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**EXPERIENCES AND  
PERCEPTIONS OF  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
IN TUNISIA**

**The case of Douar Hicher  
and Ettadhamen**

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# **EXPERIENCES AND PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN TUNISIA**

**The case of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen**

**Quantitative survey: Preliminary findings**

February 2015

## Research team members

**Olfa Lamloum:** Coordinator and researcher, International Alert Tunisia Country Manager

**Mehdi Barhoumi:** Expert and researcher, International Alert Tunisia Programme Coordinator

**Hayet Moussa:** University teacher, Researcher in Social Sciences

**Ridha Ben Amor:** University teacher, Researcher in Social Sciences

**Mohamed Ali Ben Zina:** University teacher, Researcher in Demography

**Imed Melliti:** University teacher, Researcher in Social Sciences

The research team has benefited from the cooperation of 20 enumerators. These include university graduates and young people from the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen who were trained by Alert in research ethics and procedures.

**Field supervisors:** Safoua Khaldi, Hani Njil, Selma Triki, Sadok Lejri

**Field investigators:** Thameur Jebbari, Hamza Ben Slama, Emna Beldi, Makram Ghanmi, Boutheina Hanachi, Marwa Montassar, Nabil Ouarhani, Karim Ayari, Sabeur Tlili, Zied Bouhaoula, Hamza Klai, Sihem Charfadi, Khalil Abbas, Mahassen Arari, Yassine Ayari, Khaoula Nouasri

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## Executive summary

The following is a summary of the main findings from data collected through a quantitative survey carried out in the Tunis suburbs of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen in June 2014. The survey aimed to understand the experiences and perceptions of young people in two neighbourhoods marked by high unemployment rates, school drop-outs and insecurity. The survey looked at educational and economic status, the relationship between young people and state institutions, and attitudes towards politics and religion.

For the survey, interviews were conducted with 714 unmarried individuals aged between 18 and 34. Of these respondents, 60% were male and 40% female. Some 55.5% of the respondents came from Ettadhamen and 44.5% from Douar Hicher.

**Young people believe that the stigma associated with their neighbourhoods hinders access to opportunity:** Over 80% of those surveyed feel that the cleanliness and infrastructure of their suburb is bad or very bad. Some 71% feel that security is either bad or very bad. During qualitative interviews and focus group discussions, young people cited a belief that stigma associated with their neighbourhood affects their ability to find work. Many blame the media for exaggerating incidents and further stigmatising their neighbourhood.

**Employment is the number one life priority for the vast majority, but unemployment rates are high and unemployment impacts significantly on wellbeing:** When asked what is important in life, 88.8% of the young people cited 'work' as an answer. Of the sample, 44.2% were in full-time employment, 30.7% were in education or training and 15.5% were unemployed. Among those unemployed, 31.1% had university-level education. When asked to name what unemployment meant to them, 29% of the respondents labelled it as 'psychological suffering' and 18% as 'despair'.

**Educational data show upwards mobility between generations, but this is not necessarily reflected in employment prospects:** Most of the respondents belong to poor families; 27.6% have fathers who are day labourers and 81.1% have mothers who are not in paid employment. However, 27.9% of the respondents themselves have completed higher education and 51.7% have completed secondary education. This compares with only 3.6% of parents who have reportedly completed higher education, and 31% secondary education.

**The meritocracy ends with education:** When asked which of their peers were most likely to succeed at school (with the possibility of providing more than one answer), 91.9% of the respondents believed it would be those who work hard, compared with 58.2% who believed that those who succeed have rich parents. However, in terms of avenues for finding employment, 63.4% said they use personal relationships, 46.3% use the internet and 38.3% use the employment office.

**Educational establishments are not free from violence and crime:** According to 57.4% of the respondents, they have been beaten by teachers at some point during their time at school. A further 88.1% of the respondents report the presence of light drugs in colleges, and 27.7% in schools. Some 53.2% of the respondents believe that their schools lack equipment, effective management and security.

**The revolution has not improved the lives of young people in Ettadhamen and Douar Hicher, and for some has made it worse:** A total of 46% of the respondents believe that their situation has deteriorated since the revolution, and 44% believe that nothing has changed. When asked more

specifically what has not improved, the young people cited bribery (95.2%), the absence of elected local officials (94.3%) and a lack of space within which they could voice their concerns (92.3%). A further 71.5% feel that the way the police deal with young people in their neighbourhood has not improved.

**Trust in political parties is extremely low, but young people still believe in the power of elections to bring change:** Nearly all (98.8%) the respondents feel that politicians serve only their own personal interests. However, 48.9% believe that elections are an effective way to improve the situation of young people in the future, while 5.9% feel that resorting to violence would improve their situation.

**Young people participate in political life primarily through social media:** Nearly a third (29%) of the respondents have commented on a political event on Facebook. In comparison, 14.7% have attended a political party meeting and 11% have taken part in a strike.

**The rise of Salafism is a concern for young people from these neighbourhoods, but many are still sympathetic to the Salafists' cause:** Salafism is cited as a defining feature of their neighbourhood after the revolution by 35.2% of the respondents, but no one rated this as a defining feature before the revolution. Some 80.5% of the respondents claim to know at least one young person from their neighbourhood who has gone for jihad in Syria, while 57.3% disagree with the government's decision to list Ansar al-Sharia as a terrorist group.

**Religion is important to the vast majority, but interpretations vary:** Although 88.6% of the respondents consider religion very important, only 26.2% go to the mosque to pray. Some 23.7% of the respondents believe that polygamy should be restored and 63% believe that the veil is a Sharia obligation for women. While 31% see holy shrines as an integral part of their customs and traditions, 42% view them as heretic.

## Introduction

This report outlines preliminary findings from a quantitative survey carried out in the Tunis suburbs of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen during July 2014. The survey forms part of a wider research project seeking to understand the experiences and perceptions of young people in two neighbourhoods marked by high unemployment rates, school drop-outs and insecurity. The survey looked at educational and economic status, the relationship between young people and state institutions, and attitudes towards politics and religion.

The project starts from the premise that, despite widespread recognition of the positive and negative roles young people play in Tunisia today, there is still relatively little nuanced understanding of the ways in which young people experience the challenges and successes of transition. What does exist draws largely on the voices of socially and politically active youth; it does not necessarily represent the viewpoint of young people in harder-to-access socio-economically marginalised communities.

The working-class suburbs of Tunis are a case in point. News stories relating to events in the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen often concern violence, crime or terrorism. The statistical data presented in this survey show that young people from these neighbourhoods suffer from negative stereotypes and endure a stigma of being a people who embody violence and crime. As a result of this negative media attention, the public no longer perceive young people as being driving forces in the community, major players in the revolution and bearers of hope for the people, but rather as an impending danger to society.

This survey is the first of its kind on the young people of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen, two of the most densely populated areas in Tunisia. The report begins with an overview of the areas studied and outlines the methodology used. Findings are then presented according to respondents' views of their area, their socio-economic background, educational status, employment status and attitudes towards work, their relationship with institutions and political life, and their attitudes towards Salafism and religion. The report finishes with some preliminary conclusions taken from the data.

# 1. Background and methodology

## Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen

The neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen are located nearly six kilometres west of the capital city of Tunis (see Map 1). They were selected as locations for this survey due to the occurrence of high-profile confrontations between police and young people, and between police and Salafists<sup>1</sup> in the years since the 2010–2011 revolution. These confrontations are seen as symptomatic of the marginalisation of these suburbs, which have the highest population densities in Tunisia and large youth populations. At a time when the focus of much of the international community is on the need to deliver democratic dividends to the interior of Tunisia, this survey serves as a reminder of the potential dangers of ignoring the urban periphery.

**Map 1: Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen neighbourhoods**



Since the 1970s, Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen have experienced two phases of population growth. In the first phase, numerous people from inland areas began settling haphazardly in the area. In the second phase, residents from central Tunis began to move out to these neighbourhoods.

In 1975, according to land management reports, Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen, together with Mnihla, were home to nearly 7,000 people. The areas experienced an extremely fast rate of population growth, reaching a peak of 41.4% a year. As a result, the Tunisian authorities created the Ettadhamen-Douar Hicher Municipality on 24 September 1984. The population then doubled

<sup>1</sup> Salafism is a heterogeneous movement, composed of diverse groups, which are organised and structured in different ways. Yet, they all call for a return to the sources of original Islam, a version that is purified from all kinds of 'corrupting' influences. Salafism's two main trends are quietist Salafism and jihadi Salafism.

between 1984 and 1994,<sup>2</sup> making it one of the most populated regions in Tunisia. In 2010, Douar Hicher had a population of 83,317 people and Ettadhamen 82,922 people.

The Douar Hicher-Ettadhamen Municipality was separated in 2004. Douar Hicher became part of the newly created Governorate of Manouba, while Ettadhamen remained part of the Governorate of Ariana. With a total area of 3,376 square kilometres, in 2010 Ettadhamen became the most densely populated region in Tunisia with a population density of 24,560 inhabitants per square kilometre.

Significant development problems remain, despite the Tunisian authorities' formal acknowledgment of overcrowding and the accompanying programmes they designed to reduce uncontrolled construction of housing, improve infrastructure and living conditions, and link these areas to the urban fabric. These mainly concern poor infrastructure, including roads and sanitation services, high poverty and unemployment rates, and the weak performance of educational institutions compared with other urban areas in Tunisia.

## Methodology

### Survey design and distribution of sample

The results of this survey come from a representative sample of unmarried individuals aged between 18 and 34, selected according to a quota method. The survey used this definition of youth as the age between coming of age as an adult and starting a family of one's own, hence the focus on unmarried individuals. The control variables chosen include neighbourhood (Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen), gender, age, level of education and employment status (see Annex for details of questionnaire). Using these variables, the distribution of the sample reflects societal characteristics of the Governorates of Ariana and Manouba, in accordance with data collected by the National Statistics Institute in 2010.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of the sample, according to each variable.

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2 According to the Environmental Programme of the Municipality of Ettadhamen (1999).

**Table 1: Distribution of sample according to monitoring variables, no. and %**

	Douar Hicher		Ettadhamen	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
<b>Distribution according to gender</b>				
Male	189	59.2	237	60.0
Female	130	40.8	158	40.0
<b>Distribution according to age</b>				
18–24 years	165	51.7	215	54.3
25–29 years	106	33.2	123	31.1
30–34 years	48	15.1	58	14.6
<b>Distribution according to education level</b>				
Illiterate	7	2.2	7	1.8
Primary	69	21.6	63	15.9
Secondary	173	54.2	196	49.6
High	70	22.0	129	32.7
<b>Distribution according to employment status</b>				
Employed	136	42.8	179	45.2
Unemployed looking for a job	57	17.9	54	13.6
At school or being trained	85	26.7	134	33.9
Inactive (unemployed and not seeking employment)	40	12.6	29	7.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>318</b>	<b>44.5</b>	<b>396</b>	<b>55.5</b>

This table shows that the number of males surveyed exceeds the number of females. This reflects the fact that the sample only included unmarried people, and the average age of marriage for females is lower than that of males.<sup>3</sup> Choosing a selection of unmarried people also meant that more individuals belonged to the 18–24 age category than other categories. It should be noted that unemployed people represent 15.5% of total respondents and 10.6% are registered as ‘inactive’, that is not employed or seeking employment. This brought the unemployment rate in the sample to 26.1%, compared with a national average of 15.2% in the first quarter of 2014.<sup>4</sup>

3 According to 1994 census data, the singulate mean age of marriage in Tunisia is 30 years for men and 27 years for women. See <http://www.unicef.org/gender/files/Tunisia-Gender-Equality-Profile-2011.pdf>

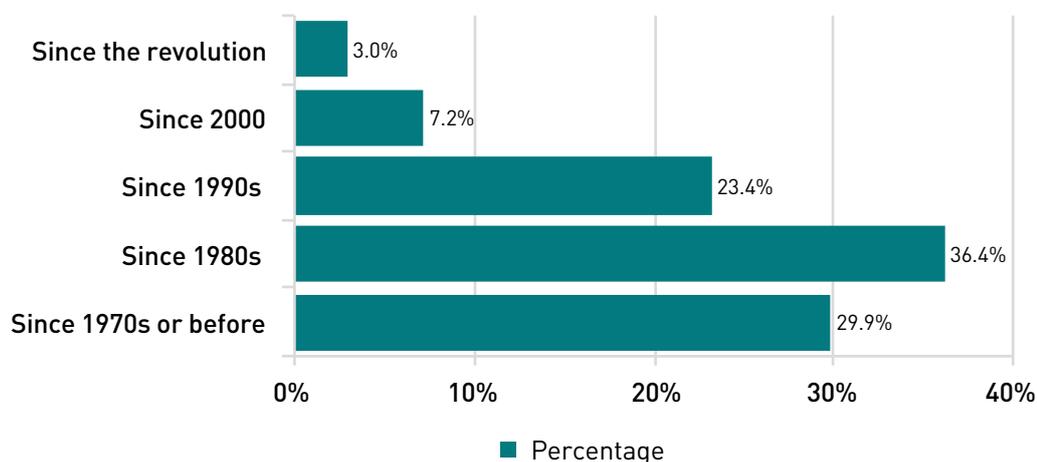
4 See Tunisia unemployment rate data, available at <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/tunisia/unemployment-rate>

## 2. Main findings

### Social and familial background of respondents

Respondents were asked about their parents' length of residence in Douar Hicher or Ettadhamen. The responses indicated that 29.9% of parents settled in or before the 1970s and 36.4% settled in the 1980s (see Figure 1). This reflects the waves of internal migrations from rural areas and central Tunis when these neighbourhoods were formed.

