

Support for Women in Politics in Tunisia

Excerpts from an IFES nationwide pre-election survey

A project by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) and The Fondation Hirondelle with funding from the Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)



Project Background

- The Public Information and Outreach Administration Assistance to the Tunisian Election Authorities program, funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative, IFES, in partnership with the Swiss media organization, Fondation Hirondelle, is a two year program supporting the Tunisian electoral authorities in preparation for the country's first free and fair multiparty elections for a National Constituent Assembly (NCA).

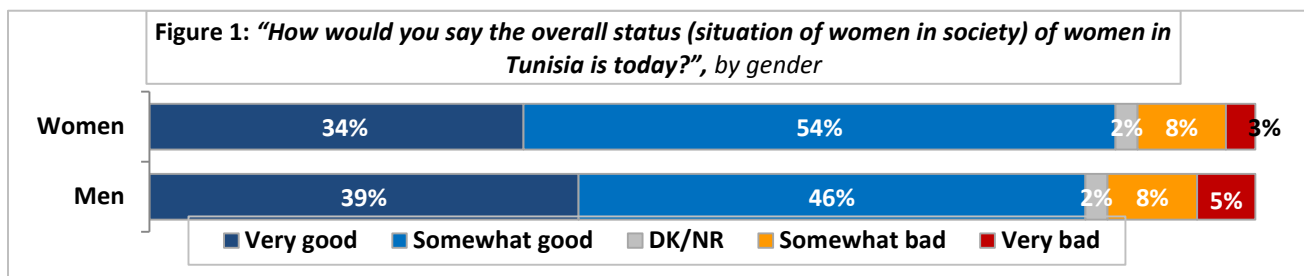
Tunisia SWMENA Survey Details and Methodology

- Fieldwork for the Tunisia survey was implemented between August 9 and August 29, 2011 by Sigma Conseil, a Tunis-based research organization.
- The survey is nationally representative of Tunisia's adult population: the sample size is 1,665; includes 838 men and 827 women.
- All respondents are aged 18 and above.
- The sample represents proportionally the various regions of Tunisia, the North, Central, and South. See map for regions covered in the survey.
- A total of 188 Primary Sampling Units were selected from the 24 governorates using the probability proportionate to size (PPS) selection method.
- The **margin of error** is $\pm 2.4\%$.

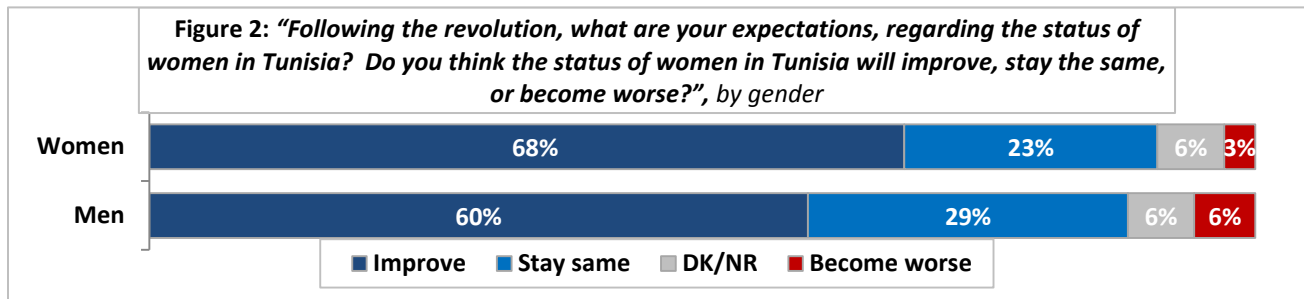


Status of Women in Tunisia

Survey findings indicate there is support among both men and women for women’s involvement in various political roles, although men display lower support. In addition, nearly two-thirds of Tunisians support the gender list parity requirement in the October National Constituent Assembly election. While the general concept of gender quotas is little known in Tunisia, there is support for their introduction in future parliamentary elections amongst those who are aware of them. As the Constitution is being drafted and as electoral reforms continue, women’s advocates may demand the inclusion of gender quotas in future parliamentary elections. Still, the data shows that awareness of this concept and the rationale for supporting gender quotas needs to be raised amongst Tunisians.

