العلوم الإجتماعية
Social Sciences Forum

GDN Global Development Network

Doing Research in TUNISIA

COUNTRY REPORT

August 2025

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Doing Research in TUNISIA

COUNTRY REPORT

August 2025

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A funding and programmatic partnership between the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MHESR) with Expertise France (EF), within the framework of the EU-funded project Savoirs Eco, has enabled the Global Development Network (GDN) to include Tunisia in its flagship Doing Research (DR) global initiative. The views expressed in are not necessarily the views of MHESR, EF, or GDN.

The Global Development Network is a public international organization that supports high-quality, policy-oriented social science research in low- and middle-income countries to promote better lives.

The Applied Social Science Forum (ASSF) is a non-profit Tunisian non-governmental organization created in 2011. Through its role as an effective research institution, the ASSF aims to contribute to solving social problems, supporting reform initiatives, informing public policies, and influencing legislations and institutions.

Title: Doing Research in Tunisia - Country Report

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Published by: The Global Development Network

Designed by: Suresh Kumar

Edition: 1

Suggested Citation: ASSF, Doing Research in Tunisia - Country Report. Bolstering Research and Research Systems in Tunisian Social Sciences. Global Development Network, 2025.

ISBN: 978-81-956855-9-2
DOI: 10.69814/DRTUNISIA/202501

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THE DOING RESEARCH PROGRAM

Bridging the research gap and improving development policies.

Today, governments and donors alike have little systematic information about the state of social science research, except for in a few developed countries. Yet, the implementation of the global agenda for sustainable development requires local research capacities to ensure that the scientific community is equipped to critically analyze development and policy challenges, and to accompany actions and reforms with contextualized knowledge of the local environment.

An in-depth analysis of research systems is key to understanding how to bridge this gap and raise the profile of research generated in developing countries. Research systems analysis can help policymakers, donors, and academics answer the question: what can be done to further generate and mainstream local research as a key input to public debate and sustainable human development policies?

Assessing and benchmarking social science research systems

Doing Research (launched in 2014) is an initiative of the Global Development Network (GDN) that aims to systematically assess how the features of a national research system impact the capacity to produce, diffuse, and use quality social science research to the benefit of social and economic development. A pilot phase (2014–2017) in 13 countries was supported by the Agence Française de Développement, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development, and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation. In 2017, GDN conducted a synthesis of the pilot studies and developed a standard methodology for studying social science research systems in developing countries, the 'Doing Research Assessment'. Since 2018, GDN has been implementing Doing Research Assessments in partnership with competitively selected national research institutions, with the aim of generating evidence on research systems. The program also aims to support the emergence of a network of research institutions in the Global South dedicated to informing national research policies, using new research-based, comparative evidence.

Doing Research National Focal Points – A Southern network of local 'research on research' expertise

Through the collaboration between GDN and these local institutions, the program aims to inspire research policies, map research strengths, support research capacity-building efforts and enhance the quality of research that can be used for policy decisions and local democratic debate in developing countries. Social science research provides a critical analysis of societies and human behavior and contributes to a better understanding of development challenges, which is fundamental to realizing national and global development agendas. Country reports, comparative global reports and data will inform actors from research, development and policy communities about their policy-oriented research environment and how it can be improved.

Doing Research Assessment: understanding, mapping and assessing research systems

A unique feature of the Doing Research Assessment is the equal importance the methodology gives to production, diffusion and uptake factors and actors in the analysis of systemic barriers and opportunities for social science development. It involves three steps for analyzing the factors that impact the social science research system in a given country or region, which will lead to several knowledge outputs and awareness-raising efforts.

Doing Research Framework: the core of the assessment

The Doing Research Framework is a mixed-method research module that allows a contextualized comparative enquiry into a national research system, looking at key factors that determine the production, diffusion and uptake of social science. It would typically serve as a magnifying glass to identify aspects that need the attention of the regulator, or to provide a baseline for strategizing investments in capacity-building for research production, its diffusion or its use.

The Framework acts as the basis for comparing and benchmarking research systems in different countries and includes 54 indicators. These indicators are populated according to the national context framed by the National Focal Points (NFP); these follow the project guidelines while adapting them to their national environment. Therefore, each country follows the same framework and general guidelines, allowing for comparisons between different reports of the indicators that define the Doing Research Assessments (DRA). The same is true for the Country Reports, which follow a similar structure.

	1. Production	**2. Diffusion**	**3. Policy uptake**
Inputs	1.1 Research inputs	2.1 Actors & networks	3.1 Policy-friendly research
Activities	1.2 Research culture and support services	2.2 Research communication practices	3.2 Research-based policy making
Outputs	1.3 Research output & training	2.3 Research communication products	3.3 Research-based policy tools
Outcomes	1.4 Opportunities & sustainability	2.4 Popularization of science	3.4 Research for better policies

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFD	French Development Agency
AIMS	American Institute for Maghreb Studies
ALECSO	Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization
ASSF	Applied Social Sciences Forum
ATP	Tunisian Psychology Association
BAROSC	Barometer of Community Life
BEST	Economic and Social Bulletin of Tunisia
BES	Sociological Studies Office
BRS	Sociological Research Office
CAORC	Council of American Overseas Research Centers
CBHE	Capacity Building in Higher Education
CAREP	Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies
CEFIR	International Training and Research Center
CEMAT	Center for Maghreb Studies in Tunisia
CERES	Center for Economic and Social Studies and Research
CESMA	Center for Social Studies of the Arab Maghreb
CIBKEPU	Ibn Khaldoun Center for Philosophical and Urban Studies
CIPE	Center for International Private Enterprise
CIFFIP	International Center for Training of Trainers and Pedagogical Innovation
CISR	Center for Insights and Survey Research
CNEARS	National Committee for the Evaluation of Scientific Research Activities
CNFF	National Center for Trainer Training
CNRS	National Center for Scientific Research (France)
CNTE	National Center for Educational Technology
CNUDST	National University Center for Scientific and Technical Documentation
CREDCRC	Center for Research and Studies on the Dialogue between Civilizations and Comparative Religions
CREDIF	Center for Research, Studies, Documentation, and Information on Women
CRESS	Center for Research and Studies on Social Security (former name of CRES)
CRES	Center for Social Research and Studies
CSRST	Higher Council for Scientific Research and Technology
DEA	Diploma of Advanced Studies
DGAE	Directorate General of Student Affairs
DGET	Directorate General for Technological Studies
DGRS	Directorate General for Scientific Research
ED	Doctoral Schools
EER	European Research Area
EES	Higher Education Institutions
EMORI	Erasmus+ Mediterranean International Credit Mobility (specific window for Tunisia)
ENI SouthMed	European Neighbourhood Instrument – South Mediterranean
EPA	Public Administrative Institution
EPNA	Non-Administrative Public Institution
EPS	Public Health Institutions
FES	Friedrich Ebert Foundation
FNF	Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom
FSHST	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of Tunis

FTDES	Tunisian Forum for Economic and Social Rights
GIZ	German Federal Government Central Agency
HBS	Heinrich Böll Foundation
HSS	Hanns Seidel Foundation
IACE	Arab Institute of Business Managers
IADH	Arab Institute for Human Rights
ICM	The international credit mobility program (Erasmus+)
IDH	Human Development Index
IHE	Institute for Advanced Studies
IRESA	Institute for Agricultural Research and Higher Education
IRD	Institute for Research and Development
IRI	International Republican Institute
IRMC	Institute for Research on Contemporary Maghreb
ISEFC	Higher Institute of Education and Continuing Education
ISCE	Higher Institute for Child Care Professionals
ISESCO	Islamic Organization for Education, Science and Culture
IST	Sexually Transmitted Infections
ITES	Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies
KAS	Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (Konrad Adenauer Foundation)
LIMESURV EY	Online survey tool Bachelor's Bachelor's, Master's, Doctorate
LR	Research Laboratories
MEAE	Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs (France)
MESRS	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MFFEPA	Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and the Elderly
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NED	National Endowment for Democracy
OG	Government Organization
OIFDEPDE	Observatory for Information, Training, Documentation, and Studies for the Protection of Children's Rights
NGO	Non-governmental organization
ONFP	National Office for Family and Population
ONLVF	National Observatory for the Fight Against Violence Against Women
ONM	National Observatory on Migration
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
OTE	Office of Tunisians Abroad
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
PIST.TN	Scientific and Technical Information Portal (Tunisia)
PNR	National Research Plan
PRF	Federated Research Projects
RLS	Rosa Luxemburg Foundation
RSS	Social Science Research
RTSP	Tunisian Journal of Political Science
RTSS	Tunisian Journal of Social Sciences
SHS	Humanities and Social Sciences
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRUSS	University Research Entities in Social Sciences
SST	Occupational Health and Safety
UDPMI	Union of Small and Medium-Sized Industries
EU	European Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UR	Research Unit
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WDN	Women's Democracy Network
WE4LEAD	Women's Empowerment for Leadership and Equity in Higher Education Institutions

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report owes much to the support, commitment, and valuable advice of many individuals and institutions. It is our pleasant duty to express our deep gratitude to them.

Our first thanks go to the Global Development Network (GDN) team for their trust and unwavering support. Thank you to **Mr. Daniele Cantini, Mr. Francesco Obino,** and **Mr. Michael Goujon** for their vision and leadership.

A big thank you and our deepest appreciation go to our mentor, **Mr. Ghazi Boulila** (DRA Mentor), whose wise advice, patience, and valuable guidance have been the compass for our research group throughout this project.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks and appreciation to the **Directorate General for Scientific Research** for its invaluable encouragement and support. We are particularly grateful to **Mr. Mourad Bellassoued (MESRS)** and **Ms. Arbia Ben Othman (MESRS)** for their continuous support.

Our sincere thanks also go to **the Expertise France team.** Without their support, this project would not have been possible. We would especially like to thank **Mr. Axel Gastambide, Mr. Alexis Ghosn,** and **Ms. Hela Cherif** for their expertise, availability, and unfailing commitment to our project.

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INTRODUCTION

This report is the result of an innovative alliance between two major players in development research. It is the fruit of a strategic convergence between the fundamental mission of *the Global Development Network* (GDN) (which promotes rigorous social science research focused on public policy and development), conducted by researchers from the Global South, and the local operational expertise of the *Applied Social Science Forum* (ASSF), whose ambition is precisely to apply cutting-edge methodologies, such as the *"Doing Research"* framework, to the specific contexts of Tunisia.

This unprecedented collaboration in the Arab world illustrates a shared desire to break down barriers in academic research and put it to work on real-world issues. It reflects a shared commitment to strengthening the capacities of the Tunisian research community and producing directly actionable knowledge to shed light on the country's contemporary socio-political and economic challenges.

The Doing Research Tunisia initiative has been fruitfully supervised and supported at the national level by Tunisia's Directorate General for Scientific Research (DGRS). Its support from the design phase onwards has been an essential catalyst, facilitating access to the field, ensuring alignment with national research priorities, and guaranteeing the local relevance of the questions addressed. This triangular partnership (GDN-ASSF-DGRS) created a unique ecosystem, combining international methodological excellence, applied expertise, and local institutional legitimacy. This framework thus enabled the emergence of critical and contextualized analyses, establishing the legitimacy of the concrete recommendations formulated for Tunisian public decision-makers.

The purpose of this report is threefold:
1. To report and capitalize: to present the substantial results of this pilot project in a transparent manner, documenting both the fruitful synergies and the methodological and logistical challenges encountered in applying the "Doing Research" method in Tunisia. This feedback is valuable for the international development community.

2. Demonstrate the power of the applied approach: to recognize the reward of integrating robust theoretical frameworks (provided by GDN) with practical expertise in the field (embodied by ASSF). This hybridization is key to producing diagnoses that are both scientifically sound and operationally relevant.

3. Generate lasting impact: to provide Tunisian stakeholders (government, civil society, universities) with evidence-based analyses to improve the design, implementation, and evaluation of public policies. The ultimate goal is to position social science research as an indispensable driver of innovation, social change, and sustainable development in Tunisia.

The originality of this study lies in its socio-epistemological approach. Rather than relying solely on the usual bibliometric or structural indicators, the study aims to open up the "black box" of social science research in Tunisia. It examines the concrete conditions of knowledge production: researchers' practices, institutional constraints, funding mechanisms, and interactions between the academic field and national socio-political issues. As Francis Bacon pointed out, knowledge gained through experience is more reliable than knowledge derived solely from books. This report therefore seeks to reveal not only the context, but also the pretext and texture of Tunisian scientific production. The investigation is organized into three complementary dimensions. The first situates the macro- structural context of research by analyzing the transformations of the Tunisian political economy, the reconfigurations of the scientific landscape, and challenges such as the precariousness of funding, the massification of student enrollment, and the segmented feminization of careers.

The second dimension draws up a critical institutional map of knowledge-producing organizations (universities, laboratories, independent research centers, international bodies), highlighting their modes of governance, their trajectories, and their often competitive interactions within the academic sphere. Finally, the third dimension presents the results of a questionnaire survey of researchers themselves, documenting their material and symbolic working conditions, their publication and collaboration strategies, and their (often problematic) relationship with the media and decision-making spheres.

Ultimately, this report goes beyond a descriptive diagnosis; it offers a systemic analysis of the capacities and shortcomings of the Tunisian social sciences research ecosystem. Its conclusions aim to inform research policies and strengthen the contribution of scientific knowledge to public debate and social innovation in Tunisia. This report is therefore intended as a major contribution, both as a model of successful partnership between global and local actors, and as a practical roadmap for more informed and effective public action.

Abdelwahab Ben Hafaiedh
Principal Investigator, Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, first edition (2025)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Social science research plays a key role in Tunisia's decision-making process. Since the 2011 revolution, the country has been striving to evolve within a complex landscape marked by significant socio- economic challenges and strong democratic aspirations. Since 1956, a positive, even complementary, collaborative relationship has historically developed between the decision-making circles and the academic sphere, in line with the developmentalist paradigm. This dynamic has facilitated constructive cooperation, enabling research findings to inform public and strategic policy-making, despite certain difficulties. It is from this interaction that the social sciences in Tunisia gained their initial legitimacy. While State investment in university and public research entities is notable despite an arduous budgetary context, an imbalance persists in the research landscape. Although essential since 2011, the role of think tanks and scientific organizations remains marginal. It is regrettable that the considerable potential of experienced researchers, whether retired or returning from abroad, is not being fully exploited. Unlike countries such as Lebanon or Morocco, Tunisia's weak tradition in this area explains the scarcity of such research entities. This situation deprives the country of important expertise and hinders the development of a cumulative research dynamic.

As a result of the fluctuating bond between knowledge and power, the relationship between the social sciences and public policy is not without tension. It oscillates between periods of trust (cold periods when decision-makers rely on evidence) and periods of mistrust (hot periods when research recommendations are contested or ignored). Sometimes there is mutual denial, which simultaneously weakens the legitimacy of decisions made and the credibility of research perceived as detached from the public interest. This ambivalent climate undermines the effectiveness of public policy and the effective implementation of research recommendations. The Doing Research - Tunisia (2025) survey reveals that, despite these challenges, **channels of dialogue** between research and decision-making remain operational. However, the nature and effectiveness of this relationship vary considerably, highlighting both the need for renewed collaboration and the persistence of structural obstacles. There is still a long way to go to consolidate this interaction, but there remains rich potential to be exploited to maximize the impact of research on public policy. This report explores this dialectical relationship, highlighting the opportunities and obstacles facing social science research in the post-revolutionary Tunisian context.

I. The Four Dynamics at Work

The analysis highlights four structural dynamics that characterize the research ecosystem.

1. A New Generation at the Helm

The social science research community is notable for its significant generational renewal, with 68% of researchers under the age of 46, and for its strong female representation, which stands at 64%. This feminization represents a **major opportunity** for the academic landscape, as it strengthens women's leadership in research governance and management (laboratories, research units). Unlike certain sectors, such as STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics), the social sciences offer female researchers an increased presence in decision-making positions (heads of laboratories and research units, and coordinators of international projects). On the other hand, **the rejuvenation** of the profession is accompanied by the gradual departure of senior researchers, which poses **a real risk** to the intergenerational transmission of knowledge and could, in the long term, affect scientific quality.

2. An Ecosystem in Search of Clarity

Although the Tunisian research ecosystem is generally fulfilling its mission, **greater clarity** could only enhance its effectiveness.

Public universities, a major institutional pillar: Tunisian public universities confirm their structuring role as the backbone of the research and innovation system. They represent the main pool of scientific talent, since almost all researchers in post come from them. Their historical roots, their territorial network, and their fundamental mission of producing and disseminating knowledge may explain this centrality. Conversely, private universities, although playing a growing role in undergraduate education, have so far been only marginally involved in research activities. Their involvement in this area remains limited, whether in terms of allocated resources, structural projects, or significant scientific output. This situation consolidates, by default, the preeminent and almost exclusive role of Tunisian public universities as central players in the national research ecosystem.

Low visibility of other stakeholders: The low visibility of non-university actors is a major obstacle to the Tunisian research ecosystem. This phenomenon mainly concerns two types of stakeholders: On the one hand, non-university public research suffers from a glaring lack of awareness. It is striking to note, for example, that only 10% of researchers are aware of the existence of national

institutions dedicated to the development of social sciences. On the other hand, think tanks and associative research suffer from insufficient legitimacy, even though their contribution is essential.

The pace of publication in the social sciences has accelerated exponentially, from 9 articles in 2000 to 517 in 2023. However, nearly a quarter of Tunisian articles in the social sciences are not cited. The majority of lead authors (80%) have published only one article, indicating fragmented and still largely invisible output.

This invisibility has a direct consequence: dozens of studies produced each year within Tunisian administrations and public institutions remain confined to drawers, invisible and inaccessible to the academic community. This situation leads to a waste of intellectual resources and unnecessary duplication of efforts.

To reverse this trend, the creation of centralized digital platforms, hosted by a recognized national institution such as CERES, represents a promising solution. Such an infrastructure could:

- **Identify and disseminate** all non-university scientific output.
- **Bring together** the various stakeholders (public institutions, think tanks, organizations).
- **Create a virtuous cycle** of exchange and collaboration between the academic world and these stakeholders, thereby enriching public debate and evidence-based policy- making.

3. The Imperative of Continuous Skill Development

Researcher training in Tunisia faces a paradox. Upstream, the doctoral system produces between 1,500 and 2,000 PhDs per year, demonstrating its vitality. However, this massification, often associated with excessive supervision rates, carries risks: it tends to erode quality standards and devalue the degree, thereby compromising scientific rigor and personalized support for doctoral students.

Downstream, these initial training challenges have repercussions on the rest of the career. New PhD graduates, although numerous, feel inadequately equipped for the future. Faced with this situation, researchers unanimously express a shared need: to supplement their training with robust postdoctoral mentoring and to acquire essential technical skills, particularly in project development. This additional training is essential to enable them to respond successfully to competitive calls for proposals and to place their research in an international context.

4. Impact on Public Policy: an Emerging Dynamic of Influence

The link between research and decision-making in Tunisia reveals an emerging dynamic of influence: although real, its impact remains limited, as evidenced by the low proportion of researchers (16.5%) who have directly contributed to public policy development. However, indirect influence seems to be growing, as half of researchers note that their work is cited in official reports—a trend that is particularly pronounced in economics and management, where the bridges between academic expertise and the decision-making sphere appear to be more structured. This emerging permeability, while promising, highlights the need to strengthen mediation mechanisms in order to transform this passive recognition into concrete and systematic impact.

The landscape of social science research in Tunisia is shaped by **contradictory forces** that drive and structure its evolution. These tensions, between imposed extroversion and local roots, outline the contours of a rapidly changing ecosystem seeking a balance between international excellence and societal relevance.

Forced extroversion or the temptation of elsewhere: External pressure, known as “outside pressure,” exerts a **selective drain** on Tunisian talent. Driven by a growing academic diaspora and departures abroad, this dynamic captures skills for the benefit of foreign institutions, weakening national potential. It encourages publication in English, a guarantee of international visibility, but sometimes tends to marginalize production in Arabic or French, thus limiting access to knowledge for decision-makers and the Arabic-speaking public.

Claimed roots or renewal from within: Conversely, a “from within” movement promotes the voluntary indigenization of knowledge. Particularly active in sociology, it advocates research that is firmly rooted in local realities, increasingly using Arabic and dialect (especially in podcasts and on social media) and favoring channels of dissemination aimed at the general public. While this popularization strategy— through the presentation of books, summaries, and the facilitation of debates—undoubtedly allows him to broaden his audience, particularly on Facebook, it nonetheless carries certain risks, foremost among which are excessive simplification and conceptual impoverishment.

Economics, the lone queen? In terms of research entities, economics and management dominate the academic landscape in terms of numbers, with the largest number of laboratories (27). Languages, linguistics, and literature follow with 14 laboratories, and legal and constitutional sciences with 10. Between 1960 and 2000, economic

research became increasingly autonomous, to the point where it was no longer represented in the Tunisian Journal of the Social Sciences, suggesting specialization or segregation from other social disciplines. Despite the historical importance of CERES in the design of national economic policies, this center now has only one economist and one specialist in quantitative methods.
Intermediate bridges or mediation through collaboration: between these two poles, mediation mechanisms are developing, particularly through international cooperation programs such as Horizon Europe. These initiatives offer an intermediate framework for promotion, bringing together university laboratories and civil society organizations. However, their full effectiveness requires stronger links between these actors and better structured collaborations.

II. For Research in Tune with Society

To overcome these tensions and build a robust science-public policy nexus, concerted action is needed. The following recommendations aim to:

- Redirect funding towards research with societal impact;
- Professionalize the interface between social sciences and decision-making;
- Reform evaluation criteria to promote civic engagement and open science.

The implementation of these levers by all stakeholders (ministry, universities, researchers, and civil society) is essential to enable Tunisian research to reconcile academic excellence and social transformation. These recommendations can be presented as follows:

1. For the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

Prioritize programs dedicated to societal impact: It is essential to allocate specific budgets to projects that have a strong societal impact and to make this "societal" impact an evaluation criterion (an improved version of the Federated Research Projects (PRF) or the former National Research Programs (PNR)). Some promising national programs already exist. This is the case, for example, with the Program for the Encouragement of Scientific Excellence (P2ES) – or equivalent programs – whose main objective is to support academic scientific excellence. This type of scheme rewards and encourages high-quality research, evaluated by peers according to recognized academic criteria, such as publications in prestigious journals, methodological rigor, or theoretical innovation. It is thus part of a vertical policy aimed at raising the overall level of research. In contrast, a program dedicated to societal impact would have as its main objective the usefulness and practical application of knowledge. It would evaluate projects on their ability to solve a specific societal problem (youth unemployment, educational disparities, a just ecological transition, etc.) and the co-construction of research with relevant non- academic actors (organizations, local authorities, ministries, social enterprises).

These two approaches—excellence and impact—are complementary but distinct. Research can be excellent from an academic standpoint but difficult to understand or inapplicable in the field. Conversely, highly applied research may require a longer period of academic maturation. Two instruments are therefore needed for two different purposes.

Faced with contemporary societal, health, socio-political, and environmental challenges, social science research is called upon to provide urgent and contextualized responses. The establishment of a dedicated program would not only institutionalize dialogue between researchers and decision-makers to co- construct appropriate solutions, but also strengthen the legitimacy and visibility of the social sciences. By demonstrating their social utility in concrete terms, the social sciences can more easily justify their public funding and shake off an image that is sometimes perceived as elitist or disconnected from the realities on the ground.

Example: Create a fund dedicated to research, developed in collaboration with sectoral ministries, private partners, and organizations. This fund would support projects that produce both scientific knowledge and concrete solutions to societal challenges classified as minor and major issues.

Structure "science-policy" mediation: To strengthen the link between research and public policy, it is important to set up interface units in each ministry. These units would be tasked with translating scientific results into operational recommendations, as currently only 16.5% of researchers produce policy briefs.

Tools: The establishment of a digital platform centralizing local expertise and research results would facilitate this mediation. This platform could serve as a bridge between researchers and decision-makers, providing rapid access to relevant information and evidence-based recommendations.

Breaking down barriers in the social sciences in the face of cross-cutting issues: This involves breaking with the traditional disciplinary approach to steer the social sciences towards truly responsible research, rooted in solving complex societal challenges. Issues such as climate change, governance, poverty, informal work, crime, and many others require a resolutely cross-cutting and multidisciplinary approach.

Responsible research consists precisely in transcending academic boundaries to develop innovative and appropriate responses to these multidimensional problems. It involves:

- **Organizing research around** societal challenges rather than around isolated disciplines;
- **Promoting collaboration** between specialists in different social sciences, but also with the exact sciences, law, economics, and environmental sciences when necessary;
- **Co-constructing research questions with the actors concerned:** citizens, organizations, public institutions, and the private sector;
- **Promoting hybrid methodologies** capable of capturing the complexity of these subjects, which resist traditional disciplinary divisions.

Such an approach would not only amplify the social impact of the social sciences, but also strengthen their political and civic legitimacy by demonstrating their ability to shed useful light on issues that truly concern society.

2. For Researchers

Training in scientific advocacy: It is important to develop mandatory training modules in communication and scientific outreach, as 83.5% of researchers do not disseminate their findings to decision-makers. This training should include presentation techniques, advocacy, and communication strategies tailored to different target audiences.

Partnerships: To strengthen these skills, it would be beneficial to collaborate with journalism schools and public media. These partnerships could offer researchers practical workshops and advice on how to make their work more accessible and relevant to decision-makers.

- **Systematize operational deliverables:** To ensure that publicly funded research has practical relevance, it is necessary to require an executive summary and a proposal sheet for all research reports. These summary documents would present the results in a clear and concise manner, facilitating their use by policymakers.

- **Encourage hybrid careers:** It is important to facilitate researchers' access to positions within the administration, as only 3% of them currently hold political office. This could include secondment or temporary assignment programs in ministries or public institutions. These experiences would enable researchers to better understand decision-making processes and contribute directly to evidence-based policy-making.

Promoting these hybrid careers would strengthen the link between research and public action, thereby enabling better integration of scientific findings into policy decisions.

3. For Universities

- Create "public policy labs": It is essential to set up dedicated physical spaces where decision- makers and researchers can co-design solutions to societal problems. Currently, 35.9% of researchers have never interacted with policymakers, highlighting the need for collaborative spaces.

  Model: Take inspiration from Nordic "policy labs," which promote collaboration and innovation by bringing together various actors around concrete projects.

- Certify cross-disciplinary skills: In the age of artificial intelligence, the world is gradually moving beyond disciplinary silos. For social scientists, there are no longer just "questions" to study, but **complex problems** to solve, which require a cross-disciplinary approach. In this context, acquiring hybrid skills, such as economic knowledge for sociologists and political scientists, and vice versa, is becoming essential, particularly at the postgraduate level (master's and doctoral degrees).It therefore seems important to officially recognize and certify these cross-disciplinary skills. This could take the form of badges or specific certifications, awarded at the end of dedicated training courses (in doctoral schools) in, for example, cross-sector project management or negotiation, attesting to researchers' ability to work in multidisciplinary and applied contexts. Such recognition would offer tangible recognition from employers and decision-makers, while encouraging researchers to become more involved in projects with a strong societal impact.

- **Developing applied Open Data:** the creation of a national portal bringing together research data that can be used by local authorities would be a major asset. This portal would facilitate access to relevant data for local decision-makers, thereby enabling better evidence-based decision-making. Making this data accessible will also encourage collaboration between researchers and stakeholders in society, promoting innovative solutions tailored to local needs.

4. For Think Tanks and Scientific Organizations

Professionalize strategic monitoring and scientific advocacy: It is essential to position Tunisian think tanks as trusted intermediaries and to systematize the mapping of national and regional policy areas open to scientific

expertise, while developing forward-looking monitoring to anticipate future advisory needs. This approach must be accompanied by a targeted advocacy plan aimed at public institutions and donors, highlighting the added value of scientific analysis in the development of development policies.

- **Launch thematic "public innovation sprints"**: Organize intensive, targeted workshops ("sprints") bringing together researchers, civil servants, economic actors, and CSOs around concrete challenges (e.g., energy transition, education reform, financial inclusion). The aim is to produce, within a limited timeframe, operational guidance notes that can be used directly by decision-makers, while creating an ecosystem of trust and exchange.

- **Structure sustainable partnerships with the administration:** Through framework cooperation agreements with key ministries (Economy, Education, Health, etc.) to formalize the advisory role of think tanks. This could include:

  - Systematic participation in expert committees attached to public programs;
  - The joint development of policy monitoring and evaluation indicators;
  - Facilitated access to public data necessary for analysis.

- **Strengthening strategic communication and scientific mediation capacities:** By training researchers in high-impact outreach and media communication, as well as in dialogue with non-academic stakeholders. The challenge is to translate research results into powerful messages that are tailored to the realities of decision-makers and the general public.

- **Diversify funding sources and guarantee intellectual independence:** By exploring hybrid models combining:
  - Public funding conditional on peer review;
  - Service contracts with international institutions;
  - Ethically supervised dedicated sponsorship;
  - A national fund dedicated to public scientific advice, supplemented by the State and technical partners.

- **Incubate policy innovation through local demonstrators:** by experimenting with pilot projects in test regions or sectors, co-developing innovative solutions informed by research with local authorities. This approach demonstrates the benefit of think tank expertise in concrete terms and inspires change on a larger scale.

5. For decision-makers

- **Establish scientific quotas:** It is important to reserve 10% of positions in senior advisory bodies for active researchers. This measure would ensure meaningful representation of scientific experts in the decision-making process, ensuring that public policies are informed by evidence.
- **Make scientific impact assessments standard practice:** Major legislative proposals should undergo systematic peer review before being adopted. This would ensure that legislative decisions are based on rigorous and relevant research, thereby strengthening the quality of public policy.

- **Create an annual barometer:** Establish an annual barometer to measure the effective use of research in public policy. Currently, 30.2% of researchers do not know whether their work is being used. This barometer would provide essential data on the integration of research into the decision-making process and identify areas for improvement.

CHAPTER 1: CONTEXT ANALYSIS

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 1

Context and legacy

- Tunisia's research system has historically been tied to national development goals, with close collaboration between policymakers and academia since independence.
- The 2011 Revolution reshaped this relationship, introducing greater democratic aspirations but also new socio-economic pressures.
- Despite instability, a tradition of policy–research dialogue endures, though it remains uneven and fragile.

Structure of the system

- Public universities dominate the research landscape and remain the primary producers of knowledge.
- Private universities play a marginal role in research, focusing mainly on teaching.
- A parallel but "invisible" ecosystem of associations and think tanks contributes to applied and policy-oriented research, yet lacks recognition and legitimacy.

Demographics and human capital

- The researcher community that participated in the survey is young (68% under 46) and majority female (64%), signaling generational and gender transformation.
- Women's presence in leadership positions is higher in social sciences than in STEM fields but still limited overall.
- Managing this generational shift is crucial to ensure effective mentoring and future scientific leadership.

Sociopolitical environment

- Relations between academia and the state have fluctuated between collaboration and control; rebuilding trust and autonomy is a key challenge.
- Dialogue with policymakers persists but is often ad hoc and lacks systematic institutional support.

Economic and institutional context

- Public investment in research remains constrained: only ~1.34% of GDP and 4% of the state budget in 2023.
- The share of funding directly dedicated to scientific research has declined from 11% (2009) to 8.5% (2023) of the Ministry's budget.
- Structural issues include limited resources, inefficient fund allocation, bureaucratic complexity, and weak inter-ministerial coordination.

International environment

- Brain drain, especially to Gulf countries, reduces local research capacity, particularly in economics.
- The push to publish in English increases global visibility but marginalizes work in Arabic and French, limiting local policy uptake.
- Conversely, there is a growing movement to "re-root" research locally, using Arabic and accessible media to engage the public, though this risks oversimplification.

Overall insight

- Tunisia's social science ecosystem is rich but fragmented: anchored in strong public universities, energized by new generations, yet constrained by limited funding, weak coordination, and insufficient integration with policy and society.

I. DOING SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH IN TUNISIA: SCALES AND PERSPECTIVES

In the social sciences, the relationship between discipline, problem and knowledge is of significant importance. As K. Popper puts it, "we are not specialists in certain questions, but rather in certain problems" (Popper, 1985). In this regard, it is worthy to note the problem of scales and angles here, and to recognize that researchers are not simply experts in specific areas, but specialize in solving certain problems. Investigating the myriad ways of "Doing Research" underpins the very essence of social science research, which is predicated upon formulating and solving complex, fundamental problems.

When addressing the social sciences, it is often more meaningful to define a discipline by the questions and problems it endeavors to solve, be they economic, political or social, rather than by the specific subjects it studies. This approach highlights the importance of the basic questions that drive a discipline, its fundamental concerns and the problems that motivate it. It also sheds light on the fact that the boundaries between disciplines can sometimes be porous, because the problems that preoccupy social scientists can often transcend the traditional boundaries of academic fields. Thus, interdisciplinary collaboration becomes essential to tackle the complex issues facing society (Unesco 2021).

This proposed definition implies that interdisciplinarity in the social sciences is essential, especially when it comes to making decisions, bringing about significant change and transforming public policy. It underlines the importance of integrating different disciplines to address complex problems and develop solutions that go beyond the boundaries of a single discipline. For while science offers different ways and methods of overcoming these problems, it cannot make the decisions on how to respond in place of the players involved. These choices of response go far beyond the realm of science, and affect the sphere of decision-making through the articulation of disciplines, the problems tackled, and the knowledge constructed.

I.1. The Political Economy Context: Challenging the Developmentalist Paradigm

Whatever the contours of the picture drawn by the various actors about the inception of the social sciences in Tunisia, they all admit that these sciences did not develop from one specific discipline, but are the result of a residual activity whose role was to fill the empty spaces on the intellectual map at the wake of independence. From its local origins, we may discern three main roots: philosophy, history and economics. With the birth of modern sociology, the need gradually arose for these disciplines to draw on more concrete and organized facts, in such a way as to enable comparisons and dimensional analyses of social change. Initially created at the Institute of Higher Studies (IHE) during its renovation, in parallel with law, and then integrated as a national discipline into university curricula after independence, sociology was soon considered by the authorities of the Tunisian economy as a science capable of explaining the causes of underdevelopment. Sociology thus maintained a close relationship with economics. (Ben Hafaiedh 2000).

After independence, Tunisia structured its education and research system, giving birth to key institutions such as the Tunis Faculty of Economics and Management in 1958. This institution, which grew out of the Institute of Higher Studies (IHE), became a major economic research center (Ben Hafaiedh 2000). In the 1980s, the creation of *Tunisian Journal of Economics and Management* and the Unit for Studies and Research in Economic Sciences bolstered academic research. Economic reforms from 1986 onwards influenced research by incorporating researchers into economic development and promoting a more practical approach. The post-revolutionary challenges since 2011 have also encouraged research into issues such as employment, growth and public policy, thus prompting Tunisian researchers to propose appropriate solutions.

As regards psychology, its roots go back well before 1956. After independence, Tunisia set about developing its own academic institutions, as well as training Tunisian researchers in various spheres, including psychology. The first Tunisian psychologists, who received training abroad, gradually returned to the country to contribute to research and teaching in this discipline. The debut of psychology in Tunisia was marked by the introduction of the first courses at the University of Tunis around 1967-1968, which were integrated into a joint program of philosophy, psychology and sociology, inspired by French practices.

Another field of research offers a similar scenario. Immediately after independence, Tunisia initiated major legal reforms to be concomitant with the building of the nation-state, by giving priority to legal training and research. Newly established universities introduced programs in private and public law, then structured

their curricula into dedicated departments and faculties, progressively developing graduate educational programs. Whether it is sociology, psychology, law or economics, one idea emerges from this genesis: there is now a sociological, legal or economic way of thinking and a method of raising issues and explaining facts, which has crystallized into a discipline characterized by novel research techniques. The analysis of public policies and social dynamics (sociological, psychological, economic and legal) will center upon three key issues:

- The opacity of knowledge production mechanisms, an issue explored by using the black-box model;
- The disciplinary fragmentation, marked by the emergence of three competing logics of scientific legitimization;
- The repercussions of these limitations on the relationship between research and public action, revealing a "growing disconnection."

I.2. Breaking out of the Black Box: Why Have the Tunisian Social Sciences Obscured the Mechanisms of Change?

During the first decades of independence, social scientists seemed to have robust confidence in the progressivist goals of the nationalist elites in power. The match between the state's mode of management and that of knowledge production was simple: all that was needed was to create elites capable of representing the nation's interests and serving their own. In terms of decision-making and the management of public choices, this direction had a name: the strategist model of government (Chabaan S. 1975). In this respect, the social sciences tended to be "serf" sciences, insofar as they had to provide explanations/arguments for public choices. At the heart of their concerns were the assistance to development programs and the sensitization of society to political and economic changes.

Out of a concern to "adapt" society (workers, informal economy players, farmers, schools, etc.), this approach, however, often treated the question of social transformation as a black box (Hafaiedh 2002). From this box, only two shared aspects of reality are fathomable: the inputs (laws, economic regulation, schooling, management of human and material resources, etc.) and the outputs. Certain variables (gender, age, socio-professional categories, etc.) were set at the input. At the output end, we obtained school failure, dropouts, integration, mobilization of human resources, equipment or institutionalization. What we failed to see, however, was how these phenomena or transitions were made inside the box, i.e. *in vivo* and in the different segments of society. In this field of "relay" social science, the individual remains silent, does not make calculations and negotiations, and therefore does not influence the process of change. Nothing is more crucial than this implacable mechanism, which absorbs and excludes, controls and generates results within the context of public decisions, independently of the populations' preferences.

It was in this light that most bachelor's degrees (law, sociology, economics, education sciences) were established in Tunisia as early as 1959. The intention shared by the French lecturers who created these majors as part of the Institute of High Studies, and those in charge of the Tunisian economy, was to train men capable of analyzing society, at a time when Jacques Berque and Jean Duvignaud (Ben Hafaiedh 2000) were emphasizing the "under-analysis of societies" as a factor of under-development. These social sciences had almost no analytical models apart from the works of G. Gurvitch, E. Durkheim, K. Marx and J. Keynes.

In terms of their orientation, the various disciplines were more sensitive to disintegration forces than to the integration mechanisms. Ensnared by the issue of state-building and cultural resistance to change, most researchers in the 1960s dispassionately relied on the ability of the strategist approach to change society (centralized planning and development programs, etc.). In this context, the ability of the national state to achieve its objectives and impose its "law" required it to be the reference point for itself. In his introduction to *Etat et société au Maghreb* (*State and Society in the Maghreb,* 1975), Abdelbaki Hermassi explained state modernization as follows: "We reject the theory of modernization as a stopgap paradigm. In fact, [...] (we propose) a new theoretical paradigm. In our theoretical framework, the object of analysis in the formation and transformation of societies is neither the individual nor the culture, but the nation-state [...] (which is) capable of making history". Thus, the development, which is supposed to replace the meta-social guarantors of tradition, discovers the political guarantor of change, which is by definition non-social.

The theorists of this "modernity that plans" (the plan being the sole means of rationalization and legitimacy) were more inspired by State model inherited from Keynes, the New Deal, and the emerging planning, than by the centuries-old construction of relations of differentiation and interaction between the management of public development choices and the elaboration of choices or rules. According to J. Duvignaud, the aim was to "form the avant-garde of an increasingly numerous intellectual elite, who, because they are professionally in contact with "social facts", will form a link between political decision-making on the one hand, and social trends and needs on the other" (Duvignaud 1968). Later,

a new oriented research practice would see the light, in which the man of science would marry the planner. The satirical image of the Golden Gate Bridge evoked by M. Kerrou (Kerrou 1991) sums up this osmotic identification between the scientist and the state planner.

The Three Corners of Research

During the 1960s, as the State moved towards a planning-based approach, major themes emerged to represent the foundations of the Tunisian social sciences. An analysis in 2000 of the content of articles in the Tunisian Social Science Journal (Ben Hafaiedh 2000), for the period of 1960-2000, underscores the dominance of subjects relating to the sociology of education (51 articles), political sociology (50 articles), regional and urban development (50 articles) and rural sociology (31 articles). However, economic research, having acquired increasing autonomy, no longer figure in the Journal. The second direction was to develop research in related or ancillary areas. Minor themes, for example, focused on highly theoretical issues such as social history, social psychology and social philosophy. In this regard, the idea, that research in social science has been on the margins of social practice and society's needs, must be emphasized. The major themes that prepare graduates for practice, such as the sociology of education, the sociology of work, the study of the rural world and political studies, were omnipresent, despite the fact that this presence translated the message of state modernization in an academic language. The relationship between these sciences and the issue of development is therefore more than obvious. The conception of its object and methods hence depended on both the theoretical approaches adopted by the various disciplines and the place of traditional society and the rural world in the concerned social formation.

In Tunisia, until 1973, rural studies were the dominant specialty in research, consultancy and university teaching. The works on this subject were characterized by a very conspicuous attachment to political change (Zghal, 1968) and by a very strong semantic confusion regarding notions such as development, social change, progress, industrialization, modernity and modernization. When Tunisian researchers spoke of change in the countryside, they often preferred the notion of modernization to that of modernity. An inventory of scientific production up to the 1980s revealed a certain number of recurring themes (Ayari Chadli 1967, Zghal A. 1967, 1968, Attia H. 1965). Under the government of M. Ahmed Ben Salah (1964-1969), sociology addressed the major issues of awareness, development, dissemination of information and social transformations in the rural world. The establishment of the BES (Bureau of Sociological Studies) within the Ministry of Planning, testified to the importance attached to sociology by the new State. In this perspective of *"modernization from above"*, very little room was left for the "local" and the regional. Studies of regional development did not see the light of day until the 1970s. This also explains the idea that while relaying the developmentalist message from the center (dissemination of technical innovation, transformation of rural regions towards agricultural modernization, rural exodus, vertical integration of agriculture with industry, and the place of peasants in political change), this production had granted very little importance to more or less old or "traditional" practices, such as local knowledge, hunting, forest populations, mountain populations, fishing, etc. The immediate impact of this type of study was a relative lack of understanding of the structures of traditional society. In the 1970s, this led to a rural exodus and underemployment.

The other example is that of the educational sciences. In the same theoretical framework, it is postulated that education is an effective modernizing activity, in that it generates the skills, attitudes and values needed to unite the nation, by producing cadres and attenuating regional particularisms. Modernization applied to changes in the education system was part of the current vocabulary, presented as a must, as an obligation. Initially, modernity was associated with the development of representations (C. Camillieri 1965) and the development of the productive apparatus (D. Mahfoudh, 1982) and personality (B. Bchir 1980). Lilia Ben Salem's work was part of a series of studies on the inception of administrative leadership (executives) and the social origins of students. Later, the second founding moment of this change-oriented production, and modernization through the training of human capital, would emerge. This new research direction is the result of works carried out by foreign researchers, especially Americans, within the context of the "social-containment" doctrine. The study of modernity and modernization would henceforth be concomitant with the study of attitudes (*Sack Richard 1972* and Francis Sutton 1965). .From the 1980s onwards, we observed two contradictory ideas: the return to the sociology of education in the doctoral research of Tunisians pursuing their studies in France, and the abrupt halt of this sociological effort to open up to the educational sciences in local research. In 1999, of the 169 doctoral and 102 MA theses in the social sciences at the University of Tunis 1, only 11 doctoral theses and 5 MA dissertations, defended or in preparation, were devoted to educational topics. This theoretical gap coincides with the emergence of new problems in schools and universities (parental resignation, intergenerational problems, teacher-student relations, etc.). Moreover, doctoral research carried out over the past few decades in the psychology department of the FSHST (University of Tunis) has recently been suspended due to

governance problems and a lack of supervisors among associate and full professors.

Deciphering Population Choices

During the 1970s and the 1980s, the research that followed the planning paradigm gradually gave way to an approach based on listening to users and, consequently, to the population. This was the pivotal period of *infitah* (openness). Exposure to development, knowledge of the rules of conduct and their transmission are now studied in terms of actors rather than social groups, even if the latter are considered as "reference groups". An elaborate public choice is not always a population choice, hence the interest in returning to attitudes, behavior and opinion. This covers varied fields of research, such as smuggling (Aïcha Ettaïb, 1999) and irregular migration (Mahdi Mabrouk, 2010).

Unlike other specialties, Tunisian political science has no founding father. It was born of a junction between, on the one hand, the study of social movements (the transition from trade union studies to political development by E. Hermassi 1975) and that of public law, on the other (the transition to the study of constitutional law (A. Amor 1973) and parliamentary elites (D. El Jazi 1971 and S. Châabane 1975). From a practical point of view, this specialty remained alien to polling techniques and electoral sociology. The return to the field, inaugurated in the context of studies devoted to the subject of identity, encouraged researchers to work more on channeling frameworks and Sartori's famous *channeling agencies*. Under the influence of French and American specialists in Maghreb studies, Tunisian researchers discovered, along with historians, the people penalized by urbanization and state control, the de-ruralized, and the downtrodden in need of community solidarity. We began, therefore, to analyze change in the light of state disengagement. This new direction, with the State-civil society pair as its focal point, would not last long. The slow evolution towards the democratic paradigm came to an end with the symposium on "Social Pluralism, Political Pluralism and Democracy". (M. Camau & K. Zamiti 1991).

I.3. Disciplinary Fragmentation and the Emergence of Three Competing Logics of Scientific Legitimization

The crisis of the developmentalist paradigm, investigated by a working group coordinated by A. Zghal at CERES in 1998, places emphasis on the profound influence of state development policies on research. This evolution resulted in the emergence of two major new paradigms: the culturalist paradigm, characterized by a return to the reflections of Ibn Khaldun in history, sociology and political studies, and the paradigm democratic governance.

This duality of perspectives sometimes represents a double alternative, offering both democratic and culturalist approaches to the challenges facing Tunisian society. This transformation marks an important inflection point in our understanding of social and political dynamics, revealing the complex interconnections between development, culture and democracy.

These three paradigms refer to three types of political legitimacy and, consequently, to three distinct modes of knowledge production (Ben Hafaiedh 1994). Firstly, legitimacy rests on economic efficiency (the developmentalist paradigm), which emphasizes economic results and progress. Secondly, legitimacy stems from a symbolic identity (the culturalist paradigm), which emphasizes the importance of culture, history and identity in social construction. Finally, legitimacy is based on choices of rational-legal domination (the paradigm is oriented towards the study of democratic governance), which stresses the importance of democratic and transparent decision-making processes for effective governance.

With the massification of higher education, particularly in the social sciences, the resulting paradigmatic pluralism had paved the way for major changes. Over the past two decades (2005-2025), the number of students enrolled in doctoral programs has far outstripped the natural outlets of research and teaching. This situation calls for changes in two directions. The first is the disciplinary and interdisciplinary redeployment of the social sciences; the second is placing research within the context of the interaction between public management and knowledge production.

The three modes of knowledge production in the social sciences - legitimacy based on economic efficiency, symbolic identity, and choices of rational domination - are merely typologies in the Weberian sense of the term. (Ben Hafaiedh 1997). In the context of social science research in Tunisia, these paradigms do not operate in isolation and may be subject to multiple interferences and combinations, due to the contradictory challenges researchers face, their social position and their relationship to economic assets and power. In the effervescence of the post-revolutionary Tunisia (2011), paradigmatic pluralism asserts itself as an intellectual necessity. Carried along by social pulsations – between the *hot weather* of political emergencies and the *cold weather* of structural reconfigurations –, research embraces this cyclicity: it articulates the analysis of democratic transformations with that of fundamental rights mutations, while expressing the challenges of

freedom of conscience (Ben Hafaiedh, IADH 2016) and the transnational reconfigurations of the religious fact (M. Saidani, 2017, "Croyants sans frontières"). It is precisely these social rhythms, alternating crisis and consolidation, that dictate the emergence and prioritization of study themes.

In times of crisis as in normal times, the social sciences, akin to other scientific fields, are subject to the laws of the "field". According to P. Bourdieu, "these are unwritten laws that are inscribed in reality and the state of tendencies and having"... "what we call ... at the stock exchange the sense of investment" (P. Bourdieu 1997). In this context, P. Bourdieu delineates the reconversion strategies practiced by scientists, leading them to move from one field or subject to another, "depending on the capital they have and the relationship to the capital they have acquired". "It's like in sports, the good scientific player makes the choices that pay off" (P. Bourdieu 1997).

When speaking of disciplinary redeployment in the sense of interdisciplinary practice, we often think of exchanges between disciplines that join forces to successfully investigate a specific question. After a revolution (since 2011), as is the case in many similar contexts, it is common to see a phenomenon where jurists, sociologists, historians and other researchers find themselves improvising as political scientists or political analysts. In these periods of transition and political instability, the urgent need to understand new issues and emerging dynamics pushes many researchers to broaden their field of expertise and venture into areas that may be outside their initial area of specialization. Thanks to the advent of social media, *"fast thinkers"* appear in abundance, motivated by the need to grasp current events, analyze and interpret them in a rapidly changing political context.

Political studies became a privileged field of exploration for these researchers, offering an analytical framework for understanding the political transformations, power conflicts, social movements and institutional changes that characterize post-revolutionary periods. By focusing on political issues, these researchers provide a popularizing perspective, while contributing to the construction of a critical and enlightened discourse on contemporary political issues.

This redeployment also concerns the interaction of social sciences with the urban and the city, as well as the theme of local governance. With this in mind, community-based research has become increasingly visible since 2011, offering new opportunities for active research on a local scale. From this perspective, the notion of territory, for example, requires more than this complementary effort. In his book *"De la modernité" (Of Modernity 1983),* Jean Chesneaux describes and denounces certain signs of territory dissolution: land use planning, relocation and uprooting go hand in hand. Once again, it is a question of angles and scales. From a purely geographical point of view, for example, there are only two aspects: territorial division and location, even when the economic question is central to the issue of regional development. This is particularly true of studies in economic and social geography, which are based on the concept of substantial public intervention by the state through industrialization, diversification of the economic base, and population mobility (Tizaoui H. 1997). From another perspective, the sociologist's and even the political scientist's gaze focuses more on the notions of uprooting, movement, human mobility and the human cost of managing space, etc. As a number of organizations (Alerte international, FTDS, ASSF, etc.) and academics (F. Hecheri, 2000 and N. Boutaleb, 1999) have shown, space is largely a social or cultural product. The use of space is the result of decisions taken by social groups, in the context of often-conflicting relationships that call into question power structures.

This redeployment then concerns crisis management (such as in Covid 19) and services such as public health. The public health system is often presented as a socially homogeneous and coherent system. The little research carried out on this subject, with the exception of the studies conducted by the Ministry of Public Health (including those by the National Office for Family and Population ONFP), focused more on prevention, awareness and protection, rather than on the quality of public services or the social and non-organic aspects of certain diseases. It was not until the emergence of community-based research in the context of COVOD that "user" and "governance" aspects of the health sector were addressed in a more sustained way (CESMA 2020). More properly speaking, the transition from a public choice (health as a public service) to a population choice (the perception of the citizen as user) increasingly implies questioning medical power and taking into account the social dimension of health and illness. With this in mind, the gradual shift towards applied social science research is helping bridge the gap between often overly theoretical basic research and the expertise of consulting firms. This shift from basic to applied research, particularly noticeable during the LMD reform of 1990-2000 (laboratories, research units and organizations, particularly in action research), underlines the importance of the applied approach as a lever for influencing public choices by the populations concerned.

I.4. Interaction: Public Management, Research Practice and Public Opinion

The most relevant studies on the relationship between knowledge production and public management focus

on the shift away from the classic administration model – based on the general interest – towards a citizen-client logic and administrative management (Monks & Joost, 1998). This upheaval calls into question the hierarchical order of goals (population as the end, administration as the means) and the legitimacy of public choices compared to citizens' expectations. The social sciences play a central role here, by deciphering social facts: people's expectations, behaviors and actual choices. In this respect, post-revolutionary Tunisia has witnessed the emergence of new players (civil society, citizens' groups) and new research practices (action research), giving impetus to academic freedom. These dynamics have shaken up the traditional frameworks of knowledge production, long dominated by a technocratic approach. The concept of governance, promoted since the 1990s by Western research centers (Hyden & Bratton, 1998), has found particular resonance in this context. Defined as "the conscious management of regime structures to strengthen public legitimacy" or as "a liberal-democratic model guaranteeing human rights and responsible administration", this notion has been incorporated, sometimes ambiguously, in official Tunisian discourse.

The ideology of "good governance", promoted by certain international partners, has given rise to an anti-statist offensive with counter-productive effects. It simultaneously weakened the State (by political delegitimization and the erosion of its fiscal capacity) and the private sector (through the withdrawal of public subsidies). This process of democratic deconsolidation further complicates the already fraught dynamics governing the relationship between knowledge and power.

In this landscape, researchers are called upon (via the academic field and civil society) to shed light on these tensions, particularly the partial economic reforms and social protection. In the medium term, Tunisia, like its North African neighbors, will have to deal with the fragmentation of national solidarities (communitarianism, family or regional resilience) and the commodification of social progress, now reserved for those who *"can pay"*. The return of informal practices (unreported work, traditional medicine, expansion of family networks in town) reveals the shortcomings of public services and the weakening of citizenship ties.

The revolution has also exposed marginal situations long ignored by research. Analysis now turns away from prescriptive norms *(what should be)* to focus on actual practices *(what is)*:

- Electoral behavior vs. legal codes,
- Social facts vs. formal law,
- Human Development Indicators (HDI) vs. GDP,
- Informal economy vs. growth models.

A precious legacy to be preserved, this research approach – a direct result of the post-2011 momentum and the paradigmatic pluralism it has unleashed – is one of the major intellectual achievements of contemporary Tunisia. Despite current tensions, it embodies a fundamental methodological subversion: by placing the citizen actor (his practices, aspirations and resistances) at the heart of the social sciences, it decimated the legacy of the authoritarian "black box", marked by a reductive developmentalist paradigm in which social dynamics were knowingly obscured and critical subjects banished or criminalized. This epistemological rehabilitation of the citizen-agent – now central, audible and politically legitimate – remains a democratic treasure whose protection engages the very future of Tunisian critical thought.