**Figure 1: Distribution of respondents according to their family's length of residence in the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen (%)**



The findings show that 93% of the young people in the sample live with their families. We know from qualitative interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) that this is due primarily to economic factors. Unemployment and poverty hinder young people from independence in housing. However, socio-cultural factors also influence this as traditional norms dictate that children only leave their parents' home when they get married.

The survey results demonstrate that a key characteristic of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen is the strong family fabric: nearly 86.5% of respondents stated that they have relatives residing in the same area, and 64% have relatives living in the same quarter. Nearly two-thirds (60.8%) of the respondents were in permanent contact with their relatives, and 24.4% saw them at occasional events.

When asked who the key decision-makers were in the family (with the option for multiple answers), 84.7% of respondents replied fathers and 64.7% said mothers.

Respondents were asked about the origins of problems within the family, with the option for multiple answers. The most significant family problems according to respondents were related to financial matters (58.4%), relations with friends (56.1%) and unemployment (56.1%).

Most respondents belonged to low-income categories. In terms of the respondents' mothers, 81.1% did not have a profession, while fathers were the chief source of family income. Sons and daughters who have jobs and live with their families also share the household expenses and burdens.

As Figure 2 below shows, of those surveyed, 27.6% of the respondents' fathers were day labourers and 13.7% were in industrial or agricultural employment. A further 17.3% of the fathers were self-employed as artisans or small traders and 23.1% were low-salaried employees or primary school teachers. Categories follow the categorisation used by the National Institute of Statistics when collecting this data.

**Figure 2: Distribution of respondents according to their own and fathers' professions (%)**

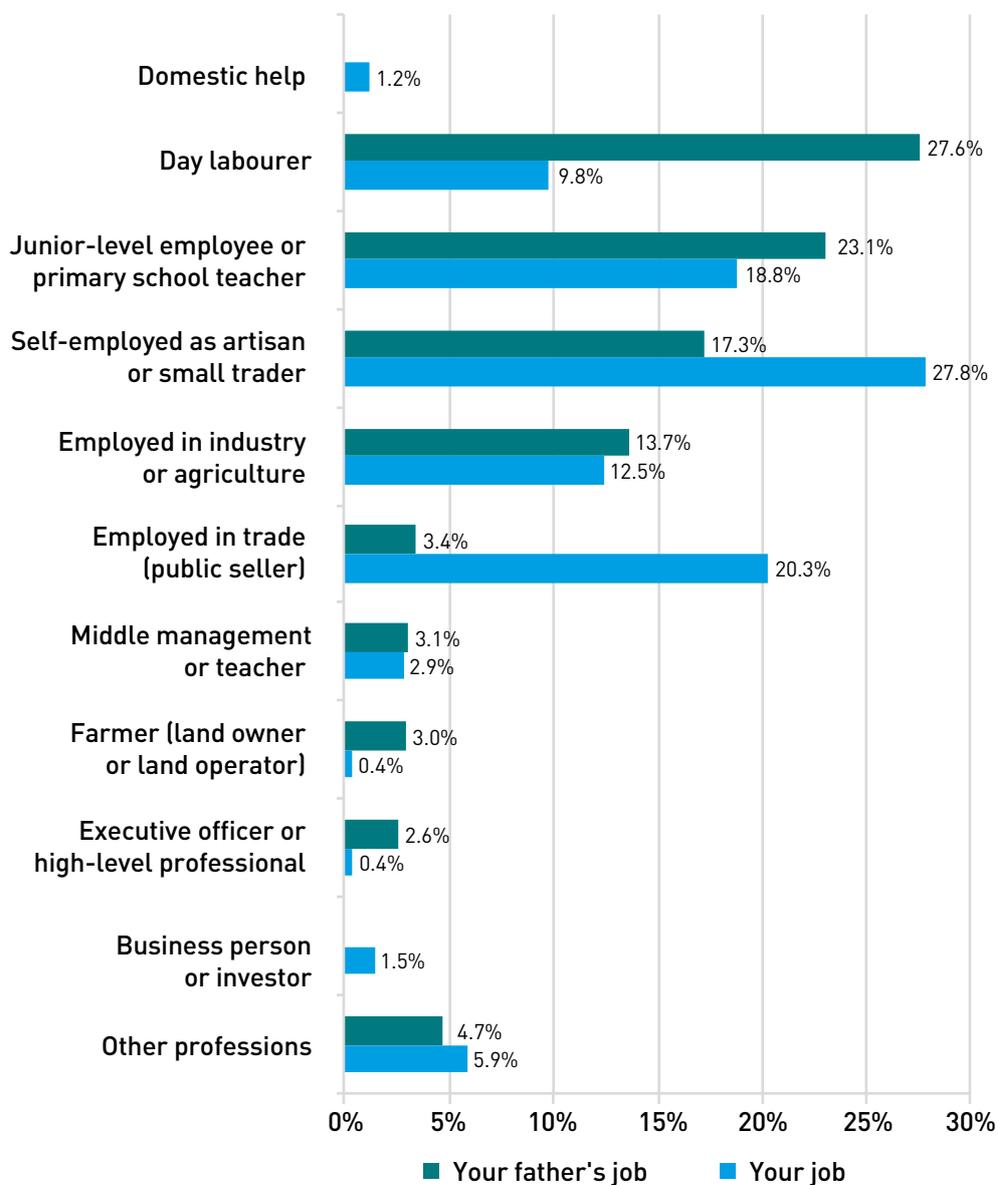
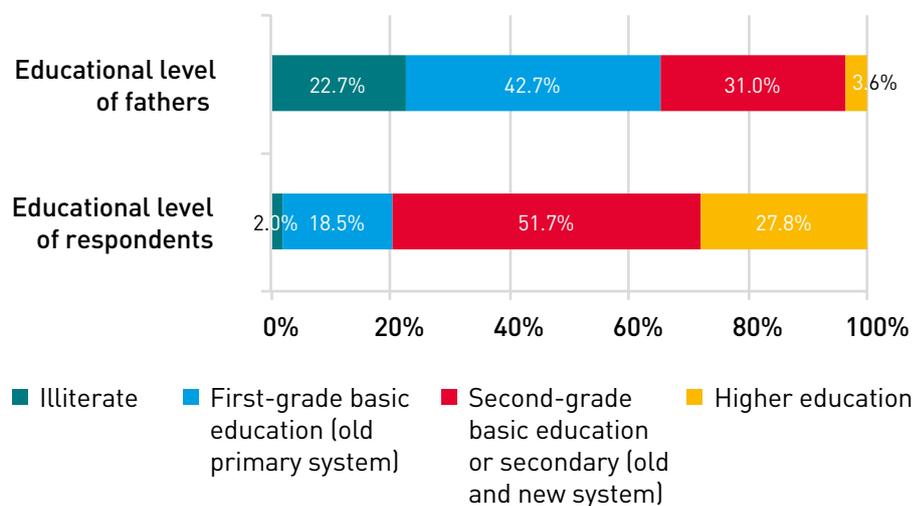


Figure 2 also shows a transformation between employment in the parents' and children's generations. In particular, there is a significant reduction in the number of day labourers and a rise in the number of artisans and small traders. These changes reflect the growth in both the service and informal economies.

Despite these changes, a major and constant feature of the responses is that most respondents and their fathers are or have been employed in professions with low or medium-sized incomes.

In terms of educational level, Figure 3 below shows that the respondents' educational level is far higher than that of their fathers, demonstrating educational mobility between generations.

**Figure 3: Distribution of respondents according to their educational level and that of their fathers (%)**



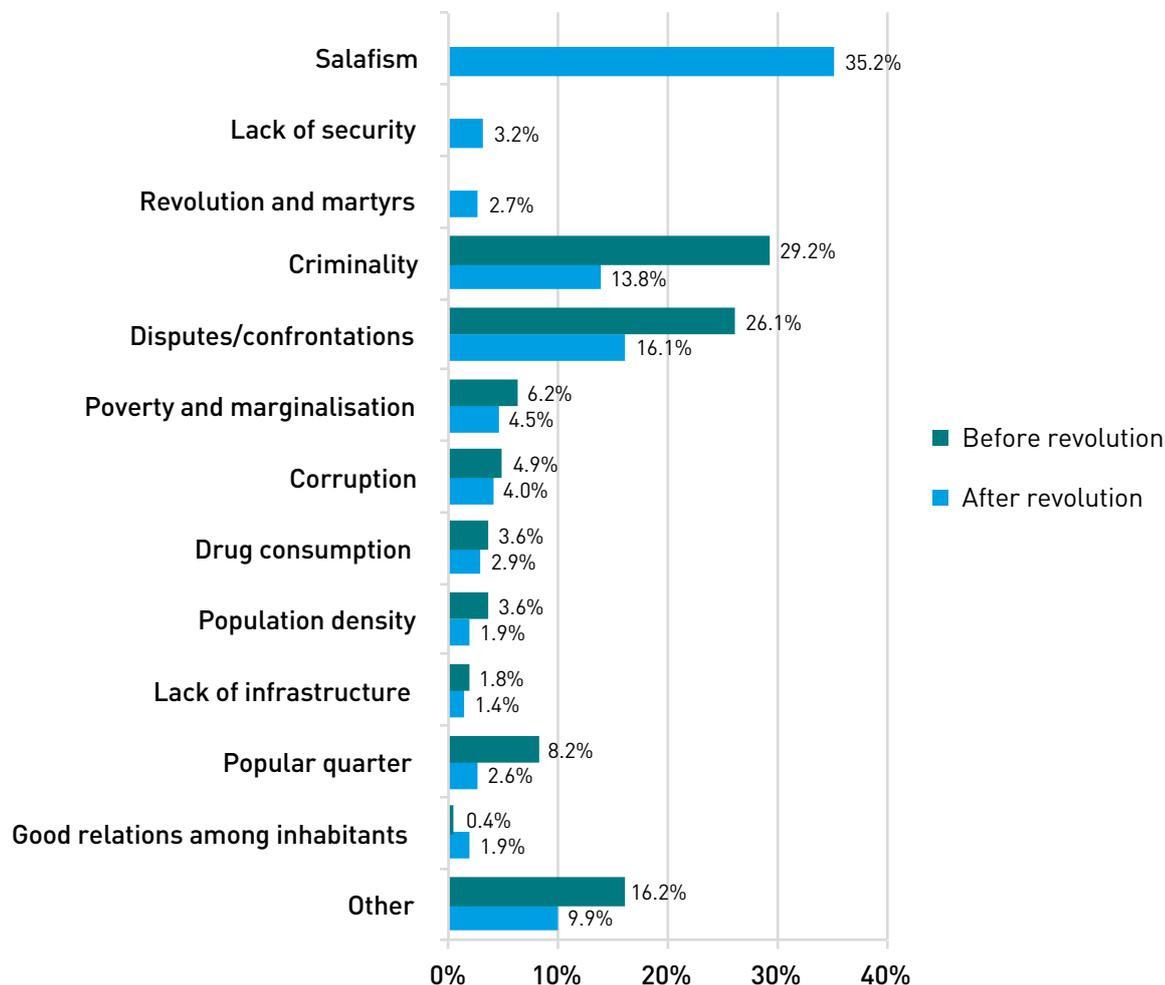
As Figure 3 shows, while the illiteracy rate is 22.7% for fathers, it is only 2% for the respondents themselves. Similarly, the rate of respondents who have reached higher-level education is 27.9% compared with 3.6% of fathers.

