

# Arab Barometer V

## Tunisia Country Report



2019

## Executive summary

In the years since the Jasmine revolution of 2011, Tunisians have grown increasingly frustrated by the political and economic conditions in their country. Views of economic conditions have fallen from already low levels. A key difference relates to hope - at the time of the revolution the vast majority expected better economic times ahead while today only a third think the future will be better than the current situation.

At the same time, perceptions of corruption in government have grown, with nearly all Tunisians believing this scourge infects state institutions. Yet, fewer now believe that the government is working to tackle corruption than at the time of the revolution.

Beyond the economy and corruption, a significant percentage of Tunisians remain even more concerned about their safety and security following a spate of terrorist attacks.

As the government has failed to tackle these basic issues, confidence in democratic institutions has fallen dramatically. Tunisians are far less likely to trust the government or parliament than at the time of the revolution. In part, this is likely due to extremely low ratings of government performance. Fewer than one-in-five say the government is doing a good job creating jobs, limiting inflation or reducing inequality.

However, trust in unelected institutions designed to provide security for the country such as the armed forces, the police and the judiciary remains relatively high despite the recent terrorist attacks. However, ratings of government performance on providing security has also fallen dramatically since 2016.

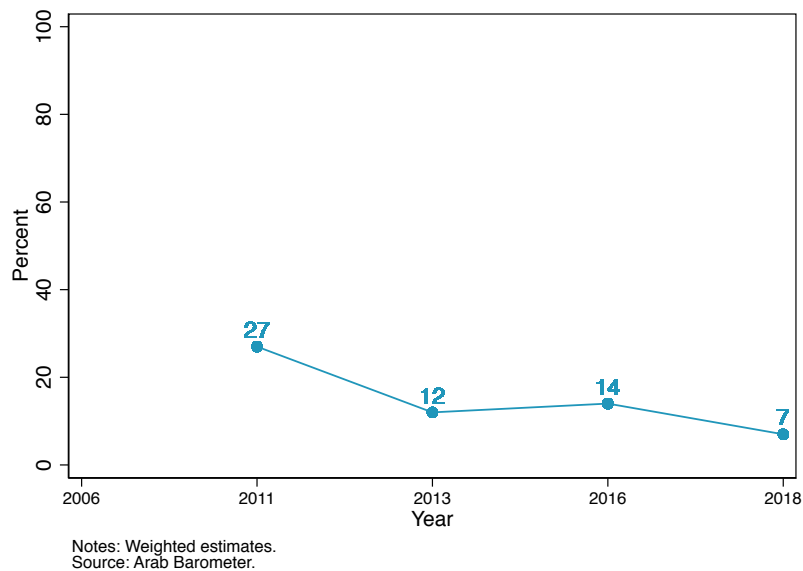
Yet, despite these grave challenges, Tunisians have not given up hope in democracy. In fact, Tunisians are now more supportive of democracy than at the time of the revolution. At the same time, there has been a substantial drop in the percentage of Tunisians who associate problems like a weak economy, indecision, or instability with democracy. Rather than blaming the system, it appears Tunisians have turned their ire toward elected leaders for failing to deliver on the promise of a democratic system.

These are among the key findings from a nationally representative public opinion survey conducted in Tunisia by the Arab Barometer from 29 October - 4 December 2018. The survey conducted 2,400 face-to-face interviews in the respondent's place of residence has a margin of error of  $\pm 2$  percent and had a response rate of 45 percent (AAPOR I).

## Economy and Corruption

Tunisians are deeply frustrated by economic conditions in their country. Just 7 percent rate the economy as good or very good, which is twenty points lower than in the months after the 2011 revolution and seven points lower than in 2016.

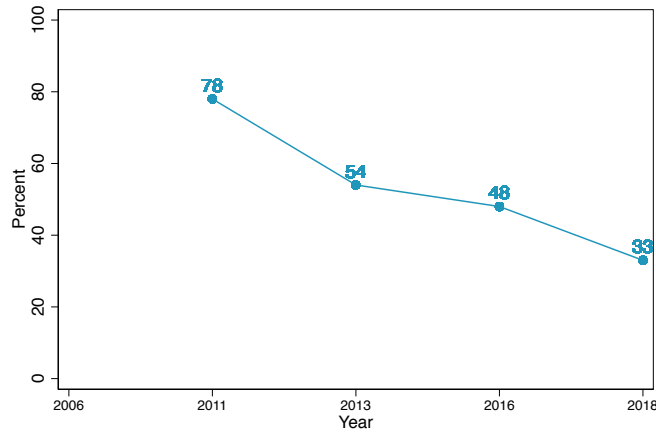
### How would you evaluate the current economic situation in Tunisia? *% saying the current economy is very good or good.*



