



Opinion Polls about Tunisian confidence trends



A preliminary reading
of the results of the opinion poll
Applied Social Science Forum

The Fourth wave

Sample size	2430
Geographic area of sample	24 gouvernorats
Time period	April 16-21, 2012
Survey team	21 researchers
Survey conducted by	Social Science Forum
Wave (survey) no	4
Margin of error	3% (reliability rate 95%)
Survey method	Door to door

Individual Confidence in the Future; Social Mistrust and Political Distrust

The Social Science Forum is publishing the results for the fourth wave in the survey for indicators of the public's confidence in the government. The sample of 2430 persons is a cross section of all regions and all groups within the country. This poll, which took place one year after the first poll (1st wave) was conducted in April 2011, has attempted to examine the connections between the people and the different authorities while the country is in the midst of political and constitutional transition.

Do Tunisians have confidence in the Future?

In spite of the extent of the current crisis in Tunisia, 75% of Tunisians have confidence in the future. According to the results of the poll, the level of confidence is split, with 34% feeling very confident and 41% somewhat confident. In light of these results, we see a high rate of overall confidence in the future; however that is not the case for other negative indicators cited in the poll, particularly those related to the future for employment and the economic and political situation of the country.

With confidence ratings for the future of 24% and 19% respectively, poverty and unemployment are the two concerns that appear to be of the greatest concern for the citizens, with the employment market becoming more difficult and purchasing power showing a dramatic fall. The first results for the question of confidence in the employment market indicate a rate of 27% feeling strongly confident and 47% feeling somewhat confident, with a global confidence rating of 71%, which stands out.

On the other hand, the rate of mistrust or lack of confidence rose to 29%, which indicates that nearly one in four Tunisians feel pessimistic about the future

employment market improving in the near future.

Save the survey of political confidence made shortly after the start of the Essebsi government (April 2011) where the rate of confidence of Tunisians was at 76%, it should be noted that the rate of confidence in this latest survey remains the most noteworthy since the elections of October 23, 2011. However, this confidence in one's personal future is not the same for those of society and politics.

Indicators of Security and Social Stability

Reestablishing stability in the country is undoubtedly one of the key concerns for Tunisians, according to polling data. Tunisians indicated, at a rate of 81% (without contest the highest in the survey), that the security situation has improved, with the exception of the first poll conducted at the beginning of the Essebsi government in April 2011.

This increased confidence shows the change in Tunisians' frame of mind after the trouble and trauma that occurred during the Revolution. In comparison with August 2011 and January 2012, this feeling of confidence has improved slightly, moving towards a greater sense of psychosocial stability, due to the overall improvement in the security situation in the country.

Concerning the efficiency of the security apparatus, this most recent poll shows an increase in the confidence towards police services with a confidence rating of 70%: 28% indicating very confident while 42% indicating somewhat confident.

It is worth noting that the increased level of trust is greater than that of the poll from August 2012 (an increase of 10 points) and also greater than the results from January 2012 (an increase of 1%). It shows that the difference cited above would have been greater, notably in terms of strong confidence had certain events were to have been able to be avoided in Tunis and Ben Arous (Rades) in the April 2012 survey.

Likewise, the military benefited from a global confidence rating of nearly 94%, of which 66% cited strongly confident and 28% somewhat confident.

The Three Presidencies: In Spite of a Drop in the Polling, Mr. Ben Jâafar Tops the List

According to the results of the survey, the level of confidence in the President of the National Constituent Assembly (ANC), Mr. Ben Jâafar rose to 67%, with 24% indicating strongly confident and 44% somewhat confident as opposed to 33% with either little confidence or who declined to answer or give an opinion. It is notable that the rate of confidence in the Constituent Assembly as an authority has lessened in comparison with the rate of confidence registered in January 2012, which was at 81%.

Comparing the level of confidence of the two presidencies, the President of the Republic and the Head of the Government, with that of the President of the Constituent, shows an increase favorable to the President of the Constituent Assembly. Polling numbers indicate that Mr. Hamadi Jebali, Head of the Government, showed a global level of confidence of 65% with 28% feeling strongly confident and 37% indicating somewhat confident, and 35% of those polled were either not confident or their responses were incomplete or undecided.