There are two likely reasons for this difference between generations. The first relates to the state education policy over the past two decades, which increased investment in schools and the education system, particularly primary education, significantly increasing access for the masses. The second reason, apparent from the key informant interviews (KIIs) and FGDs conducted as part of the qualitative research, relates to parents' desire to improve their children's educational abilities in the hope that this would offer them greater opportunities to improve their social status.

## Living conditions in the area of residence

In an open question, respondents were asked what they viewed as the distinguishing characteristics of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen compared with other areas both before and after the revolution (see Figure 4).

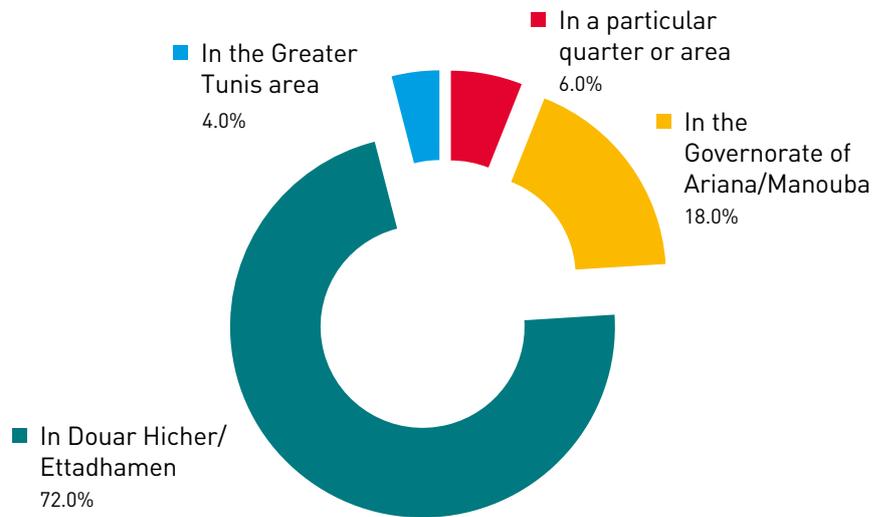
**Figure 4: Distinctive features of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen before and after the revolution, according to respondents (%)**



As Figure 4 shows, criminality and disputes/confrontations were perceived to be the most significant characteristics of the neighbourhoods before the revolution, accounting for 29.2% and 26.1% of the responses respectively. However, after the revolution, Salafism becomes a more prominent characteristic, accounting for 35.2% of responses, while criminality and disputes/confrontations are seen to be less significant.

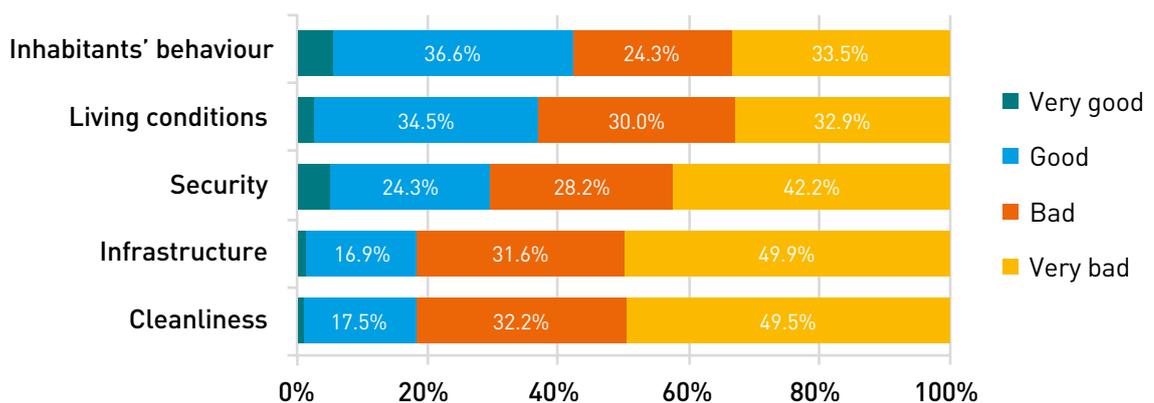
In addition, young people were asked what response they would give when asked where they reside (see Figure 5). Nearly three-quarters (72%) said they lived in either Douar Hicher or Ettadhamen, while 6% of them stated their specific quarter of residence. The remaining responses were made up of those who avoid mentioning the neighbourhoods. Some 18% viewed themselves as inhabitants of the Governorate and 4% said they lived in Greater Tunis. Qualitative interviews and FGDs indicate that the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods share a strong sense of victimisation; they believe that there is a level of stigma attached to their place of residence, which affects how they are perceived by others.

Figure 5: Distribution of respondents according to the place of residence cited (%)



The respondents were also asked how they believe others view their neighbourhood in terms of five different factors. As Figure 6 below shows, the ‘bad’ and ‘very bad’ perceptions varied between 57.8% and 81.7% of the responses. These neighbourhoods are perceived as lacking cleanliness, being insecure and having a low standard of living. The behaviour of the inhabitants is also viewed as being more generally negative. From follow-up qualitative interviews, it is apparent that this stigma is strongly felt by young people, impacts on their behaviour and leads to feelings of exclusion.

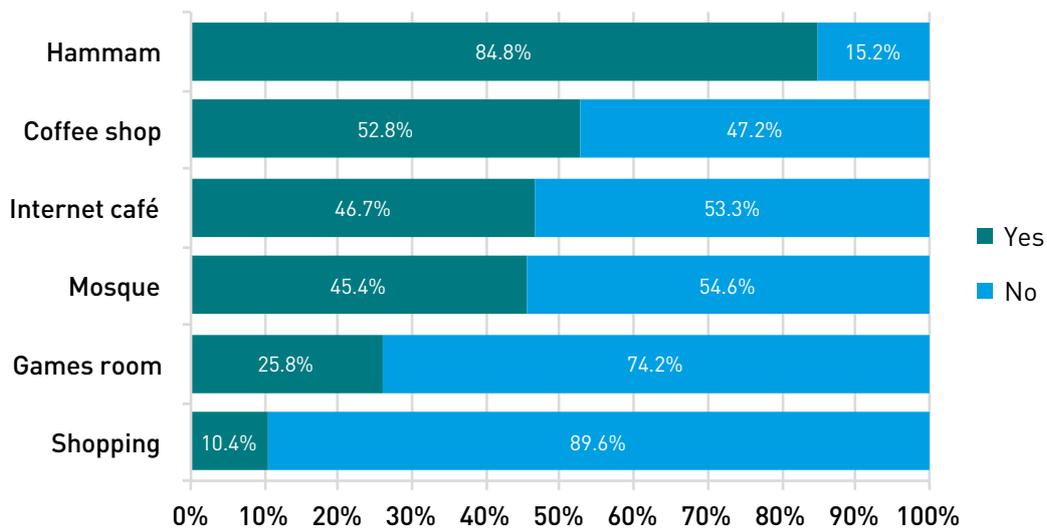
Figure 6: Distribution of respondents according to their perception of how others view their area (%)



When asked where in the neighbourhood they spend their free time, responses to this open-ended, multiple-response question reflect a lack of recreational and cultural facilities (see Figure 7). *Hammams* (traditional baths), coffee shops and internet cafés are cited as the primary refuge

for young people, with the neighbourhoods lacking sports facilities, youth centres, cinemas and other entertainment venues. Responses also signal an absence of places for young women to go to, as coffee shops, internet cafés and games rooms in these neighbourhoods are generally frequented only by men.

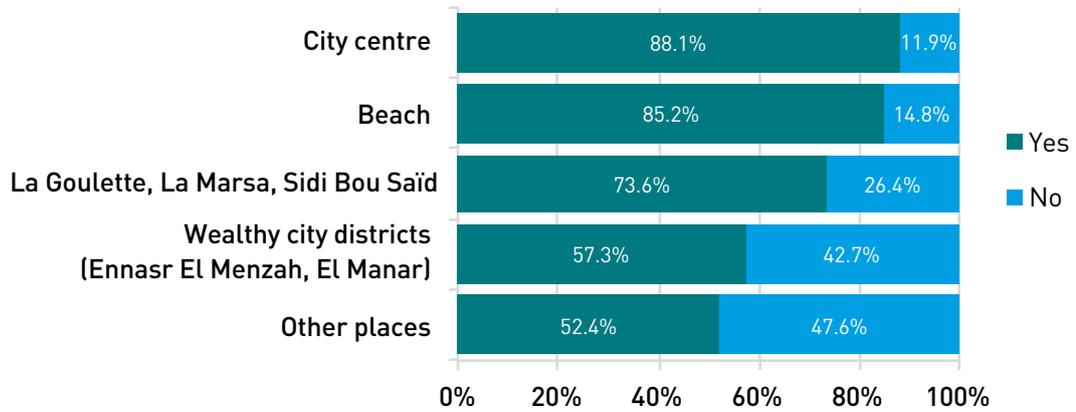
**Figure 7: Venues most frequented by young people in Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen (%)**



When asked where they spend their leisure time outside of their neighbourhoods, 88.1% of respondents say they visit Tunis city centre, while 85.2% go to the beach (depending on the season), 73.6% visit the tourist towns of La Goulette, La Marsa and Sidi Bou Saïd, and more than half visit the wealthy city districts (see Figure 8).

Data from qualitative interviews and FGDs indicate that, for the young people of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen, frequenting tourist areas and sophisticated city districts is seen as a form of escapism and a way of creating an alternative social identity. For young women, it is also seen as a way of escaping social control. However, for young men, their presence in other wealthier parts of the city can lead to problems with the police due to their association with the Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen neighbourhoods.

**Figure 8: Venues most frequented by young people outside Ettadhamen and Douar Hicher neighbourhoods (%)**

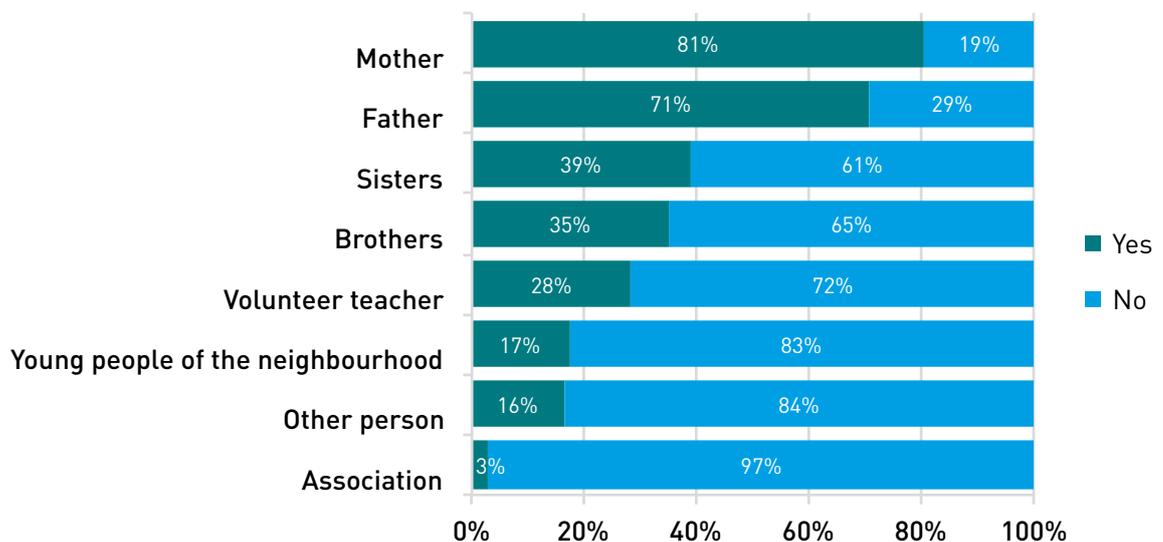


## Educational background

Contrary to assumptions held before the research was carried out, respondents report that their parents are extremely keen for their children to continue their education. This explains the marked difference between the education level of the respondents and their parents, also highlighting the faith that parents place in the educational system in enabling social mobility. Interestingly, it was not felt by respondents that parents' expectations made a distinction between boys and girls.