II. CHANNELS AND VISIBILITY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE PRODUCTION IN TUNISIA

II.1. Channels of Scientific Production in the Social Sciences in Tunisia

Scientific production in the social sciences in Tunisia is disseminated mainly through the following channels:

- **Tunisian academic journals in the social sciences:** we can identify the Tunisian academic journals that publish social science research. These journals include publications such as:
  - **Revue Tunisienne de Sciences Sociales (RTSS):** this is a multidisciplinary journal covering a wide range of social science topics, including sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science.
  - **Cahiers du CERES (Center for Research and Studies in Social Sciences):** This journal publishes in-depth research and studies in the social sciences, including sociology, history and political science.
  - **Revue tunisienne de droit:** Although focused on law, this journal also publishes articles relevant to the social sciences, particularly in the fields of public law and international law.
  - **Revue Tunisienne de Science Politique (RTSP):** This is a journal of analysis and debate on political issues. Its main ambition is to contribute to the development and dissemination of Tunisian political science, and to provide researchers in the field with in-depth, scientific and conceptualized analyses of the themes and issues of the discipline. It is a scientific journal that publishes analyses on all the spectrum of political science – political sociology, political theory, comparative politics, social science methods, administrative science, public policy and international relations – focusing on the national sphere, foreign models from a comparative perspective, and international politics. The first issue of the Revue Tunisienne de Science Politique was published in 2019.
  - **Bulletin économique et social de la Tunisie (BEST 1946-1955):** Published by the Information Department of the French General Residence in Tunis. It offers a wide range of documentation, including statistical tables, maps, articles, reports and illustrations. The themes and fields covered are manifold: politics, local history, regional history, agriculture, cities, education, social life, cultural life, territories, trade, mobility, industry, energy, mining, etc., in a multidisciplinary approach (economics, sociology, geography, history, agronomy...).
- **International and regional journals:** international cooperation with foreign researchers and institutions can also influence the visibility of Tunisian social science research. International collaborations can lead to joint publications in internationally renowned journals. Three journals stand out as leaders in the academic field: *Omran,* published by the Doha Institute; *the Revue Maghreb Machrek,* aimed at French-speaking researchers; and the *Journal of North African Studies,* designed specifically for researchers wishing to publish in English. *Omran,* published by the Doha Institute, is distinguished with its commitment to quality academic research, highlighting relevant and innovative work in various fields of the social sciences. Its growing influence helps strengthen the presence of Arabic-language works in the international fora, providing an essential platform for Arabic-speaking researchers. *La Revue Maghreb Machrek* is positioned as a pillar for French-speaking researchers, offering a space dedicated to the publication of high-quality research in the social sciences. Its regional outreach and its commitment to academic excellence make it a valuable resource for disseminating knowledge in the Maghreb and Mashraq countries, while fostering scientific dialogue in French.

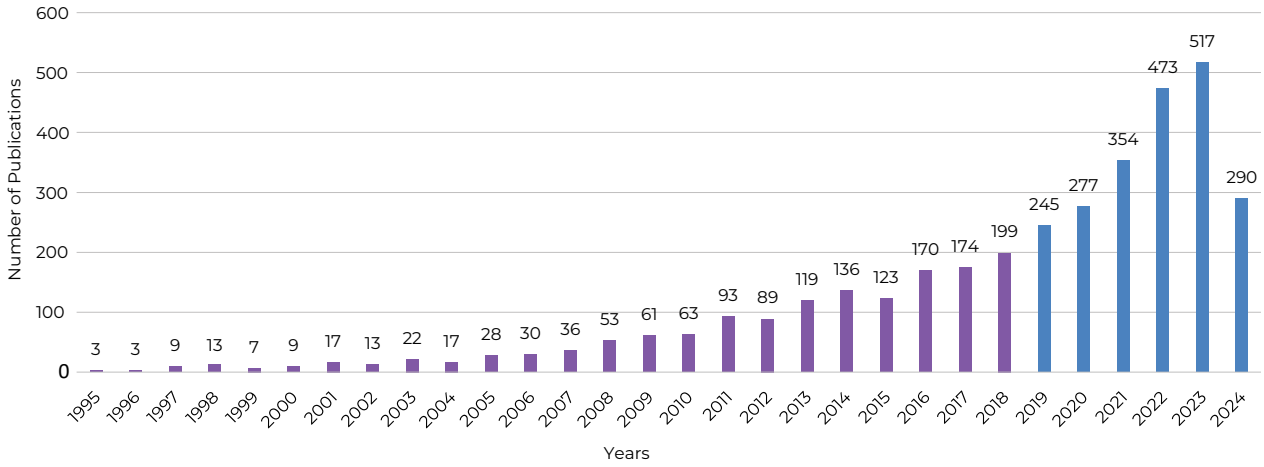
Finally, the *Journal of North African Studies* is an important forum for researchers wishing to publish their work in English. This journal plays a crucial role in promoting North African studies internationally, promoting academic exchange and collaboration among English- speaking researchers interested in the region. These three eminent journals illustrate the diversity and richness of academic research in Tunisia. They offer specialized platforms that help promote the visibility and impact of the work of researchers in different fields of the social sciences, whether in Arabic, French or English.

II.2. Key Bibliometric Indicators for Social Science Research in Tunisia

To ensure the availability of resources capable of pinpointing Tunisian scientific production in the social sciences, the bibliometric analysis below refers to the SCOPUS database to monitor developments up to the

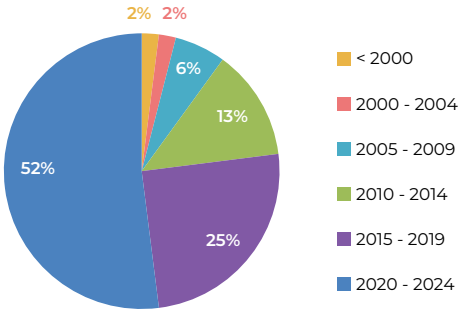
first half of 2024. According to SCOPUS (ELSEVIER, 2024), the **number of scientific articles** in the field of social science, produced by Tunisian researchers, is around **3,696 articles up to the first half of 2024.** Almost half of these articles (51.7%) are published after 2019. Articles published before 2010 account for only 10.1% of all publications. During the last five years (2020-2024), an average of around 400 articles in social science in Tunisia are identified. Since 2000, the pace of publication has accelerated exponentially, from 9 publications to 517 in 2023 (an increase of almost 5700%).

Figure 1: Annual growth in social science publications in Tunisia



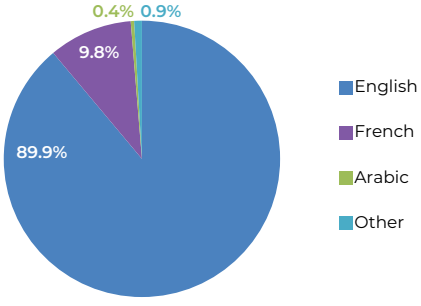
Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

Figure 2: Distribution of scientific articles in the social sciences in Tunisia, by publication period



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

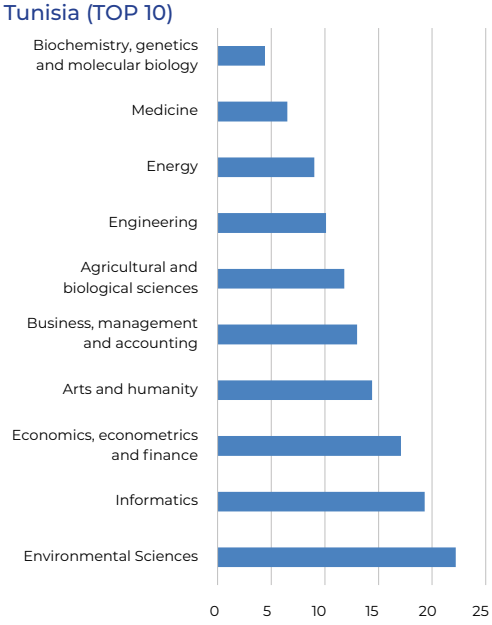
Figure 3: Distribution of scientific articles in the social sciences in Tunisia, by language of original publication



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

The original language of publication of these articles is mainly English (89%), followed by French with almost 10%. Articles in Arabic are not very visible (only 13 articles, i.e. less than 1% of the total). Given the openness of social science to other fields, the majority of social science articles tackle common themes: Nearly 22% deal with environmental science, 19% with computer science, and 17% with economics and finance.

Figure 4: Areas covered by social science articles in Tunisia (TOP 10)



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

According to SCOPUS, one fourth of Tunisian social science articles were not cited in other scientific articles. Conversely, the number of citations exceeded 10 times for 25.1% of published articles.

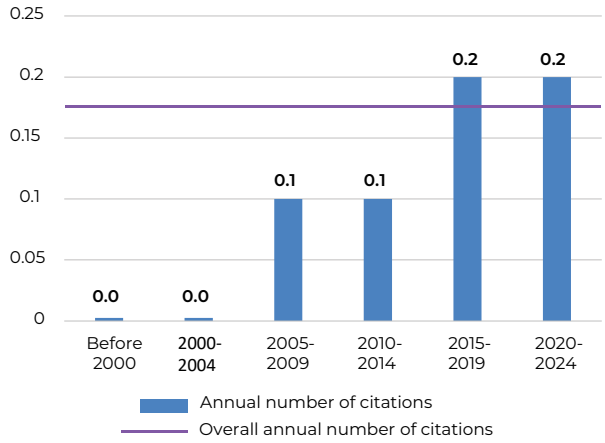
Figure 5: Distribution of Tunisian social science articles by number of citations

Number of citations	Number of articles	Percentage of articles
0 citations	921	24,9%
1 time	445	12,0%
2 - 5 times	906	24,5%
6 - 10 times	498	13,5%
11 - 20 times	426	11,5%
21 - 50 times	348	9,4%
51 - 100 times	105	2,8%
More than 100 times	47	1,3%
TOTAL	**3696**	**100%**

Source: MESRS

Taking into account the age of the article, the average annual number of citations for social science articles is around 1.7 per year. This average is clearly remarkable for those published during 2015-2019 (they are cited in 2 citations/year).

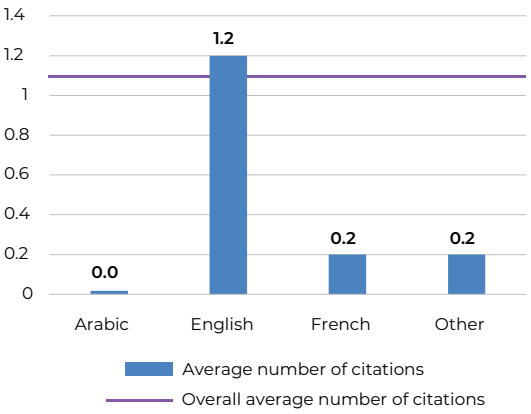
Figure 6: Annual number of citations for social science articles in Tunisia, by publication period



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

The international recognition and influence of scientific production in the social sciences in Tunisia are clearly correlated with the language in which the article is written, with an unavoidable dominance of English. Although the overall average number of citations for these research works is close to 11 citations/article, this rate is almost nil for articles in Arabic, and reaches almost 12 citations for articles in English, which reflects the lack of recognition of articles in Arabic and the dominance of those in English. Even French-language articles are relatively less attractive, with an average of 2 citations per article.

Figure 7: Average citations for social science articles in Tunisia, by language of initial publication (citations/article)



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

As regards researchers, the principal authors of the 3,696 social science articles in Tunisia numbered 2,774, of whom 80% (i.e. 2,226 authors) published only one article as pricipal author, which is the case for 60% of published articles. The remaining 20% of researchers were principal authors of at least two social science articles in Tunisia. They produced around 40% of the published articles.

Figure 8: Distribution of articles/principal authors by number of articles per author

Number of articles/ lead author	Number of articles	Percentage of articles	Number of principal authors	Percentage of authors
1 article	**2226**	**60,2%**	**2226**	**80,2%**
2-5 items	**1301**	**35,2%**	**527**	**19,0%**
6-10 items	**118**	**3,2%**	**17**	**0,6%**
More than 10 items	**51**	**1,4%**	**4**	**0,1%**
TOTAL	**3696**	**100,0%**	**2774**	**100,0%**

Source: MESRS

III. EVOLUTION AND STATE OF PLAY OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH BODIES

Public university research in the social sciences in Tunisia can be defined according to the following criteria:

a. Institutions affiliated to universities and institutes of higher education, where teaching is combined with research. Unlike public institutions such as CERES, which does not offer teaching, these institutions are, in principle, characterized by a close integration of teaching and research activities. The main research bodies in social science are laboratories and research units.

b. Institutions open only to academic players, whose findings have an impact on the career development of teacher-researchers. This means that the research work carried out within these bodies is evaluated and taken into account in the career paths of the individuals involved, notably in terms of academic promotion, additional funding opportunities and recognition in the scientific community. As far as the impact on the career development of doctoral students is concerned, the said organs are, in principle, intended to welcome them too, to facilitate their research, supervise them and enable them to make use of the resources of the research facilities (grants, libraries, participation in scientific events, etc.). Undergraduate and graduate students are supposed to benefit from the institutions in terms of training and dissemination of their research.

c. Guidance towards the production of scientific knowledge: Public university research in the social sciences focuses on the production of new and original knowledge, using rigorous scientific methodologies and approaches. Studies and research are conducted following a planned three-year research program, or during thesis preparation.

d. Accessibility of research finding: research findings are generally published in academic journals, specialized books or other media that are accessible to the scientific community and the interested public. The emphasis is on sharing knowledge and disseminating results. Laboratories and research units do not generally publish journals; institutions (faculties or institutes, and sometimes universities themselves) do. Members of these units or laboratories propose their work for publication, which is generally subject to internal assessment before publication.

e. Interdisciplinary collaboration: public university research in the social sciences often encourages collaboration among different disciplines and fields of study, and promotes an interdisciplinary approach to tackling society's complex issues. Laboratories are by definition and in practice multidisciplinary research organs.

f. Public funding: the social sciences research in public universities is generally supported by public funds, from sources such as government, research funding agencies or the academic institutions themselves. In principle, laboratories can offer paid services to interested parties, and participate in national and international calls for tender.

What follows is a brief overview of the evolution of public university research bodies in the social sciences in Tunisia. Three points will be covered: the legal framework governing scientific research in Tunisia, the history of these organs and their current situation. The information provided in the following pages will be both quantitative and qualitative. As this is only an overview, which will serve as an introduction to the in-depth treatment of the current situation, the space given over to analysis will be intentionally reduced.

III.1. Legal Framework Regulating Scientific Research

Article 2 of Decree 97-938 to 941, dated May 19, 1997, stipulates that "Public scientific research institutions are organized into institutes and centers. The scientific organization of public scientific research institutions comprises: scientific board; research laboratories; research units; specialized units; information and scientific documentation units; agricultural experimentation units". Article 7 of the same Decree stipulates that: "Public scientific research institutions comprise research laboratories and/or research units. Research laboratories are created according to the missions assigned to the concerned institution and to the national and sectorial research priorities".

With regard to financial organization, article 22 of the same Decree provides that: "The resources of public scientific research institutions are made up of subsidies granted by the State for equipment, operations, teaching and research, subsidies paid by other public bodies or other organizations, donations and bequests, and

income from acquired assets. Public scientific research institutions may enter into agreements to provide paid services, such as training programs, research programs, studies and expert appraisals, and to exploit patents and licenses. They have priority in carrying out studies and providing services ordered by the State and public institutions".

Decree no. 97-939, dated May 19, 1997, in article 3 of chapter I, dedicated to general provisions, stipulates that: "The research laboratory is the basic structure for conducting and carrying out scientific research and technological development activities in all fields of knowledge, within the framework of the general guidelines defined by the SSTRC". Article 4 states: "The creation of a research laboratory must comply with criteria designed to guarantee its functionality and its ability to carry out its missions, principally the number of research staff working there, the scientific environment in which it is located, the relevance of its scientific objectives and their coherence with national research policies. The eligibility criteria for the status of research laboratory are defined, according to the nature of the institutions referred to in article 2 of this Decree, by order of the Prime Minister after consultation with "Higher Council for Scientific Research and Technology". In article 5, it is stated that: "The research laboratory is created by order of the minister(s) concerned, after consulting the relevant national or sectorial evaluation body, without prejudice to the provisions of articles 16, 19 and 23 of this Decree". Similar provisions apply to research units.

Box 1: Research laboratories in Tunisia

In Section I of Chapter II, Decree no. 97-939 of May 19, 1997 (articles 15 to 18) provides that specific provisions apply to research laboratories and research units of public scientific research institutions. Section II (articles 19 to 22) sets out specific provisions for research laboratories and research units of higher education and research institutions. Both sections deal with the creation, by ministerial decree, of the above-mentioned organs, the ministerial appointment of their heads, the allowances granted to them, and the ranks required for their eligibility (Professors, Associate Professors). In this respect, laboratories and units are subject to the same provisions.

According to Decree no. 2007- 1417 of June 18, 2007 (article 1), doctoral schools are scientific and technological bodies, made up in particular of groups of excellence comprising teacher-researchers, researchers and doctoral students, working on a set of complementary and coherent doctoral study paths, or priority scientific and technological themes, at the national level. Doctoral schools are governed by the decree of November 13, 2007, which regulates their functioning .
The LMD (BA, MA, Doctoral degrees) reform began in Tunisia in 2008 at BA level (Decree N°3123 of September 22, 2008), then in 2012 at Master level (Decree N°1227 of August 1, 2012), culminating in 2013 at Doctorate level (Decree N°47 of January 4, 2013). Apart from the exceptional cases of a few specialties, such as Medicine and Engineering, it is in force in all higher education institutions. It is within this legal framework that social science research bodies are functioning.

III.2. Statistical History of Social Science Research Bodies in Tunisia

Historical Overview

At the Center for Economic and Social Studies and Research CERES (founded in 1962), five disciplines were created (sociology, demography, economics, and geography), then linguistics was added. After 1972, CERES grew from five to ten, with the addition of other research disciplines including the national movement history, literature and Islamic studies. CERES researchers were either permanent (from 12 to 15), appointed and assigned full-time to the center, or, coming from faculties, associated by contract. They included literary scholars, theologians, psychologists, historians, archaeologists, jurists, economists, etc. By the end of the 1970s, there were one hundred and twenty of them. In 2004, Tunisia had 12,950 researchers. By 2006, this had risen to 15,833 (DGRS 2024). In 2007-2008, there were 131 teacher-researchers and 243 student-researchers in laboratories; and 755 teacher-researchers and 1,113 student-researchers in research units.

In 2006, Tunisia had 4.52 researchers for every 1,000 active workers (DGRS 2024). Thirty-seven doctoral schools have been established within research and higher education institutions. They were empowered to award master's and doctoral degrees since the 2008-2009 academic year. These doctoral schools manage doctoral training for 196 doctoral degrees across 110 disciplines (State of play 2019-2020). Within the doctoral schools there are 196 doctoral commissions corresponding to each accredited diploma. In 2018, the breakdown of doctoral schools by university was as follows:

Figure 9: Distribution of doctoral schools (ED) by university (2018)

University	Number of EDs	Percentage
Carthage	8	21%
Tunis El Manar	5	13%
Sfax	5	13%
Tunis	4	11%
Monastir	4	11%
Sousse	4	11%
Manouba	3	8%
Gabes	1	3%
Kairouan	1	3%
Ezzitouna	1	3%
Vrituelle	1	3%
TOTAL	**37**	**100%**

Source: DGRS 2024

Figure 10: Distribution of doctoral schools (ED) by research field

Field	Number of DEs	Percentage
Technical and Engineering Sciences	10	27%
Humanities and Social Sciences	8	22%
Economics and Management	6	16%
Life Sciences and Biotechnology	5	13%
Political and Legal Sciences	4	11%
Exact Sciences	4	11%
TOTAL	**37**	**100%**

Source: DGRS 2024

Figure 11: Evolution of doctoral enrolments from 2007-2008 to 2017-2018

Academic year	Doctoral students	Enrolled in joint doctorates
2007-2008	9067	1007
2008-2009	10622	1010
2009-2010	8520	997
2010-2011	9079	1052
2011-2012	9122	1060
2012-2013	10102	829
2013-2014	12417	851
2014-2015	13230	1169
2015-2016	14450	894
2016-2017	13125	781
2017-2018	12837	720

Source: DGRS 2024

Figure 12: Evolution of scientific output in doctoral programs from 2007-2008 to 2017-2018

Year	PhD	Joint doctorate
2007	575	151
2008	624	107
2009	598	121
2010	646	72
2011	711	56
2012	906	161
2013	830	133
2014	838	102
2015	1181	220
2016	2203	153
2017	2748	172
2018	1618	101

Source: DGRS 2024

Over the same period, social science teacher-researchers accounted for 13% of the total workforce. This percentage was approximately the same among “student researchers” (12%).

In the 2017/2018 academic year, the university scientific research system included 668 research organs (research institutes, centers, laboratories and units).

For the year 2022, and based on an official list enriched by the findings of the present research, we were able to establish a list of 83 social science research laboratories: 17 at the University of Tunis (20.48%); 15 at the University of Manouba (18.07%); 13 at the University of Tunis El Manar (15.66%), tied with the University de Sfax (15.66%); 11 at the University of Carthage (13.25%); 6 at University of Sousse (7.23%); 2 at University of Zaytouna (2.41%), the University of Jendouba (2.41%) and the Institute for Agricultural Research and Higher Education (IRESA) (2.41%) respectively; 1 at the University of Kairouan (1.21%); and 1 at the Cultural Research Center (Heritage Institute; 1.21%). Greater Tunis, comprising the Universities of Tunis, Tunis El Manar, Carthage and Manouba, alone accounts for more than two-thirds (56) of all laboratories, i.e. 67.46% of their total number.

The ten disciplines with the largest number of laboratories are, in descending order: Economics (27), Languages,

Linguistics and Literature (14), Legal and Constitutional Sciences (10), History (7), Management Sciences (4), Heritage Sciences (4), Geography (3), Psychology and Education Sciences (3), Sociology and Philosophy, with 2 laboratories each.

Research Bodies

Statistical Data

Figure 13: Breakdown of laboratories and units by field of research (2023)

Research Field	Laboratories	Units	Total
Medical and health sciences	122	08	130
Engineering and Technology	117	04	121
Exact and Natural Sciences	107	02	109
Social Sciences	62	03	65
Agricultural and Veterinary Sciences	60	00	60
Humanities and Arts	33	04	37
TOTAL	**501**	**21**	**522**

Source: DGRS 2024

Figure 14: Breakdown of laboratories and research units by university (2023)

University	Laboratories	Units	Specialized units	Total
Tunis El Manar	86	02	-	88
Sfax	82	05	-	87
EPS	65	03	04	72
Carthage	58	-	-	58
Monastir	39	01	-	40
Research Center (MESRS)	33	-	26	59
Manouba	27	03	-	30
Tunis	27	-	-	27
IRESA	25	-	-	25
Sousse	25	-	-	25
Gabes	16	04	-	20
Jendouba	05	02	-	07
Gafsa	03	-	-	03
Ezzitouna	01	-	-	01
Kairouan	01	-	-	01
DGET	01	-	-	01
Other	07	01	-	08
TOTAL	**501**	**21**	**30**	**552**

Source: DGRS 2024

The growing number of laboratories may be attributed to the policy of promoting research units into laboratories and not encouraging the creation of new units. It is in educational and research institutions that the largest number of these laboratories are found. As for research centers specialized in social science, they have only one, which represents only a small proportion of their total number (3%).

Social science research bodies, laboratories and units combined, represent 12.45% of their total number. Specialized units are found only in research centers.

How Are Research Bodies Assessed?
These research bodies are evaluated periodically. They are required to draw up a three-year research program. Budgets are allocated based on these programs, and can be increased if the results of the past three years are positive.

Scientific production (articles, books and theses) is the basic criterion for this assessment. The upgrading of a research unit (generally circumscribed by a well-defined set of topics) into a laboratory (multidisciplinary by definition) is permitted after accreditation. The heads of the laboratories and units submit an annual report to the General Directorate for Scientific Research.

The CNEARS (Tunisian Agency for Evaluation and Accreditation in Higher Education and Scientific Research) is the administrative body responsible for this assessment. The assessment criteria are listed in the self-evaluation form that the laboratory must submit at the end of each cycle (3 years) and especially when applying for accreditation renewal.

Box 2: CNEARS' asssessment criteria

CNEARS: In its capacity as a scientific research assessment agency, CNEARS' assessment is based on the following criteria: human resources (teacher-researchers and supervised students); internal organization (number of research teams or entities); premises occupied by staff, specifying their functionality and the convenience of the infrastructure; logistical resources; basic scientific equipment; specific computer equipment; own documentary resources (books, treatises; regularly received scientific journals, databases, etc.); financial resources (grants from the supervisory ministry, from the economic sector, from international cooperation, etc.); structural and short-term difficulties (lack of personnel, administrative and management difficulties, etc.); positioning and scientific objectives; institutions and other supporting bodies; research program and its implementation (including responses to the objectives of the contractual document, to the objectives of the business world, projects carried out within the context of international cooperation); results of the laboratory's research activities (publications in the form of articles, books, chapters, national or international filed patents and training leading to degrees, theses and teachers' accreditations); knowledge management and valorization of the laboratory's results (publications, communications, proceedings of scientific events, web site; socio-economic valorization of results, partnerships with economic operators, and with social, administrative and cultural institutions.); difficulties and expectations of the laboratory.

IV. SUCCESSFUL RESEARCH IN TIMES OF AUSTERITY: THE KEYS TO FUNDING

While the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research places great emphasis on adding value to research results and creating solid partnerships between research and production, these objectives face particular challenges in the social sciences. Because of their complex and often qualitative nature, the social sciences have characteristics that distinguish them from the more traditional sciences. Measuring impact, valorizing results and creating lasting partnerships can be more complicated in this field.

The evaluation of social science research is often based on different criteria from those of the hard sciences, making the value of results more subjective and sometimes difficult to quantify in the traditional way. What's more, partnerships between social science researchers and industrial players can be less easy to establish due to the sometimes abstract or conceptual nature of the conducted research, which does not always lend itself to immediate or direct application in the production field. Therefore, while the desire to add value to research and promote lasting partnerships is present in the social sciences, it is essential to recognize the specific challenges faced by this field to fully achieve these objectives.

IV.1. The Special Case of the Social Sciences

In Tunisia, the relatively low cost of training in the social sciences can have a significant impact on many undecided students, or those in search of a choice, by steering them towards these pathways, often described as "catch-all". This situation stems from the lower level of public spending on these fields of study. Social science courses are often perceived as offering varied and accessible outlets, which can attract students looking for a more flexible or less specialized path. The lower cost of these courses is a further argument in favor of them, especially for students who have to take financial constraints into account when choosing their course of study. What's more, the general perception that the social sciences offer a broad, cross-disciplinary understanding of society can encourage a large number of students to take them up, especially in the absence of a precise guidance or a marked interest in other, more specific fields. This tendency is reinforced by the fact that the social sciences address societal and human issues that are often perceived as relevant and topical.

However, it is worthy to note that this trend towards social science paths can sometimes result in overcrowding in these fields of study, which can lead to challenges related to teaching quality and employment prospects for graduates. It is therefore essential to strike a balance between the affordability of these courses and the ability of the labor market to absorb graduates from these fields. In short, the low cost of social science studies, supported by lower public spending in these fields, can certainly influence the orientation of many students towards these more versatile and affordable courses, particularly when they are faced with difficulties of guidance or choice. However, it is also essential to consider the implications of this trend on the quality of education and the professional prospects of graduates in a constantly evolving job market.

Box 3: Research funding in Tunisia

Funding for the social sciences in Tunisia, like many other countries in the MENA region, is often considered to have a low return on investment, especially in comparison with the applied and technical sciences. Policy-makers and donors generally favor projects that promise quick economic returns, which can lead to an under-appreciation of social science research, despite being crucial to development.

The issue of resources is also decisive for the career path of researchers, because of the salary gap. As a result, social science research also suffers from a brain drain, with the most talented researchers leaving academia for better-paid positions in the private sector or abroad. This phenomenon is exacerbated by precarious working conditions and a lack of stable funding, which can discourage researchers from committing to long-term projects within public institutions. Added to this, economic austerity policies have a direct impact on research funding and the recruitment of new researchers.
Finally, the lack of autonomy among researchers is another major constraint. The absence of solid partnerships between public, private and community-based research limits opportunities for funding and innovation. Social science researchers often find themselves isolated, without access to the resources and networks they need to carry out collaborative projects that could enrich their work and increase its impact.

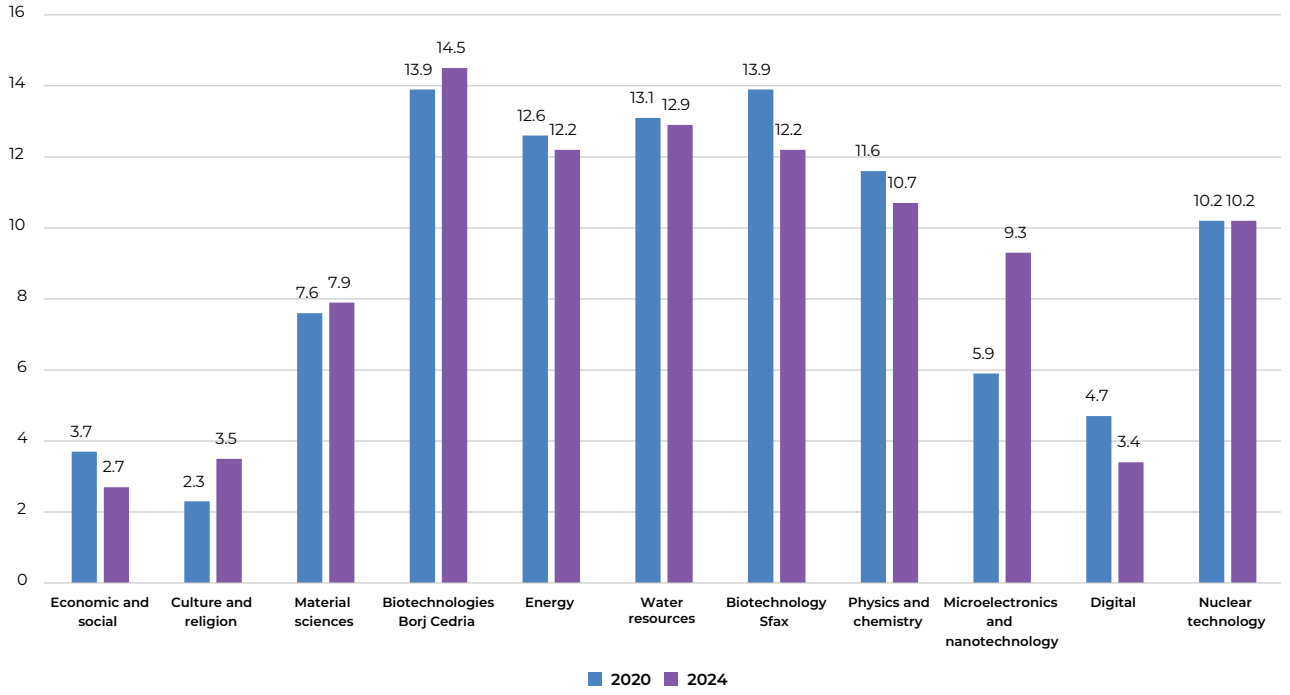
Although Tunisia is endowed with good potential in terms of research and innovation, it suffers, despite the efforts invested, from a number of shortcomings linked essentially to a lack of financial resources; the poor allocation and distribution of existing funding in favor of development; the complex bureaucratic procedures in the management of research activities; and the weak inter-ministerial coordination in scientific research. As a result, the funding of social science research in Tunisia poses a number of significant contradictions, influenced by structural and economic factors specific to the country. Chief among the challenges are those linked to massification, low return on investment, the departure of skillful researchers, the policy of economic austerity, and the limited autonomy of research actors.

As mentioned above, the massification of higher education in Tunisia has led to an increase in the number of students and researchers in the social sciences. This situation creates increased competition for funding, making it difficult to prioritize the resources needed to conduct quality research. Institutions often have to justify their funding requests by immediate results, prioritizing teaching over research.

Research Budget and Funding

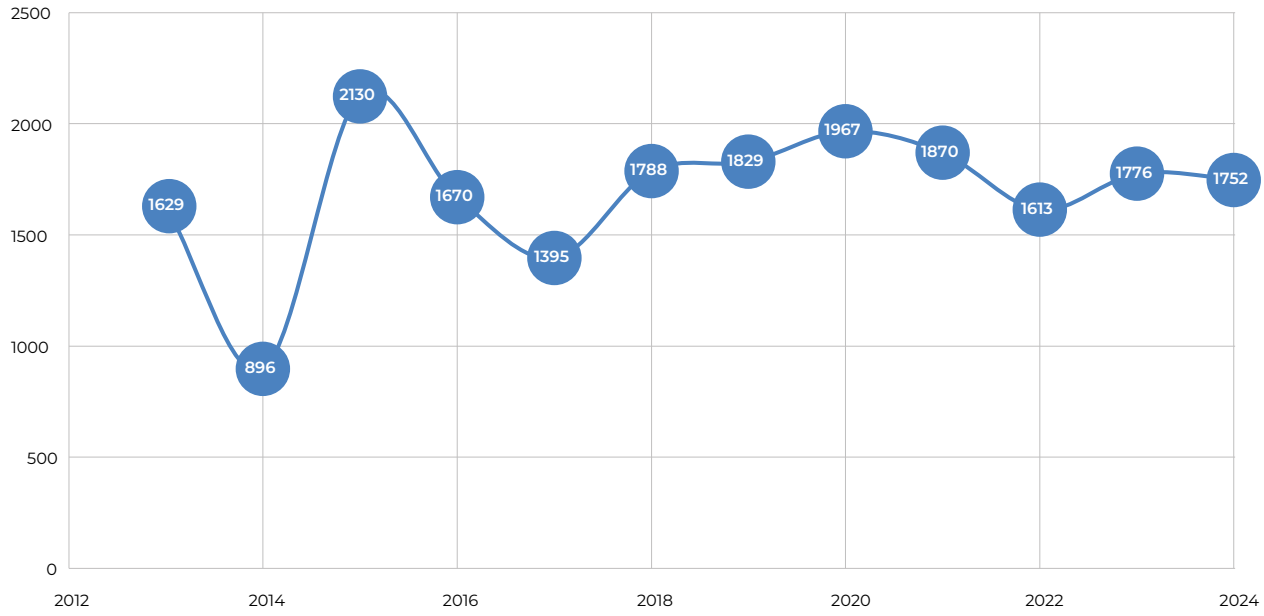
In 2023, the Ministry's budget amount to 2153 million dinars, representing 1.34% of GDP and 4% of the State budget, compared with 1035.237 million dinars in 2009 (6% of the State budget). Public funding of scientific research is relatively low, since its share of the Ministry's budget represents only 8.5% in 2023, compared with 11% in 2009. In 2024, this budget is estimated at 216.170 million dinars, or 9.3% of the Ministry's budget, compared with 186.509 million dinars for 2023 (8.5% of the budget) . This government's effort is still financially insufficient, especially in view of the new mission and orientation of research towards greater impact on economic and social development, and technology transfer. .The share of the scientific research budget for university bodies (research laboratories and units) decreased between 2020 and 2024, from 19% to 17.5% respectively. Similarly, research centers saw their share decline over time, from 38% in 2020 to 30% in 2024. The distribution of this budget reveals an increase in favor of research programs in biotechnology (Borj Cedria and Sfax centers), microelectronics and nanotechnology, to the detriment of research in the economic and social fields. As of 2020, the budget of the Center for Economic and Social Studies and Research (CERES) has dropped from 1967 thousand dinars to 1752 thousand dinars in 2024 (Figure 2), i.e. 2.7% of the total scientific research budget allocated to these research bodies (compared with 3.7% in 2020).

Figure 15: Funding of scientific research programs (% scientific research budget allocated to research structures)



Source: MESRS budget in 2020 and 2024

Figure 16: Budget of the CERES Center for Economic and Social Studies (in thousand dinars)



Source: MESRS budget

Master's and Doctoral Scholarships

With a view to strengthening research capacities and encourage scientific production on the links between economy, environment and society, Tunisia grants university scholarships for master's and doctoral students at national level, as well as scholarships for excellence to the most deserving baccalaureate (bachelor's degree) holders and students. The aim is to grant them the opportunity to pursue their university studies and research in the most prestigious institutions and laboratories abroad. However, the number of scholarships has dropped over the years: 1,978 scholarships for the 2022-2023 academic year, including 70 scholarships for master's studies; 55 scholarships for doctoral students and 1,060 doctoral work-study scholarships, compared with 2,308 scholarships for the 2017-2018 academic year, including 1,628 scholarships for master's and doctoral studies. Although government scholarships to study abroad cover various fields of study (science, engineering, medicine, etc.), opportunities in the social sciences are very limited. For bachelor's degree holders, only one scholarship is awarded each year for the sociology specialty at the University of Paris1-Sorbonne, for a total of 35 scholarships for the 2024-2025 academic year.

As for master's and doctoral studies[1], the social sciences are not well represented, since the majority of scholarships are reserved for technical and scientific fields, in particular studies in computer science, cyber-security, data-science, renewable energy, artificial intelligence, microelectronics, agriculture, language and literature, etc. These branches are largely favored, unlike economics and sociology, which are nearly absent. Such decision by the Ministry to allocate government scholarships abroad has a major influence on the academic careers of the brightest students at national level, and on their choice of specialties to pursue.

Figure 17: Distribution of government scholarships for master's and doctoral studies abroad

		2020-2021		2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025	
		Number	Level	Number	Level	Number	Level	Number	Level
France	**Psychology**	**1**	**M1**						
	Anthropology			1	**M1**	1	**M1**		
	Sociology	2	**M1**						
	Quality Management		**M1**	1	**M1**				

[1] Two categories of scholarships are available to students: university scholarships abroad and work-study scholarships for students enrolled in a Master's or Doctorate program in Tunisia.

Canada	Education Science	4	**M1**	3	**M1**	3	**M1**	1	PhD
	Psychology			1	**M1**	1	**M1**		
	Rural economics					1	**M1**		
Total		**7**		**6**		**6**		**1**	
Total awards		**41**		**59**		**47**		**20**	

Source: MESRS – DGAE

Scientific Research Programs

Tunisia has been constantly committed to securing foreign funding to stimulate scientific research and boost the recognition of Tunisian researchers' work, both locally and internationally. It is the only Maghreb, Arab and African, "associated country" to the European scientific research and innovation program, *Horizon 2020,* with an overall budget of 80 billion euros, financed by the European Union over the period 2014-2020. This project aims to strengthen Tunisia's research and innovation sector by focusing on scientific excellence, industrial leadership and societal challenges, bringing together scientists and industry to solve diverse issues.

Tunisia was distinguished by ranking third among the 16 associated countries in terms of the success rate of projects funded by the program, surpassing the European average of 14%. In 2022, Tunisia joined the new European *Horizon Europe* program, dedicated to funding scientific research and innovation projects for the period 2022-2027, with an overall budget of 100 billion euros. The social sciences are not prioritized in this program, which mainly directs its funding to sectors such as agriculture, renewable energies, health and development of competences.

Besides, Tunisia has benefited from the European Union's Erasmus+ program, with a budget of 52 million euros, between 2015 and 2020, for mobility and university cooperation actions, 24 million of which have been allocated to capacity-building projects in higher education. This program has been extended over the period 2021-2027, continuing to support projects, partnerships, events and mobilities, with a focus on higher education. Its priorities centered upon inclusion, diversity, digital transformation, environment, democratic participation, shared values and civic engagement. A few projects are devoted the social sciences, with 6 out of 12 aiming to strengthen the capacities of researchers, develop new skills to improve their employability and meet the needs of the labor market.

IV.2. Massification of the Social Sciences: a Strategy of Funding by Headcount in the Face of Reduced Marginal Costs

The massification of Tunisian higher education since the 2000s, initially motivated by democratization objectives, has evolved towards an economic model that depends on student numbers. This is particularly true in the social sciences, where the structurally lower costs of training than in the exact sciences (no expensive laboratories, specialized equipment or intensive supervision) have enabled a massive absorption of students. The explosion in enrolment in the social sciences (30.1% of total students in 2022-2023), particularly in very low-cost branches such as Business Administration (61.3% of Humanities and Social Science students) and Behavioral Sciences (20.8%), has served as a compensatory financial lever. This strategy has balanced out chronic university deficits, by generating subsidies based on student numbers, without any proportional investment in teaching resources.

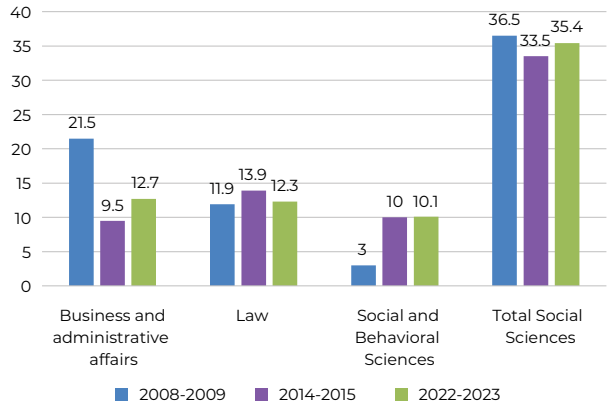
The peak in enrolment up to 2009 (almost 350,000 students), then its maintenance at a high level despite the demographic downturn (260,647 in 2022-2023), reveals the durability of this model. "Diplomania" in the social sciences and humanities thus appears less as a pedagogical choice than as a **constrained optimization of inadequate public funding,** where the number of students compensates for low per capita resources.

With the subdivision of studies into research master's and professional master's degrees, and with the transition to the LMD system – an acronym for Licence (Bachelor's), Master's et Doctoral degrees – during the 2006 reforms and its generalization in 2012, the number of research students in the social sciences (research master's degrees and doctoral students) has continued to evolve in recent years. By 2022-2023, their numbers have risen to 6310 research master's students and 3567 doctoral students, representing respectively 35.4% and 33.4% of all research students in public education, compared with 7121 research master's students and 1533 doctoral students in

2008-2009. This trend mirrors the decline in the number of students opting for a research master's degree, and the rise in enrolment in professional master's programs in all disciplines, including the social sciences. The number of students in this category has risen from 5014 in 2008-2009 to 11010 in 2022-2023, with social science students accounting for 44.4% of the total.

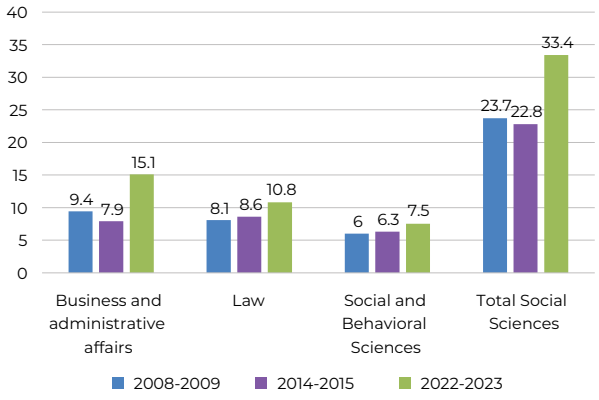
The distribution of research students among the various social sciences specialties reveals a certain disparity. For the Business and Administration specialties, the share of research master's students (percentage of total research master's students) has shown a downward trend, which may be explained by the rise in the number of students enrolled in professional master's programs (6797 students in 2022- 2023 vs. 3971 in 2008-2009), but is offset by an increase in the share of doctoral students in the same specialty in 2022-2023. The Social and Behavioral Sciences and Law specialties have seen their shares of research master's and doctoral students go up.

Figure 18: Share of research master's students (% of total students)



Source: MESRS

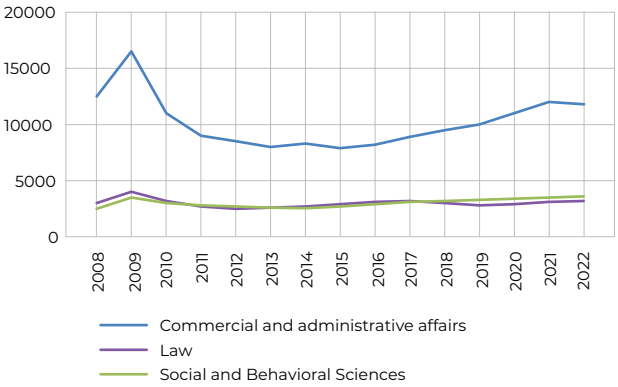
Figure 19: Share of PhD students (% of total students)



Source: MESRS

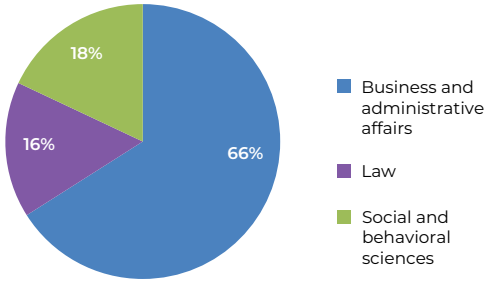
This growth in student numbers brought about record levels of graduates in 2010 (86035 graduates[2]), after which the numbers began to drop, reaching 55670 graduates in 2022. The number of graduates in Social Sciences[3] has risen from 17762 graduates in 2010 (24% of all graduates) to 17607 graduates in 2022 (31.6%). The Business and Administrative specialties continue to dominate, accounting for 22.8% of all graduates and 66% of Social Sciences graduates in 2022.

Figure 20: Number of Social Sciences graduates by specialization



Source: MESRS

Figure 21: Breakdown of Social Sciences graduates by specialty (2022)



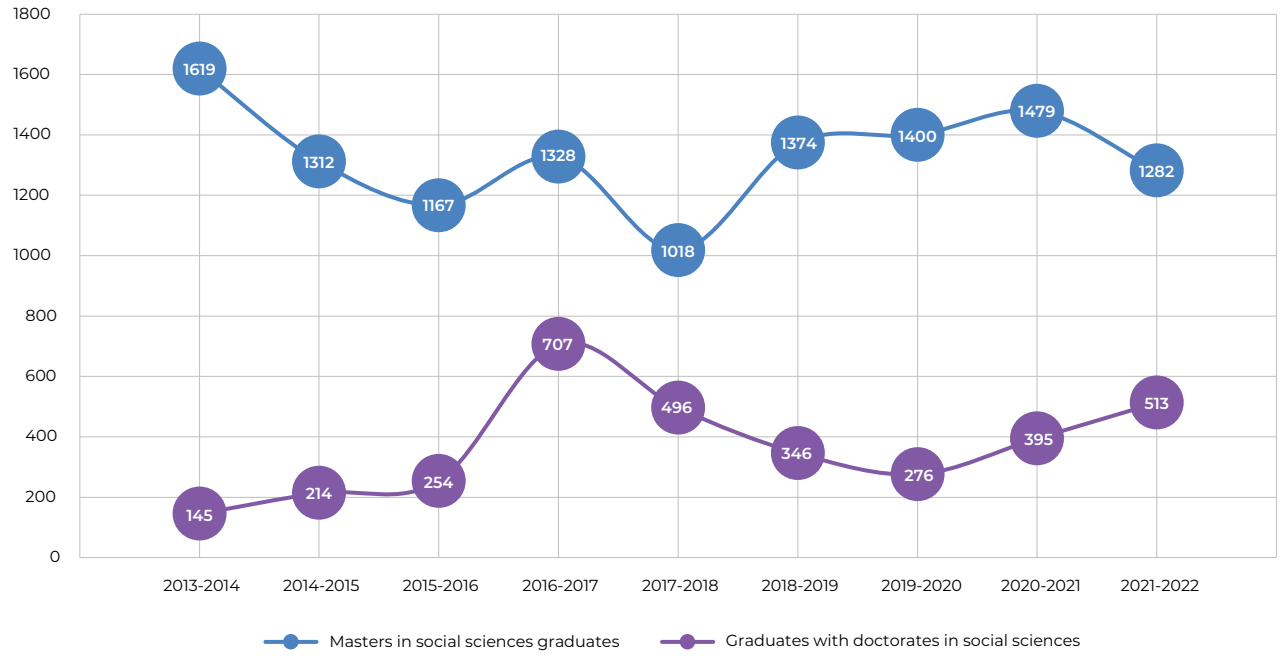
Source: MESRS

The number of research master's graduates has been on a downward trend since the beginning of the last decade. Nevertheless, their shares and those of PhDs are relatively stable, after a general downward trend in the total number of graduates. In 2022, the share of graduates in social science research master's programs corresponded to 30.8% of all research master's graduates, while that of PhDs was 32.3%.

[2] All types of diploma: Bachelor's degree and baccalaureate; preparatory cycle and national engineering and architecture diplomas; doctorate in medicine, dentistry and pharmacy; research and professional master's degrees; doctorate and other diplomas.

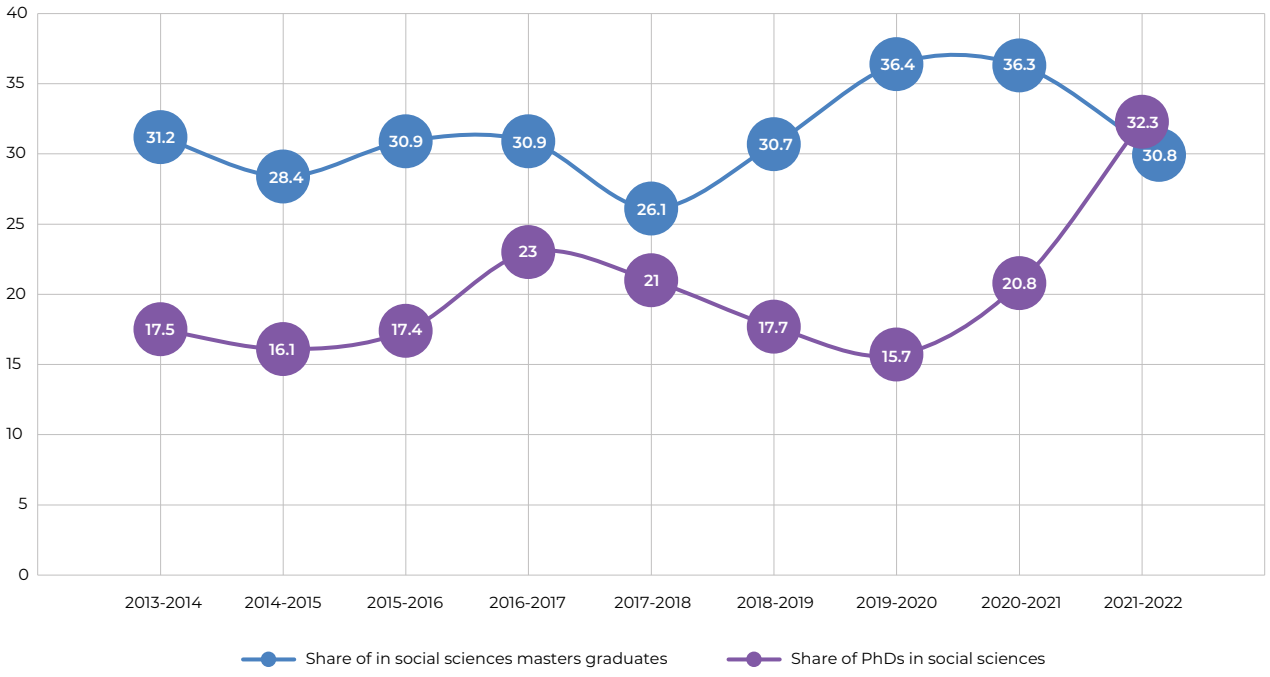
[3] Business and Administration; Law; and Social and Behavioral Sciences

Figure 22: Graduates of research master's and PhDs in Social Sciences



Source: MESRS

Figure 23: Share of research master's graduates and PhDs in Social Sciences (%)



Soource: MESRS

The distribution of research master's graduates by Social Sciences specialization reveals a certain dominance for those studying Law and Business and Administration. Their shares have risen from 11.4% and 9.6% respectively of all graduates in the 2013-2014 academic year to 11.6% and 12.4% for the 2021-2022 year. This contrasts with the Social and Behavioral Sciences, which saw their share fall from 10.1% to 6.8% for the same years. The shares of PhDs are also evolving over the years for the three Social Sciences specialties. Indeed, these shares are 18%, 6.1% and 8.2% respectively for Business and Administrative Affairs, Law and Social and Behavioral Sciences for the year 2021-2022, compared with 10%, 2.3% and 5.2% in the year 2013-2014. These graduates are distributed among seven doctoral schools, namely those of the Universities of Tunis, Tunis el Manar, Carthage, Sousse, Sfax and the Virtual University.

IV.3. A Social Science Teaching Workforce that is Not Keeping Pace

The number of teacher researchers in public higher education has also soared in recent decades. Their numbers more than doubled between 1990-2000 and 2000-2023, rising respectively from 4,550 to 11,400 teachers[4] then from 11,400 to 23,525 teachers. The number of Professors and Associate Professors (the teaching corps entitled to supervise scientific research) followed the same pattern, rising from 905 to 1753 and then from 1753 to 2924 over the same periods, representing 12.4% of all teaching staff.

However, the number of Social Sciences teachers has not kept the same pace. After a decline that began in 2017-2018, by 2022-2023 it had returned to its 2008-2009 level of 2018 teachers, representing just 8.5% of all university teachers. The proportion of "Corps A" teachers (Professors and Associate Professors) has evolved over time, rising from 14% in 2007-2008 to 22.1% in 2022-2023. In fact, the efforts made by the government have enabled the sector to increase the number of students, precisely those studying for research master's degrees, as well as the number of graduates, but not in the Social Sciences specialties, which could explain such an evolution in the number of teaching staff.

IV.4. A Declining Number of Social Science Researchers

In Tunisia, the majority of university teachers are affiliated to research entities attached to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, as well as to other ministries. However, the national research system is essentially made up of universities via their entities (research laboratories and units); public research institutions (research centers and technological resource centers); as well as public health institutions, technical centers and technoparks, and competitiveness clusters. In 2022, research activities involved 27386 researchers in all fields of whom 13061 were teaching researchers, 2539 doctoral and post-doctoral students, and 10046 students in research master's programs, compared with 24913 in 2015-2016. The number of "Corps A" teacher-researchers (Professors and Associate Professors) was 4,980 in 2022-2023, compared with 2,703 in 2008-2009, while the number of "Corps B" (Assistant Professors and Lecturers) teacher-researchers was 10,784 and 5,440 respectively in the same years. The number of research professors in the Social Sciences amounted to 945 "Corps A" professors and 2432 "Corps B" professors in 2022-2023.

