

Introduction Tunisia

Background:  

Rivalry between French and Italian interests in Tunisia culminated in a French invasion in 1881 and the creation of a protectorate. Agitation for independence in the decades following World War I was finally successful in getting the French to recognize Tunisia as an independent state in 1956. The country's first president, Habib BOURGUIBA, established a strict one-party state. He dominated the country for 31 years, repressing Islamic fundamentalism and establishing rights for women unmatched by any other Arab nation. In November 1987, BOURGUIBA was removed from office and replaced by Zine el Abidine BEN ALI in a bloodless coup. BEN ALI is currently serving his fourth consecutive five-year term as president; the next elections are scheduled for October 2009. Tunisia has long taken a moderate, non-aligned stance in its foreign relations. Domestically, it has sought to defuse rising pressure for a more open political society.

Geography Tunisia

[Top of Page](#)

Location:  

Northern Africa, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, between Algeria and Libya

Geographic coordinates:  

34 00 N, 9 00 E

Map references:  

[Africa](#)

Area:   

total: 163,610 sq km

land: 155,360 sq km

water: 8,250 sq km

Area - comparative:  

slightly larger than Georgia

Land boundaries:  

total: 1,424 km

border countries: Algeria 965 km, Libya 459 km

Coastline:  

1,148 km

Maritime claims:  

territorial sea: 12 nm

contiguous zone: 24 nm

exclusive economic zone: 12 nm

Climate:  
temperate in north with mild, rainy winters and hot, dry summers; desert in south

Terrain:  
mountains in north; hot, dry central plain; semiarid south merges into the Sahara

Elevation extremes:  
lowest point: Shatt al Gharsah -17 m
highest point: Jebel ech Chambi 1,544 m

Natural resources:  
petroleum, phosphates, iron ore, lead, zinc, salt

Land use:  
arable land: 17.05%
permanent crops: 13.08%
other: 69.87% (2005)

Irrigated land:  
3,940 sq km (2003)

Total renewable water resources:  
4.6 cu km (2003)

Freshwater withdrawal (domestic/industrial/agricultural):  
total: 2.64 cu km/yr (14%/4%/82%)
per capita: 261 cu m/yr (2000)

Natural hazards:  
NA

Environment - current issues:  
toxic and hazardous waste disposal is ineffective and poses health risks; water pollution from raw sewage; limited natural fresh water resources; deforestation; overgrazing; soil erosion; desertification

Environment - international agreements:  
party to: Biodiversity, Climate Change, Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol, Desertification, Endangered Species, Environmental Modification, Hazardous Wastes, Law of the Sea, Marine Dumping, Ozone Layer Protection, Ship Pollution, Wetlands
signed, but not ratified: Marine Life Conservation

Geography - note:  

strategic location in central Mediterranean; Malta and Tunisia are discussing the commercial exploitation of the continental shelf between their countries, particularly for oil exploration

People Tunisia

Population:   
10,383,577 (July 2008 est.)

Age structure:  
0-14 years: 23.2% (male 1,246,105/female 1,167,379)
15-64 years: 69.7% (male 3,638,062/female 3,595,254)
65 years and over: 7.1% (male 345,590/female 391,187) (2008 est.)

Median age:  
total: 28.8 years
male: 28.2 years
female: 29.3 years (2008 est.)

Population growth  
rate: 0.989% (2008 est.)

Birth rate:   
15.5 births/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Death rate:   
5.17 deaths/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Net migration rate:  
-0.44 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2008 est.)

Sex ratio:  
at birth: 1.07 male(s)/female
under 15 years: 1.07 male(s)/female
15-64 years: 1.01 male(s)/female
65 years and over: 0.88 male(s)/female
total population: 1.01 male(s)/female (2008 est.)

Infant mortality   
rate: *total*: 23.43 deaths/1,000 live births
male: 25.7 deaths/1,000 live births
female: 20.98 deaths/1,000 live births (2008 est.)

Life expectancy at   
birth: *total population: 75.56 years*
male: 73.79 years
female: 77.46 years (2008 est.)

Total fertility rate:   
1.73 children born/woman (2008 est.)

HIV/AIDS - adult   
prevalence rate: less than 0.1% (2005 est.)

