

## TUNISIA

### Whole country

Tunisia stands alone with Lebanon in the Arab world for having the earliest-onset and steadiest fertility decline, exceeding even the low-scenario projections. In the early Sixties, the TFR of 7.2 children per woman was on a par with other Arab countries. It has fallen steadily ever since: 6.20 in 1971, 5.46 in 1978, 4.87 in 1983 and 4.30 in 1986.

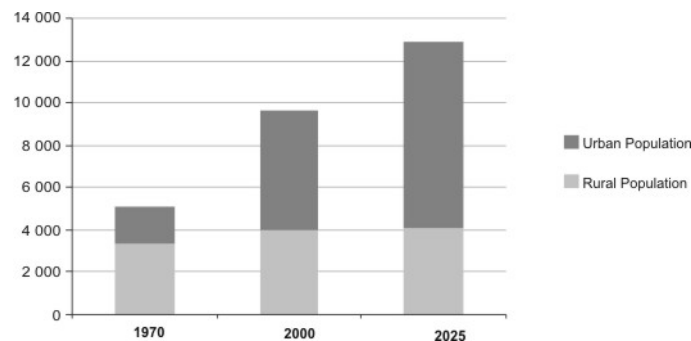


A series of sharp annual drops in the early 1990s - 3.34 in 1991, 3.12 in 1993 - reduced parity below the 3 children mark (2.90) in 1994. Average parity fell to 2.60 in 1995, then to 2.42 in 1997. It was already down to 2.09 in 1999 according to Tunisia's National Statistics Institute. With Lebanon and Turkey, therefore, Tunisia will experience the region's most rapid transition. Population projection differentials for Tunisia were always negligible between the national, UN, World Bank, and Blue Plan scenarios.

Illiteracy is still comparatively prevalent, even in the younger age brackets, but is projected to decline sharply in the 30 next years, and become residual by 2005. Fertility decline also affects women in all education subgroups, including illiterate women. The period fertility rate will fall from 2.28 in 2000 to about replacement level in 2010 touching 2.06 in 2025.

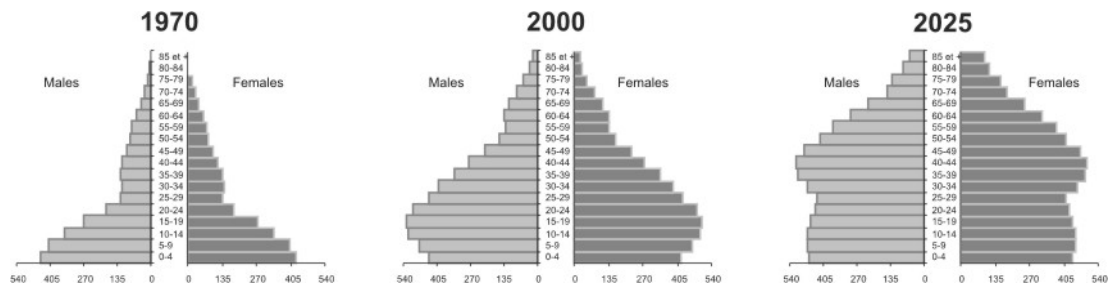
Population growth in urban areas of over 10 000 people will significantly outpace the all-country rate between 2000 and 2025, rising from 5.6 to 8.8 million at an urbanization rate projected to rise from 58.3 to 68.5%. Urbanisation and rising educational levels will be apt to reinforce the national fertility regulation program, which with Egypt's is the oldest in the Arab world.

**Figure 98. Rural population and urban population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**



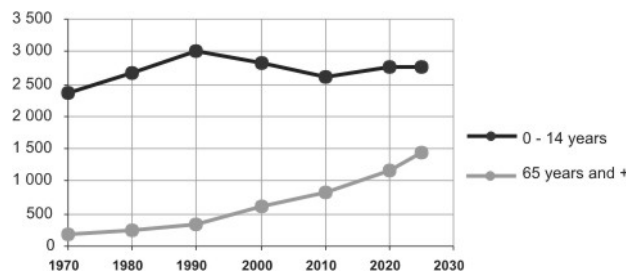
The Tunisian population will grow from 9.6 million in 2000 to 12.9 in 2025, adding 3.3 million people, i.e., a 25-year gain of 34%. This projection is very close to the UN's 12.8 million, and the Blue Plan's 12.7 million (1992). Despite a drop in fertility, however, growth will remain relatively high due to the essential inertia written into the population structure. The rate of increase will exceed 13 per thousand at the turn of the century, dropping to 9.6 per thousand in 2020-2025. The age-sex structure will reflect a sharp fall in the share of under-15s from 29.3% in 2000 to 21.4% in 2025, foreshadowing a drop in the burden of investment in future health, housing, education and jobs.