Parental concern goes beyond merely providing the material means for their children's education. It is also seen as a process of monitoring their sons' and daughters' progress in education, carried out firstly by mothers (80.5%) but also by fathers (70.8%) (see Figure 9). Other family members also play a role in this process, including brothers and sisters, but to a lesser extent than their parents.

**Figure 9: People monitoring the respondents' education (%)**

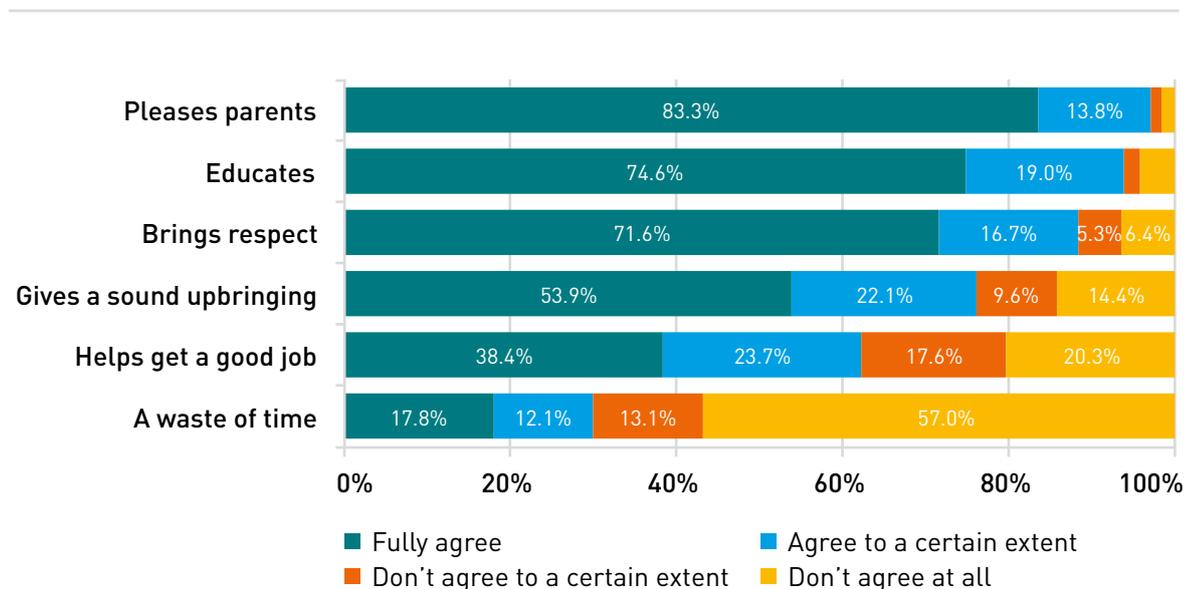


It is noteworthy that 65.4% of respondents declared that they took private lessons during their period of study. This high percentage confirms parents' readiness to make every effort, despite often limited means, to provide the necessary opportunities for their children's educational success.

Nevertheless, respondents' school results are relatively poor, with 81.1% declaring that they repeated at least one grade during their schooling. This compares with a national average of 38.7%.<sup>5</sup> In total, the rate of repeated years accounted for an average of 1.97 years. In terms of absence, 30.7% of the respondents said they were permanently absent from school, while 28.4% declared that they were sometimes absent.

When asked about their opinion of the value of education, responses further underline the influential role of parents. With the option of giving more than one answer, 83.3% of respondents regard education as a means of pleasing their parents, while 74.6% view education as having value in itself (see Figure 10). A further 71.5% feel that education brings respect. Interestingly, the proportion of those who believe that education helps them to find a good job was low (38.4%), while nearly 30% see education as a waste of time.

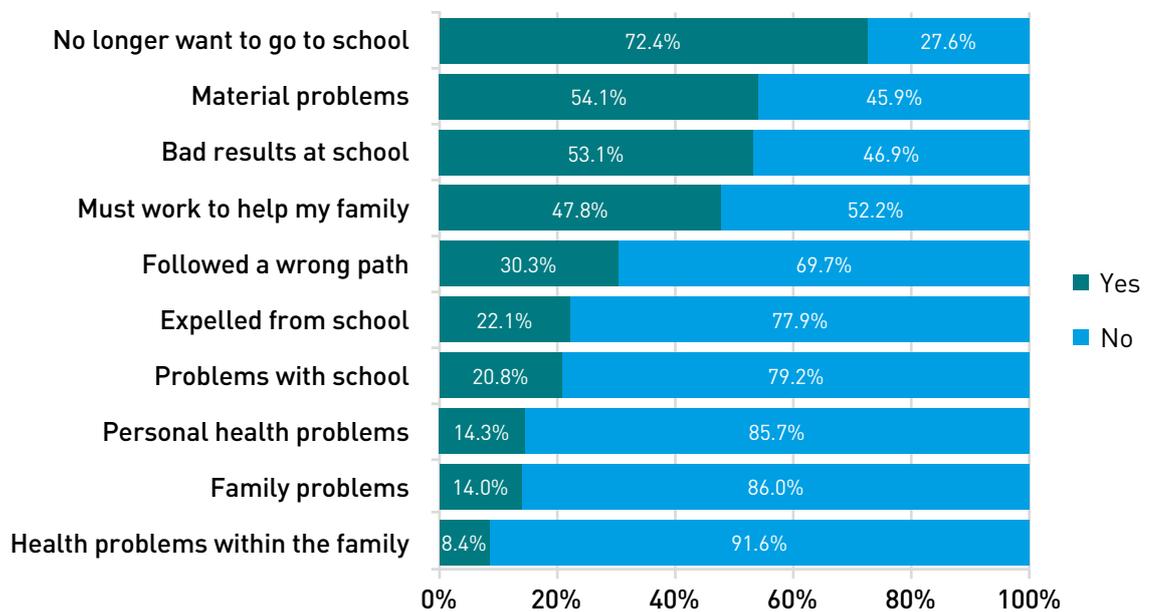
**Figure 10: Distribution of respondents according to their opinion of the value of education (%)**



Despite the symbolic value that education still has for the majority of respondents, faith in its role in achieving upward social mobility appears to be declining across generations. When asked about the reasons for school drop-out, the most common answer given by 72.4% of respondents was a lack of desire to continue education (see Figure 11). This reflects a lack of belief in the effectiveness of the education process and a common feeling among many respondents that they are just doing it to please their parents.

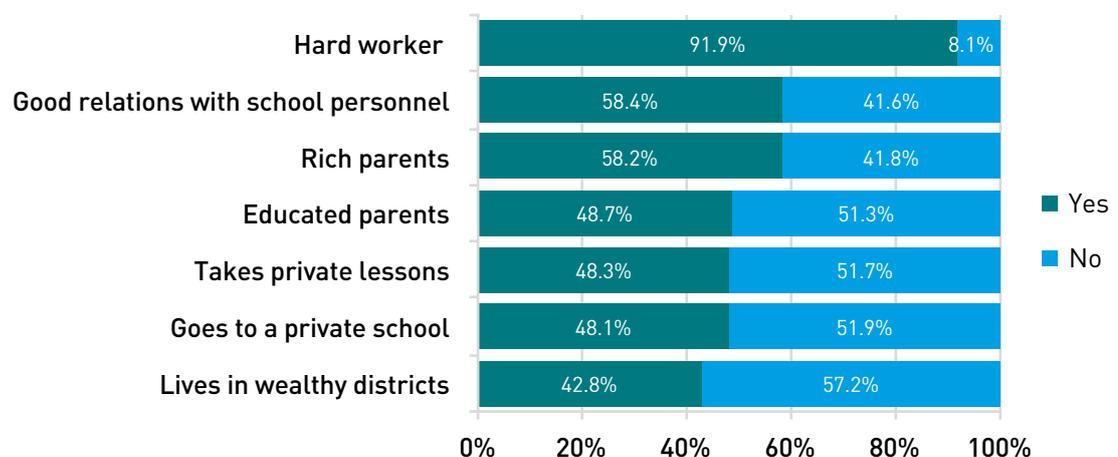
<sup>5</sup> See OECD overview (in French), available at <http://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/pisainfocus/pisaalaloupen43blogquisonleseleveslesplussusceptiblesderedoublerindicecestpeut-etrepasquunequestiondemauvaisesnotes.htm>

**Figure 11: Reasons for school drop-out (%)**



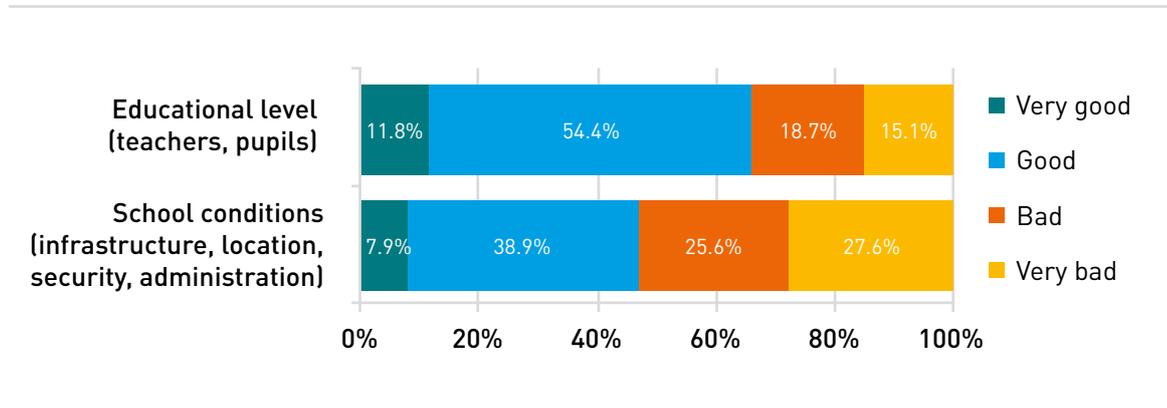
When asked what factors lead to success at school, the overwhelming majority of respondents (91.9%) stated that it is those who work hard who will eventually succeed (see Figure 12). Other factors included having good relations with school personnel, parents' social status and educational level, and receiving private lessons. The importance placed on hard work could be an acknowledgement by respondents that they did not put in the required effort to succeed in their studies, reflecting the perception that education is unlikely to lead to employment or is a 'waste of time' altogether.

**Figure 12: Factors that respondents believe account for the greatest chance of success at school (%)**



For respondents, the reasons for failure are not so much due to the low educational level of pupils or teachers in their establishment. Approximately two-thirds of respondents believe that these levels are good or very good (see Figure 13). However, 53.2% acknowledge that school conditions are bad or very bad in terms of infrastructure, location, management and safety.

