

# **Mothers living in the Inferno of their own society**

## *A qualitative and quantitative study on the phenomenon of single mothers in the Governorate of Gabes*

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### **I. The sociocultural and political context of the study:**

Despite the transformations and changes that the Tunisian society witnessed, especially when it comes to women's existence in public space, the increase of schooling ratio, women's work, and the development of the scene with regard to the feminist movement in Tunisia, and developing the legal system, which in itself reinforces women's rights protect, and considering it daring actions, compared to Arab-Islamic countries, the dominance of the traditional beliefs is still in effect, especially concerning the traditional roles of women, as they remain shaped, as long as they did not get married or give birth, or in simpler words, as long as she does not become the wife and the mother, which are considered roles of complement, and the completion for the woman's social status.

On the other hand, despite the openness to the notion of civil society, and the enjoyment of several rights, individual ones are still restricted, including sexual rights, in which society still condemns sexual relations outside of marriage, and sexual orientations are one of the aspects that the Tunisian society could not work on. Some of the aspects that the Tunisian society could not work on, is the individual freedoms.

Given the fact that the issue of single mothers is among the disregarded causes, as the studies concerning this subject, if existent, are usually qualitative, in which they focus on studying only a few cases, while the quantitative ones are still limited, since there are no numbers that indicate the extent of the phenomenon, and if it exists, unuseful, as it is difficult to rely on civil records to obtain numbers, and most of the data indicates that almost between 1200 and 1300 children are born every year outside marriage, which represents 10% of the births, along with the absence of any official indicators, or any ministries to provide official the official data that would support the studies. If we rely on the Ministry of health's data, it would still be affected by the fact that they count the only the number of cases occurring in public institutions, and not the private ones, making the provided statistics limited, while also taking into account that countryside women give birth, or abort in their houses, which explains many crimes and facts shown by the media concerning the newborns left in public places, not to forget that the easy access of well educated women, who are financially prosperous, to the private health services, either to give birth, or to abort, are among the data that are still not revealed in Tunisia today, which makes it insufficient to rely on numbers to tackle the phenomenon.

As for the political context, in the last decade, Tunisia has witnessed the rise of the far right and the political Islam to power, which had a direct influence on public policies, especially the one regarding women, and the issue of equality, in which we witnessed statements by Parliament members since 2011 condemning woman who gives birth outside marriage, and considered that a moral decline, and the same was done in 2019, as one of the of the representatives described single mothers, and whoever defends them as "prostitutes", and despite the civil society's reactions that rejected these hostile positions, and the hate speech directed towards the single mother, and

considered it an attitude that reinforces the exclusion and marginalization of women in Tunisia, it still did not have any actual impact on the policy adopted in the reproductive Health field, in which Tunisia witnessed a major decline in providing contraceptive pills (Look at Tawhida Bechikh association reports), along

campaigns carried out by the National Office of Family and Population on the prevention from sexually transmitted disease and other programs within the same context, while both the religious, and moral speeches kept growing and took control of state institutions, including healthcare centers, which reinforced girls' reluctance to access their right to healthcare, in exchange for shallow speech which condemns every behavior that is outside the moral standards set by society, and often the issue is associated with the behavior of women, the phenomenon of customary marriage has grown (Master thesis, Safwa Khaldi, can customary marriage be considered a phenomenon in Tunisia ? ,2017, the Higher Institute of Human Sciences of Tunis), which directly affected the spread of the phenomenon of single mothers in Tunisia.

While the phenomenon kept growing, in exchange for the absence of any state policy to protect them, single mothers found themselves facing numerous challenges, especially during the Covid-19 period, as they were an excluded and unrecognized category, doubling their vulnerability, and their children's.

The feminist civil society shed the light on the society's vulnerable categories, chiefly during the Covid-19 outbreak, so voices were raised, and all efforts were made to support them, such as female immigrants, house maids, women in the agricultural sector, female victims of violence, and single mothers. In this context, Free Sight Association, worked on advocacy campaigns, and sought to make voluntary work, aiming to provide support to these groups, which led to an intersection between its field work, and the phenomenon of single mothers in Gabes, and made it consider supporting this category by making the state assume its responsibility towards female citizens that committed no crimes, as motherhood is a right, along with urging it to support and reinforce their rights. However, before embarking on these steps, it was necessary to diagnose the state of the single mother in her social environment

And the role played by the state institutions in reinforcing her rights based on the reference document of Free Sight Association in collaboration with Danner Organization, which requested a field research mainly aiming to shed light on the factors affecting the spread of single mothers phenomenon on the one hand, and understanding their living in the city of Gabes, and the challenges and daily difficulties they face on the other hand, along with analyzing the social statues and how female and male citizens are dealing with this phenomenon and measuring the degree of social solidarity with this category, in addition to the state's, and association's role in reinforcing their rights.

## II. A documentation reading of previous studies on the subject:

The studies and researches conducted on the phenomenon of single mothers, and sexual relations outside marriage are scarce, so the subject is usually taken casually, in association with marriage as an institution, the vulnerability of women, and their reality, the collapse of the socio-normative system, and the development of relationships between the two genders, and the reproductive health. Even in media, the subject is being covered in a limited manner, which its main focus, or purpose is to use take advantage of some cases for the sake of ratings, and to expose certain actions, as consequence for the fact that media is part of the same symbolic, and normative system of its own society.

### - **Some studies that tackled directly the issue of single mothers:**

The socio-demographic mutations of the Tunisian family, profound studies of a the results of research of PAPFAM, National Office of Family, and Population, 2006 Edition.

Tunisia has a population of nearly two million young people in the "age group from 15 to 24 years, and in 2004 the average age was 5.29 years, and those under 15 years represented 35% of the total population." This signifies that this generation plays a very important role in the country and represents the hopes and future of the community.

Young people and adolescents seek to integrate into society and participate in its transformation, but they are more vulnerable to challenges and risks. Indeed, they live in a time of profound, often rapid, change, which brings both opportunities and limitations. In this transitional period of their lives between childhood and adulthood, adolescents and young adults go through many changes in physical, intellectual, social, economic, and legal status that prepare them for their future roles to play, as active and working citizens, spouses and parents.

In this context, the state is called to adopt a political strategy based on the programs of education, health, employment, and security to guarantee a future for this generation. However, there also the social, and the cultural aspects that play an important role in shaping one's personality, Through the process of socialization and the transmission of the customs, values and norms of society.

What is obvious today, is the deep changes occurring within the Tunisian society, especially the development of customs and behaviors, along with social phenomena. For instance, unemployment keeps affecting more and more youth, who most of the time access the labor market after waiting for too long. Consequently, the marriage age is delayed, which makes those youth remain single for a longer period of time, forcing their majority (60% of those above the age of 25) to live in the parents' house. Marriage, then, remains the only socially recognized framework that allows individuals to leave the parental home and lead a legal sexual life.

This situation experienced by Tunisian youth, taking into account, on the one hand, the prohibition of premarital sexual practices in society and the weight of social and religious taboos in our society on the other hand.

Statistical data from recent years also show us the prevalence of sexual relations among young people and teens. In this context, the National Office for the Family and Population conducted a purely Tunisian survey on youth sexuality (PAPFAM) indirectly, by questioning young people about their thoughts on sexuality of people of their age, not just their own experience.

The results of this survey reveals that three quarters of teenagers in schools thinks that those in their age already had sex (83% males and 70 females%).

They also believed that these relations were with multiple partners, and unprotected.

Based on these results, we shed light on the risky behavior that facilitates HIV transmission HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), in an almost complete absence of sexual education and culture. The number of people living with HIV/AIDS in Tunisia is 1,000. Since 1997, the annual incidence rate has been about 70 new cases each year. The incidence rate is about 6.0 per 100,000 population. The age and sex distribution of people living with HIV/AIDS shows that females living with HIV are the youngest (about a third are under 25 years of age, compared to 9% for men).

These statistics should also be looked at while considering another phenomenon, which is single mothers, and unwanted pregnancies. Indeed, the statistical results show that there are 1,660 births a year outside marriage, and four children are born daily outside the legal framework. "

Concerning abortion, or VTP, according to a study conducted by the National Office for Family and Population (2005), on 600 single mothers seeking abortion in the clinics of the Office, who their average age was 24 years old, most of them were living with their families, only 1.8% living with their partners, and 3.7 living alone, while 48% had jobs.

This data signifies the paradoxical social reality, as much as it reflects the contradictions between the daily living on the one hand, and the social values on the other hand, which is a contradiction that makes the social research record a huge gap that separates the social reality in its transformations, and the explosion of its gender stereotypes from the reality of its legal and religious texts, which became with its rigidity an obstacle facing the assimilation of single mothers, and denies thousands of innocent children the right to a decent life, and to full citizenship, especially if we realized the size of the phenomenon, and the increase in births outside marriage, not to mention the abortion cases undergone to escape the shape of being a single mother, which became merely a description to abuse dignity and humanity.

**Anne le Bris, Prohibited maternity: being a mother, not being a wife in Tunisia, between denial and “normification”, feminist research, volume 22, 2009**

In this work, the researcher focused on the reality of single mothers in a Tunisian sociocultural context, as she considered that Single mothers become aware of the role of motherhood the moment they prepare themselves for having a child, and that they are well aware that they will face many difficulties and challenges, if not social, familial and sometimes legal punishments (in the absence of a law protecting them)

In the light of the field/mechanical study, she tried to detect the factors affecting the spread of the mothers single phenomenon, “in which we are not born mothers, and not single mothers, but rather we become one.” ,as although having a child is a biological phenomenon, motherhood and fatherhood and the roles they play are mainly social and cultural results. There are social contexts and factors affecting the emergence of the phenomenon of single mothers, as well as affecting the track of their lives and the lives of their children.

- Recognizing motherhood separately from the biological matter basically requires a legal and social recognition, since the legal ie guarantees the access to rights and services, and provides protection for women and children.
- Social shame that reaches the level of denying motherhood that occurs outside marriage, despite the fact that regardless if the legitimacy of the relationship, a mother remains culturally, and religiously sacred, so that society transforms with its customs, traditions, symbols, its system, and its own self, into the one that confers sanctity on the roles according to conditions that it sets in advance.
- Being a father or a mother, requires maturity, and a number of skills, and behaviors set by society, and mainly generated from a value and normative system.

In Tunisia, as in traditional societies, only the institution of marriage is the socially recognized institution of family forming and childbearing, meaning recognizing the “legitimacy of the sexual relationship”. Meanwhile relationships outside of marriage remain hidden and undisclosed, practiced but not talked about.

**Rahima Rouissi, Single Mothers in Tunisia, emergence and defense strategies, Masters Thesis, 2019**

The researcher have concluded throughout her study that single mother find themselves in a self defense situation, a they are already socially convicted, after they suffer from exclusion, and social isolation, along with being abandoned by their families, thus, they seek to develop alternative strategies, such as marrying elders, as a refuge to protect themselves and get rid of the torture inflicted by their families and society.

**Souad Boudhina, Supervision and Care for the Single Mother in Tunisia, Procedures Guide**

In this guide, the researcher addressed the procedures adopted to take care of the single mother starting from the period of pregnancy, to the moment of birth and after childbirth, and spoke of all the parties involved in every stage that the single mother goes through, and all the legal frameworks that organize this involvement, and she highlighted that among the most interfering institutions are the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Family, Woman, Children, and Elderlies.

**Conclusions:**



The studies prove that sexual relations outside marriage are spread and practiced, yet the state and society keep denying its spread, thus single mothers who decided to keep the child and take responsibility for the result of the sexual relation, are women who decided to break the barrier of silence surrounding the sexual relation, and made it an exposed act, ending up putting the values and morals system under questioning and shook it. Being a single mother is on the one hand a challenge and a revolution against the spread social system, and on the other hand, it is a shake for the religious taboo.

- It also highlights that most of the social representations carry the idea that the single mother is not capable of assuming responsibility towards her child because she is unbalanced and unqualified neither to raise a child nor to meet his economic and social needs. subsequently,

There is an underestimation and contempt for the role of women in Tunisia and their role as mothers, as if it is a role that is not complete without a man, for without him the educational role remains lousy.

Throughout this study, we conclude that single mothers is a phenomenon that distinguishes vulnerable and poor groups, along with the limited educational level, and since it is rejected socially and religiously as a phenomenon, it doubles the vulnerability of single mothers and makes them a target for criticism and defamation by society, that is associated with everything that has to do with marginalization and contempt, especially that the situation involves not only the mother and her child, but also her family, as long as the pregnancy is "Forbidden", it is seen as defamation for the family and dishonor, which makes a large number of these mother give up their children straight after birth. Thus, society inflicts all forms of contempt and slavery, leading single mothers and children to delinquency, neurological and psychological diseases.

### **III. The Sociological Presentation of the Subject:**

## **1- The Concept of Single Mothers:**

The concept of a single mother is a new concept in the field of Arabic studies, especially social ones. It is derived from the Western field, chiefly the European, specifically French and English, as it is a translation for "les mères célibataires" and "single mother", which means the name given to a woman who gives birth outside the institution of marriage, whatever the forms of this birth, whether as a result of rape, or the abandonment by the biological father after pregnancy, or as a result of a woman's decision to become pregnant through artificial insemination, as is the case For Western countries, although the Arab context has not yet seen cases similar to this artificial insemination and voluntary.

In the Arab context, after naming the single mothers following the translation of the French concept (Les mères célibataires), meaning those who gave birth to a child after a sexual relation outside the institution of marriage. The metaphorical translation came from the French social lexicon, given the spread of the phenomenon in France at the beginning of the seventies. The impact of the "sexual revolution" and the result of openness and the cultural and social transformations that Tunisia is going through, is similar to that. Like some Maghreb and Arab countries, since the nineties of the last century, where the phenomenon emerged, and as a result of a rise the number of single mothers, and sponsorship by some civil society associations working on women's issues, and their support by international bodies.

## **2- A Sociological Reading of Single Mothers Issue:**

The single mothers issue is is considered among the manifold and complicated issues specifically within the Tunisian cultural and social context, and generally the Arab-Islamic one, due to the association of childbirth outside the institution of marriage with the religious and social normative system which condemns sexual relations outside "the legitimate" context, meaning marriage, making single mothers and children born outside this institution vulnerable to many

forms of violence, exclusion, marginalization, and conviction that can reach into some countryside areas the level of death threat.

Violence can be symbolic, verbal, moral, physical, economic, or social:

If the single mother subject is among the ignored, and unannounced ones, to the point it is considered as a taboos that should not be discussed. However, the social reality and statistics reflect the complete opposite, in which many official studies the opposite of the spread beliefs, in which many official statistics such as the ones made by the the National Office for Family and Population indicate that the rate of births occurring outside marriage is between 1200 and 1600 cases every year, which equals three or four children yearly. It should also be noted that in the sixties the daily rate was 10 children per day, but the legalization of the marital relationship through the Personal Status Code and the state's adoption over the years of a birth control policy by providing contraceptives and access to the right to abortion in addition to the provision of mother and child care and health services such as the centers in which the state has allocated In the late nineties, a special section for "single" girls was established to enable them to obtain an abortion for free. 24 centers were established in 24 states, in addition to women going out for work and education. All these factors played an important role in the decline of birth outside marriage.

Still, this does not deny the presence of this phenomenon in society, as studies show that most single mothers are in the same category, they are between the ages of 23 and 25, with a low level of education, and often come from a poor social background, along with a level of education that does not exceed high school, and only a small percentage of them have a higher level of education.

Many single mothers suffer from social exclusion and economic marginalization because families often leave their daughters and judge them morally, considering them a source of shame and dishonor, thus damaging the family status, which for them occurs as soon as she loses her virginity, following the sexual relation that took place outside marriage, because in traditional societies, dominated by the patriarchal system, woman gains her position within the family when she is "an honorable wife" by keeping her virginity and the sacredness of her body, in addition to obtaining the honor of "legitimate"

motherhood, which is the path towards her position within society, and her family. On the other hand, deviating from this social norm is considered a strike to the normative system, a danger threatening the social system, and even a complete collapse of the family's position, and the social monitoring forced on the female body, and individual freedoms.

Conversely, the phenomenon that conceals the transformations of sexuality in society in the context of openness to free sexual relations, or what the sociologist Abdessamad Dialmy calls the "sexual explosion", implies a dysfunction in the connection between the accusative and the reality, whether this text is religious or legal, whereby motherhood becomes from the most beautiful dream and the most honorable gender function to shame, as long as motherhood took place outside of marriage and outside the foundations set by society. And regardless of the reasons and factors behind the phenomenon, whether it is the result of rape, or occurred within following a love relationship, or even during the engagement period, and ended up by separation, or the partner's death, or escaping his responsibility and denying the pregnancy, or it occurred as a result of the ignorance of both sides of the bilateral relationship about sexual culture and education, especially since the use of condoms and contraceptive pills is almost an elitist culture. The single mother remains, in the end, the scapegoat of society, and a victim of the legislative and realistic contradictions.

Often fingers are pointed at the single mother and she is held fully responsible for the pregnancy, even if she is a victim, a victim of sexual exploitation or a victim of rape in order to turn into a culprit, and this reflects the calcification of the masculine mentality, which considers the sexual relationship a reflection of the man's virility in return for "women's immorality" in which bears the burden of preserving the standards and values set by society in return for the man enjoying his freedom, as he is the master who has the capacity to plow his land as he pleases and to finally marry whoever he wants, without accountability or oversight. His religion, while the woman is the subject of

plowing and the heart, always remains the victim of the master who owns her body, her honor, and her honor, for he is the origin and she is the branch, and he is the origin and she is the copy. As the masculine thought perpetuates the inferiority of women and carries the burden of preserving the standards and values set by society in return for the man enjoying his freedom, as he is the master who has the capacity to plow his land as he pleases and to marry in the end whoever he wants, without accountability or oversight, and when he marries after a long sexual adventure, whatever the results, his marriage would still be blessed as he has completed half of his religion, while the woman who is in an inferior position, always remaining the victim of the master who owns her body, and her honor, for he is the origin and she is the offshoot, and he is the origin and she is the copy.

This situation that most women go through, despite reaching the highest positions, and proving her competence in all fields and the role she plays to contribute to the development of the society, when it comes to sexual relations, and motherhood outside marriage, she remains condemned socially and culturally. This had made many feminist movements around the world raise the slogan “Hands Off Women Bodies”, in a protests expressing women’s right to retrieve their bodies, and freeing them from the group’s authority.

Although this issue is among the disregarded subjects, many feminist associations sought to shed light on the suffering of women who gave birth outside marriage, including those who decided to keep the child, and they tried to support them throughout offering some services, yet the efforts of these associations remains limited considering the scarce human resources that cannot cover the needs of single mothers in Tunisia, not to mention that protecting rights and freedoms and guaranteeing good life is basically the state’s duty.

#### **IV. Legal analysis:**

##### **✓ The legal status of single mothers in Tunisian law: (by Judge Omar Weslati)**

There is no special section in the Tunisian legal system related to the protection and guarantee of the rights of single mothers or the custodial mother and their

children, such as alimony, guardianship, lineage and inheritance, although the Tunisian legal system with regard to women's rights is pioneering for Arab societies, including its adoption of preventing polygamy and regulating the institution of marriage, divorce, custody, lineage, and everything related to family's life.

It is important to note that the Tunisian legislators of The Code of Personal Status did not mention the special cases that may occur outside the legal framework of the institution of marriage, which is especially associated with the single mothers situation, in which it was disregarded by the Tunisian law, specifically by the Code of Personal Status, the Code of Civil Status, and the Law of Granting Last Names to Children of Unknown Parentage, as they consider it a criminalized act, throughout prohibiting religious freedom outside the framework of marriage, which paved the way to dyeing those cases that existed, and tried to cover it, and avoid recognizing its full rights, which are acknowledged by the international treaties that Tunisia signed after issuing the Code of Personal Status.

At a later stage, and in a modest manner, the legislator approved for the children born outside marriage the right to parenthood, and forgot a set of rights for single mothers in a relationship with their children, and granted a partial recognition of the rights of the framework of marriage with the right to paternity, and then recognized for them the right to identity and alimony, but this law did not recognize their right to lineage, and this directly affects their economic rights of children.

After the revolution of December 14, 2010-January 14, 2014, pressure increased for the recognition of equal rights for male and female citizens, regardless of their social status, full and undiminished rights, including non-discrimination based on social status. In the context of framing the issue of the rights of single mothers, reference can be made to the provisions of the Tunisian constitution, which approved an important principle in Article 21: "Male and female citizens are equal in rights and duties, and they are equal before the law without discrimination." Article 46 of the Tunisian Constitution stipulates a general obligation to protect, provide, and fulfill, explicitly stipulating that "the state is committed to protecting the acquired rights of women, supporting their gains, and working to develop them."

“The state guarantees the equality of opportunities between women and men to have access to all levels of responsibility in all domains. The state works to attain parity between women and men in elected Assemblies. The state shall take all necessary measures in order to eradicate violence against women.”

Denying single mothers - foster mother- their basics rights based on their social situation after giving birth outside the system that is supported by the Code of Personal Status represents a major violation of of constitutional rules and human rights in general, which are granted by the Tunisian constitution. The same constitution also imposes within the context of single mothers, the right of children born outside the framework of marriage that is organized by the Code of Personal Status, as its Article 47 states “ Rights guaranteed to children from their parents” without indicated the situation in which the child was born, which makes the state carry the burden of “rights to dignity, health, care and education”, in accordance with what Tunisia has approved of children rights in the Code of Child Rights that kept getting delayed since the country has already approved the International Convention on the Rights of the Child. The same article has stated “The state must provide all types of protection to all children without discrimination and in accordance with their best interest.” despite that the approved international treaties are considered to be superior to local laws, as stated in article 20 “International agreements approved and ratified by the Assembly of the Representatives of the People have a status superior to that of laws and inferior to that of the Constitution.”. However, the legal results of this superiority remains rare, especially when it is about supporting the rights of single mothers, and their children, as the state did not legislatively work on recognizing these cases which are opposed by society, and many associations have tried to help single mothers by providing them with shelter and by all the available means.

Single mothers are exposed to discrimination and the lack of full recognition of their rights to access justice, although Tunisia has ratified many agreements, including the most important agreement on the elimination of all forms of discrimination. It defined “discrimination against women” as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction that takes place on the basis of gender.” Among its provocations or purposes is the weakening or thwarting of women’s recognition of their human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field, or the weakening or thwarting of their enjoyment or exercise of these rights, regardless of their marital status and on the basis of equality between them and men. Article 2 of

the agreement also obliges, “States parties to condemn all forms of discrimination against women, and agree to adopt, by all appropriate means and without delay, a policy aimed at eliminating discrimination against women, and to this end they commit to do the following:

- a) a) Incorporate the principle of equality between men and women into their national constitutions or other appropriate legislation, if this principle has not yet been incorporated therein and to ensure the practical realization of this principle through legislation and other appropriate means;
- b) b) Taking the necessary measures to, legislative and non-legislative, including the appropriate punishments, to prohibit any discrimination against women
- c) Enforcing legal protection for women rights, based on equality with men, and guaranteeing the efficient protection for women, specialized courts and other public institutions in the country, against any discrimination.
- d) Refrain from engaging in any discriminatory act or practice against women, and ensure the authorities' actions and public institutions consistent with this commitment;
- e) taking all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women exercised by any person or organization, or institution
- f) Take all appropriate measures, including legislative ones, to change or abolish existing laws, regulations, customs and practices that constitute discrimination against women.
- g) Abolish all national penal provisions that discriminate against women.