Comparing the level of confidence of the Head of the Government in this fourth survey against numbers from the third, where Jebali received 73% immediately after the formation of this government, we see that his popularity has decreased. This decrease can be explained by errors committed during this first period: managing the dissemination of information, prices, the increasing cost of living and the lack of communication on the part of the Head of the Government. Such an assessment cannot reduce the confidence level that has yet remained high in spite of difficult conditions in which the government does their job.

For the President of the Republic, Mr. Mohamed Moncef Marzouki, the survey indicated a rate of confidence of 65%, with 27% feeling strongly confident and 38% somewhat confident, but with 35% not confident and 11% of those polled abstaining. These figures show a decrease in terms of rate of confidence cited in January 2012, which was at 86% with 56% feeling strongly confident.

Globally, the rate of confidence towards the three presidencies has maintained a positive level greater than 50%, even though there has been a decrease when compared to previous polls. Putting aside the factors that could explain this decrease, it is worth pointing out that the difficulties faced by the Troika as well as the crises that shook certain parties in power, notably the Congress for the Republic (CPR) and the FDTL, clearly contributed to the decrease in the level of confidence, even if the decrease is negligible.

Effectiveness and Performance of the Government and the Constituent Assembly

Of those polled, 66% believe that the current government is capable of resolving outstanding problems, with 31% believing the contrary. Of those feeling confident in the ability of the government to solve current problems, 23% are strongly confident while 43% are somewhat confident.

In a previous survey (that of January 2012), 78% of those surveyed felt confident in the ability of the government to solve current problems. In comparison with this most recent survey, in contrast there has been a 12 point decrease in confidence in spite of the positive opinions about the Troika.

Concerning the Constituent Assembly, 53% of those surveyed are confident about their performance. Nevertheless, the breakdown in terms of degree of confidence is somewhat inconsistent. While 38% feel somewhat confident about the Constituent Assembly, only 15% feel strongly confident, and 47% are

dissatisfied with their performance thus far. It is also worth noting an increase in the rate of abstention on this question (23%).

There are two key reasons that may be behind the high rate of abstention: the technical nature and intangible nature of certain topics of debate as well as citizens avoiding the evaluation of their effectiveness. In fact, the majority of those surveyed consider that the Constituent Assembly's effectiveness falls short of what was necessary, citing the quibbling and the verbal altercations that dominated certain sessions.

This assessment can also be verified for the opposition as well as the majority government. Results show as well that only 63% of those surveyed are satisfied with the role taken by the Constituents. For the opposition Constituents, the survey shows dissatisfaction with their performance: results indicating a low percentage feeling strongly confident of less than 10%, somewhat confident at 23% against 41% not confident in the performance of the opposition.

Consensus Concerning the First Article of the New Constitution

Concerning the debate on the length of the first article, on the questions related to Sharia and the Constitution, 60% of respondents stated that they had not followed the debate on the subject. Others affirmed that they were unaware of the issues surrounding the debate. However, 90% of those questioned preferred to keep the first article of the constitution in its original version, that of the Constitution of June 1, 1959, citing that it is a comprehensive text that responds to all of the Tunisian people. On the other hand, 10% felt this was the opportunity to delete this article from the Constitution.

On the question of if *Sharia* could be considered as one of the sources for Tunisian law or the sole source or even if it should be totally removed from subject of debate in the Constituent Assembly, the survey results

indicate that 51% prefer that Sharia be considered as one of the sources along with others for Tunisian law, while 21% are favorable to having Sharia as the exclusive source for Tunisian law.

On the other hand, 19% prefer that it not be considered as a source and 10% said they knew nothing about the debate. The results seem to indicate that public opinion is split on the subject. First, there are the Tunisians who don't quite have a handle on the debate surrounding the subject in question, emphasizing how vague the ideas of such as Sharia and substantive law are. Second, the majority of Tunisians are convinced that the debate surrounding the first article of the Constitution is not of real concern to the citizen overwhelmed by the challenges of everyday life.

Looking at the poll numbers broken down by category, those most favorable to the idea of Sharia as the sole source for Tunisian law, are, by age (15-35, 60%), male respondents (78%) with some education (80%) basic education without attending university, including those who are illiterate (20%).

Daily Life of the Citizens... a Growing Urgency

Identifying the primary concerns of the citizen is key for the public decision-makers, notably the development of the public sectors for administration and services.

It is in the evaluation of this sector that the citizens seem to be largely dissatisfied as compared to the first days of the revolution where they country was in a state of disarray.