**Figure 13: Respondents' perceptions of educational establishments in Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen neighbourhoods (%)**

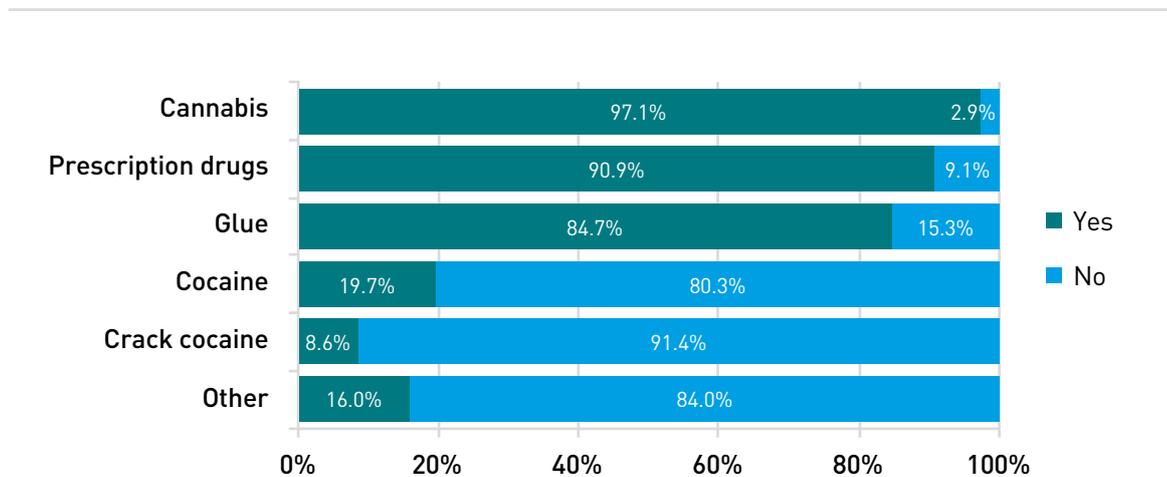


When asked further about school conditions, 57.4% of respondents stated that, during their studies, they had sometimes been beaten by teachers, 20.1% by supervisors and 6.8% by other people.

Drug consumption within the premises of educational institutions also represents a real danger facing young people, especially teenagers. A total of 88.1% of respondents pointed to the presence of drugs in colleges: of these, 68.9% stated that large quantities can always be found, while 19.2% declared that they can sometimes be found. This proportion decreases to 27.7% for schools, with 17% indicating that drugs can be found in large quantities and 10.7% that they can sometimes be found.

In terms of the types of drugs consumed, cannabis (*zatla*) ranks first, accounting for 97.1% of all responses (see Figure 14). This is followed by prescription drugs (90.9%), and glue (84.7%). Other drugs are also consumed, but to a lesser extent.

**Figure 14: Drugs consumed in educational institutions, according to respondents (%)**



Such responses indicate that the school environment in Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen is not free from violence and criminality. This may be a factor underlying young people's lack of motivation to study, despite their awareness of their own abilities and despite parental efforts to promote education. Other problems cited in relation to perceptions of educational establishments included the lack of funds available to educational institutions.

## Employment

Those in full-time employment represented 44.2% of the sample, while 30.7% were still continuing their studies or training. In terms of unemployment, 15.5% were unemployed and in the process of looking for a job. This figure combined with those registered as 'inactive'<sup>6</sup> brings the unemployment rate to 26.1%.

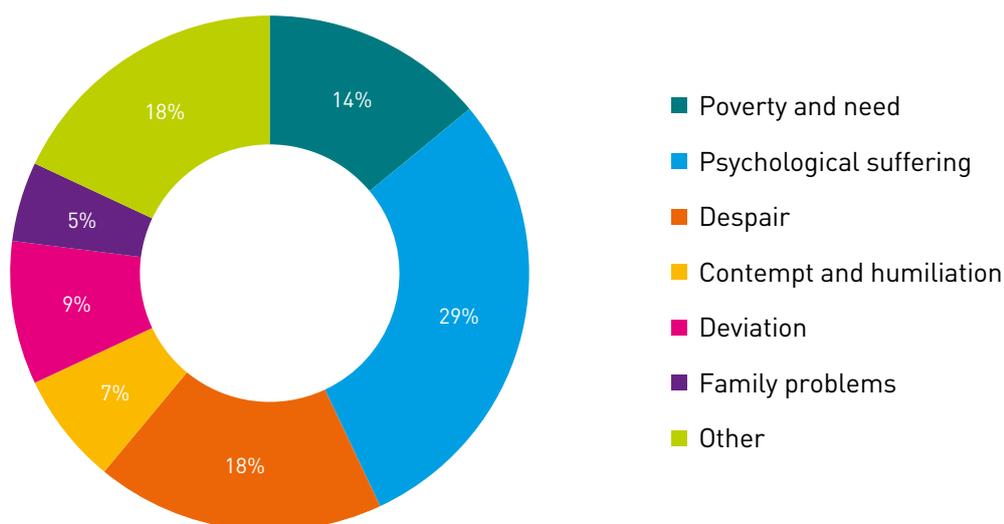
Among those unemployed, the educational level varied as follows:

- 31.1% of respondents with a university-level education;
- 26.3% of respondents with a secondary-level education;
- 21.5% of respondents with a primary-level education.

This high unemployment rate paired with a high educational level confirms young people's fears, as mentioned above, that education, including higher education, does not facilitate entry into the job market.

When asked what unemployment means to them, 29% labelled it as 'psychological suffering' and 18% as 'despair' (see Figure 15). Of the 18% whose responses fall into the category of 'other', the respondents referred to a sense of 'abnormality', 'contempt and humiliation' and 'family problems', among other factors.

**Figure 15: Respondents' perception of unemployment (%)**

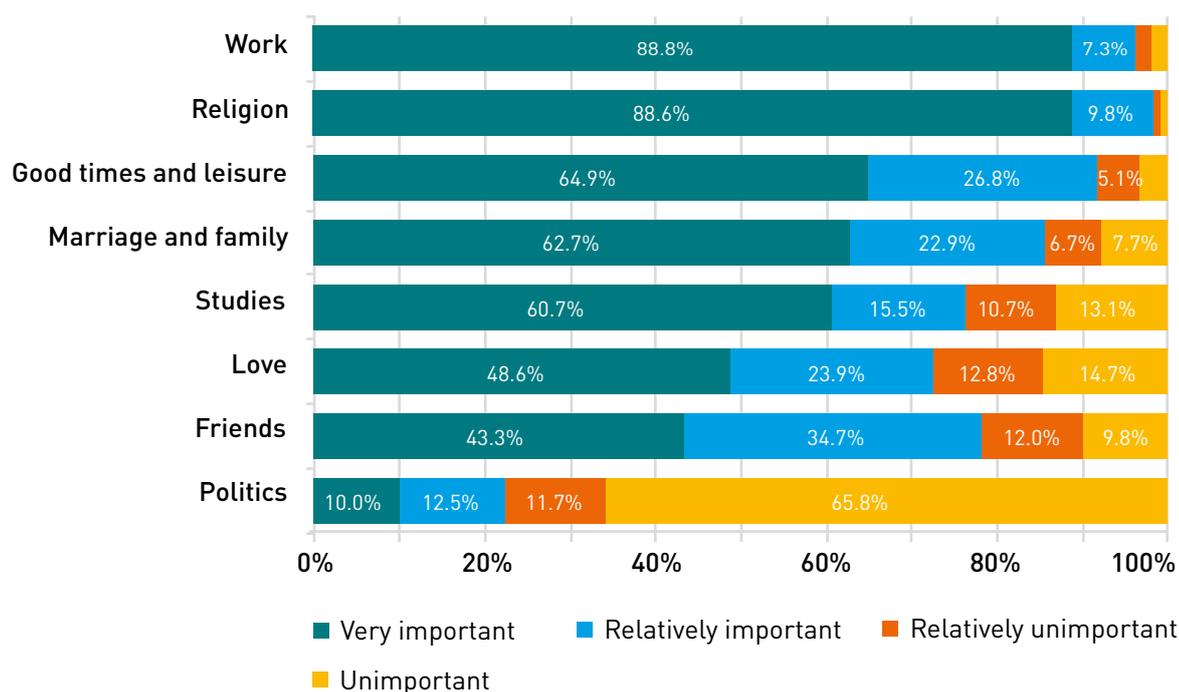


<sup>6</sup> 'Inactive' refers to those who are not in employment or education and who are not actively looking for employment. The majority of respondents in this category are female and from more conservative backgrounds where women are not expected to enter employment on completion of their education.

For young people, getting a job is at the forefront of their priorities, with 88.8% of them confirming that it is very important (see Figure 16). There was a gender difference in this respect, with 92.4% of males and 82.6% of females stating that getting a job is very important.

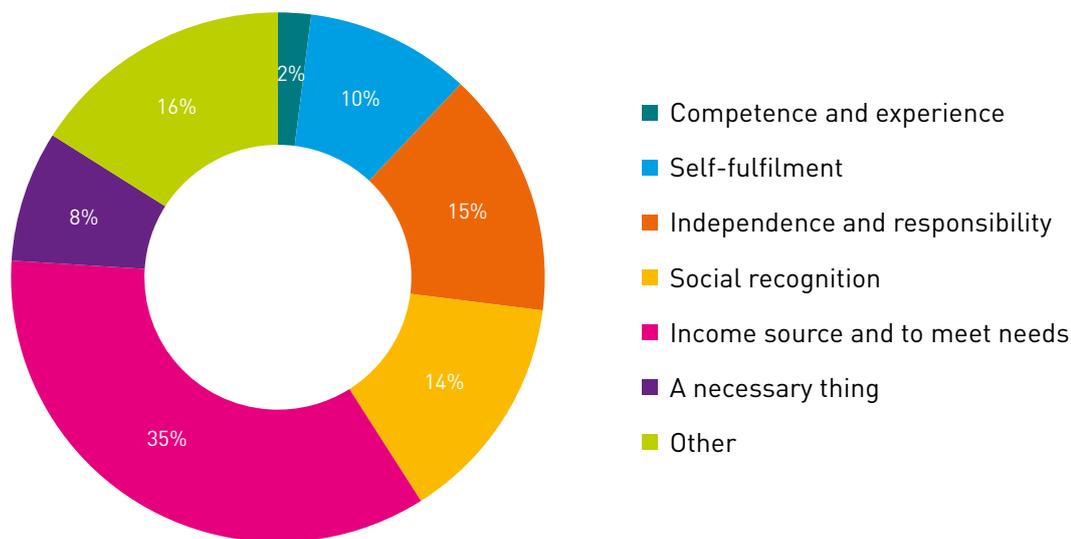
In comparison, only 60.7% perceive education as a priority (49.3% for males and 77.7% for females), while 62.7% consider that marriage and starting a family are among the most important things in life. Politics came last on the list of priorities, with only 10% considering it as being very important and 65.8% perceiving it as not being important at all.

**Figure 16: Young people's perceptions of importance of different aspects in life (%)**



When asked how they view work in an open-ended question, young people see it primarily as a source of income (35%) (see Figure 17). Factors such as independence and assuming responsibility, social recognition and self-fulfilment are seen as secondary.

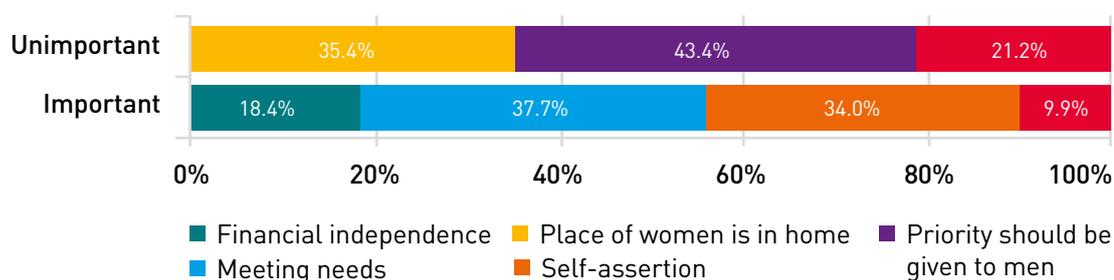
**Figure 17: Young people's perceptions of work (%)**



In response to a question about whether or not employment for women is important, 71% of respondents consider it important (88.2% of females and 58.9% of males). This is in contrast to the very low proportion of women in active employment compared with men at the national level.<sup>7</sup>

Among those in favour of women's employment, 18.5% believe that employment is necessary for women to achieve their financial independence, 37.7% to help them meet basic needs and 34.1% to improve their self-confidence (see Figure 18). In contrast, among those opposing women's employment, 43.4% believe that men should have priority in terms of employment and 35.4% feel that a woman's natural place is in the home.