The share of teaching researchers in the legal, economic and management sciences disciplines has risen from 9.7% in 2015-2016 to 11.1% in 2022-2023 for the "Corps A", and from 16.5% to 17.2% for the "Corps B" for the same years, in contrast to the share of teaching researchers in the humanities and social sciences, which was expected to fall from 8.9% to 7.8% for the same years. Such a decline may be attributed to the drop in the number of research students in master's and doctoral programs.

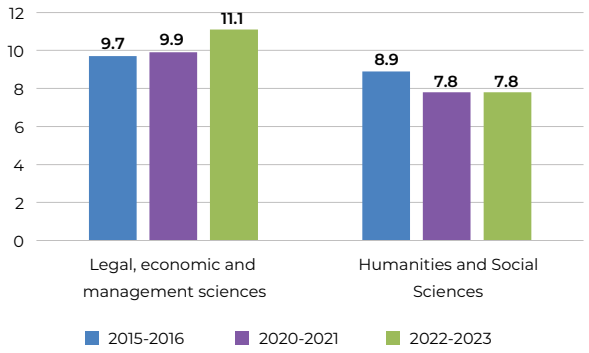
However, within these research bodies, the share of research master's students has remarkably fallen from 46.1% in 2015-2016 to 36.6%, against an increase in that of doctoral students from 10.1% to 15.6%. This trend may be related by the general decline in student numbers at the university, but also by the subdivision into research and professional master's degrees, which means that many students opt for the latter course in order to enter the job market quickly. This situation is reflected in an improved supervising ratio[5]. The latter stands at 2.87 students for each "Corps A" teacher in 2022-2023, compared with 4.23 students in 2015-2016.

Figure 24: Distribution of researchers in research laboratories and units

	Laboratories				Research units			
	Teaching researchers		Student researchers		Teaching researchers		Student researchers	
	2015-2016	2022-2023	2015-2016	2022-2023	2015-2016	2022-2023	2015-2016	2022-2023
Humanities and Social Sciences	680	1368	966	1639	530	59	919	186
Legal, Economic and Management Sciences	831	1808	1232	**3440**	747	**142**	1342	162
Total Social Sciences	1511	3176	2198	5079	1277	201	2261	348
TOTAL	**6930**	**12125**	**8825**	**13290**	**3958**	**936**	**5200**	**1035**

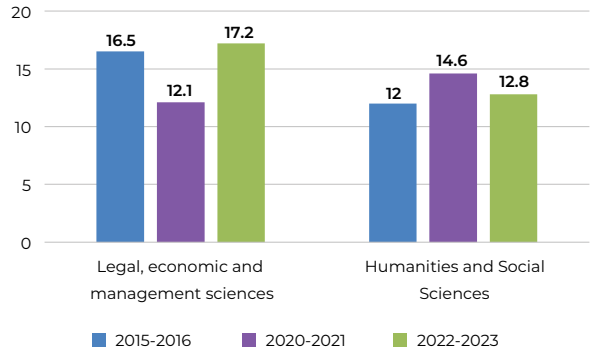
Source: MESRS

Figure 25: Share of "Corps A" teaching researchers in Social Sciences (% of total researchers)



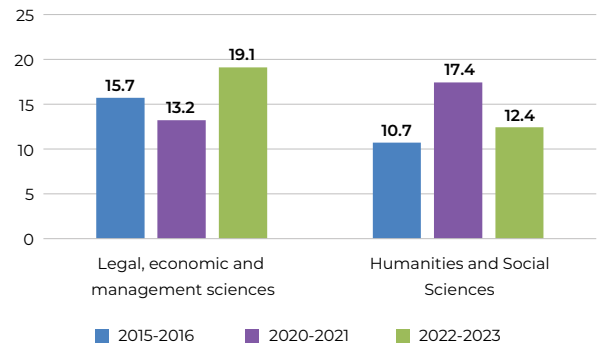
Source: MESRS

Figure 26: Share of "Corps B" teaching researchers in Social Sciences (% total researchers)



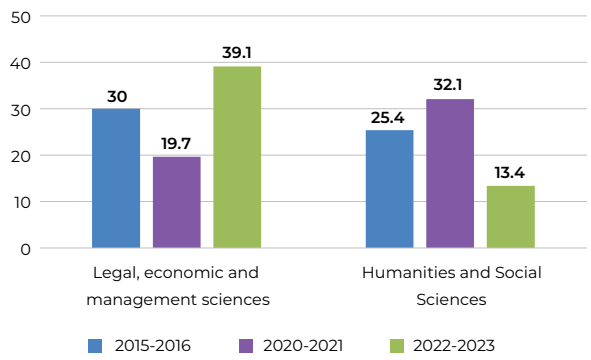
Source: MESRS

Figure 27: Share of research students in social science masters programs (% of total researchers)



Source: MESRS

Figure 28: Share of doctoral students in Social Sciences (% total researchers)



Source: MESRS

[4] A list of all ranks: professors and associate professors in public higher education; lecturers and assistant professors in public higher education (permanent and contractual); university hospital professor in public higher education (permanent and contractual); technologists in public higher education (permanent and contractual); assistant technologists in public higher education (permanent and contractual); teachers in public higher education in other ranks: engineers and doctors (permanent and contractual); foreign teachers in public higher education (permanent and contractual).

[5] Teaching/research staff ratio = number of regular students/total number of teaching/research staff

V. DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH BEYOND UNIVERSITY

This section explores social science research conducted by public institutional bodies outside the university context, examining their operational approaches and structural evolution. Research in the social sciences outside the university sector remains marginal and underdeveloped in scope. The expansion of the national university system, alongside the establishment of laboratories and research units (LR and UR) affiliated with universities, has diminished the relative contribution of non-university research. University-based entities thus play a pivotal role in generating scientific knowledge and fostering innovation.

V.1. Structuring Research in Tunisia: Developments and Challenges

The reform of the national scientific research system, initiated in 1996 by the law n°96-6 of January 31, 1996, has profoundly reshaped the landscape. In the ten years to the end of 2005, 139 laboratories and 624 research units were created. However, this trend has changed over the last decade: by 2023, the number of LRs had risen significantly to 501, while the number of URs had fallen to 21 (MESRS, 2023a). This development reflects a strategy of merging units into laboratories. The representation of the humanities and social sciences remains limited, with 14.4% of LRs and 23.5% of URs dedicated to this field. These figures cover all social science research bodies. This sector receives 7% of the total research budget, compared with 36% for the medical sciences, as well as 2% of international cooperation funds and 4% of national research projects, including 45 federated projects (PRF) in 2022, compared with 24% for the medical sciences.

Box 4: Research centers in Tunisia

Of the 39 research centers listed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS), only two are clearly dedicated to the social sciences: the Center for Economic and Social Studies and Research (CERES), under the General Directorate for Scientific Research (DGRS - MESRS), and the Center for Research and Social Studies (CRES), under the Ministry of Social Affairs.

Besides, there are three foreign active centers in Tunisia: the Institute for Research on Contemporary Maghreb (IRMC), the Center for Maghreb Studies in Tunisia (CEMAT) and the Research Institute for Development (IRD), in addition to six other centers with activities related to social research (MESRS, 2022, 2023b):

- Research and Study Center for Dialogue among Civilizations and Comparative Religions (Sousse)
- National Heritage Institute (Tunis)
- Higher Institute of Contemporary Tunisian History
- Center for Islamic Studies (Kairouan)
- Center for Research, Studies, Documentation, and Information on Women
- Ibn Khaldoun Center for Philosophical and Urban Studies

CERES, founded in 1962, is a public research institution of an administrative nature, legal personality and financial autonomy. Its mission covers research in humanities and economic and social sciences. It aims at analyzing and diagnosing past and present social and economic phenomena, and carrying out anticipatory and predictive studies. Its programs are developed within the context of contracts with the government, ministries, public and private organizations, as well as through international cooperation via specific agreements. It also contributes to doctoral training through its programs. Research is organized in flexible teams around projects whose composition can change at the end of each cycle. These projects, often initiated by individual researchers or integrated into national or international frameworks, focus mainly on economic and social fields, without excluding the individual research pursued by each of the center's researchers.

This institution alone accounts for the majority of non-university institutional social research. CERES has produced almost 2,700 publications since its inception, averaging around 45 titles a year. In 2022-2023, it published two double issues of RTSS[6], plus 7 books in various fields of social science, 21 maps. It manages a library of over 35,000 works. RTSS , a semiannual periodical launched in September 1964, has become the center's main organ of expression, dedicated to field

[6] The journal is indexed in Index Medicus, with an NLM ID of 0057026.

and academic research in the social sciences. In 2024, it reached its 150th issue, regularly publishing more than two issues a year, despite publishing disruptions. CERES also publishes the Cahiers du CERES, which brings together the proceedings of colloquia and seminars in ten thematic series covering geography, sociology, economics, demography, psychology, educational sciences, linguistics, history, Islamic sciences, anthropology- ethnology, as well as foresight. Historically, most social science research was published in RTSS and Cahiers de Tunisie (Melliti and Mahfoudh-Draoui, 2014). CRES, a public research institution with a non-administrative status created by law no. 96-50 of June 20, 1996, began its activities in 1998 under the name Center for Social Security Research and Studies (CRESS). It reports to the Ministry of Social Affairs and has legal personality and financial autonomy. Initially focused on social security, its mission was expanded in 2012 (decree n°2012-1697 of September 4, 2012) to cover all social issues with a comprehensive approach addressing the national socio-economic context. CRES now plays an essential role in the development of Human Capital, carrying out socio-economic studies and surveys focused on social protection. Today, it is a pillar of social research, aligned with national planning and reform priorities.

CAREP Tunisia addresses a wide range of socio-political issues and seeks to broaden the scientific debate on the Arab world by making Arab intellectual production accessible to Tunisian researchers and academics through translations. The aim of CAREP Tunisia is to establish an active network of Arab researchers and academics, enabling the "production" of knowledge that integrates the realities on the ground. CAREP Tunisia, affiliated to the parent center in Doha (Qatar), aims to create, through the social sciences and humanities, institutional partnerships between higher education institutions in Tunisia and universities in the Arab world.

IRMC, a French institute founded in 1992 and based in Tunis, conducts research in humanities and social sciences across Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. Its multidisciplinary team includes anthropologists, geographers, contemporary historians and political scientists specialized in the Maghreb region and its global interactions. Well integrated into the regional academic network, the IRMC maintains numerous Maghreb collaborations and is active in training through research (doctoral workshops bringing together students from both sides of the Mediterranean). According to Ben Salem (2013), the IRMC has become a recognized reference center for rigorous, independent research. It offers a significant documentary output in various forms, notably via "Le carnet de l'IRMC", books and reports, supported by a referenced library of 65,000 records .

CEMAT (affiliated with the American Institute for Maghreb Studies (AIMS), created in 1984 and a member of the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC), encourages research and information exchange between American and Maghreb academics (Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Libya). It supports publications such as the *Journal of North African Studies* (published by Taylor & Francis), organizes annual conferences in North Africa and an annual dissertation workshop at an American university, and awards research grants. Its position at the crossroad of the Arab, French and English- speaking worlds makes CEMAT a key player in the production and dissemination of knowledge about Tunisia. However, this dual cultural and linguistic affiliation can also lead to a certain fragmentation or compartmentalization of national scientific production, which may veer towards distinct networks and logics of recognition and valorization.

IRD (The Research Institute for Development), is a French public scientific and technological research institution that was founded in 1944. It is present in over 50 countries, including Tunisia. Its vision is to conduct research that benefits as many people as possible, sharing results and putting science at the service of action. IRD supports the transformation of societies towards sustainable social, economic and ecological models, contributing to their resilience in the face of global challenges. Comprising 1,565 scientific staff, including 946 researchers, 67 local staff abroad and 741 engineers and technicians, 157 of whom are local, it published over 1,340 articles in 2023, 64% of which in collaboration with partners in the South. IRD is dedicated to strengthening the higher education and research capacities of its partner countries, with a view to promoting universal scientific advances and satisfying the specific needs of their populations, particularly the most vulnerable.

V.2. Catalysts for Change: Investment and Institutional Research

There is a general consensus that social science research in Tunisia receives far less support than other disciplines, as recent studies indicate (Durán Monfort, 2020; Dallal, 2025). This observation is based in particular on the low budget allocations granted, especially for institutional research outside universities. This fact is not unique to Tunisia (Laplante-Anfossi, 2024), but it is also in this context that research bodies such as the Center for Economic and Social Studies and Research (CERES) play a leading role in national scientific production.
In this respect, as J. Berque's puts it: "there are no underdeveloped countries, there are under-analyzed countries". The 2010-2011 revolution revealed the fact that

Tunisia remains largely under-analyzed in social terms, despite a multitude of studies and research. Certain major issues, such as public health, precariousness, ageing, unemployment, regional imbalances and the socialization of the younger generation, are either insufficiently explored or absent from formalized research programs. According to K. Bendana (2024), since 2011 humanities and the social sciences have been navigating "without a compass" in Tunisia. While studies are multiplying and fuelling public debate, they are struggling to structure endogenous knowledge, particularly within universities. The issue is all the more acute for institutional research outside universities. Moreover, Durán Monfort (2020) questions the capacity of Tunisian production to create a "circularity of knowledge" rather than consolidating epistemological boundaries.

Historically, social science research in Tunisia has remained largely individual and devoid of any real logistics, even in centers like CERES, which nevertheless had notable ambitions and experience since the post-independence era. This observation comes at a time when research worldwide is tending to move beyond disciplinary compartmentalization, favoring multidisciplinary laboratories combining several humanities and social science disciplines, or even integrating so-called "exact" or "hard" sciences as well.

The need for a stronger, better-structured social research is more than obvious today: social issues are accumulating old, unresolved problems and many new questions, which requires a renewed and adapted approach. This is particularly true of CERES, which continues to produce important publications in a variety of disciplines. Despite a pessimistic outlook expressed by its former director A. Bouhdiba in 2019, the center remains a key player in academic and public debate, thanks to its openness towards the national scientific community and social actors.

CERES enjoys a "notoriety" that symbolizes its history, experience and output. It can be seen as the "memory of the social sciences" in Tunisia. However, its development and operation depend heavily on the support of public authorities, particularly in terms of infrastructure and investment. The provision of new, suitable premises since 2013 bears witness to the fact that this public commitment is possible. If institutional research in the social sciences is to make serious progress, it is crucial that the public authorities reassert the strategic importance of these research entities beyond ad hoc employment considerations.

One problematic aspect is CERES' traditional mode of operation, long based on a combination of permanent researchers, associates and volunteers. This organization has favored the creation of synergies and the realization of various individual and collective projects, but it is no longer viable in the medium term. Indeed, the suspension of recruitment has hindered team renewal, and in some centers, administrative staff now outnumber active researchers. Besides, spreading a small number of researchers across a wide range of disciplines constrains both dynamism and the collaboration necessary for structured projects. Consequently, the minimum critical staff required for meaningful scientific activity remains insufficient.

Faced with these challenges, it is imperative that the supervisory authority invests more in social science research, in particular by strengthening non-university institutional bodies such as CERES. Given budgetary and organizational constraints, it would be advisable to pool technical and logistical resources and facilitate their sharing among the centers. A concrete proposal would be to create, around CERES, a social science research cluster federating the various research bodies, whether institutional or otherwise, to develop collaborative projects and optimize resources.

CERES, a public administrative institution with financial autonomy, brings together both permanent and associate researchers, with teams covering a broad range of disciplines (economics, sociology, literary and artistic studies, etc.). This diversity, however, combined with the reduction in the total number of researchers, hampered the development of economics as a discipline, a field that has historically been at the heart of the CERES's mission, a center that has always been considered as the traditional forum for the formulation and discussion of national economic policies. Today, CERES counts only one economist and one specialist in quantitative methods.

A targeted recruitment strategy, possibly through co-optation would be necessary to attract new experts in economics, in order to bring these issues back to the center of debate. This approach could draw on the center's many assets: a strong record of producing and disseminating knowledge, logistical resources, academic network, and a broad range of activities. The current context is favorable to the renewal and strengthening of collaborative research. Despite the difficulties, CERES remains a nationally and internationally recognized institution for its contribution to social science research in Tunisia, with significant potential, provided it can benefit from renewed and more structured support.

VI. ROADS TO KNOWLEDGE: A FADING DREAM!

Prior to Tunisia's independence in 1956, student mobility to France for higher education had a significant role in the development of the social sciences. Tunisian students seeking to further their studies often had to travel to France, where they obtained degrees in a variety of fields, including social sciences such as law and economics. For example, with the creation of the Institute of Higher Studies (IHE) in 1945, which prepared students for university studies in France, these graduates went on to contribute significantly to the development of the social sciences in Tunisia after independence.

Influenced by the theories developed in France by French-speaking researchers such as Samir Amin and A. Laroui, these graduates introduced critical perspectives on the social and economic dynamics of their country. French training also shaped linguistic and methodological choices in research, with French remaining, along with English, a dominant language in high-quality academic publications. This linguistic predominance has sometimes led to tensions with university teaching in Arabic, raising questions about the identity and autonomy of Tunisian researchers.

After 2011, new political cleavages emerged in Tunisia, obscuring the traditional linguistic conflict between Arabic and French. French, once seen as a language of the elite and a relic of colonization, has evolved to become, alongside English, a "key asset for international recognition". A growing number of Tunisians, especially young people, view proficiency in French as an advantage for their careers and their social and international mobility.

At the same time, English has become crucial in Tunisia as a language of globalization and mobility, now coexisting with French. In this context, both languages are increasingly valued as tools for international mobility and personal development, reflecting a significant evolution in Tunisia's research landscape.

VI.1. Current Forms of Mobility

The mobility of Tunisian social science students faces specific challenges and is governed by specific determinants. Indeed, few students leave the country solely to study sociology, psychology, or even law. This low trend may be attributed to the limited return on investment, particularly in terms of job opportunities, for these specific fields. Moreover, Tunisian students are increasingly educated primarily in Arabic, which makes it difficult to integrate into European universities, where instruction is mainly in English, French or German. The language barrier is therefore a limiting factor for many Tunisian students interested in the social sciences. What's more, many students from modest socio-economic backgrounds cannot afford to go abroad without a scholarship or financial support. Financial constraints therefore represent a further obstacle to the mobility of Tunisian students in the social sciences.

These various factors help explain the low mobility of Tunisian social science students abroad. It is important to take these challenges and determinants into account in order to promote student mobility in this field and facilitate access to international study opportunities for Tunisian students interested in the social sciences. This mobility can take various forms:

- **Institutional mobility:** Some Tunisian students can obtain scholarships from Tunisian institutions, international organizations or foreign universities. Such scholarships enable students to pursue their studies abroad in the social sciences, covering tuition fees, accommodation and in some cases living expenses. This form of mobility is rare in the social sciences, with a few exceptions. A well-known example is a German initiative launched in the 1990s, which sought to support the mobility of approximately 30 students to pursue studies in religious sociology in Germany (Ben Hafaiedh 2006). However, non-governmental or civil society organizations generally offer most institutional mobility programs in this field. A case in point is the Beirut-based Arab Council for Social Sciences, which has set up mobility programs aimed at promoting academic exchange and collaboration in the social sciences within the Arab region. This approach, although less widespread, highlights the importance of promoting the mobility of social science researchers and students. This helps enrich academic exchanges and consolidate links among research institutions on an international scale.

- **Cooperative mobility:** Some European countries and foreign institutions offer cooperative programs. These programs allow Tunisian students to study abroad within the framework of partnership agreements between Tunisian and foreign higher education institutions.

- **Individual mobility:** Some Tunisian students decide to go abroad to pursue their studies in the social sciences at their own expense, without the benefit of a scholarship or formal financial assistance. However, this option is often limited to students who have the financial resources to cover tuition fees, accommodation and living expenses abroad.

Box 5: Examples of cooperative programs supporting researcher mobility in Tunisia

Erasmus+: This European Union program offers opportunities for exchanges of students, academic staff and educational resources among higher education institutions in Europe and other partner countries. Tunisian students can benefit from scholarships to study at European partner universities, thus promoting mobility in the social sciences.

Fulbright program: The Fulbright Program offers scholarships and fellowships for Tunisian students to pursue graduate studies or research in the United States. These grants promote academic mobility and give Tunisian graduates in the social sciences access to high-level resources and learning opportunities.

French government scholarship program: France offers various scholarship programs for foreign students, including Tunisians, as part of the academic and cultural cooperation between the two countries. Although increasingly limited in number, these scholarships enable Tunisian students to pursue studies in the social sciences at renowned French universities.

Institutional partnership programs: Many universities and research institutes around the world have established partnerships with Tunisian institutions to encourage the mobility of students and researchers. These programs facilitate academic exchanges, research collaborations and the sharing of best practices in the social sciences.

VI.2. Joint PhD Supervision (Cotutelle): a Pathway to Excellence?

The other important aspect of this mobility concerns doctoral research under joint supervision. Tunisian students, enrolled in joint doctoral programs between Tunisian and French universities, can benefit from a number of potential advantages by taking part in a joint thesis supervision program. First, this experience offers them valuable international exposure by enabling them to collaborate with world-renowned researchers, broadening their horizons and opening up new prospects for their future. In addition, students have access to state-of-the-art facilities and resources that might not be available at their home university, thus enriching their research experience and allowing them to pursue innovative research paths. A bilingual environment also strengthens students' language skills, which is a real asset for their academic and professional futures in an increasingly connected world. Besides, joint supervision offers them the opportunity to build an international professional network by interacting with researchers and students from other countries, which can prove essential to their future development. However, despite these advantages, the experience of joint thesis supervision is not without limitations for Tunisian students. The administrative complexities of joint supervision programs, especially given differences in university systems and regulations, can lead to delays and complications. Furthermore, financial constraints such as the costs associated with international mobility can be a burden for students, especially in the absence of adequate financial support. Communication challenges due to geographical distance and cultural differences may also pose obstacles, sometimes leading to misunderstandings or difficulties in coordinating research work. Finally, reconciling academic calendars and the requirements of both institutions can prove complex, with the risk of delays in completing the doctoral thesis. Despite these limitations, joint thesis supervision between Tunisian and French universities can offer significant advantages to students in terms of academic enrichment, professional development and openness to international perspectives. Overcoming these challenges is key to making the collaboration both productive and rewarding.

VI.3. Towards New Horizons

International mobility for Tunisian social science students is currently undergoing major transformations, with the emergence of new non-European destinations and innovative academic paths. However, this dynamic is hampered by a severe shortage of reliable statistical data.

Beyond Traditional Destinations

Historically turned to Europe, Tunisian social science students are now diversifying their geographical choices:

- **North America** is attracting an increasing number of students, thanks to favorable admission policies (Source: "Global Student Mobility Trends", ICEF

Monitor, 2023). Canada saw a 60% increase in international students between 2017 and 2022 (Source: "International Students in Canada", Statistics Canada, 2023).

- **Gulf countries,** with institutions such as the Doha Institute in Qatar, offer appealing graduate-level opportunities (Source: "Higher Education in the Gulf", Gulf Education Report, 2022).

- **Asian destinations** are gradually emerging, particularly for English-language courses (Source: "Asian Education Hubs", QS Rankings, 2023).

Alarming Lack of Statistical Data

Specific data on this type of mobility are sorely lacking:

- **Lack of precise categorization:** the social sciences are often subsumed under the broader 'humanities' category (Source: "Classification of disciplines in migration statistics", UNESCO, 2021).

- **Lack of dedicated sources:** available studies mainly concern scientific fields (Source: "La mobilité étudiante tunisienne", Observatoire National de l'Éducation, 2022).

- **Methodological difficulties:** As one study points out : "the statistical clarity of the data remains problematic" (Source: "Les défis de la mesure des mobilités étudiantes ("The challenges of measuring student mobility"), Revue Internationale d'Éducation, 2020).

Predominance of scientific fields

The data confirm the dominance of scientific disciplines:

- In France, almost half of all Maghrebi students are in the sciences, compared with one-third in the humanities (Source: "Les étudiants étrangers en France", Campus France, 2023).

- Most Tunisian doctoral students abroad are concentrated in the sciences (Source: "La diaspora scientifique tunisienne", CNRS, 2021).

VII. DOING COOPERATIVE AND COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH

Today, international cooperation is a crucial driver for the development of scientific research in Tunisia, particularly in a context marked by the scarcity of national funding and the need to boost the global visibility of research. This commitment is reflected in Tunisia's active participation in large-scale programs such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe, which promote the mobility of researchers, strengthen institutional capacity, and build international scientific networks.

Likewise, at the multilateral level, Tunisia is involved in regional and international cooperation initiatives, notably with the European Union, the Euro-Mediterranean region and several international organizations, to enable its researchers to join networks of excellence. By way of illustration, Italy is one of Tunisia's main scientific partners, with 186 collaborations, followed by Spain (92 collaborations) and France (74 collaborations). Other countries such as Greece, Germany, Belgium, Portugal and the Netherlands also maintain significant exchanges with Tunisia. Notable partnerships also exist with Turkey, Serbia, the United Kingdom, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Switzerland and Sweden. This diversity of collaborations shows both Tunisia's growing integration into the European and international research landscape and its commitment to participating fully in the production of knowledge on a global scale.

However encouraging this dynamic may be, it raises an essential question: what role do the social sciences truly play in these cooperative ventures, and what concrete impact do they have on the development of Tunisian research bodies in this field? Even though the social sciences are essential for understanding and responding to major social, economic, political and cultural transformations, they are struggling to be recognized as a priority in national research strategies and to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by international cooperation programs. With this in mind, this section examines the main international cooperation programs through an analysis of Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe. The aim is to gain a better understanding of their actual contribution to capacity building in the social sciences, and to identify strategic levers that could help to better integrate these disciplines into the dynamics of cooperative and collaborative research.

VII.1. Erasmus+ Programs

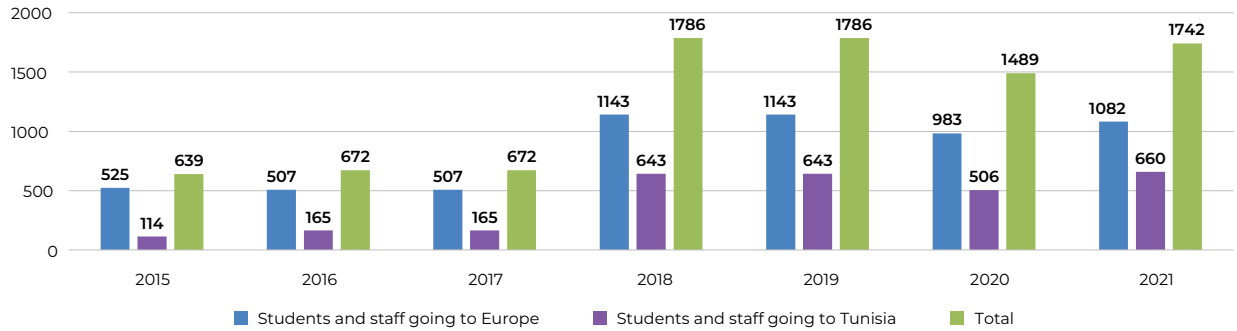
The original aim of the Erasmus program was to strengthen cooperation between European universities by promoting international student mobility. Gradually, this program evolved into Erasmus+, expanding to include transnational cooperation and mobility initiatives, not only with European countries, but also with numerous partner countries worldwide. To date, more than 15 million people have taken part in the program, spending time abroad, learning, exchanging experiences and developing skills. For some, Erasmus+ has helped improve employability, and for others it has provided opportunities for scientific progress, including in the social sciences.

However, this overall dynamic has seen significant variations across regions, depending on national capacities to make effective use of the program's tools and direct projects toward strategic disciplines. Since 2014, Tunisia has been an active participant in Erasmus+, with a budget of 52 million euros allocated to support mobility initiatives and university cooperation projects during the 2015-2020 period. This participation reflects Tunisia's determination to strengthen the internationalization of its higher education system. Despite this dynamic, the specific impact of this cooperation on the social sciences remains an open question. It raises questions about the actual involvement of researchers and students, as well as the concrete impact on the design of curricula and the production of knowledge in these disciplines.

The International Credit Mobility (ICM) Program

Tunisia is one of the most active participants in the Erasmus+ ICM program, with 20 million euros in funding, allocated to support 813 partnership projects between Tunisian and European universities over the 2015-2020 period. This program financed the mobility of 7,802 students and academic staff, including 5,180 to Europe and 2,622 to Tunisia. Tunisian participation in ICM has risen sharply, from 639 beneficiaries in 2015 to 1,742 in 2020, which testifies to the increasing internationalization of Tunisian higher education.

Figure 29: Total ICM Mobilities, Tunisi 2015-2020 Source: Erasmus+ Tunisia 2021 National Office



Source: Erasmus+ Tunisia 2021 National Office

In addition to its participation under the South Mediterranean region (Region 3), Tunisia has benefited from a specific "Tunisia Window, EMORI", with 3 million euros in annual funding between 2017 and 2020, and additional funding of 75,000 euros from the "Juncker North Africa" window, which covers the five ENI South Med countries: Morocco, Algeria, Libya, Egypt and Tunisia. It should be noted, however, that social science participation in these exchanges remains largely marginal. The funded mobility projects have mainly concerned the hard sciences, engineering and technology, where academic institutions are generally better organized and better equipped to develop competitive international partnerships. Conversely, research in the social sciences faces difficulties in securing such funding, due to a number of structural and institutional obstacles, particularly in setting up international projects within social science research units, as well as insufficient knowledge of the funding mechanisms and opportunities offered by the Erasmus+ program.

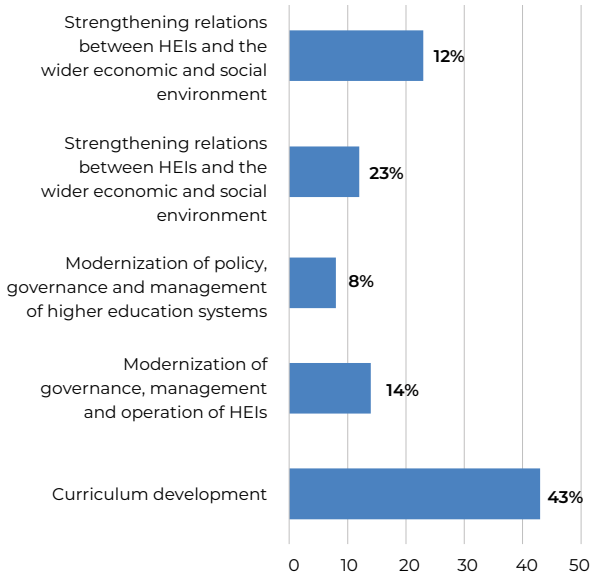
This marginalization is particularly alarming, given that the social sciences are particularly well placed to play a central role in the analysis and understanding of major regional issues: migration dynamics, democratic governance, social inclusion, cultural transformations and environmental challenges. Yet, in the absence of significant participation in these exchanges, opportunities to strengthen methodological skills, diversify comparative approaches and foster the emergence of new lines of research in these fields remain limited. The concrete impact of these exchanges on Tunisian social science institutions is therefore minimal, in terms of scientific production, knowledge dissemination and institutional capacity-building. The poor integration of the social sciences into mobility schemes not only limits the international visibility of Tunisian research in these fields, but also hinders the improvement of curricula and the creation of specialized research clusters with significant social value. As a result, strengthening the presence of the social sciences in Erasmus+ mobility schemes is not just an academic imperative, but also a strategic challenge to open up Tunisian researchers to new methodologies, enrich scientific exchanges on social and cultural transformations, and increase the societal impact of the produced research.

It is worthy to note that beyond individual mobility, however, the program also emphasizes the structural development of higher education institutions through the "Capacity Building in Higher Education" (CBHE) program.

The Capacity Building in Higher Education (CBHE) Program

The CBHE program aims to modernize and reform higher education institutions by improving curricula, management and governance. It also encourages exchanges among academic institutions and organizations, at both transnational and international levels, with a view to fostering the creation of institutional networks for sharing best practices and strengthening the impact of reforms at institutional and societal levels.

Figure 30: Categories of CBHE projects involving Tunisia



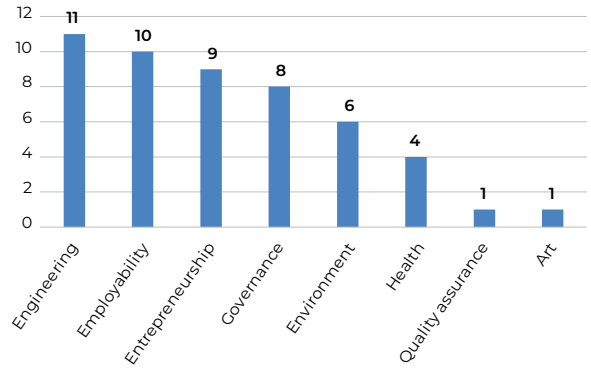
Source: Erasmus+ Tunisia 2021 National Office

A budget of 20 million euros has been allocated to 49 projects, involving 18 Tunisian universities and organizations and 203 partner bodies. CBHE projects focus mainly on:

- Curriculum development (43%),
- Strengthening relations between institutions and the socio-economic environment (35%),
- Modernizing governance and management policies (22%)

Thematically speaking, the social and behavioral sciences rank only fifth, behind engineering, employability, governance and the environment.

Figure 31: Themes of CBHE Projects in Tunisia



Source: NIS-CBHE-Tunisie-2021

This low representation is problematic on two levels: on the one hand, it reflects the priority given to disciplines deemed more directly linked to the labor market and technological innovation. On the other hand, it reveals the difficulties faced by social science departments in developing competitive international cooperation projects, because they lack resources, training, and adequate recognition.

Figure 32: Some promising but isolated initiatives

Project	Theme	Budget (€)	Objective
MIGRANTS	Migration	964 025	Accreditation of a joint research master's degree in migration studies
DEMOS	Democratic governance	932 320	Creation of a master's degree in democratic governance and human rights with an e-learning platform.
RAQMYAT	Digitization in Humanities and Social Science	902 073	Strengthening digital skills in SHS doctoral schools (7 universities).

Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

In addition to these key initiatives, the following table provides a more extensive overview of the international cooperation projects in which Tunisia participated under the CBHE and Erasmus Mundus programs between 2019 and 2023. It highlights the diversity of the covered themes, ranging from art therapy and digital transformation to governance and heritage enhancement, as well as the wealth of the employed pedagogical and scientific approaches.

Figure 33: Categories of CBHE projects involving Tunisia

Type of project	Year	Projects	Programs	Duration	Budget
CBHE	2019	INSAF-Fem	Social and Technological Innovation to Enhance the Employability of Tunisian Women	3 years	593 416,00
CBHE	2019	HEALING	Developing a Multidisciplinary Diploma on Art Therapy in Health Education	3 years	868 526,00
CBHE	2019	MUSAE	Multidisciplinary Skills for Artists' Entrepreneurship	3 years	999 850,00
CBHE	2019	MED2laH	Mediterranean Countries: Towards Internationalisation at Home	3 years	996 888,00

CBHE	2019	RAQMYAT	Digital Strategies for Doctoral Training in the Humanities and the Social Sciences in Tunisia	3 years	902 073,00
CBHE	2019	DEMOS	Master Degree in Democratic Governance and Human Rights	3 years	932 320,00
CBHE	2019	MIGRANTS	Master Degree in Migration Studies: Governance, Policies and Cultures - MIGRANTS	3 years	964 025,00
CBHE	2022	PYTHAGORAS	Development of a System for High Level Digital Transformation of Engineering Education in Mediterranean Countries	3 years	765 354,00
CBHE	2022	TOURITAGE	Tourism-Led Heritage Development	3 years	369 451,00
CBHE	2022	Women's Empowerment for Leadership WE4lead	Women's Empowerment for Leadership in Higher Education and Research	3 years	794 764,00
Erasmus Mundus	2021	TPTI	TPTI - Techniques, Heritage, Territories of Industry: History, Development, Didactics	7 years	5 174 400.00
Erasmus Mundus	2023	MSSE	MSSE - Social and Solidary Economy	2 years	55,000.00

Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

This table indicates that, while the social sciences are not among the most frequent themes, several significant projects focus on them or adopt transdisciplinary approaches. Nevertheless, their small number and limited scope confirm the need to better organize the concerned institutions, strengthen their capacity for participation and enhance their role in major contemporary issues.

Yet Tunisia ranks second among MENA countries in terms of participation in CBHE projects over the 2015-2020 period, just behind Jordan (National Bureau Erasmus+, NIS-CBHE Tunisia, 2021). While this is a commendable ranking, it should not obscure persistent disciplinary disparities, where the social sciences remain relegated to a marginal place in academic cooperation priorities.

To enhance the impact of the social sciences, it is essential to integrate them into a broader dynamic, where international research cooperation extends beyond higher education. This cooperation includes ambitious funding programs, such as the Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe framework programs, which aim to strengthen scientific excellence and innovation on a global scale.

VII.2. Europe Horizon Framework Programs

The European framework programs Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe are major funding instruments for research and innovation on a continental scale. Aligned with the European Union's main priorities, these programs address major societal challenges such as climate change, public health, food safety, sustainable energy and information and communication technologies. They help strengthen the European Research Area (ERA) by funding cutting-edge infrastructures, promoting knowledge and technology transfer, and stimulating transnational cooperation. Increased mobility for researchers, the integration of member states' scientific capacities and closer ties between public research, the private sector and civil society are strongly encouraged. These measures also promote responsible, ethical and sustainable research. However, this dynamic of openness contrasts with the weak capacity of southern countries (Tunisia in particular) to enroll their researchers in these programs on a long-term basis, particularly in the social sciences. While the European area represents a central pole of attraction for global research, Tunisian participation in these fields remains marginal, due to a lack of structuring, resources and institutional recognition of the social sciences in national research strategies. Despite this relevance, social sciences and humanities are struggling to establish themselves in submitted and funded projects, in the absence of a clear national strategy to encourage their inclusion in calls for collaborative projects. This deficit limits not only scientific production in these fields, but also the ability to disseminate useful knowledge for the development of evidence-based public policies. If Tunisia is to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by Horizon 2020 and Horizon Europe, proactive action is required. This implies recognizing the social sciences as a strategic lever for understanding and accompanying contemporary societal changes, while consolidating their role in guiding and assessing public policies.

Horizon 2020

This EU-backed program is aimed at developing research and innovation (R&I) as a whole, with a colossal budget equivalent to 80 billion euros for the 2014-2020 period, based on three fundamental pillars: scientific excellence, industrial leadership and societal challenges. The program focuses its funding on projects likely to boost the scientific and technological competitiveness of the European Union and its strategic partners.

Tunisia's participation in Horizon 2020

Tunisia first participated in the seventh R&I Framework Program as a third country with 114 projects, giving it in 2016 the status of being the only "Associated Country" in Africa, the Maghreb and the Arab world in the eighth R&I Framework Program.

Thanks to its success rate in projects financed by this program (18.56%) and the significant advances made in cutting-edge research, Tunisia is now ranked third out of the 16 associated countries, exceeding the European average (14%).

As an associated country, Tunisia has become eligible not only to submit innovative projects, but also to contribute to the design of work programs. In this context, Tunisian researchers can benefit from the funding opportunities offered by this program on an equal footing with their counterparts from EU member states and other associated countries. This perspective offers Tunisian researchers the opportunity to network internationally and to collaborate closely with institutions across Europe and beyond.

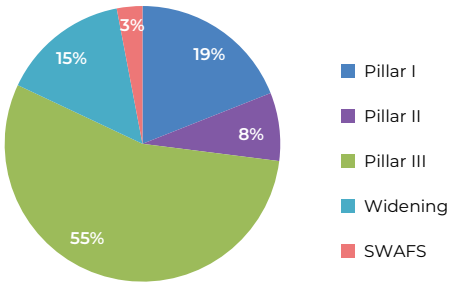
The Tunisian contribution has clearly evolved over time. Between 2016 and 2020, the number of projects funded rose from 4 to 61, and the number of Tunisian partners from 7 to 81. The increase also applies to funding obtained by Tunisian institutions, which has climbed from 1.2 to 10.7 million euros, which emphasizes Tunisia's research capabilities (MESRS, 2020). However, the role of the social sciences remains marginal in this growth. The majority of Tunisian projects revolve around the "Societal Challenges" subject (55%), but mainly concern agriculture, the environment and scientific mobility. Projects genuinely integrating humanities and social sciences are rare and often relegated to secondary roles. This situation reflects a structural imbalance. As a result, the exact sciences receive the lion's share of funding, to the detriment of specific disciplines that analyze the country's social, economic and cultural changes. This has had a limited impact on the long-term structuring of social science research.

Horizon 2020 Flagship Projects in Tunisia

Most of the funding granted to Tunisia (55%) concerns "Pillar III: Societal Challenges", mainly focusing on 12 projects in agriculture, the environment, food safety and researcher mobility. These projects are devised to respond to major global challenges, but remain focused on natural and applied sciences.

"Pillar I: Scientific Excellence" enjoys 19% of the funding. It has enabled a number of Tunisian institutions to strengthen their research infrastructures and skills, particularly in the exact and engineering sciences. The "Spreading Excellence and Widening Participation" transversal program accounted for 15%, with 8 projects coordinated by Tunisian institutions, demonstrating a significant improvement in skillful administrative and scientific management of European projects. The lowest rate (3% of funding obtained) is mainly attributed to the "Science with and for Society" transversal program, which deals directly with issues linked to humanities and social science, scientific mediation, ethics or societal impact. Only 7 projects involving the social sciences were identified, echoing a structural disciplinary imbalance.

Figure 34: Breakdown of Tunisian projects by H2020 Pillar



Source: Erasmus+ Tunisia 2021 National Office

Admittedly, Tunisia demonstrated high potential in terms of proposal quality, the highest amount of funding being obtained in emblematic projects. Examples include:

- Initiatives in sustainable agriculture and food security, aimed at modernizing agricultural practices in the face of climatic challenges, partially integrating socio-economic aspects linked to rural dynamics.
- Energy and environment projects, focusing on the transition to renewable energies, resilience against natural disasters and adaptation to climate change.
- Mobility and training initiatives for young researchers, notably through Marie Skłodowska- Curie grants, largely dominated by the hard sciences, with limited impact on young researchers from the social sciences and humanities.

Nevertheless, the participation of the social sciences remains low compared to other scientific fields. Their contribution, if there is any, is often limited to support functions in multidisciplinary projects (social impact assessment, technology acceptability, scientific communication), without Tunisian institutions taking a leading role in their design or steering.
This low level of involvement of humanities and social science has far-reaching consequences. It limits their ability to structure sustainable networks, to develop coherent research programs, or to inform public policies in relation to major contemporary challenges. Themes such as democratic governance, inclusive public policies, migration, citizen participation, inequalities and the preservation of cultural heritage are insufficiently explored or under-valued in the projects submitted and funded.

A better integration of the social sciences in future European projects would require not only a change of approach in project development strategies, but also a stronger institutional recognition of their strategic role in analyzing and supporting societal transformations.

Horizon Europe

In 2022, Tunisia once again signed an association agreement with the new Horizon Europe program. This is the 9th framework program that aims to anchor R&I in an approach of scientific excellence for the period 2021-2027. The program is endowed with an overall budget of 100 billion euros. More concretely, it is a continuation of the H2020 program, offering scientists and researchers numerous opportunities to enjoy all funding and networking opportunities, on an equal footing with EU member countries.

In this context, social sciences are not one of the most obvious and solicited themes of the program, but rather are effectively integrated at different levels in all program components as a key element of R&I. Indeed, in the global issues program of "Pillar 2", which is composed of 6 multidisciplinary clusters, calls for social science projects are proposed within the second cluster. The latter, with a budget of almost 2 billion euros over 7 years, aims to understand contemporary transformations in society and provide policies for a green, digital, socially just and inclusive European recovery.

In this vein, social science research provides answers to the challenges of democratic governance, citizen participation, preservation of cultural heritage and economic, technological and cultural transformations. It also contributes to the understanding of contemporary crises and the resilience of societies.

Box 6: International collaborative research in Tunisia

The great diversity of Tunisia's international collaborations amply reflects the efforts made by the Tunisian community, which enjoys a high level of scientific competence and the ability to participate actively in large-scale scientific and technological research programs that are organized in competitive consortia and research networks. This is unquestionably in line with the priority objectives of the national policy for the development of the research system, which seeks on the one hand to diversify partnership and cooperation links with countries whose scientific and technical development system is highly advanced, and on the other hand to mobilize financial resources for the benefit of the national research system.

In this perspective, bilateral cooperation with Tunisia's "traditional" partners is being pursued, in particular with Maghreb and Arab countries. These partnerships, historically regulated by agreements and joint calls for projects since the 2000s, as illustrated by the programs launched with Morocco, Algeria, Egypt and Jordan (European Commission, ESTIME Project, 2007), have supported a number of research projects, including in humanities and social sciences. However, their current low profile, the absence of long-term follow-up mechanisms and the lack of joint dissemination of scientific output are evidence of a slowdown in the South-South dynamic, which remains under-exploited today. At the same time, Euro-Mediterranean partnerships and agreements with countries such as Japan and the USA have continued to develop, complementing ongoing regional dynamics and reflecting Tunisia's determination to maintain a multidirectional opening of its scientific cooperation policy.

Although these themes are present in Horizon Europe, their mobilization by Tunisian humanities and social science research bodies remains limited. Participation remains marginal, hampering the ability of research units to produce knowledge related to European dynamics. Concrete spin-offs, in terms of scientific publications, local dissemination of results or influence on public policy, are still weak. This is due to a lack of structuring, a lack of support mechanisms for commercialization, and a weak capacity for institutional support.

VIII. NAVIGATING BETWEEN OPPORTUNITIES AND LOSSES: INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY OF RESEARCHERS

At the heart of Tunisia, a silent crisis is shaking the foundations of the middle class, echoing a growing exodus of talent to greener pastures. In addition to traditionally migrant professions such as engineers and doctors, other socio-professional categories, including teacher-researchers, are joining this movement of emigration to distant horizons. While some sociologists are abandoning Tunisian lecture halls for more enticing opportunities abroad, others, such as psychologists, lawyers and economists, are being lured into positions as practitioners and consultants in both public and private organizations. This hemorrhage of talent leaves a gaping void within the walls of the Tunisian university, depriving the institution of its most creative minds, its experienced researchers who nourish the very essence of higher education. The impact on the national research landscape is inexorably taking shape, threatening the dynamism and quality of academic work in the country, and signaling the decline of a middle class in search of new perspectives and better life prospects.
The skills drain is not confined solely to higher education graduates. Musette (2022) refers to this phenomenon as the "exodus train", a process accelerated by various schemes introduced by Northern countries to attract a wide range of talent. These include specific immigration policies, bilateral agreements and incentive programs. For example, immigration policies such as Germany's skilled worker visa program and the EU Blue Card facilitate the entry of highly skilled professionals. Bilateral agreements, such as those signed between Canada and developing countries, aim to simplify the recognition of foreign competences. Besides, incentive programs such as scholarships and research grants are designed to attract promising researchers and students.

However, it is important to note that this phenomenon is also driven by a growing desire for mobility among the populations of southern countries. Individuals are looking for better economic opportunities, improved living conditions, and environments that are more conducive to research and innovation. Thus, the brain drain is the result of a complex dynamic of push and pull factors. It has evolved into a genuine "race for talent", fuelled both by the strategies of countries in the North and by the legitimate aspirations of populations in the South for a better life (Musette, 2022; OECD, 2021; World Bank, 2020).

VIII.1. Impact of Skills Mobility on Local Social Science Research

It is worthy to note the significant obstacle of obtaining relevant official data concerning the mobility of academic skills (particularly from an academic point of view) within academic institutions expected to teach or do research in the social sciences.

However, thanks to updated data provided by the Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation (ATCT), it is now possible to obtain a clearer and more in-depth overview of the extent of academic skills migration. This updated source of information thus offers a valuable opportunity for a more nuanced analysis and understanding of the issues surrounding the mobility of academic skills in the current context.

Push and Pull Factors

In terms of researcher and teacher mobility in Tunisia, "push" and "pull" factors play a significant role in individual decisions to seek opportunities elsewhere. This applies equally to researchers in the social sciences and other disciplines.

Push Factors

1. **Economic difficulties:** Researchers and teachers may be pushed to leave due to economic challenges in Tunisia, such as low salaries, limited opportunities for advancement and precarious working conditions.

2. **Political and economic instability:** Political and economic uncertainty may prompt professionals to seek more stable and predictable environments in which to pursue their careers.

3. **Lack of research opportunities:** Constraints on research funding and infrastructure can drive researchers to seek out environments that are more conducive to research and innovation.

Pull factors

1. **Opportunities for professional advancement:** Gulf countries often offer attractive career opportunities, with faster advancement prospects and more dynamic working environments.

2. **Salary differentials:** Salary differentials between Tunisia and the Gulf countries can be a major factor in attracting researchers and teachers in search of better remuneration (Hafaiedh, 2021, p100).

3. **Academic freedom and research infrastructure (when the destination is Europe):** Advantages such as academic freedom, advanced research resources and international collaborations available in European countries can attract talented academic professionals.

Combining these factors, we notice that the mobility of Tunisian social science researchers and teachers to Gulf countries is often driven by a complex set of pressures and incentives that shape individual career choices[7].

Senior Researchers Fully Committed to Expatriation

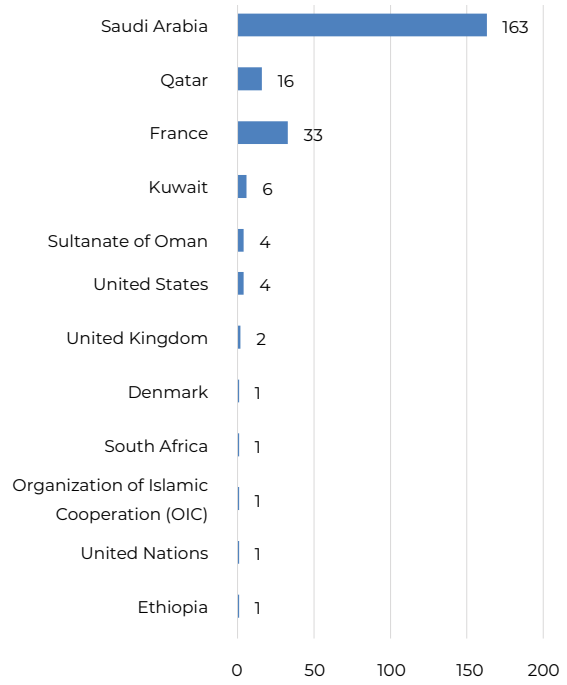
The international mobility of social science professors in Tunisia towards the Gulf countries is largely stimulated by the financial benefits and attractive salaries offered in this region. This salary dynamic strengthens their professional commitment, improves their financial stability and fosters greater efficiency and job satisfaction. However, it is crucial to combine these financial aspects with other factors for a complete understanding of the motivations of internationally mobile professors.

The disciplines that are most sought after by these social science teachers, such as sociology, political science and law/legal science, are branches in growing demand in the Gulf countries. Attracted by these fields, Tunisian professors find opportunities in the region's prestigious academic institutions, where salaries and financial benefits are often highly competitive.

Among the destinations favored by these professors, Saudi Arabia stands out for hosting five social science researchers. Gulf countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are renowned for their generous salaries and attractive financial benefits for international teachers. These financial incentives, combined with favorable working conditions and professional development opportunities, provide additional motivation for Tunisian teachers seeking better remuneration. This international mobility improves their financial situation and reinforces their professional commitment. The attractive salaries offered in these countries allow teachers to benefit from higher remuneration than in Tunisia. This increase in income can have a positive impact on their quality of life, financial security and job satisfaction, often leading to greater productivity and commitment to their research and teaching activities.

[7] Ben Hafaiedh: Le déficit de compétences" Stumédia -ITES - Tunis 2021

Figure 35: Number of cooperating social science teachers by destination



Source: Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation (ATCT)

It is important to note that, although remuneration is a key factor in the international mobility of social science professors, other aspects such as research opportunities, institutional prestige and potential collaborations may also influence their choices. Nevertheless, financial attractiveness plays a crucial role in the selection of Gulf countries as preferred destinations for these Tunisian teachers in search of new professional prospects.

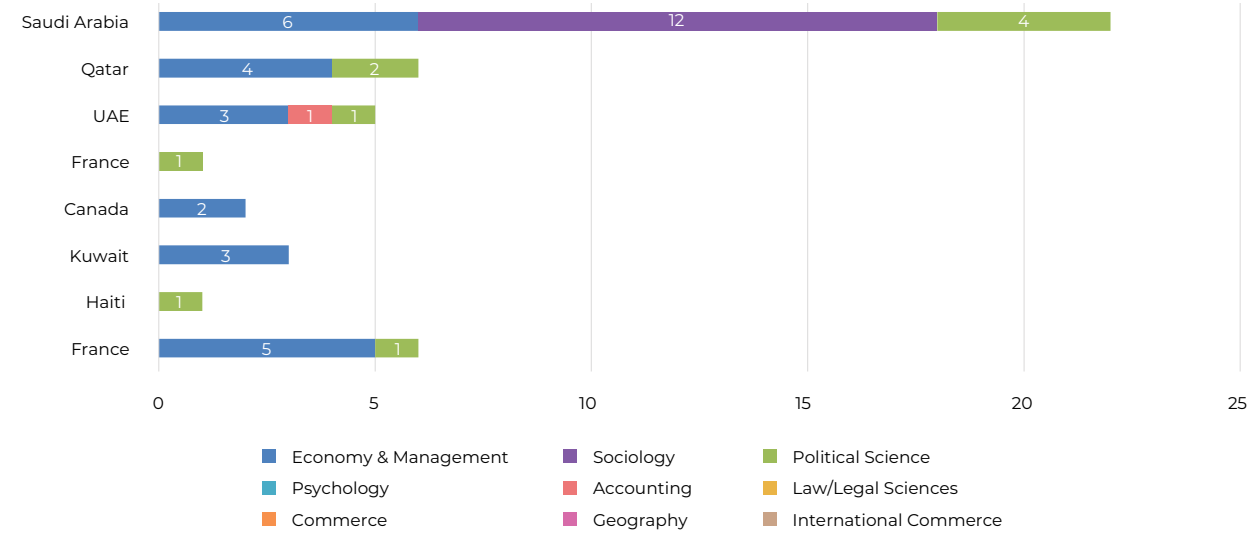
VIII.2. Economists on the Front Line

The international mobility of Associate Professors in economics and management in Tunisia is a central issue, just as it is for Professors, in terms of remuneration and salary motivation. Unlike other social science specialties, these teachers have the opportunity to work in a variety of countries, offering them attractive and stimulating financial prospects for their careers. Among the most sought-after destinations, Saudi Arabia stands out. This economically open country welcomes Tunisian economists in its public and private universities and consulting firms. The competitive salaries and financial benefits offered in these countries have a significant role in the choice of these destinations, improving the financial situation of Tunisian teachers. This often translates into greater job satisfaction, a better quality of life and greater commitment to their teaching and research activities.