Article 16 of the mentioned treaty also states that the state parties should “take All appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relationships, and in particular guarantees, on the basis of equality between men and women:

- a) The same right in marriage contract
- b) the same right to freely choose a spouse and not to enter into marriage except with her free and full consent
- c) The same rights and responsibilities during marriage and upon its dissolution;
- d) The same rights and responsibilities as parents, regardless of their martial status, concerning matters related to their children, and in all cases the interests of children remains the priority.
- e) The same rights to decide, freely and with awareness of the consequences, the number of her children and the period between a child and the next one , and in obtaining information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights.
- f) The same rights and responsibilities in respect of guardianship, wardship, guardianship and adoption of children, or similar costumes whenever one of these concepts are found in the national legislation, and in all cases, the interest of the child is prioritized.
- g) The same Personal rights for the husband and the wife, including the right to choose the family name, and the labor type
- h) h) The same rights for both spouses with respect to the ownership, possession, supervision, management and enjoyment of property, whether free of charge or in exchange for compensation.

Tunisia's ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child had a direct impact on the issuance of the Child Rights Code. The provisions contained in the Child Protection Code apply to the status of children born outside marriage , which "this code guarantees the child's right to enjoy various preventive measures, of a social, educational, health nature, and other provisions and procedures aimed at To protect them from all forms of violence,

harm, or physical, moral, or sexual abuse, or neglect or negligence that lead to abuse or exploitation, which is included in the protection that a child born outside marriage is granted, in view of his best interest, which is expressly enshrined in Chapter Y, which stipulates that The best interest of the child must be considered in all actions taken in his regard, whether by courts, administrative authorities, public social welfare institutions or the Code of Child Protection. However, the legal status of the single mother, in terms of her rights to alimony, housing, and other rights granted by the Code of Personal Status remains the subject of complete denial, and in the face of the increasing number of single mothers, the Tunisian legislator found a middle ground in which they recognized the minimum rights of children, such as the right of a last name that is associated with an alimony that includes housing, clothing, and subsistence, etc, along with recognizing the right of children born outside the framework of marriage to the identity that is stated in the Civil Status Code, which in fact granted it only to children born within the institution of marriage that is organized by the Code of Personal Status.

The law granting children born out of wedlock the family name might be the beginning of recognizing the legal status of single mothers and their right to choose. Indeed, Act 3 bis concerning the right of children of children born out of wedlock to parentage: "The concerned, the father, the mother, or the public prosecutor can take the matter to the specialized court of first instance to request that the surname of the father be given to the child born out of wedlock once his/her parentage is proven by admission, through witness accounts, or through genetic tests. When the concerned persons refuse to submit to a genetic test, the court decides the matter using the evidence available. The child whose parentage is proven has the right to child support, care, and custody until adulthood or after according to law. The father and the mother remain responsible towards the child and others throughout the legal period in accordance with the law". Tunisian law, then, does not grant any legal status to the single mother except her right to seek the rights of her child born out of wedlock. Indeed, in addition to proving his parentage, the child enjoys his full maternal rights in application of act 152 of the Code of Personal Status. The child, however, remains stigmatized as a child born out of wedlock despite the fact the fornication is a crime that requires one of the two sides to be married.

Although Tunisia has enacted several important principles and constitutional acts in the 2022 constitution in addition to ratifying international treaties,

optional protocols, and withdrawing all its objections related to the protection of women from all forms of discrimination, and despite having enacted Act 58 2017, Tunisia remains unrecognizing of the rights of single mothers except for some rights for the rights of children born out of wedlock. Indeed, these children have the right to the surname and child support without having the right to heritage and inheritance. On the other hand, there are no rights granting the woman the right to health care and inheriting from the biological father and that constitutes social discrimination against them.

### **Conclusion:**

Feminist organizations continue to advocate for single mothers to enjoy all the rights prescribed in the Code of Personal Status including the right to child support from the biological father, the right to lodging and care, as well as the child's right to inherit from his father like legitimate children.

In this regard, we notice the very limited role of the state in protecting single mothers. The state, in fact, completely nullifies their role in society as the legal system lacks any legal framework that protects single mothers and incriminates assaulting them. The state then, deals with the phenomenon of single mothers from a societal and religious perspective that considers intercourse before marriage illegitimate. The state also treats the single mothers mostly as a victim while it could be a choice and part of the right of women to have full agency over their bodies as well as their right to choose to be single mothers without subscribing to the institution of marriage.

The limited scope of the legal framework and the near absence of public authorities that are supposed to safeguard the rights of single mothers and ease their access to the services and to their rights makes this section of society even more marginalized and impoverished and can have severe repercussions on the woman and her child.

## **Part II: Field Study**

### **1- Study objectives:**

This field study aims at:

- An objective understanding of the phenomenon of single mothers and the difficulties that surround them as well as the challenges that impede women from enjoying their rights and the rights of their children.
- A scientific reading of the social environment and its reaction to the situation of single mothers.
- Pointing out the failings of the policies adopted by state institutions in looking after single mothers and safeguarding their rights.
- Formulating recommendations to bolster the rights of single mothers and change mentalities.

## 2- Study Methodology.

### **Qualitative Study**

Due to the lack of statistics on single mothers in our society and the difficulty of reaching single mothers because of fear of scandal we will rely on a qualitative study (Max Weber) as we use case studies wherein individual experience and try to understand the behaviour of the individual and the mechanisms that influence the phenomenon. We will focus on real life experiences past and present.

This methodology is interested in the full picture through analyzing the different factors that influence the case while also taking into account the influence of the external environment.

### **Research Techniques:**

#### **- Semi-directed interview:**

It consists of an interview between the researcher and other persons to collect the data needed by for making scientific findings and achieving the goals of the study. This, also, allows us to gather information to paint a picture of the emotions and behaviours of the interviewees under certain conditions and in their lives.

The interview is built on semi-open questions that allow the interviewee a freedom to answer the questions her own way.

We have divided the interview guide to three time-based parts: a first part about the pre-pregnancy period. This includes childhood, adolescence, family life, relations with school friends, ambition, and sex education. Part 2: The

pregnancy period. This part includes how the pregnancy took place, whether it was consensual, how the child's father was recognized, the reaction of the victim and her family, support, birth, access to services and the role of state institutions (health, social and women services). As for the third part, it concerns the motherhood experience, the difficulties women face when they decide to keep the child, proving parentage, how to cover basic needs, relation with the environment, strategies for protection and self defence.

- **The content analysis technique:** The norms used in this method are expressions, subject, and personality.
- **Study sample:** Cases of women who became single mothers between the ages of 17 and 24. All cases come from disadvantaged families and their maximum level of instruction is 5<sup>th</sup> grade, except three who respectively reached 7<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade while one is illiterate.

We tried through this qualitative study to perform more than 20 interviews with single mothers who shared the experience of motherhood. However, there are many similarities between them. Indeed, most cases are from rural areas while only one belonged to the urban area of Kabariah.

Most case studies come from poor families. Most women we met lived with their mothers except three who married after giving birth then divorced or became widows and remain in their marital homes.

We have also interviewed a senior employee from the social services at the ministry of social affairs to study the institutional treatment of this section of society, the services they receive, and the difficulties in looking after them. We also met an attorney who specializes in defending women, specifically single mothers, to discuss the possibilities they have in reaching justice as well as a psychologist to probe into the psychological experience of single mothers.

## **Qualitative Study Results**

### **1- Social factors.**

#### **1-1 The family: from a protective environment to a violent one.**

We have focused on studying the family's composition, their interactions, and the relationship between its members and the social environment to know what sort of families have a negative effect on the individual's behaviour and

how relationships form within them? How does the family turn from an institution of social upbringing to an institution that contributes to exclusion and marginalization? What is the position of the woman within this family that makes her under the threat of sexual violence?

The family plays a major role in social upbringing and education. Indeed, it is the first social institution that forms the personality of the individual and decides their orientations and inclinations. The more relationships within the family are close and emotional and based on listening and dialogue the more its members have a balanced personality. However, field work showed us that most cases we met lived in traditional families that relied on violence and control.

Using educational methods that are based on violence and authority without dialogue or consultation contributes to the straining of relationships which become based on fear instead of love and widens the gap between its members. This creates feelings of hate and fear which translates into practices like rape out of need to exercise authority and violence. Women are usually the victim as they represent the weak link that can be controlled and manipulated.

One speaker described her father as a the jailer: "We lived in a prison. My father was very strict. We couldn't breathe. He once hit me so hard I got my head stitched up because I said hi to the neighbours' boy". Rihana describes her brother as : "He hit me so hard he almost killed me. My father reported him to the police and he was arrested. He was released later and my mother sued me and they took me to a correctional facility".

Most cases depict the father who expresses no feelings and relationships based on fear, especially in Mareth. One woman said: "Of men, we only know the father who is strict, rough, and we couldn't even look him in the eye".

The nature of these relationships cannot produce balanced personalities. They, instead, produce shaken personalities that lean towards rebellion and the desire to break free. Indeed, this is especially true as the family retains traditional methods of education while society carries many new modern ideas that valorize the individual within society. Narjess expressed this as she said: "I wanted to live like my peers. I wanted to go out and dress up. I started leaving home in secret". Zohra said: "My family carried obsolete ideas. The world was living one way and they were living another. They couldn't understand me. When you speak to them you only hear "Haram". They wanted to make me live

in their world while I came from a different generation. The world has changed". These situations raise many questions regarding social changes and the gap between generations as well as families' inability to fill this gap so they resort to methods of control and authority which reflects on the nature of relationships. Most cases we have encountered reacted either rebellion, escape from home, or getting kicked out of the home to find themselves on the street.

### **2-1. Educational methods based on discrimination between family members.**

Discrimination between children plays a major role in creating enmity and a gap between them due to jealousy and envy. Sexual assault, then, becomes a tool of revenge. Discrimination between the sexes leads to women's subjugation as they are treated as weak and in need of the brother's protection. Some cases have expressed their dissatisfaction with their brother's treatment of them as the brother enjoys all the privileges while the girl becomes like a maid. While the boy enjoys his "stud" status and can go out as he likes she is repressed and even if she asks to go out with him he tells her that her place is at home without any reaction from the parents. This behavior aggravates the feeling of injustice in girls and her feeling that she is unable to defend herself if she leaves home.

As for other forms of discrimination, they are based largely on education. Qoronfola says: "My sisters can go out and have fun while if I return at 5 pm I get beaten and verbally abused. All this because they are getting an education while I am like their maid. I have decided to challenge the entire family and rebel and prove that I can go out and have fun even if I didn't finish my education".

As relationships are based on the extent to which family members interiorize their roles and positions, these methods of upbringing can produce such practices.

### **2- Violence as a main factor in the phenomenon of single mothers.**

**Physical or material violence:** Half the cases that were studied were subject to repeated violence in the name of education as well as oppression by the brother or the father or the uncle or even the mother which pushed 4 of them to leave home as they no longer felt safe there.

**Sexual violence: Incest:** During field work, we encountered a case of a girl who turned out to be an incest victim. Her father assaulted her. This shows the

nature of relationships within families and its influence on behaviours. The girl became pregnant due to her father's sexual assault.

As family relationships collapse they are replaced by sexual relationships, especially when the relationship between the parents are strained. In time, new types of relationships which are sexual are created and so the daughter becomes a wife since family relationships have lost their value.

Indeed, going back to the aforementioned case, the interviewee says: "My father used to beat my mum constantly. He had many mistresses. He would come home drunk every night. I once found him with his mistress at home. I told my mum to divorce him and that we should move out and live away from him but she refused. He thought I was covering up for him so he started to defend me when I went out. I wanted to prove to him that, just like him, I can go out and get drunk. Until one day, he raped me".

In this context, sociological studies have shown that statistics prove that the rates of teenage delinquency rise as much as the families are fragmented and suffer from collapsing relationships. The relationship becomes between two bodies with no regard to blood ties or any other value that can define these relationships. The greatest problem for families that have incest is that they cannot build an esprit de corps, but rather individual bodies that exercise violence".

### **Rape and sexual exploitation:**

Our case studies spoke about being raped. One interviewee said: "I met a guy while I was asleep in the bus station in Djerba. He took me, fed me, we spent the night together, I don't know what he put in my drink but I found myself the next morning naked in bed and that's when I realized what happened". Folla also spoke about her experience saying: "I was almost living in a forest. I worked as a rosemary harvester and I worked in coal and there I was raped. I was afraid and I didn't tell anyone until they noticed when my belly grew".

As for Jasmin, she said: "When I ran away from home, I lived in the house of a friend and her brother used to come often and we would spend the night together. He was very kind and nice to me and I wasn't aware that he was married. I loved him but he used me. One day I was alone at home and things just happened. I didn't want to do it but he forced himself on me and I found myself helpless. I had nowhere to run".



Rihana was the victim of sexploitation. When she was 14 she was lured into a prostitution ring. Her feelings of deprivation, poverty, and injustice made her easy pray for her recruiter. Back then, she didn't realize she was being exploited. She used to have sex with three persons at the same time for money at that age. Rihana's case is similar to many other cases that are considered human trafficking. Indeed, the National Committee for Combatting Human Trafficking spoke about this in its latest report about the exploitation of children and girls in prostitution networks.

**Moral Violence:** This is one of the most common similarities between all the participants. Indeed, all of them were called names that offended their dignity and directly influenced their mental health. It is noteworthy that most of this verbal abuse took place before they left home and before pregnancy. Indeed, as soon as the girl expressed her desire to go out or dress up or wear makeup she faced all sorts of insults from the family or the social environment. This form of violence creates a feeling of inferiority in girls which makes them easy prey for anyone who tries to restore her confidence in her femininity. Some interviewees used expressions such as: "He spoiled me, he made me feel safe, I felt like a woman with him, I had fun, I felt a warmth and love I didn't experience with my family". The respect and appreciation the woman misses with her family makes her seek it elsewhere and this is what perpetrators use to lure them.

### **The Image of Women in Society:**

Culture differs from one society to another, from one civilization to another, and from one medium to another, and it is a set of symbols which in turn determine the status of each individual within society and the roles that he plays. These roles are a social function that satisfies the individual's need and helps him interact with the rest of the community.

This principle will help us uncover several symbols surrounding extramarital affairs and the status of women in society, their surroundings, given that these symbols are related to the roles played by others in the lives of the victims of this behavior.

The symbolism of fatherhood, motherhood, the symbolism of sex in the familial and social milieu and the image of the woman within this

medium, within the cultural system in which she lives, actions, thoughts, emotions and temperaments are subject to patterns and cultural behaviour.

The attitudes of the social environment in which, through observation, single mothers prevail in some cases, we noticed that women take a position of inferiority and submission, based on the ideas that women were created from the rib of a man. Rather, the presence of the female sex within the family is disastrous, as it bears the burden of family honor and is a crooked rib. Every day you hear things about you the way you dress, and complaints about the way you talk.." Thus, the respondents expressed the method of dealing with them and their families' view of them. "The female body is entrusted with culture and identity more than ever before." It will always be

Condemned and responsible for every immoral act as a symbol of sin and of arousing sexual instincts. It solidifies the image of women as a sex symbol, a symbol of sin and vice.

Even if this woman was a victim and was legally avenged, society has its own view and judgments that are not based on legal proceedings. The normative system it adopts, this cultural representation of women as a profane body responsible for the sexual relationship makes many girls suffer.

This, in addition to the society's adoption of a culture of stigma and shame, which directly causes the phenomenon of mothers to spread. Single women Victims of this behavior usually hide the practices and assaults they are subjected to for fear of scandal and becoming stigmatized and thus losing their realistic social identity, as expressed by Kaufman, and here it is repeated

The attitudes of the female respondents, saying, "Why should we talk, and how not to talk? We expose ourselves and by that we expose the whole family. And I doubt anyone would believe me if I speak."

This body, which has always been desired, becomes a mark of disgrace, and every man who pursues his desires turns it into a disgrace. In secret or in public, or both, to a jurist and preacher who speaks in the name of heaven, and women themselves become defenders.

Indeed, in society, the manifestations of male dominance emerge strongly through the condemnation of emotional relationships.

## **5- Psychological Factors.**

Unstable Adolescence:

We conclude through the interviews that most of the cases are troubled teenagers and others. As we have previously shown, the family environment was not the one that provides sympathy, understanding and tenderness

And the love that a child needs, especially in adolescence, and therefore these repressive methods had great effects on them. Girls have the desire to live adventures and experiences like the rest of the girls of their generation "to go out to Cafes, nightlife, dress, grooming, smoking and romantic relationships".

It is normal matter, given that adolescence is the stage of transition from childhood to adulthood, and is often characterized by many hormonal disorders on the one hand, and behavioral disorders on the other. The school is one of the most important institutions that must intervene in framing young men and women until this stage passes peacefully, which was not found by the mothers who met them.

Field research shows that one-third of the respondents started their relationships when they were no older than 17 years old, which brings us to adventures of adolescence in light of the total absence of sexual education or even health related to reproductive health and knowledge of the body.

### **- Lost of self confidence and the feeling of injustice:**

We also noticed, through the interviews, that female respondents were under the impression that they wanted in any way to prove their femininity because they were treated as either a table or a chair in the house or that lump of sexual desire. Vagabond, meaning "whore", which perpetuated their sense of injustice and imbalance, in addition to the loss of confidence in themselves and in their femininity, as soon as they met a person who expressed his emotions and dealt with them differently, they found themselves pregnant.

## **6- Economic Factors.**

Economic factors affect the course of life of individuals and even their personalities, as poverty and deprivation and fragility enhance the feeling of injustice, exclusion, and non-citizenship of people, which is what happened with Mr. "N" Alti: "Why is my family like this? Why can't I dress as well as my

friends? Why does the teacher treat me with disdain? I never felt like other people. I felt like something less than everyone else and pupils used to laugh at me in school until I quit". These factors created the conditions for Mrs. "N" to be exploited through her economic fragility on the one hand and social exclusion on the other hand at the age of fourteen. The man lured her into a prostitution network in the city of Al-Hama for two years, and she found herself pregnant while she was 15 and six months.

As for other economic factors, they are mainly related to the absence of jobs, and if they exist, they are precarious or unstructured, in which women are exploited, so she finds herself forced to live with a man who seemed that he could provide her with all the necessities of life. One of the victims works as a waitress in a bar and is exploited by the family. She lives with them , and when she decided to face this exploitation, she found herself on the street, and the monthly wage was insufficient for rent. Which made her vulnerable to exploitation by the spouse, especially since she did not know many people in that area.

## **7- Structural Factors.**

- **Absence of Sex Education.**

The results show that there is a basic point of convergence among all the women we met, which is their lack of knowledge of their own bodies like not knowing about pregnancy, and even having never talked about sexual relations before going through the experience. Rather, they stress that the subject is not mentioned in the family, nor with girlfriends, nor in educational institutions, as it is a "A defect" and it is immoral to talk about it, what girls know is that a man is not allowed to touch her while she is required to preserve her virginity because it diminishes her honor, status and that of the family within society.

The absence of sexual education and dealing with sex as a taboo contributes to the fact that the individual cannot perform sexual practices outside the framework set out by the cultural system in generating repression on the one hand, and ignorance of what the sexual act is, on the other. The girl was subjected to sexual abuse, she does not even realize that this is what is called sexual practice and that she is not guilty of anything.

This is the total absence of sexual education and education, the prohibition of sexual relations outside marriage, and even the necessity of abstaining. On the other hand, the sexual encounters of a culture based on individual freedoms, openness to the other, and the desire to experience under the influence of emotion on the one hand, along with pornographic films and pornography, and on social networks. This girl describes her experience with her lover: ""He was addicted to watching porn and when I bring him coffee, I watch some scenes with him, and he often stops me, and one day he allowed me to sit down by his side to watch a movie and we ended up in bed. This situation generates a conflict between the individual and the traditional and civilized and between the individual desire and the social model, which makes his behavior unbalanced and looking for satisfaction. This desire, whatever the means, is met by a need to maintain a stereotyped image set by society.

- **The regression in the work to raise awareness of reproductive health.**

Despite the policy pursued by the state since independence, mainly related to birth control and awareness-raising policy prevention of sexually transmitted diseases and involuntary pregnancy, but when we went to the female respondents with the question be aware of the existence of state institutions that provide services to single women in relation to termination of pregnancy or contraceptives. However, there are only three cases out of twenty who know mother and child care centers and have visited them previously, i.e. before pregnancy and this was related to medical health conditions, while the others expressed their ignorance of the existence of institutions and that single girls have the right to take contraceptive pills or other procedures services.

Girls' lack of knowledge of reproductive health and how to get pregnant or not made them victims of unwanted pregnancy

The cases that were interviewed expressed that they did not want to get pregnant and did not think about it, but they found it. They themselves are pregnant and did not realize that until three months later. In answer to the question of why I was not thought of once the menstrual period was delayed, the answer was that they believed it was a normal issue and that there were some previous disturbances of the relationship, while others answered that they believed that they were unable to conceive because of medical information that if the germ is not treated in the womb, it will not give birth.

- Absence of sheltering centres.

It is necessary to refer at this level to the fact that despite the stipulation of Law No. 58 on the need to provide shelter centers for women victims of violence, however, at the level of implementation, the state's steps are still confused in establishing centers in each country states, in addition to introducing the law and spreading the culture of rights in Tunisia, which fall within the framework of prevention in said law.

In dialogue with the female respondents, there is no relationship with one of the state institutions, especially given the low level education and lack of knowledge of the law and rights, which prevented them from being protected and informed when they were in a situation fragility and need for support.

## **VI- Pregnancy period and its effects on single mothers.**

Most of the surveyed mothers got pregnant involuntarily and unwantedly, meaning that the pregnancy was not voluntary but naturally and biologically without planning for it, except for the three cases of victims of violence and sexual exploitation. In most cases, they lived emotional relationships, and for them, sexual relations are an expression of love, and so it was being deceived, in fact, the nature of these practices is not exclusive to Tunisian society, as most studies show. In all societies, women often experience sexual relations as an expression of love, so they surrender to a partner out of impulse emotion is the opposite of a man who lives the experience as an adventure and as proof of his virility, and that is why once the act occurs, he denies it.

### **1- A pregnancy paved with dangers.**

What can be concluded from the data that we obtained is that most of the mothers realized the pregnancy in a late period and most of them tried to get rid of it without success in this process, for fear of society's reaction and condemnation. Scandal and shame on the one hand and on the other hand, in front of the pressure of the child's father, there were not many options in front of them. In the sense that motherhood was not an option, but imposed by circumstances and nature.

As for the reaction of the surroundings and the family: all single mothers meet at this level on their exposure to insults by their families, their denial, expulsion, and failure to recognize them as members of the family, in addition to all epithets disgraceful, humiliating and destroying their dignity and their selves. "A single mother is subjected to ill treatment and punishment

And exclusion and ostracism by relatives, as well as being deprived of the citizenship status that each person gives rights. Sometimes she finds herself facing the danger of death, because she is the mother of a child who has no surname, and because fatherhood in our societies is reduced to a surname.

And because the surname is considered a vital necessity for the individual to have a legitimate position in our societies, single mothers often abandon their children when they are discharged from the hospitals birth in a brutal way most often, because those children don't have titles.

This situation puts the single mother in a position of exclusion, social isolation, and the inability to cope in her family and social environment, she often finds herself alone without support, especially in front of her father's abandonment the responsibility. Only three cases found support from their mothers.

## 2- Pregnancy without medical supervision.

Most of the cases emphasized the lack of medical follow-up for pregnancy and the failure to obtain a treatment card until after childbirth. This is because of the fear of conviction, and some of them were afraid of being legally arrested, especially when they were minors and were afraid from going to the hospital because she was told that what she committed was a crime and punishable by law. Public institutions have the obligation to be notified and they will be imprisoned. These factors prevented the mother from being cared for as well as the child. One sole case was under medical supervision because the father of the child was security and he was playing the role of the caring father. The health of the mother and the fetus until the time of birth, to disappear later. These positions cause many related risks maternal and child health.