At the same time, hopes for a better economic future have plummeted. Today, just a third of Tunisians expect the economy to improve in the coming years, compared with more than three-quarters (78 percent) in 2011. Youth and those who are better educated are especially likely to have lost hope in the country's future. Roughly a quarter (27 percent) of those ages 18-29 expect improvement compared with 41 percent of those who are 60 and above. Meanwhile, only 28 percent of those with a university education expect improvement compared with 35 percent of those with a basic level of education.

### What do you think the economic situation in Tunisia will be in the next few years compared to the current situation?

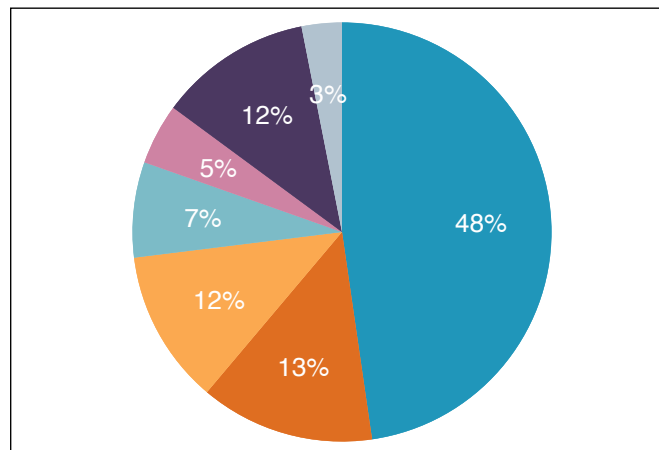
*% saying the economy will be much or somewhat better in 2-3 years.*



Notes: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer.

Yet, despite the vast economic problems facing the country, only half (48 percent) say this is the greatest problem facing their country. By comparison, a quarter cite either terrorism (13 percent) or corruption (12 percent), while two-in-ten list a range of other concerns as being more important than the economy. In other words, Tunisians are not solely focused on the economy, but are deeply concerned about a wide range of issues afflicting their country.

### What is the most important challenge facing Tunisia today?

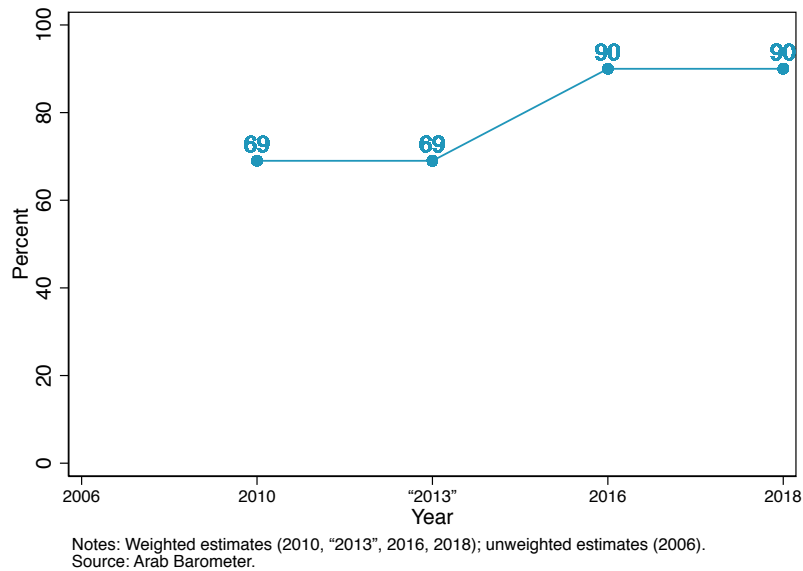


- economy
- fighting terrorism
- corruption
- political issues
- security
- other
- don't know/refused

Note: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer V.

Concerns about corruption continue unabated with nine-in-ten saying that there is corruption in government institutions to a great or medium extent. The level is unchanged since 2016, but is 21 points greater than at the time of the 2011 uprising.