The rate of return remains low, and generally depends on the duration of contracts and retirement prospects in Tunisia. In addition to Saudi Arabia, which hosts 95 lecturers in economics and management, 7 lecturers live and work the United Arab Emirates. Other countries such as France, Canada, Qatar, Bahrain, the Sultanate of Oman, the United States, Kuwait and Morocco are also favored choices, with a significant number of lecturers in economics and management.

It should also be emphasized that the international mobility of these lecturers is not limited to salary considerations. Other factors such as research opportunities, international collaborations, institutional prestige and career prospects can also influence their decisions. However, financial attractiveness plays a key role in the choice of Gulf countries as preferred destinations for these mobile Tunisian teachers and researchers.

Figure 36: Number of positions by country/discipline



Source: Tunisian Agency for Technical Cooperation (ATCT)

This migration trend is particularly observed among economists holding the rank of Assistant Professor. Of the 283 qualified researchers who had left the country by June 1, 2024, the number of economists among them continues to grow. It is important to distinguish between the brain drain, which refers to the mobility of skills as a whole, and the mobility of high-level skills, which includes university researchers in particular. According to Mr. Boughzala, “Brain drain is a real concern, but skilled labor migration can also have positive effects, not only in terms of funds transfer, but also in terms of human capital accumulation.” This statement underlines the complexity of the issue, and highlights the fact that talent departures can also be associated with benefits, both in terms of finance and human resource development.

In his analysis of the “skills gap”, Ben Hafaiedh (2021) stresses a range of factors that influence the propensity of social scientists to consider leaving. Among these factors, the report first highlights the significant impact of the salary differential and opportunities for advancement.

It also points out that “the more skills and higher qualifications expatriates acquire, particularly postgraduate degrees, the less likely they want to return” (Boughzala and Kouni, 2010). This observation underscores an important point: as individuals become more skilled and specialized, their desire to return to their country of origin may diminish. This raises essential questions about talent retention and the policies that need to be devised to encourage the eventual return of skills acquired abroad.

Social and professional interactions, as well as the capacity to communicate effectively in different languages, are crucial aspects that may influence their choice of mobility. These factors emphasize the complexity of the motivations underlying the migration of social science skills, and underline the importance of considering a wide range of parameters to understand and address this issue adequately.

IX. BEING A SOCIAL SCIENCE WOMAN RESEARCHER IN TUNISIA

In a society built since independence on fundamental socio-political choices, such as the emancipation of women and free, compulsory schooling, Tunisian women have been able to benefit on an equal footing with men from the generalization of education. They have also enjoyed an intellectual emancipation thanks to the reception and the contribution to knowledge and research in various fields, including our object of study here: the social sciences.

Indeed, since the 1960s, women researchers[8] have developed innovative approaches, theories and works that highlight the specific experience of being a female social scientist. Their contribution has enriched the academic discourse by tackling key issues such as gender, identity, women's participation in Tunisian society, individual rights and freedoms, etc. However, despite this growing feminization, there is a notable disparity in terms of quality scientific production and women's access to management and decision-making positions in the research field.

This raises the following question: how can we explain this paradoxical situation, characterized by a significant increase in the feminization of the social sciences in Tunisia, on the one hand, and by low female participation in quality scientific production and positions of responsibility, on the other? Though feminization of social science studies is on the increase, this discipline may be "undergone" (first part), which partly explains the low level of quality female scientific production, in addition to the number of obstacles limiting the access of female researchers to research management positions (second part).

IX.1. Growth of Undergone Feminization of Social Science Studies

Undergone Feminization of the Social Sciences through Basic University Training

According to statistics regularly published by the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS 2023), the number of women enrolled in the social and behavioral sciences during the 2022-2023 academic year is on the rise when compared to the number enrolled in 2013-2014. Similarly, the feminization of law and education sciences is on the rise, as shown in the table below. The social sciences rank sixth and law seventh in the list of fields chosen by women, after other specialties such as business and administration, literature and health.

Figure 37: Evolution in total enrolments by MESRS

	Number of enrolments in 2013-2014		Number of enrolments in 2022-2023	
Specialty	Total	Of which women	Total	Of which women
Training of trainers in educational sciences	665	484	7984	6911
Social and behavioral sciences	19153	13037	18865	13995
Law	19607	14277	16137	12130

Source: MESRS

The increasing feminization of the social sciences through basic university training, particularly at bachelor's level, is a key element in this dynamic. More and more Tunisian girls are choosing to study the social sciences, contributing to a diversity of perspectives and voices in the field. However, it is important to recognize that this evolution can be perceived as an undergone feminization rather than a deliberate choice. It may be influenced by the constraints of the university guidance system in Tunisia. In addition, the feminization of the literary disciplines may also play a role in this trend. It is therefore possible to interpret this feminization as a segregation factor. It is true that some girls may turn to the social sciences for lack of better options, due to the lower scores required for these streams. This can lead to a concentration of girls in social science branches, which require a lower level of language, logical-mathematical or statistical skills. This sudden feminization of several social science streams can result in a form of ghettoization, particularly for girls from rural and modest backgrounds

[8] Sana Ben Achour, Ilhem Marzouki, Hafidha Chkir, Neila Sellini, Monia Ben Jemia, Lilia Ben Salem, Olfa Youssef, Dorra Mahfoudh, Christine Agache, Saloua Charfi, Ahlem Belhaj, Raja Ben Slama, Dalenda Bouzgarou Larguèche, etc.

who go to university to escape family control, as Dorra Mahfoudh puts it: *"Away from family, it is an opportunity to discover the world and become emancipated. They try to succeed in order to assert themselves, to be recognized, to have an identity"*. (Inkifada 2021)

IX.1.2. Feminization of Doctoral Studies and Increase of Female Graduates in the Social Sciences

The feminization of doctoral studies in the social sciences is on the rise, as shown by the MESRS statistics in the tables below. For example, female graduates in the social sciences numbered 1,770 in the 2013-2014 academic year, all degrees combined. By 2022-2023, this number rose to 2609.

Figure 38: Evolution of female graduates in social and behavioral sciences

Number of graduates in 2013-2014			
Total first degree graduates	Of which women	Total second degree graduates	Of which women
1668	1265	727	505
Number of graduates in 2022-2023			
Total graduates	Of which women		
3325	2609		

Source: MESRS

Figure 39: Evolution of female graduates in training of trainers in educational sciences

Number of graduates in 2013-2014			
Total first degree graduates	Of which women	Total second degree graduates	Of which women
507	460	01	00
Number of graduates in 2022-2023			
Total graduates	Of which women		
3135	2785		

Source: MESRS

Figure 40: Evolution of graduates in law and political science

Number of graduates in 2013-2014			
Total first degree graduates	Of which women	Total second degree graduates	Of which women
2417	1910	271	194
Number of graduates in 2022-2023			
Total graduates	Of which women		
12012	2609		

Source: MESRS

The increasing feminization of doctoral studies in Tunisia undeniably helps strengthen the presence of women in academic research, particularly in the social sciences, which translates into a significant contribution to the production of knowledge and the advancement of research in this field. The growing participation of women in doctoral programs brings a wealth of perspectives, knowledge and skills to the academic research landscape. Women researchers may develop innovative ideas, varied methodological approaches and relevant research themes, thus contributing to the enrichment and diversification of the scientific field.

However, it is worthy to note that a number of female doctoral students did not defend their theses and enrolled just to improve their financial situation. In fact, given the Tunisian government decided to award a grant to PhD students for 3 years. This means they can continue their active search for a job, especially in Tunisia's big cities.

IX.2. Low Participation of Women in National Leadership Positions versus International Leadership

Weak Female Leadership at the National Level

Obtaining a doctorate degree in the social sciences, or accessing higher education at universities, does not automatically guarantee women equal access to research

leadership positions or management roles in research units, laboratories and research institutes.

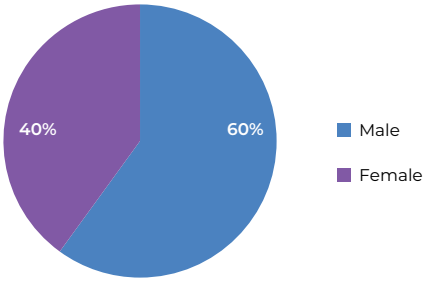
Women are also less present in high-quality scientific production, which is mainly undertaken by the "A Corps" professors, a rank category that is least representative of women researchers in Tunisia.

Figure 41: Female leadership in social science research bodies

Social science research bodies			
Total	Of which male director	Of which female director	Of which women
71	48	23	194
Doctoral schools			
Total	Of which male director	Female director	
12	07	05	

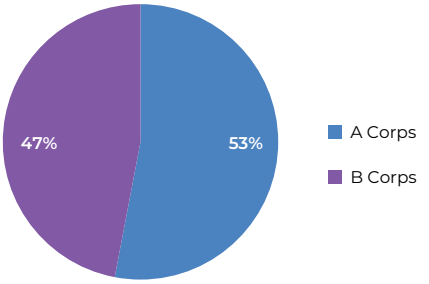
Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

Figure 42: Breakdown of scientific output by gender



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

Figure 43: Breakdown of scientific output by rank



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

Furthermore, the data analysis of the gender of respondents reveals a significant distribution:

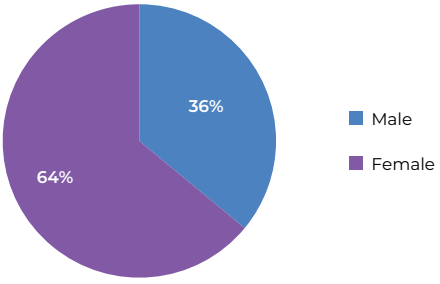
- 64.0% of participants identify themselves as women.
- 36.0% identified themselves as men.

Reasons for Disparity: The Glass Ceiling

The glass ceiling refers to the invisible barriers, created by prejudice, that prevent women from gaining access to positions of high responsibility (Morrison et al., 1977). Since the 1970s, studies have shown that these barriers limit women's access to management (Kanter, 1977). In the context of women researchers, gender influences the distribution of roles, associating men with leadership abilities and women with traditional roles (Neila Chaâbane, 2014). Feminist mobilization has led to the creation of professional networks, such as the **WE4LEAD** project ("Women's Empowerment for LEADership and Equity in Higher Education Institutions"), which aims to improve women's access to decision-making positions in higher education. This project is part of a wider initiative to transform the governance of higher education institutions in the Mediterranean.

Finally, the glass ceiling metaphor also resides within women themselves. It is linked to societal expectations that assign them to the roles of mothers and wives, hindering their professional ambitions (Daune-Richard, 1999). In Tunisia, Dorra Mahfoud points out that the combination of family and professional careers often hinders women's advancement, leading to delays in their careers (Inkyfeda, 2021).

Figure 44: Distribution of researchers by gender



Source: Doing Research Assessment in Tunisia, 1st edition (2025)

A Path Fraught with Pitfalls

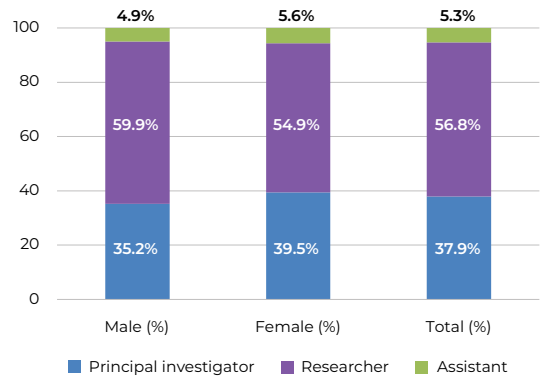
Although the presence of women researchers is gradually consolidating itself in the academic arena (publications, supervision, training), their progress continues to face serious challenges, including physical and symbolic violence, as well as sexual harassment. A report by the Ministry for Women, published in November 2023,

indicates that 31% of the 8300 reports of violence concern academics, with a high rate among women aged 30 to 40 (40%) and 41 to 50 (25%). Most cases of violence are perpetrated by partners, creating a harmful family environment that compromises their physical and mental health, as well as their academic potential. Sexual harassment in doctoral and master's supervision, as well as in laboratories, is a major problem at the university. This issue, which includes any sexual aggression that undermines women's dignity, marginalizes their contributions to education and research. Many women refrain from reporting such abuse for fear of reprisals, which reinforces professional inequalities. To remedy these problems, the "Women's Empowerment for LEADership and Equity in Higher Education Institutions" project (Tunisia being an active member of the consortium via the University of El Manar) has set up anti-harassment units in several universities. This initiative is still in its early stages.

International Female Leadership: Are Women Researchers Better Leaders than Men?

The structural indicators regarding publications and the low number of women in the "A Corps" need to be highlighted, in the light of the findings of the Doing Research Tunisia 2025 survey, which reveals a real advance for women in research leadership. According to these results, difficulties have not held back women's progress in coordinating research projects and bodies. Data from the Doing Research survey, illustrated by the following graph, show very small gaps between men and women in terms of their roles in international research projects.

Figure 45: Role of Tunisian researchers in international research projects by gender



Source: Doing Research Survey -Tunisia -ASSF 2025

The data reveal that 35.2% of men occupy the role of principal investigator, while 59.9% act as researchers, and only 4.9% are classified as assistants. For women, on the other hand, the figures show that 37.9% hold the position of principal investigator, 54.9% are researchers, and 5.6% are assistants. Although the distribution is relatively similar, women appear to be slightly better represented in the position of principal investigator than men.

This may be explained by institutional support and inclusive collaboration networks. Indeed, the working culture within an inclusive and supportive environment may encourage greater participation of women in leadership roles, whereas a climate of distrust or competition may have the opposite effect.

Scientific Networks: Are Women More Committed than Men?

The same data also reveals some interesting trends in network membership. Among men, 44.7% claim to be members of a professional network, while 34.6% are not, and 20.7% feel that this does not apply to their situation. In contrast, women show a slightly higher membership, with 56.5% belonging to a network, 22.7% not, and 20.8% saying it does not apply to them. These figures suggest that women are more likely to be involved in professional networks than their male counterparts.

The observed difference in membership between the sexes may be attributed to various factors. Women, who often face systemic barriers in academia, may actively seek out networks that support and encourage them. Men, on the other hand, often benefiting from easier access to informal networking opportunities, may not feel the same need to join formal research entities. Besides, perceptions of the importance of networks may vary according to gender. Women may be more aware of the benefits of collective support, while men may prefer more individualistic paths in their professional development.

CHAPTER 2:
MAPPING RESEARCH IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 2

Overall landscape

- Tunisia's social science research system is institutionally diverse but unevenly structured, with universities at its core and limited coordination among other actors.
- The system includes universities, public research institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners, but their interactions remain fragmented.

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

- Public universities dominate the national research output; research entities (labs, units, doctoral schools) are largely university-based.
- Geographical concentration: Around 75% of public research bodies and most private universities are located in Greater Tunis, creating regional imbalances.
- Social sciences represent 45% of student enrollment, but only 22% of senior researchers (corps A); this indicates a clear underrepresentation in research leadership.
- Disciplinary focus is narrow: Management and Economics dominate, while other social sciences (sociology, anthropology, etc.) remain underfunded and marginalized.

Non-university public research

- Roughly 40 national research centers exist, with a dozen active in the humanities and social sciences.
- These centers, often under sectoral ministries, have scientific autonomy but limited visibility and coordination with universities.
- Cross-ministerial collaboration in research governance remains weak.

Civil society and associative research

- Associations and think tanks are active in public debate but under-recognized as research actors.
- Despite their contribution to applied knowledge, their outputs lack legitimacy and integration into national research policy.

International organizations and partners

- A dynamic network of foreign research institutions and political foundations (IRMC, IRD, CEMAT, Friedrich Ebert Foundation, among others) supports thematic research in Tunisia.
- Their influence has grown significantly since 2011, aided by favorable legal and political environments and easier access to international funding.
- These partnerships strengthen international visibility but may reorient priorities toward donor-driven agendas.

Governance paradox

- Despite the presence of institutions such as CERES, only 10.8% of researchers recognize the existence of a national governance structure for social science research. 61% of respondents did not answer the survey question on governance, indicating deep disconnection between governance bodies and the research community.
- This reflects a fragmented ecosystem where researchers often work in isolation, disconnected from institutional frameworks and support mechanisms.

Overall insights

- Tunisia's research ecosystem is dense but disjointed: a strong public university backbone coexists with underutilized civil society and public research actors.
- Coordination, recognition, and governance remain the missing links to turn this fragmented landscape into a coherent national research system.

I. MAPPING RESEARCH LABORATORIES: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

After changing its name several times, the ministry responsible for higher education in Tunisia is now the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS). In addition to the central directorate of Higher Institutes of Technological Studies (ISETs), the two other largest central directorates are those of Higher Education and of Scientific Research, the former being in charge of all aspects of training at the 13 universities. However, this does not prevent them from also being university bodies that organize and produce knowledge, not only at the level of doctoral schools, which are responsible for the scientific training of doctoral students and the awarding of doctoral degrees, but also at the level of research bodies divided into research units and laboratories. It is these entities that interest us here, particularly those that operate in the sphere of social sciences, which we will refer to as university social science research structures (SURSS).

In addition to the Virtual University (located in Tunis), the other universities are mainly concentrated in three areas: Greater Tunis with five universities, the Center-East with two universities, and Sfax with one university. These three regions alone account for 105 higher education institutions, or 51% of the total (rounded percentage), according to official statistics for the year 2023-2024. The total number of higher education institutions is 206, of which 175 fall under the MESRS, with a total student population of 250,249. The other 31 institutions are jointly supervised by the MESRS and other ministries, with a total student population of 16,588. Of the total 266,837 students, 177,861 are females (66.65%) and 88,976 are males (33.35%).

The ministry also has fairly extensive oversight of private universities (governed by Law No. 73 of 2000). Despite constant efforts on the part of the Tunisian and foreign authorities and investors, the sector has only 85 institutions authorized by the MESRS. The number of Tunisian and foreign students enrolled in these institutions amounts to 48,347 (2023-2024 statistics). In the jargon and categorization of the MESRS, the institutions, teachers, and researchers of interest to this report are part of the so-called “social and behavioral sciences.” According to official statistics for the year 2023-2024, the total number of students in these specialties is 19,244 in the public sector, including 14,354 women (74.58%). If we adopt a broad definition of the social sciences, we would add, according to the denominations used by the MESRS, 9,146 students in teacher training and educational sciences, 47,534 in business and administration, 14,285 in law, 955 in journalism and information sciences, and 644 in social services, for a total of 72,584. Based on this definition, the total number of students in the various social and behavioral science specialties at Tunisian universities is 91,828. Rounding up, we could estimate the rate at 45% of the Tunisian student population.

The private sector, which consists solely of educational institutions, accounts for only 443 students. Research in the social sciences or in any other scientific field is nearly non-existent. Therefore, whenever scientific research in the social sciences is mentioned in all that follows, it refers only to research organized in the public sector.
During our investigation, we found that data on SRUSS (University Social Science Research Structures) is sparse and difficult to obtain. Although these are official bodies and constitute the major component of the social science research landscape in the country, most of them do not have official websites. At best, there is a page or an interface hosted on the website of the parent institution or even the university to which a particular entity is affiliated. In general, there is a clear lack of visibility resulting from the absence of real information organs. One of the simplest solutions was to create Facebook pages, rather than accounts, which are not managed by a qualified administrator. Usually, the youngest members of SRUSS take care of this for two reasons: the communication component of the research structures’ strategy is considered to be simply a collection and dissemination of information on activities, and it is generally the younger members who have the most knowledge and skills to fulfill this “communication” mission. Although these pages are becoming more numerous, they are not permanent. Quite often, they change managers, profiles, or “editorial lines.” Other than the name of the research body, its identifying number and the identity of its director (telephone numbers, email addresses, etc.), data are often personal and replace what should be official information. Notwithstanding these obstacles, we have been able to compile the following summary table.

I.1. Landscape of University Research Entities in the Social Sciences in Tunisia

Table 1: University social science research bodies by geographical region, institution, and specialization (indicated in the labels)

Region	Institution	Name of SRUSS
Southeast	Higher Institute of Management in Gabes	Research Laboratory: Business and Decision-Making (Abbreviation: RED) LR23ES10
	Institute for Agricultural Research and Higher Education (IRESA)	Research Laboratory: LR16IRA05 Economics and Rural Societies
South	University of Gafsa	Research Unit: UR13ES78 Business and Decision-Making
North	Faculty of Economics and Management in Jendouba	Research Laboratory: LR11ES38 Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage
Northeast	Faculty of Economics and Management in Nabeul	Research laboratory: LR18ES48 Business Environment (Abbreviation: ENVIE)
Sfax	Sfax Business School	Research unit: UR17ES35 Economic and Financial Analysis and Modeling (Abbreviation: URAMEF)
	Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Sfax	Research laboratory: LR03ES07 Systems, Training, Development, Cartography, Territories, and Environments (Abbreviation: SYFACTE)
		Research Laboratory: LR13ES18 The Maghreb: Plural Umran
		Research laboratory: LR21ES12 State, Culture and Social Change (Abbreviation: ECUMUS)
		Research unit: UR16ES13 Research for Development and the Social Environment
	Faculty of Economics and Management in Sfax	Research laboratory: LR11ES43 Information Technology, Governance, and Entrepreneurship (Abbreviation: LARTIGE)
		Research laboratory: LR11ES44 Modeling and Optimization for Decision-Making and Industrial and Logistics Systems (Abbreviation: MODILS)
		Research laboratory: LR11ES56 Marketing Research
		Research laboratory: LR13ES19 Governance, Finance and Accounting
		Research laboratory: LR18ES24 Perspectives and Research in Innovation, Strategy and Business Management (Abbreviation: PRISME)
		Research laboratory: LR18ES25 Competitiveness, Commercial Decision-Making and Internationalization (Abbreviation: CODECI)
		Research laboratory: LR18ES26 Development Economics (Abbreviation: LED)
		Research laboratory: LR18ES27 Economics and Management
Center-East	Faculty of Law and Political Science in Sfax	Research unit: UR13ES67 Social law and economic change
		Research unit: UR17ES34 Obligations and Arbitration
		Research Laboratory: LR20ES16 Administration and Development

	Faculty of Arts and Humanities in Sousse	Research Laboratory: LR13ES11 Land Use, Settlement, and Lifestyle in Ancient and Medieval North Africa
	Faculty of Economics and Management of Sousse	Research laboratory: LR21ES28 Modeling, Financing, and Economic Development
	Institute of Higher Commercial Studies of Sousse	Research laboratory: LR11ES33 Economics, Management, and Quantitative Finance (Abbreviation: LaREMFiQ)
	Higher Institute of Management in Sousse	Research laboratory: LR11ES32 Innovation Management and Sustainable Development (LAMIDED)
Greater Tunis (Manouba)	Higher Institute of Specialized Education	Research laboratory: LR13AS01 Disability and Social Maladjustment
	Faculty of Arts, Arts, and Humanities of Manouba	Research laboratory: LR11ES28 Elites, Knowledge, and Cultural Institutions in the Mediterranean
		Research Laboratory: LR21ES11 Religious Phenomena
		Research laboratory: LR21ES18 Maghreb-Africa- Europe Exchanges (Abbreviation: LEMAE)
		Research Laboratory: LR99ES23 Regions and Heritage Resources in Tunisia: An Interdisciplinary Approach (Abbreviation: LIEI)
	Higher Institute of Accounting and Business Administration	Research laboratory: Accounting, Financial and Economic Modeling (Abbreviation: MOCFINE)
	Higher Institute of Documentation of Tunis	Research laboratory: LR18ES14 Information Science (Abbreviation: SILAB)
	Higher School of Commerce of Tunis	Research laboratory: QUAR Lab
	Higher Institute of Accounting and Business Administration	Research laboratory: LR16ES11 Research in Innovation, Governance, Entrepreneurship, and Risk (Abbreviation: RIGUEUR)
	Tunis Business School	Research laboratory: LR16ES10 Economic theories, modeling, and applications (Abbreviation: ThEMA)
		Research laboratory: LR21ES29 Research on Innovative Management, Risk, Accounting and Finance (Abbreviation: LARIMRAF)
Greater Tunis (Tunis)		Research laboratory: LR19ES06 International Law, International Jurisdictions, and Comparative Constitutional Law (Abbreviation: DIJIDC)
	Graduate School of Statistics and Information Analysis	Research laboratory: Statistical and Economic Modeling and Analysis
	Institute of Higher Commercial Studies	Research laboratory: LR05ES07 Applied Economics and Finance (Abbreviation: LAFA)
		Research laboratory: LR21ES24 Economic and Strategic Forecasting, Innovation, Management, and Entrepreneurship (PRESTIGE)
		Research laboratory: LR11ES21 Economics and Business Strategies (Abbreviation: ECSTRA)
	National Institute for Agricultural Research in Tunis; IRESA (Ministry of Agriculture)	Research laboratory: LR16INRAT07 Rural Economics
	National Heritage Institute	Research laboratory: LR21INP01 Economy, Territory, and Heritage Landscapes in Tunisia, the Maghreb, and the Mediterranean
	Tunis Business School.	Research laboratory: LR16ES02 Business analytics and decision making

	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Tunis	Research laboratory: LR99ES02 Geomorphological mapping of environments, surroundings, and dynamics (Abbreviation: CGMED)
		Research laboratory: LR03ES01 DIRASET- Maghreb Studies
		Research laboratory: LR11ES01 History of Mediterranean Economies and Societies
	Higher Institute of Management in Tunis	Research laboratory: LR13ES02 Macroeconomics, Economic Conditions and Applied Methods (Abbreviation: MACMA)
		Research laboratory: Innovation Management and Sustainable Development
		Research laboratory: LR19ES16 Analysis of Economic and Social Policies
		Research Laboratory: Applied Research in Relations and Business Administration
		Research laboratory: LR13ES01 Corporate Governance, Applied Finance and Auditing (Abbreviation: GEF2A)
		Research laboratory: LR99ES04 Business and Economic Statistics Modeling (Abbreviation: BESTMOD)
		Research Laboratory: Operational Research, Decision Support and Control Processes
	Tunis School of Economics and Business	Research laboratory: LR11ES02 Economic and Business Change (Abbreviation: LARIME)
		Research laboratory: Financial Development and Innovation (Abbreviation: DEFI)
		Research laboratory: LR21ES07 Governance and Territorial Development
		Research Laboratory: LR21ES16 Studies in Structures, Design, and Aesthetics
		Research laboratory: LR99ES01 Medieval Arab- Islamic World
		Research Unit UR17ES03 Transition, Transmission Transition Mobility
Greater Tunis (Tunis El Manar)	Faculty of Law and Political Science in Tunis	Research Laboratory: LR19ES04 Banking, Financial, and Business Law
	Faculty of Economics and Management in Tunis	Research laboratory: LR05ES03 Prospective, Strategy and Sustainable Development (Abbreviation: PS2D)
		Research Laboratory: LR11ES07 Business and Marketing Research (Abbreviation: ERMA)
		Research laboratory: LR16ES04 Quantitative evelopment Economics (Abbreviation: LAREQUAD)
		Research Laboratory: LR20ES12 Research in International Finance (Abbreviation: IFGT)
		Research laboratory: LR20ES13 Innovation, Strategy, Entrepreneurship, Finance and Economics
		Research laboratory: LR20ES14 Economics of Sustainable Development, Natural Resources, and Agriculture (Abbreviation: LEDDRNA)
		Research laboratory: LR99ES06 International Economic Integration (Abbreviation: LIEI)

	Faculty of Law and Political Science in Tunis	Research laboratory: LR05ES02 International Market Negotiation Relations Law
		Research laboratory: LR11ES06 Dispute Resolution and Enforcement
		Research Laboratory: LR13ES05 Research in Civil Law

Given the state of SRUSS self-produced information, this table is not exhaustive. However, it is sufficient to draw a fairly accurate picture of the reality of social science research, organized within the Tunisian public university system. Five main observations are worth noting:

- Cephalic hypertrophy: As the table shows, the overwhelming majority of SRUSS are concentrated in the region known as "Greater Tunis". This is a group of cities, urban centers, and agglomerations clustered around the city of Tunis, the country's capital. Given that the country is administratively divided into "governorates," this center spans four of them (Tunis, Ariana, La Manouba, and Ben Arous, with a population of around 20% of the country's total). It is home to five universities (Tunis, Tunis El Manar, La Manouba, Carthage, and the University of Zytouna). SRUSS statistics indicate that three-quarters of research bodies are located in Greater Tunis and only one-quarter in the rest of the country.

- The very high concentration in "traditional" university centers: in addition to Greater Tunis, there are two "hubs" in Sfax (including the city of the same name, known as the capital of the South, which is home to the governorate headquarters) and in the center-east, represented mainly by the city of Sousse, which is home to the University of Sousse. Another university (the University of Monastir), just 20 kilometers away, is part of the same hub but does not house any institutions working in the field of the social sciences. In the past, these three centers represented respectively the University of Tunis (divided at one point between Tunis I and Tunis II), the University of the Center, and the University of the South. The other regions, which are home to university "hubs," include both the "hubs" of new creations (from the last twenty years or less) responding to a policy of "decentralization", and the least favored regions of the country in terms of development programs and plans.

- The map that this table allows us to draw is similar to all other maps of the various types of disparities that have plagued the country since the early years of the post-colonial state. They include regional imbalance, imbalance between the East (the country's coastline) and the West (the border area with Algeria), imbalance between large and small cities, and imbalance in the distribution of the country's resources, which has reproduced social inequalities, etc.

- The dominance of SRUSSs specializing in economics and management on the one hand, and legal sciences on the other: extreme specialization in quantitative economics (accounting, banking, finance, entrepreneurship, etc.) is only increasing and becoming more and more fragmented. The same applies to legal sciences (financial, banking, and market-related in the capitalist and liberal sense).

- The social sciences, which generally find their niche in humanities and social science faculties and institutes, do not enjoy a comfortable position in the landscape of social science research in Tunisia. The SRUSS labels in the table do not provide clear information on this reality, but according to the map that can be drawn from them, history (all specialties combined), geography (human, social, and even economic), sociology, and anthropology are not well represented.

I.2. A Puzzle of Incomplete Information

To further clarify what was mentioned in the introductory sub-paragraph about SRUSS data, it should be added that, when the data is available, it is neither uniform nor standardized. Quite often, it is not updated and sometimes even obsolete. When we encountered such cases, we conducted additional research to correct the data and retain only the latest information that we believed, or simply knew from our own sources, to be correct, i.e., likely to be up to date.

Very Low Visibility

In the same vein of completing the information, we made quick visits to the interfaces dedicated to SRUSS, hosted within the home institution or even the universities to which such bodies are affiliated. In several cases, we found only a few lines of presentation. Activity reports and punctuality in their electronic publication are often lacking on this type of medium. Several SRUSSs are content to publish lists of events, published titles, etc. Sometimes the "texts" of this information refer to Facebook pages or YouTube posts related to the reported or mentioned activities or events. Few sites are updated and indicate the date of their last update or the number of visitors.

Despite the increasing number of Facebook pages dedicated to disseminating information about SRUSS,

we have noticed , after visiting a few of them , that they mainly publish scant information about this or that activity (symposium, seminar, meeting, book presentation, field trip) in the form of program leaflets, photos (often entitled “a throwback in pictures/photos” on...), short announcements, position papers, and information brochures. When the mentioned activity had not yet taken place at the time of its publication on the page, it was not followed up with “reports” on its organization in the days that followed. The data provided in this way is not without use, but it remains superficial in terms of assessing the value of these activities and their impact. Few research entities provide updated activity reports. All these observations lead to the following assumptions:

Data Transparency and Accessibility

Few reports are provided by SRUSS that are “properly” visible and “easily” readable. Without exaggeration, this is a genuine structural problem. It appears that the various activity reports are written by senior managers and sent/delivered to the relevant academic authorities without any real input from members. The summary sheets that these authorities ask the said managers to provide do not stipulate that any specific effort be made to ensure the visibility of the research entity.

As described, the editorial lines of the Facebook pages complicate communication about SRUSS research activities. This is evidenced by the diversity of information disseminated, as already mentioned. However, this complication in no way reflects the richness of the data, since the information disseminated on these platforms is neither sufficiently focused nor specified in such a way as to allow for an adequate assessment of the impact and value of research activities.

Activity Reports and Assessment

The scarcity of detailed and up-to-date activity reports poses a major challenge for assessing the effectiveness and impact of SRUSSs. The problem of continuity/transition in the leadership of these research entities has always been a real challenge. It explains, at least in part, the presence of personal data instead of official data, as already mentioned in relation to telephone numbers, email addresses, etc. Activity reports are generally drafted by senior managers, who send last-minute questions to the research body members who have led a particular activity or successfully published an article, chapter, or book, asking them for dates, titles, or simply photos of the covers or title pages. The scientific aspect of such activity reports is most often omitted. There is no “serious” impact to report to the evaluation committees.

Governance and Management: A system in Need of Rethinking

All of the points mentioned above and elaborated on here mean that the governance of SRUSSs is one of the most critical aspects of their very existence. When first established, their founding directors generally opted for the cooption of their closest colleagues and students enrolled in theses under their supervision. Cronyism and clientelism can very easily prosper in such conditions. Whenever it has been necessary to pass the torch on to the successor of the first “veterans” (this title is not random, given the sacrifices they have made and the bureaucratic obstacles they have had to overcome), it has been the turn of the comrade-in-arms, who fought alongside them from the beginning, to become the leader. They succeed in the position, in the command, and in the granting of benefits and privileges (grants, publication assistance, information on conferences, registrations for possible invitations). The SRUSSs are far from functioning with a “democratic” alternation of management, or at least from guaranteeing a consistent space for the widest possible consultation.

I.3. Multidisciplinarity: a Distant Goal

This management style is exacerbated by an excessively expressed and practiced disciplinary corporatism. As a result, there is little room for true multidisciplinarity. Each time there has been a change in leadership at one research structure or another, the command has had to remain within the discipline of the previous leader: from historian to historian, from philosopher to philosopher, to give just a few examples. The structuring of laboratories into research teams only accentuates the dispatching of members according to their specialties, at least in terms of their origins. The few multidisciplinary conferences that are organized are not enough to launch a genuine multidisciplinary reflection on the issues addressed. The collective works and conference proceedings that emerge from them are generally divided and subdivided into quasi-disciplinary sections. The introductory texts do not necessarily remedy this problem in all cases. Rare are the conclusions that offer reflections that attempt to bridge the walls separating disciplines within the social sciences themselves. When such a mindset prevails and is reproduced, it is virtually impossible to imagine activities that would promote transdisciplinarity, allowing us to navigate between the social, human, and natural sciences.

II. EXPLORING THE PROSPECTS FOR PUBLIC RESEARCH OUTSIDE THE UNIVERSITY

Non-university research occupies a significant place in the field of social sciences in Tunisia, although its implementation remains limited to a small number of institutions. It complements traditional university bodies such as laboratories and research units. These centers, which are often public administrative institutions, fall under the jurisdiction of various ministries, while enjoying a certain degree of autonomy for their scientific activities.

The various national directories list around 40 research centers, a dozen of which operate in the field of humanities and social sciences (HSS) in the broad sense, encompassing all disciplines except the exact and technical sciences. Four of these centers are directly affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS), via its Directorate General for Scientific Research (DGRS): the Center for Economic and Social Studies and Research (CERES), the National University Center for Scientific and Technical Documentation (CNUDST), the Center for Research and Studies on the Dialogue of Civilizations and Comparative Religions (CREDCRC), and the Ibn Khaldoun Center for Philosophical and Urban Studies (CIBKEPU). The table below shows all the available information.

Figure 46: Research centers affiliated with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MESRS)

Research Body	Number of research Bodies	Location	Senior (Professors, Associate Professors)	Researchers		Research assistants	
				MA	Assistants	Docs	Doctoral students
CERES	20	Tunis https://ceres.rnrt.tn secretariat.dg@ceres.mesrs.tn Tel: +216 71 770 244	2	5	1 Master	5	7
CREDCRC	14	Sousse www.ceredicrec.rnrt.tn Tel: +216 73 335 255	4	2 HDR	3 Doc	2	3
CNUDST	The CNUDST does not employ researchers, only engineers, documentalists, and administrative staff.						
CIBKEPU	The Ibn Khaldoun Center for Philosophical and Urban Studies (CIBKEPU): No information available.						

Source: MESRS

The CERES in Tunis is the main public non-university center dedicated to the social sciences. It maintains a central position thanks to the diversity of its research areas and its nationally recognized scientific output. The CNUDST, with its technical focus, plays a key role in supporting universities and national centers by facilitating access to specialized scientific documentation, particularly at the international level. Its multilingual and multidisciplinary collection includes printed, digital, and microform materials. This resource covers both a large part of national scientific output and global technological innovation, and can be consulted on site or via the “PIST.TN” portal. The CNUDST is also notable for its commitment to the digitization of Tunisian scientific output, with a number of initiatives such as the creation of consortia for the allocation of digital object identifiers (DOI). It regularly trains teachers and researchers on how to promote their work, in conjunction with major international publishers.

The Ibn Khaldoun Center, created in 2013 and specializing in philosophical and urban studies, remains poorly documented, as its actual activity is difficult to assess beyond the framework set by its founding decree. However, this research entity illustrates a phenomenon observed after 2011: the emergence of new research centers responding to the enthusiasm for Tunisia as a field of study and experimentation.

The CREDCRC, founded in Sousse in 2005, embodies another dynamic. It is part of the post- September 11, 2001 international context and the promotion of dialogue among civilizations, a theme supported by the UN since 2001. This center develops research on comparative civilizations and religions, while promoting Tunisia’s intellectual heritage through prospective studies and scientific events, in cooperation with a vast national and international network.

Examining the direct impact of these centers on public policy development, particularly in the areas of higher education and research, reveals a complex situation. Unlike other ministerial departments (Agriculture, Social Affairs), there is no center specifically dedicated to analyzing higher education policies: major reforms or program revisions are generally handled by ad hoc committees or groups set up by the MESRS itself. However, the contribution of the CNUDST and CERES remains valuable: the former increases the visibility and competitiveness of Tunisian research through its documentary services, while the latter serves as a privileged space for open debate and analysis of public policies, including those related to higher education. The work and feedback from these debates prove to be enriching for decision-making bodies.

Finally, the institutional history of these centers reveals that their only real link with the supervisory authority remains administrative governance. CERES, created even before MESRS and DGRS, is an example of a research entity born of its own initiative, with the supervisory authority intervening only in day-to-day management, without having been involved in its creation or its historical missions. Given this lack of centers specifically dedicated to higher education policy, it seems appropriate to capitalize more on the expertise and potential of CERES. With its infrastructure and experience, CERES stands out as a unique space for reflection and public decision-making support, with many major works having been presented and debated on its premises. Strengthening its role and better aligning it with the strategic needs of the ministry could therefore contribute to greater consistency between non-university scientific output and public policy development in Tunisia.

III. INTEGRATING SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH INTO THE SOCIO-CULTURAL SPHERE

With the advent of independence, public policy choices and orientations became part of the planning process. This approach proved particularly significant in the emergence of disciplines such as sociology, which mainly flourished within the Bureau of Sociological Research (BRS), under the Ministry of Economy and Planning. This coexistence highlights a pragmatic and rational approach to the social sciences. By extending this approach to other ministerial spheres, the integration of research became an essential element in the Tunisian public decision-making process, enriching policies (directly or indirectly) with a solid and diverse knowledge base.

Although this research was overwhelmed by the demands of the State and the authoritarian tendencies that used it as a pretext, the presence of researchers within these entities and the degree of freedom they enjoyed were undeniable. The case of CERES illustrates in a relevant manner this paradoxical situation. Although working closely with state institutions and ministries (through national PNR programs), it was founded and largely funded by the American Ford Foundation. It was run by researchers steeped in Marxist ideology, while being under the supervision of an independent State with conservative and single-party leanings. This case illustrates the fundamental contradictions that underlay integrated research under the various ministries.

These research bodies are units, centers, or departments dedicated to sectoral research integrated directly into government action. From this perspective, the link between integrated research and ministerial policies is essential to ensure that government decisions are based on solid evidence and respond effectively to the needs of a changing society (the transition from a socialist model to infitah (openness)). This relationship also meets other needs, such as:

“Alibi Research” or Informing Decisions?
By drawing on research findings, ministries can develop policies that address identified issues, thereby minimizing the risk of errors or inefficiencies. According to F. Siino, this approach highlights the crucial role of the link between politics and science. In Tunisia, the State assumes responsibility for various social aspects, thereby structuring a fragmented society. State policies drive social transformation, making science a matter of State while granting a certain degree of freedom to actors and researchers, as long as they do not directly interfere in political regulation. From this perspective, discussing science policy highlights the external nature of science and reveals its power to influence institutional decisions and the selective disclosure of information (the concept of “gray knowledge” refers to the notion of “Madda chakma” (gray brain), dear to Habib Bourguiba). This makes it possible to assess the attitude of the authorities towards science, and to conclude that their benevolence is not systematic[9].

The Challenge of Adapting to Social Demands
Ministries often have to cope with rapid changes in society. Integrated research makes it possible to stay up to date on emerging trends and citizens’ needs. This helps decision-makers adapt their policies in real time, ensuring an adequate response to contemporary challenges. Drawing on the work of P. Garraud, F. Siino notes the existence in Tunisia of a research management model based on anticipation. In this respect, it is the public authorities or their representatives who identify future gaps or imbalances in certain areas, define them as issues, and proactively place them on their agenda. This model is distinguished by the absence of political conflicts, social pressures, or media exploitation, with public action being triggered mainly by the expertise of ministries.

A parallel can be drawn with the situation in question, where integrated research entities have the capacity to define as “problematic” what is in fact a collectively important issue (such as the involvement of the social sciences in development), but which remains largely diffuse, non-urgent, and without explicit social demand.

Policy Assessment and Improvement
Integrated research has a significant role in evaluating current policies. By analyzing the results and impacts of ministerial initiatives, research should identify areas for improvement, enhance program effectiveness, and justify necessary adjustments. It is important to note that the hierarchical and centralized model, in which decision-makers anticipate research choices and themes (national research programs or other mobilization programs), is not the only reference model for integrated research. Following the work of P. Garraud, F. Siino highlights the model of silent corporatist action, in which one or more “organized groups” emerge at a given moment. These groups do not pre-exist as organized entities, whether they be professional associations, trade union tendencies,

9 Siino, François. Science and Power in Contemporary Tunisia. Institute for Research and Studies on the Arab and Muslim Worlds, Karthala Publishing, 2004, https://doi.org/10.4000/books.iremam.507

or even learned societies (whose members come from various disciplines). Their interaction in response to circumstances seems to forge the group as action progresses, without prior institutionalization of social mediation or consideration as an interest group (except possibly a posteriori). The alignment of "knowledge-power" objectives is rather technocratic in nature, as observed in studies conducted by the ONFP (National Office for Family and Population) or international research agendas across sectoral fields such as public health. Similarly, research entities under the Ministry of Education adapt their research strategies to the needs of the education sector, while operating within a national or international framework with organizations such as UNESCO, ALESCO, ISESCO, etc.

Strengthening Legitimacy

When a policy is supported by solid research, it enjoys greater legitimacy in the eyes of the public and stakeholders. This strengthens citizens' confidence in the decisions taken by ministries and promotes greater acceptance of policies. However, the use of social science research by politicians to legitimize policies can involve selective manipulation of results, research agendas, and the creation of artificial consensus. The influence of the State is felt not only in the research process itself, but also in the choice of experts and the publication of results. Some statistical figures may be deliberately omitted. For example, prior studies on youth (2010 report by the Tunisian Youth Observatory) and certain studies on the development of "shadow zones" were often tampered with before 2011 to justify or conceal government actions. This manipulation continued after 2016 through various consultations, both in person and online. This convergence highlights how political mobilization and the manipulation of knowledge can become inseparable.

Creation of Partnerships

Integrated research encourages collaboration among researchers and government decision- makers. These partnerships promote the exchange of ideas and expertise, giving ministries access to specialized knowledge that can enrich the political process. International collaboration among various actors, such as ministries related to development and international cooperation, the Ministry of Women, Family, Children, and the Elderly in partnership with United Nations agencies, as well as NGOs and international development organizations such as AFD (French Development Agency), USAID, and others, greatly enhances the capabilities of integrated research. This multi-stakeholder cooperation offers many advantages: sharing of resources and expertise, broadening of scope and impact, diversity of perspectives, access to varied data and contexts, and skills development. By incorporating these international actors, integrated research takes a more comprehensive, interdisciplinary, and global approach, thereby enabling a better understanding of and response to the complex challenges facing contemporary societies worldwide.

III.1 Research Entities with Variable Geometry

In defining the sociocultural sphere, we refer to research that is fully integrated into public decision- making and institutional processes, particularly within the ministries of Social Affairs, Cultural Affairs, and Religious Affairs.

The collected information comes mainly from the websites of these ministries and the institutions or decrees relating to their creation. However, the comprehensiveness and quality of the information varies significantly from one site to another. The OTE website (Office of Tunisians Abroad, under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Affairs), for example, is currently undergoing maintenance and cannot be accessed. The same applies to the ONM (National Migration Observatory) website, the French version of which is currently under construction. Some of the above institutions or centers have had their names changed.

Most of them are public institutions with an administrative nature (EPA), combining information, training, and research. Some have permanent staff responsible for research or training, while others have staff recruited on an ad hoc basis for specific tasks.

Their scientific output often manifests as reports on their activities in the form of booklets or bulletins. However, some institutions under the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, for example, do not engage in research but encourage, through grants, artistic and literary creation and innovation and contribute to their dissemination.

It should be noted that extra-university research deserves greater attention and more in-depth examination given its direct impact on social reality.

Ministry of Religious Affairs

Institution	Creation	Type
Center for Research and Studies on Dialogue among Civilizations and Comparative Religions (in partnership with the MESRS)	2005	EPA*

Mission:
- Conducting scientific research and studies for the dialogue of civilizations and comparative religions.
- Organization of conferences and training courses.
- Establishment of an observatory of databases in the field.

Human resources:
It has a multidisciplinary group of researchers: Islamic sciences, philosophy, sociology, education sciences, legal and economic sciences.

Publications:
Booklets summarizing symposiums and study days.

(*) Public institution of administrative nature

Ministry of Cultural Affairs

Establishment	Creation	Type
The National Center for Cultural Communication	1987	EPA*

Mission
- The promotion and dissemination of culture in Tunisia
- Studies, surveys, collection of information and documents, statistics relating to culture and leisure.
- It ensures the publication of documents and works specific to this sector.

The National Heritage Institute (under joint supervision with the MESRS)	1993	EPA*

Mission:
- Study, preservation, and promotion of cultural heritage
- Training and retraining of executives
- Central library, branch libraries, and a digital library
- Publication of scientific and cultural studies relating to heritage.

Components:
- The Center for Heritage Science and Technology, responsible for training executives
- The National Laboratory for the Restoration and Conservation of Manuscripts
- The National Calligraphy Center (training in this field)

Human resources:
Researchers, engineers, heritage curators

The Fund for the Encouragement of Literary and Artistic Creation	2013	

Mission:
Supporting creators in the literary and artistic fields; it offers grants to encourage the work of artists, poets, and writers.

The International Center for the Digital Cultural Economy	2018	EPNA**

The Center is:
- An incubator for innovative projects and start-ups operating in the field of culture.
- A laboratory for administrative innovation in the public cultural sector
- A center for documentation, research support, surveys, and studies in the field of culture in relation to digital technologies.
- A training space for the promotion of culture through technology.

It has a digital library: ekotbia.tn

The Translation Institute	2006	EPNA**
Mission: Information, training, documentation, and conducting		
(*): Public administrative institution (**): Public institution of a non-administrative nature		

Ministry of Social Affairs

Institution	Creation	Type
Office for Tunisians Abroad	1988	OG*
Mission: • Promote and implement support programs for Tunisians living abroad. • Define and implement assistance programs for their benefit. • Facilitate the reintegration of Tunisians returning to Tunisia into the national economy. • Establish a continuous information system for Tunisians living abroad.		
The Institute for Occupational Health and Safety	1990	EPA
Mission: • Promoting occupational health and safety and developing occupational risk prevention programs. • In this context, it carries out the following activities: • Studies and research, • Training and information, • Technical and medical assistance to companies **Departments and units:** • Occupational biology and toxicology laboratory • Training and Communication Department • Occupational Health Department • Occupational Safety Department **Publications:** OHS journal, brochures, leaflets, prevention guides, medical protocols.		
The Center for Research and Social Studies (CRES)	1996	EPNA
Mission: • To conduct studies in the field of social security and contribute to human capital development by carrying out socio-economic studies and surveys covering the broad field of social protection. • Its functional organization consists of five departments, including one responsible **for monitoring and evaluating social policies and programs.** P**ublications: journal:** CRES newsletter, scientific reports		
The National Migration Observatory (ONM)	2014	EPA
Mission: • Research and analysis of migration dynamics. It collects, analyzes, and disseminates data on migration, and contributes to the development of policies and programs aimed at improving the situation of migrants and strengthening their ties with Tunisia. • The ONM has five departments, one of which is dedicated to research, studies and documentation. • It has agreements with research laboratories and higher education institutions. **Publications:** A media library of 700 titles (studies and legal texts relating to migration). Periodic and occasional publications on immigration (*) : Governmental Organization.		

III.2 Public Research in Education and Public Health: Current Challenges

At the heart of Sigmund Freud's thinking lies a perceptive observation: *"Educating, caring for, and governing are three impossible tasks."* This sentence, although concise, raises essential questions about the complexity and challenges inherent in these fundamental functions of society. This impossibility sometimes extends to the field of research related to these three areas.

In the field of education, faced with the rise of privatization of educational institutions and the deterioration of public services, research is essential to rethink educational policies, improve the quality of teaching, and strengthen continuing education for teachers. Based on solid empirical data, this research, conducted within the various ministries, aims to identify gaps in the education system (quality, dropout rates, vocational training, etc.), propose innovative solutions, and promote transformations that are adapted to the changing needs of Tunisian society. On the other hand, in the field of public health, with public health services under increasing pressure and reforms needed to ensure equitable access to health care, public research plays an important role. By focusing on priority public health issues, such as access to care, disease prevention, and health promotion, public research institutions are called upon to help inform public policy and improve the delivery of health services.

Besides, the trend toward privatization and the deterioration of public services highlight the urgent need to strengthen research in education and public health. This research is essential to inform decision-makers, develop evidence-based policies, and ensure quality services accessible to all citizens. By investing in public research in these key areas, Tunisia is positioning itself to meet current and future challenges, promote social equity, and contribute to sustainable national development. In doing so, the country's will be better able to listen and respond to the needs of citizens as customers or users of public services.

III.3 Diversity of Research Entities in Health-Related Research

Mapping research institutes and centers specializing in the collection of data on the Tunisian public health policies and education system is a difficult undertaking due to the diversity of research bodies and the lack of centralization of available documentation.

It is clear that Tunisia invests heavily in research and innovation, particularly in health and education. The National Office for Family and Population (ONFP) and educational research centers are two key players in this dynamic. However, despite their respective efforts, challenges remain in terms of coordination and application of research findings.

The National Office for Family and Population (ONFP) is a key player in Tunisia's healthcare landscape. Since its creation, it has positioned itself as a tireless advocate for the reproductive and sexual health of Tunisians. By continually adapting its interventions to societal changes and public health issues, the ONFP has made itself indispensable.

Research is at the heart of the ONFP's activities. The International Training and Research Center (CEFIR) conducts in-depth studies to improve knowledge in the field of reproductive health and to inform public policy. This research makes it possible to identify the specific needs of the population and to adapt programs accordingly. The ONFP also offers a comprehensive range of sexual and reproductive health services. From prenatal and postnatal consultations to sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention programs, family planning, and infertility care, the ONFP supports individuals throughout their lives. At the same time, the institution conducts awareness-raising activities among the general public, particularly young people, to promote responsible behavior and combat misconceptions.

Beyond its national activities, the ONFP is also involved in international cooperation. By sharing its expertise with other countries in the Global South, the institution contributes to strengthening health systems worldwide.

However, it faces new challenges. Young people, with their specific characteristics and vulnerabilities, are a priority. Combating violence against women, controlling population growth, and ensuring the sustainability of the economic model are all major challenges for the years to come.

To meet these challenges, the ONFP is called upon to continue its prevention, education, and research efforts, while adapting its economic model. The institution will also need to strengthen partnerships with civil society actors, public institutions, and the private sector. Integrating gender into all its actions is also essential to ensure equity and gender equality.

(*) Public institution of administrative nature
(*): Public administrative institution
(**): Public institution of a non-administrative nature

Despite the significant activity of institutions such as the ONFP in the field of reproductive health, they remain poorly connected to university research units in the social sciences. Their scientific output is not indexed, rarely disseminated, and little used in national and international academic publications. This lack of integration limits their contribution to the collective dynamics of research in the social sciences and humanities. The result is a persistent divide between the production of operational knowledge for social purposes and academic research, which only a strategy of inter-institutional rapprochement could overcome.