## **VII- Met with the Father's Denial, the Single Mother and the child Face Social exclusion and Economic Fragility.**

### **1- Extra-marital Birth's Effects on the Mother and the Child.**

Denial of paternity and the difficulty of proving it. A child is not born without a biological father, but this paternity requires recognition within the framework of the institution of marriage. In the event of pregnancy outside this institution, the subject requires voluntary confession or proof of parentage, which did not happen in the studied cases where all the parties denied it. She threatened the mothers who succumbed to the fear of the spouse, so she did not reveal the

name. She said: "I was afraid. He was an ex con. He wouldn't think twice about doing something to me or my daughter. He told me that if I gave up his name his mother might have a hard time and he'd kills me". As for Narjess, she says: "My child's father is a cop. He has power and he can do many things. He threatened me and I was afraid. And how would I prove that he's father while he refuses to undergo a genetic test? My mum called his father and he told her prove that he's the father and he'll recognize him".

While the others were not able to determine the identity of the father, given the multiplicity of relationships and ignorance of the pregnancy process.

## 2- Ineffective Judicial Assistance.

In this context, we asked the question about resorting to the court in order to determine the lineage and give the name to the child in order to ensure his right to alimony, most of the respondents answered that they were ignorant of this procedure and of the rights guaranteed by law. For the child, she realizes that even if they are aware, they do not have the financial capabilities to follow up on cases, and they do not have the right to do so the ability to protect themselves from the husband and his threats. As for legal aid: the mothers who answer they interrogated them for the first time they had heard of this procedure.

While the representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs answers the difficulties that prevent the enjoyment of this. The truth, especially since most of the mothers move from their surroundings to another surroundings and often compose another novel. Therefore, they are not registered in the register of deanships and accreditations in which they live, and therefore it is difficult for them to be able to obtain a document proving her need for support and legal aid, as single mothers often prefer to live with an alias as a mechanism of self-defense instead of recognizing and confronting the problem.

These situations refer us to the difficulty of accessing a number of rights, the first of which is the right to legal aid, and thus the right to justice and the right to establish parentage, and thus the right to the name of the child and the right to support him in return promoting the father's escape from responsibility. The subject also refers us to the necessity of subjecting the father to analysis

The genetic makes the mother in a difficult situation in proving parentage, and her journey through the courts may be lengthy, to no avail, so she chooses



She bears the responsibility of motherhood without revealing the identity of the father, thus answered the representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs.

### 3- Social Exclusion.

Single mothers suddenly find themselves homeless and in a very precarious social situation after an involuntary pregnancy outside of marriage. A single mother finds herself without work or financial resources to support her child, and far from a home family, and without a network of acquaintances that could help her get out of the impasse in which she found herself.

In addition to the first period after childbirth, which requires care and attention, and proof of the mother's ability to provide basic needs in order for the Child Welfare Commission not to kill the child, society practices all forms of exclusion and marginalization against the mother the single woman, which often forces her to change her residence address and create a new social identity. One woman says: "People here don't know I'm a single mother. They believe my husband is in Italy. I rented a house and told the landlord my husband is in Libya. I rented a garage with my friend and we live there. I lied to the landlord and told him I'm living with my sister, my husband died in Ben Guerdane, and his family want to take the child away from me".

### 4- Between motherhood and work: a difficult paradox.

As we have already indicated, most single mothers have dropped out of school and are illiterate, and therefore do not have certificates scientific or technical that qualifies them for work, in addition to the blockage of the labor market in Tunisia in general and in Gabes in a way. In particular, the status of maternity and taking care of the child on her own reduces her chances of obtaining a job, especially in the first period of childbirth, so she finds herself forced to accept any work that makes her reconcile motherhood and work only

Here are the mothers who found support from the mother or the environment, who were able to work and take care of the child. Quronfola says as she cries: "I found myself forced to Work in the bar again As a waitress and leave the child alone at home for extended periods of time. So the father of the child informed the childhood services and told him that she was not able to raise the child and meet her needs and that the child remains the whole day alone and she did not exceed the age 5 months. So they took it".

In the same context, the mother finds herself legally required to prove her financial ability and to provide adequate housing and conditions for care

The child so that she can exercise her right to keep him and fully practice her motherhood, which makes the task difficult for her, especially if she recently moved to the place of residence and does not know anyone and avoids contact with people so that her issue is not revealed.

#### 5- Precariousness doubled.

This situation sometimes pushes women to work in fragile sectors in terms of "I try to manage. I sometimes wash bed sheets for a fee or clean houses, and sometimes I buy used clothes and sell them". Some join networks of

Prostitution, and one of the female respondents said: "All doors were shut to me. I rented a house from a woman who told me she could bring me men to spend on me and my daughter and in return you could live here with your daughter.". Another says: "I went back to the people I met at first. I started having sex with them to get money and pay my rent. I had no way out. Every door was shut".

### **VIII- The Psychological Repercussions of Extra-marital motherhood.**

#### Disturbed personalities

In our conversation with the psychologist about the effects of maternal experiences outside the recognized frameworks, we asked if the damages vary according to ages and according to the relationship with the other party (Ordinary, rape, violence, incest) and according to age, mature women and women are less affected by the experience. Young children are affected because sexual intercourse at an early age violates the innocence of the child

She is suspicious of everyone she deals with, and if she is unable to treat, the psychological condition may be worse.

The effects on the sexual experience and the experience of pregnancy, motherhood, and isolation also vary according to the relationship between the mother the single woman is on the other side, her family and her surroundings, in terms of the depth of this relationship and the extent it takes.

The emotional relationship that both agree on and then abandon, goes beyond the effects of loneliness. Feelings of guilt, shame, sadness and loss lead to

mental illness, especially sexual anxiety. Add to that the disturbed type, nightmares, social isolation, thoughts of suicide, and addiction

What Quironfola confirms is, "I started drinking and smoking too much. Twice I tried to commit suicide".The respondents expressed their feelings of remorse, shame and loss.

This behaviour produces different types of personalities like:

**The sad personality:**

She does not reject this behavior and does not resist it, but rather considers herself, the one to blame and responsible for that and a contributing party to this experience, so she feels guilty and her aggression turns towards herself. So she takes revenge on herself by seeking suicide, wishing for death, and feeling hate towards herself.

**The Oscillating personality:**

The victim has mixed feelings and loses control over them, especially if she is young. She does not realize the meaning of the sexual act at the beginning, so her feelings mix between love and hate towards her attacker, especially if the issue is related to incest, meaning that the perpetrator is one of the family members, as she was brought up instinctively on the feelings of love towards the father and brother, and then she finds herself in a strange situation that she has no ability to absorb. What plagues this victim is not the sexual act in itself, but rather the feeling of being unprotected by the family.

**The reclusive personality:**

They are the personalities who tend to become isolated, because of the society's image. She carries the burden of scandal and shame, thus generating a sense of embarrassment that constitutes a threat to one's social identity and self-identity "The human self, as Kaufman sees it, bears a social identity hypothetical (normal people worthy of playing a full role in society) and realistic social identity (reality person in realizing this virtual identity), otherwise there will be a conflict between the two identities. A corrupt person who has no account in the eyes of society and others. Which leads to the inability of the single mother to interaction with the environment in which it is located.

## **IX- The relationship between the single mother and the institutions of the state: Absence of public institutions and access to information.**

In addition to what we previously presented in relation to the absence of sexual education, the absence of social support and the absence of care the health of the mother and child, especially during pregnancy, for respondents who have no relationship with state institutions with their status as single mothers, they have a relationship with the Social Welfare Department of the Ministry's regional office. This is in order to obtain some social benefits, treatment cards, and support from the Mother's Care Association.

In this context, we note the absence of the Ministry of Family, Women, the Elderly, and Children, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Employment and other structures due to the failure to follow public policies that include this social group. The social isolation practiced on single mothers in Tunisia and other Arab countries is not limited to society, it is a systematic and institutional isolation.

Results of the quantitative study:

## **Social representations of the cases of single mothers in the governorate of Gabes**

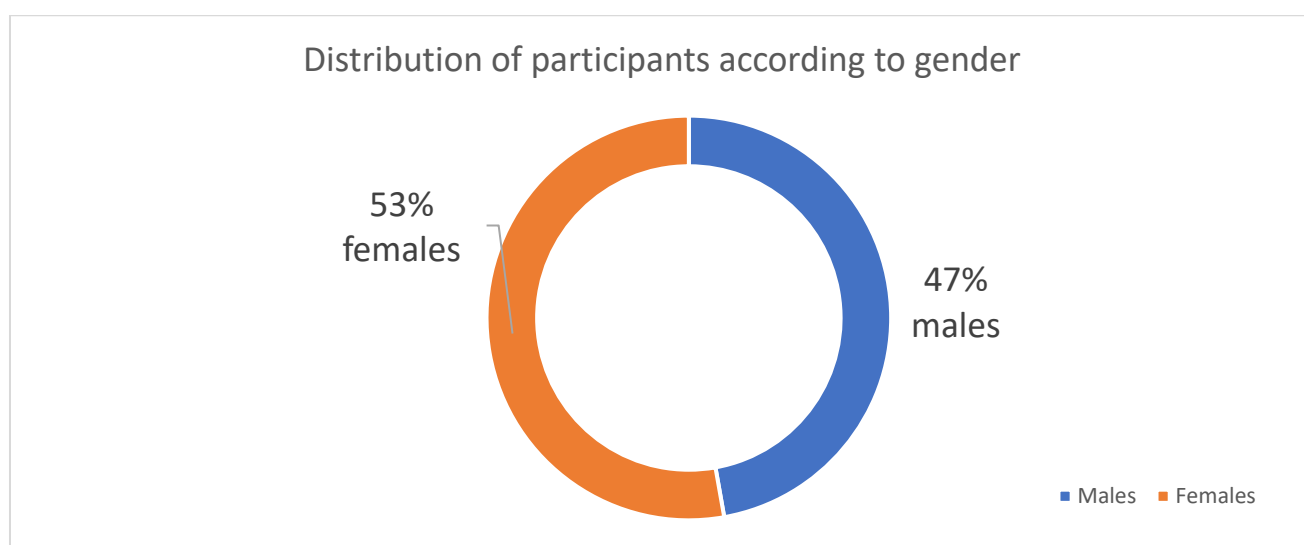
### **1-Sample characteristics:**

#### **\*Distribution of participants according to gender:**

The sample was formed of 290 participants as follows:

	Quantity	Percentage
Males	137	47.2%
Females	153	52.8%
Total	290	100%

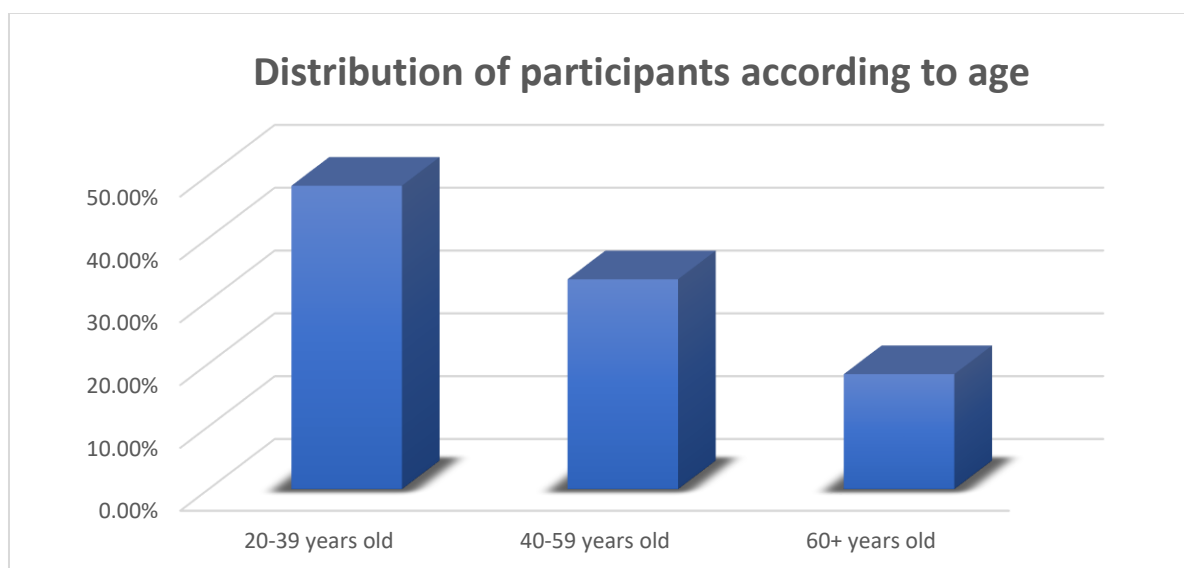
The sample consists of 137 male (47.2%) and 153 female (52.8%).



#### **\* Distribution of participants according to age:**

Age group	Quantity	Percentage
20-39	140	48.3%
40-59	97	33.4%
60+	53	18.3%
Total	290	100%

The result of the age structure analysis showed that the age ratios of the sample members vary, as we find that almost half of them (48.3%) are between the ages of 20 and 39 years, which corresponds to 140 respondents, which is an important percentage and represents the category of youth, as for the second half, it is divided between the adults and the elderly, where we find 97 individuals whose ages range between 40 and 59 years old (33.4%) representing the adults category, and 53 respondents belong to the age group over 60 years old (18.3%) representing the elderly.

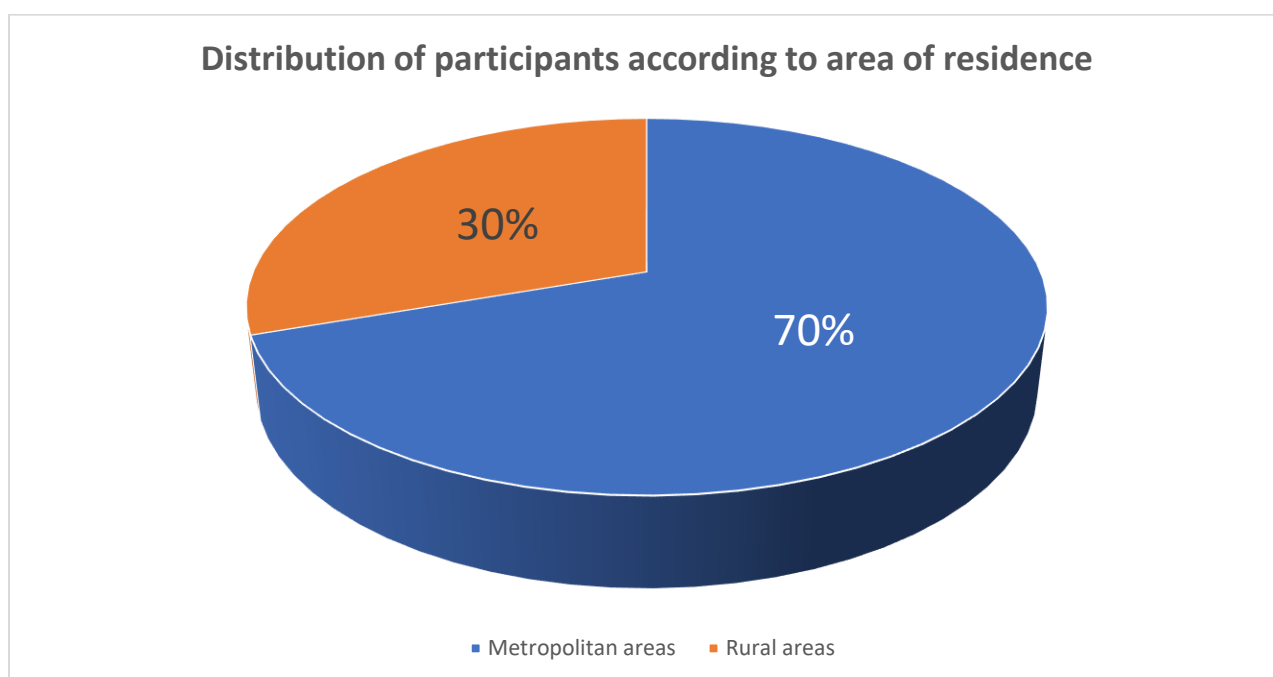


**\* Distribution of participants according to area of residence:**

Area of residence	Quantity	Percentage
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Metropolitan area	202	69.7%
Rural area	88	30.3%
Total	290	100%

It becomes clear to us that most of the respondents belong to the metropolitan (urban) areas, as their percentage was 69.7% equals to 202 individuals, while the percentage of respondents in the non-municipal (rural) areas is estimated at 30.3% roughly 88 individuals.



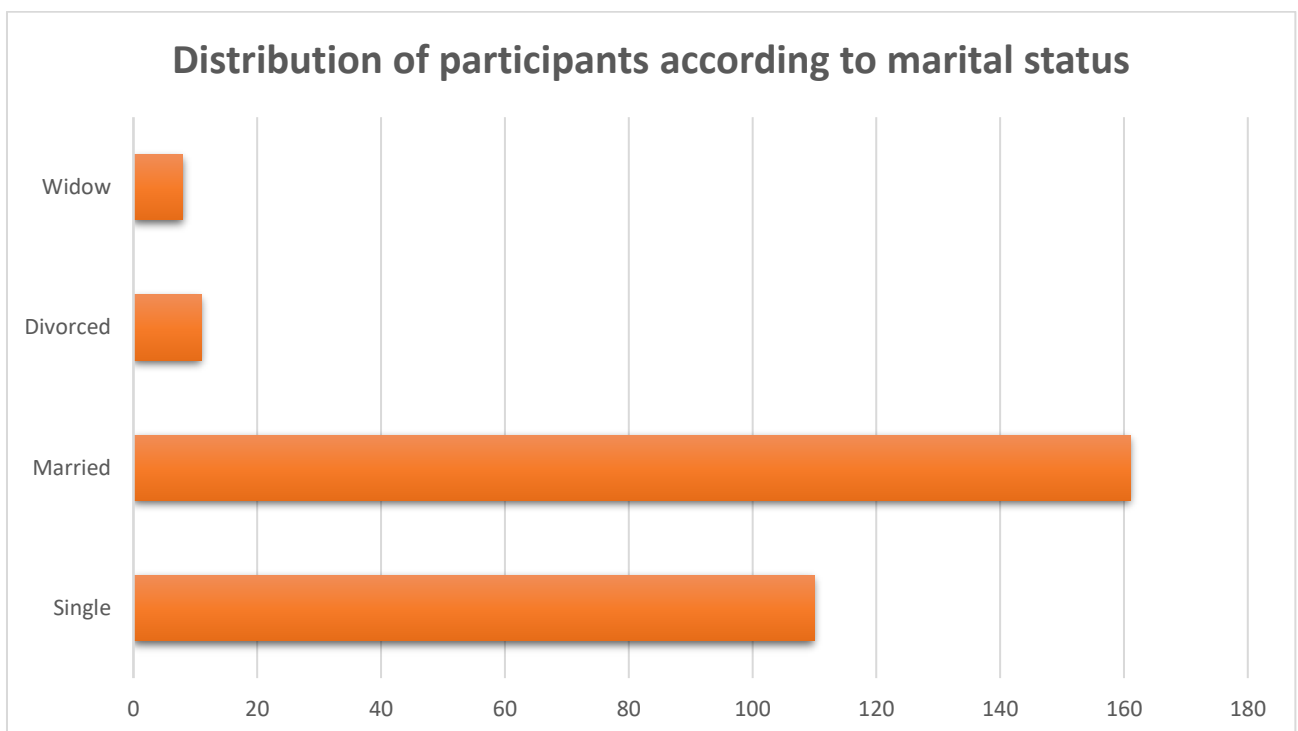
**\* Distribution of participants according to marital status:**

Marital status	Quantity	Percentage
Single	110	37.9%

Married	161	55.5%
Divorced	11	3.8%
Widow	8	2.8%
Total	290	100%

From the data available it appears that more than half of the respondents are married, at a rate of 55.5% corresponds to 161 individuals, while 9.37% declared that they are singles around 110 respondents.

The rest consist of 3.8% divorced subjects equals to 11 individuals and 2.8% widowed roughly 8 subjects.



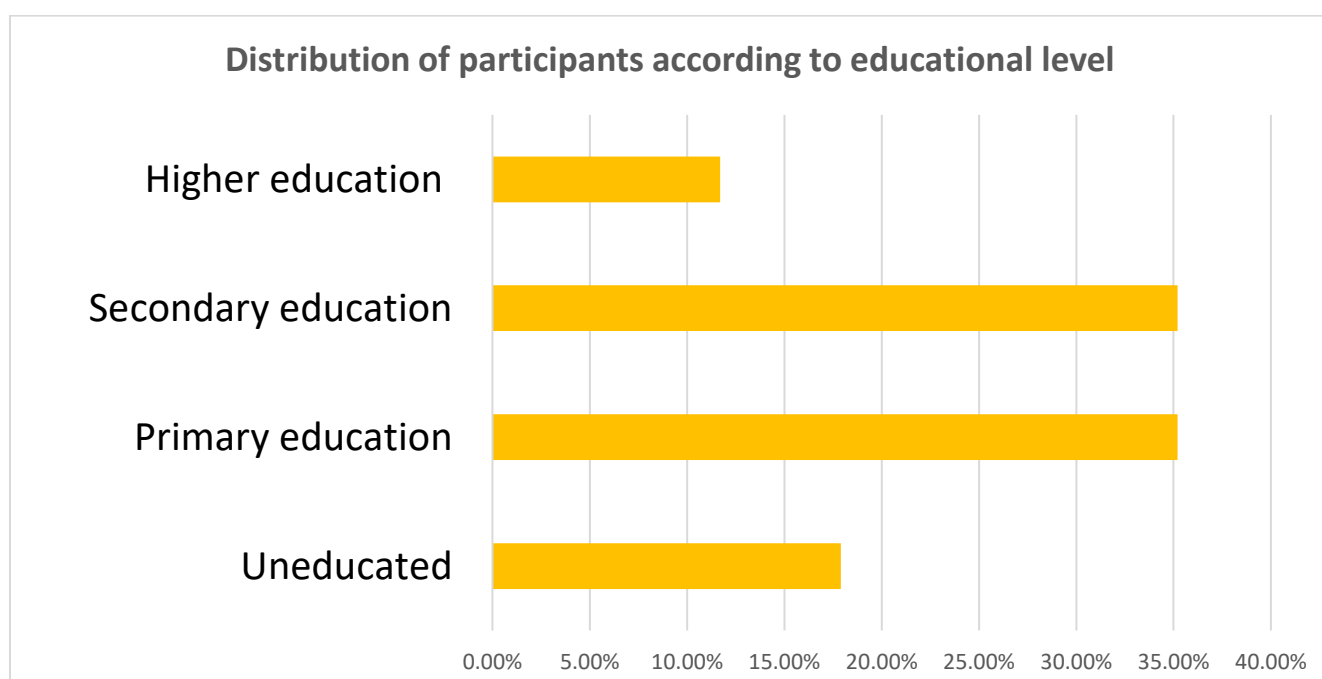


**\* Distribution of participants according to educational level:**

Educational level	Quantity	Percentage
Uneducated	52	17.9%
Primary education	102	35.2%
Secondary education	102	35.2%
Higher education	34	11.7%
Total	290	100%

It is clear from the table that the educational level of most of the respondents is primary and secondary, with an estimated rate of 35.2% about 102 individuals for each level, with a rate of 17.9%, which equals 52 respondents for the illiterate.

We also note that the number of respondents who have a high level of education is very small, not exceeding 34 individuals, with an estimated rate of 11.7%.



