

# Tunisia

## Geography

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

Area:

total area: 163,610 sq km

land area: 155,360 sq km

Land boundaries: total 1,424 km, Algeria 965 km, Libya 459 km

Coastline: 1,148 km

Maritime claims:

contiguous zone: 24 nm

territorial sea: 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

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

Land use:

arable land: 20%

permanent crops: 10%

meadows and pastures: 19%

forest and woodland: 4%

other: 47%

Irrigated land: 2,750 sq km (1989)

Environment:

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

natural hazards: NA

Note: strategic location in central Mediterranean

# People

Population: 8,879,845 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 35% (female 1,507,866; male 1,563,411)

15-64 years: 60% (female 2,665,586; male 2,672,712)

65 years and over: 5% (female 226,201; male 244,069) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 1.69% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 22.52 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 4.86 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: -0.74 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 32.3 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:  
total population: 73.25 years  
male: 71.16 years  
female: 75.44 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 2.73 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:  
noun: Tunisian(s)  
adjective: Tunisian

Ethnic divisions: Arab-Berber 98%, European 1%, Jewish less than 1%

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

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

Literacy:  
total population: 57%  
male: 69%  
female: 45%

# Government

## Names:

conventional long form: Republic of Tunisia

conventional short form: Tunisia

local long form: Al Jumhuriyah at Tunisiyah

local short form: Tunis

Type: republic

Capital: Tunis

Independence: 20 March 1956 (from France)

National holiday: National Day, 20 March (1956)

Constitution: 1 June 1959; amended 12 July 1988

Legal system: based on French civil law system and Islamic law;  
some judicial review of legislative acts in the Supreme Court in joint  
session

Suffrage: 20 years of age; universal

Flag: 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, energy, tourism, and manufacturing sectors.

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

Agriculture: accounts for 16% of GDP and one-third of labor force; output subject to severe fluctuations because of frequent droughts; export crops - olives, dates, oranges, almonds; other products - grain, sugar beets, wine grapes, poultry, beef, dairy; not self-sufficient in food

## Transportation

### Railroads:

total: 2,260 km

### Highways:

total: 29,183 km

Pipelines: crude oil 797 km; petroleum products 86 km; natural gas 742 km

Ports: Bizerte, Gabes, La Goulette, Sfax, Sousse, Tunis, Zarzis

### Airports:

total: 31

## Defence Forces

Branches: Army, Navy, Air Force, paramilitary forces, National Guard