III.4 "Integrated" Research in Education

Furthermore, in the field of education, the involvement of research entities specializing in the collection of data on the national education system is important for its development and evolution. The creation of the National Center for Educational Technology (in 2000) and the International Center for Teacher Training and Pedagogical Innovation (in 2016), as well as other bodies, clearly illustrates the Ministry's ambition to improve the quality of education. These centers provide trainers with various services to support trainees in the professionalization process through scientific and technological approaches. Indeed, an analysis of the specific missions of each center highlights a dense schedule of activities, research, and training programs. This suggests that the training is robust and enables education managers to acquire skills that guarantee a higher quality of teaching.

However, we have found that the entire scientific arsenal, including educational research and training programs, has no concrete impact on teaching practices. The challenges and potential problems faced by schools, teachers, and learners remain persistent. In other words, there is a significant gap between the proposals of training programs, scientific advances, and the final result, namely the actual performance of schools.

It is worthy to note that continuing education activities for teachers – particularly at the National Center for Teacher Training (CNFF) and the Higher Institute of Education and Continuing Education (ISEFC) in Bardo – are currently operating on a small scale, with insufficient resources to ensure a real impact. In this context, a fundamental question arises: what place does scientific research in education occupy in these training programs? Are pedagogical advances and innovations resulting from research truly integrated into training programs, or do they remain confined to theoretical studies?

Is there a real political and institutional will to transform this strategic sector, drawing inspiration from successful models applied elsewhere? How can we envisage greater synergy between educational research and teacher training, with a view to sustainable professionalization and tangible improvements in classroom practices? To meet the challenges facing this sector, it is essential to strengthen coordination and collaboration between the various involved actors. This promotes better articulation between research and public policy, the development of strong partnerships, and the creation of platforms for exchange.

Tunisia certainly has significant potential in terms of research and innovation. To consolidate the impact of actions in the fields of health and education, several recommendations can be made. These include supporting applied research, developing continuing education programs, evaluating the impact of public policies, and communicating research results.

Although research bodies are useful for the professionalization of educational actors, they have neither an explicit scientific research mission nor institutional recognition as centers for the production of validated knowledge. Their work often remains internal, is not highly valued scientifically, and is not well integrated into the broad orientations of the national research system. This situation reveals the absence of a genuine pool of educational research at the crossroads between the field and academia. To remedy this fracture, the creation of inter-institutional research consortia should be encouraged, bringing together the relevant ministries (Education, Higher Education, Health), training centers, university research units, and civil society actors.

These consortia would make it possible to anchor social sciences and humanities research in concrete social issues, pool resources, and produce recommendations with a strong operational impact.

(*) : Governmental Organization

IV. AT THE FOREFRONT OF RESEARCH ON WOMEN: SPECIALIZED CENTERS FOR WOMEN'S STUDIES

IV.1 Nomenclature

Among the research institutions that have been assigned missions of study, training, monitoring, and data collection, or even an advisory mission, is CREDIF (The Center for Research, Studies, Documentation, and Information on Women), explicitly designated as a research center in its founding text.

The other entities are not designated as such, but carry out multiple tasks of research, training, studies, proposals, consultations, and observations in their respective sectors. These are the OIFDEPDE (Observatory for Information, Training, Documentation, and Studies for the Protection of Children's Rights) and the ONLVF (National Observatory for the Fight against Violence against Women).

In addition, under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Women, Family, Children, and the Elderly, there is a higher education institute, a structure dedicated to higher education and scientific research par excellence.

Below are their missions and characteristics:

Name of the Research Body	Affiliation	Field and Specialization	Other useful information
Research Center			
Center for Research, Studies, Documentation, and Information on Women (CREDIF)	The Center is a non-administrative public institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and the Elderly.	In accordance with its founding charter, CREDIF has both research and advisory roles: On the one hand, it supports studies and research on the status of women in society and their contribution to development by collaborating with specialized national and international organizations. It collects, updates, and disseminates data and documents relating to the status of women in Tunisia, and prepares reports to be communicated to the official authorities as needed for the purpose of developing public policy and related programs. It may be asked by ministries to express its opinion or invited to participate in various entities created by public authorities in relation to the situation of women.	CREDIF was established by Law No. 78 of 1990, dated August 7, 1990, repealed and amended by Law No. 121 of 1992, dated December 29, 1992.
Higher education and Scientific Research Body			
The Higher Institute for Child Care Professionals (ISCE)	The institute is under the supervision of the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and the Elderly	• To train childhood professionals in all specialties • Encouraging scientific research, documentation, and publication in the field of childhood • Ensuring continuing education and capacity building for all childhood professionals • Establish links with Maghreb, Arab, Muslim, and African schools and any other comparable schools. • Present proposals to improve child development and children's rights. • Conduct studies and research assigned by official authorities on the subject of children.	• Master's degree in childhood research and artistic mediation • Professional Master's Degree in Audiovisual Communication for Childhood Educators • Master's degree in child education research • Doctorate in Childhood Education and Mediation.

		• Organize events related to children, such as festivals, exhibitions and competitions.	• Doctorate in Art Technology, Design, and Artistic Mediation
Observatories			
Observatory for Information, Training, Documentation, and Studies for the Protection of Children's Rights	The observatory is a public administrative institution under the supervision of the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and the Elderly.	• Monitoring the status of children's rights • Collecting data and information at the national and international levels, analyzing it, and cataloging it in databases • Conducting research and evaluation or prospecting studies related to the sector of childhood and its evolution • Prepare reports and participate in the publication of periodicals and economic reviews. • Promote a culture of children's rights and facilitate communication on this issue between the various ministries and structures involved in the implementation of the provisions of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Code for the Protection of Children's Rights or working in related fields • Contribute with the official authorities to the development of policies and programs aimed at promoting children's rights • Organize learning and training seminars, meetings, study days, and related events.	Created by Decree No. 2002-327 of February 14, 2002
The National Observatory for the Fight against Violence against Women	Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and the Elderly	In accordance with Article 3 of Decree No. 2020-12, the observatory performs the following tasks: • Receiving complaints and reports via a dedicated hotline • Detect and archive cases of violence against women • Detect and collect cases of violence against women and their repercussions and archive them in a database created for this purpose • Monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of legislation and policies relating to the elimination of violence against women, and publishing reports to propose appropriate solutions. • Conduct the necessary scientific and field research and carry out evaluation and prospecting studies on violence against women in order to assess the interventions required and address the forms of violence • Contribute to the development of national strategies, common and sectoral practical measures, and define the guiding principles for the elimination of violence against women.	Government Decree No. 2020- 126 of February 25, 2020, establishing the National Observatory for the Fight against Violence against Women and setting out its administrative and financial organization and operating procedures.

		• Carry out its missions within the framework of cooperation Ensure cooperation with civil society, independent constitutional bodies, and any public body concerned with monitoring and controlling respect for human rights, with a view to developing and consolidating the system of rights and freedoms in general. • Issue opinions on training, learning, and empowerment programs for those working in the field of violence against women, and propose appropriate mechanisms for developing and monitoring them • Organize meetings, study days, and events in the field of combating violence against women. • Article 4 of the same decree gives the observatory the right to collect all reports and data relating to violence against women from any relevant ministry or body in order to produce its annual report, which includes "statistics on violence against women, the conditions for receiving, accommodating, monitoring, supporting, and integrating victims of violence, the consequences of protection orders, legal actions, and related judgments, as well as proposals and recommendations for developing national mechanisms for the elimination of violence against women." • Each year, in the first quarter, the report must be submitted to the President of the Republic, the President of the Assembly of People's Representatives, and the Head of Government, and published on the Observatory's website.	

IV.2 Structural and Budgetary Difficulties

Structural Difficulties

In Tunisian and comparative administrative law, the classification of public institutions into public administrative institutions (EPA) and non-administrative public institutions (EPNA) has an impact on the degree of autonomy and flexibility in their administrative and financial governance.

Firstly, although under the law EPAs and EPNAs have legal personality and financial autonomy by virtue of the text establishing them, which makes them subject to supervisory rather than hierarchical control, in practice there are no fundamental differences between the powers exercised over decentralized authorities and those exercised over decentralized EPAs. Thus, administrative and financial oversight of EPAs includes powers of a priori (prior approval) and a posteriori (cancellation of acts) control, in addition to the power of substitution.

In addition, the supervisory authority may issue injunctions to the EPA, all of which is justified by the fact that these entities must act within the framework of the general guidelines set out by the supervisory authority. However, compared to EPAs, the EPNA (to a greater or lesser extent depending on the EPNA subcategory) benefits from less stringent management rules and greater decision-making and budgetary autonomy, although both categories of legal entities are subject to the supervisory control of the line ministry.

This is the context for the structural difficulties experienced by some of the research entities under the Ministry of Family, Women, Children, and the Elderly (MFFEPA). The reason is that among all the bodies that have assigned themselves the tasks of collecting statistical data, preparing studies, and producing regular observation and evaluation reports in their respective sectors, only the Center for Research, Studies, Documentation, and Information on Women (CREDIF) and the Higher Institute for Child Welfare (ISCE) do

not suffer too much from structural burdens (given that CREDIF is an EPNA and ISCE is a higher education and scientific research entity under the University of Carthage and also under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education[10]) unlike the Observatory for Information, Training, Documentation, and Studies for the Protection of Children's Rights (OIFDEPDE) and the National Observatory for the Fight against Violence against Women (ONLVF). Furthermore, the ONLVF's organizational chart is very small and unambitious, and does not fully meet the ambitions of Law 58-2017 of August 11, 2017, as a single department combines three missions that should in principle be separated to form separate departments: monitoring, studies, and communication. As a result, the organizational chart is closed, which creates a staffing problem.

Similarly, almost all the above entities share the difficulty of a lack of qualified personnel, as even CREDIF suffers from a total absence of researchers, despite being a research body, and also lacks psychologists, demographers, statisticians, and lawyers. In the same vein, OIFDEPDE also suffers from a lack of staff such as sociologists and statisticians.

Besides, the government's strategy of slowing down recruitment has left the door open only to recruitment through secondment or transfer. However, given that the vacant positions are unattractive, high-quality researchers (such as teacher-researchers) are not interested in accessing them through these two methods. Furthermore, like other research centers (such as the National Heritage Institute), CREDIF should be under the joint supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and the FFEPA in order to resolve the problem of recruiting high-quality researchers. The latters would then be recruited at the start of their careers through competitive examinations, like teacher- researchers, and could progress within the same research institution.

Budgetary Issues

In budgetary terms, the problem of a lack of qualified personnel impacts the effectiveness of the concerned research entity, and leads to slowness and sometimes even hinders its work. This slowness is primarily the result of the cumbersome public procurement procedure required for the recruitment of experts, which is now an essential solution to compensate for the lack of qualified personnel.

As a result, the CREDIF, the National Observatory for the Fight against Violence against Women, and the Observatory for Information, Training, Documentation, and Studies for the Protection of Children's Rights most often rely on contractual experts to carry out their studies, reports, or projects in the absence of qualified personnel. The expertise is then financed either by NGO or GO donors or by the State. The related difficulties may limit the research body's decision-making power with regard to the choice of fields and subjects of study. In the first case, the project must be in line with the general framework of the objectives on which the partner is working, in order for it to agree to provide funding. In the second case, if the proposed study does not fit within the strategy and vision of the relevant ministry, approval is not required. Studies can then either be submitted by the concerned research organization in accordance with the political and strategic framework of the relevant ministry, or be proposed by the latter in order to guarantee approval of financing if funds are available.

A practical observation of the activities of the above-mentioned research entities shows that, apart from CREDIF, the other bodies, especially OIFDEPDE and ONLVF, suffer from very limited budgets and, as a result, their actions are based mainly on financial output.

[10] See the official ISCE website at http://www.iscenf.rnu.tn. See also the official MFFEPA website at http://www.femmes.gov.tn/fr/8475-2/#.

V. CROSS-PERSPECTIVES: FOREIGN INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS IN TUNISIA

Since independence and on the eve of the 2011 revolution, Tunisia has maintained and developed international relations in a context of mutual respect. International cooperation has always been considered the cornerstone of its foreign policy, which aims to forge closer ties with the rest of the world, enhance and develop partnerships. Aware that the development of the national research system is based on the mobilization of efforts and resources at the national and international levels, but also on the consolidation of cooperative partnerships with other countries, Tunisia has always sought to improve and expand its network of partners, diversify its forms of intervention, and adopt an active economic diplomacy. As a result, international organizations and institutions are increasingly present. They have played a key role in supporting economic policy guidelines and orientations, and have contributed significantly to improving living conditions.

In various fields, including the social sciences (political economy, democracy, decentralization, social equity, economic development, etc.), these institutions have been very active in conducting research and analysis to support the State in policy-making, establishing a solid democracy, and implementing good governance, among other things. Since 2011, several existing institutions in Tunisia have taken a particular interest in political life, the emerging democracy and elections, providing technical support through training and studies, as well as financial support to their partners (political parties, parliament, think tanks, organizations, etc.).

Some institutions are political foundations, such as the German foundations (Friedrich Naumann Foundation; Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation; Hanns Seidel Foundation in the Maghreb, etc.). They are linked to political parties in their countries (National Democratic Institute NDI), but generally have legal independence and have as a main mission political, social, and democratic education. They have provided training for members and leaders of political parties to strengthen their skills by giving them the tools and expertise they need to be more representative. They have also conducted in-depth research through surveys, polls, and interviews to track social, economic, and political trends and perceptions among Tunisians, providing valuable information that has helped inform decision-making.
In addition, some of these organizations (IRI) had a significant role in working to empower women and young people through their networks, with a view to promoting their involvement in political and civic processes. They also worked on promoting research and consulting through the awarding of scholarships as part of international cooperation with countries in the Global South (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung FES Foundation). These organizations and institutions, which have provided political education for political parties and civil society, have also monitored and supervised elections, thereby supporting and consolidating the fundamental values of democracy and promoting transparency and equal opportunities in political, economic, social, and cultural participation.

Others are part of their countries' international development cooperation (GIZ). Their projects rest on scientific and technical collaboration to assist the government in decision-making, prospecting, and economic and social development.

Another category of institutions includes research centers or institutes (IRMC; IRD; the Heinrich Böll Foundation HBS; CEMAT; CAREP) that are regional in scope and attached to institutions or under the supervision of ministries in their countries (Ministry of Higher Education and Research and Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development). As academic institutions, their role is to enrich debates in the humanities and the social sciences from a comparative perspective, at the regional and international levels. Their activities focus mainly on organizing doctoral training, colloquiums, seminars, and conferences, and hosting researchers, fellows, and interns, in cooperation with institutions in the countries concerned.

This evolution in the role of these organizations and institutions in supporting scientific research in Tunisia has been made possible by the legal framework established since the revolution, but also by a favorable political and institutional environment and relatively easy access to foreign funding. This has helped to attract maximum external financing for research in specific areas from their countries (democracy, democratic transition, governance, energy, environment, security, etc.).

Political foundations and research centers are independent, but they are mainly financed by public funds from their countries to support scientific research for the economic and social development

of their partners. Some may have their own income from registration fees and donations. For example, NDI programs in Tunisia are supported by donations from USAID, the United Nations, and the National Endowment for Democracy. The IRMC's budget comes mainly from government grants (CNRS and MEAE). The IRD and the French Development Agency (AFD) have a strong strategic and financial relationship. GIZ implements projects for donors such as the European Union (EU), the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), the Federal Foreign Office (AA), the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWi), and the German private sector.

These organizations and institutions have websites through which they communicate their news, events, and projects in order to continue to have a significant impact. Their staff and local partners are mobilized to achieve objectives aimed at economic and social development and human well-being. Tunisia is home to several international institutions and organizations specializing in the social sciences, including:

List of Foreign Research Institutes

Organization/ Institution	About the Organization/Institution	Number of Senior Researchers	Assistant Researchers	Postdocs Doctoral Students and Others
France				
Institute for Research on the Contemporary Maghreb (IRMC)	The Institute for Research on the Contemporary Maghreb (IRMC) is a regional research center for the humanities and social sciences, founded in 1992. The center is overseen by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE). The IRMC contributes to the development of research on the Maghreb in the following disciplines: anthropology, demography, law, economics, urban studies, geography, history, political science, sociology, and social sciences applied to literature, philosophy, and psychology. The IRMC is one of the most competent academic institutions in terms of knowledge of the contemporary Maghreb (19th-21st centuries) through its research areas focusing on the history of the Maghreb (Algeria, Tunisia, Libya) between the 19th and 21st centuries; contemporary Maghreb societies undergoing restructuring; and governance and politics. It participates in debates in the humanities and the social sciences from a comparative perspective at the regional and international levels. Its activities include organizing doctoral programs, symposiums, seminars, and conferences with an international focus; and hosting researchers, fellows, and interns from the Maghreb and France, in cooperation with institutions in the countries concerned.	20	10	13
The Research Institute for Development (IRD)	The Research Institute for Development has been in Tunisia since 1957. It works in cooperation with the Tunisian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, institutes, schools, universities, and research institutions.	7		

	The IRD seeks to develop research, training, and expertise on issues related to ecosystems and natural resource management, the development of bioenergy, nutrition and health, governance, and economic and social dynamics. It also seeks to implement action programs to promote and disseminate research knowledge and foster dialogue between science and society. Several research projects have been carried out in cooperation with Tunisian universities.			
Germany				
The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom	The Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) is a German political foundation. It is part of the Federal Republic of Germany's international cooperation program. It supports partner organizations and associations, namely political parties, think tanks, business associations, and other organizations that contribute to the development of a free and open society and protect the right to private property for all citizens so that they can live in democratic self-determination and under the rule of law. Since 1964 in Tunisia, the Foundation has been organizing, with its partners, national, regional, and international activities in the form of seminars, workshops, conferences, and debates, as well as training and strategic advice through political education to support the principles of human rights, the rule of law, freedom of the press, and democracy. They also work on issues relating to international finance and economic policy; digital policy; security; and development and human rights policies. Through its activities and publications, the foundation seeks to help people become more involved in political affairs. It also awards scholarships to talented students to support them.	0	0	0
The Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES)	Founded in 1925, the FES is Germany's oldest political foundation. It is a non-profit, autonomous and independent organization. It seeks to support and consolidate the fundamental values of social democracy, including freedom, justice, and solidarity, by supporting socio-political and historical research. Its overall goal is to ensure a free and united society that promotes equal opportunities for political, economic, social, and cultural participation, without any discrimination based on origin, gender or religion; a dynamic and robust democracy; an economy supported by sustainable growth and promoting decent work for all its people; a welfare State that provides better education and health systems and combats poverty; a country that assumes its responsibilities for peace and social progress.	0	0	0

	Since 1988, the FES in Tunisia has been committed to dialogue, democracy, and development. It works to promote and strengthen social democracy through political education, offering information, guidance, and training programs to improve citizens' participation in public debate and decision-making processes; political advice aimed at formulating proposals on key issues of economic, social, and educational policy and the development of democracy; international cooperation with the aim of defending human rights, establishing and consolidating democratic, social, and constitutional structures, and promoting the emergence of free trade unions and a strong civil society; the awarding of scholarships mainly to students and doctoral candidates from low-income or immigrant families to improve equal opportunities in access to education; the establishment of an archive center and a library for research projects in contemporary history.			
The Hanns Seidel Foundation in the Maghreb	The Hanns Seidel Foundation is an organization that works "in the service of democracy, peace and development" through political education. The conceptual and field work of the Hanns Seidel Foundation is divided into four main areas or four branches, namely the Academy of Politics and History, which identifies and analyzes trends; the Institute for Political Education, which organizes symposiums on various topics; the Institute for the Promotion of Studies, which offers programs for talented students who are socially engaged; and the Institute for International Cooperation, which manages and evaluates international cooperation projects for development, but mainly in favor of good governance, poverty reduction, and sustainable development. The Hanns Seidel Foundation's projects contribute to national efforts to respond to challenges and adapt to various political, social, and economic changes in a country. Active in Tunisia since 1988, its main mission is to promote democracy, the rule of law, peace and human security, good governance, sustainable economic development, and environmental protection. The foundation also seeks to encourage dialogue between different actors in society to raise awareness of the importance of democratic values, good governance, and economic development. The main pillar of the Hanns Seidel Foundation's work in Tunisia is scientific research, training, and the promotion of Maghreb and international exchanges. More specifically, it seeks to support local actors and local authorities in the implementation of their projects.	0	0	0

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation	The Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS) is a political foundation whose fundamental principles are freedom, justice, and solidarity. Through international cooperation, it seeks to promote democracy, the rule of law, and a social economy by establishing ongoing dialogue on foreign and security policy in order to foster exchanges between cultures and religions, and by developing active networks within politics, the economy, and society to bring together people who assume social responsibility. The aim is to increase the chances of structuring globalization in a socially just, ecologically sustainable, and economically efficient manner. Present in Tunisia since 1982, the KAS aims to support social, economic, and political development and transformation. More specifically, its work focuses on the areas of democracy and the rule of law, civil society, the social market economy, intercultural dialogue, conflict prevention, and relations between the EU and Mediterranean countries. As part of its projects and programs, the foundation works with state actors and institutions or those close to the government, such as ministries, municipalities, and think tanks; political actors such as political parties; universities; and civil society and private sector organizations.	0	0	0
The Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBS)	The Heinrich Böll Foundation (HBS) is a think tank that carries out work and projects on ecology, sustainability, democracy, human rights, and the fight against all forms of discrimination. Since 2013, the office in Tunisia has been working on regional democracy by implementing projects and programs. More specifically, particular attention is given to research on good governance, transparency, the role of law, political and social participation, and young democracy in a country in transition. Recently, interest has focused on European migration policies and food security in the MENA region. The center publishes its work in the quarterly journal "Perspectives Moyen-Orient et Afrique du Nord" (Middle East and North Africa Perspectives). Authors from the MENA region have the opportunity to discuss and publish topics that are often neglected in European or German debates.	-	-	-
The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation	The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation (RLS) is a progressive, international, non-profit civic education institution that is publicly funded. Since 1990, the organization has focused on analyzing social processes and developments around the world. Specifically, it concentrates on democratic and social participation, the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, alternatives for economic and social development, conflict prevention, and peaceful conflict resolution.			

	The North Africa Office was established in Tunisia in 2013 to support social justice, political participation, and inter-societal dialogue. It cooperates with individuals, political representatives, progressive NGOs, trade unions, think tanks and media platforms. Cooperation with local organizations is academic, logistical, and/or financial. The goal is to ensure a shared learning process through the production and dissemination of knowledge via conferences, research, training, study visits, publications, and artistic production. The office in Tunisia is interested in studying relations between Europe and North Africa and their impact on societies and individuals. These relations encompass European policies, namely trade relations, debt policy, development aid, and public and private investment.	-	-	-
GIZ	GIZ provides, through its expertise, international cooperation services for sustainable development and international education. More than 120 countries have benefited from its services, the majority of which are partners of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. It works with civil society actors, research institutions, and entrepreneurs on issues related to economic development, employment, energy, the environment, peace, and security in order to create synergy between recommended policies and economic activity. Since 1999, GIZ has been operating in Tunisia on behalf of the German federal government and the European Union in more than 50 projects with the aim of supporting the country's economic and democratic development by promoting inland regions. Specifically, the projects focus on sustainable economic development and employment promotion; decentralized development and governance; water and natural resource protection. Currently, support is being provided to the State, businesses, and start-ups in the digital economy to improve the economic performance of different regions and encourage investment. Decentralization is another priority area of work. GIZ also coordinates Tunisia-specific activities in the areas of sustainability and gender. Since 2017, it has been in a reform partnership with Tunisia to modernize public administration and to improve conditions for private investment.	-	-	-

The United States				
Center for Maghreb Studies (CEMAT)	The Center for Maghreb Studies (CEMAT) is affiliated with the American Institute for Maghreb Studies (AIMS) research center, a private, non-profit educational organization that promotes research and information exchange between academics and students in the United States and the Maghreb, to foster a better understanding of the region. It is the leading professional organization for US-based academics interested in North Africa. Founded in 1985 and headquartered in Tunis, its priority and mission are to promote scientific interaction between Tunisian and American academics and between Maghreb academics in general. CEMAT regularly organizes conferences, round tables, and lectures on topics related to the region, but it also funds academic conferences in North Africa and awards grants to students and academics for research on the region. It also sponsors the Journal of North African Studies (published by Taylor & Francis) and a thesis-writing workshop at an American university.	2	4	1
National Democratic Institute (NDI)	The NDI is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan organization that seeks to strengthen and develop democracy around the world. It provides technical support to parliaments, political parties, elected officials and civil society organizations working to establish and consolidate democratic values and institutions in their countries. Since the creation of its office in January 2011, NDI Tunisia has collaborated with Tunisian civil society organizations (CSOs) by providing them with technical and financial support to give citizens a voice in the democratic process through election monitoring, advocacy for changes to the legal and electoral framework, and concrete improvements in communities. NDI also seeks to facilitate cooperation and knowledge sharing among its CSO partners to build a more effective and collaborative civil society, strengthen participatory governance, promote transparency, and increase government accountability. NDI also works with political parties, movements, independent candidates, elected officials at the local and national levels, and government actors to help them understand and represent citizens' concerns.	-	-	-
International Republican Institute (IRI)	The International Republican Institute (IRI) was founded in 1983 and is considered one of the leading institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), with a mission to advance democracy and freedom around the world. Its goal is to strengthen civil society, political parties, and marginalized communities in several areas related to democratic governance. It helps lawmakers improve transparency, connect policymakers, and empower individuals and include them in the political process.	-	-	-

	It is a people-centered organization that promotes participation, innovation, and creativity among individuals and institutions to impact the political and civic development of their countries. IRI includes the Center for Global Impact, which is composed of experts, researchers, and global project staff who help monitor and develop innovative approaches to respond to emerging trends and challenges in democracy; the Center for Insights and Survey Research (CISR), which leads the institute's efforts in qualitative and quantitative public opinion research and data through the collection of survey data from polls and surveys conducted in more than 100 countries; The Women's Democracy Network (WDN), founded in 2006 to inspire and empower women to participate and take on greater leadership roles in government, political parties, and civil society in their countries; and IRI's global youth network, Generation Democracy, which engages, empowers, and connects young people around the world to promote their involvement in political and civic processes. IRI has been working in Tunisia since 2011 to help the country continue its reforms and advance its democratic transition through political party training programs. It provides customized technical assistance to political parties and civil society on organizational structure, project and financial management, marketing, advocacy, and business development. IRI has trained numerous party members and leaders to strengthen their skills by providing them with the tools and expertise necessary to become more representative, responsive, and trustworthy to citizens. It has also conducted in-depth research through surveys, polls, interviews, and focus groups to track important social, economic, and political trends and perceptions among Tunisians, providing valuable information on public attitudes and priorities to inform decision-making.			
International Center for Private Enterprise (CIPE)	CIPE is an institute of the National Endowment for Democracy and an affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce. Based on the principle that economic and political freedoms are inseparable, it seeks to build strong democratic institutions that enable the creation of an environment conducive to business development and entrepreneurship through the fight against corruption, training entrepreneurs, assisting local business associations, chambers of commerce, and think tanks, and participating in presidential debates on the economy and good governance bodies. CIPE in Tunisia, which has been in existence since 1996 and had an office in 2016, works to support civil society organizations and advocate for good governance and sound policies to create a dynamic market where businesses can thrive and overcome economic and governance challenges.	0	0	0

	Several projects have been carried out in Tunisia with the aim of strengthening governance: the SAHA (Supporting Good Governance in Healthcare) project, implemented in collaboration with Tunisian civil society, citizens, business representatives, and the Tunisian Ministry of Health. CIPE, together with its partners the Arab Institute of Corporate Executives (IACE) and the Union of Small and Medium Industries (UPMI), advocates for reforms and measures for industrial development and regional growth and supports public-private partnership. CIPE Tunisia brings together businesses, governments, civil society, academics, and the media to discuss current economic issues such as informal economy, trade, corruption, and women's economic empowerment.	0	0	0
Qatar				
Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (CAREP)	The CAREP center, created in 2010 in Qatar, is an independent think tank focused on humanities and social sciences. Through scientific research, it seeks to establish communication between researchers, intellectuals, and specialists in the Arab world and internationally. Specifically, it is a private, non-profit institution created for the purposes of teaching, research, and public service. Created in Tunisia in July 2014, it conducts political, human, and social studies relating to the Greater Maghreb. Its objective is to strengthen scientific collaboration among different researchers in Tunisia, the Maghreb, and Europe. It also seeks to target researchers and encourage them to participate in the center's various activities and events. The center is called upon to monitor the political, economic, and social changes that characterize the region through studies and analyses that reflect the thoughts of its researchers.	0	0	0

VI. A WINNING SYNERGY: SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATIONS AND RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

Among the 813 organizations that participated in the Barometer of Associative Life (BAROSC 2023), those claiming to be scientific or research-related remain very much in the minority. Analysis of the fields of activity reveals a clear dominance of certain sectors, while community-based research occupies a marginal place. It should be noted that although the survey includes think tanks, it excludes religious and political organizations, even though some of these may contribute indirectly to research work.

Box 7: Thematic distribution of Tunisian organizations and implications

The available data reveal a low representation of scientific organizations or think tanks in the Tunisian community landscape. On the other hand, three main areas clearly dominate the sector:

- Cultural and artistic activities (23.3% of associations)
- Defense of economic and social rights (12.2%)
- Defense of human rights (11.8%)

This distribution highlights several significant trends:
A particularly strong commitment of organizations in areas perceived as priorities by civil society
Concerns focused on cultural dimensions and fundamental rights
Less institutionalization of research and strategic thinking activities Other notable areas of action include:

- Defense of women's rights (9.2%)
- Environmental protection (8.5%)
- Health and disease prevention (5.6%)

These figures reflect a civil society that is strongly mobilized around concrete societal issues that directly affect people's living conditions and environmental protection. However, the relative absence of scientific institutions or strategic thinking suggests a potential for development in these areas to strengthen the impact of community-based actions.

The distribution also reflects the diversity of community commitments, covering areas such as agriculture and food security (4.2%), social movements (4.1%), social studies and research (3.3%), defending minority rights (2.9%), migrant and refugee rights (1.8%), and other specific areas. With 3.3% of CSOs declaring themselves to be scientific CSOs, the number of organizations specializing in social, political, or economic research appears to be negligible.

In a context traditionally marked for decades by a deep crisis of confidence between the political sphere and idea generators in Tunisia, think tanks find themselves in a somewhat problematic position with regard to their role and purpose. These entities, which are supposed to be independent in their thinking and research, are called upon to play a leading role in public policy development, generating innovative ideas, and stimulating democratic debate.

Over the years, and particularly since 2011, several Tunisian think tanks have emerged, addressing a variety of topics ranging from governance to the economy, security, human rights, the environment, and civil society. They provide in-depth analysis, policy recommendations, and discussion platforms for policymakers, the media, and the public.

Box 8: Tunisian think tanks face challenges of recognition and sustainability

The Tunisian think tank landscape presents a striking paradox: while new bodies have emerged in recent years, their international visibility remains limited. The Global Think Tanks Index lists only a small number of Tunisian institutions, dominated by a single State entity (ITES), with other organizations producing few notable publications during the evaluation period (Source: 2023 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report, University of Pennsylvania). This underrepresentation indicates:

- The methodological limitations of this international ranking, which is regularly criticized for its biases
- The low profile of this sector on a global scale

- The gap between local institutional dynamics and their international perception

Structural challenges exacerbated by the crisis
The 2020-2021 pandemic has aggravated the difficulties faced by young think tanks, which are confronted with:
- Growing financial constraints
- A shortage of qualified staff
- Various external pressures

Faced with these challenges, experts are calling for greater independence and transparency in these organizations as a guarantee of credibility (Source: "The Governance of Think Tanks in Tunisia," Arab Reform Initiative, 2022).

Capacity-building initiatives
The Savoir Eco program (Expertise France, 2023) illustrates ongoing efforts to:
- Consolidate the analytical capacities of think tanks
- Promote their collaboration with public decision-makers
- Structure this emerging sector

This initiative targets several institutions in a partnership-based approach, aimed at professionalizing the sector while maintaining its roots in Tunisian public debate.

VI.1. Empowering Research CSOs and Think Tanks in Tunisia

The empowerment of community-based research organizations and their influence on public policy and society are key evaluation criteria. These entities, which are neither uniform nor unique, come in various types of structures, namely:

- **Profit Think Tanks:** This type of think tank operates as a for-profit enterprise, generally offering consulting and research services to clients who pay for their services. They may be independent entities or affiliated with private companies. In Tunisia, these types of entities take the form of consulting firms, and their number is quite limited.

- **Non-profit think tanks:** These think tanks are often non-profit organizations dedicated to research, analysis, and policy formulation in various fields such as social policy, economics, the environment, etc. Their main objective is generally to make an intellectual contribution without seeking direct financial gain. They are governed by the Associations Act.

- **University Think Tanks:** These think tanks are often affiliated with academic institutions such as universities or research centers. They generally conduct advanced research in specific fields and contribute to the production of knowledge in these areas. In Tunisia, these entities work mainly in the context of research laboratories and are not designated as think tanks.

- **Organizational Think Tanks:** These think tanks are often linked to professional associations, NGOs, or think tanks specializing in specific fields such as human rights, the environment, health, and the economy, etc. Their work often focuses on promoting a particular cause or solving specific problems (ASSF, FTDS, ITP, etc.).

- **Government think tanks:** Some think tanks are directly affiliated with governments or public bodies. Their main role is to advise policy-makers on important issues and to inform public policy. The ITES (Tunisian Institute for Strategic Studies) is the best-known institution in Tunisia.

According to data from the 2023 Barometer of Community Life, it appears that these entities have been operating in a relatively autonomous environment since 2011. In terms of freedom of thought and research, the assessments highlight a moderately favorable political, economic, and socio-cultural context, with a score of 55.4. Although the climate of expression is rated at 62.0, think tanks and research CSOs show strong internal governance with a score of 67.7, which is essential for their effectiveness and credibility.

Their collaboration with institutions, rated at 64.4, is satisfactory, as is their inclusiveness index at 64.4, highlighting openness and diversity in their contributions. These overall results suggest a balanced empowerment of think tanks and research activities, highlighting their role, albeit modest, in generating ideas and shaping public policy.

VI.2. Partnership with State Entities

One of the key criteria for measuring the success of organizational research is its ability to influence policy decisions. Research-focused civil society organizations play a key role in providing in-depth analysis, evidence-based recommendations, and independent perspectives on important issues. When these organizations succeed in establishing strong links with public actors, a relationship of trust is created. This relationship then becomes a crucial element in ensuring the effectiveness of policy decisions.

By working closely with these organizations, public actors can also strengthen the legitimacy of their decisions. Likewise, by taking into account the analyses and recommendations of research CSOs, policymakers can demonstrate a commitment to transparency, citizen participation, and informed decision-making. Since 2015, there have been examples of organizational networks contributing to social debates or reform debates on public health and education: the Forum for Social and Economic Rights (FTDS), the Social Sciences Forum (ASSF), and the Arab Institute for Human Rights (IADH), etc.

The relationship between research-oriented civil society organizations and public actors is thus becoming an essential pillar for ensuring the effectiveness of public policies and legitimizing the taken decisions. This collaboration has repeatedly promoted a more inclusive decision-making process, based on reliable data and in-depth analysis, thereby contributing to more effective policies that are better adapted to the needs of Tunisian society in times of crisis.

According to the same barometer, partnerships between public institutions and civil society organizations involve a wide range of activities, from training and awareness campaigns to cultural activities and psychological and social assistance. Scientific collaborations, expert consultations, and other specific activities are also emphasized. These activities reflect the diversity of the partnerships' objectives and needs, which aim to promote development, awareness, and support in different areas. Training is the most frequently implemented activity within the partnerships, accounting for 32% of responses. This highlights the importance of strengthening skills and knowledge through joint training programs. The other dominant aspect of this collaboration concerns participation in scientific conferences. This participation is mentioned in the barometer with a percentage of 17.5%. This shows the importance of exchanging knowledge and experience between public institutions and civil society organizations, thereby contributing to the advancement of research and the dissemination of results. Another aspect of collaboration involves making experts available for scientific consultations. This provision of experts for scientific consultations is mentioned by association researchers with a percentage of 2.5%.

VII. FROM THEORY TO THE FIELD: THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH FOR THE SURVEY OF RESEARCHERS

VII.1. Survey Base: Mapping of Social Science Research Entities in Tunisia

The mapping of social science research entities in Tunisia reveals a rich and diverse academic landscape, spread across the entire country, and forms the sampling frame for any field study in this area. These entities, which include laboratories, research units, and doctoral schools, are mainly affiliated to public universities and specialized institutes.

They cover a wide range of disciplines such as sociology, psychology, history, political science, etc. The Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research oversees and supports most of these entities, which play an essential role in the production of knowledge, the analysis of social dynamics, and the development of public policy.

However, there is no specific pre-established map of social science research entities in Tunisia. To this end, the research team, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, has worked to map these bodies, as detailed in the following table:

Table 2: Distribution of social science research entities in Tunisia

University/ Affiliation	Supervisory Structure	Governorate	Research Entity	Number Of Researchers
Cultural Research Center	National Heritage Institute	Tunis	Economy, Territory And Heritage Landscapes In Tunisia, The Maghreb And The Mediterranean	49
Institute For Agricultural Research And Higher Education (Iresa)	Institute Of Arid Regions Of Medenine	Medenine	Rural Economies And Societies	24
	National Institute Of Agricultural Research Of Tunis	Tunis	Rural Economy	24
Ministry Of Higher Education And Scientific Research	Center For Research And Studies For Dialogue Between Civilizations And Comparative Religions In Sousse (Ceredicrec)	Sousse	Research Unit Of The Center For Research And Studies For Dialogue Between Civilizations And Comparative Religions In Sousse	14
	Center For Economic And Social Studies And Research (Ceres)	Tunis	Research Unit Of The Center For Economic And Social Studies And Research	20

	National University Center For Scientific And Technical Documentation (Cnudst)	Tunis	Cnudst Research Unit	0
Ministry Of Family, Women, Children And The Elderly	Center For Research, Study, Documentation, And Information On Women (Credif)	Tunis	Research Unit Of The Research, Study, Documentation And Information Center On Women	0
	Observatory For Information, Training, Documentation And Studies For The Protection Of Children's Rights	Tunis	Research Unit Of The Childhood Observatory	0
	National Observatory For The Fight Against Violence Against Women	Tunis	Research Unit Of The Observatory On Violence Against Women	0
Ministry Of Education	Regional Center For Education And Continuing Education In Sousse	Sousse	Training And Research Units Of The Regional Center For Education And Continuing Training In Sousse	14
International Ngos	Arab Center For Research And Policy Studies (Carep)	Tunis	Arab Center For Research And Policy Studies (Carep)	4
	Center For Maghreb Studies (Cemat)	Tunis	Center For Maghreb Studies (Cemat)	7
	Friedrich Naumann Foundation For Freedom	Tunis	Friedrich Naumann Foundation For Freedom	0
	Giz	Tunis	Giz	0
	Research Institute For Development (Ird)	Tunis	Research Institute For Development (Ird)	6
	Institute For Research On The Contemporary Maghreb (Irmc)	Tunis	Institute For Research On The Contemporary Maghreb (Irmc)	43
	International Center For Private Enterprise (Cipe)	Tunis	International Center For Private Enterprise (Cipe)	0
	The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation (Fes)	Tunis	The Friedrich Ebert Stiftung Foundation (Fes)	0
	The Hanns Seidel Foundation In The Maghreb	Tunis	The Hanns Seidel Foundation In The Maghreb	0
	The Heinrich Böll oundation (Hbs)	Tunis	The Heinrich Böll Foundation (Hbs)	0
	The Konrad Adenauer Foundation	Tunis	The Konrad Adenauer Foundation	0
	The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Mail	Tunis	The Rosa Luxemburg Foundation Mail	0

National Ngo	Applied Social Sciences Forum (Assf)	Tunis	Applied Social Sciences Forum (Assf)	2
	Tunisian Forum For Economic And Social Rights (Ftdes)	Tunis	Tunisian Forum For Economic And Social Rights (Ftdes)	1
	Global Institute For Transitions (Gi4t)	Tunis	Global Institute For Transitions (Gi4t)	1
	Tunisian Observatory For Democratic Transition (Ottd)	Tunis	Tunisian Observatory For Democratic Transition (Ottd)	4
	Solidar Tunisia	Tunis	Solidar Tunisia	2
University Of Carthage	Polytechnic School Of Tunisia	Tunis	Economics and Industrial Management	54
	Faculty Of Economics &Amp; Management Of Nabeul	Tunis	Business Environment	50
	Faculty Of Legal, Political & Social Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Community Law And Maghreb-Europe Relations	32
	Faculty Of Legal, Political & Social Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Law Of Companies In Economic Difficulty	34
	Faculty Of Legal, Political & Social Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	International Law, International Jurisdictions And Comparative Constitutional Law	22
	Faculty Of Legal, Political & Social Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Research And Studies In International Law: Private International Law, International Trade Law, International Criminal Law	35
	Institute Of Higher Commercial Studies Of Carthage	Tunis	Economics And Applied Finance	31
	Institute Of Higher Commercial Studies Of Carthage	Tunis	Economics And Business Strategies	69
	Institute Of Higher Commercial Studies Of Carthage	Tunis	Economic And Strategic Forecasting, Innovation, Management And Entrepreneurship	45
	Higher Institute For Child Care Managers Of Carthage Dermech	Tunis	Research Unit Of The Higher Institute For Child Care Managers	36
University Of Gabes	Higher Institute Of Management Of Gabes	Gabes	Economics Business Environment	30
	Higher Institute Of Arts And Crafts Of Gabes (Isamg)	Gabes	19Ir And 5 Ur Isamg	24
	Higher Institute Of Languages Of Gabes (Islg)	Gabes	19Ir And 5 Ur Islg	24

	Higher Institute Of Human Sciences Of Medenine (Isshm)	Medenine	Lr Isshm	24
University Of Jendouba	Faculty Of Economics &Amp; Management Of Jendouba	Jendouba	Valorization Of Natural And Cultural Heritage	132
University Of Kairouan	Kairouan Islamic Studies Research Center	Kairouan	Islamic Thought And Its Transformations And The Construction Of The National State (Pitcen)	24
	Faculty Of Letters &Amp; Humanities Of Kairouan	Kairouan	Innovation In Research And Teaching Methods In Humanities	100
University Of Manouba	High School Of Commerce Of Tunis	Manouba	Economic Theories, Modeling And Applications	84
	High School Of Commerce Of Tunis	Manouba	Research On Innovative Management, Risk, Accounting And Finance	109
	Institute Of Press & Information Sciences Of Manouba	Manouba	Media, Communication And Transition	1
	Higher Institute Of Accounting & Business Administration Of Manouba	Manouba	Research In Innovation, Governance, Entrepreneurship And Risks	82
	Higher Institute Of Accounting & Business Administration Of Manouba	Manouba	Accounting, Financial And Economic Modeling	159
	Higher Institute Of Accounting & Business Administration Of Manouba	Manouba	University-Business Management: An Interdisciplinary Approach	170
	Higher Institute Of Specialized Education Of Manouba	Manouba	Disability And Social Maladjustment	19
University Of Sfax	Faculty Of Arts &Amp; Humanities Of Sfax	Sfax	Geographic Information System, Training In Planning, Cartography, Remote Sensing And The Environment	43
	Faculty Of Letters & Humanities Of Sfax	Sfax	Interdisciplinary And Comparative Studies And Research	87
	Faculty Of Letters & Humanities Of Sfax	Sfax	The Maghreb: The Plural Humran	56
	Faculty Of Letters & Humanities Of Sfax	Sfax	Speech, Art, Music, And Economics	161
	Faculty Of Letters & Humanities Of Sfax	Sfax	State, Culture And Social Change	35

	Faculty Of Economics & Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Information Technology, Governance And Entrepreneurship	271
	Faculty Of Economics & Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Modeling And Optimization For Decision-Making And Industrial And Logistics Systems	232
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Marketing Research	77
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Governance, Finance And Accounting	82
	Faculty of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Dynamic And Combinatorial Systems	32
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Perspectives And Research In Innovation, Strategy And Business Management	75
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Competitiveness, Business Decision-Making and Internationalizati On	130
	Faculty Of Economics &Amp; Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Development Economics	88
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Economics and Management	208
	Higher Institute Of Industrial Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Optimization, Logistics, and Decision Support Systems	61
University Of Sousse	Faculty Of Law And Political Sciences Of Sousse	Sousse	Administration And Development	78
	Faculty Of Arts And Humanities Of Sousse (Flshs)	Sousse	Lr Flshs	30
	Faculty Of Economics And Management of Sousse	Sousse	Modeling Finance And Economic Development	56
	Institute Of Higher Commercial Studies Of Sousse	Sousse	Economics, Management And Quantitative Finance	104
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Sousse	Sousse	Innovation Management And Sustainable Development	88
	Faculty Of Letters & Humanities Of Sfax	Sfax	State, Culture And Social Change	35
	Faculty Of Economics & Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Information Technology, Governance And Entrepreneurship	271
	Faculty Of Economics & Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Modeling And Optimization For Decision-Making And Industrial And Logistics Systems	232
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Marketing Research	77

	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Governance, Finance And Accounting	82
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Dynamic And Combinatorial Systems	32
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Perspectives And Research In Innovation, Strategy And Business Management	75
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Competitiveness, Business Decision-Making And Internationalizati On	130
	Faculty Of Economics &Amp; Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Development Economics	88
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Economics And Management	208
	Higher Institute Of Industrial Management Of Sfax	Sfax	Optimization, Logistics, And Decision Support Systems	61
University Of Sousse	Faculty Of Law And Political Sciences Of Sousse	Sousse	Administration And Development	78
	Faculty Of Arts And Humanities Of Sousse (Flshs)	Sousse	Lr Flshs	30
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Sousse	Sousse	Modeling Finance And Economic Development	56
	Institute Of Higher Commercial Studies Of Sousse	Sousse	Economics, Management And Quantitative Finance	104
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Sousse	Sousse	Innovation Management And Sustainable Development	88
University Of Tunis	Higher School Of Economic And Commercial Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Changes In Economies And Businesses	87
	Faculty Of Human And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Culture, Technology And Philosophical Approaches	97
	Faculty Of Humanities And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Diraset- Maghreb Studies	41
	Faculty Of Humanities And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	History Of Mediterranean Economies And Societies	138
	Faculty Of Humanities And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Intersignes	82

	Faculty Of Humanities And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Clinical Psychology: Intersubjectivity And Culture	59
	Faculty Of Human And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Governance And Territorial Development	66
	Faculty Of Human And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Studies Of Structures, Design And Aesthetics	63
	Faculty Of Human And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Medieval Arab- Islamic World	53
	Faculty Of Humanities And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Geomorphological Cartography Of Environments, Surroundings And Dynamics (Cgmed)	23
	Faculty Of Human And Social Sciences Of Tunis (Fshst)	Tunis	Transition, Transmission Transition Mobility	84
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Operational Research, Decision Support And Control Processes	80
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Strategies For Modeling And Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (Smart Lab)	59
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Corporate Governance, Applied Finance AndAuditing	105
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Macroeconomics, Economic Situation And Applied Methods	1
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Applied Research In Business Relations And Administration	103
University Of Tunis El Manar	Higher Institute Of Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Analysis Of Economic And Social Policies	42
	Higher Institute Of Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Business And Economic Statistics Modelling	59
	Tunis Business School	Tunis	Business Analytics And Decision-Making	49
	Faculty Of Law & Political Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Law Of International Market Relations Negotiations	32
	Faculty Of Law & Political Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Constitutional, Administrative And Financial Sciences	50
	Faculty Of Law & Political Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Dispute Resolution And Enforcement	35
	Faculty Of Law & Political Science Of Tunis	Tunis	Research In Civil Law	68
	Faculty Of Law & Political Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Banking, Financial And Business Law	67
	Faculty Of Law & Political Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Criminal Sciences And Criminology	23
	Faculty Of Economics & Management Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Forecasting, Strategy And Sustainable Development	41
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Businesses And Marketing Research	81
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Applied Microeconomics	43

	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Quantitative Economics Of Development	61
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Research In International Finance	116
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Of Tunis	Tunis	Innovation, Strategy, Entrepreneurship, Finance And Economics	83
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Economics Of Sustainable Development, Natural Resources And Agriculture	61
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Finance, Accounting And Taxation	36
	Faculty Of Economics And Management Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	International Economic Integration	57
	Higher Institute Of Human Sciences Of Tunis	Tunis	Research On The Enlightenment, Modernity And Cultural Diversity	62

VII.2. Methodological Approach

The methodological approach of this study is based on three fundamental pillars that ensure its solidity while recognizing the natural limitations of this type of research:

First, a rigorous and representative sample was established. We put together a panel of 400 researchers carefully selected mainly from the official database of the DGRS (Directorate General for Research and Studies) of the Ministry of Higher Education, but also from other research entities operating in the field of social science (i.e., non-university or civil society organizations).

The procedure began with the identification of research entities operating in this field, forming the research landscape in Tunisia at the national and regional levels. The resulting map identified a total of 106 social science research bodies, 95 of which have permanent researchers (i.e., approximately 5,800 researchers). To achieve good representativeness, we used stratified sampling, because although random sampling is the ideal method, it requires access to a complete list of researchers with their profiles, and the response rate is likely to be low as it may depend on the availability and interest of researchers, among other factors. These potential drawbacks may lead to low representativeness of the sample of respondents in relation to the entire population of researchers.

The sample targeted 400 researchers. Each researcher was contacted by email, with three systematic reminders to maximize the response rate. This selection ensures diversity covering the main academic disciplines, types of institutions, and levels of professional experience, thereby minimizing bias and allowing for a detailed analysis of trends.

Data collection was **then** standardized and controlled (via the LIMESURVEY platform). We developed a rigorous protocol based on a closed questionnaire with precise rating scales. The questionnaire items specifically measured the frequency and nature of researchers' interactions with decision-makers, the perception of the effectiveness of existing collaborations, and the degree of involvement in political processes. Strict response validation criteria were applied, ensuring completeness, appropriate response time, and consistency of the data provided.

Finally, a rigorous statistical analysis was performed using SPSS. Based on the response rate observed in each subgroup, adjustments were made to the raw data to take into account the necessary weightings and calibrations. Data processing included significance tests (chi^2) to validate the observed trends, the calculation of margins of error on key proportions, and an analysis of correlations between the main variables. We also systematically identified statistically significant deviations; thereby reinforcing the reliability of our conclusions (details are available from the authors).

VII.3. Survey Design

Stratified sampling can help achieve good representativeness. The objective is to form subgroups where the population within each subgroup is relatively homogeneous (while there is heterogeneity between the different subgroups and within the overall population). This would reduce the size of the total sample in order to obtain an accurate estimate for the entire population. The term "subgroups" refers to the different parts of the researcher population.

Three criteria were selected at the institutional level: the category of the institution, the size of the institution (defined in terms of the number of employed social science researchers), and the geographical location of the institution. According to the mapping, these three criteria were defined as follows:

- Category: University research entity, non-university research entity, and NGO
- Location: Greater Tunis, Central-East, and other locations
- Size: <25 researchers, 25-49 researchers, 50-99 researchers, and 100 or more researchers

The composition of social science research structures made it possible to generate a segmentation consisting of nine subgroups (Appendix 1 details the list of subgroups by research entity).

Table 3: Segmentation of social science research entities

Subgroup	Category	Location	Size	Number Of Institutions	Number Of Researchers
Sub-Group 1	CSO/NGO	Greater Tunis	< 25 & 25 - 49	8	68
Sub-Group 2	Non-university research structure	-	-	7	146
Sub-Group 3	University research entity	Other	< 25 & 25 - 49 & 100+	7	358
Sub-Group 4	University research entity	Central-East	25 - 49 & 50-99	14	88
Sub-Group 5	University research entity	Central-East	100+	6	1106
Sub-Group 6	University research entity	Greater Tunis	< 25	7	91
Sub-Group 7	University research entity	Greater Tunis	25 - 49	14	532
Sub-Group 8	University research entity	Greater Tunis	50 - 99	25	1718
Sub-Group 9	University research entity	GREATER TUNIS	100+	7	900
			Total	**95**	**5807**

In response to the segmentation, a sampling plan was proposed to define the number of researchers targeted by the survey in each subgroup. Based on 400 researchers, a sampling plan was devised in accordance with the initial distribution of all researchers according to the defined stratum segmentation: This represents a sampling rate of approximately 7%.

In the field, a mailing and follow-up were carried out for all researchers (5,807 researchers) working in the various social science research entities. The efforts of the surveyors resulted in responses from 489 researchers: 8.4% of researchers responded favorably and completed the questionnaire.

To correct sampling bias and ensure that the survey results were representative of the target population, on the one hand, and to remedy the over-representation and under-representation of subgroups, on the other, weighting was applied to adjust the responses to reflect the actual structure of the population, improve the accuracy of the results, and correct non-response or selection bias.
However, we are aware of the limitations of our study: By focusing on categories of institutions (NGOs, public academic institutions, and public non-academic institutions), we have neutralized disciplinary categorization. In addition, certain specific subgroups would have deserved to be represented by larger numbers. It is therefore important to interpret the results as reliable indicators rather than absolute measures.

Despite this limitation, this methodology allows us to establish solid orders of magnitude, identify significant structural differences, and lay a robust foundation for further in-depth research. This approach provides a

reliable initial snapshot of the interactions between science and politics, while highlighting the relevance of including qualitative supplements in future studies to refine our understanding of the observed dynamics.

The transparency of our protocol, from the selection of respondents to the analysis of data, ensures the robustness of our conclusions while acknowledging the inherent limitations of this type of study.