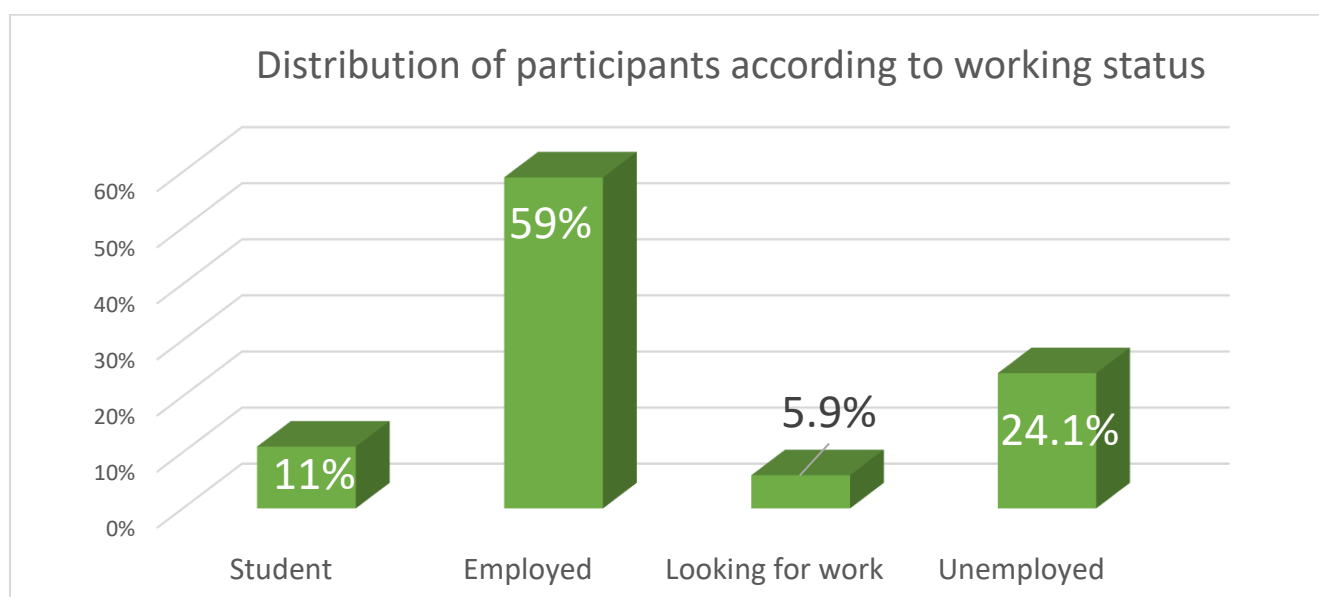
**\*Distribution of participants according to working status:**

Working status	Quantity	Percentage
Student	32	11%
Employed	171	59%
Looking for work	17	5.9%
Unemployed	70	24.1%
Total	290	100%

It is clear from the data that the active working group ranked first with a rate of 59%, which is equal to 171 individuals out of 290 in total, followed by the unemployed group with a rate of 24.1% equals to 70 individuals.

As for the respondents who are pursuing their studies or in the process of pursuing vocational training, they represent 11% of the total number of respondents.

As for the remaining category, they are the unemployed and those in the process of searching for a job. This category has the lowest percentage in the sample, representing 5.9%, and their number does not exceed 17 respondents.



**\*Distribution of participants according to the father educational status:**

Educational status	Quantity	Percentage
Uneducated	123	42.4%
Primary education	78	26.9%
Lower secondary education	27	9.3%
Upper secondary education	30	10.3%
Higher education	22	7.6%
Total	280	96.6%
Unknown	10	3.4%
Total	290	100%

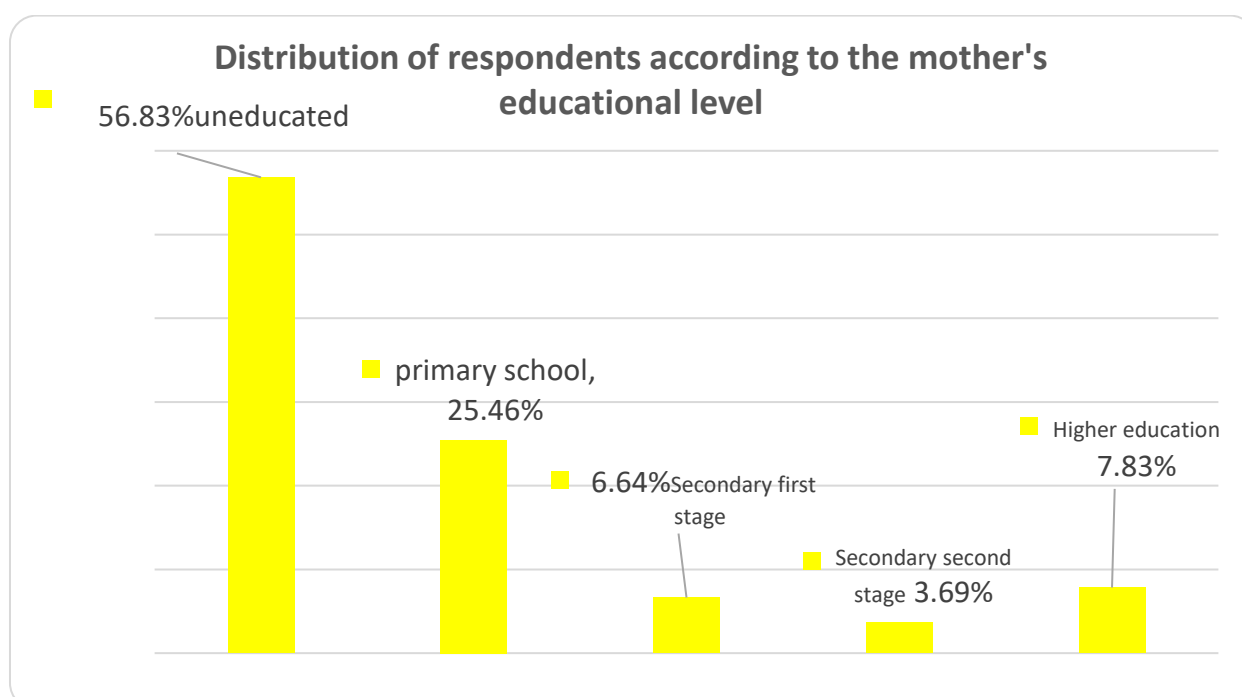
We conclude that the educational status for the fathers of the respondents is limited in general, as we note that almost half of all respondents stated that their fathers did not attend school and did not have any proper education at a rate of 42.4%.

while parents who received primary education only 27.86% and those who have an educational level are estimated at 20.35%. We note that there is also a low percentage of respondents who have parents with a university education level, estimated at: 7,85%.

**\* Distribution of respondents according to the mother's educational level:**

	Percentage	Number
Mom (unschooled)	42,4	123
primary	26,9	78
Secondary first stage	9,3	27
Secondary second stage	10,3	30
Higher education	7,6	22
Total	96.6	280
Unknown	3.4	10
Total	100	290

Regarding the educational level of the respondents' mothers, 56.83% of the mothers have no level of education, 25.48% have a primary education level, 10.33% have a secondary education level, while 7.83% Among them are with a university education.



## **1- General results of the research:**

### **1.2 Values and standards relating to the phenomenon of single mothers:**

We raised many questions about the values and standards related to the phenomenon of single mothers, where we touched in the first stage on the issue of **individual freedoms** due to their importance and as they give the person the right to choose between one act and another, it is a human right and freedom is a basic value in developed societies as human freedom in his personal choices and exercise without control or any form of prevention.

These freedoms represent the right to life, bodily integrity, the right to security and freedom, freedom of thought, belief and conscience, freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to private life, and their recognition and importance contribute to building a modern democratic society that believes in individuals and their rights and freedoms, thus achieving the required coexistence and social cohesion.

In a second stage, we touched on the issue of gender equality and the nature of the relationship between the two parties. The questions at both stages were aimed at figuring out the values and standards.

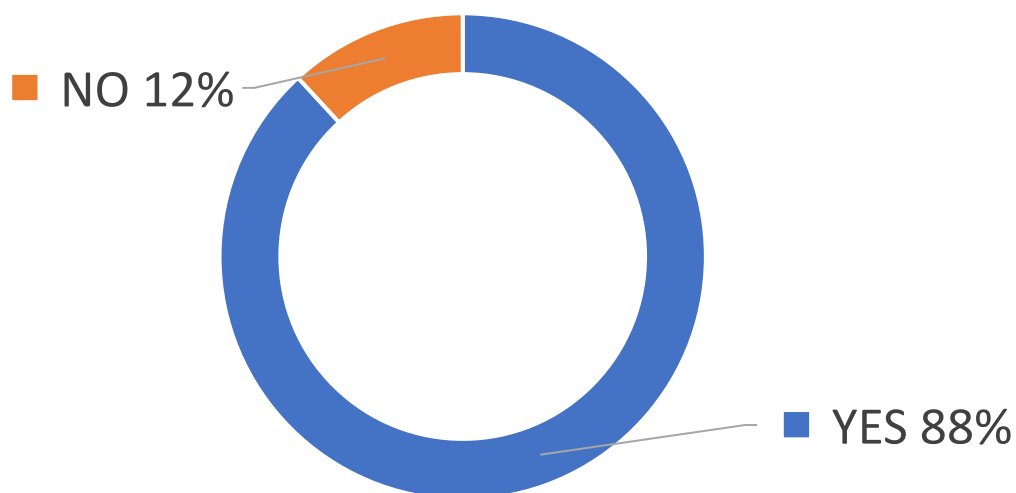
**\* Distribution of respondents according to the extent of change in society and the standards of the new generation:**

**- Do you imagine that society has changed and that the new generation has new standards?**

88.15% percent of respondents admitted that society has changed, making the current generation have new standards different from those of their predecessors, contrary to 11.85% of respondents who believe that society has not changed and that the two generations have the same standards.

	Percentage	Number
Yes	87.2	253
No	11.7	34
Total	99	287
Unknown	1	3
Total	100	290

**Do you imagine that society has changed and that the new generation has new standards?**



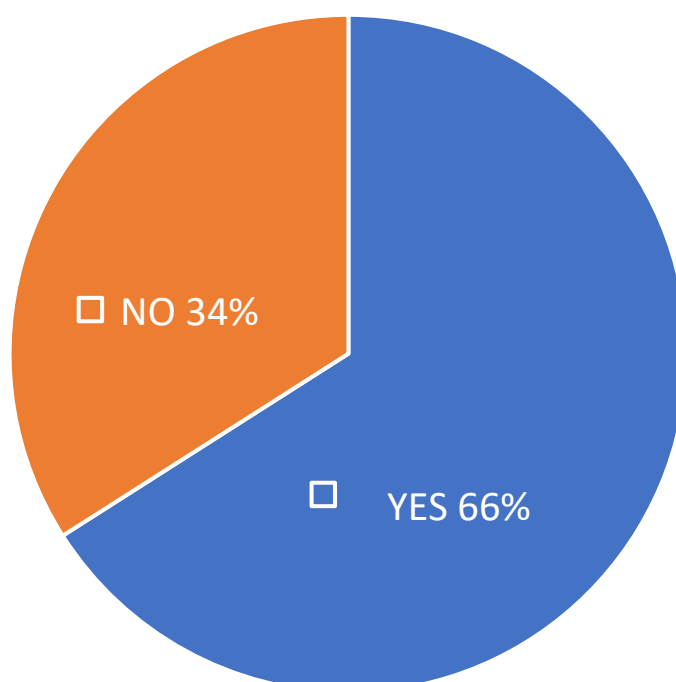
**\* Distribution of respondents according to their acceptance or rejection of individual freedoms.**

**- Are you for individual freedoms?**

	Number	Percentage
Yes	190	65.5
No	98	33.8
Total	288	99.3
Unknown	2	0.7
Total	290	100

Perhaps the main observation that can be concluded is that the majority of respondents favor individual freedoms by 65.97% and 34.03% rejects it.

Are you for individual freedoms?

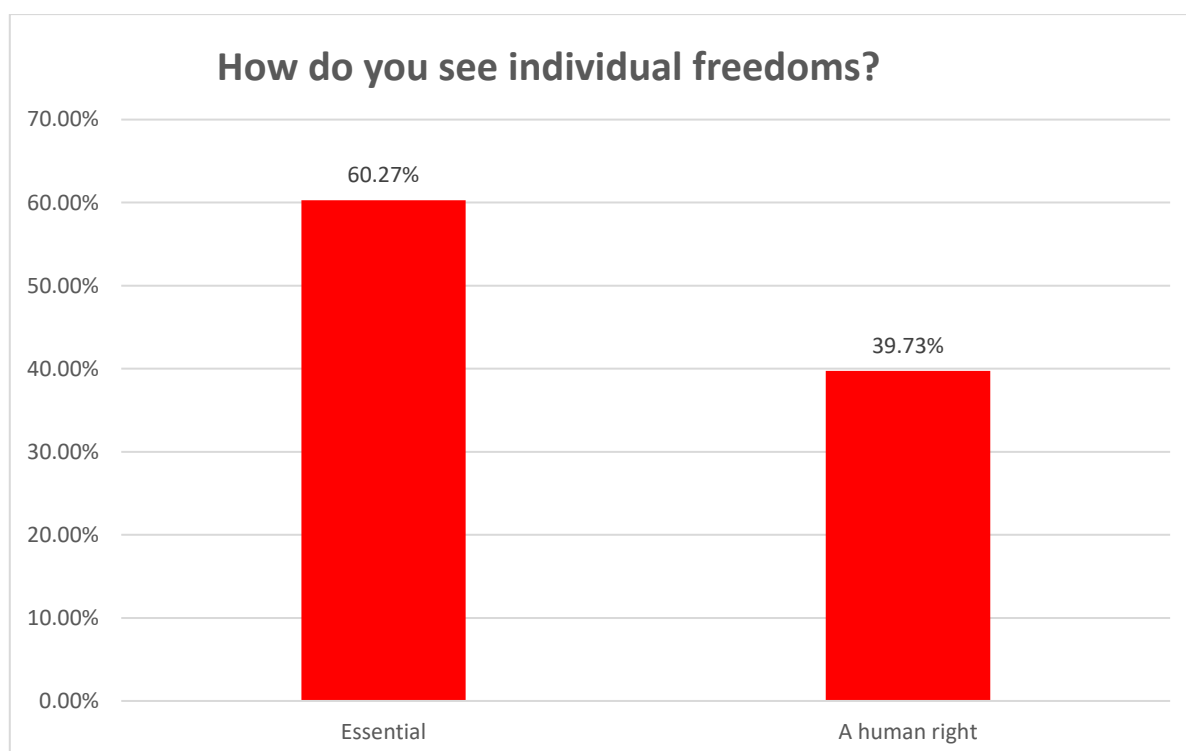


**\* Distribution of respondents according to their view of individual freedoms:**

**- How do you see individual freedoms?**

	Number	Percentage
Essential	87	30
A human right	132	45.5
Total	219	75.5
Unknown	71	24.5
Total	290	100

60.27% of the total respondents consider individual freedoms as a human right while 39.73% consider them essential.



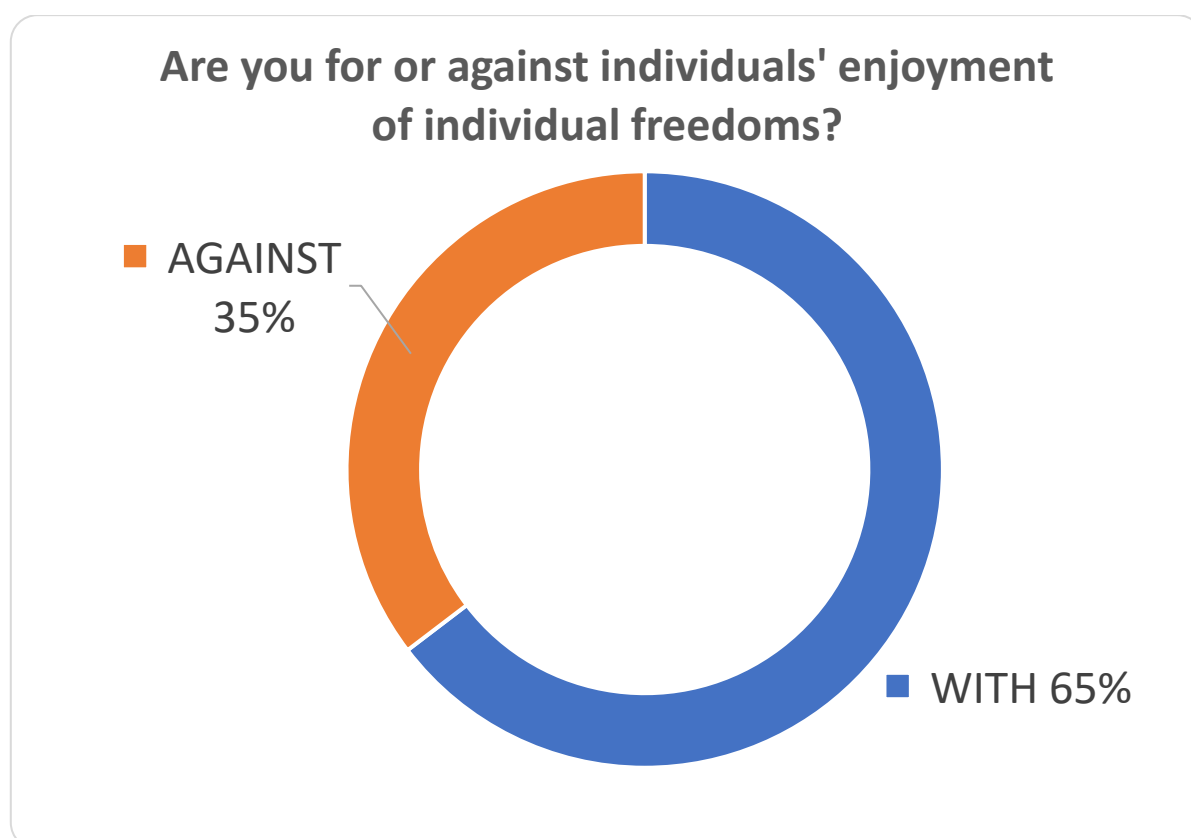


**Distribution of respondents by who is for or against the enjoyment of individual freedoms:**

**Are you for or against individuals' enjoyment of individual freedoms?**

	Number	Percentage
with	81	62.4
against	99	34.1
Total	280	96.6
Unknown	10	3.4
Total	290	100

We note that more than half of the respondents support the enjoyment of individual freedoms by individuals (64.64%), while 35.36% of the respondents completely refuse to enjoy these freedoms.

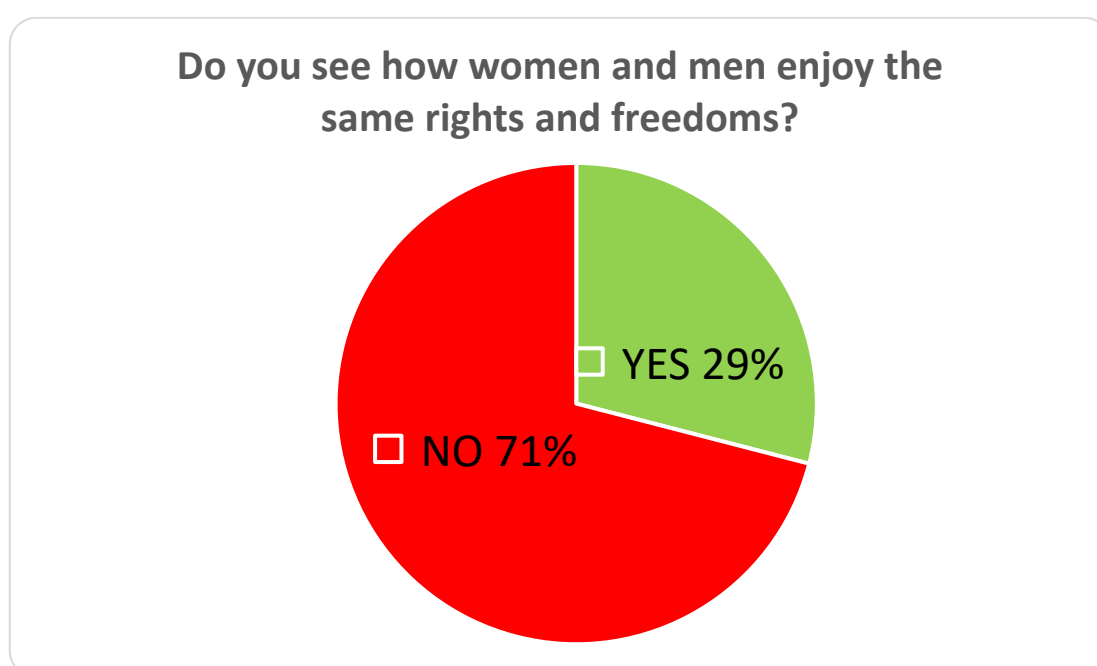


**\*Distribution of respondents according to the enjoyment of the same rights and freedoms by men and women:**

**Do you see how women and men enjoy the same rights and freedoms?**

	Number	Percentage
Yes	83	28.6
No	203	70
Total	286	98.6
Unknown	4	1.4
Total	290	100

70.98% of the total respondents confirmed that men and women do not enjoy the same rights and freedoms and 29.02% of respondents believe that both sexes enjoy the same rights and freedoms. More than two-thirds of respondents consider that women do not benefit from their rights effectively and on the basis of equality and continue to suffer discrimination to this day. The issue of gender discrimination remains entrenched in the social mind structured on male domination.



### **Distribution of respondents by who is for or against gender equality:**

#### **Are you for or against gender equality?**

	Number	Percentage
with	176	60.7
against	108	37.2
Total	284	97.9
Unknown	6	2.1
Total	290	100

We conclude that the data available to us is that a significant percentage of the respondents (61.97%) support the principle of gender equality compared to 38.03% who reject this principle, believing that from a biological, physiological and psychological point of view, "the female is female and the male is male", the physical composition of both sexes is different, the organic functions are different, the psychological composition is different, and the brain mechanism of each sex is separated, and therefore absolute equality between them is not valid.

As for the legal aspect, they consider that the concept of gender equality does not exist according to the Islamic religion, which is why they think that men occupy a higher rank than women, according to the Qur'anic verse "Men are the guardians of women" (Surah An-Nisa, verse 34).

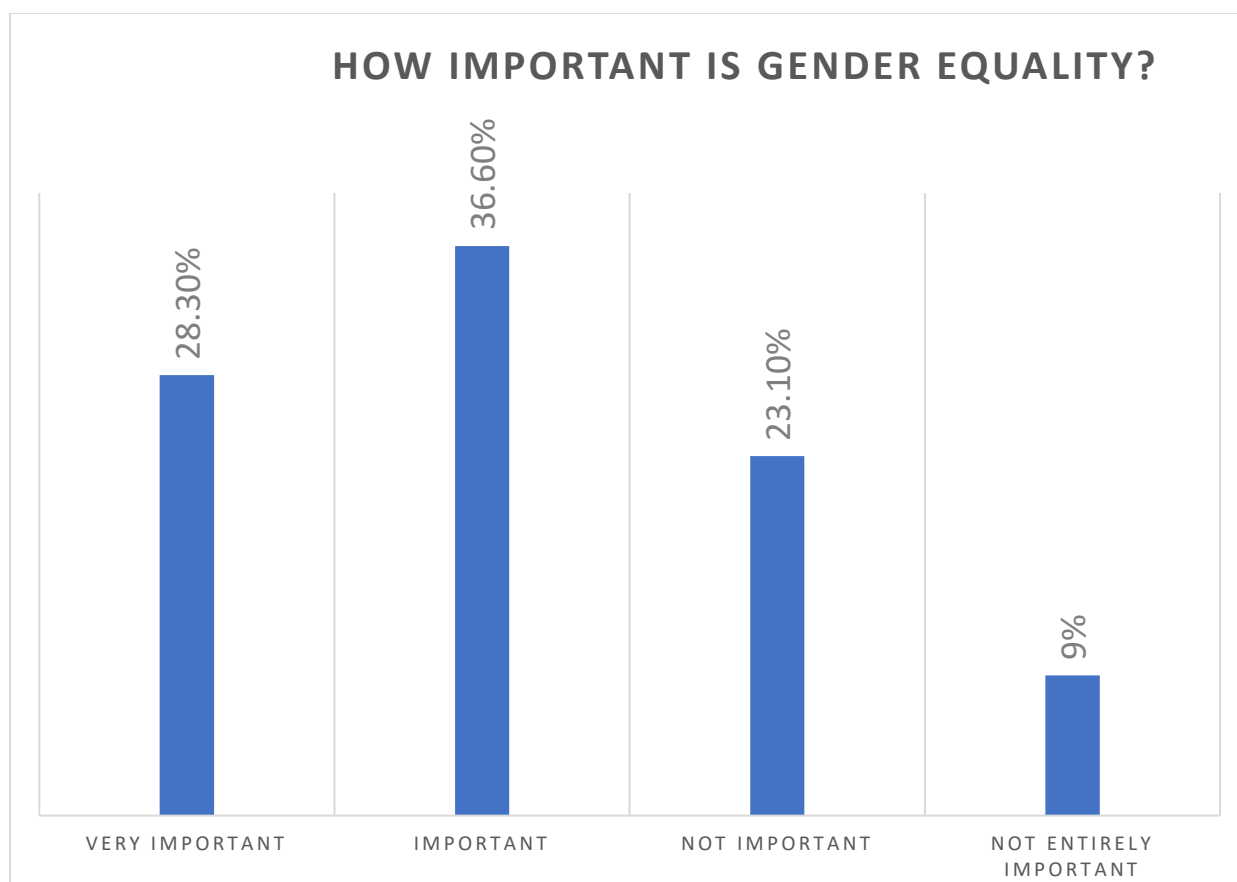
Socially, they see equality between women and men as a threat to the values of society and indirectly contribute to the disintegration of the family and make it incohesive and thus result in an imbalance in society as a whole.