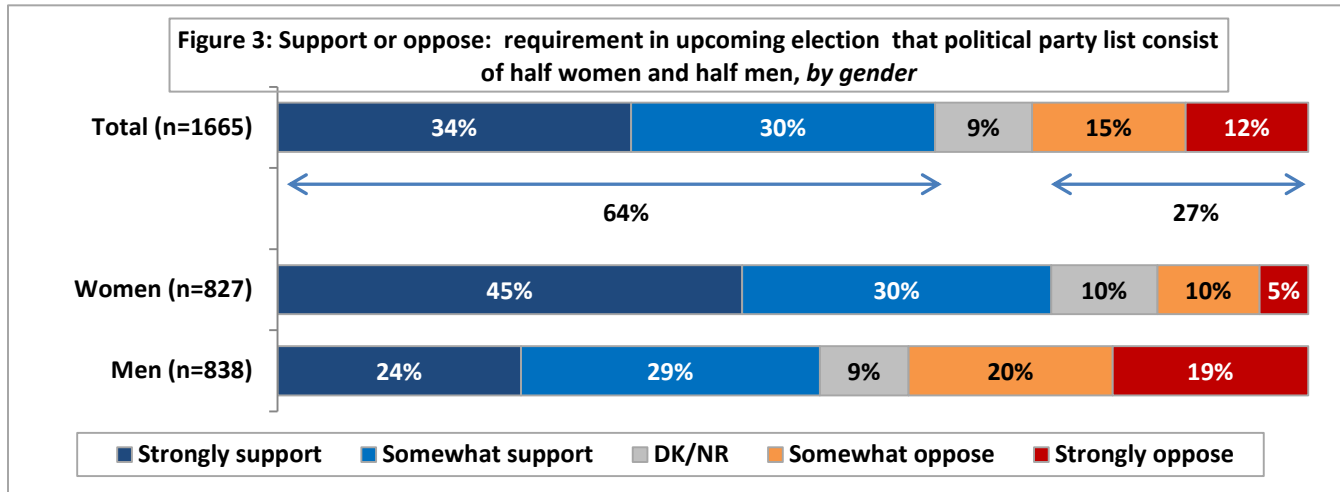


While a majority of Tunisians support women in political roles, but a sizeable portion opposes it. Women in Tunisia have long enjoyed equal access to education and other guarantees considered progressive for the region. In this time of transition in Tunisia, women have an opportunity to preserve their gains and push for even more advances, particularly in the political arena. In fact, asked generally about the overall status of women in Tunisia, a majority of Tunisians (86%) view women’s status as very good (36%) or somewhat good (50%). There is not a large difference in opinion between genders when assessing women’s status. Women are only slightly more likely to rate the status of women as good than men (Figure 1).



Tunisians are essentially optimistic about the impact of the revolution on the status of women in their country. Indeed, 64% of Tunisians believe after the revolution women’s status will improve, 26% feel it

will stay the same and only 4% believe it will get worse. Again, women are just slightly more likely than men to expect the status of women to improve following the revolution (Figure 2).