Table 4: Survey Design

Subgroup	Category	Location	Size	%	Theoretical Sample	Number Of Respondents	Weight[11]
Sub-Group 1	OSC/NGO	Greater Tunis	< 25 & 25 – 49	1	5	7	9,714
Sub-Group 2	Non-university research organization	-	-	3	10	9	16,222
Sub-Group 3	University research entity	Other	< 25 & 25 - 49 & 100+	6	25	29	12,345
Sub-Group 4	University research entity	Central-East	25 - 49 & 50-99	15	61	146	6,082
Sub-Group 5	University research entity	Central-East	100+	19	76	87	12,713
Sub-Group 6	University research entity	Greater Tunis	< 25	2	6	8	11,375
Sub-Group 7	University research entity	Greater Tunis	25–49	9	37	26	20,462
Sub-Group 8	University research entity	Greater Tunis	50–99	30	118	126	13,635
Sub-Group 9	University research entity	Greater Tunis	100	15	62	51	17,647
			Total	**100**	**400**	**489**	
					7	8	

[11] The weight in each subgroup (i) is calculated as follows: WEIGHT (i) = Number of researchers (i) / Number of respondents (i)

VIII. HOW TO LISTEN TO FACILITATORS: INTERVIEWING RESEARCH ADMINISTRATORS AND POLICY MAKERS

This part of the study aims to capture, in a qualitative fashion, the perceptions, practices and challenges encountered by key players in the Tunisian research ecosystem, at the crossroad between knowledge production and its use in public policy. The objective is not statistical exhaustiveness, but rather in-depth analysis and a detailed understanding of the mechanisms at play.

VIII.1. Target Audience

The target population was divided into two distinct but complementary subgroups, representing two essential links in the research value chain:

- **Group 1 (G1):** Policy makers (n=14). This group is composed of: elected members of parliament, representatives of political parties (members of executive committees or program managers). The objective is to understand the demand for knowledge, modes of legitimization, and constraints perceived from the political sphere.

- **Group 2 (G2):** Research administrators (n=15). This group is composed of directors of research departments within civil society organizations (CSOs) and think tanks, heads of laboratories and research units within academic institutions. The objective is to understand the challenges of knowledge provision and the constraints of production, funding, and dissemination from the academic and para-academic spheres.

VIII.2. Sampling Technique: The “Snowball” Method

A small, targeted sample was selected using the snowball sampling technique. This method involves identifying an initial core group of relevant respondents (e.g., MPs known for their interest in educational issues or an influential think tank director). At the end of their interview, they are asked to recommend other people who fit the desired profiles (e.g., “Who else do you think is a key player on these issues?”).

The anonymity and confidentiality of respondents were strictly guaranteed. Informed consent was obtained verbally before each interview regarding the use of data for research purposes. This methodology, based on a reasoned sample, is perfectly suited to exploring in depth the logic of actors and the complex mechanisms that govern the relationship between research and decision-making in the context of this survey.

CHAPTER 3: SURVEY OF RESEARCHERS AND THE RESEARCH ECOSYSTEM: A POTENTIAL AWAITING RECOGNITION

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM CHAPTER 3

Methodology

- The study mapped Tunisia's social science research ecosystem using the Doing Research Assessment (DRA) framework, combining quantitative and qualitative methods.
- A population of 5,807 researchers was identified; a representative sample of 400 was targeted through stratified random sampling across institution types and regions.
- 489 valid responses were collected and statistically weighted to ensure representativeness.
- Findings should be interpreted as reliable indicators, not absolute measures, given the limits of institutional classification and disciplinary overlap.

Research production

- Research output has grown exponentially (from 9 publications in 2000 to 517 in 2023), but remains fragmented and low-impact:
- 25% of social science articles are never cited;
- 80% of lead authors have published only one article.
- Despite strong quantitative growth, research visibility and continuity remain weak.

Research training and careers

- Tunisia produces 1,500–2,000 PhDs per year, signaling strong academic vitality but also risks of massification and declining supervision quality.
- New PhDs often feel underprepared for research careers and lack mentoring and technical skills, especially in project design and management.
- Only 27% of researchers consider career prospects attractive; 44% gave no answer, revealing low morale and uncertainty about career advancement.

Diffusion and communication

- Limited engagement with policy and media:
- 85.8% of researchers have never contributed to policy development.
- 69% report no interaction with the media, showing minimal outreach beyond academia.
- Research remains largely academic and inward-facing, with weak communication skills and low institutional incentives for outreach.

Research uptake and policy influence

- Direct policy influence is limited: only 16.5% of researchers have directly contributed to policy formulation.
- Indirect influence is emerging: around 50% report their work being cited in official documents, particularly in economics and management.
- However, the science-policy interface is weakly institutionalized, relying on personal networks rather than structured mechanisms.
- This limits the social sciences' potential contribution to national policymaking and evidence-based governance.

Overall insights

- Tunisia's social science research shows strong growth in production but weak diffusion and policy impact.
- The ecosystem is constrained by disciplinary concentration, lack of mentoring, poor communication channels, and low institutional support for research uptake.
- Bridging the gap between academic research and public policy will require systematic mediation, better training, and performance incentives linked to societal impact.

I. CONDITIONS OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH: BETWEEN SATISFACTION AND MAJOR CHALLENGES

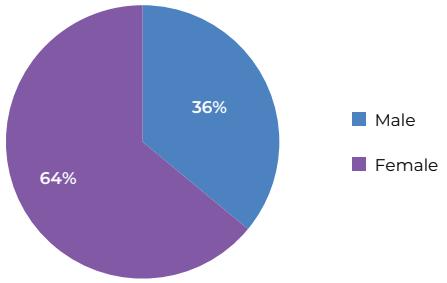
I.1. Researcher Profiles

Gender

Analysis of the data on the gender of respondents reveals a fairly significant distribution:

- 64.0% of participants identify as women.
- 36.0% identify as men.

Figure 47: Distribution of researchers by gender



Source: MESRS

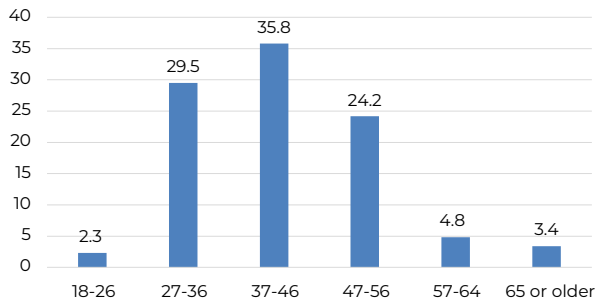
This distribution indicates a female majority among respondents, which could have implications for the perspectives and experiences shared in research and engagement with policymakers. This “feminization” of the social sciences, empirically validated , helps us consider how this gender diversity may influence approaches, priorities, and dynamics within research and policy discussions. Initiatives could be put in place to encourage even more balanced and inclusive representation in research and decision-making processes.

Social Sciences: Young Sciences?

The figures draw a picture of a demographically fractured academic world. The majority of respondents are concentrated in the 27-36 and 37-46 age groups, reflecting a strong representation of researchers at the beginning or middle of their careers. Young researchers, aged 18 to 26, represent only a tiny fraction of 2.3%, and are almost absent from the research landscape. On the other hand, we observe the dominant age group, those aged 27 to 46, which constitutes a monolithic block comprising 65% of the sample. At age 30, these young people are fighting to have a postdoc, while at age 40, they reach the peak of their careers: tenure, accreditation, projects, publications. This period is often considered the golden age, when the institution opens up to them, and their expertise is adorned with the coveted legitimacy.

However, from the age of 47 onwards, signs of withdrawal begin to appear. The 24% of established researchers in the 47-56 age group have earned their stripes, but their energy is gradually waning. Then, a worrying void emerges: barely 8% of researchers are over 57 years old. So where have these elders, who embody the living memory of their disciplines, gone? They seem to have disappeared, retired without successors, converted to private expertise, or exiled to other institutions. The age distribution could signal a need to include more experienced voices in research and policy discussions. The academic system acts like an age-crushing machine. It nibbles away at the younger years in early laboratory and research unit experiences, feverishly consumes the labor force of those in their forties, and then gradually pushes away its elders before they have had a chance to pass on the essentials. The result is a strange pyramid, devoid of a summit, where knowledge accumulates between the ages of 30 and 55 before dissipating, leaving a vaccuum that raises questions about the future of knowledge transfer. Initiatives to encourage the participation of older researchers could enrich debate and decision-making in the field of research, bringing valuable perspectives that are currently lacking.

Figure 48: Distribution of researchers by age group



Source: MESRS

Disciplines

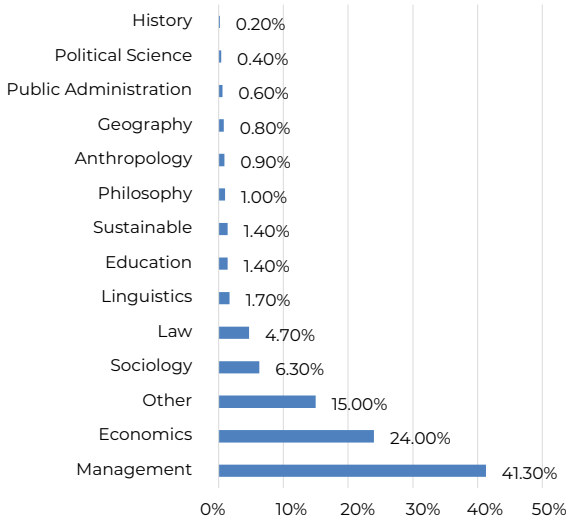
The disciplinary composition of the Tunisian sample, with 41.3% in management, 24% in economics, 6.3% in sociology, and 4.7% in law, illustrates dynamics specific to the Tunisian academic and socio- economic context,

which differ from those in France. Two key factors manifest from these figures. Representativeness is structured by institutions and career opportunities. The primacy of management and economics can be explained by their historical support from Tunisian institutions, as they are considered strategic for economic development. Business schools and economics departments benefit from priority funding and close links with the private sector, enhancing thus their visibility in surveys. In contrast, sociology (6.3%) and law (4.7%) suffer from weak integration into national research policies. CERES, a pioneer in the 1960s, has seen its influence decline in the face of a preference for utilitarian studies and international research consultancies.

Academic networks also have an important role: disciplines such as economics rely on strong transnational networks, particularly with France, facilitating their participation in surveys. In contrast, Tunisian sociology, although dynamic, remains fragmented and less connected to international research circuits. A correlation can be noticed with the numerical weight of students and career paths.

Management and economics attract large numbers of students because of their opportunities in the private sector and international organizations, naturally leading to an increase in the pool of researchers. Conversely, sociology and law, perceived as less lucrative, train fewer doctoral students, with students favoring professional courses that reflect a national trend toward educational utilitarianism.

Figure 49: Distribution of researchers by discipline



Source: MESRS

Graduates trained abroad also have a significant influence: economics and management courses are overrepresented among Tunisians trained in Europe, particularly in France, who then return to teach or conduct research in Tunisia, thus reproducing the imported disciplinary hierarchies. Tunisia's specific characteristics, between colonial heritage and academic neoliberalism, are also evident. After 1960, Tunisia prioritized sciences perceived as "drivers of development," marginalizing the humanities and social sciences, which were considered too theoretical. This historical bias persists in current entities. In addition, the influence of international donors, with research programs funded by the EU or the World Bank, often targets economic or environmental themes, reinforcing the overrepresentation of certain disciplines.

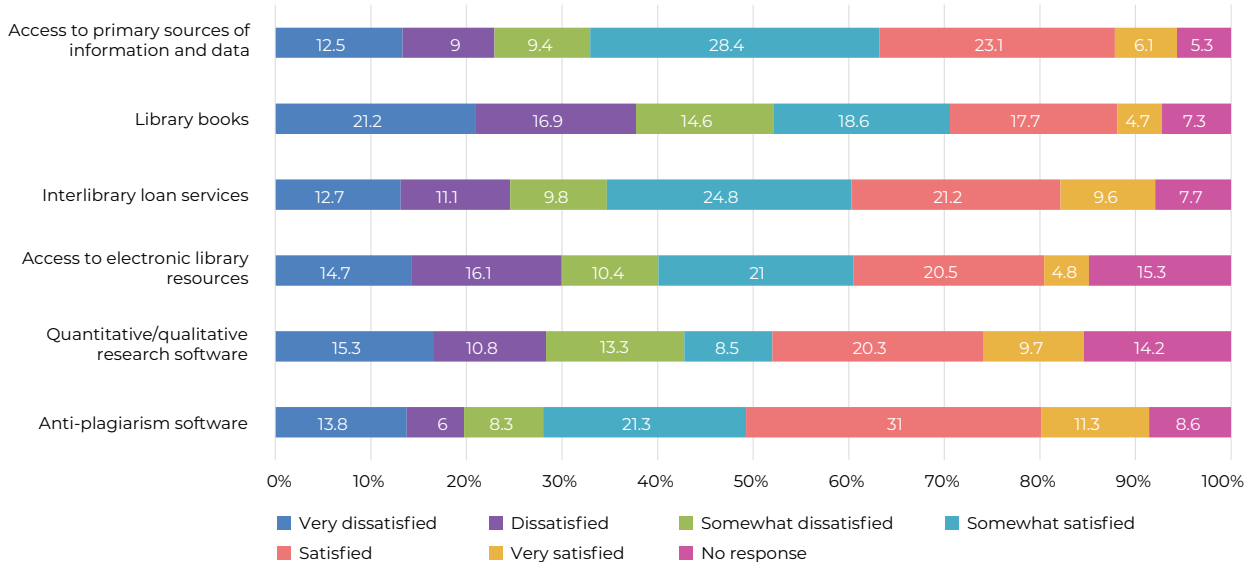
I.2. Software, Libraries, and Technical Support: How Satisfied Are Researchers?

Overall, although some areas show an acceptable level of satisfaction, several others require urgent attention. Satisfaction is especially low in critical areas such as access to primary sources and interlibrary loan services. These gaps must be addressed to improve the researcher experience and create a more productive research environment. Initiatives to strengthen access to resources and improve technical support could help meet the identified needs. Analysis of responses regarding researcher satisfaction with the availability of various resources at their institutions reveals interesting trends and notable concerns:

- Satisfaction with anti-plagiarism software is relatively high, with 21.3% of respondents reporting that they are very satisfied and 26.3% reporting that they are somewhat satisfied. However, a significant proportion, 21.3%, express dissatisfaction, highlighting a need for improvement in the access or functionality of these tools.
- When it comes to research software, the situation is more nuanced. While 19.7% of respondents say they are very satisfied, 21.3% say they are very dissatisfied. This dichotomy highlights a disparity in access to or training in these tools, which can hinder the quality of research.

- Access to digital library resources is seen as fairly satisfactory: 20.5% of respondents are very satisfied. Yet 14.3% are dissatisfied, indicating problems with accessibility or the range of resources available. Interlibrary loan services have a dissatisfaction rate of 25.5%. This suggests that researchers encounter difficulties in accessing essential documents, which may hinder their research and productivity.

Figure 50: Assessment of satisfaction with the availability of resources in institutions



Source: MESRS

With regard to access to primary sources of information and data, the low level of satisfaction in this area, with 28.4% of respondents very dissatisfied, highlights a major problem. Limited access to primary sources can seriously compromise the quality of research. IT support shows mixed results, with 20.5% of participants very satisfied, but also 21.3% very dissatisfied. This indicates a need to improve technical support for researchers. *Satisfaction with computers and printers varies. While 28.4% are very satisfied with computers, 21.3% are dissatisfied with printers, affecting daily efficiency.* When it comes to workspace, 28.4% of respondents say they are very dissatisfied.

I.3. Strengthening Research Capacity: Balancing Satisfaction and Major Institutional Challenges

The analysis of researchers' satisfaction with research capacity building reveals mixed results. It highlights both significant strengths and notable weaknesses within institutions. Although some areas show a reasonable level of satisfaction, several aspects require substantial improvements. Research institutions must take this feedback seriously. They need to strengthen support for researchers, improve communication, and ensure that resources and training address the actual needs of the academic community. A proactive approach in these areas can improve the experience of researchers. This would enhance the overall quality of research.
An examination of researchers' satisfaction with research capacity building within their institutions reveals significant dynamics that deserve special attention. The results highlight areas of satisfaction, but also critical areas for improvement:

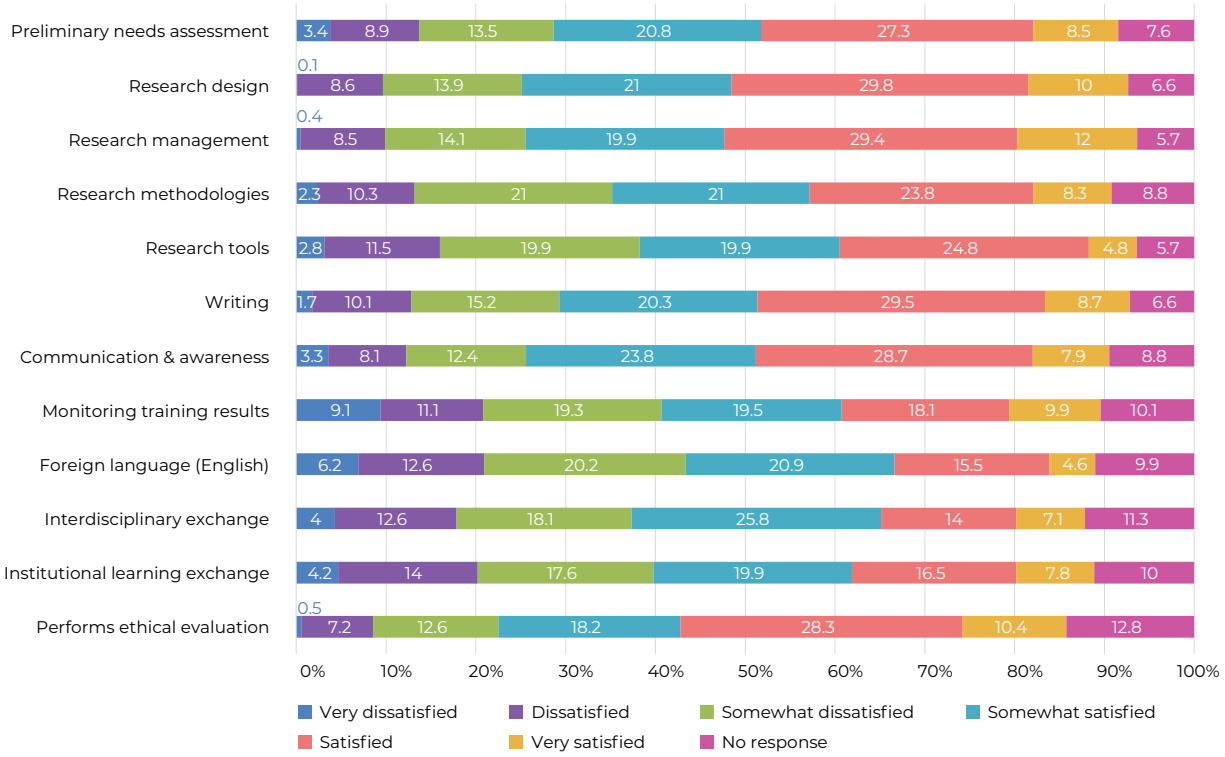
- *Ethical review of research:* With 28.3% of respondents very satisfied and 10.5% very dissatisfied, ethical review is an area where a majority appear to appreciate institutional efforts. This may reflect greater awareness of the importance of research ethics. Still, the level of dissatisfaction shows that gaps remain, especially in training and resources.

- *Institutional learning exchange programs:* Only 28.3% of respondents expressed satisfaction with exchange programs. This indicates an urgent need for improvement to foster collaboration and enrich learning experiences. The absence of such exchanges can limit opportunities for professional development and knowledge enrichment.

- *Interdisciplinary exchange:* Interdisciplinary exchange is an area where satisfaction is moderate. Although 12.8% of researchers are very satisfied, a significant proportion (20.5%) report being dissatisfied. This suggests that initiatives to foster collaboration across disciplines are not sufficiently effective, which may hinder innovation and diversity of approaches in research.

- *Foreign language (English):* Proficiency in English is essential for international research. The results indicate mixed satisfaction, with 22.4% of respondents dissatisfied. This raises questions about institutional support for language learning, which is vital for accessing publications and collaborating globally.

Figure 51: Level of satisfaction with institutions in the areas of research capacity building



Source: MESRS

- *Monitoring and tracking training outcomes:* Satisfaction is relatively low in this area, with 28.3% of researchers dissatisfied. A lack of follow-up can lead to a perception that training does not meet the real needs of researchers, which can diminish its effectiveness and their motivation to participate.

- *Communication and awareness:* Institutional communication plays a key role in the success of capacity-building initiatives. The results show significant dissatisfaction, which may indicate a lack of clarity regarding available resources and training opportunities. Effective communication is essential to engage researchers and encourage them to participate actively.

- *Writing and research tools:* Writing and access to research tools are areas where researchers express varying levels of satisfaction. Dissatisfaction rates indicate that there are unmet needs in terms of resources and training, which can have a direct impact on the quality of research work.

- *Research management and research design:* These two areas also show mixed levels of satisfaction. Researchers seem to need more support to effectively manage their research projects and design robust studies. This could involve additional training and support from the institution.

I.4. Investment in Training = Research Quality: The Missing Link

Analysis of the duration of research training reveals some gains, but also significant gaps in access to adequate educational programs for researchers. To improve the quality of research and support professional development, it is essential that institutions strengthen their training efforts by offering longer and more accessible programs. This will not only promote skills acquisition, but also the engagement and motivation of researchers, contributing to a more dynamic and innovative research environment. Data on the duration of research training received in the past three years provides key insights into researcher engagement and professional development opportunities. The table shows a breakdown of training durations, which warrants further exploration:

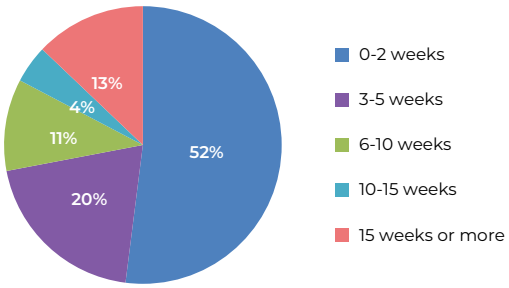
- Prevalence of Short Training Courses (0-2 weeks) With 52.5% of respondents reporting that they had received 0-2 weeks of training, it is clear that the majority of researchers had limited access to in-depth training opportunities. This situation may be the result of several factors, such as time constraints, a lack of available programs, or a perception that training is not necessary for their research careers. This low level of training may have consequences for the quality of the research conducted, as essential skills may not be adequately developed.

- Short-term training (3-5 weeks and 6-9 weeks) Researchers who have received 3 to 5 weeks of training represent 19.3%, while those who have received between 6 and 9 weeks represent 11%. Although these figures are more encouraging than those for very short training courses, they nevertheless indicate that less than 30% of researchers have access to training that could enable them to deepen their skills and, , improve their research practices. While these training periods are better than none, they remain insufficient to build advanced research skills

- Longer training courses (10-15 weeks and 15 weeks or more) Only 4.4% of respondents received 10 to 15 weeks of training, while 12.9% had access to more than 15 weeks. These figures reveal that very few researchers participate in substantial training programs. This suggests that institutions may not prioritize training enough, or that resources for such programs are too limited.

One possible implication of this situation is a lack of skills. The fact that the majority of researchers received little or no training could mean that they lack the skills needed to conduct high-quality research. This may limit their ability to remain academically competitive and produce innovative research. Another possible implication is the need to invest in training. It is important for institutions to recognize the importance of investing in research training programs. Longer and more frequent training sessions could enable researchers to strengthen their methodological skills, improve their understanding of ethical issues, and increase their ability to use advanced research tools. *Finally, it is noteworthy that limited training also affects researcher motivation and commitment*. Those who do not feel supported in their professional development may be less inclined to invest in their research projects, which could have repercussions on productivity and job satisfaction.

Figure 52: Duration of research training over the last three years (in weeks)



Source: MESRS

I.5. Mentoring the Future: Researchers' Engagement in Doctoral Supervision

Examining data on the number of PhD candidates supervised by respondents provides valuable insight into researchers' workload and commitment to training the next generation of researchers. The table reveals interesting trends that warrant further analysis, as follows:

- No supervision load (0 doctoral students) 37.3% of respondents reported supervising no PhD candidates, showing that a significant proportion of researchers are not engaged in supervision.

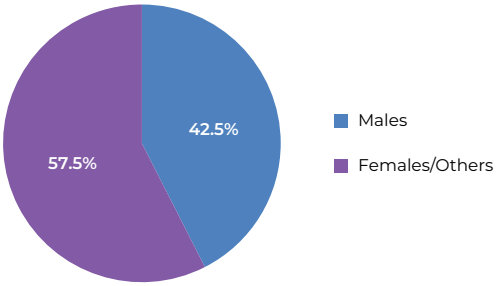
- These are likely to be researchers belonging to 'Corps B'.

- Light supervision load (1-3 doctoral students) The 1-3 doctoral students category represents 21.3% of respondents. Although this figure is more encouraging, it suggests that most researchers remain only lightly involved in supervision. This may mean that these researchers have varied commitments, making it difficult to supervise several doctoral students simultaneously.
- Moderate supervision load (4-6 doctoral students) With 28.6% of respondents supervising between 4 and 6 doctoral students, this category shows a more substantial level of commitment. Supervising multiple doctoral students requires resources and a time investment, which may be an indicator of these researchers' experience and academic recognition.

- Heavy supervision load (7-9 doctoral students) The 7-9 doctoral students category, with 8.8% of respondents, shows that some researchers are very involved in mentoring. Managing such a large supervisory load is highly demanding and requires strong time-management and mentoring skills. These researchers likely have a significant impact on their field, training several future researchers.

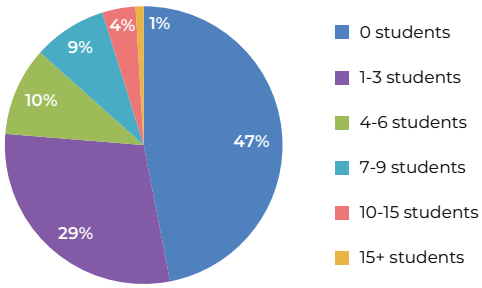
- Very heavy supervision load (10-15 doctoral students and above) Only 3.3% of respondents supervise 10 or more doctoral students, making this a very small group. These researchers are often leading figures in their field, recognized for their expertise and ability to supervise many students. However, supervising a large number of PhD candidates (which is no longer permitted in Tunisian universities) can lead to risks of work overload, which could affect the quality of supervision and the mental health of the researcher.

Figure 53: Researchers authorized to supervise doctoral students



Source: MESRS

Figure 54: Number of doctoral students supervised by researchers



Source: MESRS

I.6. Promoting Excellence: Improving Peer Review in Research

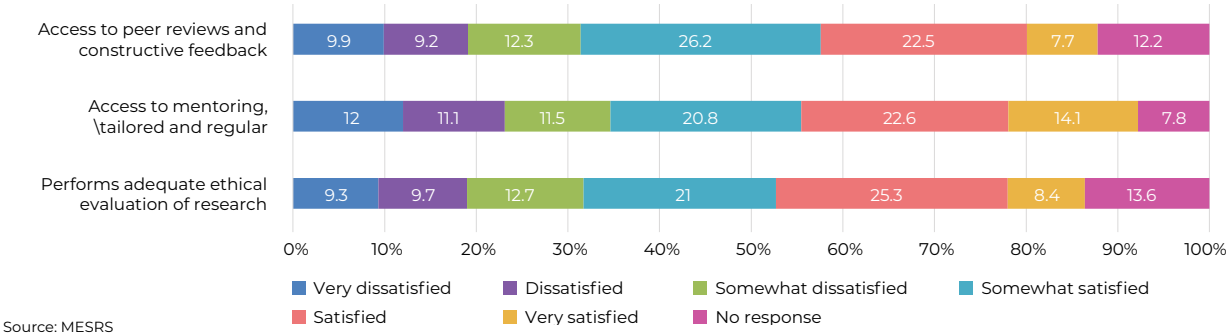
Peer review is a fundamental part of the academic process, ensuring research quality and rigor. Analyzing satisfaction levels with different aspects of this review process reveals important insights into researchers' perceptions as well as areas for improvement. This covers several aspects, such as:

- *Ethical evaluation of research proposals:* 25.3% of respondents reported being satisfied or very satisfied with ethical evaluation processes, indicating that most researchers approve of them. However, 9.3% are very dissatisfied, raising concerns about the rigor and implementation of ethical standards. This area requires particular attention, as adequate ethical evaluation is essential to maintaining research integrity and strengthening public trust.

- *Access to mentoring and guidance:* Satisfaction with access to mentoring and guidance is moderate: 22.6% are satisfied, while 11.1% are very dissatisfied. This indicates that a significant number of researchers do not receive adequate support for their projects, which may impact their professional development. Mentoring is crucial for guiding researchers, especially younger ones, and for fostering a collaborative learning environment. Insufficient regular advice can lead to feelings of isolation and frustration.

- *Peer review and constructive feedback:* Regarding access to peer review and constructive feedback, 22.7% of respondents say they are satisfied, while 9.3% are very dissatisfied. The findings suggest that while many researchers receive useful feedback, a significant number find the reviews lacking in constructiveness or relevance. Quality peer review is essential for researcher development, helping to identify areas for improvement and guiding future research.

Figure 55: Researcher satisfaction with peer review processes

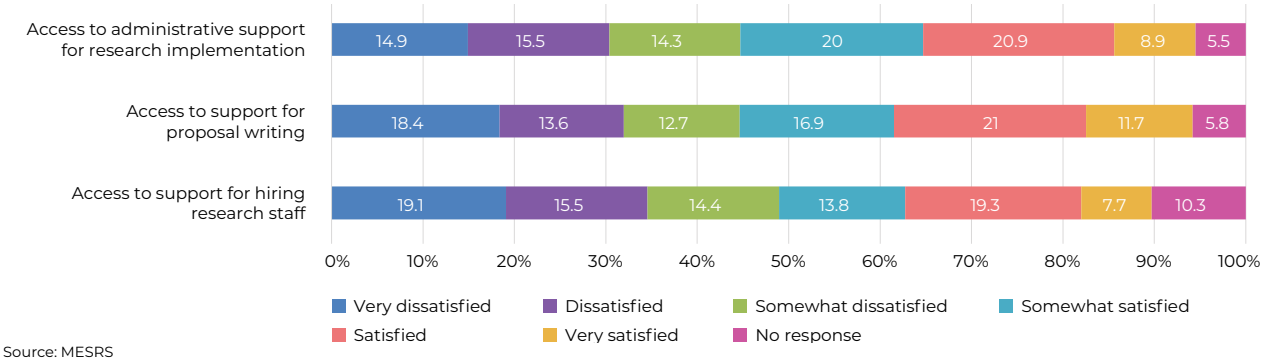


Source: MESRS

I.7. Administrative Support for Research: an Obstacle to Scientific Innovation?

Analysis of the administrative support available for research highlights areas of dissatisfaction that could hinder the productivity of researchers. Although some aspects of support are satisfactory, institutions should enhance administrative structures, particularly in staff recruitment and proposal preparation. By improving these services, institutions can create a more efficient and supportive research environment that fosters innovation and academic success.

Figure 56: Researchers' satisfaction with the administrative support available to carry out their work at their institutions



Source: MESRS

Assessing the administrative support available to conduct research within an institution or research center is crucial for understanding the effectiveness of research processes and the well-being of researchers. The table presents different aspects of administrative support, each with significant implications for researchers' ability to complete their projects. These aspects are as follows:

- *Access to support for hiring research staff:* With 19.1% of respondents reporting strong dissatisfaction, it is clear that a significant proportion of researchers struggle to obtain adequate support for hiring research staff. Although 21.6% are satisfied, this dissatisfaction can have a direct impact on project productivity and quality, as adequate research staff are essential for undertaking complex work. A lack of support in this area can lead to project delays and heavy workloads for researchers.

- *Support for proposal writing and development:* Regarding support for proposal writing and development, 18.4% of respondents are dissatisfied, while 24% report satisfaction. Although the majority acknowledge its effectiveness, the proportion of dissatisfied respondents indicates gaps in proposal writing assistance. This is particularly concerning, as effective writing is crucial for successful funding applications and persuasive research project presentations.

- *Administrative support for research planning and execution:* Administrative support for research planning and execution shows higher satisfaction levels, with 20.6% of respondents satisfied and 20.9% very satisfied. Yet, 16.8% of researchers remain dissatisfied. This highlights the importance of effective administrative support to ensure that research projects are properly planned and executed. A lack of support in this area can lead to inefficiency and frustration, impacting the overall quality of research.

The results indicate an urgent need to improve administrative support at all levels. Initiatives should be implemented to train administrative staff so that they can better meet the needs of researchers, particularly in terms of hiring staff and writing proposals. More resources should be allocated to administrative support, including increasing the number of staff dedicated to these tasks. This could include establishing specialized services to help researchers navigate complex administrative processes.

I.8. Social Science and Ethics: Where Do We Stand?

Satisfaction with social science research ethics review practices reveals areas of strength, but also significant gaps. By improving access to information and strengthening ethics committee support, institutions can foster a more ethical and accountable research environment, which in turn promotes trust and integrity in the academic community.

Ethical review is a fundamental aspect of social science research, ensuring participant protection and safeguarding research integrity. Analysis of satisfaction levels with current practices in this area within the institution reveals critical points to consider:

- *Access to information on open access publishing: Although 25.4% of respondents expressed satisfaction, many researchers value access to information on open access publishing.* However, 11.7% report being very dissatisfied, indicating concern about the availability or clarity of information. Adequate access to these resources is essential *for broadening the reach of research and ensuring it is widely disseminated.*

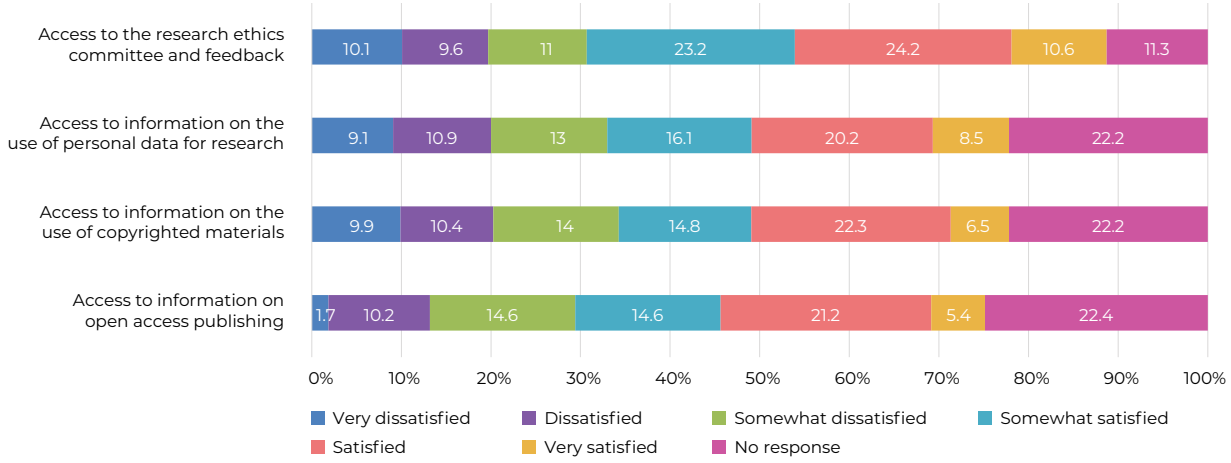
- *Access to information on copyrighted materials:* Satisfaction with access to information on the use of copyrighted materials is moderate, with 9.9% of respondents dissatisfied. While some researchers find

the resources useful, others may struggle to navigate the complexities of copyright, which could limit their ability to use resources relevant to their work. Better communication on these issues could help alleviate these concerns.

- *Access to information about personal data collected:* The relatively low level of satisfaction (22.4% dissatisfied) regarding access to information about the use of personal data collected highlights a serious problem. *Researchers need clear guidance on regulations and ethical practices for collecting personal data to safeguard participants' rights.* A lack of information in this area, particularly in sociology and psychology, or when working with vulnerable individuals, can lead to ethical violations and legal consequences.

- *Access to research ethics committees and constructive feedback:* With 20.6% satisfaction and 12.9% dissatisfaction, access to ethics review and constructive feedback clearly require improvement. More proactive communication by professional CSOs and improved response times could strengthen researchers' confidence in the review process.

Figure 57: Level of satisfaction with current ethical review practices.



Source: MESRS

Against this backdrop, it is essential that institutions improve access to information on publication practices, copyright, and personal data management. This could include workshops, online guides, and training sessions. *Although no formal ethics committee exists, those expected to fill this role should be more proactive in raising awareness and supporting researchers.* A more collaborative approach *could enhance research quality while ensuring adherence to ethical standards.* Institutions should establish feedback mechanisms to regularly assess researcher satisfaction with ethical review practices. This would enable them to adapt to researchers' needs and continuously improve their practices.

I.9. Research Time: Balancing Commitment and Overload

Analysis of research time allocation reveals significant trends in researcher engagement. While most researchers devote a reasonable share of their time to research, some need greater support to increase involvement. At the same time, highly engaged researchers require support to manage their workload sustainably. By taking a proactive approach, institutions can foster a more productive and balanced research environment. Assessing research time allocation over the past three years provides valuable insights into both researchers' engagement and the challenges they encounter. The graph shows a breakdown of responses that warrants further analysis:

- *No time spent on research (0%):* Only 2.4% of respondents reported no research time, a reassuring indication that most remain engaged in research activities. However, this data could also indicate researchers who focus primarily on other responsibilities, such as teaching or administration.

- *Minimal engagement (1-20%):* The group that devoted between 1 and 20% of their time to research represents 12.5%. This low percentage may reflect significant time constraints, with researchers juggling multiple responsibilities. Such minimal engagement can also cause frustration, limiting opportunities for publishing and career growth.

- *Moderate commitment (20-40% and 40-60%):* The 20-40% and 40-60% categories show similar proportions, with 21.9% and 21.2% of respondents respectively.

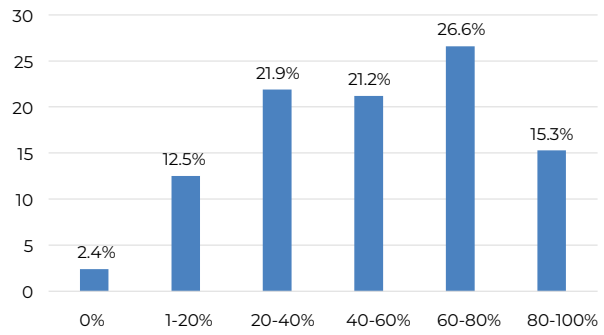
This shows that nearly half of researchers devote a moderate amount of time to research. These levels of commitment point to a reasonable balance between different obligations, though they reveal also potential for improvement. Researchers in this range could benefit from more support to maximize their research time and improve their productivity.

- *High commitment (60-80%):* The group that devoted between 60 and 80% of their time to research represents 26.6%, which is the highest percentage. This indicates that these researchers are highly committed to their research projects, which is positive for academic output and innovation. However, such a workload can also lead to a risk of burnout, underscoring the need for a healthier balance with other duties.

- *Very high commitment (80-100%):* Finally, 15.3% of researchers devote 80-100% of their time to research. While this shows exceptional commitment, it may also raise concerns about sustainability and stress management. Researchers in this category may require additional support to manage their workload and maintain their well-being.

The findings highlight the need to balance teaching, administrative, and research duties. Institutions should ease workloads to allow researchers to focus more fully on their research projects. Institutions should also expand support—through training, resources, and collaboration opportunities—to help researchers make the most of their time and overcome barriers. Finally, institutions should monitor researchers' workload levels and establish feedback mechanisms to assess their well-being. This could include regular workload reviews and discussions on work-life balance.

Figure 58: Time spent by researchers conducting research over the past three years



Source: MESRS

I.10. Most Researchers Lack Time: How to Rethink the Teaching/Research Balance?

An analysis of perceptions about the adequacy of research time reveals major concerns within the academic community. Most researchers feel pressured in ways that limit their ability to conduct high-quality research. To improve this situation, it is essential to take steps to reassess workloads, strengthen support, and create an environment conducive to research. Addressing these areas would enable institutions to foster deeper engagement and generate richer, more meaningful research output.

The examination of responses regarding the adequacy of time spent on research highlights significant concerns within the academic community. The graph shows that 68.3% of respondents feel that the time they spend on research is not sufficient, while only 31.7% say the opposite:

- *Majority dissatisfaction:* The fact that nearly 70% of researchers consider their research time insufficient underscores a significant problem. This dissatisfaction may stem from several factors:

  a. Balanced workload: Many researchers juggle teaching, administrative, and other responsibilities, which reduces the time available for research.

  b. *Pressure to publish:* In an increasingly competitive academic environment, the pressure to publish and obtain funding can also intensify the feeling that the time allocated to research is insufficient.

  c. *Prior authorizations:* Perceived primarily as civil servants, university researchers in particular cannot engage in any external activities without prior administrative approval. This administrative burden (the procedure can take several months in some cases) encourages many of them to work in the shadows or to give up on any initiative.

- *Impact on productivity and quality:* The perceived lack of time devoted to research can have several consequences:

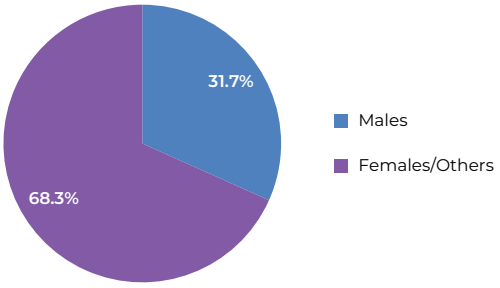
  a. *Impact on the quality of work:* Insufficient research time can compromise project quality, resulting in less rigorous outcomes or incomplete publications.

  b. *Demotivation:* Researchers may feel frustrated and unmotivated, which can affect their commitment and job satisfaction.

- *Relatively high satisfaction among those who are satisfied:* Although 31.7% of respondents consider their research time sufficient, it is important to understand why they feel this way. These researchers may benefit from better time management, adequate institutional support, or lighter teaching and administrative responsibilities. They may also have developed effective strategies to maximize their research time, allowing them to feel satisfied with their commitment.

The findings indicate an urgent need for institutions to reassess researchers' workloads, taking into account the need for a balance between teaching, administration, and research. Adjustments could increase the amount of time devoted to research. It is crucial that institutions offer increased support to help researchers manage their time effectively. This could include training in time management, task prioritization, and tools to improve productivity.

Figure 59: Adequacy of time devoted to research



Source: MESRS

I.11. Only 10% of Researchers Believe in a National Body: The Great Institutional Uncertainty in the Social Sciences

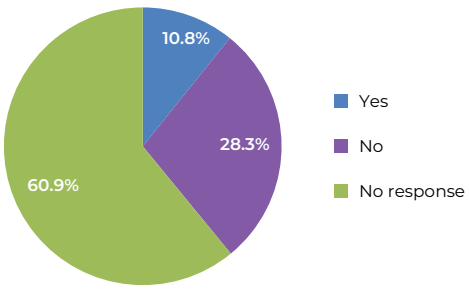
The governance of social science research in Tunisia reveals a striking paradox. On the one hand, the country has institutions such as CERES, designed to play a central role in the field of Social Science Research (SSR). On the other hand, the survey reveals that only 10.8% of Tunisian researchers correctly identify the existence of a national structure, while 28.3% outright deny that such a national body exists. *Even more troubling, 61% of respondents left the question unanswered, suggesting that the very existence of a governance structure lies outside their scientific concerns.*

This widespread lack of awareness has significant consequences: it reflects a fragmented research ecosystem in which researchers often work in isolation, developing projects outside institutional frameworks and sometimes overlooking existing support mechanisms. Young talents, lacking clear prospects, look abroad for opportunities. Research, though rich and relevant to the Tunisian context, struggles to influence public policy or resonate within society. This situation raises profound questions about the effectiveness of institutional communication and the real place accorded to the social sciences in the national scientific landscape.

However, solutions do exist to reverse this trend. An institution such as CERES could reposition itself as a true leader in humanities and social sciences research, by clarifying its missions, improving its visibility, and strengthening its ties with universities and laboratories. The creation of a single information portal on research in Tunisia, the organization of regular meetings with the scientific community, and the development of attractive programs for young researchers would be concrete steps toward rebuilding the confidence and commitment of researchers. A special effort should also be made to facilitate access to data and documentary sources, which are often scattered and difficult to access. Beyond the technical aspects, it is a whole dynamic that needs to be recreated. By developing strong partnerships with ministries and public institutions, opening up permanent spaces for dialogue between researchers and decision-makers, and promoting scientific work more widely among the general public, social science research could regain its rightful place in public debate and in the country's development process.

Tunisia has remarkable scientific potential and a community of skilled and committed researchers. By modernizing its research governance, improving transparency, and providing adequate resources to its scientific institutions, the country could not only retain its talent, but also establish itself as a leading regional research hub. In a context of rapid social change, where the social sciences are more essential than ever, *such a reform is not optional but a strategic necessity for the country's future.*

Figure 60: Presence of a national body for the supervision of social science research



Source: MESRS

I.12. Researchers' Expectations of a Potential National Body

According to the survey results, Tunisian researchers have specific expectations about the role and missions of a potential national social science research body. First, researchers want an institution with genuine scientific legitimacy, capable of defining a coherent national research strategy. "Today, everyone works in their own corner," notes a sociologist at the University of Tunis. "We need a common vision and clear priorities." Second, researchers express the need for an effective interface between research and public authorities. "Our work too often remains confined to university libraries," laments an economist. The ideal body would therefore play a mediating role, giving the social sciences a stronger voice in public debate and political decision-making processes. Finally, the international dimension appears to be a crucial issue. Tunisian researchers want an institution capable of facilitating collaboration with foreign scientific networks and promoting Tunisian research internationally. "We have a lot to offer, but we lack visibility," explains a historian.

Yet, such a regulatory institution does exist: Tunisia's scientific research evaluation system is structured around the **National Committee for Evaluation of Scientific Research Activities (CNEARS),** whose strategic importance deserves in-depth analysis. By examining its operating mechanisms, impacts, and challenges, we can better understand its place in the national research ecosystem, which is nevertheless poorly understood.

The CNEARS operates within a complex regulatory framework in which it must reconcile several fundamental missions. Reporting to the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, its mandate covers both the ex-ante evaluation of research projects and the ex-post analysis of the results obtained. This two-stage approach grants CNEARS a distinctive role in the national science policy process.

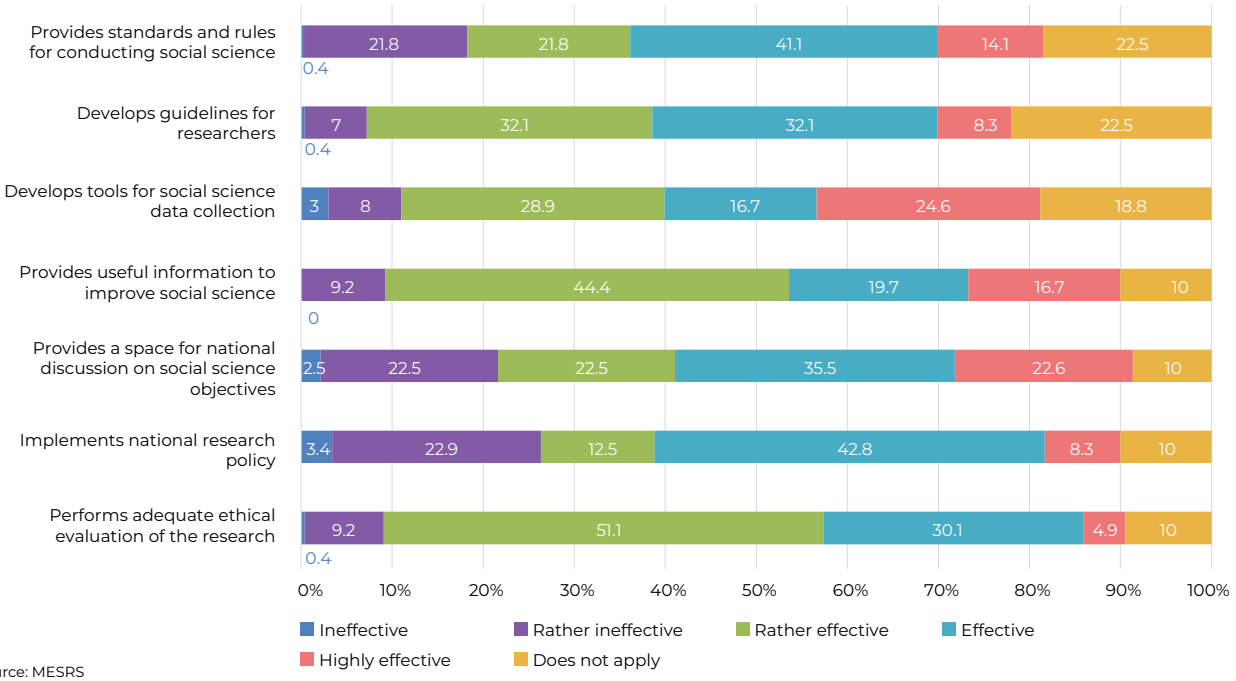
CNEARS evaluations, which cover certain social science projects, such as those conducted by CERES on terrorism, directly influence:

- The allocation of financial resources
- The certification of research units
- The strategic orientation of institutions

This impact is particularly noticeable in the priority areas identified by national research plans (PNR), where the committee's recommendations have redirected efforts on topics with high socio- economic potential.

One key finding of this perception survey is that these efforts are poorly communicated to the research community. Quantitative analysis of perceptions reveals clear expectations on the part of researchers. They envision an organization capable of ensuring robust ethical evaluation, formulating guidelines, and providing tools and resources to improve the quality of research. By meeting these expectations, such an organization could play a decisive role in the development and rigor of the social sciences.

Figure 61: Effectiveness of the organization in related areas



Source: MESRS

An examination of responses on the potential role of a national social sciences research organization sheds light on the expectations and priorities of researchers. The results reveal a variety of perspectives on the functions that such an organization could perform, such as:

- *Ethical evaluation of research:* Perceived effectiveness (51.1% effective and very effective): A majority of respondents believe that an organization should play a key role in the ethical evaluation of research. This underscores the importance attached to participant protection and research integrity, reflecting a growing concern for ethical standards in the field.

- *Implementation of national research policy: Perceived effectiveness (22.2% effective)***:** Although fewer respondents consider this role to be very effective, many still **see value in having an organization that aligns research objectives with national priorities.** This could help ensure that the research conducted is relevant and meets societal needs.

- *Providing a space for research objectives:* Perceived effectiveness (20.9% effective): Creating a space to define research objectives and priorities in social sciences and humanities is seen as an important role. This could foster collaboration between researchers and stakeholders, ensuring that research is geared towards meaningful outcomes.

- *Providing information to improve quality: Perceived effectiveness (22.3% effective):* Researchers believe such an organization should provide information and resources to improve the quality of research. This shows a demand for increased support in methodology and best practices.

- *Development of tools and protocols:* Perceived effectiveness (25.7% effective): The **need for tools and protocols tailored to social science research is widely recognized.** Researchers want concrete resources to facilitate their work, which could also contribute to the harmonization of practices within the field.

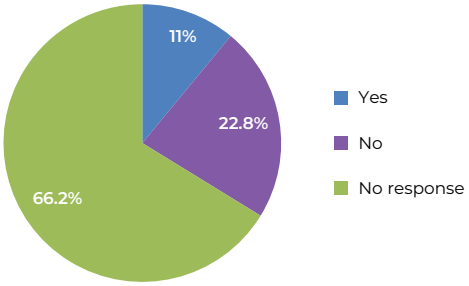
- *Development of guidelines:* Perceived effectiveness (20.6% effective): **Developing guidelines for social science research is likewise considered essential.** This could help standardize methodological approaches and ensure the rigor of the work.

Strong support for an ethical review role underscores the need for a body that can ensure compliance with ethical standards, thereby strengthening confidence in social science research. The results indicate that such a body could play a key role in aligning research with national priorities, which requires close collaboration with decision-makers and institutions. **Researchers also expect tools and resources to enhance the quality of their work, a need that could be met through online training and resource platforms.**

I.13. Researchers' Perceptions of National Social Science Policy

Responses regarding national social science policy reveal promising ways to strengthen dialogue between institutions and researchers. *The survey shows that 11% of researchers are aware of the existence of this policy, while 22.8% believe that it does not exist.* The majority (66.3%) did not respond, highlighting a clear need to improve information and communication on this topic.

Figure 62: Existence of a national policy related to social science research



Source: MESRS

These results indicate that it would be beneficial to raise awareness of national research guidelines in Tunisia. Better dissemination could help researchers align their work with national priorities and better navigate funding and collaboration opportunities.

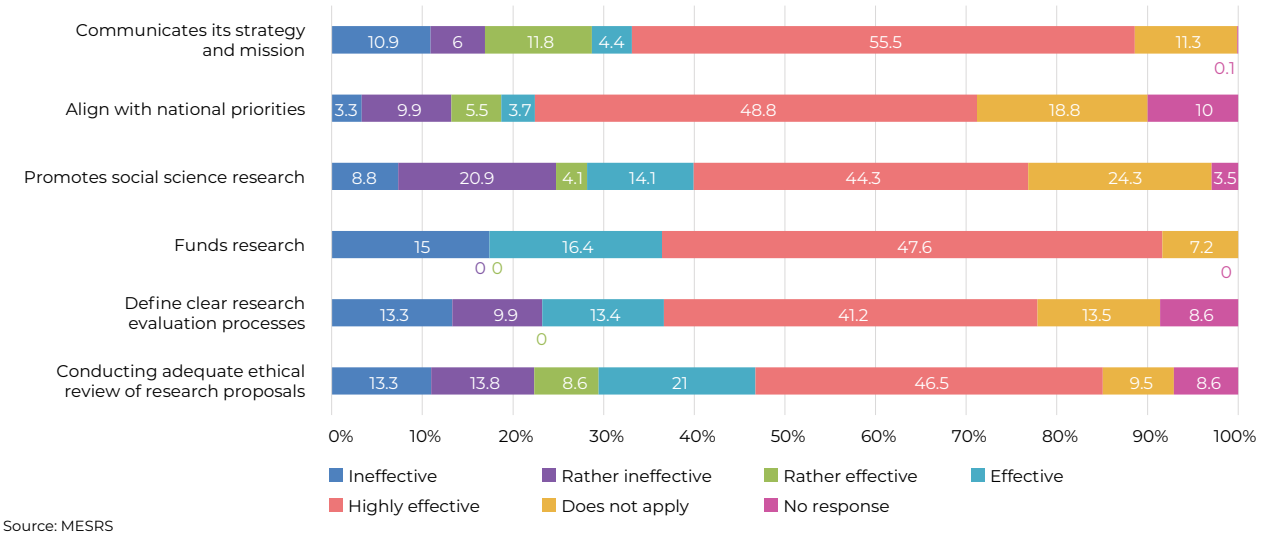
Potential measures include organizing regular meetings between institutions and researchers, providing clear and accessible informational resources, and integrating this aspect into doctoral training programs. These actions would strengthen synergies between the various actors in the research system.