**\*Distribution of respondents according to the importance of gender equality:**

**- In your opinion, how important is gender equality?**

	Number	Percentage
Very important	82	28.3
Important	106	36.6
Not important	67	23.1
Not entirely important	26	9
Total	281	96.9
Unknown	9	3.1
Total	290	100

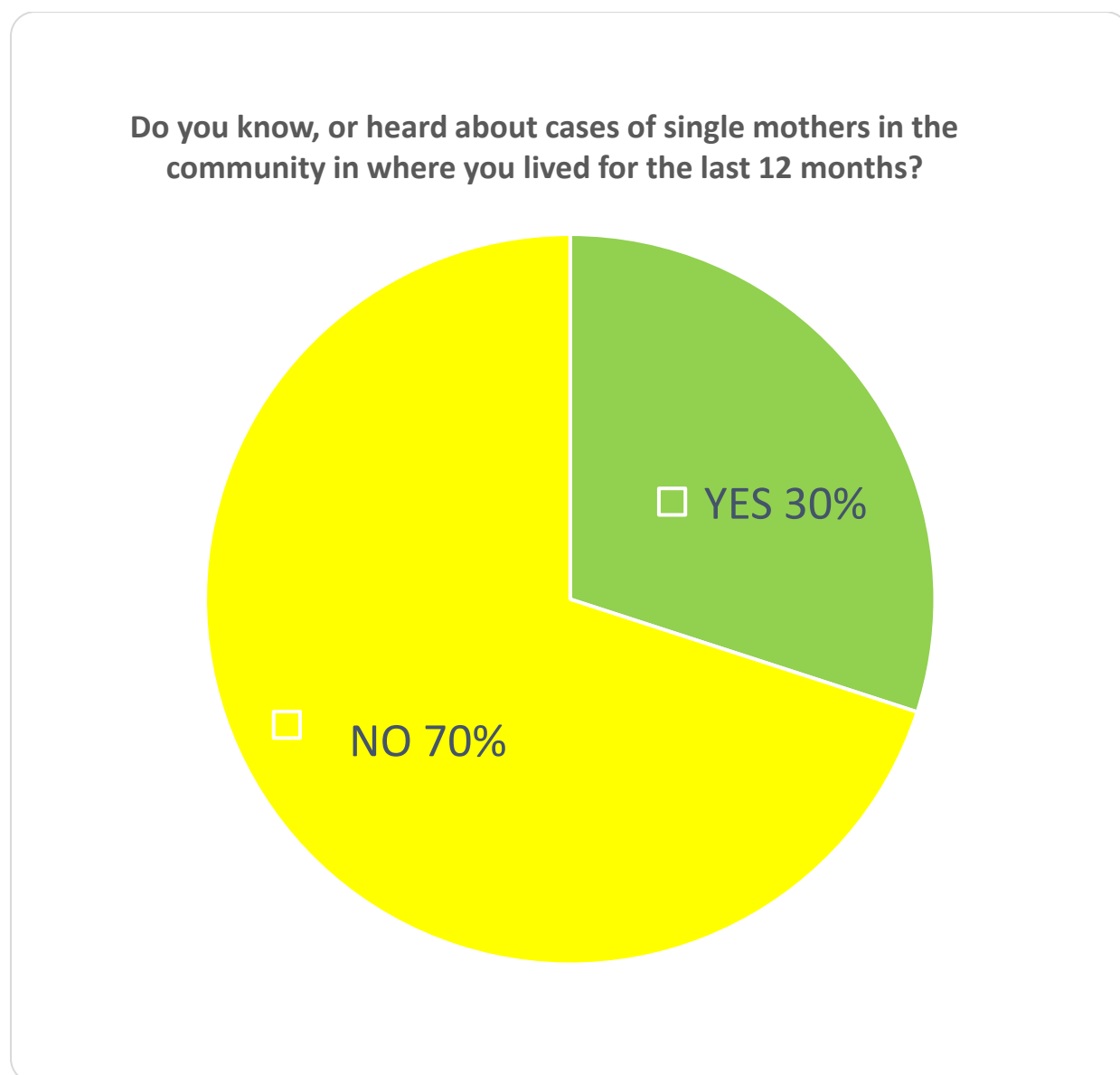
66.90% of respondents believe that equality between men and women is important, while a third (33.09%) believe that it is not important.



## 2.2 The phenomenon of single mothers in the wilaya of Gabes:

\* Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge of single mothers in the community in which they live for the last 12 months:

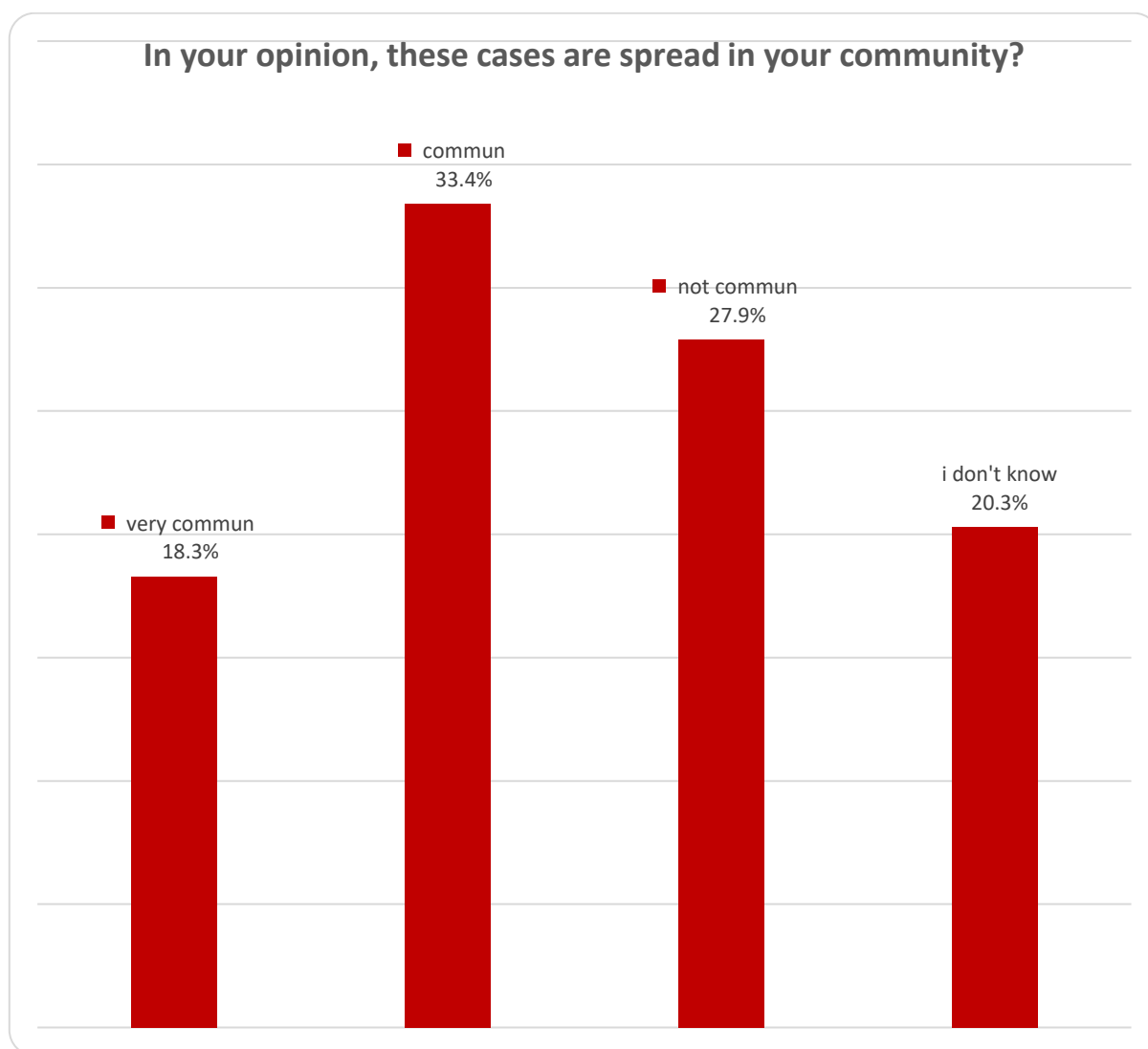
- Do you know, or heard about cases of single mothers in the community in where you lived for the last 12 months?



It is clear from the graph that two-thirds of the respondents were not aware of cases of single mothers during the last 12 months, while one-third of the respondents did not know even one case during the mentioned period.

**\* Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge of the extent of the phenomenon in Gabes:**

**- In your opinion, these cases are spread in your community?**



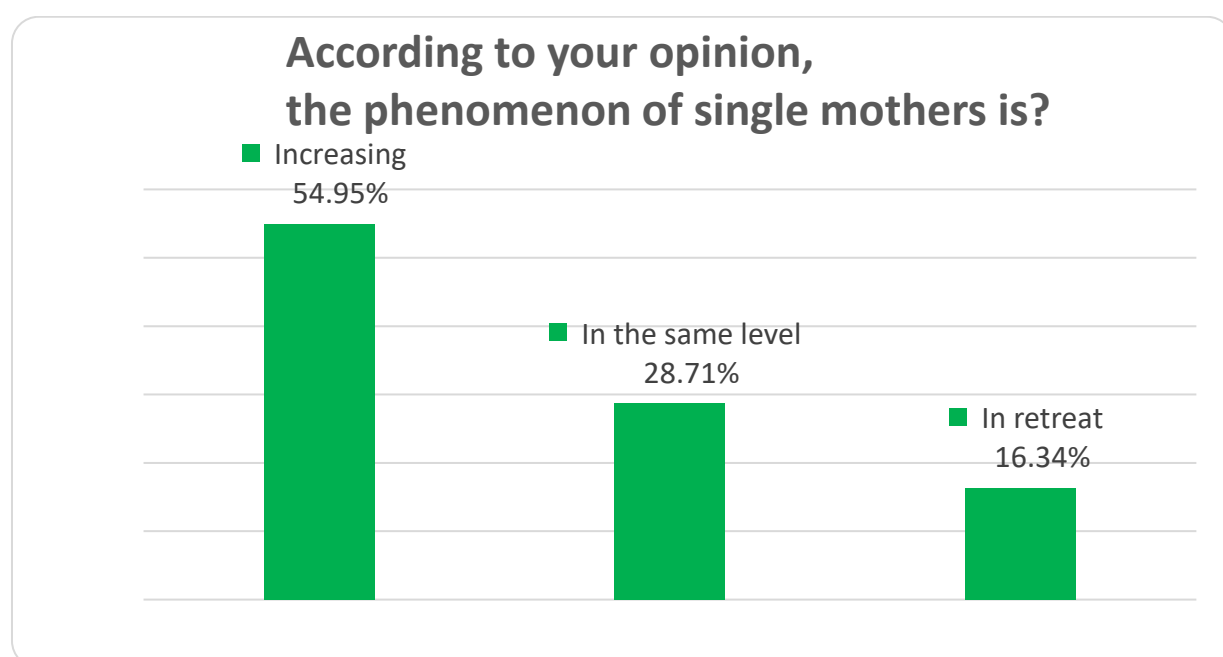
Half of the respondents (51.7%) admitted to the prevalence of single mothers in Gabes, while the second half (48.2%) of the respondents stated that these cases are uncommon.

**\* Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge of the extent of development of the phenomenon of single mothers in Gabes.**

**- According to your opinion, the phenomenon of single mothers is:**

	Quantity	Percentage
Increasing	111	38.3
In the same degree	58	20
In retreat	33	11.4
Total	202	69.7
Unknown	88	30.3
Total	290	100

As for those who expressed their opinions about the prevalence of this phenomenon or not, representing 69.7%, 54.95% of them stated that this phenomenon is increasing and that the number of single mothers is increasing, representing 38.30% of the total number of respondents, while 28.71% of them felt that these cases remained in the same degree, while 16.34% of them reported that it is declining.



**\* Distribution of respondents according to their view of the single mother.**

**- From your point of view, how do you see a single mother?**

Victim of society	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	27.9	81
I agree	33.1	96
I oppose	22.4	65
I strongly oppose	13.8	40
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

Socially guilty	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	32.4	94
I agree	34.1	99
I oppose	20	58
I strongly oppose	12.4	36
Total	99	287
Unknown	1	3
Total	100	290

Stain	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	30.7	89
I agree	22.1	64
I oppose	27.9	81
I strongly oppose	17.9	52
Total	98.6	286
Unknown	1.4	4
Total	100	290



Ordinary mother	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	23.4	68
I agree	16.6	48
I oppose	28.3	82
I strongly oppose	30.3	88
Total	98.6	286
Unknown	1.4	4
Total	100	290

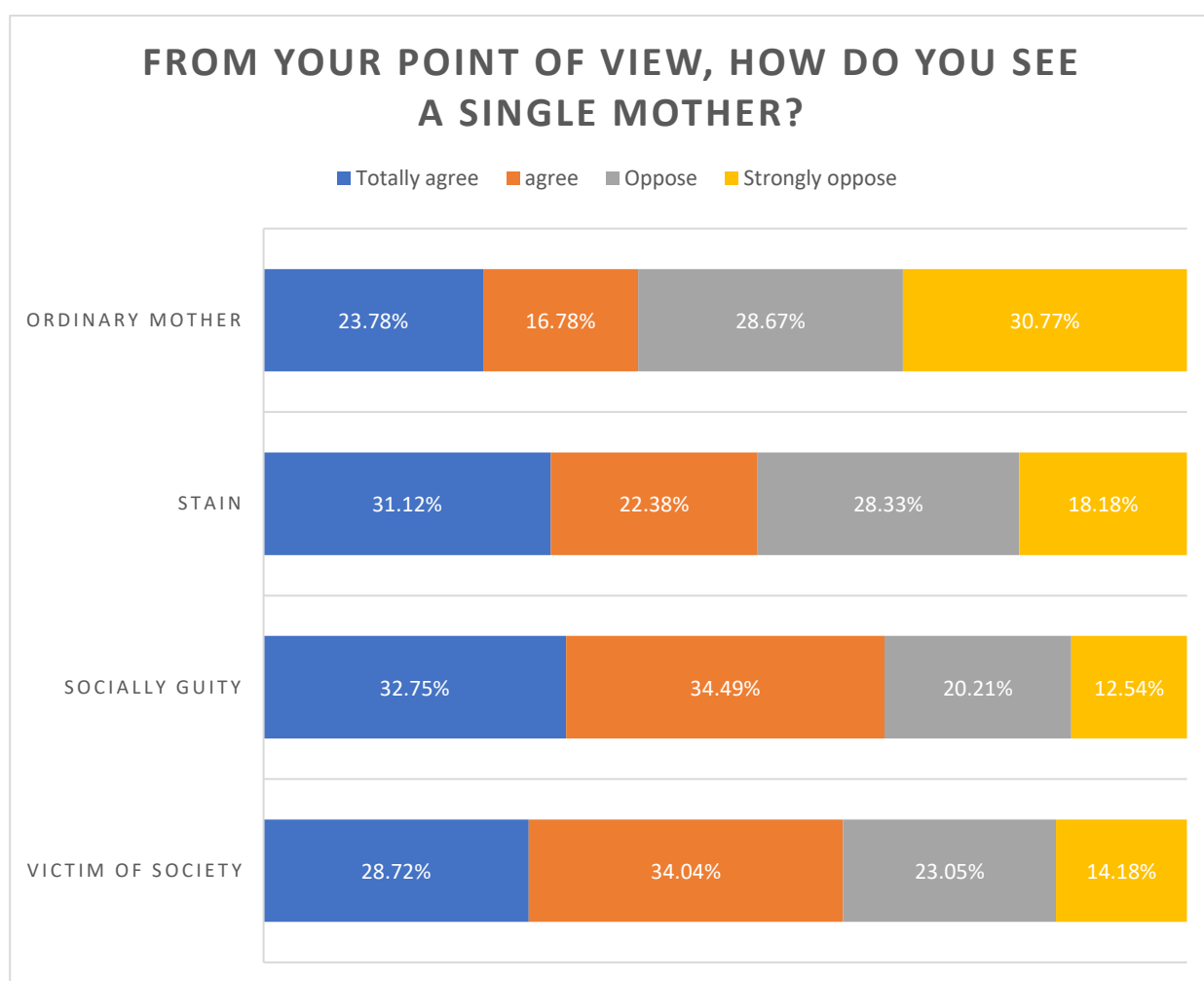
Perhaps the basic observations that can be deduced from the various opinions expressed by the respondents and their view of the single mother in their society:

- 62.76% of the respondents believe that single mothers are "victims of a ruthless society" that holds them responsible for their situation and the consequences and harsh conditions that result from it, and does not do them justice and does not provide them with opportunities and overcome their difficult situation, while 37.23% of the respondents do not consider them victims of the society in which they live.

- 67.24% of the respondents consider mothers who gave birth to children in a sexual relationship outside of marriage "socially guilty", which led society to describe them with various insults and defamatory epithets such as corrupt women, prostitutes and immoral, while 32.75% go on to assert that women who give birth outside the legal and legal frameworks are "not socially insecure" and must be accepted, contained and supported by them and their children.

- The opinions of the respondents are divided into two parts, where we find 53.5% of them believe that mothers who give birth outside the institution of marriage are "stigmatized" and result in the desecration of the family's reputation and the contamination of honor, while the second half (46.5%) believe that having children outside the legal and legal frameworks is normal and personal freedom.

- 40.56% of the respondents believe that a mother who gave birth to a child outside the institution of marriage is an "ordinary mother" like all married mothers, treated with respect by society and its institutions, while 59.44% of the total respondents do not consider her an ordinary mother, as they believe that "illegitimate" childbearing in the absence of legal frameworks is a violation of traditions and customs and contrary to morals.



**\* Distribution of respondents according to the determination of the responsibility for a woman's pregnancy outside marriage:**

**In your opinion, is a woman's pregnancy outside of marriage be:**

Women's Responsibility Only	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	6.6	19
I agree	9	26
I oppose	39	113
I strongly oppose	44.5	129
Total	99	287
Unknown	1	3
Total	100	290

Men's Responsibility Only	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	2.4	7
I agree	5.2	15
I oppose	44.5	129
I strongly oppose	46.9	136
Total	99	287
Unknown	1	3
Total	100	290

Shared responsibility	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	82.1	238
I agree	12.4	36
I oppose	3.1	9
I strongly oppose	2.1	6
Total	99.7	289
Unknown	0.3	1
Total	100	290

Through the analysis of data related to the pregnancy of women outside the institution of marriage and the determination of responsibility in this matter, we conclude that:

- Women are not the only ones responsible for pregnancy, according to 84.32% of respondents. They see that the man is a partner in the relationship and is also responsible for their fruits and all its results, but nevertheless we see him evading his responsibility and denying pregnancy and remaining away from any punishment or suspicion that violates his person.

- 92.34% of the respondents reported that a woman's pregnancy outside marriage is not the responsibility of men alone, but that women have a good share in the responsibility.

- Most respondents (94.81%) believe that a woman's non-"evil" pregnancy is a joint responsibility between the two parties, the burden of which is borne by both.

**\* Distribution of respondents according to their opinions on the pregnancy of women outside marriage:**

**From your point of view, do you consider that a woman's pregnancy outside marriage is?**

A right: the right to motherhood	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	9.3	27
I agree	7.6	22
I oppose	36.2	105
I strongly oppose	44.5	129
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

Prejudice to honor for women	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	51.7	150
I agree	23.4	68
I oppose	12.4	36
I strongly oppose	10.3	30
Total	97.9	284
Unknown	2.1	6
Total	100	290

Personal freedom	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	14.8	43
I agree	12.1	35
I oppose	30.3	88
I strongly oppose	39.7	115
Total	96.9	281
Unknown	3.1	9
Total	100	290

A moral crime for which only women must be held accountable	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	6.9	20
I agree	4.5	13
I oppose	45.9	133
I strongly oppose	41.7	121
Total	99	287
Unknown	1	3
Total	100	290

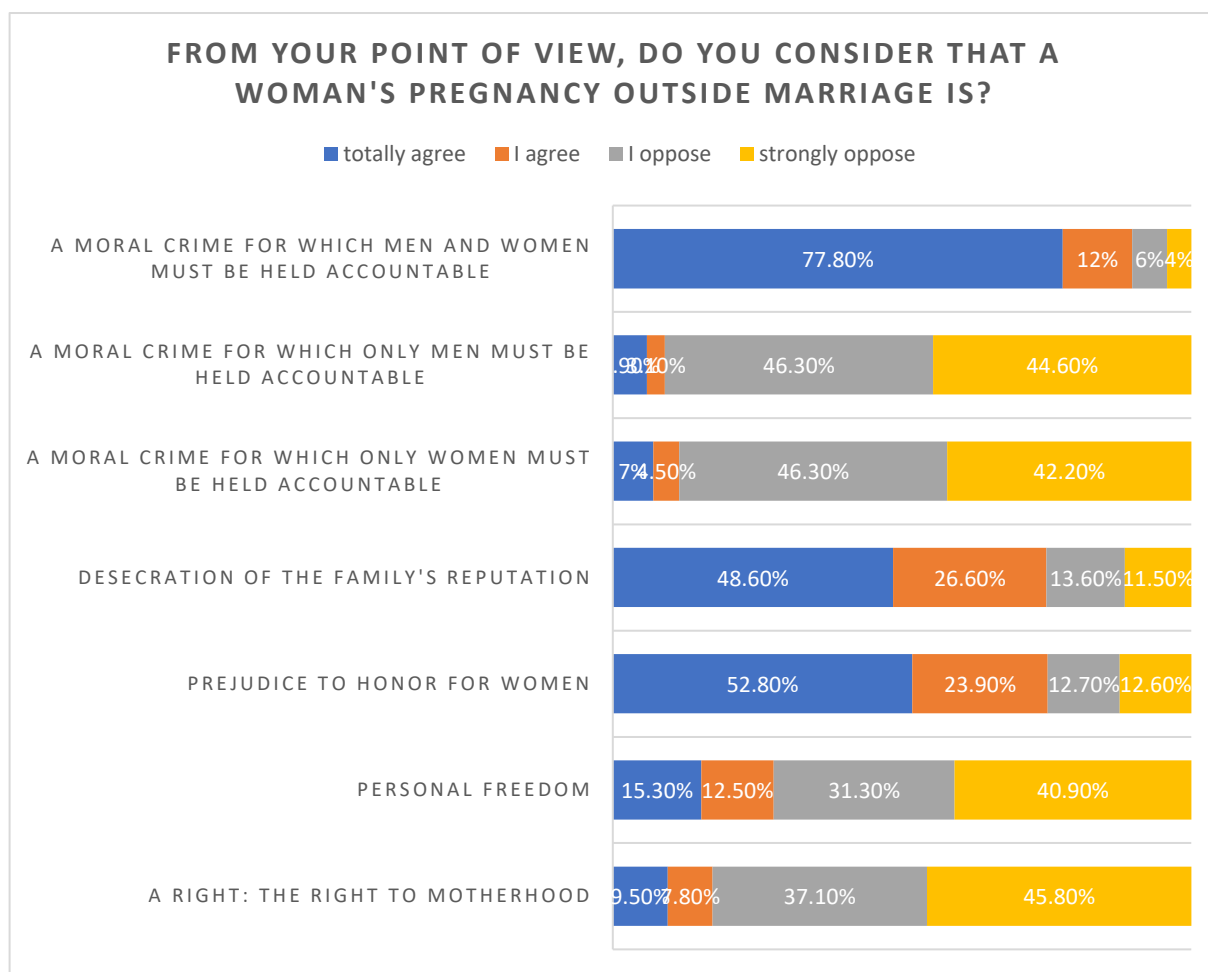
Desecration of the family's reputation	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	47.9	139
I agree	26.2	76
I oppose	13.1	38
I strongly oppose	11.4	33
Total	98.6	286
Unknown	1.4	4
Total	100	290

A moral crime for which only men must be held accountable	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	5.9	17
I agree	3.1	9
I oppose	45.9	133
I strongly oppose	44.1	128
Total	99	287
Unknown	1	3
Total	100	290

A moral crime for which men and women must be held accountable	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	76.2	221
I agree	11.7	34
I oppose	5.9	17
I strongly oppose	4.1	12
Total	97.9	284
Unknown	2.1	6
Total	100	290

It is clear from analyzing the point of view of the respondents that a woman's pregnancy outside marriage is considered an attack on her honor, according to the statements of 76.7% of the respondents and a desecration of the family's reputation for 75.2% of them. While 82.7% of the respondents reject that this type of pregnancy is really Rights and the right to motherhood, in which case motherhood in their eyes turns from the most beautiful dream and the most honorable sexual function into a shame as long as motherhood took place outside of marriage.