**Figure 18: Reasons for importance or unimportance of women's employment (%)**



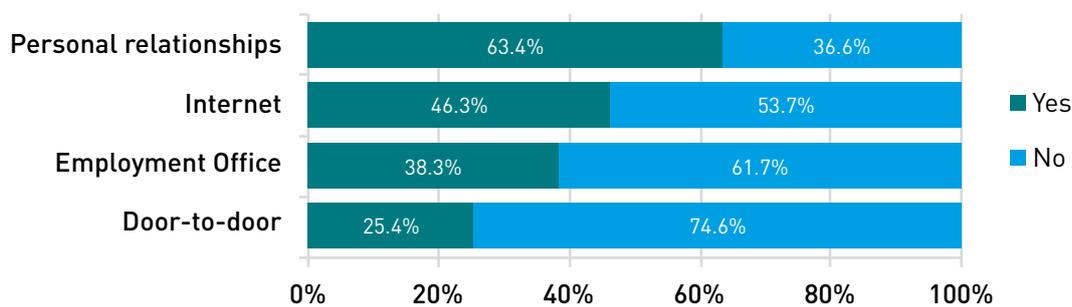
When looking for employment, young people use different methods. Interestingly, they rely primarily on a number of personal relationships, their family and what they view as their 'social assets', rather than on institutional bodies such as the Employment Office. Those looking for

<sup>7</sup> Women represented 26.8% of the total workforce in Tunisia in 2010, according to the National Institute of Statistics.

employment through their personal relationships constitute 63.4% of the respondents, while only 38.3% rely on the Employment Office (see Figure 19). New communication technologies are the second most useful resource for seeking employment, with 43.3% of respondents using them. About a quarter (25.4%) rely solely on door-to-door visits to institutions to submit their applications.

Such findings may reflect young people's lack of confidence in the state institutions' ability to find a solution to the unemployment problem, despite hopes placed in the revolution to improve these conditions. For example, in a question regarding their expectations for change following the revolution, 83.4% cited increased employment opportunities as an expectation.

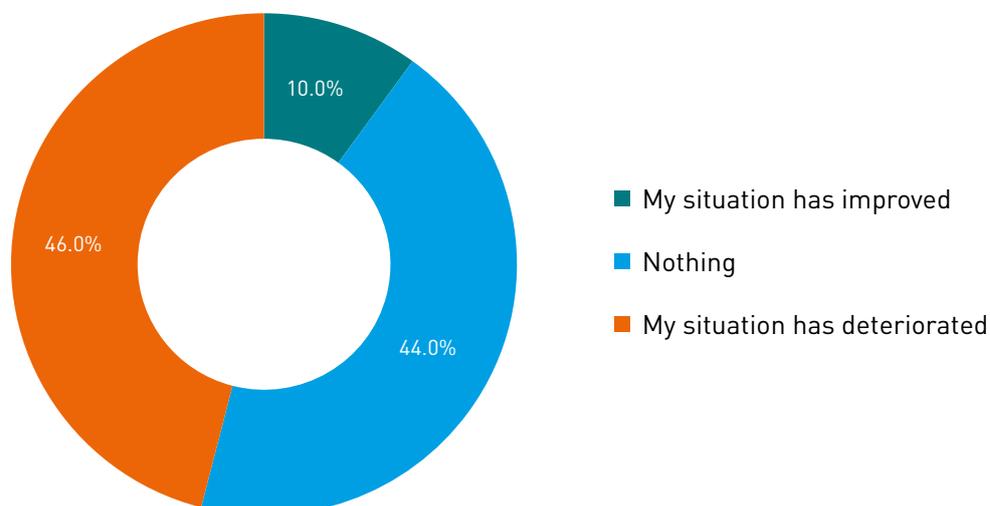
**Figure 19: Methods used by young people to find employment (%)**



## Participation in public life

Throughout the qualitative and quantitative research, young people expressed disappointment in the failure of the state to deliver tangible dividends from the revolution. Those who felt that their situation had not changed since the revolution constituted 44% of the respondents, while 46% felt that their situation had deteriorated (see Figure 20).

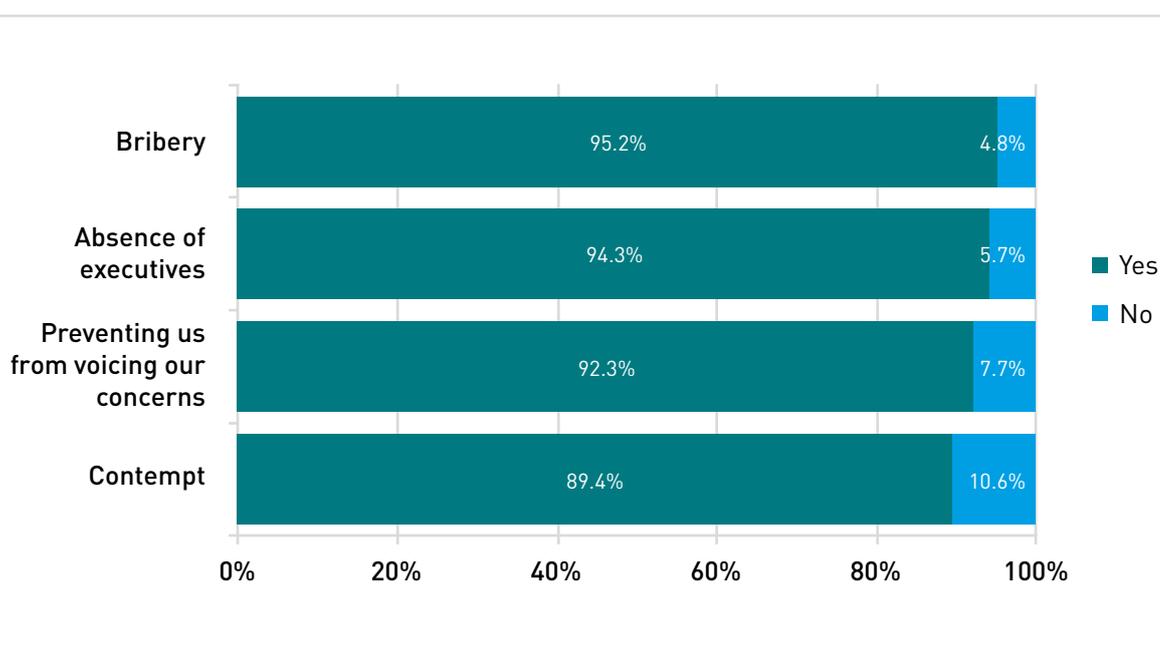
**Figure 20: What has changed in your life after the revolution (%)?**



Respondents were asked about their expectations from the revolution. These expectations related particularly to access to employment and to improved living standards and conditions. The results confirm, to varying degrees, that the barriers to the state meeting these expectations include the poor performance of the administration after the revolution – for example, corruption, the conspicuous absence of executives, and the lack of space for young people to voice their concerns on important and fundamental issues (see Figure 21).

In addition, 71.5% of the respondents feel that the way the police deal with young people in neighbourhoods has not improved, despite a significant proportion (83.6%) citing this as an expectation for change after the revolution. This also highlights the problematic relationship between young people, the law and the methods and agencies used to enforce the law. Related to this, 38.3% of respondents are in favour of decreasing the penalties for drug consumption (Law 52), while 17.7% would like these penalties to be maintained and 44% are demanding that they be increased.

**Figure 21: What has not improved since the revolution (%)?**

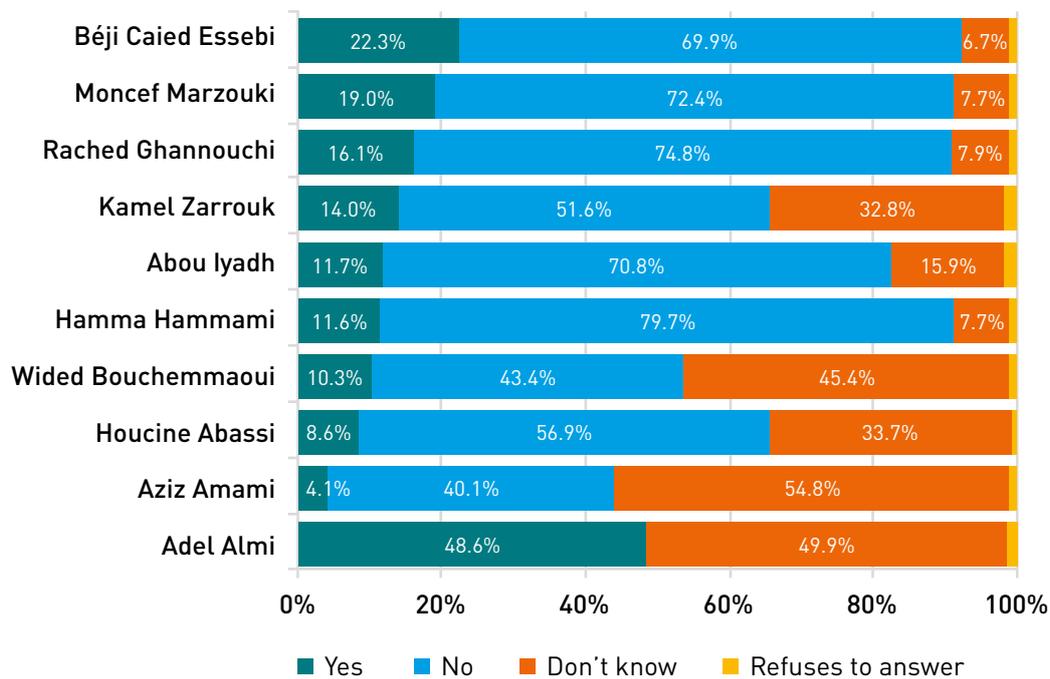


Young people's lack of trust in political leaders is stark. When asked whom politicians serve, with the option to give more than one response, only 8.3% of respondents stated that politicians serve the country's interests. The majority (98.8%) believed that politicians serve their own personal interests.

This explains the general reluctance of young people from the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen to engage in the activities of political parties. Only 4.7% of respondents engage in the activities of political parties.

The survey also aimed to gather information on young people's levels of trust in certain politicians and well-known activists (see Figure 22). The results show a strong lack of trust in the individuals cited.

Figure 22: Do you trust the following people (%)?



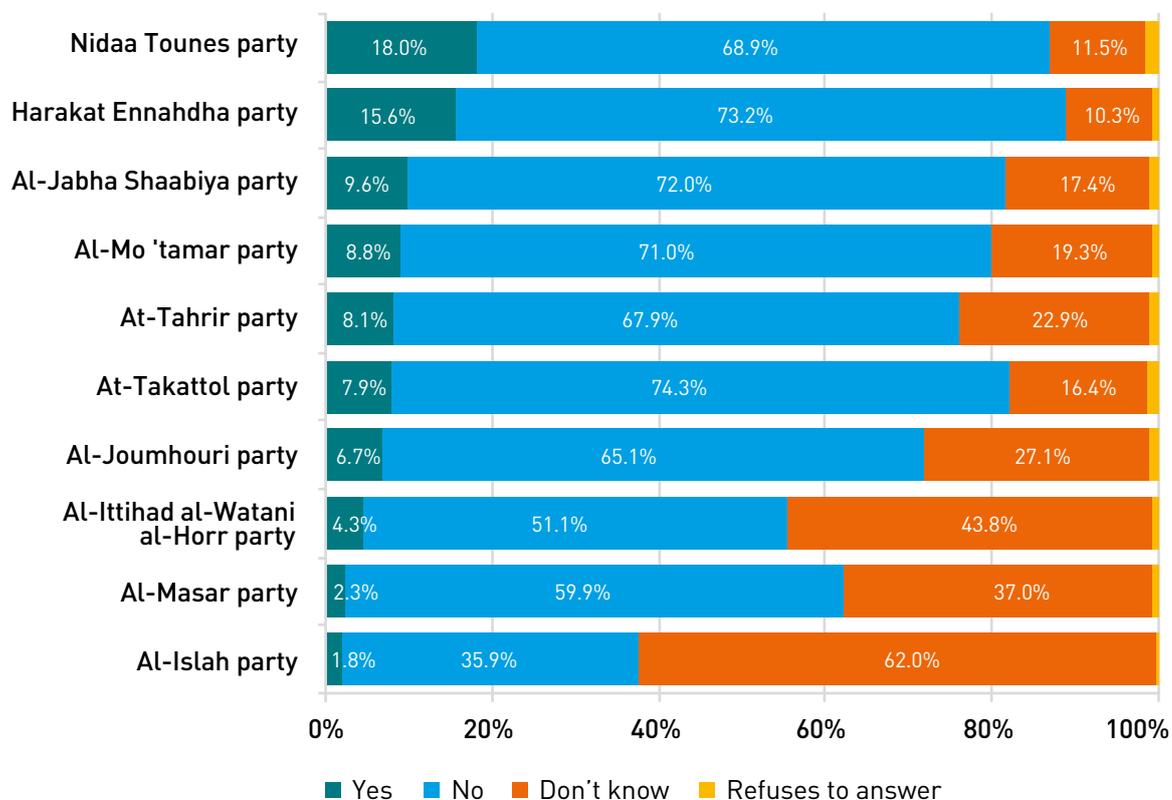
However, this data should be treated with considerable caution, considering that the question asked referred to the trust placed in these well-known figures and not whether they would vote for them in an electoral framework. In addition, some of the figures are not directly connected to the electoral process, such as the Chairwoman of the employers' organisation the Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), Wided Bouchemmaoui, or the Secretary General of the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), Houcine Abassi. There were also figures associated with Salafist and Jihadist groups, such as Kamal Zarrouk and Abou Iyadh, and this association may have meant that respondents refrained from disclosing their opinion frankly.