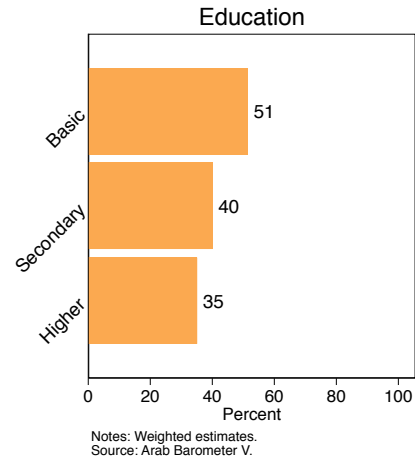
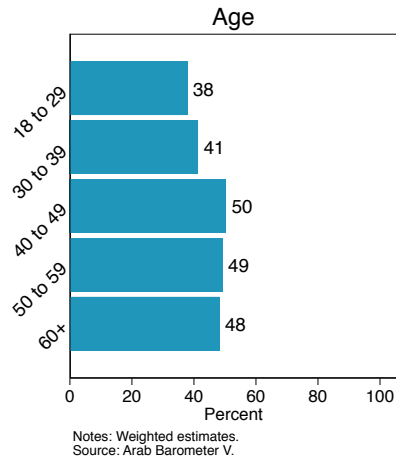
**To what extent do you think that there is corruption within the national state agencies and institutions in Tunisia?**  
*% saying to a large or medium extent.*



Meanwhile, a minority of those who believe there is corruption say that the government is serious about tackling corruption (44 percent). Younger and better educated Tunisians are the most skeptical that about government efforts to address corruption. Just 38 percent of those 18-29 say the government is making serious efforts compared with half of those over 40 years of age. Meanwhile, half (51 percent) of those with a basic education say the government is serious about addressing this scourge compared with 35 percent of those with a university education.

## To what extent is the national government working to crackdown on corruption?

*% saying large or medium extent.*

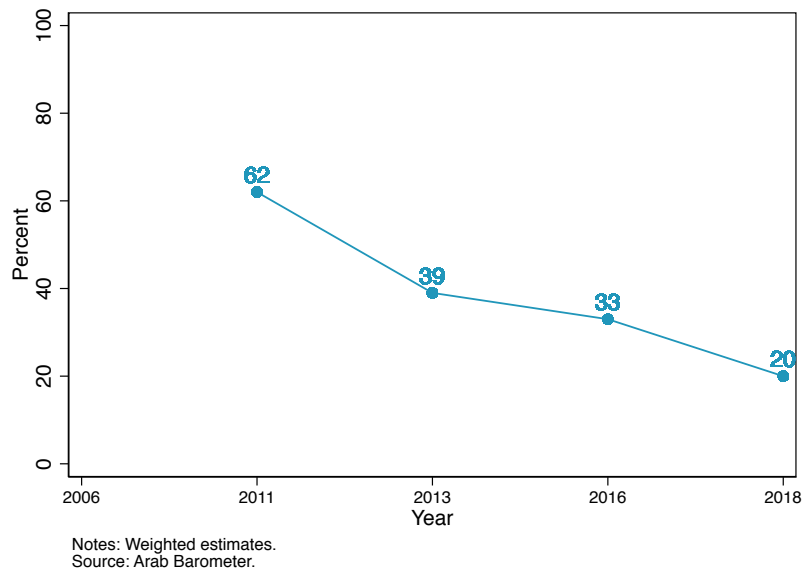


## Views of Government Institutions

Of the countries across MENA that experienced uprisings in 2011, Tunisia is the only one that continues its experiment with democracy. However, low trust government institutions and dismal evaluations of government performance indicate that few Tunisians are satisfied with the country's current trajectory.

### How much trust do you have in the government?

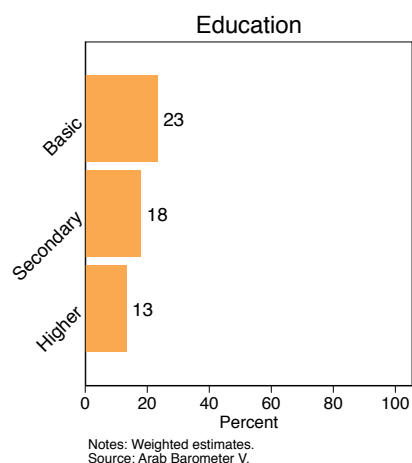
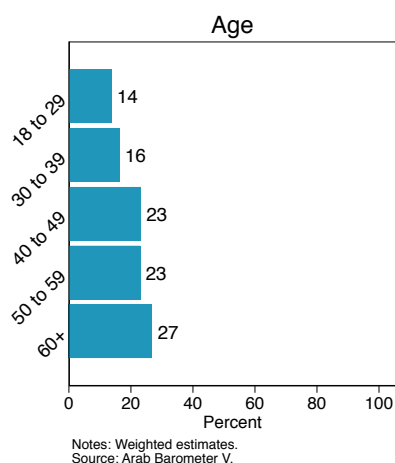
*% saying great deal or quite a lot of trust.*