A high percentage of respondents of more than two-thirds (72.2%) categorically reject this practice under the rubric of "personal freedom" and all parties who committed this act must be held accountable, meaning both men and women should be held accountable, as stated by 89.8% of the total respondents.



**\* Distribution of respondents according to the exposure of single mother to problems.**

**- In your opinion, the rule that a single mother is exposed to these problems?**

Violence (physical-verbal-moral)	Percentage	Number
All the time	47.9	139
Once in a while	25.2	73
Rarely	10.7	31
At all	6.2	18
Total	90	261
Unknown	10	29
Total	100	290



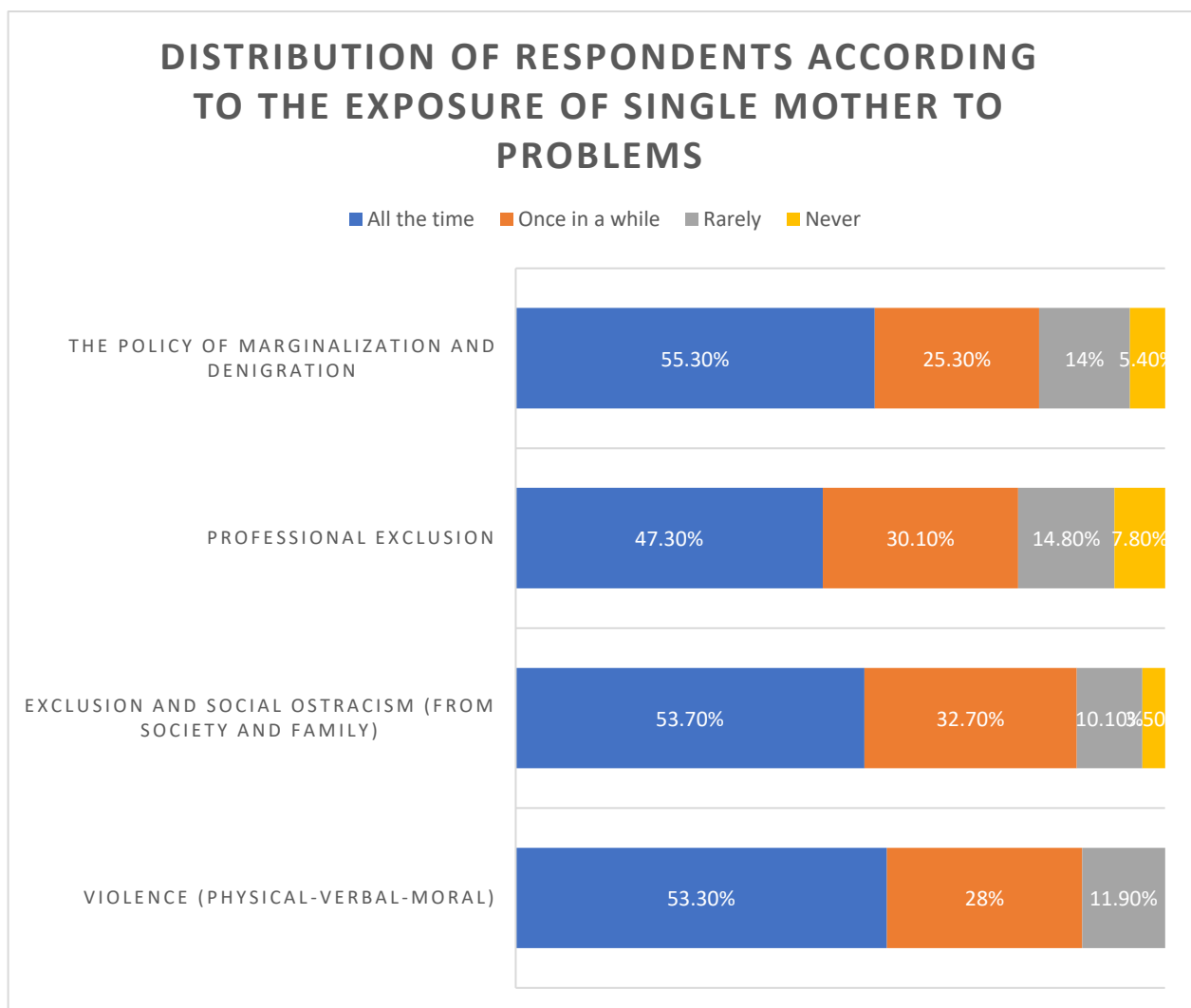
Exclusion and social ostracism (from society and family)	Percentage	Number
All the time	47.6	138
Once in a while	29	84
Rarely	9	26
At all	3	9
Total	88.6	257
Unknown	11.4	33
Total	100	290

Professional exclusion	Percentage	Number
All the time	41.7	121
Once in a while	26.6	77
Rarely	13.1	38
At all	6.9	20
Total	88.3	256
Unknown	11.7	34
Total	100	290

The policy of marginalization and denigration	Percentage	Number
All the time	49	142
Once in a while	22.4	65
Rarely	12.4	36
At all	4.8	14
Total	88.6	257
Unknown	11.4	33
Total	100	290

We conclude from the data that almost most of the sample members stated that the single mother in Gabes is exposed to many problems, the rates of these statements ranged from 92.2% to 96.5%, and the most important percentages that reduce these problems are the following:

- 93.2% of respondents reported that physical, verbal and moral violence is inflicted on a single mother.
- 96.5% of respondents confirmed that they suffer from the economy and social ostracism (from society and family).
- 92.2% felt that they were being marginalized and degraded.



**\* Distribution of respondents according to their view of children born out of wedlock.**

Victim of a sin committed by parents	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	64.5	187
I agree	19.3	56
I oppose	10	29
I strongly oppose	5.9	17
Total	99.7	289
Unknown	0.3	1
Total	100	290

Coercion	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	5.9	17
I agree	3.4	10
I oppose	42.8	124
I strongly oppose	47.6	138
Total	99.7	289
Unknown	0.3	1
Total	100	290

Stigma (son of adultery, son of haram..)	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	16.9	49
I agree	7.2	21
I oppose	40	116
I strongly oppose	35.2	102
Total	99.3	288
Unknown	0.7	2
Total	100	290

An ordinary child like other children born in marriage	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	36.9	107
I agree	32.8	95
I oppose	23.4	68
I strongly oppose	5.5	16
Total	98.6	286
Unknown	1.4	4
Total	100	290

A child without an identity and an outsider to the values of society	Number
I totally agree	44
I agree	40
I oppose	103
I strongly oppose	101
Total	288
Unknown	2
Total	290

It is clear from what we have reported to Gabes' interrogators that the child born out of wedlock was in the eyes of society a victim of a sin committed by his parents, which made the members of his community stand in solidarity with him or look at him as any normal child. This is highlighted by the statements made by the respondents, the most important of which are:

- 90.7% do not consider him guilty.
- 84.1% consider him a victim of guilt committed by his parents.
- 75.7% do not consider him a disgrace and do not describe him as a son of adultery and a son of a haram.
- 70.9% of respondents do not see him as a child without an identity and an outsider to the values of society.

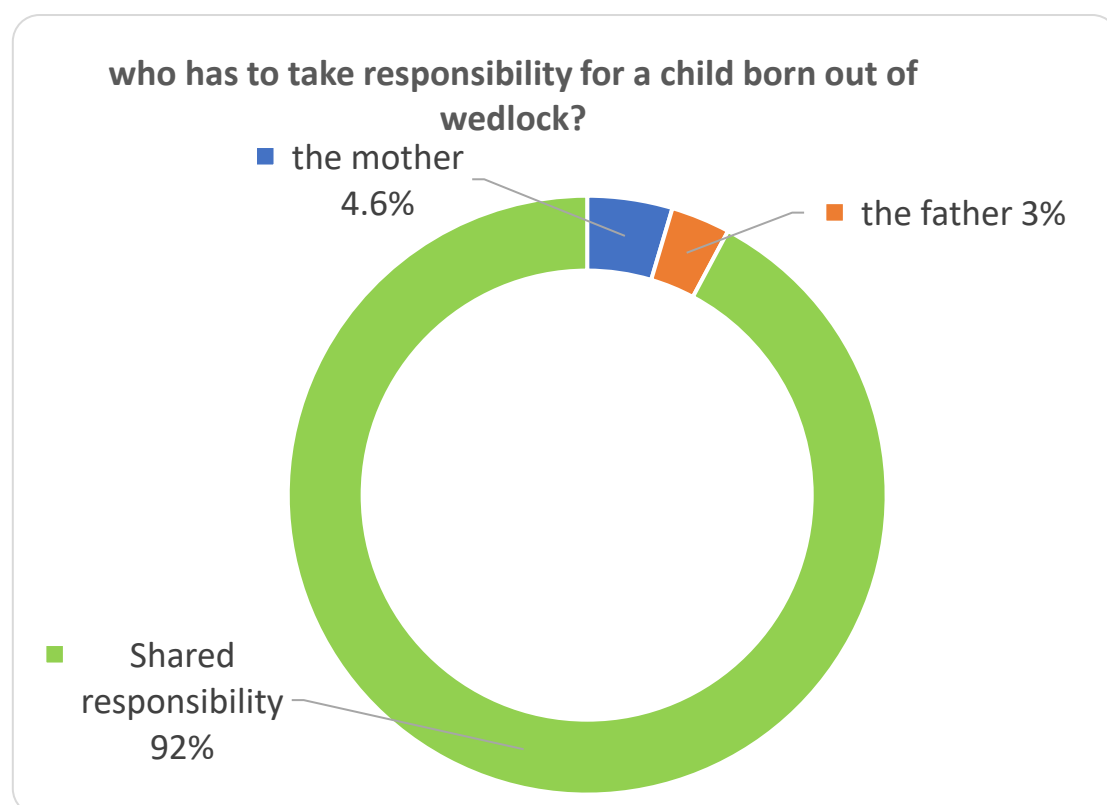
- 70.6% consider him a normal child like other children born in a legal marriage.

**\* Distribution of respondents according to the determination of the responsibility of the child born out of wedlock.**

**- According to your opinion, who has to take responsibility for a child born out of wedlock?**

Almost all respondents were of the same opinion and had the same view regarding the responsibility of raising and caring for a child born outside the "Shariah" frameworks, which is a shared responsibility between the parents, according to 92.2% of the respondents.

Percentage	Number	
4.5	13	Mother
3.1	9	ABelder
90	261	Shared responsibility
97.6	283	Total
2.4	7	Unknown
100	290	Total



**\* Distribution of respondents according to the problems faced by the child born out of wedlock.**

**- In your opinion, a child born out of wedlock is still exposed to these problems?**

Percentage	Number	Violence (physical, verbal, moral)
35.9	104	All the time
32.4	94	Once in a while
13.1	38	Rarely
6.9	20	At all
88.3	256	Total
11.7	34	Unknown
100	290	Total
Percentage	Number	Marginalization and contempt
38.6	112	All the time
33.4	97	Once in a while
14.5	42	Rarely
3.4	10	At all
90	261	Total
10	29	Unknown
100	290	Total
Percentage	Number	Society does not give them the opportunity to succeed and excel
35.5	103	All the time
29	84	Once in a while
16.9	49	Rarely
10.3	30	At all
91.7	266	Total
8.3	24	Unknown
100	290	Total
Percentage	Number	Social ostracism and aversion
43.8	127	All the time
32.8	95	Once in a while
10.3	30	Rarely
3.4	10	At all
90.3	262	Total
9.7	28	Unknown
100	290	Total

Percentage	Number	Depriving them of certain rights
39.7	115	All the time
27.6	80	Once in a while
15.9	46	Rarely
8.3	24	At all
91.4	265	Total
8.6	25	Unknown
100	290	Total

It is clear from the data that the respondents agreed that a child born outside the legal frameworks suffers from many different problems. Where the rates of these statements were high, ranging between 86.5% and 96.30%, the most important of which are the following:

- 92.1% of respondents reported that this child is physically, verbally and morally supported by others.
- 96.2% felt marginalized and despised.
- 96.3% stated that illegitimate children are subjected to social ostracism and alienation
- 91% confirmed that he is deprived of certain rights.
- 88.7% stated that society does not give it the opportunity to highlight its abilities, success and excellence.
- 86.5% of respondents admitted that illegitimate children are exposed to health, educational and social neglect

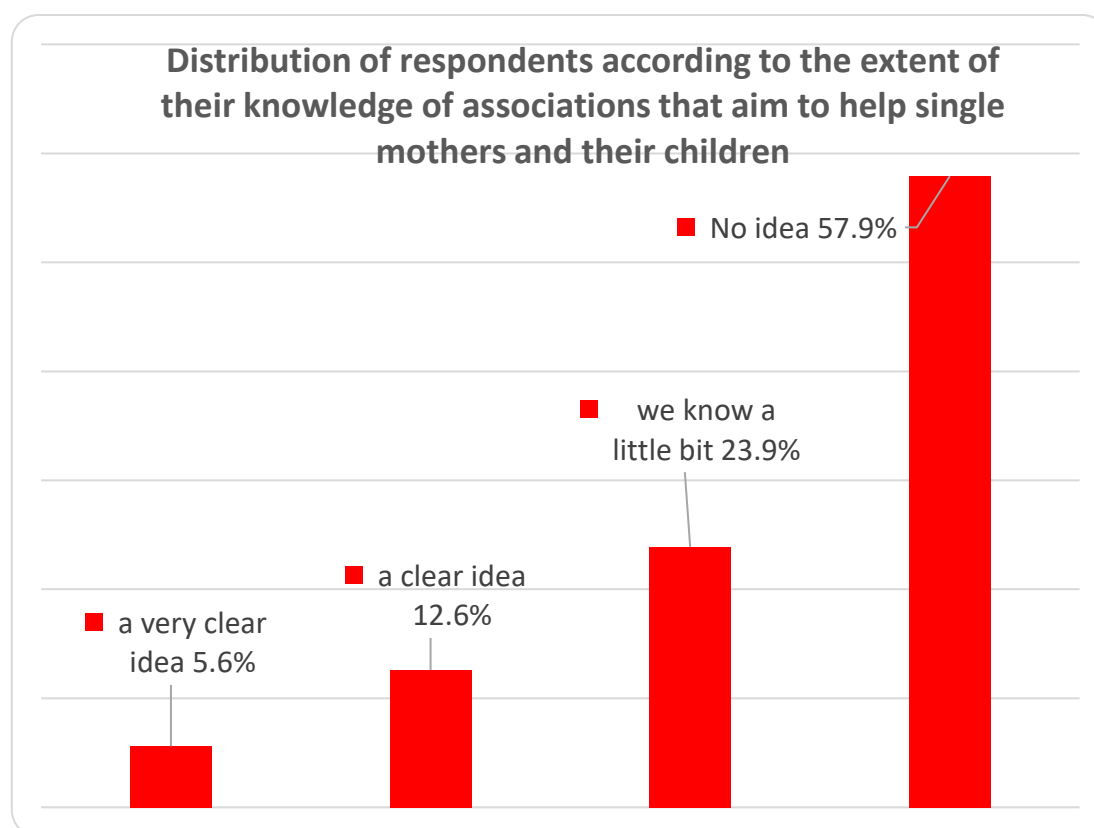


**\* Distribution of respondents according to the extent of their knowledge of associations that aim to help single mothers and their children:**

**Do you have an idea about associations that aim to help single mothers and their children in your community?**

More than half of respondents (57.9%) are unaware of associations that aim to help single mothers and their children, compared to 42.1% who have an idea about these centers.

	Percentage	Number
A very clear idea	5.5	16
Clear idea	12.4	36
We know a little bit	23.4	68
I have no idea.	56.9	165
Total	98.3	285
Unknown	1.7	5
Total	100	290

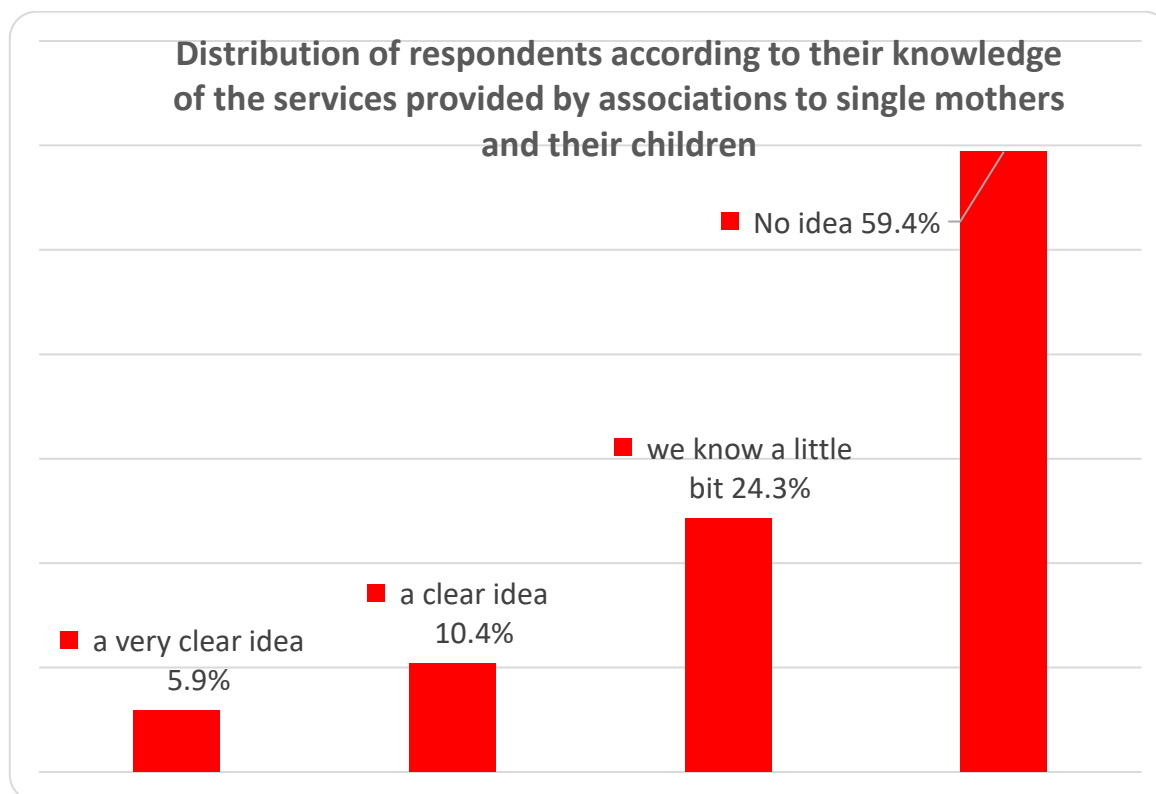


	Percentage	Number
A very clear idea	5.9	17
Clear idea	10.3	30
We know a little bit	24.1	70
I have no idea.	59	171
Total	99.3	288
Unknown	0.7	2
Total	100	290

**\* Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge of the services provided by associations to single mothers and their children.**

**- Do you have an idea of the services these associations provide to single mothers and their children?**

Just over half of the respondents(59.4%) are unaware of the services provided by the association to single mothers and their children, while 40.6% are aware of the services mentioned for the benefit of these women and their children.



**\* Distribution of respondents according to the importance of the services provided by the associations to single mothers and their children:**

**- According to you, among the services provided by the association to single mothers and their children, what is the importance of the services provided?**

Reintegration of a single mother with her family	Percentage	Number
Very important	48.6	141
Important	35.5	103
Not important	11	32
Not entirely important	2.1	6
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

School follow-up for the children of these single mothers	Percentage	Number
Very important	53.4	155
Important	36.6	106
Not important	5.2	15
Not entirely important	2.8	8
Total	97.9	284
Unknown	2.1	6
Total	100	290

Rebuilding themselves psychologically and socially	Percentage	Number
Very important	54.5	158
Important	35.5	103
Not important	6.6	19
Not entirely important	1	3
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

Building the relationship between the mother and her child and directing her to prevent her from abandoning him	Number
Very important	166
Important	97
Not important	18
Not entirely important	3
Total	284
Unknown	6
Total	290

Reintegration of a single mother with her family	Percentage	Number
Very important	48.6	141
Important	35.5	103
Not important	11	32
Not entirely important	2.1	6
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

Providing legal assistance and providing the necessary information about his rights	Percentage	Number
Very important	48.3	140
Important	39.3	114
Not important	7.2	21
Not entirely important	3.1	9
Total	97.9	284
Unknown	2.1	6
Total	100	290

Helping a single mother reintegrate her and her child into society	Percentage	Number
Very important	54.5	158
Important	33.4	97
Not important	7.6	22
Not entirely important	2.1	6
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

Accompaniment and listening	Percentage	Number
Very important	49.7	144
Important	37.9	110
Not important	5.5	16
Not entirely important	3.8	11
Total	96.9	281
Unknown	3.1	9
Total	100	290

Loans for microenterprises so that single mothers can enter the torch market	Percentage	Number
Very important	51.4	149
Important	35.9	104
Not important	8.3	24
Not entirely important	2.4	7
Total	97.9	284
Unknown	2.1	6
Total	100	290

The services provided by associations for the benefit of single mothers and their children are important, whether financially, morally or psychologically, according to the statements of the interrogators, the most important of which were as follows:

- 92.2% of the respondents considered that the service that the association can provide, which is "rebuilding the mother's psyche from a social point of view". 92.7% stressed the importance of "building the relationship between mother and child and guiding her to prevent her abandonment" as a service provided by the association.
  - According to 68.5% of respondents, the service provided by the association to these women and children represented in the "reintegration of single mothers into her family" was important.
  - 90% expressed the importance of reintegrating a single mother with her child into society.
- "School follow-up of the children of these single mothers" is important, according to 91.90% of all respondents.