In general, the views expressed reflect the current political scene and the degree of popularity experienced by these figures in public opinion, especially among young people. These views are characterised by a strong lack of confidence in most politicians.

Similarly, in response to the question about the trust placed in the most well-known political parties in the country, respondents' answers reflected their political inclinations. Nidaa Tounes ranked first with a trust level of 18%, while Ennahdha came second with 15.6%, followed by al-Jabha Shaabiya with 9.6% (see Figure 23).

Of interest here is the consistency of these trends with the results of the national legislative elections held in October 2014, regardless of age, which challenges the prevailing view that young people hold different political opinions from those of the wider population.

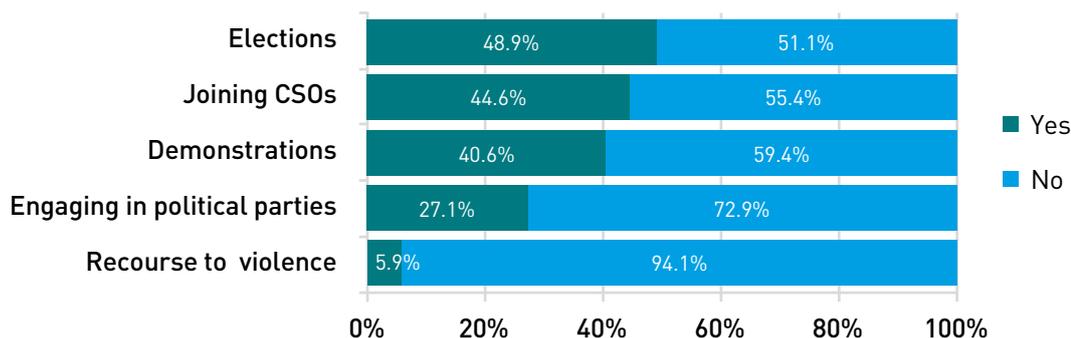
Figure 23: Do you trust the following political parties (%)?



Despite the frustration felt by young people and the narrowing of their prospects, they paradoxically favour institutional channels, such as elections and joining civil society organisations (CSOs), rather than engaging in political parties to achieve their demands (see Figure 24). Moreover, despite the prevalence of violence observed in these populous quarters, only 5.9% of young people believe that recourse to violence is an effective way to achieve their demands.

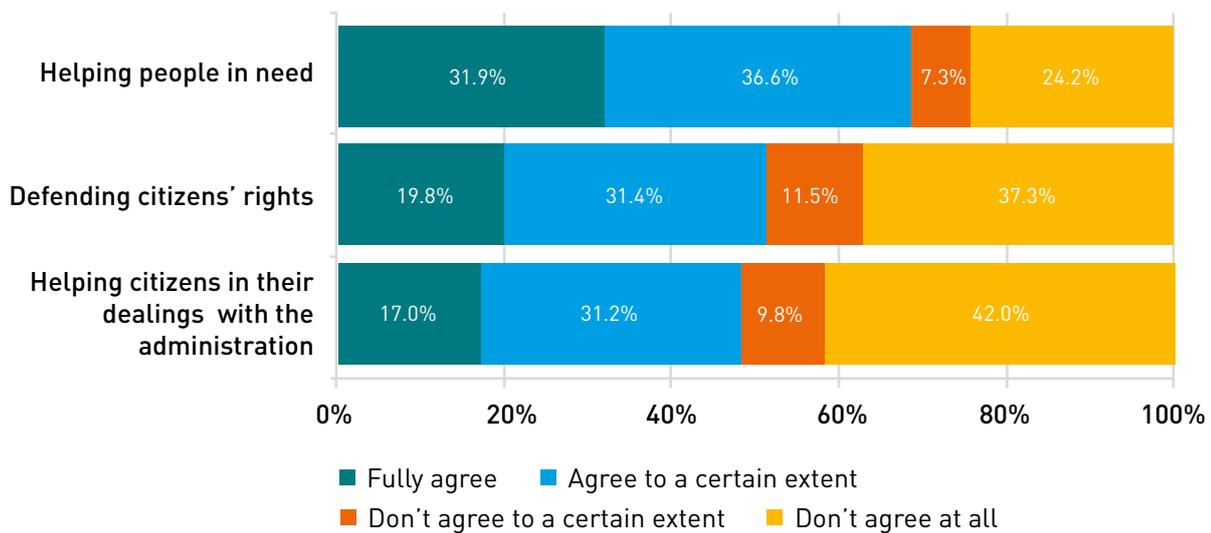
In terms of the October 2014 elections, 66.3% of the respondents agreed that the elections would represent an opportunity for people to choose their representatives, while 53.1% hoped that the elections would help to improve living conditions.

Figure 24: What are the most effective ways to improve the situation of young people in the future (%)?



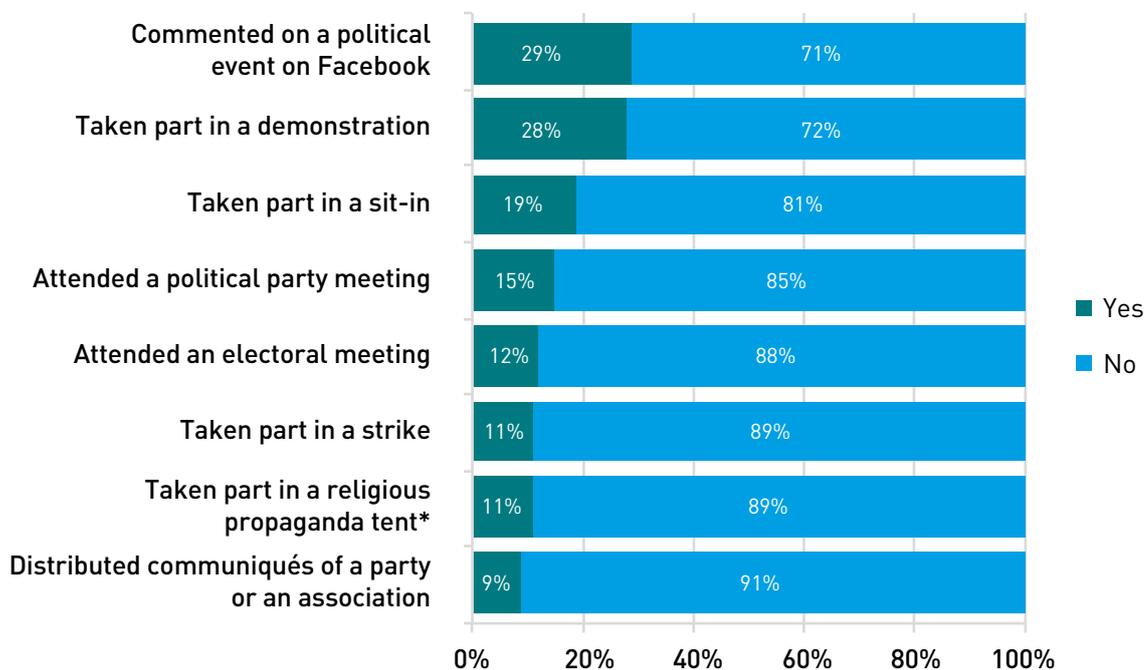
Young people have a high regard for CSOs and their role in society. They consider the main activity of these CSOs as helping those in need (see Figure 25). This opinion may relate to the focus of existing CSOs operating in the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen. Respondents also believe that CSOs defend the rights of citizens and help them deal with the administration.

**Figure 25: What is the role of CSOs in your opinion (%)?**



With respect to the different ways in which young people participate in public life and activities, discussion through social networks ranks first (29%), followed by participation in demonstrations (27.7%) and sit-ins (19.1%) (see Figure 26). These findings confirm our previous observations about young people refraining from taking part in the traditional activities of political parties and associations. They also reflect young people's tendency to find new ways to voice their opinions and engage in protest movements.

**Figure 26: Have you taken part in any of the following movements since the revolution (%)?**



\* Note: A 'religious propaganda tent' is a public meeting held by Salafist preachers under a covered tent. Such activities were banned after the classification of Ansar al-Sharia as a terrorist organisation in mid-2013.

## Salafism

Most young people (80.5%) from the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen confirmed that they know of young people from their neighbourhood who have travelled for jihad in Syria.

The Salafist phenomenon in the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen has given rise to significant media attention. However, the young people of these areas consider this media attention to be an exaggeration, particularly with regard to clashes between police and Salafists occurring in the neighbourhoods.

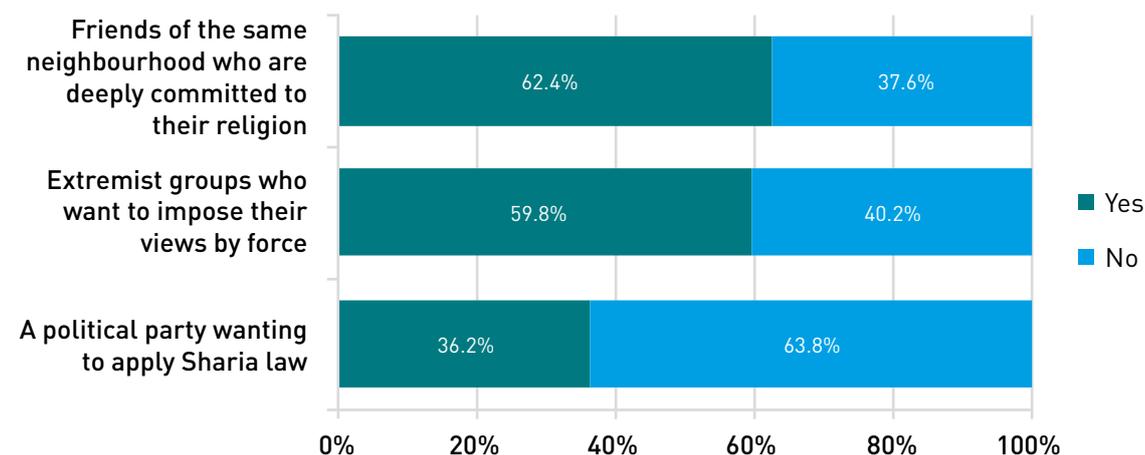
Respondents were asked their opinion of the Ennour mosque clashes in 2012<sup>8</sup> – one of the major events that now links Douar Hicher with violent Salafism in the eyes of the public. This question was closed-ended and multiple choice. Most respondents (89.2%) felt that these events had tarnished the reputation of the neighbourhood, but many (65.9%) also blamed the media for exaggerating events (see Figure 27). The proportion of respondents who felt that Salafi young people were the victims of injustice was also high, at 67.5%.