Despite being the product of democratic elections, just one-in-five Tunisians trust the government while 14 percent trust parliament. Trust in political parties is even lower at 9 percent. Notably, trust in each of these institutions has plummeted since the revolution. In 2011, 62 percent of Tunisians trusted the government, meaning there has been a 42-point decline in the years since. During the same period, trust in parliament has fallen by 17 points.

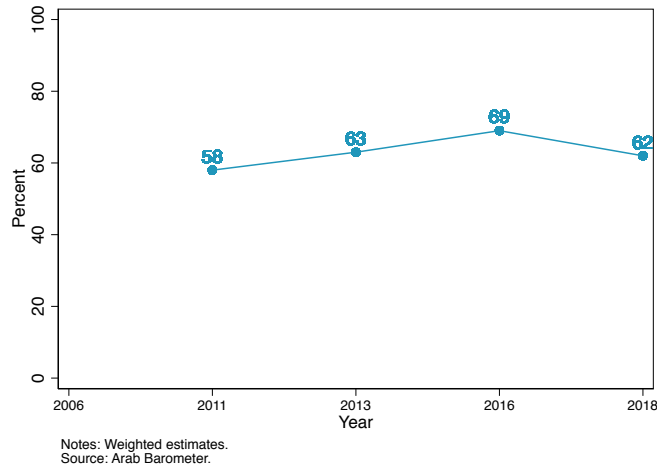
The crisis of legitimacy is augmented for the younger generation. Those who are ages 18-29 are half as likely to trust the government as those who are 60 and above (14 percent vs. 27 percent). The trend is similar for parliament, with youth being 13 points less likely to have confidence in the legislature than those 60 plus. Additionally, those who are 60 and older are three times more likely to trust political parties than those who are ages 18-29 (12 percent vs. 4 percent). Trust is also lower among those with higher levels of education. Those with a university degree are about half as likely to trust the government or parliament than those with a basic education, and are 11 points less likely to trust political parties.

**How much trust do you have in the government?**  
*% saying great deal or quite a lot of trust.*



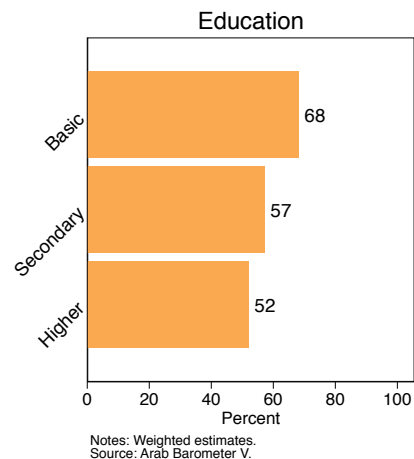
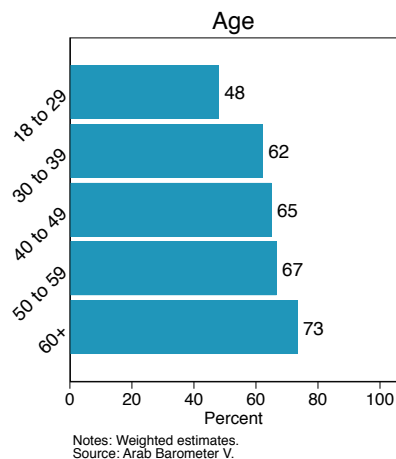
By comparison, trust in unelected institutions designed to ensure law and order is significantly higher. Trust in the army is nearly universal (90 percent), while a majority (62 percent) have confidence in the police and nearly half say the same about the judiciary (48 percent). Notably, unlike for political institutions, support has remained relatively stable over time: in 2011, 89 percent trusted the army, 62 percent the police, and exactly half the judiciary.