The rate of confidence in the quality of public administrative benefits is at 44%, and within that, 35% are strongly confident, 9% somewhat confident and 57% not very confident. This is the highest rate of confidence recorded since 2011 in terms of public administrative benefits offered to citizens. Confidence in governors and the new regional officers is at 42%

versus 44% in January 2012

The survey results for this poll indicate the following: there is a feeling among the citizens that the reforms being enacted by the current government are not managing to promote a better relationship between the administration and the people. They also believe that the concerns such as the administrative schedule and the privatization of public media are secondary to other concerns they see as more sensitive and more pressing.

Information and the UGTT

In general, the information sector comprises one of the more sensitive questions for politicians as well as a large minority of public opinion. The level of confidence in the public media sector is at 61% versus 39% not confident. This level of confidence remains the same as in the previous survey from January 2012, which can possibly be explained by a great many factors, notably the current debate over the independence and neutrality of the public media. According to the survey, the rate of confidence for this sector has proven stable, which accounts for this significant evidence reflecting the calls for reform and restructuring this sector, so as to reestablish confidence in the media's performance. Currently 39% are still dissatisfied with their performance.

At the same time that the level of confidence accorded associations has risen to 69%, that of the Union générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT) was at 56% versus 45% who stated their dissatisfaction with their performance. The image forged by the labor organization following measured statements by their leaders as well as reasonably handling of sit-ins was not enough to restore public confidence in this labor organization. Compared to previous polls, it is likely to maintain that those stating they were very confident in the UGTT only increased slightly by 4 points to 22% versus 18% in January 2012.

The Party of Non-voters, the Undecideds and

Political Apathy

For the first time, the rate of those not voting in the next elections risks surpassing the rate of those voters loyal to a political party. The number of persons who stated that they did not intend to vote in the January 2012 survey was 5%, while it rose to 12% in the current survey.

If we add the number of non-voters to those who are undecided (33%), the rate of potential non-participation becomes 45%, which is nearly half of the voters who had expressed their voice in the elections of October 23, 2011. This is a very high rate which will have a decisive role on the next election day and which suggests a level of political apathy that is becoming more and more visible.

In virtue of these results, there are three conclusions that can be drawn:

- In the event that those who now wish to abstain do in fact abstain in the next elections, the presence of those voters loyal to their parties will undeniably be the most crucial factor in those elections. This is the case for populist parties who benefit from member discipline, who are well-structured and mobilize to reach their popular base. The Ennahdha Party is an example of this type of party. In fact, Ennahdha seems to be the most disciplined and well-structured in terms of its voter intentions and adherents, with 29% of the voter population versus 4.3% for the CPR and 4.1% for Al Aridha Populaire. Nevertheless, this party discipline carries some nuances. A minimal percentage of voters loyal to Ennahdha expressed their intention to vote for parties that are not in fact legal parties, such as Ettahrir (1.6%) or Al-Amana (0.7%).

- Unquestionably, the shifts in political behavior and partisan instability could be a trump card for certain parties and a source of weakness and failure for others. This is what happened with the CPR where a large number of voters expressed their intentions to no

longer vote for the party in the next elections because of the internal conflicts that shook the CPR in recent weeks

That is why the founder of this party, Mr. Marzouki, has seen a decrease in poll numbers in comparison with those of January 2012, jeopardizing his chances in the upcoming presidential elections in the event that the Constituent Assembly opts for a presidential form of government in which the President of the Republic is elected by universal suffrage. The Ennahdha Party will be the overall winner in the event of a decline in the number of voters opting for the CPR (collecting 6% of the vote), with the Tunisian Workers Communist Party (POCT) recuperating 3% of potential votes from the CPR. Even worse (or better depending on who is talking) and contrary to January 2012 where Mr. Marzouki saw a peak in his popularity, the major challenge for the pro-CPR will be henceforth, how to

connect with potential non-voters (12%) and those who are undecided (38%).

- Voter intentions can also concern parties which don't yet exist on the political scene but which the creation of parties is tied to renowned political personalities. This is the case with Beji Caied Essebsi's initiative which seems realistic in view of the intentions of unhappy voters, notably those from the Ettakatol party (8.3%). In addition, certain developments that have arisen in the country the last three months have created a resurgence in the Al-Aridha Populaire movement as well as its offshoots (PBT, PPG, etc.). These new coalitions, such as Al Massar and the Republican Party are certainly becoming more and more well known among a large party of opinion, primarily in greater Tunis, but seem to be marked by internal problems and difficulties.