Ultimately, a better understanding of national policies by the entire scientific community would increase the visibility and impact of social science research and enhance its contribution to the country's development. This represents an important challenge for Tunisia, but one where significant progress can be achieved through coordinated communication and dialogue between the General Directorate for Scientific Research (DGRS) at the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and key actors in university and association research.

I.14. Evaluating the Effectiveness of Social Science Research Policy: Strengths and Challenges

Analysis of the effectiveness of social science research policy reveals strengths, particularly in ethical review and mission communication. However, significant gaps remain in critical areas such as funding and alignment with national priorities. These findings underscore the need to improve less effective aspects in order to maximize the policy's impact on the quality and relevance of social science research.

Figure 63: Assessment of research policy effectiveness



Source: MESRS

Assessing the effectiveness of research policy in various areas provides important insights into its impact and shortcomings. It includes the following functions/priorities:

- *Conducting an ethical review of research proposals:* A majority of respondents (46.5%) consider this function to be effective or very effective. This demonstrates recognition of the importance of ethical evaluation in research, indicating that the policy is perceived as a useful tool for ensuring the protection of participants.

- *Ensuring the oversight of research institutions:* Here, 45.3% of respondents consider oversight to be effective. This suggests that researchers see value in the regulation and monitoring of institutions, which could strengthen confidence in the research being conducted.

- *Defining clear research evaluation processes:* Perceptions of effectiveness in this area are more mixed, with 39.9% of respondents considering the processes to be effective. This points to a need for clearer and more transparent evaluation criteria.

- *Funding research:* The perception of funding effectiveness is relatively low, with only 29.9% of respondents considering it effective. This raises concerns about resource availability and points to an urgent need for greater financial support for research projects.

- *Promoting social science research:* In this area, 30.6% of researchers believe that policy is effective. This suggests that while efforts are underway to promote the social sciences, more remains to be done to strengthen their visibility and impact.

- *Aligning with national priorities:* The perception of effectiveness in aligning with national priorities is even lower, with only 23.9% of respondents considering this to be effective. This highlights a potential gap between research work and the strategic needs of the country.

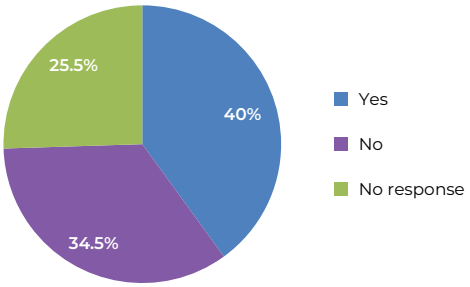
- *Communicating strategy and mission:* Finally, 55.5% of respondents rate this function as effective or very effective. This shows that clear communication of policy strategy and mission is perceived as a strength, essential for engaging researchers and stakeholders.

I.15. Research Mentoring: Enhancing a Vital Source of Support for Researchers

Analysis of access to research mentors reveals significant trends in the support available to researchers. While a considerable proportion of researchers have access to mentors, many remain without such support, which may

hinder their professional development. By strengthening mentoring initiatives and raising awareness among researchers, institutions can foster a more collaborative and enriching research environment.

Figure 64: Access to research mentors



Source: MESRS

An examination of responses on access to research mentors highlights key aspects of research support. The findings show that 40% of researchers have access to mentors, underscoring the vital role—formal or informal—that mentoring plays in their professional development. Mentors provide advice, resources, and moral support—all essential for navigating the increasingly complex research landscape.

Yet nearly 34.5% of respondents reported lacking such support, raising concerns about the challenges they may encounter in their careers. The absence of mentoring may restrict their learning and development opportunities, potentially diminishing the quality of their work. Furthermore, 25.5% of researchers did not respond, possibly reflecting uncertainty about what mentoring entails or limited awareness of available resources. This high proportion of unanswered responses highlights an urgent need to raise awareness about mentoring.

In this context, the importance of mentoring becomes all the more evident. The fact that 40% of researchers benefit from it shows that this support can promote the sharing of knowledge and exchange experience, thereby helping to improve the quality of research.

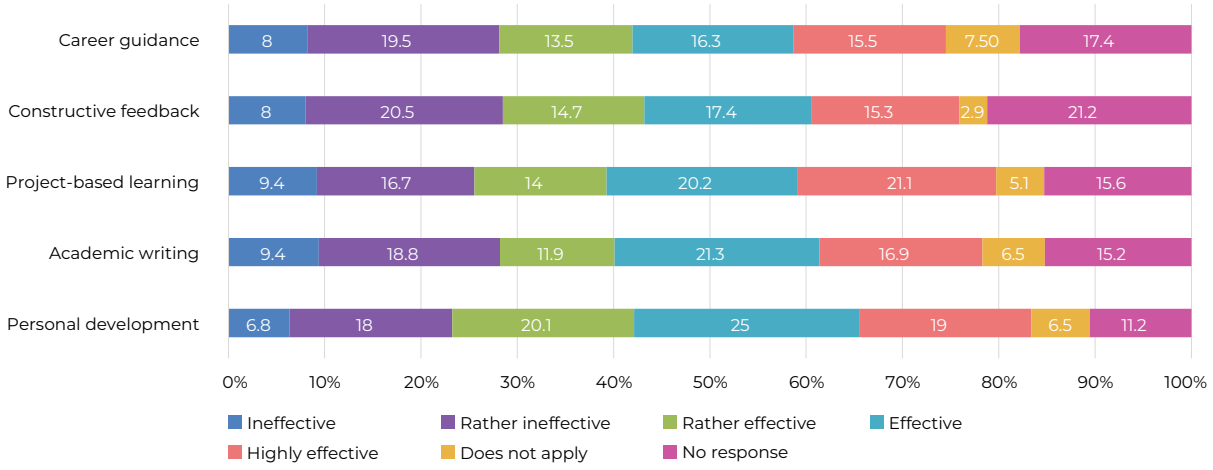
I.16. Mentoring: Support for Researchers

An analysis of the responses reveals mixed levels of satisfaction with the current mentoring system. While some areas, such as personal development and career guidance, show relatively positive levels of satisfaction, others, such as academic writing and project- -based learning, highlight significant shortcomings. These results underscore the need to improve the quality and effectiveness of mentoring to better meet the needs of researchers and enhance their professional development. The assessment of researchers' satisfaction with the mentoring system in several areas highlights varying perceptions of its effectiveness:

- *Personal development:* Satisfaction in this area is moderate, with 25% of respondents rating mentoring as effective. However, 20.1% consider it ineffective, indicating a need for improvement. This shows that while some researchers find support, others feel that mentoring does not fully meet their personal development needs.

- *Academic writing:* Regarding academic writing, 21.1% of researchers report satisfaction, while 18.8% express dissatisfaction. This result suggests that, although mentors may offer advice, many researchers do not receive the help they need to improve their writing skills.

Figure 65: Satisfaction with the current mentoring system in the relevant fields



Source: MESRS

- *Project-based learning:* For project-based learning, 21.1% of respondents consider mentoring to be effective, but a significant proportion (16.7%) find it ineffective. This indicates that, while some mentors provide good support for projects, others may not be sufficiently involved or competent in this area.

- *Constructive feedback on research:* Here, 23.9% of researchers consider constructive feedback to be effective, while 16.5% consider it ineffective. This reveals a certain level of satisfaction, but also a need for improvement to ensure more constructive and useful feedback.

- *Career guidance:* In the area of career guidance, 25.3% of respondents find mentoring effective, while 15.7% consider it ineffective. This indicates that, although some mentors are able to guide researchers in their career paths, others fail to provide the expected support.

I.17. Measuring Impact: Researchers' Knowledge of Citations

An analysis of responses on researchers' awareness of citation counts reveals significant trends in their engagement with their own work. Although some researchers have a good understanding of their citations, a significant proportion remain uncertain, highlighting the need for awareness and training. By fostering this understanding, institutions can better support researchers in their career paths and improve recognition of their academic impact.

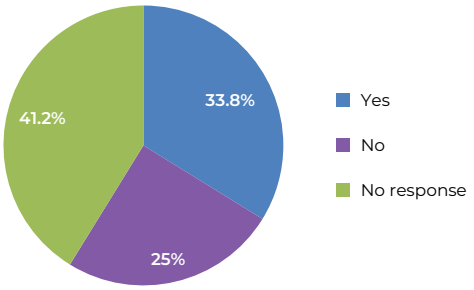
Examining the responses to the question of whether researchers know the number of citations of their published documents reveals important information about their engagement with their work and the recognition of their impact. The distribution of responses is as follows:

- **Yes (33.8%):** One-third of researchers report knowing the number of citations of their publications. This indicates a certain level of engagement with their own research and a desire to measure their impact in the field. Knowledge of citations can also be seen as an indicator of academic recognition, which is essential for their career development.

- **No (25.0%):** Nearly a quarter of respondents do not know how often their work has been cited. This raises questions about the visibility of their contributions and how they assess their academic impact.

- **No response (41.3%):** A significant proportion of respondents (over 41%) did not express an opinion on the question. This high rate suggests either uncertainty or limited interest in citation tracking, possibly due to unawareness of the tools available to measure publication The relatively low proportion of researchers aware of their citation counts (33.8%) may point to limited academic engagement. Knowledge of citations is crucial for evaluating the success of research and can influence funding and collaboration opportunities. For those who do not know how many times their work has been cited, there is a risk of missing out on professional development opportunities. Understanding the impact of their publications can help researchers better guide their future work and identify areas requiring further attention. Finally, the high proportion of "no response" answers indicates an urgent need for awareness-raising on the importance of tracking citations. This could involve training on the tools and resources available to measure the impact of publications, such as Google Scholar, Scopus, or Web of Science.

Figure 66: Knowledge of the number of citations of published documents (regardless of source)



Source: MESRS

I.18. Access to Research Resources: Current Situation and Prospects for Improvement

An analysis of responses on access to research resources highlights significant trends in researchers' circumstances. Although a significant proportion have access to these resources, one-third remain without support, and many gave no response. By improving access and raising awareness among researchers, institutions can enhance research quality and impact, while fostering a supportive and collaborative environment. The evaluation of responses to the question concerning access to research resources reveals important insights into the situation of researchers. The analysis of the responses reveals that 40.5% of researchers report having access to research resources. This suggests that nearly half of researchers have the

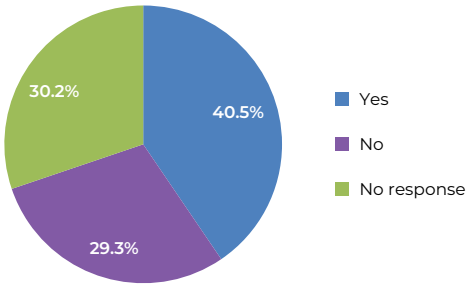
tools and materials needed to conduct their work—an essential condition for producing high-quality projects and remaining competitive in a constantly evolving academic environment.

Conversely, nearly 29.3% report lacking access to these resources. This raises concerns about the challenges these researchers may face in carrying out their work effectively. Lack of access to resources can limit their ability to innovate and produce high-quality research. Meanwhile, 30.3% of respondents did not provide an answer. This high rate may reflect uncertainty about what counts as research resources, confusion over their availability, or even disengagement—pointing to a need for clearer communication about the tools provided. The fact that 40.5% of researchers have access to resources underlines the importance of these tools in the success of research. Adequate access can enable researchers to carry out their projects more effectively, improve the quality of their work, and increase their academic visibility.

For those without access to resources, the consequences can be significant. The lack of material and informational support can hinder their ability to conduct rigorous and relevant research, thereby limiting their impact.

Finally, the high proportion of "no response" answers underscores a need to raise awareness of available resources. It is essential to inform researchers about the tools and support available to maximize their research potential.

Figure 67: Researchers registered in a database or international research database



Source: MESRS

I.19. Open Source Science: How to Persuade the 30% Who Remain Resistant?

Analysis of responses regarding the proportion of open source production highlights some concerning trends. Although a substantial proportion of researchers are open to the idea of sharing their work, the majority are not fully committed to open-source practices. By raising awareness and providing adequate support, institutions can promote wider adoption of open-source practices, which could enrich research and increase its impact. Examination of the responses concerning the share of open source production among researchers reveals significant trends in commitment to open source in academia.

Notably, 30% of respondents report that none of their research output is open source. This raises questions about the barriers that may be hindering the adoption of these practices. Potential reasons include concerns over intellectual property protection and a lack of awareness of the benefits of open source practices, both in terms of collaboration and research visibility.

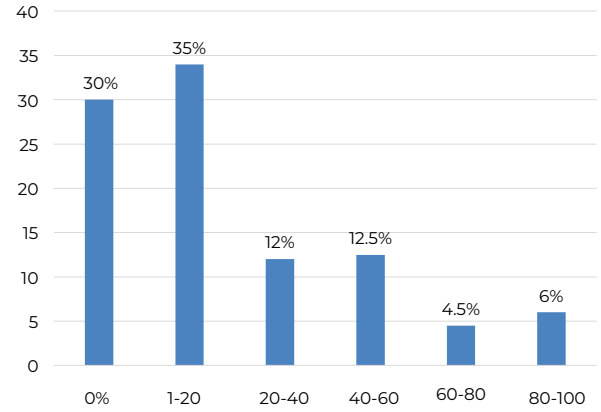
Further analysis shows that 35% of researchers report that only 1 to 20% of their research output is open source. Although this indicates a certain openness to the idea of sharing their work, this figure remains relatively low, suggesting that the majority of researchers are not fully committed to open source practices.

Additionally, a small group of researchers, representing 12% and 12.5%, estimate that 20% to 60% of their output is open source. These results show that a significant minority are adopting more open practices, but this remains a limited share of the total.

Finally, very few researchers, 4.5% and 6%, report that 60% or more of their research output is open source. This highlights a general reluctance to fully embrace open source, even among those who appear to be supportive of the approach.

The high proportion of researchers with no open-source output, along with those limiting themselves to 1-20%, suggests significant barriers to adopting open-source practices. These could include concerns about visibility, control over content, or a lack of institutional support. By not sharing their work as open source, researchers may miss opportunities for collaboration, innovation, and recognition. Open source can increase the visibility of research and improve its impact by allowing others to build on existing work. Finally, the results highlight an urgent need to raise awareness of the benefits of open-source practices. Informing researchers about how and why to share their work in open source can potentially reduce reluctance and encourage greater adoption of these practices.

Figure 68: Estimated share of open source in researchers' output



Source: MESRS

I.20. Research Career Prospects: Hopes and Realities

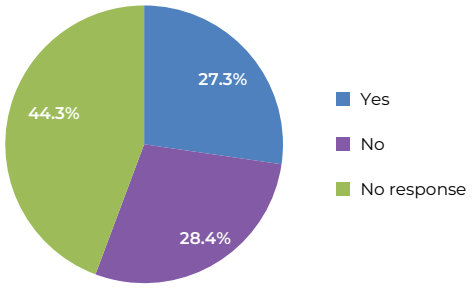
An examination of responses about researchers' perceptions of career opportunities reveals mixed feelings. Only 27.3% of respondents believe that there are attractive career opportunities in their field. Although this figure indicates a certain degree of optimism, it remains relatively low and suggests a mixed view of professional development prospects.

Meanwhile, nearly 28.5% of researchers express the opposite sentiment, stating that they do not perceive such opportunities. This dissatisfaction raises concerns about the challenges they face, such as growing competition, limited funding, or unfavorable working conditions.

In addition, a significant proportion of respondents (44.3%) did not answer this question. This high figure could indicate uncertainty or disengagement with regard to their professional development, suggesting that many researchers are not fully aware of potential opportunities, or that they feel indifferent about their future in academia.

These findings underscore the importance of raising awareness about the various career opportunities available to researchers. Institutions must play an active role in informing researchers about diverse career paths and strengthening institutional support. Indeed, in order to promote a dynamic and motivating research environment, it is essential to improve working conditions and funding opportunities to make research careers more attractive and viable.

Figure 69: The existence (or lack thereof) of a sense of career opportunities for researchers



Source: MESRS

I.21. Barriers to Motivation and Recognition

An analysis of responses regarding incentives related to a research career reveals major concerns about key issues such as job security, social recognition, and financial rewards. These findings highlight the need to improve working conditions and increase the visibility and recognition of researchers in order to make a career in research more attractive and rewarding. The assessment of overall incentives associated with a career in research reveals diverse perspectives on several aspects:

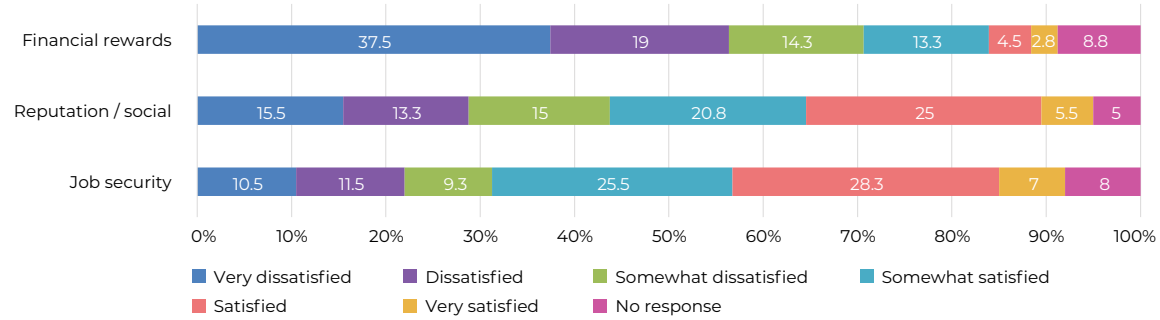
- *Job security:* Regarding job security, 10.5% of respondents report being very dissatisfied, while 11.5% report being dissatisfied. In contrast, 28.3% express satisfaction, though 25.5% remain somewhat dissatisfied. On the other hand, 28.3% of researchers expressed satisfaction, but 25.5% remained somewhat dissatisfied. These results indicate a general concern about job stability, with a significant proportion of researchers feeling insecure in their positions.

- *Reputation and social recognition:* With regard to reputation and social recognition, 15.5% of respondents say they are very dissatisfied, and 13.3% are dissatisfied. However, 20.8% express satisfaction. These figures show that while some researchers appreciate recognition in the academic community, a significant proportion feel a lack of visibility and appreciation for their work.

- *Financial rewards:* Financial rewards also elicit mixed feelings. Just over 37.5% of respondents report being very dissatisfied, and 19.4% are somewhat dissatisfied. In contrast, only 14.3% report satisfaction. This highlights a widespread dissatisfaction with financial compensation, which could influence the attractiveness of a career in research.

- *No response:* Finally, a notable proportion of respondents chose not to answer certain questions, which may reflect uncertainty or disengagement with regard to career incentives.

Figure 70: Assessment of overall incentives related to a research career



Source: MESRS

I.22. Motivating Researchers: How can we Bridge the 41% Non-response Gap?

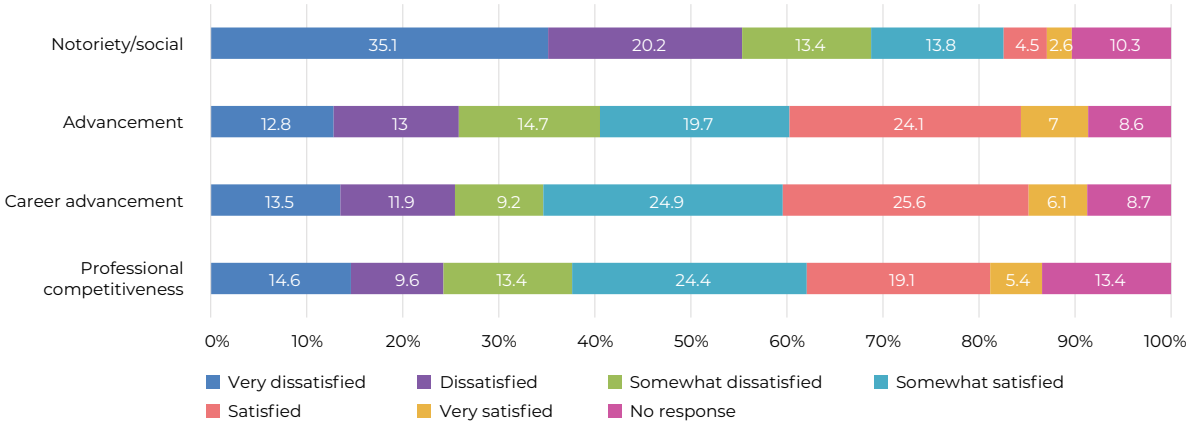
An analysis of responses regarding the assessment of overall incentives related to research output reveals significant findings. Approximately 33.8% of researchers believe that these incentives are sufficient to encourage their work. This suggests that some of them feel supported, potentially through funding programs, institutional resources, or collaborative opportunities that are considered beneficial.

However, 25.0% of participants express concerns about the effectiveness of these incentives, indicating gaps in the support provided. This could point to a lack of funding, recognition, or resources needed to carry out their research projects.

A particularly notable point is the high proportion of non-responses (41.3%). This may reflect several factors: a lack of clarity about the incentives available, making it difficult for some researchers to evaluate them, or indecision about varied experiences. This situation highlights the importance of improving communication about incentive programs.

These results emphasize the need for action to strengthen researcher motivation. By addressing the concerns expressed and striving to meet expectations, institutions can not only enhance the quality and quantity of research but also optimize researcher engagement. Targeted initiatives to gather additional feedback and clarify available incentives could play a crucial role in this process.

Figure 71: Assessment of overall incentives related to research output



Source: MESRS

II. RESEARCH DISSEMINATION: WORKING TOGETHER FOR A GREATER IMPACT

Research dissemination involves promoting the products, findings, and outputs of scientific work. It is not enough to simply conduct research; this work must also be accessible and understandable to the target audience, including researchers, decision-makers, and society at large. Research that is not disseminated is, in a sense, work that does not exist publicly. It loses its potential impact and does not contribute to the shared body of knowledge.

Dissemination is a key element in the advancement of the social sciences. Making results accessible promotes the exchange of ideas, innovation, and the application of knowledge in different fields. The communication of results directly influences public policy, professional practices, and public awareness of societal issues. For example, the use of communication tools allows for the swift and interactive dissemination of research findings. It facilitates the creation of communities around specific themes, thereby promoting exchanges between researchers and the public. In this respect, scientific journals remain a traditional but essential vehicle. They guarantee peer review and ensure the quality of the published work. However, access to certain publications may be limited, which raises the question of inclusivity in dissemination. Finally, collaborations and meetings provide opportunities for discussion and sharing of research results. They allow researchers to present their work, receive feedback, and establish collaborations. The dissemination of research is now a fundamental criterion in the evaluation of the social sciences. Evaluation bodies take into account the visibility and impact of scientific work. This includes not only the number of publications but also the way in which they are shared and discussed in the public sphere.

II.1. Why do Tunisian Researchers Collaborate Seven Times More With their Universities than with National CSOs or International Agencies?

Analysis of the responses highlights a predominance of collaborations with national actors, particularly universities and non-profit organizations. International partnerships also exist, but their scope could be expanded. By strengthening collaborations with international agencies, researchers could benefit from additional support and increase the impact of their work. This dynamic highlights the importance of cross-sectoral and international cooperation in the development of relevant and applicable research.

An examination of the results concerning researchers' collaboration with various sectoral actors reveals interesting trends in research dynamics:

- **National universities:** The largest proportion of researchers, 51.5%, report working with national universities. This figure highlights the importance of local academic institutions in the research landscape. Collaboration with these institutions not only strengthens local capacity, but also promotes fruitful exchanges of ideas and resources within the country. This connection also underscores the relevance of national universities in supporting research projects and developing solutions tailored to local needs.

- **National non-profit organizations/institutions:** In second place, 37% of researchers report collaborating with national non-profit organizations or institutions. This type of partnership can offer unique perspectives and additional resources, thereby enriching research projects. Non-profit organizations often play a key role in the practical application of research, with a focus on social and environmental issues.

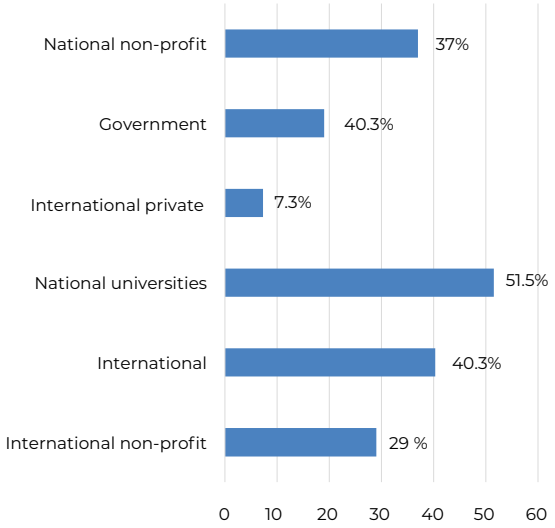
- **International universities:** Nearly 40.3% of researchers say they work with international universities. This international collaboration is crucial for the exchange of knowledge and access to global resources. It also extends the impact of research beyond national borders, promoting a more comprehensive approach to the issues under study.

- **International non-profit organizations/institutions:** Finally, 29% of respondents report collaborating with international non-profit organizations or institutions. This type of collaboration can offer significant opportunities to address global issues and strengthen the impact of research on an international scale. However, the relatively lower proportion compared to other categories may suggest challenges in establishing these partnerships, such as differences in priorities or logistical barriers.

- **International agencies:** At the other end of the spectrum, only 7.3% of researchers report collaborating with international agencies. This figure indicates a missed opportunity for many researchers, as

cooperation with these agencies could provide valuable financial support and resources, while strengthening the capacity to undertake large-scale projects.

Figure 72: Institutions with which researchers collaborate



Source: MESRS

II.2. Nearly 40% of Researchers consider Decision-Makers to be Accessible, Compared to Only 30% for Vulnerable Groups

Analysis of the responses highlights a general perception of accessibility for many groups, although barriers remain. Policy makers and non-academic researchers seem to enjoy greater recognition, while further efforts are needed to improve the involvement of vulnerable groups and women. This dynamic highlights the importance of broadening engagement in research discussions to ensure diverse and equitable representation of voices within the academic community and beyond.

Regarding the involvement of various groups in research discussions, the analysis reveals varied perceptions of accessibility and engagement among different stakeholders, namely:

- **Individual community members:** A significant proportion, 34.0%, consider the involvement of individual community members to be fairly accessible. However, 17.2% consider their participation to be fairly inaccessible. This contrast suggests that, although there is openness to the inclusion of these members, barriers remain, which may emanate from a lack of information or resources.

- **Community groups and associations:** For community groups and associations, 30.5% of respondents consider their involvement to be accessible or fairly accessible. However, 18.3% consider it to be fairly inaccessible. This indicates a positive perception, but also a recognition of the challenges that can hinder their active participation.

- **Policy makers:** With regard to policy makers, 40.0% of researchers perceive them as somewhat accessible, while 11.5% consider them to be very inaccessible. This perception may highlight a certain confidence among researchers in their ability to engage in constructive discussions with these key actors, although barriers remain.

- **Vulnerable groups:** For vulnerable groups, 30.6% of respondents consider them accessible, while 6.1% find them very inaccessible. This highlights a certain recognition of the importance of inclusion, although further efforts are needed to ensure their voice in research discussions.

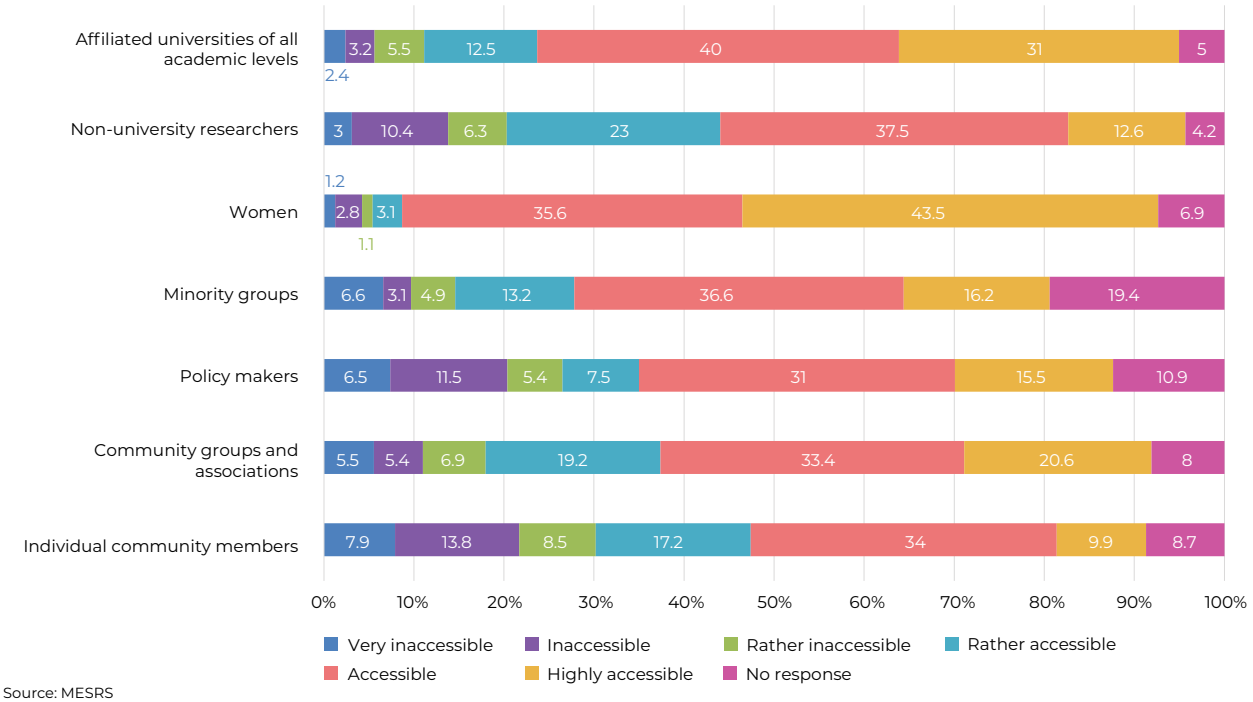
- **Women:** The situation of women in research discussions is revealing, with 35.6% of respondents considering their involvement to be fairly accessible. However, 10.6% consider their participation to be very inaccessible. This indicates progress towards inclusion, but also the need to strengthen efforts to overcome persistent barriers.

- **Non-university researchers:** *Regarding* non-university researchers, 40.0% of respondents perceive them as accessible, while 11.5% consider them inaccessible. This result highlights the importance of these researchers in the research landscape and the growing recognition of their contribution.

- **Affiliated universities at all academic levels:** Finally, for universities at all academic levels, 23.5% of researchers consider their involvement to be accessible, while 20.0% find them rather inaccessible. This mix of opinions reflects the challenges associated with the engagement of academic institutions, which can sometimes seem distant from community concerns.

Overall, the results show a general trend toward openness to collaboration, with a majority of researchers engaging at least occasionally with people outside their institution. However, there is still a significant proportion of researchers who do not explore these opportunities. To maximize the impact of research, it would be beneficial to

Figure 73: Assessment of the involvement of different groups in research governance



Source: MESRS

encourage more interactions among institutions, thereby facilitating access to diverse resources and expertise. This dynamic could not only enrich research projects, but also contribute to creating more solid and integrated collaborative networks.

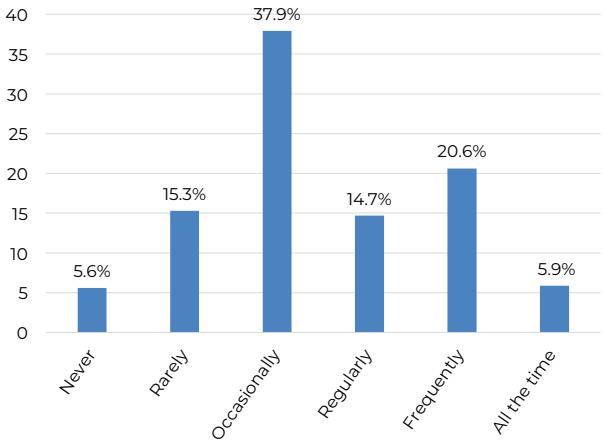
An examination of the responses to the question on the frequency of collaboration with people outside the research institution reveals interesting trends in collaboration practices among researchers:

- **"Occasional" collaboration:** The most represented category is that of researchers who *occasionally* collaborate with people outside their institution, reaching 37.9%. This result indicates that a significant majority of respondents occasionally engage in external collaboration. This may reflect a desire to exchange ideas and share resources, while maintaining a strong anchorage in their institution. This frequency of collaboration also suggests flexibility in research approaches, allowing researchers to access diverse expertise without making it a systematic practice.

- **"Frequent" collaboration:** 20% percent of respondents report collaborating frequently with external parties. Although this figure is lower than that for the "occasional" category, it indicates that some researchers have integrated external collaborations into their working methodology. This regular practice can enrich their research projects by promoting fruitful exchanges and opening up new perspectives. It also demonstrates a recognition of the importance of research networks beyond institutional boundaries.

- **"Regular" collaboration:** 14.7% of researchers say they collaborate regularly. This highlights that a number of them establish sustained partnerships with actors outside their institution. This regularity in collaboration may be a sign of strategic integration of inter-institutional exchanges into their work, thereby strengthening the impact of their research.

Figure 74: Scientific cooperation practices beyond institutional boundaries



Source: MESRS

- **"Rarely" and "never" collaboration:** Among the responses indicating "rare" (15.3%) or "never" (5.6%) collaboration, it is clear that some researchers remain

less engaged in external collaborations. These figures may reflect obstacles such as time constraints, lack of resources, or a preference for working within their own institution. It could also indicate a research culture that favors autonomy over collaborative work.

II.3. Training Researchers to Communicate Better: the Key to More Visible Science

In general terms, analysis of the responses shows that, although a significant proportion of researchers recognize the importance of communication training, many have not had access to sufficient opportunities to develop these skills. To improve the impact of research, it would be beneficial to encourage more communication training to equip researchers with the tools they need to share their work in an effective and engaging way. Examination of the responses regarding the number of communication training courses researchers have participated in over the past three years reveals significant trends:

- *No training (0):* 18.5% of respondents indicated that they had not participated in any communication training. This figure raises concerns about researchers' preparedness to disseminate their work effectively. The lack of training could limit their ability to share their research with a wider audience, collaborate effectively, or obtain funding.

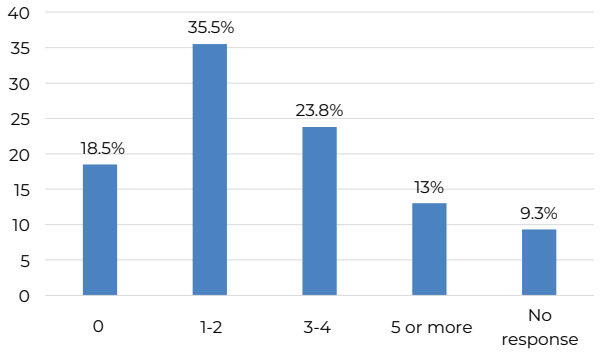
- *1 to 2 training courses (1-2):* The majority of researchers, representing 35.5%, attended 1 or 2 communication training courses. This result indicates some recognition of the importance of these skills, but also suggests that many have not had the opportunity to receive in-depth training. Limited training can hinder the development of skills that are essential for disseminating research results and engaging with diverse audiences.

- *3 to 4 training sessions (3-4):* Approximately 23.8% of respondents participated in 3 or 4 training sessions. This figure shows that some researchers are actively engaged in developing their communication skills. Regular training in this area can strengthen their ability to communicate clearly and effectively, which is crucial for the impact of their research.

- *5 or more training courses:* Only 13% of researchers attended 5 or more training courses. This relatively low proportion suggests that, although there is a desire to improve communication skills, few researchers are engaged in continuous development in this area. This could indicate limitations in terms of time, resources, or training opportunities.

- *No response:* Finally, 9.3% of respondents did not provide an answer. This figure may reflect a lack of engagement with the subject or uncertainty about the question.

Figure 75: Number of communication training courses attended in the last 3 years



Source: MESRS

II.4. What if Researchers Know How to Search, But Not How to Share?

Analysis of the results shows that, although communication training has provided some value, key areas need improvement. Particular attention should be placed on writing and presentation skills to ensure that researchers are well equipped to communicate their work effectively. By strengthening these training programs, we can hope to improve the quality of scientific communication and the impact of research.

The evaluation of communication training in relation to several key skills reveals varied perceptions among researchers:

- *Event organization skills:* Regarding event organization skills, 20.2% of respondents say they are satisfied, while 24.2% are somewhat satisfied. However, 17.9% expressed dissatisfaction. These results show that there is recognition of the benefits of training, but also gaps that could be filled to better prepare researchers to organize events.

- *Outreach skills:* For outreach skills, 22.5% of participants said they were satisfied, and 23.8% were somewhat satisfied. However, 18.1% reported dissatisfaction. This indicates that although the training provided useful elements, there is still a need for improvement to strengthen researchers' ability to communicate their work to a non-specialist audience.

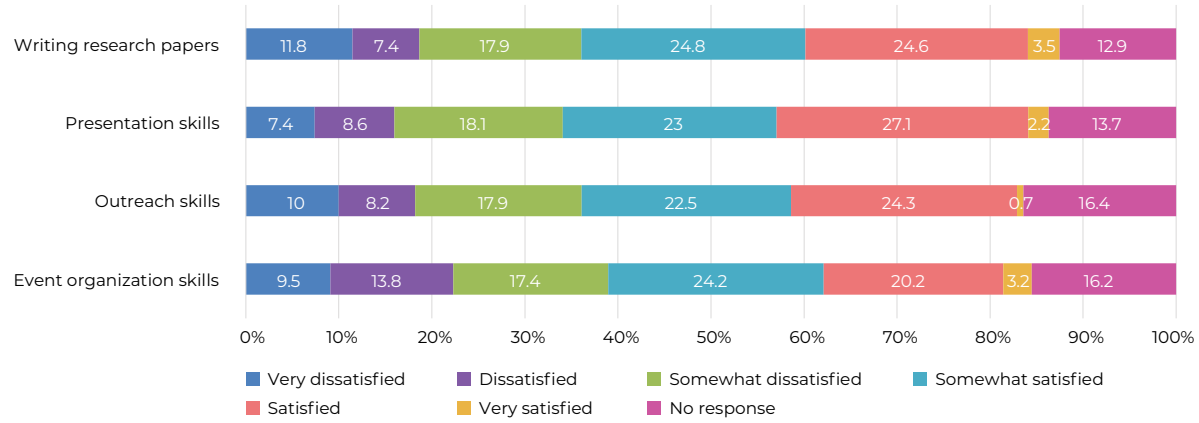
- *Presentation skills:* With regard to presentation skills, 18.1% of researchers reported being satisfied, with 24.2% reporting being somewhat satisfied.

However, 8.6% were very dissatisfied. This highlights the importance of improving training to ensure that researchers acquire strong presentation skills, which are essential for sharing their work in an impactful way.

- *Research writing:* Finally, when it comes to research writing, 14.3% of respondents say they are satisfied, while 11.4% are very dissatisfied. This result indicates mixed perceptions about the value of training in this crucial area. Writing is a fundamental skill for researchers, and dissatisfaction with it can have repercussions on the quality of publications.

- *No response:* A significant proportion of respondents did not provide an answer, which may reflect a lack of engagement or experience with training.

Figure 76: Assessment of Satisfaction with Communication Training



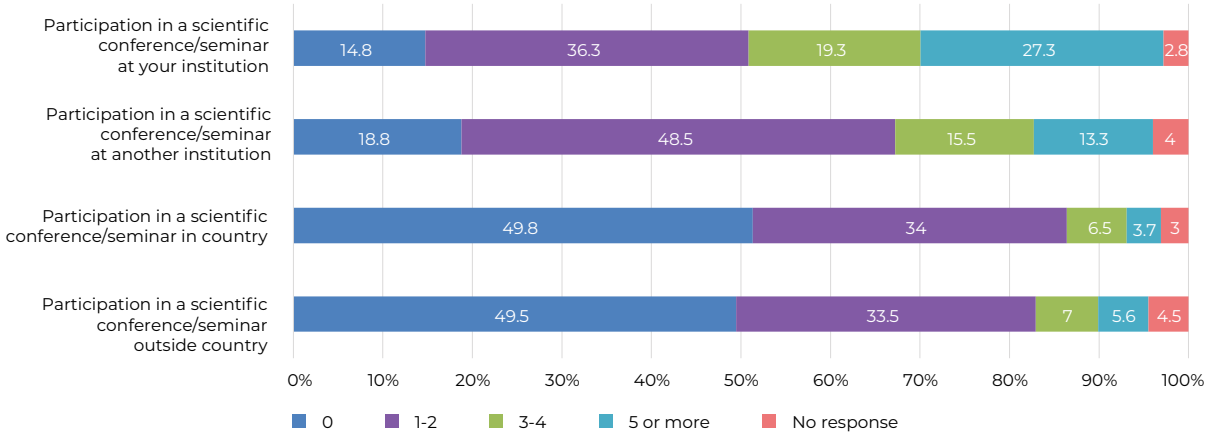
Source: MESRS

II.5. Researchers' Engagement: Trends in Participation in Scientific Events

Analysis of data on researchers' participation in scientific events over the past three years reveals some interesting trends. For scientific conferences or seminars outside their region, nearly half of respondents (49.5%) attended one or two events. This indicates moderate interest in opportunities to share knowledge beyond their geographical boundaries. At the same time, 33.6% of researchers participated in three or four events, showing that some of them are actively engaged in scientific forums. A small group, representing 7.5%, even attended five or more events, demonstrating significant engagement in their field. However, 5.5% of participants did not provide a response, raising questions about the accessibility or visibility of these events.

When it comes to participation in conferences or seminars at other institutions in their country, the results are similar. In this respect, 49.6% of researchers attended one or two events, showing a strong inclination to engage locally. Only 15.3% participated in three or four events, while 5.7% attended five or more events. This shows that there is a respectable level of engagement, even though 29.4% of respondents did not provide an answer, which could signal a lack of opportunities or information about available events.

Figure 77: Number of scientific events attended in the last 3 years



Source: MESRS

Finally, with regard to conferences or seminars organized within their own institution, 14.8% of researchers participated in one or two events, while 27.3% attended three or four. A significant 19.3% even participated in five or more events, revealing a strong engagement in local activities. However, 38.6% of respondents did not express an opinion, which could indicate uncertainty or disaffection with the activities organized by their institution.

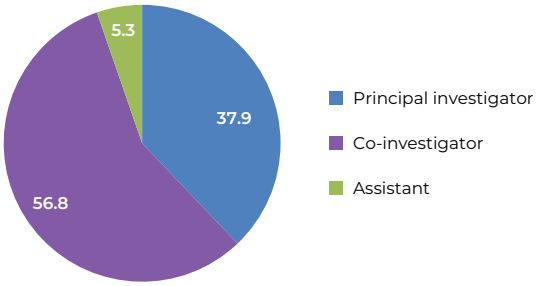
These findings highlight the varying levels of participation by researchers in scientific events, both locally and internationally. Although many are involved, the high proportion of non-responses in certain categories underscores a need to improve the communication and accessibility of information about these events. By promoting greater participation and facilitating access to these opportunities, institutions can strengthen the network of collaboration and knowledge exchange within the scientific community.

II.6. International Research Reveals its Strengths

Analysis of responses regarding the role of researchers in international research projects bring to light some interesting results. A significant majority of 56.8% of respondents identify themselves as researchers, indicating a strong involvement in research work. In addition, 37.9% identify themselves as principal investigators, demonstrating a level of responsibility and leadership in projects.

Only 5.3% of participants have held the role of assistant, suggesting that most researchers involved in these projects occupy more autonomous and active positions. These results emphasize that researchers are mainly engaged in significant roles within projects, with a majority holding positions that allow them to contribute substantially to research. This highlights significant potential for the development of skills and leadership in the field of international research.

Figure 78: Role of researchers in collaborative projects



Source: MESRS

II.7. Researchers Seeking Resonance: the Pressing Need to Better Connect Science and Society

The analysis reveals a worrying paradox: while 52% of researchers are part of professional networks, 87% are never contacted by the media and 69% are ignored by politicians. These figures reveal a double divide—among men of science, and between research and society. However, 68% of the networks to which they belong remain national, limiting the international outreach of their work. The results on this subject are as follows:

- Membership of a professional research network: The majority of respondents, 52.0%, are members of a professional research network. On the other hand, 27.3% are not, while 20.8% indicate that this does not apply to their situation. This suggests that, although a considerable number of researchers are involved in networks, a significant proportion remain outside these entities, which may limit their opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing.

- Frequency of contact with the media: Regarding the frequency with which journalists or the media contact researchers after the publication of an article or report, an overwhelming majority of 87.3% of respondents indicate that they are never contacted. Only 7.3% are rarely contacted, and 5.1% are sometimes contacted. This shows a significant lack of interaction between researchers and the media, which could prevent the dissemination of important research to the public.

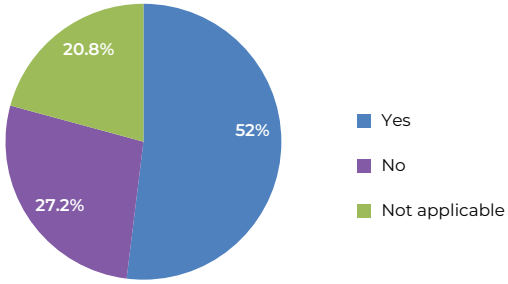
- Assessment of media coverage: Responses regarding the quality of media coverage of organized events and published research reveal a diversity of opinions. For example, social media coverage is considered satisfactory by 30.0% of respondents, while 25.5% find it unsatisfactory. Radio coverage is perceived as rather unsatisfactory by 41.3% of researchers. These results highlight concerns about how non-academic media outlets cover scientific research.

- Frequency of contact with political actors: Concerning contact with political actors after the publication of an article, 69.3% of respondents say they are never contacted. A small proportion, 16.8%, report rare contact, and only 9.8% experience it occasionally. This indicates a disconnection between academic research and its potential impact on policy decisions.

- Level of professional networks: Among those who are members of a professional network, 68.3% belong to a national research network, while 18.3% are in an international network. Only 13.5% of respondents are

members of a regional network. This distribution suggests a concentration of research activities at the national level, which may influence access to international collaborations.

Figure 79: Researchers who are members of a professional research network



Source: MESRS

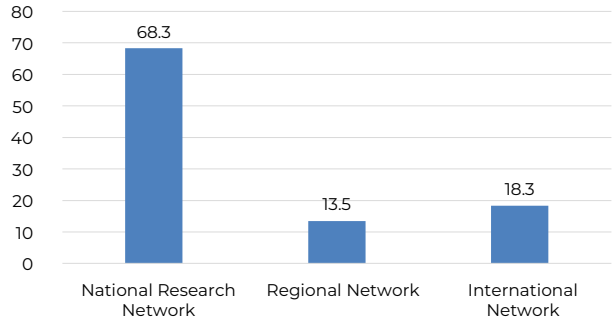
With 68.3% of researchers involved in a national research network, it is clear that internal cooperation is predominant. This strong involvement suggests that researchers favor local exchanges, which may facilitate access to resources, expertise, and available funding in the country. This reflects a research environment that promotes synergies and the sharing of information, which are essential to the development of national research.

In contrast, participation in regional networks is significantly lower, reaching only 13.5%. This figure raises questions about the obstacles that may hinder collaboration with other countries in the region. Barriers such as language differences, divergent research priorities, or funding limitations could explain this situation. It therefore appears that there is untapped potential for developing regional partnerships, which could enrich the work of Tunisian researchers and enhance their visibility in the Arab or Mediterranean world.

As for the international network, it attracts 18.3% of researchers, a figure that remains relatively modest. This level of international engagement could reflect various challenges, such as difficulties in accessing international funding, the need to publish in high-impact journals, or bureaucratic obstacles to establishing collaborations with researchers from other countries. Nevertheless, this international engagement is crucial for diversifying research perspectives and integrating Tunisian research into a global context.

Although national networking is predominant, the low level of engagement in regional and international networks sheds light on the opportunities of improvement for Tunisian researchers. Upscaling regional partnerships and promoting international collaborations could boost research in Tunisia and increase its impact and recognition on the global stage.

Figure 80: Level of membership in a professional research network



Source: MESRS

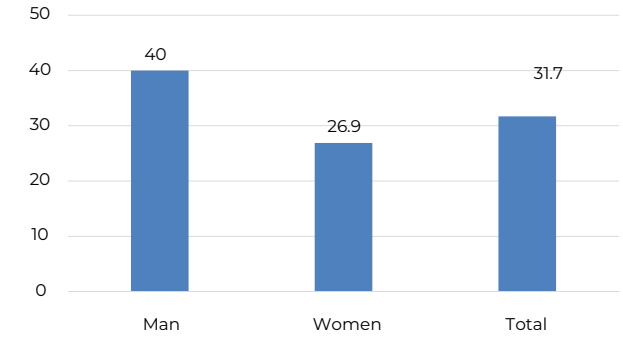
II.8. Why Do Women Have Less Time for Research?

The results indicate a striking gap between the time devoted to research by men, at 40%, and by women, at only 26.9%. This disparity raises important questions about the sociological factors that influence women's availability for research.

One of the main factors is domestic roles. Due to deeply entrenched societal norms, women often shoulder a disproportionate share of family and domestic responsibilities. This additional burden limits their time and energy, preventing them from devoting themselves fully to their research projects.

In addition, societal pressures are significantly crucial. Cultural expectations may influence women's career choices, pushing them to opt for teaching positions that are less time-consuming and therefore more compatible with a research-intensive career. Unequal access to resources is also a major obstacle. Women may encounter difficulties in obtaining the funding, mentoring, or networks that are necessary to advance their work, which impacts their ability to invest in research. Finally, the quest for a work-life balance proves particularly difficult for women. The difficulty of juggling personal and professional obligations can become a significant obstacle to their involvement in research projects. These disparities highlight the urgent need for initiatives to support women in research. Flexible policies, for example, could help achieve a better balance between professional life and family responsibilities. Similarly, increased access to parental support resources and mentoring programs specifically designed for women could help reduce this gap.

Figure 81: Sufficiency of time devoted to research (by gender)



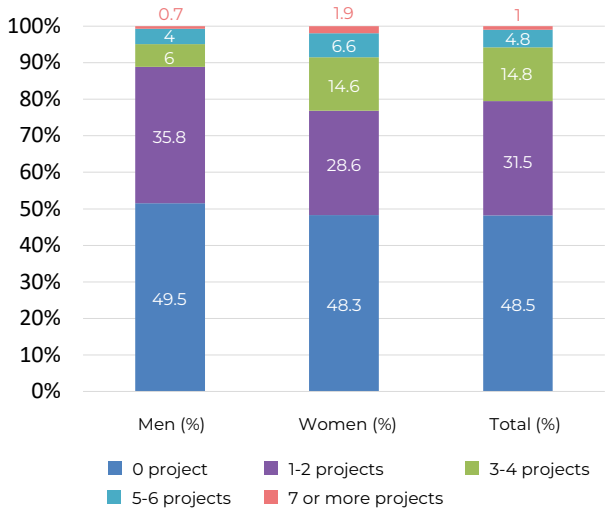
Source: MESRS

II.9. International Collaboration: Current Situation and Opportunities for Researchers to Be Involved

The graph illustrates the distribution of the number of collaborative international research projects carried out over the last three years, highlighting marked differences between men and women. The results reveal trends that deserve special attention.

A significant proportion of men are involved in 3 to 4 projects and 5 to 6 projects, while women seem to be more concentrated in categories with fewer projects. Although 49.5% of men did not participate in any projects, a majority of them nevertheless took part in several collaborations, compared to 48.3% of women who did not contribute to such projects. This situation can be attributed to several sociological factors.

Figure 82: Number of international collaborative research projects over the last three years (by gender)



Source: MESRS

First, access to opportunities seems to play a major role; men often benefit from a more extensive professional network and an environment that encourages their participation. At the same time, women often face a heavier workload, particularly due to domestic responsibilities, which limits their available time to engage in research projects.
Issues of confidence and visibility are also decisive.

In academic circles that are often male- dominated, women may hesitate to apply or get involved in large-scale projects for fear of not being taken seriously.

In addition, the research culture itself can influence their participation; an atmosphere that places less value on women's contributions can discourage women from being fully involved.

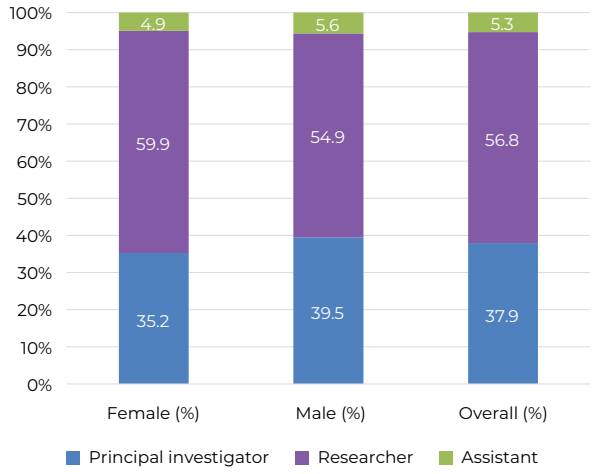
II.10. Are Female Researchers Better Leaders than Men? What Do the Statistics Reveal?

The distribution of roles among researchers in international projects highlights notable differences between men and women. The data reveal interesting trends regarding the participation of both sexes in these projects. Among men, 35.2% occupy the role of principal investigator, while 59.9% act as researchers, and only 4.9% are classified as assistants. In contrast, the figures among women show that 37.9% play the role of principal investigator, 54.9% are researchers, and 5.6% are assistants. Although the distribution is relatively similar, women seem to be slightly better represented in principal investigator roles than men.