**How much trust do you have in the police?**  
*% saying great deal or quite a lot of trust.*



However, as with political institutions, there are some important differences in trust by age. Overall, those who are younger tend to have less trust in institutions providing law and order. Those who are ages 18-29 are 25 points less likely to trust the police than those who are 60 and above. Meanwhile, trust in the army is 7 points lower among the youth cohort compared to those who are 60 and older. However, for trust in judiciary, Tunisians of all ages hold roughly equal levels of trust. Meanwhile, those with higher levels of education are less likely to trust the police in Tunisia, although no such differences are found for trust in the army or the judiciary.

**How much trust do you have in the police?**  
*% saying great deal or quite a lot of trust.*

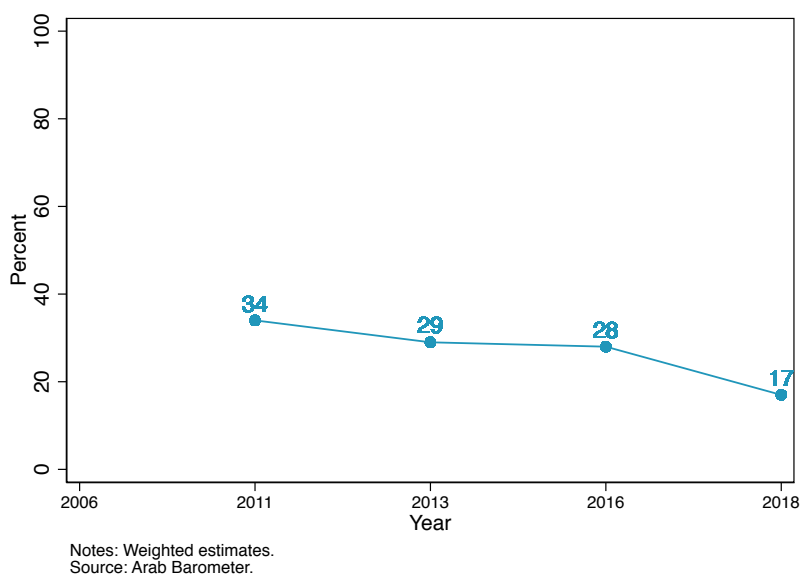




Ratings of government performance are also low, especially on economic indicators. Fewer than one-in-five say the government is doing a good job addressing unemployment (17 percent), limiting inequality (13 percent), or controlling inflation (10 percent). Ratings of government performance are higher on providing security, however, with a small majority (55 percent) saying the government has done a good job in this area despite recent terrorist attacks.

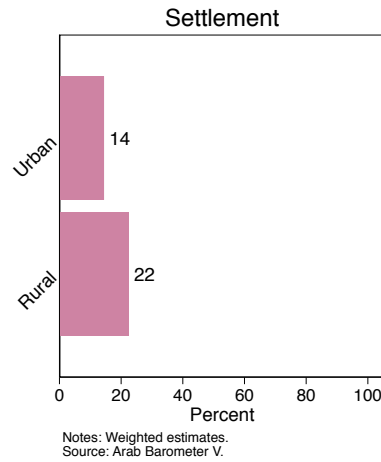
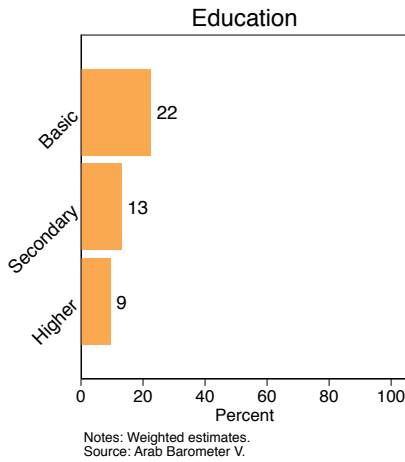
Ratings of government performance have steadily declined since the time of the revolution. For example, Tunisians are now half as likely to say the government is doing well on addressing unemployment as in 2011 (17 percent vs. 34 percent). Meanwhile, ratings of the job addressing inequality have dropped by 10 points during this period.

**How would you evaluate the current government’s performance on creating employment opportunities?**  
*% saying very good or good.*



Despite higher rates of youth unemployment, there are no differences by age in ratings of the government’s performance in creating jobs, which is also true for other measures of economic performance. However, those in urban areas are less satisfied, on average, than those living in rural areas. Additionally, those who have higher levels of education are typically less satisfied than those with lower levels, suggesting that anger at government performance is actually more concentrated in the urban and more elite classes.