HIV/AIDS -   
people living with 1,000 (2003 est.)
HIV/AIDS:

HIV/AIDS -   
deaths: less than 200 (2003 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Tunisian(s)
adjective: Tunisian

Ethnic groups:  
Arab 98%, European 1%, Jewish and other 1%

Religions:  
Muslim 98%, Christian 1%, Jewish and other 1%

Languages:  
Arabic (official and one of the languages of commerce), French (commerce)

Literacy:  
definition: age 15 and over can read and write
total population: 74.3%
male: 83.4%
female: 65.3% (2004 census)

Government Tunisia

Country name:  
conventional long form: Tunisian Republic
conventional short form: Tunisia
local long form: Al Jumhuriyah at Tunisiyah
local short form: Tunis

Government type:  
republic

Capital:  

name: Tunis

geographic coordinates: 36 48 N, 10 11 E

time difference: UTC+1 (6 hours ahead of Washington, DC during Standard Time)

daylight saving time: +1hr, begins last Sunday in March; ends last Sunday in October

Administrative  

divisions: 24 governorates; Ariana (Aryanah), Beja (Bajah), Ben Arous (Bin 'Arus), Bizerte (Banzart), Gabes (Qabis), Gafsa (Qafsah), Jendouba (Jundubah), Kairouan (Al Qayrawan), Kasserine (Al Qasrayn), Kebili (Qibili), Kef (Al Kaf), Mahdia (Al Mahdiyah), Manouba (Manubah), Medenine (Madanin), Monastir (Al Munastir), Nabeul (Nabul), Sfax (Safaqis), Sidi Bou Zid (Sidi Bu Zayd), Siliana (Silyanah), Sousse (Susah), Tataouine (Tatawin), Tozeur (Tawzar), Tunis, Zaghouan (Zaghwan)

Independence:  

20 March 1956 (from France)

National holiday:  

Independence Day, 20 March (1956); also the anniversary of BEN ALI's assumption of the presidency, 7 November (1987)

Constitution:  

1 June 1959; amended 1988, 2002

Legal system:  

based on French civil law system and Islamic law; some judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court in joint session; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction

Suffrage:  

18 years of age; universal except for active government security forces (including the police and the military), people with mental disabilities, people who have served more than three months in prison (criminal cases only), and people given a suspended sentence of more than six months

Executive branch:  

chief of state: President Zine el Abidine BEN ALI (since 7 November 1987)

head of government: Prime Minister Mohamed GHANNOUCHI (since 17 November 1999)

cabinet: Council of Ministers appointed by the president

elections: president elected by popular vote for a five-year term (no term limits); election last held on 24 October 2004 (next to be held in October 2009); prime minister appointed by the president

election results: President Zine El Abidine BEN ALI reelected for a fourth term; percent of vote - Zine El Abidine BEN ALI 94.5%, Mohamed BOUCHIHA 3.8%, Mohamed Ali HALOUANI 1%

Legislative branch:  

bicameral system consists of the Chamber of Deputies or Majlis al-Nuwaab (189 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms) and the Chamber of Advisors (126 seats; 85 members elected by municipal counselors, deputies, mayors, and professional associations and trade unions; 41 members are presidential appointees; members serve six-year terms)

elections: Chamber of Deputies - last held on 24 October 2004 (next to be held in October 2009); Chamber of Advisors - last held on 3 July 2005 (next to be held in July 2011)

election results: Chamber of Deputies - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - RCD 152, MDS 14, PUP 11, UDU 7, Al-Tajdid 3, PSL 2; Chamber of Advisors - percent of vote by party - NA; seats by party - RCD 71 (14 trade union seats vacant (boycotted))

Judicial branch:  

Court of Cassation or Cour de Cassation

Political parties  

and leaders: Al-Tajdid Movement [Ahmed IBRAHIM]; Constitutional Democratic Rally Party (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Democratique) or RCD (official ruling party) [President Zine El Abidine BEN ALI]; Democratic Forum for Labor and Liberties or FDTL [Mustapha Ben JAJFAAR]; Green Party for Progress or PVP [Mongi KHAMASSI]; Liberal Social Party or PSL [Mondher THABET]; Movement of Socialist Democrats or MDS [Ismail BOULAHYA]; Popular Unity Party or PUP [Mohamed BOUCHIHA]; Progressive Democratic Party [Maya JERIBI]; Unionist Democratic Union or UDU [Ahmed INOUBLI]