<sup>8</sup> A security force raid on the Ennour mosque in Douar Hicher occurred on 30 October 2012 and resulted in two deaths, including that of the mosque's Imam, during clashes with the police. Thirteen people believed to be associated with the Salafist movement were arrested. The raid was a response to an attack against a senior national guard official who tried to stop violent clashes between Salafists and an illegal alcohol trader the previous day.

**Figure 27: What is your opinion of the Ennour mosque events (%)?**

Although these views seem to reflect sympathy with Salafists in an area known for the spread of this phenomenon, there is a clear contradiction in attitudes. On the one hand, many of the respondents (59.8%) feel that the Salafists are an extremist group who want to impose their views by force (see Figure 28). On the other hand, they also regard them as friends who are strongly committed to religion (62.4%) but who also demonstrate solidarity with marginalised young people in the hardships of daily life.

Such views may explain why 57.3% of the young people surveyed disagree with the government's decision to list Ansar al-Sharia as a terrorist group. This figure rises dramatically according to education level, with 77.8% of illiterate respondents disagreeing with the decision. There is also a difference of opinion between the two neighbourhoods surveyed, with 50.4% in Douar Hicher compared with 63.5% in Ettadhamen stating that they are against this government decision.

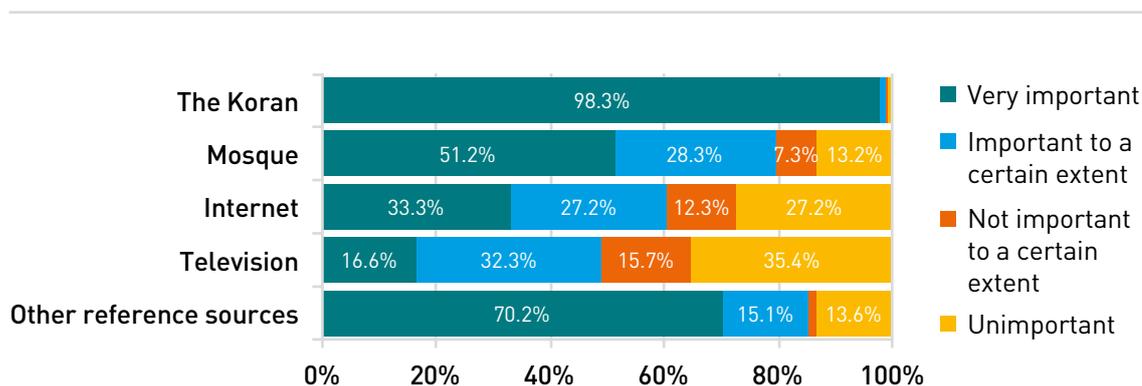
**Figure 28: Who are the Salafists in your opinion (%)?**

## Religious practice

Religion represents a central aspect of life for most of the respondents, with 88.6% considering it to be very important. When asked about practising religion, 53.1% of young people said they pray regularly and 92.3% said they fast during the month of Ramadan. Only 26.2% stated that they pray in the mosque.

Young people develop their knowledge of religion in various ways. In addition to the Koran, which is considered the main source of religious information, going to the mosque is an important learning mechanism for 79.5% of the respondents, with 51.2% viewing it as very important and 28.3% as important to a certain extent (see Figure 29). Young people also inform themselves about religion through the internet, with 33.2% viewing it as very important and 27.2% as important to a certain extent. Among the ‘other reference sources’ mentioned by respondents, religious books were cited as very important or important to a certain extent by 28.6% of the total sample.

**Figure 29: What do you use to learn more about religion (%)?**

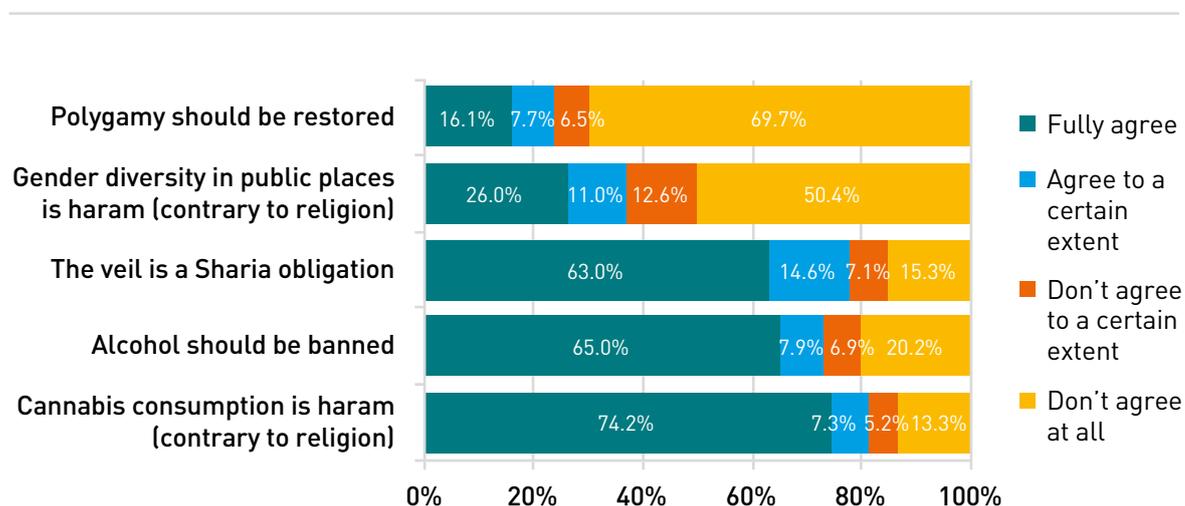


Responses to this question highlight the minor role that family plays as a source of learning for transmitting religious knowledge between generations. They also underline the conspicuous absence of official institutions (the school and the al-Ifra’ institution, for example) as a source of learning about religion.

Young people appear to adopt a clear stance about crucial religious issues such as wearing the veil, gender diversity in public places, polygamy, drug consumption and drinking alcohol.

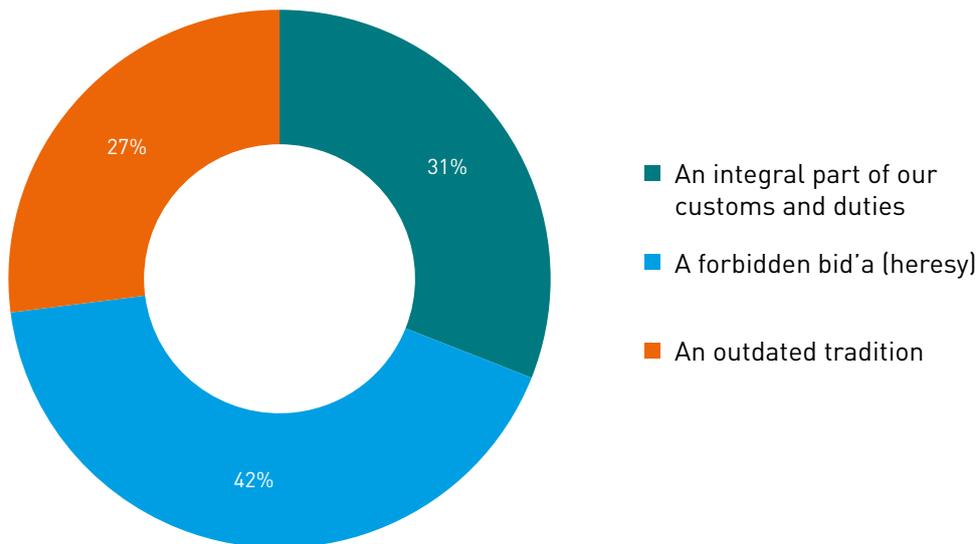
Most of the respondents do not agree that polygamy should be restored (69.7% do not agree at all and 6.5% do not agree to a certain extent) (see Figure 30). However, most are also against banning gender diversity in public places (50.4% do not agree at all and 12.6% do not agree to a certain extent). The majority consider that the veil is a religious obligation for women (63% fully agree and 14.6% agree to a certain extent).

**Figure 30: Do you agree with the following statements (%)?**



Young people also have mixed perceptions about other religious issues. While 31% of them consider visiting holy Sufi shrines as an integral part of customs and traditions, 42% see it as a forbidden *bid'a* (heresy) and 27% of them view it as an outdated belief (see Figure 31). Visiting shrines was previously an important tradition, but attacks against shrines have been attributed to Salafist groups who see them as heretical. Salafists in the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen have been particularly vocal about their views on Sufism.

**Figure 31: What is your opinion about visiting holy shrines (%)?**



### 3. Conclusions

The findings from this survey and associated qualitative data continue to be analysed and their implications discussed with the young people of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen and with the Tunisian authorities. The following are key conclusions drawn from the research to date. They continue to be developed and deepened through consultation with experts and discussion with relevant stakeholders.

- Young people from the neighbourhoods of Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen come from poor and economically vulnerable social backgrounds. Despite the changes we observed in the distribution of young people's social professions compared with that of their parents' generation, this distribution still reflects, albeit in a new form, the vulnerability of their situation.
- The young people from Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen neighbourhoods show a strong sense of belonging to their places of residence. This reflects the strength of social relationships and how shared feelings of marginalisation and poverty can play a role in further strengthening them.
- The negative stereotypical image of various aspects of life in Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen neighbourhoods (including the inhabitants' behaviour, hygiene, criminality and living standards) is a cause of suffering for the young people residing there. This stigma impacts on their lives – for example, in the way they are treated by others when looking for employment or in the way the police treat them in public places outside their neighbourhoods.
- The young people's educational level has significantly increased compared with that of their parents' generation, but this has not been accompanied by an improvement in their social status. This has led to a deepening sense of injustice, influencing the hopes placed in the educational system and even leading to a re-ordering of their priorities. As a result, the importance of education has become secondary to other objectives.
- Unemployment is a source of suffering and despair for the majority of young people and represents their main concern. This is especially the case regarding difficulties faced in their search for a job and their lack of confidence in the state's ability to support them in this endeavour.
- The young people from Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen neighbourhoods had many expectations of the revolution – mainly in relation to employment, the promotion of their social status, the eradication of bribery and improvements in their treatment by the police.
- However, in this survey, they expressed disappointment in the failure of the state to meet these expectations. This has impacted on their relationship with state institutions and on the extent of their participation in public life through engagement in traditional political parties and associations.
- Most young people agree that some of the events in Douar Hicher relating to Salafism were exaggerated by the media, thus representing a further blemish on the reputation of their areas.

- Most young people do not share what they consider radical Salafist ideas. However, what stood out was the significant sympathy for those whom they regard as friends in the same neighbourhood. Once again, this points to the sense of solidarity felt for those who share the same hardships and suffering.
- Religion represents a particular area of interest for a major proportion of the respondents. The respondents learn about religion from many different and new sources, in the context of the complete absence of official institutions.

## Annex: The Questionnaire

To understand more fully how young people in Douar Hicher and Ettadhamen neighbourhoods experience the transition and determine the problems facing their neighbourhoods, the questionnaire used for this survey was divided into the following seven parts:

1. Family characteristics and social origins;
2. Living conditions in the neighbourhood and area of residence;
3. Educational background – including indicators relating to the importance they attach to their studies, their families’ desire for them to successfully complete their studies, and the number of obstacles encountered, which may delay or end their studies;
4. Employment – including unemployment problems and different channels used to find employment, all with reference to gender differences;
5. Participation in public life and engagement in politics – political views and convictions were elicited through perceptions of the Salafist events in their neighbourhoods;
6. Relations with official institutions and expectations of their performance after the revolution;
7. Religious practices – including how young people have greater access to and seek a better understanding of religion.



**International Alert.**

346 Clapham Road, London SW9 9AP, United Kingdom

Tel +44 (0)20 7627 6800, Fax +44 (0)20 7627 6900

[info@international-alert.org](mailto:info@international-alert.org)

[www.international-alert.org](http://www.international-alert.org)

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