**How would you evaluate the current government’s performance on creating employment opportunities?**  
*% saying very good or good.*



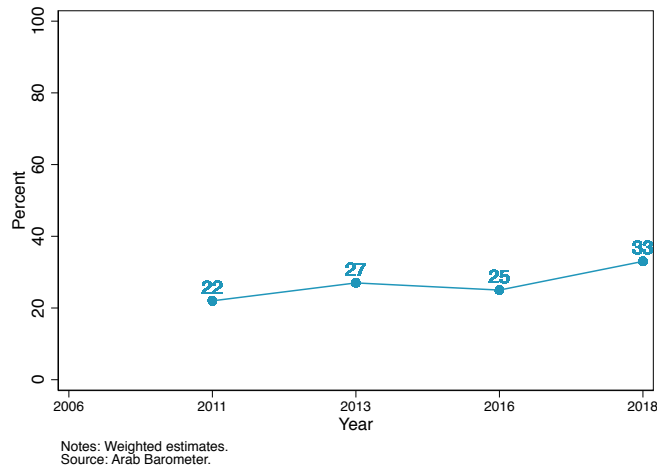
Meanwhile, although 55 percent say the government is doing a good job providing security, this level represents a dramatic drop since 2016 (-21 points). Those who are younger (ages 18-29) are somewhat less likely to say the government is doing a good job in this area than those who are 60 and older (49 vs. 57 percent, respectively). Only half (49 percent) of those with a university education hold a positive view compared with six-in-ten (59 percent) of those with a basic level of education.

Tunisians are also concerned about the quality of public services. Just four-in-ten (39 percent) rate the quality of healthcare in the country as good while three-in-ten (29 percent) say the same about education.

## Emigration

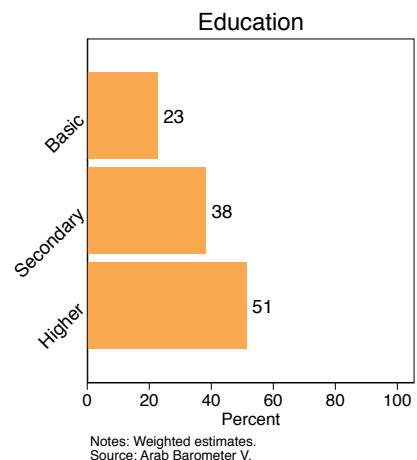
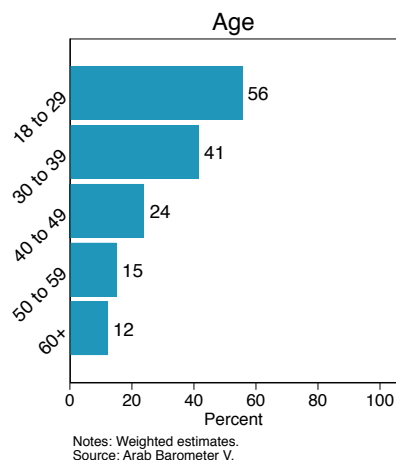
A third of Tunisians are considering emigrating, which is a 50 percent increase over the time of the revolution.

### Have you ever thought about emigrating from Tunisia? *% saying they thought about emigrating.*



Tunisia risks losing its youth, with more than half (56 percent) of those ages 18-29 thinking about leaving their homeland. Additionally, those with higher levels of education are more likely to seek to move abroad. Half (51 percent) of those with at least a secondary education say they want to emigrate compared with just 28 percent of those with a lower level.