Temporary accommodation for single mothers in the center and preparing them to leave	Percentage	Number
Very important	47.2	137
Important	37.9	110
Not important	8.3	24
Not entirely important	4.1	12
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

- "Setting up vocational training courses and proposing modest loans for micro-enterprises so that mothers can enter the labour market", which 89.10% of respondents considered an important service for these mothers and their children.
- According to 88.70% of the respondents, they understood that providing material assistance (milk, diapers, ...) and medical assistance and situational funds (rent, nanny, ...) is an important service.
- 90.3% of respondents confirmed the usefulness of accompaniment and listening by the association for single mothers.
- 89.4% reported that the service of providing legal aid and providing necessary information to single mothers was important and beneficial to her.
- 87.3% of the respondents considered that the temporary stay of single mothers in the center and preparing them to leave is an important service that helps them reintegrate into social life again.

**\* Distribution of respondents according to the prevalence of free relations outside marriage.**

- **In your opinion, extramarital relationships exist in the society in which you live?**



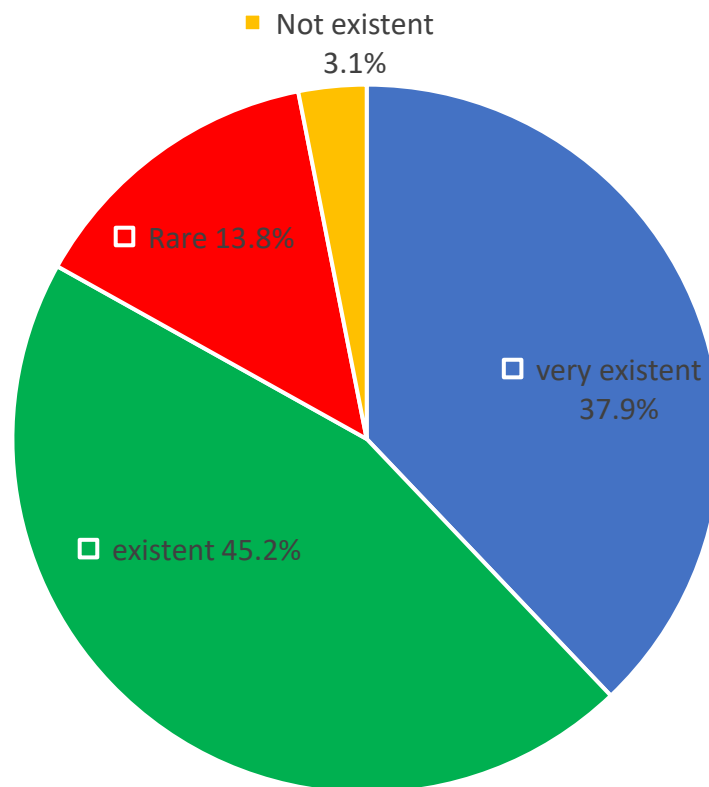
There is no doubt that there are free extramarital relationships in Gabes, according to 83.10% of all respondents.

After reviewing the opinions of the respondents and reading the information they gave on this subject, we note that there is a large part of them, estimated at 167

	Percentage	Number
Abundant	34.1	99
Exist to some extent	40.7	118
Somewhat non-existent	12.4	36
Completely non-existent	2.8	8
Total	90	261
Unknown	10	29
Total	100	290

out of a total of 211, who consider free relations outside marriage to be corruption and moral decay, adultery and a stigma on women, especially as they are forbidden and outside the legal scope. On the other hand, we find some of the 44 respondents who believe that these relations are a human right, a personal freedom that can be exercised normally, given the difficulty of marriage and spending on the family at the present time.

**Distribution of respondents according to the prevalence of free relations outside marriage**



**\* Distribution of respondents according to the reasons for rejecting free relations outside marriage.**

**- What are the reasons for rejecting free relationships outside marriage?**

Religious reasons	Percentage	Number
Yes	92.1	267
No	6.9	20
Total	99	287
Unknown	1	3
Total	100	290

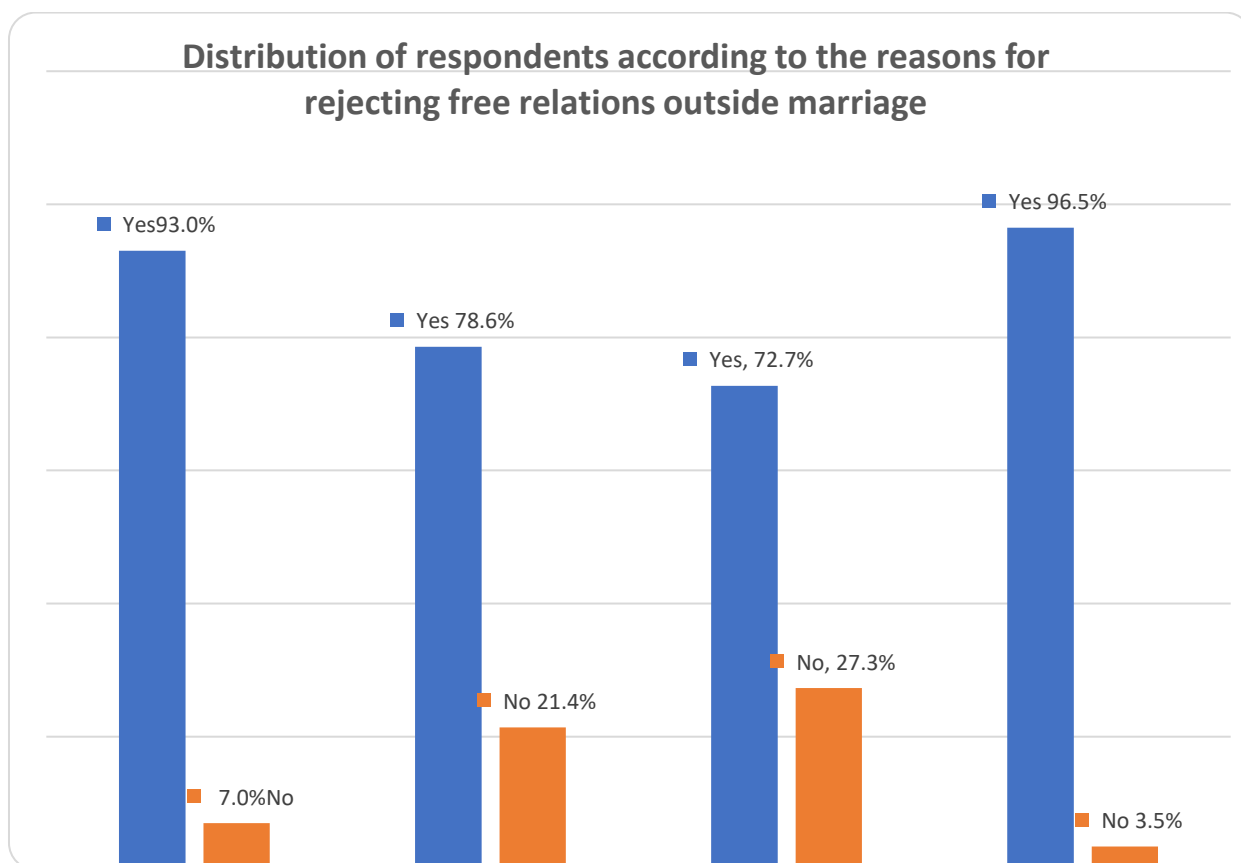
Family education, customs and traditions reject this type of relationship	Percentage	Number
Yes	94.8	275
No	3.4	10
Total	98,3	285
Unknown	1.7	5
Total	100	290

Fear of serious consequences (illegal pregnancy...)	Percentage	Number
Yes	77.2	224
No	21	61
Total	98.3	285
Unknown	1.7	5
Total	100	290

Fear of contracting sexually contagious diseases	Percentage	Number
Yes	69.7	202
No	26.2	76
Total	95.9	278
Unknown	4.1	12
Total	100	290

After reflecting on the results of the tables, we conclude that most of the respondents believe that the reasons for rejecting free relations outside marriage

were religious (93%), in order to avoid the serious consequences (such as illegal pregnancy, loss of virginity...) by 78.6% and fear of sexually transmitted diseases by 72.70%. With a stark rate of 96.50%, the respondents rejected these relationships because they do not conform to customs, traditions and customs. Family education is in Gabes in particular and in Tunisia in general.



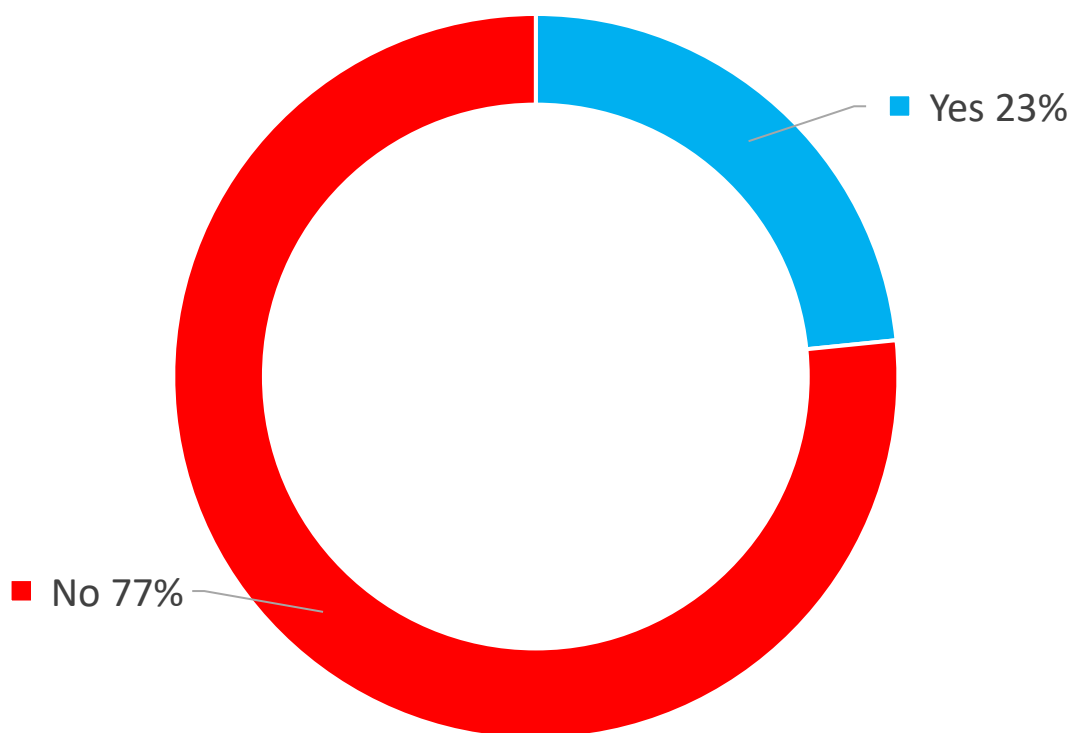
**\* Distribution of respondents according to their opinion on women's enjoyment of bodily freedom compared to men.**

**According to you, women today enjoy the same physical freedom as men?**

	Percentage	Number
Yes	22.8	66
No	74.5	216
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

More than two-thirds of respondents (76.6%) confirmed that women do not enjoy the same bodily freedom as men because Tunisian society is still a patriarchal society with a conservative mentality governed by a traditional culture that makes men the master who does what he wants without control.

**Distribution of respondents according to their opinion on women's enjoyment of bodily freedom compared to men**

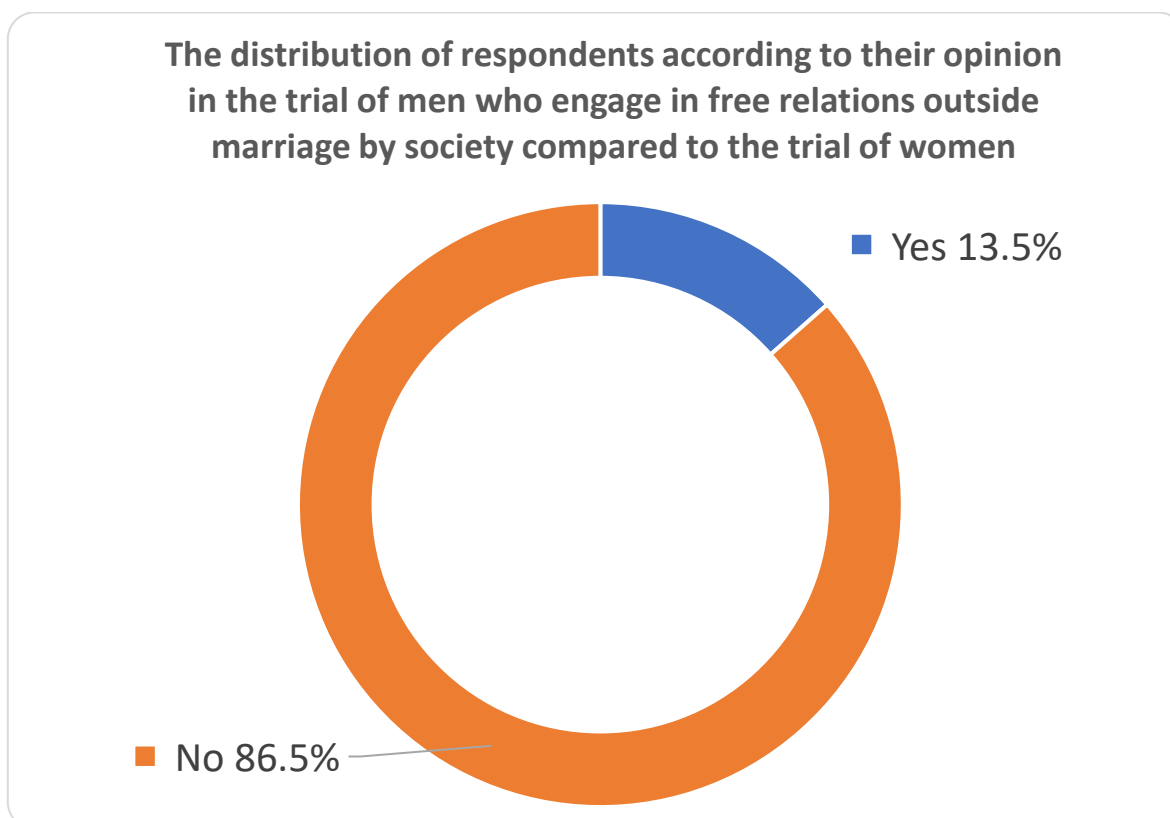


**\* The distribution of respondents according to their opinion in the trial of men who engage in free relations outside marriage by society compared to the trial of women.**

**- In your opinion, the society in which you live judges men who have free relationships outside of marriage in the same way as women?**

	Percentage	Number
Yes	13.1	38
No	84.1	244
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

In an analysis we discussed earlier, we concluded that women do not enjoy the same bodily freedom as men, and this is confirmed by what 86.5% of respondents who said that society does not judge men who engage in free relations outside marriage in the same way as women. This is for several reasons, including religious, moral, customs and traditions that perpetuate the inferiority of women.



**\* Distribution of respondents according to their view of women's honor:**

**- In your opinion, the society in which you live associates the honor of women with:**

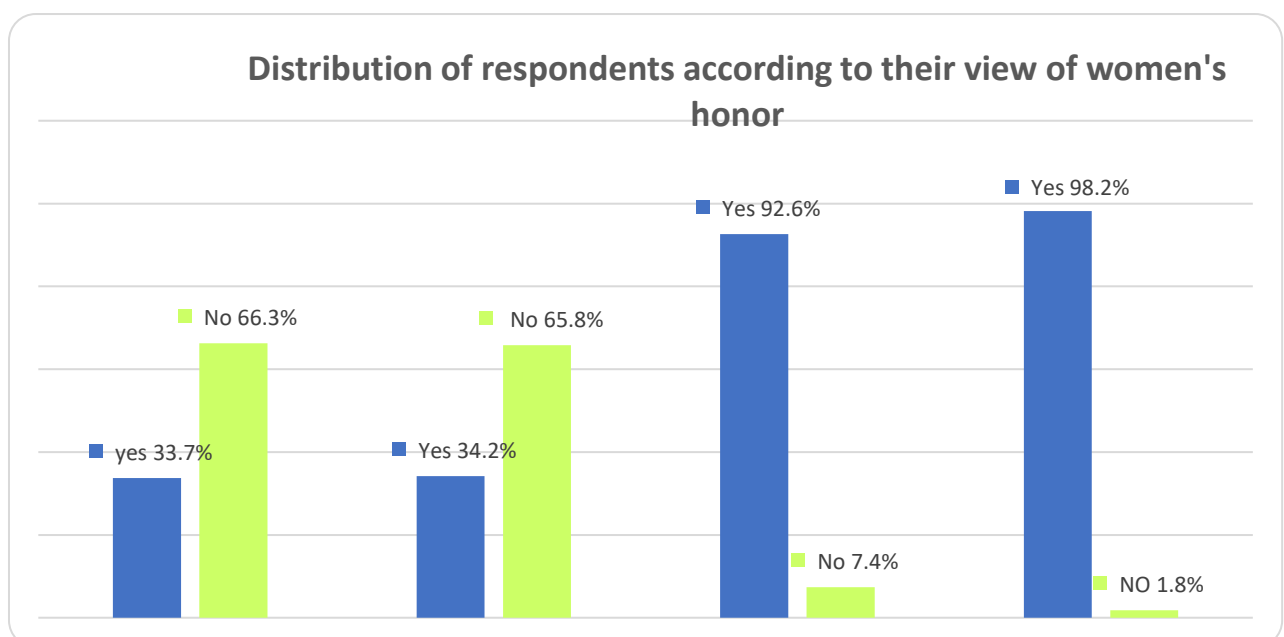
The social class to which he belongs	Percentage	Number
Yes	32.8	95
No	64.5	187
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

Decency and good education	Percentage	Number
Yes	90.3	262
No	7.2	21
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

Preserving her body mainly (the integrity of her virginity...)	Percentage	Number
Yes	95.5	277
No	1.7	5
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

Prestigious social status and high level of education	Percentage	Number
Yes	33.1	96
No	63,8	185
Total	96.9	281
Unknown	3.1	9
Total	100	290

On the issue of women's honour, 98.2% of respondents believe that a woman's honour is primarily linked to the preservation of her body and especially to the integrity of her virginity. 92.6% of respondents believe that women's honor is reflected in their good upbringing, morals and life. Only a third of respondents believe that a woman's honor lies in the social class to which she belongs, the prestigious position in society and the high level of education.





**\* Distribution of respondents according to their view of the man's honor:**

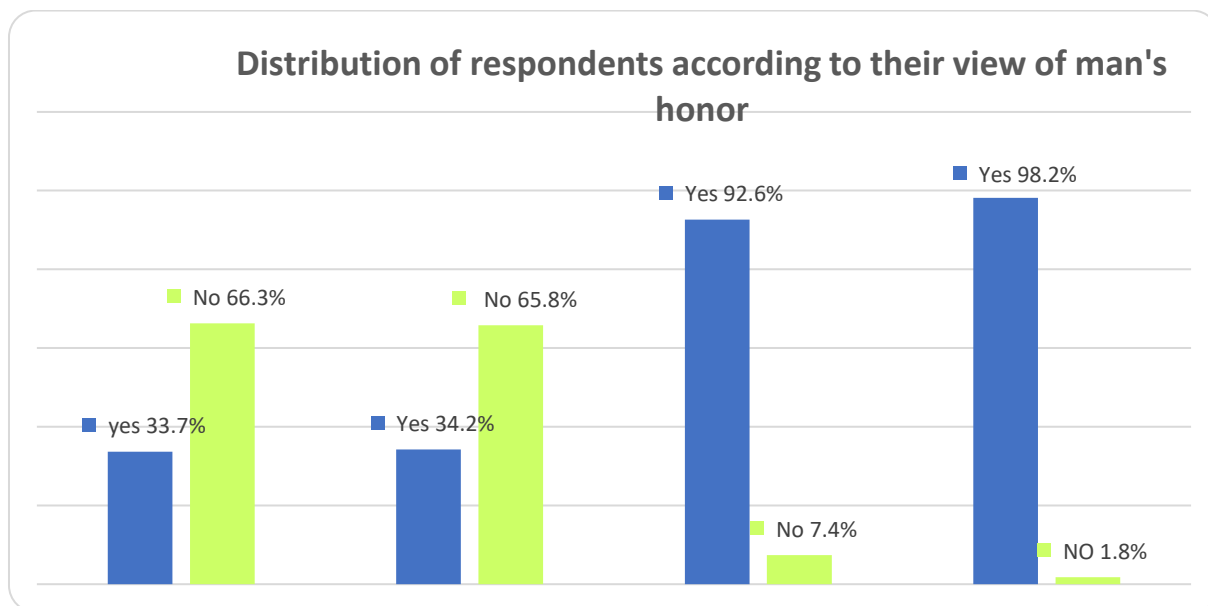
**- In your opinion, in general, the society in which you live associates a man's honor with:**

The social class to which he belongs	Percentage	Number
Yes	42,8	124
No	54.5	158
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

Prestigious social status and high level of education	Percentage	Number
Yes	45.9	133
No	51.4	149
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

The reputation and chastity of the women under his guardianship and responsibility	Percentage	Number
Yes	88.6	257
No	8.6	25
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

After reviewing the tables, we found that the members of the research community link the issue of a man's honor to the reputation and chastity of women who are under his guardianship, responsibility and protection, such as his wife, sisters and daughters, according to what was reported by 91.10% of the respondents.

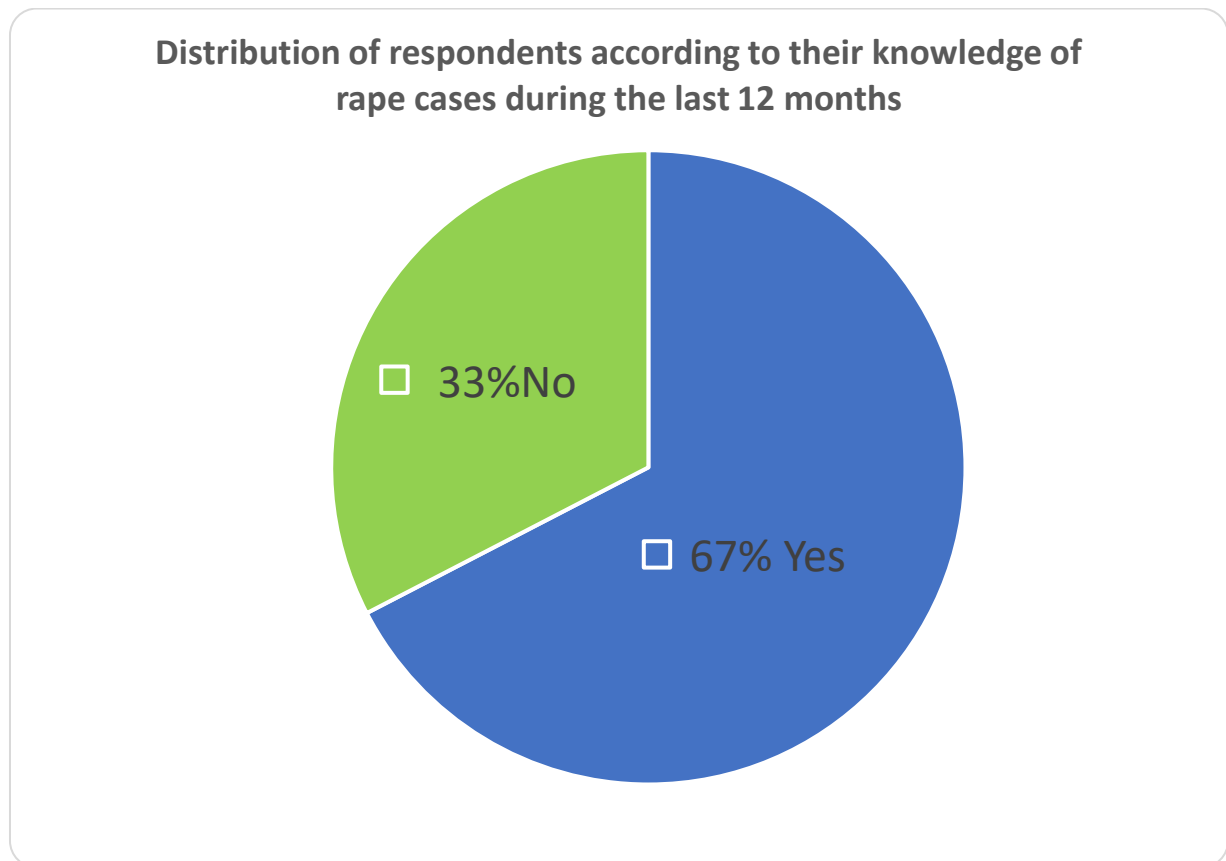


**\* Distribution of respondents according to their knowledge of rape cases during the last 12 months.**

**Do you know, otherwise you have heard of rape cases that have occurred in the society in which you have been living in the last 12 months?**

	Percentage	Number
Yes	62.1	180
No	30	87
Total	92.1	267
Unknown	7.9	23
Total	100	290

67.40% of respondents stated that they were aware of rapes in Gabes in the last 12 months.