Political pressure  

groups and leaders: 18 October Group [collective leadership]; Tunisian League for Human Rights or LTDH [Mokhtar TRIFI]; note - the Islamist Party, Al Nahda (Renaissance), is outlawed

International  

organization participation: ABEDA, ACCT, AfDB, AFESD, AMF, AMU, AU, BSEC (observer), FAO, G-77, IAEA, IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, IMSO, Interpol, IOC, IOM, IPU, ISO, ITSO, ITU, ITUC, LAS, MIGA, MONUC, NAM, OAPEC (suspended), OAS (observer), OIC, OIF, OPCW, OSCE (partner), UN, UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNHCR, UNIDO, UNMEE, UNWTO, UPU, WCO, WFTU, WHO, WIPO, WMO, WTO

Flag description:  

red with a white disk in the center bearing a red crescent nearly encircling a red five-pointed star; the crescent and star are traditional symbols of Islam

Economy -

overview: Tunisia has a diverse economy, with important agricultural, mining, tourism, and manufacturing sectors. Governmental control of economic affairs while still heavy has gradually lessened over the past decade with increasing privatization, simplification of the tax structure, and a prudent approach to debt. Progressive social policies also have helped raise living conditions in Tunisia relative to the region. Real growth, which averaged almost 5% over the past decade, reached 6.3% in 2007 because of development in non-textile manufacturing, a recovery in agricultural production, and strong growth in the services sector. However, Tunisia will need to reach even higher growth levels to create sufficient employment opportunities for an already large number of unemployed as well as the growing population of university graduates. Broader privatization, further liberalization of the investment code to increase foreign investment, improvements in government efficiency, and reduction of the trade deficit are among the challenges ahead.

GDP (purchasing   
power parity): \$77.16 billion (2007 est.)

GDP (official  
exchange rate): \$34.54 billion (2007 est.)

GDP - real growth   
rate: 6.3% (2007 est.)

GDP - per capita   
(PPP): \$7,500 (2007 est.)

GDP - composition  
by sector: *agriculture*: 11.5%
industry: 30%
services: 58.5% (2007 est.)

Labor force:   
3.591 million (2007 est.)

Labor force - by  
occupation: *agriculture*: 55%
industry: 23%
services: 22% (1995 est.)

Unemployment   
rate: 13.9% (2007 est.)

Population below  
poverty line: 7.4% (2005 est.)

Household income  
or consumption by *lowest 10%: 2.3%*
percentage share: *highest 10%: 31.5% (2000)*

Distribution of  
family income - 40 (2005 est.)
Gini index:

Inflation rate   
(consumer prices): 2.9% (2007 est.)

Investment (gross   
fixed): 23.6% of GDP (2007 est.)

Budget:  
revenues: \$8.355 billion
expenditures: \$9.476 billion (2007 est.)

Public debt:   
54.5% of GDP (2007 est.)

Agriculture -  
products: olives, olive oil, grain, tomatoes, citrus fruit, sugar beets, dates, almonds; beef,
dairy products

Industries:  
petroleum, mining (particularly phosphate and iron ore), tourism, textiles,
footwear, agribusiness, beverages

Industrial   
production growth 4.1% (2007 est.)
rate:

Electricity -   
production: 12.85 billion kWh (2005)

Electricity -   
consumption: 11.17 billion kWh (2005)

Electricity -  
exports: 0 kWh (2005)

Electricity -  
imports: 0 kWh (2005)

Oil - production:   

76,900 bbl/day (2005 est.)

Oil - consumption:   
90,000 bbl/day (2005 est.)

Oil - exports:   
75,060 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - imports:   
85,680 bbl/day (2004)

Oil - proved reserves:   
307.6 million bbl (1 January 2006 est.)

Natural gas - production:   
2.398 billion cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - consumption:   
4.124 billion cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - exports:   
0 cu m (2005 est.)

Natural gas - imports:   
1.726 billion cu m (2005)

Natural gas - proved reserves:   
74.68 billion cu m (1 January 2006 est.)

Current account balance:   
\$-935 million (2007 est.)

Exports:   
\$14.81 billion f.o.b. (2007 est.)

Exports - commodities:  
clothing, semi-finished goods and textiles, agricultural products, mechanical goods, phosphates and chemicals, hydrocarbons, electrical equipment

Exports - partners:  
France 28.9%, Italy 20.4%, Germany 8.6%, Spain 6.1%, Libya 4.9%, US 4% (2006)

Imports:   
\$17.9 billion f.o.b. (2007 est.)