### Have you ever thought about emigrating from Tunisia? *% saying they thought about emigrating.*



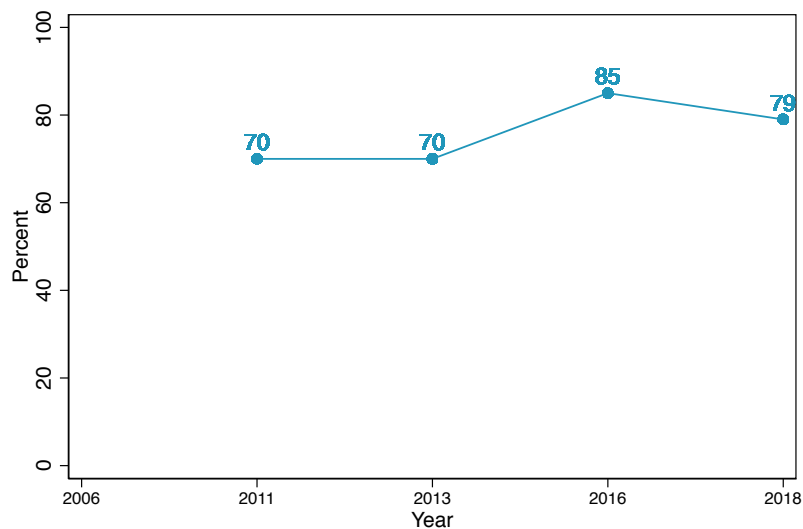
The overwhelming motivation for Tunisians to consider emigrating are economic conditions (73 percent). By comparison, just 7 percent say for educational opportunities and 6 percent say cite corruption.

Europe is by far the most preferred destination for potential migrants, with 57 percent hoping to move to Europe. Meanwhile, 12 percent prefer North America, and 11 percent a country in MENA or sub-Saharan Africa. Among potential migrants, forty percent would consider leaving even if they didn't have official papers.

## Democratic Values

Despite the challenges of Tunisia's political transition, support for democracy remains high in the country. When asked if democracy, despite its problems, is the best political system four-in-five (79 percent) agree, which is 9 points more than in 2011 shortly after the Jasmine revolution.

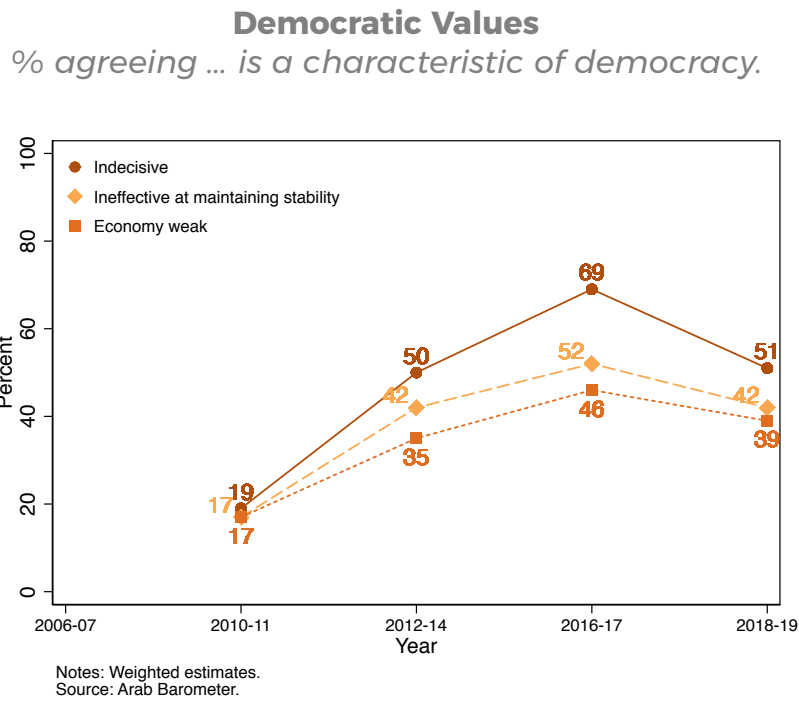
**“Democracies have problems, but are better than other systems.”**  
*% saying they strongly agree or agree.*



Notes: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer.

However, Tunisians have become more skeptical about potential problems sometimes associated with democracy. At the time of the revolution, fewer than one-in-five said that democracy was bad for the economy, unstable, or too indecisive. By comparison, now 51 percent say democracy is indecisive, 42 percent say it leads to instability, and 39 percent that it leads to weak economic outcomes. At the same time, since 2016, the percentage who hold these negative associations with democracy has actually dropped, falling by 18 points for being

indecisive, 10 points for instability, and 7 points for leading to a weak economy. In other words, it appears that Tunisians may be becoming less likely to blame their country's challenges on their political system relative to the actions of their political leaders.