This situation raises several sociological questions. First, access to leadership roles in research may be influenced by factors such as institutional support and collaborative networks. Women, despite progress, continue to face barriers related to the recognition of their skills and visibility in environments that are often male-dominated. In addition, perceptions of roles in research may vary by gender. Men may be more often perceived as natural leaders, thereby reinforcing their position as principal investigators. In contrast, women, even when they hold positions of responsibility, may encounter stereotypes that limit their advancement in these roles.

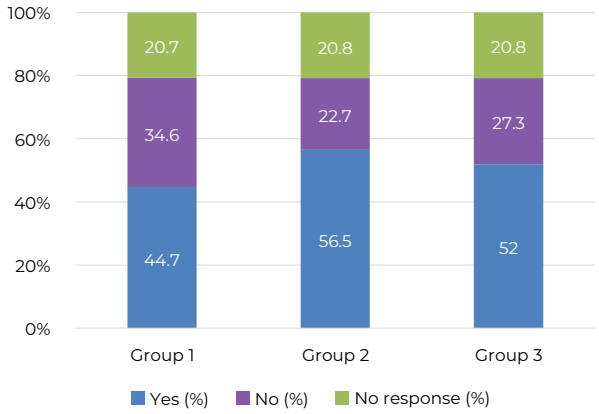
Finally, the work culture within research teams is also a crucial factor. An inclusive and supportive environment can encourage greater participation by women in leadership roles, while a climate of mistrust or competition can have the opposite effect.

Figure 83: The role of researchers in international projects (by gender)



Source: MESRS

Figure 84: Researchers who are members of a professional research network



Source: MESRS

II.11. Scientific Networks: Women Are More Engaged than Men

The distribution of researchers who are members of a professional research network underlines significant differences between men and women. The data reveal interesting trends regarding membership in these networks. Among men, 44.7% report being members of a professional network, while 34.6% are not and 20.7% feel that this does not apply to their situation. In contrast, women show slightly higher membership, with 56.5% belonging to a network, 22.7% not being members, and 20.8% indicating that this does not apply to them. These figures suggest that women are more inclined to engage in professional networks than their male counterparts. This situation raises several sociological questions. First, membership in professional networks can play a crucial role in the career development of researchers. Networks offer opportunities for collaboration, mentoring, and access to resources that can be critical to professional success.

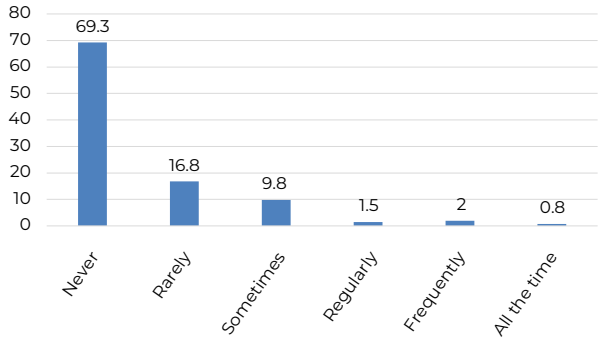
The observed difference in membership between the sexes could be related to various factors. Women, who often face systemic barriers in academia, may actively seek out networks that support and encourage them. In contrast, men, who often have easier access to informal networking opportunities, may not feel the same need to join formal structures. Furthermore, perceptions of the importance of networks may vary by gender. Women may be more aware of the benefits of collective support, while men may favor more individualistic paths in their professional development. Finally, the climate of the networks themselves may influence membership. Inclusive and welcoming environments encourage participation, while atmospheres perceived as competitive or non-inclusive may deter researchers.

II.12. Media and Researchers: the Great Misunderstanding?

The survey results reveal significant trends regarding the frequency of researchers' contact with the media. With 69.3% of researchers reporting that they never have contact with the media, it is obvious that the majority of them remain isolated from public communication channels. This situation raises questions about why these researchers do not engage with the media. This could reflect a perception that research is primarily intended for an academic audience, or perhaps a lack of training on the importance of scientific research in society.

In the same vein, 16.8% of researchers say they have rare contact with the media. Although this is less than the majority, it indicates that a small group of researchers recognizes the importance of sharing their work with a wider audience, even if this is carried out sporadically. This lack of frequency could be attributed to limited opportunities or a reluctance to engage in public communication.

Figure 85: Frequency of media contact after publication of research articles



Source: MESRS

The categories “occasionally” (9.8%), “Regularly” (1.5%), “Frequently” (2.0%), and “All the time” (0.8%) show that very few researchers are actively and continuously engaged with the media. These low percentages highlight a gap in the dissemination of scientific knowledge to the public. The scarcity of interactions with the media limits the reach of research and its impact on societal issues. It can also contribute to a misperception of science, where advances and discoveries fail to reach citizens.

In short, the survey results underscore a crucial issue: the need to encourage researchers to engage more with the media. For research to have a real societal impact, it is essential to strengthen researchers’ communication skills and create opportunities for them to share their work more frequently and in a more accessible way. Such an approach could not only improve the visibility of research, but also promote a better understanding of scientific issues among the public.

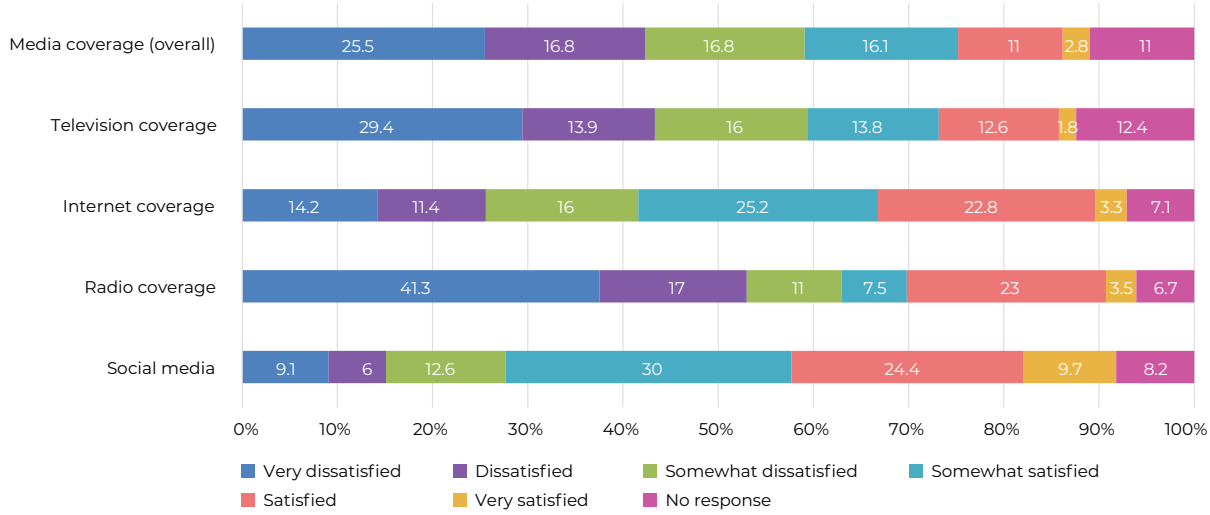
II.13. Science Journalism: Why 41% of Researchers Consider Radio Coverage “Very Unsatisfactory”

The results of the survey on the quality of media coverage by non-academic media reveal varied perceptions among researchers. To begin with, radio coverage is perceived as the least satisfactory, with 41.3% of respondents saying they are very dissatisfied and 16.8% saying they are somewhat dissatisfied. This indicates a high level of disappointment with radio’s ability to convey research information effectively. This result could suggest that radio media are failing to cover scientific topics in a thorough or accessible manner.

With regard to Internet coverage and websites, 30.0% of researchers are very dissatisfied, while 12.6% say they are somewhat dissatisfied. Although this category has a high percentage of dissatisfaction, it also has a significant proportion of satisfied researchers (25.2%). This could indicate that some online media outlets are successful in covering topics adequately, but that many others are failing.

Television coverage shows mixed results, with 25.5% of researchers very dissatisfied and 11.0% satisfied. This suggests that, although television can reach a wide audience, it does not always meet researchers’ expectations in terms of the quality of scientific content.

Figure 86: Assessment of the quality of media coverage by non-academic media



Source: MESRS

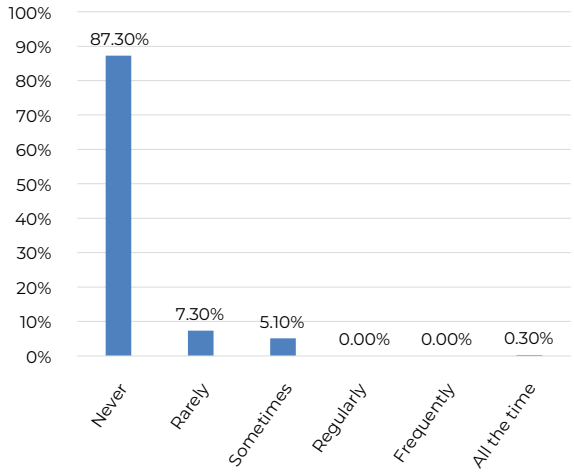
Finally, newspaper coverage stands out with more varied results: 25.5% of researchers say they are very dissatisfied, but a considerable number (16% satisfied and 11.0% very satisfied) indicate that some journalists manage to cover research topics satisfactorily.

These results show widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of media coverage by non-academic media, with notable shortcomings in the transmission of scientific information. To improve this situation, it would be crucial to strengthen the training of journalists on scientific issues and encourage closer collaboration between researchers and the media in order to ensure more effective and accurate communication of research results.

The results of the survey on the frequency of contact with political actors after the publication of research articles highlight a reality concerning the interaction between academic research and the political world. With 87.3% of researchers reporting that they never have contact

with political actors after the publication of their work, it is clear that this relationship is largely absent. This figure raises important questions about how research is perceived and used in decision-making processes.

Figure 87: Frequency of contact with political actors after publication of research articles



Source: MESRS

Only 7.3% of researchers report rare contact, while 5.1% say they have occasional interactions. These results suggest that, although some researchers may establish links with decision-makers, this remains the exception rather than the norm. The absence of regular or frequent contact (0.0% for "Regularly" and 0.3% for "All the time") demonstrates a significant disconnect between research and public policy. This situation can have several implications. On the one hand, it indicates that research findings are not sufficiently taken into account in policy-making, which can undermine the effectiveness of policy decisions and their relevance to societal issues. On the other hand, this lack of dialogue may also limit researchers' understanding of political realities and the needs of decision-makers.

These results highlight the need to improve interactions between researchers and political actors. For research to have a significant impact on public policy, it is crucial to promote channels of communication and collaboration, enabling researchers to share their knowledge and decision-makers to integrate it into their thinking.

III. RESEARCH AND PUBLIC POLICY: BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND POWER

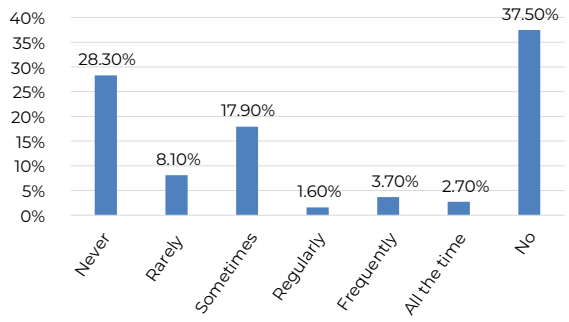
III.1. Researchers and Political Influence: a Relationship of (Mis)Trust

Analysis of the answers to the question concerning the influence of politicians on the independence of research results reveals varied perceptions among researchers. A significant proportion of respondents (37.5%) did not express an opinion on the issue, which may indicate uncertainty or a lack of clear information about the dynamics between research and politics. This high figure highlights the importance of raising awareness among researchers about the issues surrounding research independence and the potential impact of political pressure.

Among those who did express an opinion, 28.3% of researchers said that policymakers never influence research results. This may reflect confidence in the integrity of research processes, but could also indicate a lack of awareness of the potential pressures that could be exerted. On the other hand, 8.1% of respondents believe that such influence is rare, while 17.9% believe that it occurs sometimes. These results suggest an acknowledgment of some interaction between research and political interests, although the majority of researchers seem to believe that this influence is not systematic.

Only 3.7% of respondents say that politicians regularly influence results, and 2.7% say that this happens frequently or all the time. These relatively low figures may indicate that, even if some researchers perceive an influence, it is considered marginal in relation to the overall body of research.

Figure 88: Perceived influence of policymakers on the independence of research results



Source: MESRS

Analysis of answers to the question regarding participation in research directly commissioned by policymakers over the past three years reveals some striking results. An overwhelming majority of 89.5% of respondents indicate that they have not worked on such research. This figure suggests a lack of interaction between academia and policymakers, which could limit the application of research findings in public policy development.

In contrast, only 10.5% of researchers said they had been involved in research directly commissioned by policymakers. This indicates that a minority of researchers are engaged in projects that could influence policy decisions, but this proportion remains very small.

These results highlight the importance of strengthening the links between research and decision- making. Closer collaboration could not only improve the relevance of research to the needs of policy- , but also ensure that scientific findings have a direct impact on public policy.

III.2. Research and Politics: How Often Do Researchers Collaborate with Policymakers?

Analysis of responses regarding the frequency with which researchers work on research commissioned by policymakers reveals some interesting trends. A majority of 57.1% of respondents indicate that they participate in this type of research once a year. This suggests that, although few researchers are involved in commissioned projects, those who are do so on a relatively regular but limited basis.

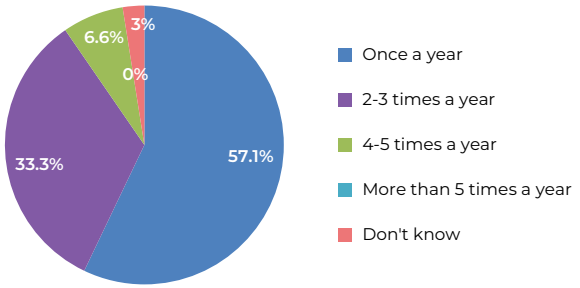
Likewise, 33.3% of researchers report participating in such research 2-3 times a year. This figure indicates that a significant number of researchers are involved in initiatives that allow them to interact more frequently with policymakers, which could strengthen the impact of their work.

Only 7.1% of respondents say they participate in such research 4 to 5 times a year, while no researchers report participating more than 5 times a year. This shows that, even among those who participate, engagement remains relatively modest.

Finally, 2.4% of respondents are unable to assess their frequency of participation. This low percentage may reflect uncertainty or a lack of clarity about the nature of these collaborations.

These results highlight the importance of encouraging greater frequency and diversity of collaboration between researchers and policymakers. By facilitating more opportunities for engagement, we could improve the relevance of research to policy needs and strengthen the link between research and public policy development.

Figure 89: Frequency with which researchers work on commissioned research



Source: MESRS

III.3. Research and Public Policy: a Partnership to Be Strengthened

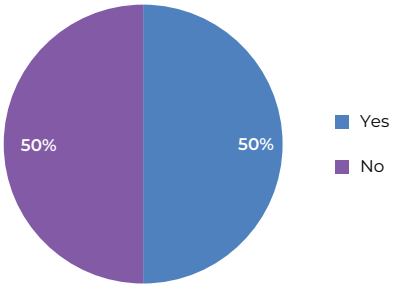
Analysis of answers to the question on receiving funding for research commissioned by policymakers over the past three years reveals a striking balance. In fact, 50.0% of researchers say they have received such funding (grants from laboratories or research units or scholarships), while the other half, also 50.0%, say they have not.

This parity suggests that, although there is an opportunity for researchers to engage in projects funded by public actors, an equally significant proportion does not participate in this type of collaboration. This may reflect differences in research areas, the interests of decision-makers, or funding mechanisms.

The fact that 50% of researchers have received funding may indicate a growing recognition of the importance of academic research in the decision-making process. It also shows that some researchers are actively involved in projects that could influence public policy.

However, the lack of funding for the other half of respondents highlights the need to strengthen links between academia and public decision-makers in order to promote better use of research findings in policy-making. Encouraging more collaboration and facilitating access to funding for commissioned research could enrich the research landscape and improve the impact of academic work on policy decisions.

Figure 90: Research commissioned by policymakers in the last three years



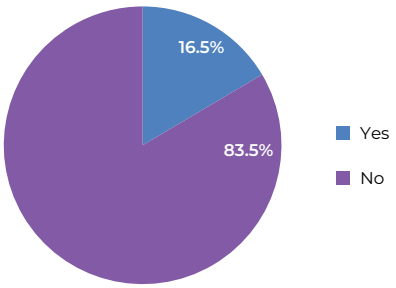
Source: MESRS

III.4. Translating Science for Policymakers: a Rare Skill among 83.5% of Researchers

Analysis of responses to the question concerning the production of documents such as policy briefs, white papers, or working papers to communicate research findings to policymakers reveals significant results. A very large majority of 83.5% of researchers indicate that they do not produce this type of document. This suggests a lack of commitment to communicating research findings directly to policymakers, which could limit the impact of their work on public policy.

In contrast, only 16.5% of researchers say they produce such documents. Although this figure indicates that a small proportion of researchers are proactive in disseminating their findings to policymakers, it remains relatively low. This may reflect obstacles such as a lack of time, resources, or institutional support to develop documents tailored to policymakers.

Figure 91: Production of documents (such as policy briefs, white papers, working papers, etc.) to communicate research findings to policymakers



Source: MESRS

These results highlight the importance of encouraging researchers to create communication materials that translate their work into clear and accessible

recommendations for policymakers. Promoting such initiatives could not only improve the visibility of research, but also strengthen the use of scientific data in policy-making, thereby promoting better evidence-based decision-making.

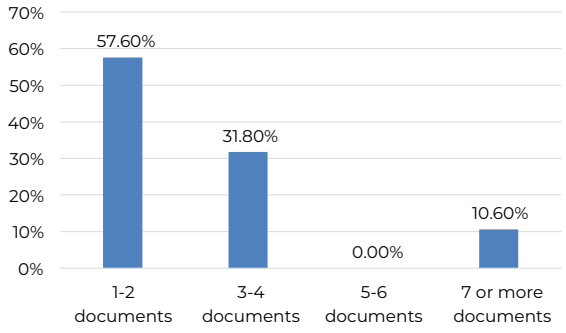
III.5. Untapped Potential: 58% of Researchers Publish only 1 to 2 Documents per Year

Analysis of responses regarding the number of documents produced per year, such as policy briefs or white papers, reveals conspicuous trends among researchers. A majority of 57.6% of respondents indicate that they produce 1 to 2 documents per year. This suggests that, although some researchers are committed to publishing their findings, their output remains relatively limited. This figure may reflect time or resource constraints, hindering the ability to generate more documents.

In the same vein, 31.8% of researchers report producing 3 to 4 documents per year. This group represents a significant proportion, indicating that some researchers are more proactive in disseminating their findings, which could contribute to better dialogue with policymakers.

No researchers report producing between 5 and 6 documents, and only 10.6% say they produce 7 or more. This shows that levels of document production remain generally modest, even among those who are committed.

Figure 92: Number of documents produced per year by researchers



Source: MESRS

These results highlight the importance of finding ways to encourage greater production of communication documents. Facilitating the creation of these materials could improve the dissemination of research results and strengthen their impact on policy decisions. Initiatives to train researchers in writing documents tailored to policymakers could also be beneficial.

III.6. Only 10% of Researchers Produce 7 or more Documents per Year: How Can We Change This?

Analysis of responses regarding the number of documents produced per year, such as policy briefs or white papers, reveals clear trends among researchers. A majority of 57.6% of respondents indicate that they produce 1 to 2 documents per year. This suggests that, although some researchers are committed to communicating their results, their output remains relatively limited. This figure may reflect time or resource constraints, hindering the ability to generate more documents.

At the same time, 31.8% of researchers report producing 3 to 4 documents per year. This group represents a significant proportion, indicating that some researchers are more proactive in disseminating their findings, which could contribute to better dialogue with policymakers. No researchers report producing between 5 and 6 documents, and only 10.6% say they produce 7 or more. This shows that levels of document production remain generally modest, even among those who are committed.

These results highlight the importance of finding ways to encourage greater production of communication materials. Facilitating the creation of these documents could improve the dissemination of research results and strengthen their impact on policy decisions. Initiatives to train researchers in writing documents tailored to policymakers could also be beneficial.

III.7. Only 3% of Researchers Gain Access to Power: Is Science without a political voice?

The results of the survey on the political role of researchers over the past three years show limited participation by researchers in political functions. First, only 3.0% of researchers hold political positions at the central level. This low percentage indicates that very few researchers are integrated into decision-making positions within government institutions, which may limit the influence of research on public policy.

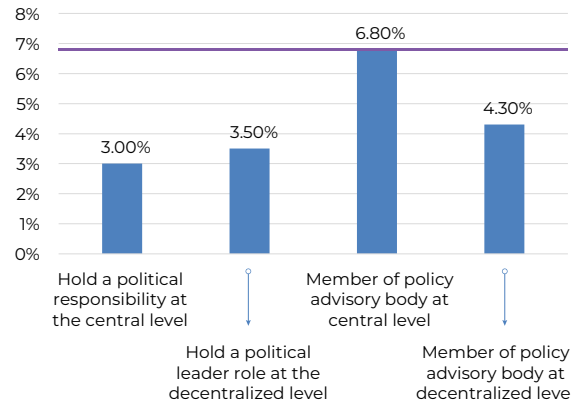
Second, 3.5% of researchers hold political positions at the decentralized level. Although this figure is slightly higher than at the central level, it remains marginal. This suggests that even at more local levels of governance, the presence of researchers in political roles is still very limited.

In contrast, 6.8% of researchers were members of a policy advisory body at the central level. This figure shows some openness to the participation of researchers in advisory structures, which could enable them to influence policy decisions even without holding a position of direct responsibility. However, there is still a long way to go before this participation becomes meaningful and the voices of researchers are heard more clearly in the decision-making process.

Finally, 4.3% of researchers were members of a decentralized policy advisory body. Although this figure is also encouraging, it once again highlights that the majority of researchers are not involved in these consultation mechanisms.

These survey results reveal limited participation by researchers in policy roles, both at the central and decentralized levels. For research to have a stronger impact on public policy, it would be essential to promote more active avenues of engagement for researchers, with a view to fostering constructive dialogue between academia and policymakers.

Figure 93: Political role of researchers over the last three years



Source: MESRS

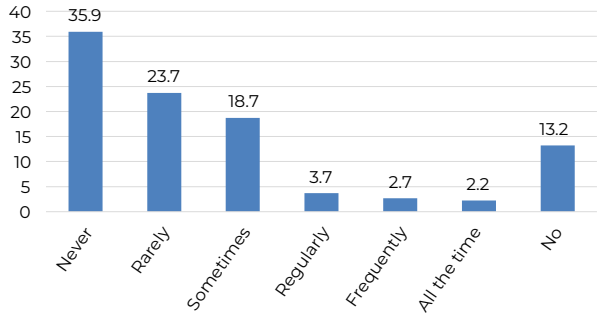
III.8. The Science-Politics Divide: How Can We Explain Why 6 out of 10 Researchers Interact so Little?

Analysis of responses regarding the frequency of interaction between researchers and policymakers reveals some worrying trends. A majority of 35.9% of respondents say they never interact with policymakers. This figure suggests a significant barrier between academia and the decision-making process, which may limit the impact of research on public policy.

In addition, 23.7% of researchers say they rarely interact with policymakers. This indicates that a number of researchers are aware of the importance of these interactions but do not engage in them often, which could also be due to time constraints or a lack of opportunities. With regard to more frequent interactions, 18.7% of respondents say they sometimes interact with policymakers. However, only 3.7% of respondents say they do so regularly, and even fewer, 2.7%, say they interact frequently, while 2.2% do so all the time. These figures show that interactions are generally low, even among those who are actively engaged.

Finally, 13.2% of respondents did not provide an answer, which may reflect uncertainty or a lack of experience in this area. These results highlight the need to create more opportunities to strengthen interactions between researchers and policymakers. Initiatives to facilitate these exchanges could not only improve the dissemination of research, but also promote a better mutual understanding of scientific and political issues.

Figure 94: How often do you interact with policymakers?



Source: MESRS

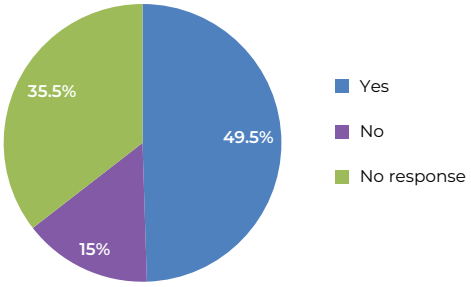
III.9. Less than Half of Researchers Feel Influential... How to Improve this Figure?

Analysis of the responses to the question on the ability of institutions to influence policy reveals some interesting insights. Nearly half of respondents, 49.5%, believe that their institution is capable of influencing policy. This indicates significant confidence in the potential of academic research to play a role in policy-making. This positive perception may reflect previous experiences of engagement with policymakers or a recognition of the importance of research findings in the decision-making process. In contrast, 15.0% of researchers believe that their institution is not able to influence policy. This figure highlights concerns about the real impact that research can have on policy decisions, which may stem from a perception of isolation or a lack of visibility for academic work.

A notable 35.5% of respondents did not provide an answer. This may reflect uncertainty about their

institution's influence or a lack of knowledge about the mechanisms through which research can affect policy. These findings highlight the importance of strengthening communication and collaboration between academic institutions and policymakers. By improving the visibility of research work and facilitating more frequent interactions, institutions could not only increase their influence, but also strengthen researchers' confidence in their ability to contribute to evidence-based decisions.

Figure 95: Do you think your institution is capable of influencing policy?

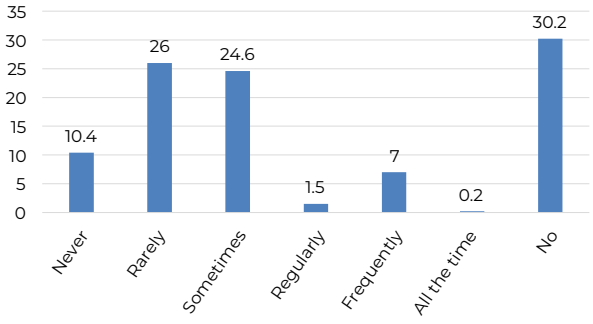


Source: MESRS

III.10. The Worrying Gap between Research and Policy Action: 30% Don't Know, 10% Say Never

Analysis of responses regarding the use of academic work and citations in government publications and reports reveals varied perceptions among researchers. A notable 30.2% of respondents did not provide an answer, which could indicate uncertainty or a lack of observation on the subject. This lack of response highlights the importance of raising awareness among researchers about how their work is incorporated into government documents.

Figure 96: Government publications/reports use academic work and citations



Source: MESRS

With regard to the opinions expressed, 10.4% of researchers believe that government publications never use academic work. This figure may reflect a perception of isolation between academic research and public administration.

In addition, 26.0% of respondents believe that this work is seldom used, while 24.6% believe that it is sometimes used. These results show that a majority of researchers seem to recognize some use of academic research, but it is still perceived as limited.

Only 1.5% of respondents say that academic work is used regularly, and 0.2% say it is used frequently or all the time. These figures indicate that even among those who perceive some use, it is considered marginal.

III.11. Public Policy: Science in Search of Influence

Analysis of responses regarding the quality of collaboration with policymakers at different stages of the policy cycle reveals varied perceptions among researchers. Overall, these results highlight mixed perceptions regarding the quality of collaboration between researchers and policymakers at each stage of the policy cycle. Although some aspects are considered effective, a significant proportion of researchers believe that improvements are needed. This underscores the importance of strengthening collaboration mechanisms to ensure better integration of scientific knowledge into the decision- making process:

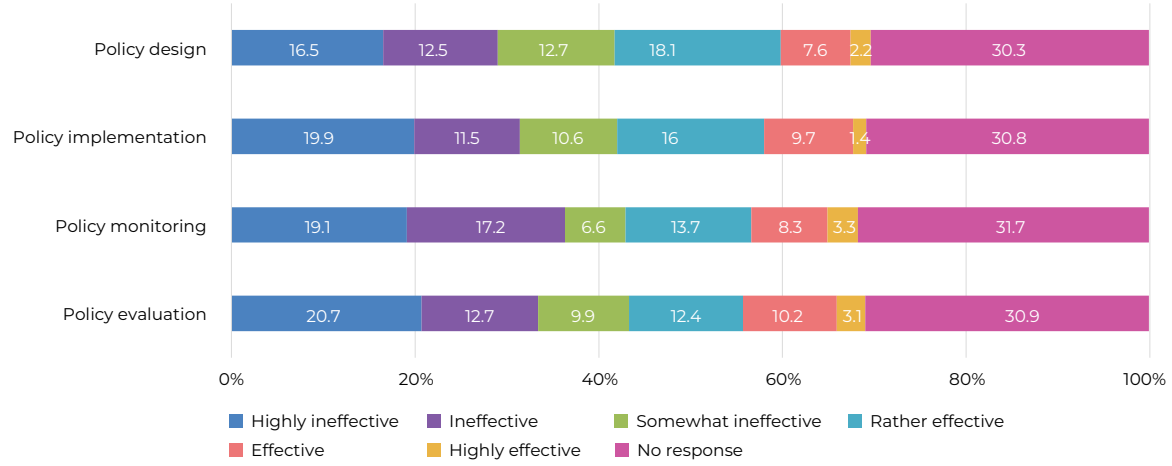
- *Policy evaluation:* 20.7% of respondents consider this collaboration to be very ineffective, while 12.9% consider it ineffective. In contrast, 10.2% find it very effective and 30.9% effective. This indicates a divided perception, with a majority believing that improvements could be made in this area.

- *Policy monitoring:* 19.1% of researchers see this collaboration as ineffective, and 8.3% as very ineffective. However, 31.7% consider it effective or very effective, showing that there are positive points, but also significant concerns.

- *Policy implementation:* Here, 17.9% of respondents rate the collaboration as ineffective, while 9.7% find it very ineffective. A proportion of 27.1% consider it effective, but only 7.6% rate it as very effective, indicating that implementation could be a critical area for improvement.

- *Policy design:* 16.5% of researchers consider this collaboration to be very ineffective, and 12.5% consider it ineffective. On the other hand, 7.6% find it very effective, and 23.5% find it effective, suggesting a need for improvement in the involvement of researchers from the design phase onwards.

Figure 97: Assessment of the quality of collaboration with policymakers at different stages of the policy cycle



Source: MESRS

III.12. Involvement of Researchers in Public Policy: Current Situation

Analysis of the responses to the question on researcher participation in policy development reveals significant results. A very large majority of 85.8% of respondents indicate that they have not participated in policy development. This figure suggests a notable lack of researcher involvement in the decision-making process, which could limit the influence of research on public policy.

In contrast, only 14.3% of researchers say they have been involved in policy development. While this figure shows that a minority of researchers have had the opportunity to contribute directly to policy decisions, it also highlights that such collaboration remains rare.

These results highlight the importance of creating more opportunities for researchers to engage in the policy-making process. Facilitating their participation could not only enrich the decision-making process with evidence-based perspectives, but also strengthen the link between academic research and the needs of policymakers.

IV. THE DECISION-MAKERS-RESEARCHERS INTERFACE: ANALYSIS OF TUNISIAN DYNAMICS

In Tunisia's complex and changing sociopolitical landscape, analyzing the interactions between policymakers and social science knowledge producers is essential. This relationship, which is crucial for the development of effective public policies, functions as an ecosystem of supply and demand where pragmatic needs and scientific rigor intersect. By examining the daily practices of legislators, party members, and other key actors, this study aims to map the mechanisms of collaboration, identify persistent obstacles, and propose avenues for a more virtuous integration of research into public decision-making.

IV.1. Knowledge Production: Infrastructure and Resources

The ability of institutions to generate internal expertise is the first link in the chain.

- **Presence of research units:** A significant majority of 65% of the decision-makers surveyed confirm the existence of dedicated research units within their institutions. This figure reflects a formal recognition of the importance of scientific production.
- **Allocated budget:** However, the sustainability and scale of this production are dependent on financial resources. Only half of the institutions (50%) have a permanent budget allocated to social science research, raising the question of whether the resources are sufficient to address complex societal issues.
- **Willingness to exchange:** One positive point is the organization of events. 70% of institutions host forums and debates, indicating a real willingness to create spaces for dialogue and decompartmentalization between the political and academic worlds.

IV.2. Dissemination and Access to Information: Diverse channels of varying quality

The way in which knowledge circulates and is consumed directly influences its potential use.

- **Participation in Academic Conferences:** There is direct interaction, as 60% of decision-makers participate in conferences organized by researchers. This demonstrates openness and interest in ongoing work, even if these exchanges do not automatically translate into concrete action.
- **Reading Publications:** Intellectual engagement can also be measured by the consultation of scientific literature. A slight majority of 55% of decision-makers read articles by national researchers, compared to 45% who prefer foreign work. This preference for local production, while understandable, can sometimes limit exposure to innovative international perspectives.
- **Central Role of the Media:** The media is a major channel of information, used by 65% of respondents. This role as a conduit is essential but carries a risk: the simplification or distortion of complex research results, which can influence the perceptions of decision-makers.

IV.3. Application in the Decision-Making Process: The Weak Link

The ultimate test of this interface lies in the effective integration of knowledge into political action.

- **Direct collaboration:** Only 40% of decision-makers report having collaborated directly with researchers on specific projects. Although not insignificant, this figure reveals that the majority of institutions have not yet formalized concrete partnerships with the research community, thus limiting the practical impact of academic work.
- **Use in debates:** There is a glimmer of hope in the fact that 55% of decision-makers say they use research findings to inform their deliberations and arguments. This practice indicates a growing commitment to the principle of evidence-based policymaking, but it has yet to become widespread and systematic.

V. TUNISIAN POLICYMAKERS AND THE SCIENTIFIC LEGITIMACY OF THEIR DECISIONS: ASPIRATION AND INSTRUMENTALIZATION

The question of whether decision-makers rely on scientific legitimization for their decisions goes beyond simply consulting data. It involves analyzing whether social science is used as a strategic resource to establish, justify, and give unquestionable authority to a political decision, long after it has been conceived.

V.1. A Half-Tone Legitimacy

The available data paint a nuanced picture, where science is more often one source of insight among others than an exclusive basis for legitimacy.

- **Research is used, but to a limited extent:** The fact that 55% of decision-makers use research findings in their deliberations indicates a desire to use language and arguments that are perceived as rational and objective. This can be interpreted as a quest for legitimacy, if only to strengthen a position in the face of opponents or public opinion.

- **Weak direct collaboration:** The relatively low rate of 40% of formalized collaborations with researchers suggests that science is often consulted rather than co-constructed. For deep legitimization, experts should be integrated into the process from the design phase onwards. Here, research is more likely to be used after the fact to validate a direction that has already been chosen on the basis of other criteria (ideological, economic, political, or opportunistic).

- **The role of the media:** The fact that 65% of decision-makers obtain their information from the media is a crucial indicator. This means that the "scientific knowledge" they receive is often pre-digested, mediated, and therefore potentially distorted or simplified. Authentic scientific legitimacy would require direct access to the primary source, which seems to be the case for only a minority (only 55% read scientific articles).

V.2. Beyond Numbers: Forms of Scientific Legitimacy

Several modes of using science in the legitimization process can be distinguished:

- **Instrumental legitimization (or "alibi research"):** This is the most common practice. The decision-maker looks for data, a study, or an expert citation that corroborates a decision that has already been made. Here, science serves as a rationalizing cover to give weight to a political choice. The risk is "cherry-picking" (selecting only data that supports the desired outcome), which instrumentalizes research rather than truly legitimizing it.

- **Substantive legitimization:** Here, research genuinely guides the decision. The problem is first posed to researchers, who conduct a study whose results then determine the policy options. Low permanent budgets (only 50% of institutions have one) and a lack of structural collaboration (40%) show that this approach is still marginal.

- **Legitimization through procedures:** Legitimacy does not come from the content of science but from the ritual of consulting it. Organizing a conference (70% of institutions do so), commissioning a report, or meeting with experts becomes a visible political act which, in itself, gives the impression of a mature and informed decision, regardless of the real impact of knowledge on the final choice.

V.3. Barriers to Authentic Scientific Legitimization

Several obstacles, present in the original text, explain this difficulty:

- **Time frame:** The political cycle is fast-paced and media-driven; the research cycle is slow and methodical. A decision-maker facing a crisis cannot wait for the results of a two-year study.

- **Language and culture:** Researchers communicate in academic jargon, while decision-makers use accessible political language. This barrier prevents smooth mutual understanding.

- **Mutual mistrust:** Decision-makers may perceive researchers as disconnected from the field; researchers may fear that their work will be exploited and distorted by politicians.

In Tunisia, as in many countries, decision-makers do not rely on purely scientific legitimation. Their legitimacy remains primarily political, electoral, and administrative. However, social science is increasingly being mobilized as a complementary resource for legitimation, often in an instrumental and symbolic way. It offers an aura of objectivity and rationality that political actors need to strengthen their credibility.

The challenge is therefore not only to increase the rate of research use (already at 55%), but to deepen the nature of this use: to move from a posteriori and selective legitimization to a priori and substantial integration of knowledge into the very fabric of public decision-making. This requires a profound cultural change on both sides of the research-policy interface.

VI. ANALYSIS OF ADMINISTRATORS' RESPONSES ON STRENGTHENING RESEARCH CAPACITIES

The analysis draws a contrasting picture. It reveals solid foundations, with a majority of administrators satisfied with research capacities and benefiting from adequate administrative support. However, it also clearly exposes critical weaknesses that call for targeted action: the need for greater gender equity, increased internationalization of scientific output, and a stronger effort to stimulate academic life and remove persistent administrative barriers.

Reviewing administrators' feedback on the development of research capabilities within institutions provides valuable insight into the interface between the academic world and administrators' expectations. A detailed segmentation of the results, enriched by quantitative data, makes it possible to accurately identify the strengths and limitations of this ecosystem.

VI.1. Knowledge Production

Satisfaction with internal research capabilities is a key indicator. A clear majority of 75% of administrators say they are satisfied or very satisfied. This high level of satisfaction reflects institutional recognition of the importance of research and a commitment to skills development. However, the residual dissatisfaction rate of 25% calls for further investigation to identify the specific obstacles—whether structural, financial, or organizational—that hinder the development of research in certain contexts.

The quality of administrative support also appears to be a determining factor. 65% of respondents consider this support to be adequate for the conduct of their projects, indicating an overall supportive environment. However, the fact that one-third of administrators perceive shortcomings in this support highlights persistent administrative obstacles. If not addressed, these difficulties can significantly impact the effectiveness and completion time of research work.
The international visibility of scientific output is another major challenge. Only 40% of academic articles are published in English. This low proportion may limit researchers' integration into global intellectual networks, restrict their access to high-ranking journals, and ultimately minimize the impact and international recognition of their work.

Furthermore, the analysis raises a crucial issue of equity with regard to female publications. Only 30% of articles are authored by women as lead authors. This underrepresentation highlights a persistent gender disparity which, beyond its ethical dimension, impoverishes the diversity of scientific perspectives and questions, potentially to the detriment of the richness and relevance of the research produced.

VI.2. Research Training

Investment in continuing education for researchers reveals significant disparities. The average duration of training for male researchers is approximately six weeks, reflecting a tangible investment in the development of their skills. In contrast, the training provided to female researchers is only about five weeks. This difference of one week, although seemingly minimal, symbolizes and contributes to perpetuating systemic inequalities in access to professional development opportunities. It is likely to affect women's long-term career progression and academic leadership.

VI.3. Academic Events

The dynamics of knowledge dissemination and sharing also involve the organization of events. The fact that 50% of institutions have organized at least one social science conference in the last three years demonstrates a certain level of activity and engagement. However, this figure also means that half of institutions participate little or not at all in this academic momentum, which can isolate their researchers and reduce opportunities for fruitful collaboration, scientific debate, and the sharing of ideas. The question of the diversity of the audiences reached by these conferences remains unanswered. Without precise data, it is difficult to assess their real openness and impact on the wider community (students, practitioners, non-academic audiences). Greater transparency on this point would be necessary to ensure that these events fully fulfill their role as catalysts for exchange.

CONCLUSION

With less State involvement and reduced social protection, social science research in Tunisia has become more closely linked to discussions on the social transformations that began in the 1970s. Since 2011, by regaining its role as a mediator between science and social needs, as well as public opinion, research has begun to regain some practical relevance. However, strong resistance persists to this effort to bring knowledge, power, and opinion closer together. Reflexes of mistrust remain, and social media play an important role in separating scientific research from public opinion, exacerbating issues like misinformation and polarization. They highlight extreme opinions, which can lead to particularly virulent online debates. Online scientific mediation, via blogs, websites and podcasts, is still in its infancy.

A new digital dynamics means that discourse based on scientific facts is often drowned out by a sea of subjective opinions, making it difficult to disseminate information based on rigorous research. This separation between science and opinion is also fueled by growing mistrust of experts and scientific institutions. Users, and even young researchers, may favor unverified sources of information or personal opinions over evidence-based analysis, widening the gap between research and public opinion. This dynamic has consequences for public and individual decision-making. Scientific information, which is often complex and nuanced, is overshadowed by simplistic and emotional messages circulating on social media. This can influence critical issues such as public health, climate change, or social policy, where informed decisions are essential.

This argument can be used to say that the loss of credibility of expertise or social engineering also appears to be an additional factor that further undermines and weakens confidence, not only in the social sciences, but also in future governance and its capabilities. The emergence of alibi expertise, practiced by a number of consulting firms, explains why serious research can only develop in a context of genuine openness to local communities and civil society (collaboration between public university research, associative research, and private organizations).

Data from the “Doing Research Tunisia” survey reveal limited, but not non-existent, interaction between the world of research and that of policy makers. While some collaborations are working, most of the potential remains untapped due to a lack of structured mechanisms and appropriate communication.

- **Independence largely preserved, but areas for vigilance:** A significant proportion of researchers (37.5%) do not comment on the influence of politicians on their work, which may reflect a lack of information rather than outright mistrust. Among those who did express an opinion, a majority (53%) believe that this influence is weak or non-existent, suggesting a certain degree of confidence in the autonomy of research. However, a significant minority (10%) perceive recurring pressure, highlighting the need to strengthen guarantees of independence, particularly in research funded by public actors.

- **Direct involvement still marginal: Researchers’ involvement in policy-making remains low:** only 10.5% have participated in research commissioned by decision-makers, and 14.3% have contributed to policy design. However, nearly half (49.5%) believe that their institution could play a more active role. This discrepancy shows that there is a lack of opportunities for collaboration, rather than a reluctance on the part of researchers themselves.

- **A pressing need for scientific mediation:** Communication between researchers and policymakers is lacking: 83.5% of researchers do not produce policy-relevant documents (summary notes, white papers). Without a clear translation of results, however, research struggles to influence public action. Furthermore, existing collaborations are often considered unsatisfactory, particularly in policy evaluation (20.7% consider them “very ineffective”).

- **A symbolic presence in decision-making spheres:** Only 3% of researchers hold political positions, which limits their direct influence. However, foreign models (such as Chief Scientific Advisors) show that greater integration of experts into institutions is possible—and beneficial.

By placing the experience of social science research in a broader context, the situation can be summarized as follows:

A strong State, in a participatory context that accepts the three legitimacies of science (development, culture, and democratic governance), cannot be envisaged without mediation by scientific knowledge (situation A). A strong State without an open civil society can, however, be content with “relay” social engineering (situation C). Governance, whether good or bad, when it operates in a non-democratic or low-resource environment with

a weak and fragile civil society, cannot be reconciled with the principle of autonomous research practice. In this case, public choice will be based on priorities pre-established by token expertise. Similarly, when governance is imposed by particular groups with a view to manipulating the State to the detriment of other groups, it can only lead to the weakening of public and, in particular, university research (situation B). The interaction between the mode of knowledge production and the mode of government is summarized in the following diagram:

		State Sphere	
		STRONG (+)	**WEAK (-)**
Research Sphere	**STRONG (+)**	**(A)** Public management of social change based on mediation through social science knowledge Triple legitimization of the research paradigm: development, culture, and democratic governance	**(B)** Governance imposed by groups with a view to manipulating the State depends on other groups. It weakens public and academic research
	WEAK (-)	**(C)** The prevalence of the developmentalist, culturalist paradigm, or a fusion of the two, is to the detriment of the paradigm based on democratic governance, which is excluded	**(D)** Fragmentation that weakens both the management of public choices and autonomous actors of change. It favors alibi expertise

Currently, the state of research varies between situations B, C, and D, where political and social change continues to neglect the mediating function of research. Today, only mediation through research and an environment characterized by paradigmatic pluralism (developmentalist, culturalist, and democratic) can give meaning to the future role of the social sciences in Tunisia. While mediation refers to a pragmatic philosophy of lived experience, communication, or education, placing action on the subject within a framework of constraints, social sensitivities, and cultural references, relaying is defined, on the other hand, by the opposite characteristics. Within the framework of a strategic and directive model of government, it is defined as an indispensable mechanism for the selective receptivity of social demand. Relay social sciences function, so to speak, in a directive mode, ensuring the link between the institution and users. Through constant instrumentalization, the field invested by relay social engineering becomes an apparatus.

The social sciences have always been considered the offspring of social progress, but also of crises and challenges. With Tunisia's independence (1956), researchers had to answer the question: how to achieve development and finalize "State building" as a major challenge of independence? Having identified a number of problems in this area, they set about analyzing them thoroughly through intervention, consultation, and targeted research. Their projects defined how to change, without dwelling on the very notion of development. Their focus was on economic development, birth control, cultural development, the advancement of women and rural populations, and training in the context of research and development.

However, empirical experience shows that it is the development process itself, insofar as it has replaced meta-social guarantors with a State guarantor, that always secretes the forms most resistant to science. In cultural, architectural, artistic, legal, political, and educational practices, "development" and "underdevelopment," "modernity" and "tradition" are now forms that express the conflicts that are deeply shaking Tunisian society. In this conflict, a new priority is emerging: to think and rethink "nation-building" versus "State-building" while preserving the plurality of paradigms.
The private sector, civil society, citizens, and consumers now play an increasingly important role. As the role of the State is redefined (even if, after the 2019 health crisis, calls for more State interference have become very prominent in the discourse), new research questions are emerging, particularly on how to reconcile the diversity of actors in society in order to achieve sustainability goals, while

ensuring a transparent and equitable distribution of impacts, particularly environmental ones (Unesco 2013).

Everything confirms that Tunisian society is renewing its way of life, its styles and its forms, more through hybridization and contamination than anything else. It is up to researchers today to rethink these transitions, which constitute a point of convergence between the spirit of the unfinished and that of the "already accomplished," or between social facts and the rules of collective life, where not everything is political and not everything is economic. We can recall here Simmel's metaphor of the bridge *"Brücke"* and the door "Tür". The bridge is the image of convergence and connection, the door that of closure and passage. In terms of decision-making, this dichotomy is present through the "institutional constraint" and "strategic behavior" of the actor. Despite the more frequent calls since 2021 for more State intervention and a strategic model of government, everything seems to be negotiation and everything seems to be "transit." Linguistic conflicts (against a backdrop of Arabization) are easing in favor of a quest for international recognition and indexed publications. However, the gap is widening between the few researchers publishing in high-quality international journals and local researchers, thus dashing hopes of discovering researchers who are both local and globally visible.

In this context, the use of the analogy of a lock to describe a situation of "neither one nor the other" may be relevant. In understanding social, political, or economic change, researchers often have to navigate complex situations where the answers are not limited to extremes. Sometimes reality is neither entirely economic, nor fully political, nor exclusively sociological, but a complex combination of these and other domains. Thus, researchers are invited to act as intellectual locks, adapting and adjusting their understanding to allow for a nuanced analysis of situations that do not easily fit into strict frameworks. They are increasingly called upon to manage these diverse flows of information and concepts in order to offer a more complete view of contemporary issues.

Significant progress has been made in the field of research, but overall, the situation is characterized by a predominance of quantity over quality and impact on public policy decisions. Is this the result of the economic and social crisis, or is it a symptom of an intrinsic crisis in these sciences (brain drain) that calls into question their purpose, role, and mission? Or perhaps both?

To avoid giving to pessimism, let us say that crisis means judgment, and that the pessimism of reason is the optimism of the will. After all, is there a situation more favorable to the social sciences than one in which a society asks itself many questions and has few answers? This is how these sciences came into being at the end of the 19th century. In Tunisia, we are now at the end of a period in which these sciences no longer serve as a relay, that is, a function that consists of producing answers, but rather of expressing new questions, which requires much more experience and humility and less interpretation.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: Composition of Subgroups

SUBGROUP	CATEGORY	LOCATION	RESEARCH ENTITY	NUMBER OF RESEARCHERS
Sub-Group 1	NGO	Greater Tunis	Applied Social Sciences Forum (ASSF)	2
			Arab Center For Research And Policy Studies (CAREP)	4
			Center For Maghreb Studies (CEMAT)	7
			Tunisian Forum For Economic And Social Rights (FTDES)	1
			Global Institute For Transitions (GI4T)	1
			Research Institute For Development (IRD)	6
			Research Institute On Contemporary Maghreb (IRMC)	43
			Tunisian Observatory For Democratic Transition (OTTD)	4
Sub-Group 2	Non-University Entity	Other	Economy and Rural Societies	24
	Non-University Entity	Central-East	Research Unit of the Center for Research and Studies for Dialogue between Civilizations and Comparative Religions in Sousse	14
		Central-East	Training and Research Units of the Regional Center for Education and Continuing Education in Sousse	14
		Greater Tunis	Rural Economy	24
			Economy, Territory, and Heritage Landscapes in Tunisia, the Maghreb, and the Mediterranean	49
			Research Unit of the Center for Research, Study, Documentation, and Information on Women	1
			Research Unit of the Center for Economic and Social Studies and Research	20
Sub-Group 3	University Entity	Other	19LR AND 5 UR ISAMG	24
			19LR AND 5 UR ISLG	24
			Economics Business Environment	30
			Innovation in Research and Teaching Methods in the Humanities	100
			Islamic Thought and Its Transformations and the Construction of the Nation State (PITCEN)	24
			LR ISSHM	24
			Promotion of Natural and Cultural Heritage	132

Sub-Group 4	University Entity	Central-East	Administration and Development	78
			Development Economics	88
			State, Culture, and Social Change	35
			Interdisciplinary and Comparative Studies and Research	87
			Governance, Finance, and Accounting	82
			The Maghreb: Plural Humran	56
			LR FLSHS	30
			Innovation Management and Sustainable Development	88
			Modeling of Financing and Economic Development	56
			Optimization, Logistics, and Business Intelligence	61
			Perspectives and research in innovation, strategy, and business management	75
			Marketing research	77
			Geographic Information Systems, Training in Planning, Cartography, Remote Sensing, and the Environment	43
			Dynamic and Combinatorial Systems	32
Sub-Group 5	University Entity	Central-East	Competitiveness, Business Decision-Making, and Internationalization	130
			Speech, art, music, and economics	161
			Economics and management	208
			Economics, Management, and Quantitative Finance	104
			Modeling and Optimization for Decision Making, Industrial Systems, and Logistics	232
			Information Technology, Governance, and Entrepreneurship	271
Sub-Group 6	NGO	Greater Tunis	SOLIDAR TUNISIA	2
	University Entity	Greater Tunis	Geomorphological Mapping of Environments, Settings, and Dynamics (CGMED)	23
			International Law, International Jurisdictions, and Comparative Constitutional Law	22
			Disability and Social Maladjustment	19
			Macroeconomics, Economic Conditions and Applied Methods	1
			Media, Communication, and Transition	1
			Criminal Justice and Criminology	23

Sub-Group 7	University Entity	Greater Tunis	Analysis of Economic and Social Policies	42
			Business analytics and decision-making	49
			DIRASET- Maghreb Studies	41
			Community Law and Maghreb-Europe Relations	32
			Law on Companies in Economic Difficulty	34
			International Market Negotiation Relations Law	32
			Economics and Applied Finance	31
			Finance, Accounting, and Taxation	36
			Applied Microeconomics	43
			Economic and Strategic Forecasting, Innovation, Management, and Entrepreneurship	45
			Prospective, Strategy, and Sustainable Development	41
			Research and Studies in International Law: Private International Law, International Trade Law, International Criminal Law	35
			Dispute Resolution and Enforcement Measures	35
			Research unit of the Higher Institute for Child Welfare Professionals	36
Sub-Group 8	University Entity	Greater Tunis	Intersigns	82
			Business and Economic Statistics Modeling	59
			Culture, Technology, and Philosophical Approaches	97
			Banking, Financial and Business Law	67
			Economics of Sustainable Development, Natural Resources and Agriculture	61
			Economics and Industrial Management	54
			Economics and Business Strategy	69
			Quantitative Development Economics	61
			Business and Marketing Research	81
			Business Environment	50
			Structural Studies, Design, and Aesthetics	63
			Governance and territorial development	66
			Innovation, Strategy, Entrepreneurship, Finance, and Economics	83
			International Economic Integration	57
			Medieval Arab-Islamic World	53
			Changes in Economies and Businesses	87
			Clinical Psychology: Intersubjectivity and Culture	59

			Operational Research, Decision Support, and Control Processes	80
			Research in Civil Law	68
			Research in Innovation, Governance, Entrepreneurship, and Risk Management	82
			Research on the Enlightenment, Modernity, and Cultural Diversity	62
			Constitutional, Administrative, and Financial Sciences	50
			Strategies for Modeling and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory (SMART Lab)	59
			Economic Theories, Modeling, and Applications	84
			Transition, Transmission Transition Mobility	84
Sub-Group 9	University Entity	Greater Tunis	University-Business Management: An Interdisciplinary Approach	170
			Corporate Governance, Applied Finance, and Auditing	105
			History of Mediterranean Economies and Societies	138
			Accounting, Financial and Economic Modeling	159
			Applied Research in Business Relations and Administration	103
			Research in International Finance	116
			Research on Innovative Management, Risk, Accounting, and Finance	109

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