Imports -  
commodities: textiles, machinery and equipment, hydrocarbons, chemicals, foodstuffs

Imports - partners:  
France 25%, Italy 21.9%, Germany 9.7%, Spain 4.9% (2006)

Economic aid -  
recipient: \$376.5 million (2005)

Reserves of foreign   
exchange and gold: \$7.183 billion (31 December 2007 est.)

Debt - external:   
\$18.56 billion (December 2007)

Stock of direct   
foreign investment \$21.22 billion (2006 est.)
- at home:

Stock of direct   
foreign investment \$57 million (2006 est.)
- abroad:

Market value of   
publicly traded \$4.446 billion (2006)
shares:

Currency (code):  
Tunisian dinar (TND)

Exchange rates:  
Tunisian dinars per US dollar - 1.2776 (2007), 1.331 (2006), 1.2974 (2005),
1.2455 (2004), 1.2885 (2003)

Fiscal year:  
calendar year

Communications Tunisia

Telephones - main   
lines in use: 1.268 million (2006)

Telephones -   
mobile cellular: 7.339 million (2006)

Telephone system:  

general assessment: above the African average and continuing to be upgraded; key centers are Sfax, Sousse, Bizerte, and Tunis; Internet access available
domestic: in an effort jumpstart expansion of the fixed-line network, the government has awarded a concession to build and operate a VSAT network with international connectivity; competition between the two mobile-cellular service providers has resulted in lower activation and usage charges and a strong surge in subscribership; overall fixed-line and mobile-cellular teledensity is about 85 telephones per 100 persons
international: country code - 216; a landing point for the SEA-ME-WE-4 submarine cable system that provides links to Europe, Middle East, and Asia; satellite earth stations - 1 Intelsat (Atlantic Ocean) and 1 Arabsat; coaxial cable and microwave radio relay to Algeria and Libya; participant in Medarabtel; 2 international gateway digital switches

Radio broadcast  
 stations: AM 7, FM 38, shortwave 2 (2007)

Television  
 broadcast stations: 26 (plus 76 repeaters) (1995)

Internet country  
 code: .tn

Internet hosts:   
 1,163 (2007)

Internet users:   
 1.295 million (2006)

Transportation Tunisia

Airports:   
 30 (2007)

Airports - with  
 paved runways: *total:* 14
over 3,047 m: 3
2,438 to 3,047 m: 6
1,524 to 2,437 m: 2
914 to 1,523 m: 3 (2007)

Airports - with  
 unpaved runways: *total:* 16
1,524 to 2,437 m: 2
914 to 1,523 m: 7
under 914 m: 7 (2007)

Pipelines:  
gas 2,665 km; oil 1,235 km; refined products 353 km (2007)

Railways:   
total: 2,153 km
standard gauge: 471 km 1.435-m gauge
narrow gauge: 1,674 km 1.000-m gauge (65 km electrified)
dual gauge: 8 km 1.435 m and 1.000-m gauges (three rails) (2006)

Roadways:   
total: 19,232 km
paved: 12,655 km (includes 262 km of expressways)
unpaved: 6,577 km (2004)

Merchant marine:   
total: 8 ships (1000 GRT or over) 130,475 GRT/91,013 DWT
by type: bulk carrier 1, cargo 1, chemical tanker 2, passenger/cargo 4
foreign-owned: 1 (Libya 1) (2007)

Ports and  
terminals: Bizerte, Gabes, La Goulette, Rades, Sfax, Skhira

Military Tunisia

Military branches:  
Army, Navy, Republic of Tunisia Air Force (Al-Quwwat al-Jawwiya al-Jamahiriyah At'tunisia) (2008)

Military service  
age and obligation: 20 years of age for compulsory military service; conscript service obligation - 12 months; 18 years of age for voluntary military service (2007)

Manpower  
available for *males age 20-49*: 2,441,741
military service: *females age 20-49*: 2,406,362 (2005 est.)

Manpower fit for  
military service: *males age 20-49*: 2,035,431
females age 20-49: 2,000,757 (2005 est.)

Manpower  
reaching military *males age 18-49*: 108,817
service age *females age 20-49*: 103,087 (2005 est.)
annually:

Military   

expenditures - 1.4% (2006)
percent of GDP: