 28: The Use of contraceptives by method 2010-2021 (Source: INS)<sup>83</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Office National de la Famille et de la Population. "Portail De Données De La Tunisie, Analyse De Données." Actes de contraception utilisée, November 24, 2022. <http://dataportal.ins.tn/fr/DataAnalysis?Pu0QI4jkkGcr5fWgBURVw>.

## An Increase in Unpaid Domestic Work and Care Work

Alongside productive labor, that is often paid and remunerated, lies reproductive labor that remains largely unpaid. One important aspect of reproductive labor is care and domestic work. This includes tasks such as raising children, taking care of the elderly, cooking, and doing housework.<sup>84</sup> It also includes certain types of paid work such as paid labor in healthcare, education, paid domestic work, and to some extent social work.

Care work is essential to ensuring the productivity of a functional economy. Men, generally would not be able to allocate their customary share of free time to leisure if it were not for their female partner and their engagement in housekeeping.

Women often take on most of this unpaid work. In fact, women constitute over three fourths of the 2 billion full-time unpaid workers.<sup>85</sup> They also take on 75% of unpaid work.<sup>86</sup>

Tunisia is no exception. Men, for instance, only spend 3 hours a week carrying out care work, while women spend an average of 17 hours focusing on this occupation. The time burden of unpaid care work more than doubles when a woman gets married, from 10 hours a week to 23 hours, as new responsibilities such as child rearing and elderly care are often added. For men, it only increases from 2 to 5 hours. (Figure 29)

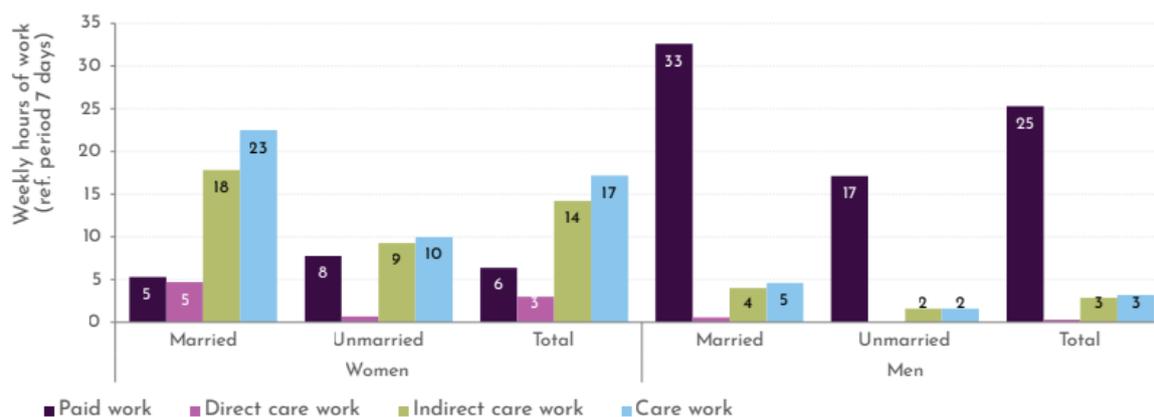
Women also have fewer hours of paid work (6 hours, vs 25 hours for men). While hours of paid work increase for men after marriage, doubling from 17 hours to 33 hours, the hours of paid work decrease for women from 8 to 5 hours. This means that women are taking on more work but are being paid less. (Figure 29)

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<sup>84</sup> The United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, *The Political and Social Economy of Care in a Development Context Conceptual Issues, Research Questions and Policy Options* Shahra Razavi, Gender and Development Programme Paper Number 3 June 2007.

<sup>85</sup> ActionAid International. "The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity," October 10, 2022. <https://actionaid.org/publications/2022/care-contradiction-imf-gender-and-austerity>. Page 14

<sup>86</sup> United Nations General Assembly. "Report of the Independent Expert on the Effects of Foreign Debt." Report of the Independent Expert on the effects of foreign debt and other related international financial obligations of States on the full enjoyment of all human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights Impact of economic reforms and austerity measures on women's human rights, July 18, 2018. <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N18/229/04/PDF/N1822904.pdf?OpenElement>. Page 6



Source: Authors' calculation based on the TLMPS 2014.

Figure 29: Weekly hours of paid work and unpaid care work by gender and marital status ages 15-64 (Source: UN Women)<sup>87</sup>

This burden of unpaid work and working women having to do a “second shift” at home, means that women are time-poor, meaning they have little time for rest and leisure. In particular, “time poverty means the lack of discretionary time available to engage in activities for social wellbeing after partaking in unpaid and paid work and necessary activities.”<sup>88</sup> As such women will have less time for paid employment, rest, and political participation, etc...

The lower rate of participation in paid employment and the formal economy severely affects the power of women and their ability to bargain for better conditions, both within the domestic unit and on the local and national political scene.<sup>89</sup> For instance, a woman with no financial resources will have a harder time leaving a violent domestic situation if her only income comes from her abuser. Additionally, women will not be able to make use of their labor and their power of collective bargaining to advocate for better working conditions or legislation that improves their situation.

The unpaid care work that women take on is made worse by austerity measures. In a way, women end up being shock absorbers and safety nets of last resort for their households.

For example, when healthcare is privatized and people are reluctant to seek medical help for illnesses, it is women who will stay at home to take care of the sick child or the sick elderly. In the cases of long-term illnesses and conditions, women will be the ones to leave their employment to

<sup>87</sup> UN Women, THE CARE ECONOMY IN TUNISIA: TOWARDS RECOGNIZING, REDUCING AND REDISTRIBUTING UNPAID CARE WORK, December 2020, [https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English\\_PolicyBrief\\_Tunisia.pdf](https://arabstates.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20Arab%20States/Attachments/Publications/2020/12/English_PolicyBrief_Tunisia.pdf), Page 2

<sup>88</sup> ActionAid International. “The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity,” October 10, 2022. <https://actionaid.org/publications/2022/care-contradiction-imf-gender-and-austerity>. Page 9

<sup>89</sup> OHCHR. “OHCHR | The Impact of Economic Reform Policies on Women’s Human Rights.” Accessed January 2, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-foreign-debt/impact-economic-reform-policies-womens-human-rights>. Page 1

care for the ill person. The same is true in the case of the privatization of education. If the cost of pre-school or pre-kindergarten exceeds her monthly salary, it will be the mother who leaves her employment to take on the unpaid work of educating her child.

The pandemic has proven that when state-provided care services is no longer available, it is women who bear the burden of this care work, as this work becomes unpaid and is shifted onto them. In countries such as India, Kenya, and South Africa, it was found that 71% of women saw their household workload increase.<sup>90</sup>

Some of the unpaid care work is now being privatized to private domestic workers such as nannies and cleaning workers. However, these domestic and global care networks only further entrench the exploitation of women as they offer very low wages for very fragile work.<sup>91</sup>

Despite its impact on the economic and social rights of women, and its contribution to propping up the productive economy, care work is often neglected by states and international financial institutions. Public policy impacts on the unpaid work of women are rarely, if ever, taken into consideration when it comes to political decision-making. As a result, the shift of burden from states to women remains invisible.

Major economic indicators such as state accounts and GDP growth fail to reflect the changing role of unpaid work of women, and thus fail to take their contribution and the centrality of their work into account. As such, women continue to be used as shock absorbers for economic crises and austerity policies.

It is also important to note that being deprived from their own income, and employment opportunities put women at higher risk of financial abuse from others, such as family members or their partner.

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<sup>90</sup> ActionAid International. "The Care Contradiction: The IMF, Gender and Austerity," October 10, 2022. <https://actionaid.org/publications/2022/care-contradiction-imf-gender-and-austerity>. Page 7

<sup>91</sup> Yeates, Nicola. "Global care chains: a state-of-the-art review and future directions in care transnationalization research." *Global Networks* 12, no. 2 (2012): 135-154.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Investing in Public Spending

In order to create jobs and support women, the state needs to invest further resources in the underfunded and under-staffed public sector, particularly in care work sectors such as healthcare and education. This includes care services for the elderly as well as preschool and pre-kindergarten provisions for children. Social protection programs need to be updated through a life-cycle approach that is universal, inclusive, and adequate. This would include programs such as unemployment insurance, universal child benefits, etc.

These reforms must also be gender-responsive and prioritize human rights. In order to achieve that, care work needs to be distributed not just within the family unit, but also between individuals and the state. “High-quality public services will free up women’s time for paid work as well as political and social activity, while also ensuring that quality care services are universally available (and will also create more paid employment).”<sup>92</sup>

In terms of unpaid care work in particular, the following recommendations by the UN Human Rights Office<sup>93</sup> might be applied to both the government of Tunisia, as well as the IFIs partnering up with it:

- Recognizing unpaid care and domestic work as valuable work, including it in national accounts, and funding gender disaggregated time-use surveys that monitor time spent on this work. The latter would help monitor and measure the actual impact of public policies on the time and labor share of women.
- Making macroeconomic decisions based on an understanding of the importance of care provision in sustaining societies, including cost-benefit analysis of economic policies and their impact on unpaid care work.
- Reducing the time, it takes people to provide quality care and domestic work by investing in labor-saving equipment and infrastructure including water, sanitation and hygiene, electricity and public transportation.
- Gender-responsive budgeting, involving women-led civil society organizations, should be used to ensure sufficient resources are allocated to implement laws, policies and programs promoting gender equality.

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<sup>92</sup> OHCHR. “OHCHR | The Impact of Economic Reform Policies on Women’s Human Rights.” Accessed January 2, 2023. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/special-procedures/ie-foreign-debt/impact-economic-reform-policies-womens-human-rights>. Page 4

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## Adopting More Progressive Taxation

In order to fund these services in the public sector, a fair and equitable taxation policy based on the contributory faculties of persons, firms, and institutions is necessary. Examples of policies include:

- Adopting a wealth tax on assets.
- Adopting a higher corporate income tax.
- Adopting higher inheritance tax rates.
- Adopting a more progressive personal income tax with more brackets and a higher marginal tax rate.
- Investing more in the human and material resources of the tax administration to effectively fight tax fraud and tax evasion.
- Close gaps in the tax legislation by abolishing ineffective tax incentives.

However, in order to promote tax justice and equality, policy makers need to:

- Rely less on indirect taxes such as value added tax and other consumption taxes.
- Create a list of basic necessity products that are exempt from VAT, including pads and other sanitary products, basic medication, etc.



## Recommended Readings on Taxation and Inequalities

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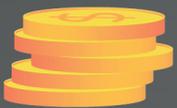
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