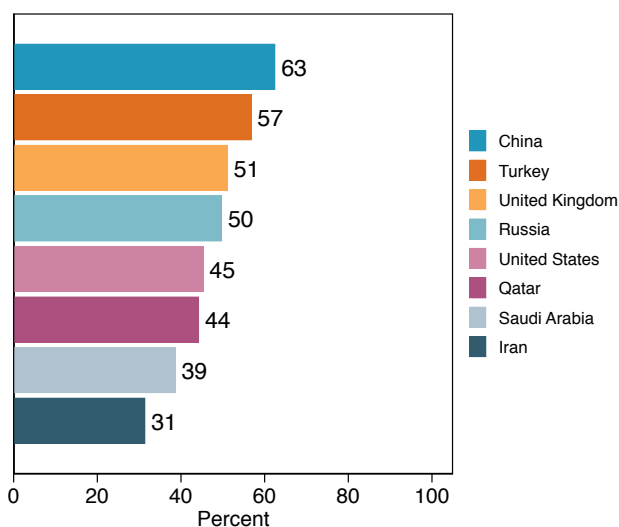


Notably, youth are somewhat more likely to associate these problems with democracy than those who are older. Among Tunisians ages 18-29, 43 percent say that the economy is

## International Relations

Tunisians vary widely in their attitudes toward foreign powers. Globally, China is the most favored world power, with 63 percent of Tunisians wanting improved economic relations. By comparison, half want stronger relations with the U.K. (51 percent) or Russia, while 45 percent want better ties with the U.S. (51 percent) or Russia, while 45 percent want better ties with the U.S.

**Relations with Other Countries**  
% preferring stronger economic relations with...



Notes: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer V.

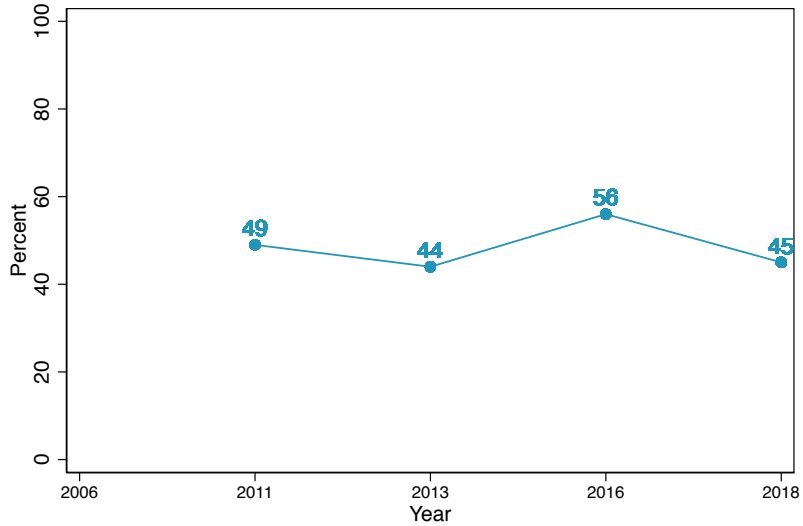
Not only is a desire for closer relations with the U.S. the lowest of any global power, but Tunisians are turning against ties with the U.S. Since 2016, the percentage wanting stronger ties has fallen by 19 points. By comparison, views toward Russia have remained about the same during this period, representing a decrease of 2 points overall.

Regionally, Tunisians have the most favorable attitude toward Turkey (57 percent), followed by Qatar 44 percent, Saudi Arabia (39 percent) and Iran (31 percent). Overall, views toward Turkey have been stable, with roughly six-in-ten wanting better relations in 2016. However, views toward Saudi Arabia have declined dramatically, falling by 18 points since 2016.

Anti-Americanism is also on the rise in Tunisian. Now, 45 percent of Tunisians affirm that regardless of U.S. foreign policies, Americans are good people. By comparison, 56 percent held this view in 2016. Notably, those with a university degree are 18 points more likely to say that Americans are good people than those with a basic level.

**Irrespective of U.S. foreign policies, most ordinary Americans are good people.**

*% saying they strongly agree or agree.*



Notes: Weighted estimates.  
Source: Arab Barometer.



## About Arab Barometer

The Arab Barometer is a nonpartisan research network that provides insights into the social, political, and economic attitudes and values of ordinary citizens across the Arab world.

We have been conducting rigorous, and nationally representative face-to-face public opinion surveys on probability samples of the adult populations across the Arab world since 2006. The margin of error is  $\pm 3$  percent.

The Arab Barometer is the largest repository of publicly available data on the views of men and women in the MENA region. Our findings give a voice to the needs and concerns of Arab publics.



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