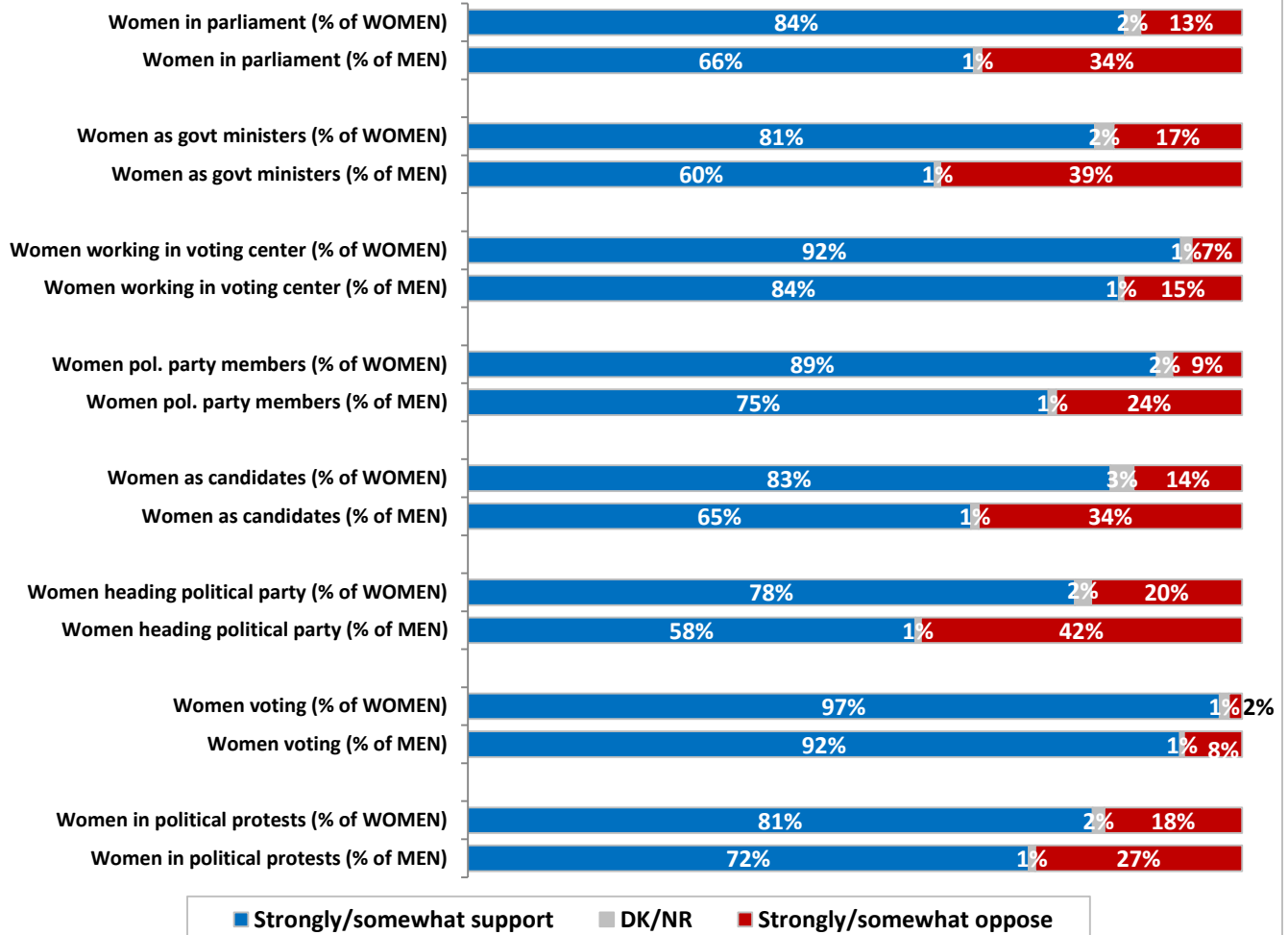
One of the decree-laws requires that in the upcoming election political party lists consist of half women and half men, alternating between the two genders, also known as list parity. Nearly two-thirds of Tunisians say they strongly (34%) or somewhat (30%) support this requirement, 27% oppose it and 9% say they do not know. Majorities of both men and women support the list parity; however, significantly more women support it than men (85% vs. 53%, respectively) and more women strongly support this requirement than men (45% vs. 24%) (Figure 3).

Support for Women in Politics

Majorities of Tunisians also say they support women in various political roles. Respondents say they strongly or somewhat support women voting (95%), working at a voting center (88%), being members of political parties (82%), heading a political party (68%), working for a candidate during a campaign (61%), running as candidates in elections (74%), serving in parliament (75%), serving as ministers (71%) or participating in political protests (77%). Nevertheless, between 5% and 29% of Tunisians oppose women in these roles.

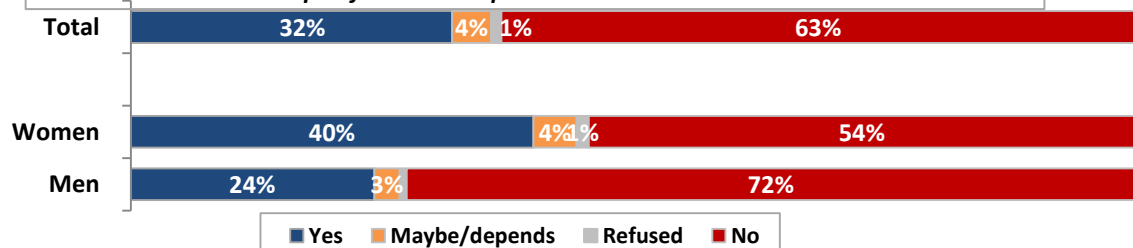
When looking at responses by gender, we see majorities of both men and women supporting women in the various political roles; however, higher percentages of women support women in each of these roles, and higher percentages of men oppose women in each these roles. Between 8% and 42% of Tunisian men oppose women in each of these roles.

Figure 4: Support/Oppose Women in Various Political Roles, by gender



There is less opposition amongst men for women voting and women working at a voting center, but over one-third of men oppose women in what can be considered more direct leadership roles: women as government ministers (39%), women in parliament (34%), women as candidates in an election (35%) or women heading a political party (42%). This is a notable gender gap, however, it must be noted that

Figure 5: "In principal, would you vote for a woman president for Tunisia if she was equally qualified as male presidential candidates?"



there is some opposition amongst women themselves as well (Figure 4).