**Figure 99. Population age structure (by 5-year age groups) 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**



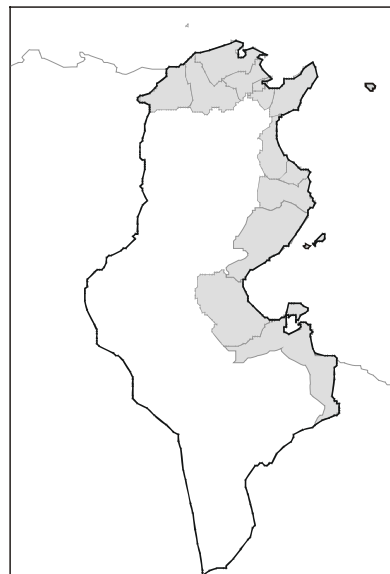
The price to pay for this will be a rise in the population aged 65 and over from 6.4% in 2000 to 11.3% in 2025. New labour force entries will drop sharply from 2010-2015. Also, the labour force turnover rate is predicated by ageing: the 1 retirement exit to 4 entries in 2000 will be 1 to 1.4 by 2025.

**Figure 100. Populations aged 15-and-under and 65-and-over, 1970-2025 (in thousands)**



### Mediterranean coastal regions

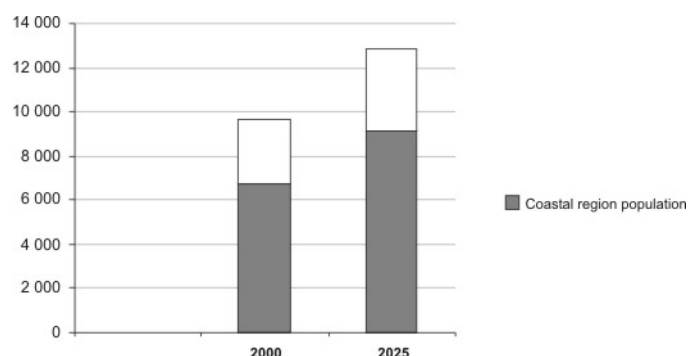
While analysis is complicated by the changes made to population distribution by administrative unit, especially as a result of rural-urban migration, clear trends can be picked out from the 1956, 1966, 1975 and 1984 censuses. In particular, they show a growing concentration of the Tunisian population on the Mediterranean coast: 64.7% in 1956, 68.1% in 1966, 70.2% in 1975 and 70.0% in 1984. In 1995, the 13 Mediterranean governorates had 6.314 million people, i.e., 70.2% of the total population. If these recent period reconstitutions are reliable, they suggest that governorate of Tunis (900 000 people in 1995) has lost some pull factor - its mean annual rate of growth was just 1.4% between 1990 and 1995. Prima facie, the same applies to Béja and Jendouba (1.0% and 1.2%



respectively), as opposed to Ariana (population 594 000 in 1995) and Ben Arous (387 000), both achieving very high period growth rates of 4.2% and 4.1%. In the other Mediterranean governorates, the rates of increase range from 2.0% for Bizerte to 3.0% for Sousse.

Tunisia's Mediterranean coastal population will continue to grow over the next 25 years from 6.762 million people in 2000 to 9.154 million in 2025, adding 2.392 million people at a mean annual rate of growth of 1.2%, compared to a rest-of-country rate of 1.1%. As a result, the Mediterranean coastal population share will rise from 70.3 to 71.0%.

**Figure 101. Mediterranean coastal regions population as a share of total population 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**



Tunisia's seaboard has undergone rapid urbanization in recent decades. The Mediterranean governorates had 1.636 million people living in urban areas of over 10 000 people in 1970, rising to 4.065 million by 1995 - a particularly high annual rate of growth of 3.7%. Against this, the rest-of-country mean annual urban growth rate was an outstanding 6.6%, albeit with much smaller total population sizes - the aggregate population of inland urban areas was just 178 000 people in 1970, and still only 892 000 in 1995. The urban area of Tunis (population 1.633 million in 1995) grew by 3.0% a year over the period 1970-1995, far above what natural increase alone could have achieved, whence the very clear pull factor of the capital for internal migrants. Although only a quarter the size (403 000 people) of Tunis, Sfax's population growth has been even more rapid at 4.3%. Sousse (257 000) and Moknine (148 000) have grown at the same rate as the capital, approximately 3.1%. Among the smaller towns, Gabès (population 134 000) experienced remarkable population growth of 4.8%, compared to the dwindling 2.4% of Bizerte (131 000). The 45 Mediterranean towns of under 100 000 people in 1995 are also displaying dynamic population growth at an aggregate period rate of 4.2% from 1970-1995.

The Mediterranean coast's dynamic urban population growth, influenced by the tourist boom, is projected to continue over the next 25 years, though at slacker rates of 1.75% a year. The population of urban areas of over 10 000 people will rise from 4.582 to 7.075 million, adding 2.493 million people in the 25 years from 2000 to 2025, and raising the period urbanization rate from 67.8 to 77.3%.

**Figure 102. Rural and urban population of the Mediterranean coastal regions 1970-2000-2025 (in thousands)**