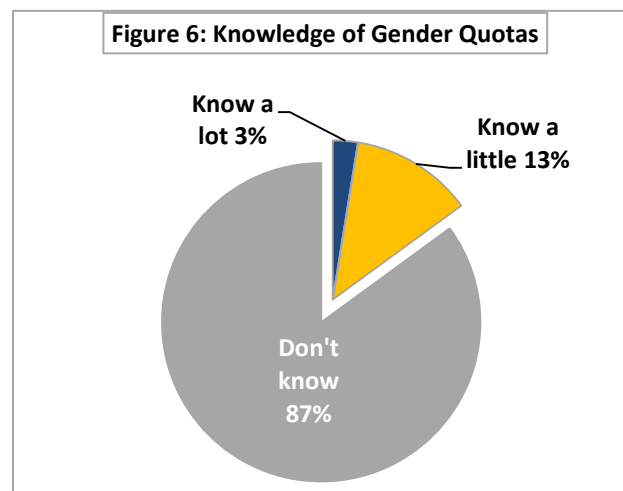
Despite majority support for women in various political roles, opinions differ when discussing a woman president. When asked about voting for a woman president if she was equally qualified as a man, 63% of Tunisians say they would not vote for a woman president. Most men and women would not vote for a woman president for Tunisia, but women are more likely to say they would (40%) than men (24%).

Opinions on Gender Quotas

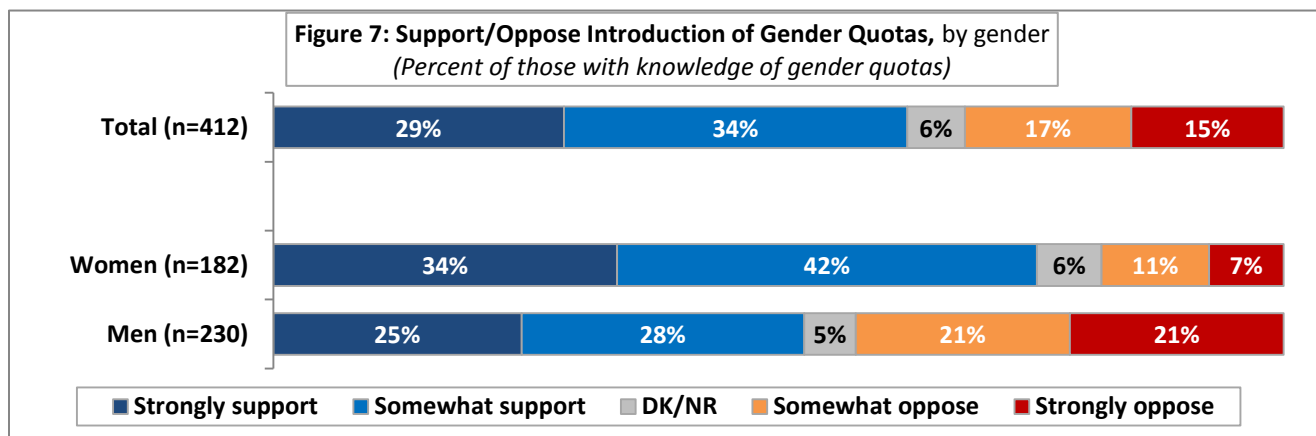
Knowledge Levels of Gender Quotas is Low but Majorities Aware of Quotas Support Them

When measuring knowledge levels on gender quotas, the data clearly illustrates the low level of awareness of such a notion amongst the population. Nearly nine in 10 Tunisians (87%) say they do not know about the notion of gender quotas. Only 13% of Tunisians say they know a lot (3%) or a little (10%) about gender quotas (Figure 6).

Awareness of gender quotas generally increases as education levels increase: only 3% of Tunisians with no education are aware of gender quotas, compared to 6% with a primary education, 3% with an intermediate education, 13% with a secondary education and 25% with a university education or higher.



The 13% of Tunisians who are aware of the notion of gender quotas were then asked to what extent they would support or oppose the adoption of gender quotas in future parliamentary elections. Sixty-



three percent of respondents say they would strongly (29%) or somewhat (34%) support the adoption of gender quotas in future parliamentary elections, yet one third say they somewhat oppose (17%) or strongly oppose their introduction (15%) and 6% do not know.

Similar to the gender gap discussed above regarding women in political roles, the data shows a large gender gap in the level of support for gender quotas: men are more than twice as likely to oppose their introduction than women (42% vs. 18%). Still, a majority of men (53%) and women (76%) would support their introduction (Figure 7).

The very small number of respondents who are aware of gender quotas and would oppose their introduction say they oppose them on the following grounds: they are against the principle of equal opportunity (41%); it means politicians get elected based on sex and not qualifications (11%); or women should not be elected just because they are women (9%). Meanwhile 21% say they oppose them because of more stereotypical reasons such as the belief that women are less qualified/educated than men, and 9% say because women's place is at home or they have no place in politics (9%).