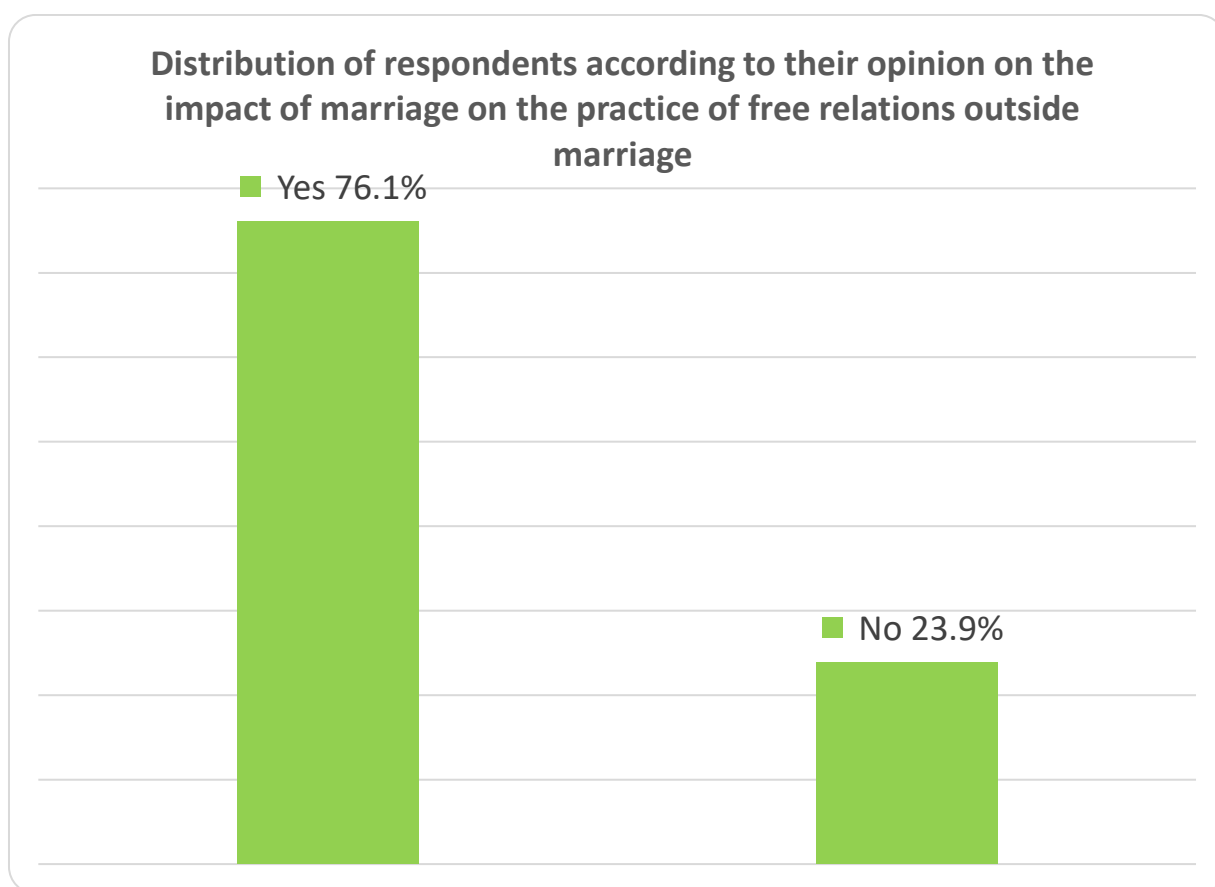


**\* Distribution of respondents according to their opinion on the impact of marriage on the practice of free relations outside marriage.**

**In your opinion, marriage would limit free relationships outside the legal frameworks.**

	Percentage	Number
Yes	74.8	217
No	23.4	68
Total	98.3	285
Unknown	1,7	5
Total	100	290

Nearly 80% of respondents agreed that marriage has an impact on limiting the practice of free relations outside the legal frameworks, while 23.90% of them stated that legal marriage does not have much effect on those relationships.



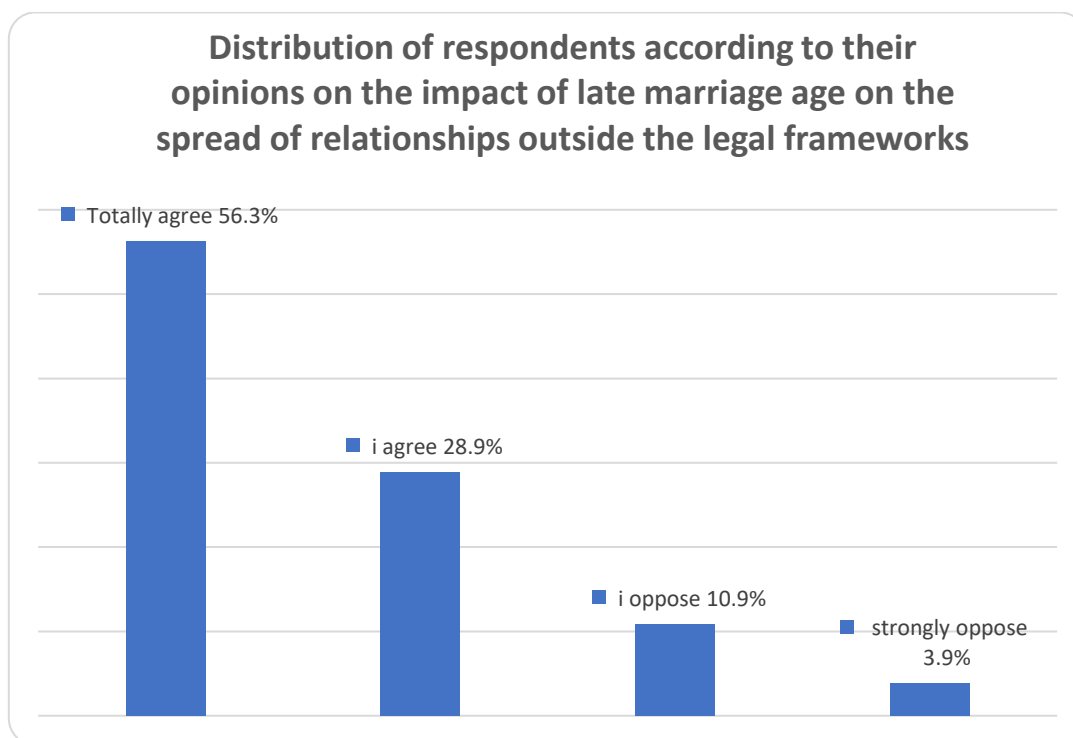
**\* Distribution of respondents according to their opinions on the impact of late marriage age on the spread of relationships outside the legal frameworks.**

**In your opinion, the late age of marriage contributes to the spread of extramarital relationships?**

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	55.2	160
I agree	28.3	82
I oppose	10.7	31
I strongly oppose	3.8	11
Total	97.9	284
Unknown	2.1	6
Total	100	290

The

delay in the age of marriage contributes to the spread of relationships outside the legal and legal frameworks, according to the statements of 85.2% of the respondents.



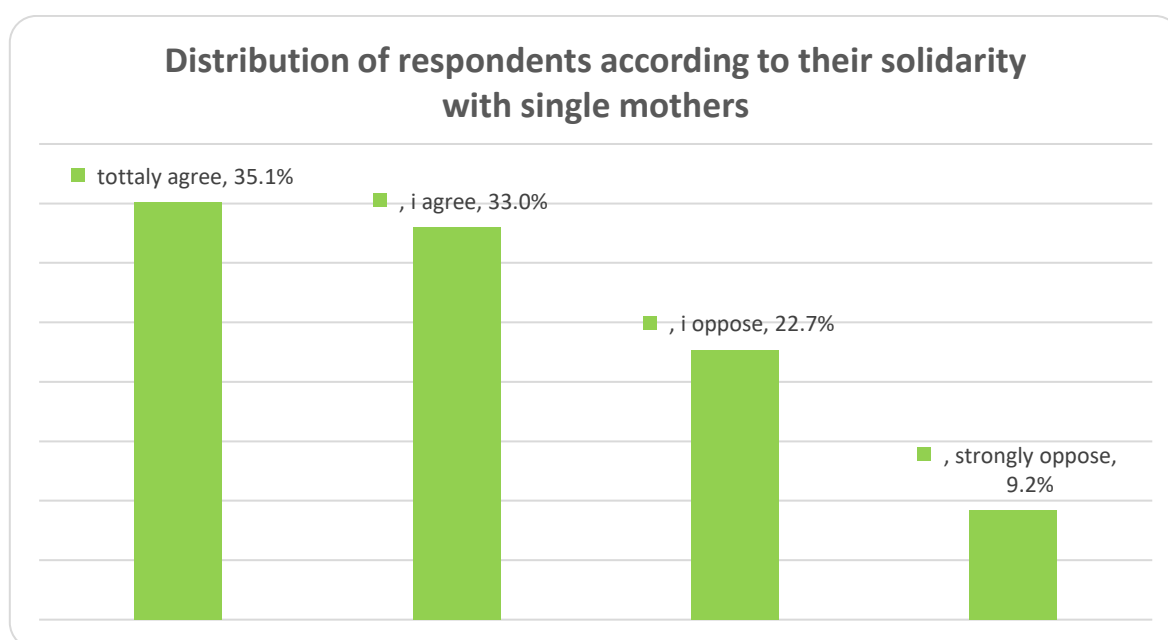
### 3- The extent of community solidarity with single mothers in the wilaya of Gabes.

\* Distribution of respondents according to their solidarity with single mothers:

- What would your position be if you had a house for rent for a single mother with her child and her financial conditions are good?

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	34.1	99
I agree	32.1	93
I oppose	22,1	64
I strongly oppose	9	26
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

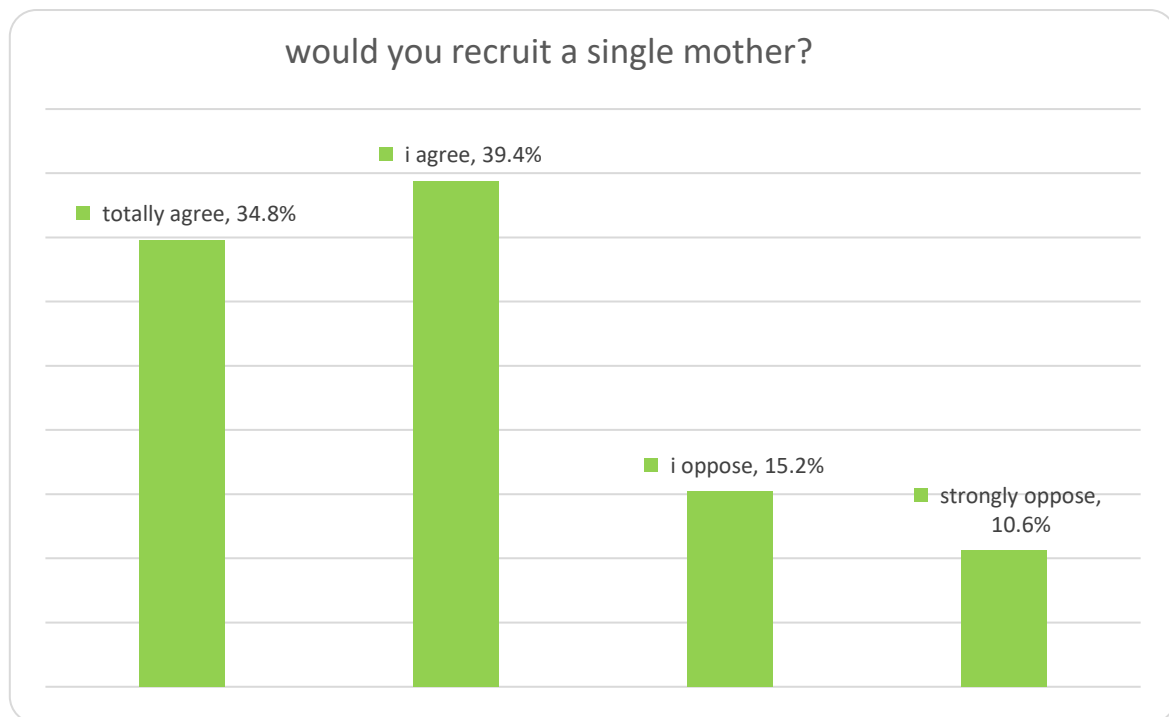
The results showed that 68.1%, which means equal to one third of the respondents, expressed their agreement to justify a place of residence for a single mother and her child if she is well-off. While 31.9% of the respondents refuse to rent a house for these mothers, even if her financial conditions are good.



**- What would be your position if you are a project worker and asked you to be a single mother with a high level of education and has experience in the field of work that you enable her to get a job?**

74.2% of the respondents agreed to employ a single mother due to her high educational level, professional competence and experience in the field, while only a quarter of the respondents (25.8%) refuse to assign any work to her, even if she has high scientific and cultural capital and has experience in the field.

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	33.8	98
I agree	38.3	111
I oppose	14.8	43
I strongly oppose	10.3	30
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

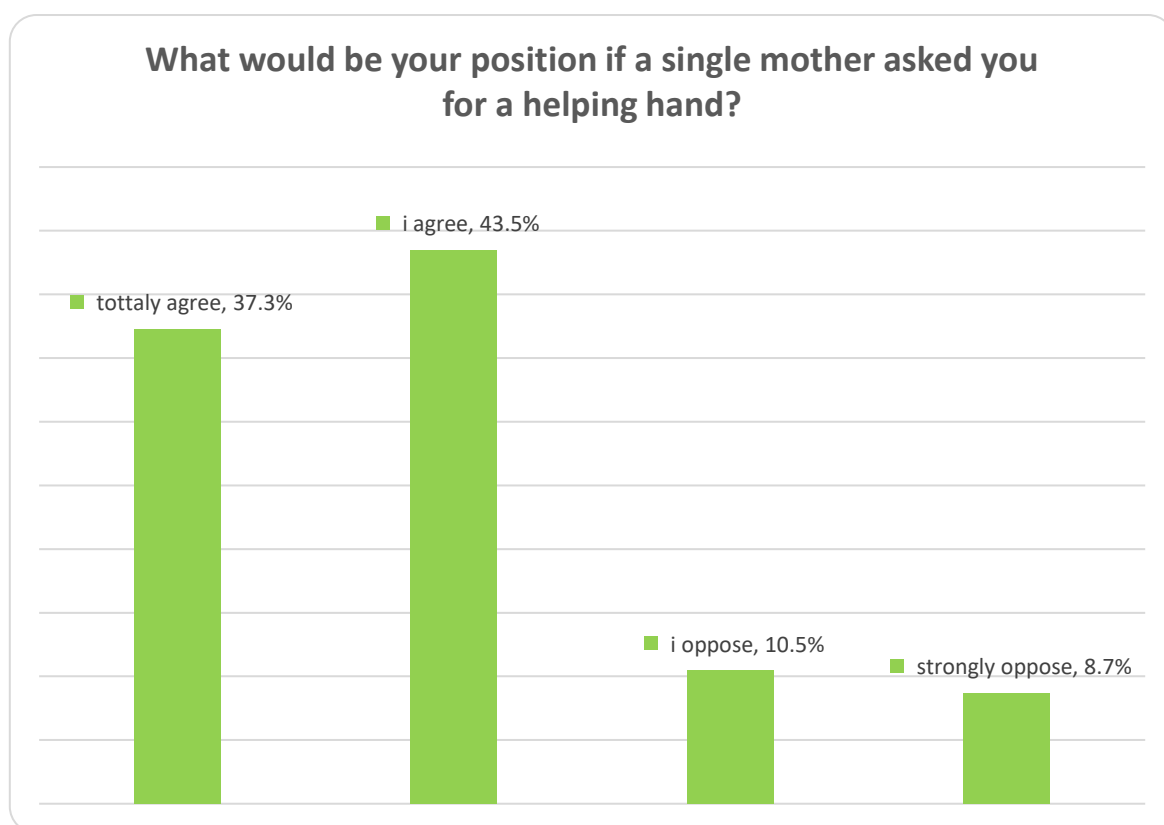


**-What would be your position if a single mother asked you for a helping hand?**

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	35.5	103
I agree	41.4	120
I oppose	10	29
I strongly oppose	8.3	24
Total	95.2	276
Unknown	4.8	14
Total	100	290

We conclude that 80.80% of respondents are willing to lend a helping hand to single mothers in solidarity with them due to their vulnerable situation. On the other hand, 19.20% of respondents oppose helping them.

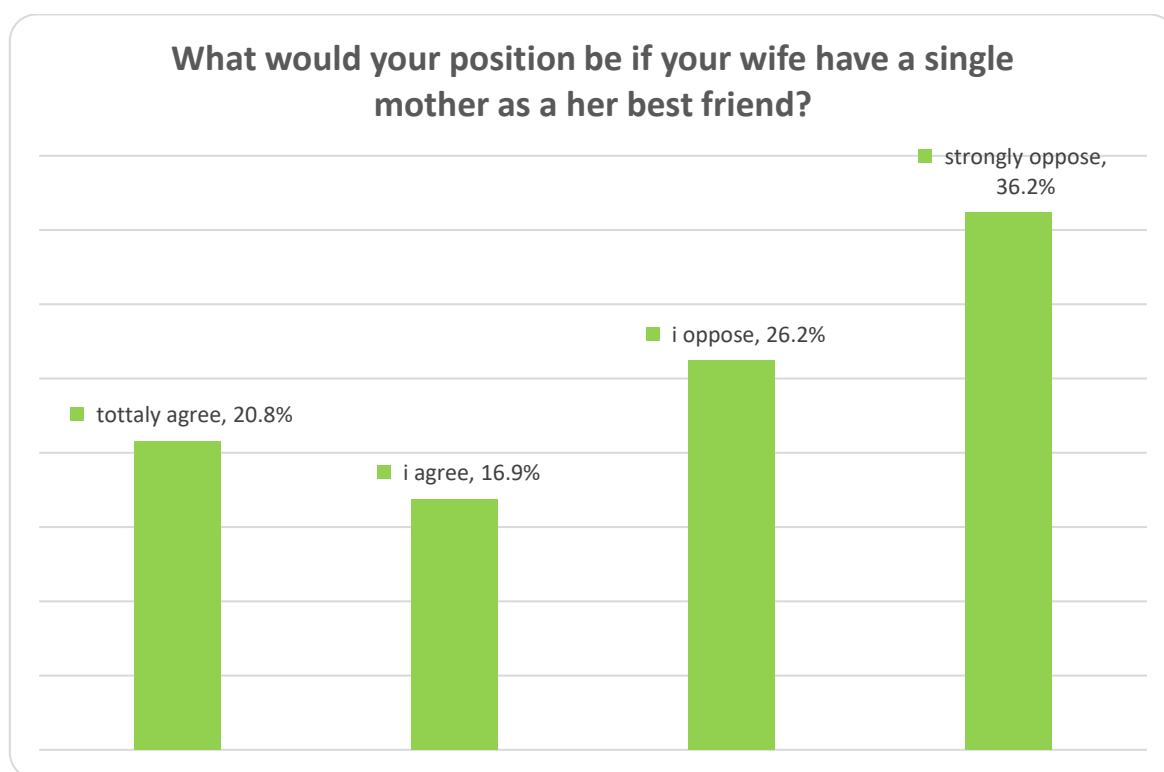




**-What would your position be if your wife have a single mother as a her best friend?**

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	9.3	27
I agree	7.6	22
I oppose	11.7	34
I strongly oppose	16.2	47
Total	44.8	130
Unknown	55.2	160
Total	100	290

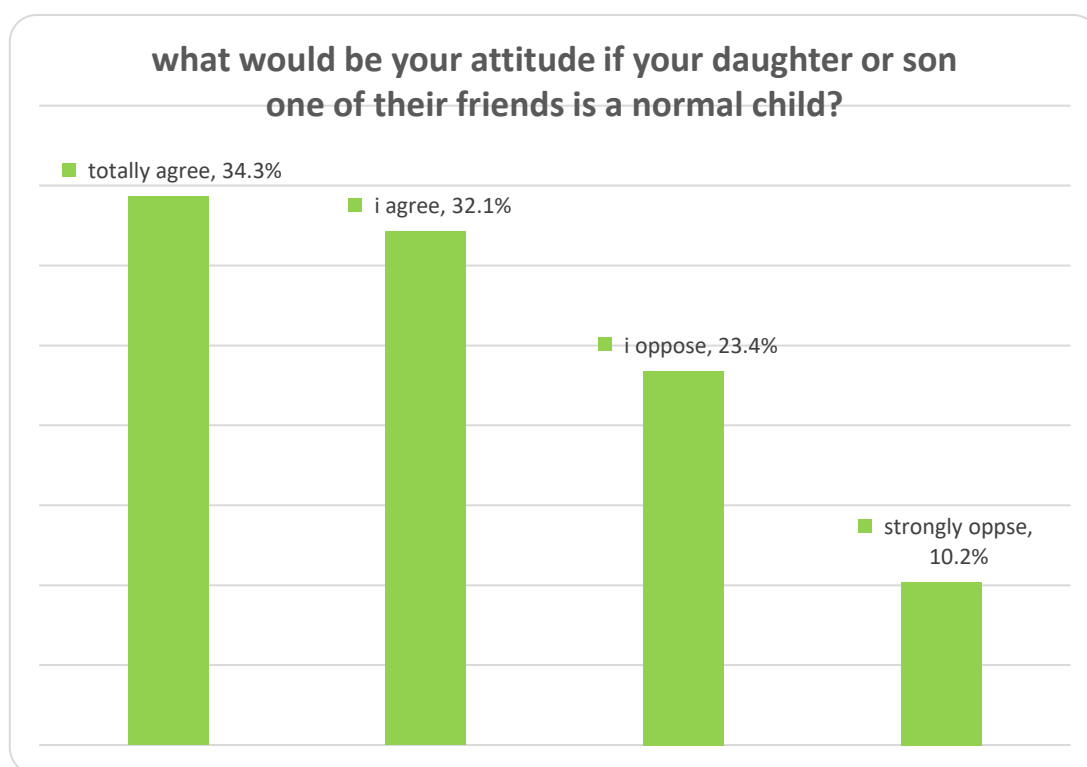
For those who submitted their permits, representing 44.8% of the males, 62.4% of them refuse to let a single mother be a close friend of their wives due to the bad reputation of these women, and they represent 16.90% of the total number of respondents, while 37.70% of them see no objection to that friendship.



**-what would be your attitude if your daughter or son one of their friends is a normal child?**

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	32.4	94
I agree	30.3	88
I oppose	22.1	64
I strongly oppose	9.7	28
Total	94.5	274
Unknown	5.5	16
Total	100	290

66.4% of the respondents see no objection to accompanying their children to normal children, while 33.60% of them refuse to cohabit with them and come into contact with them, believing that these children are a stigma and without identity.

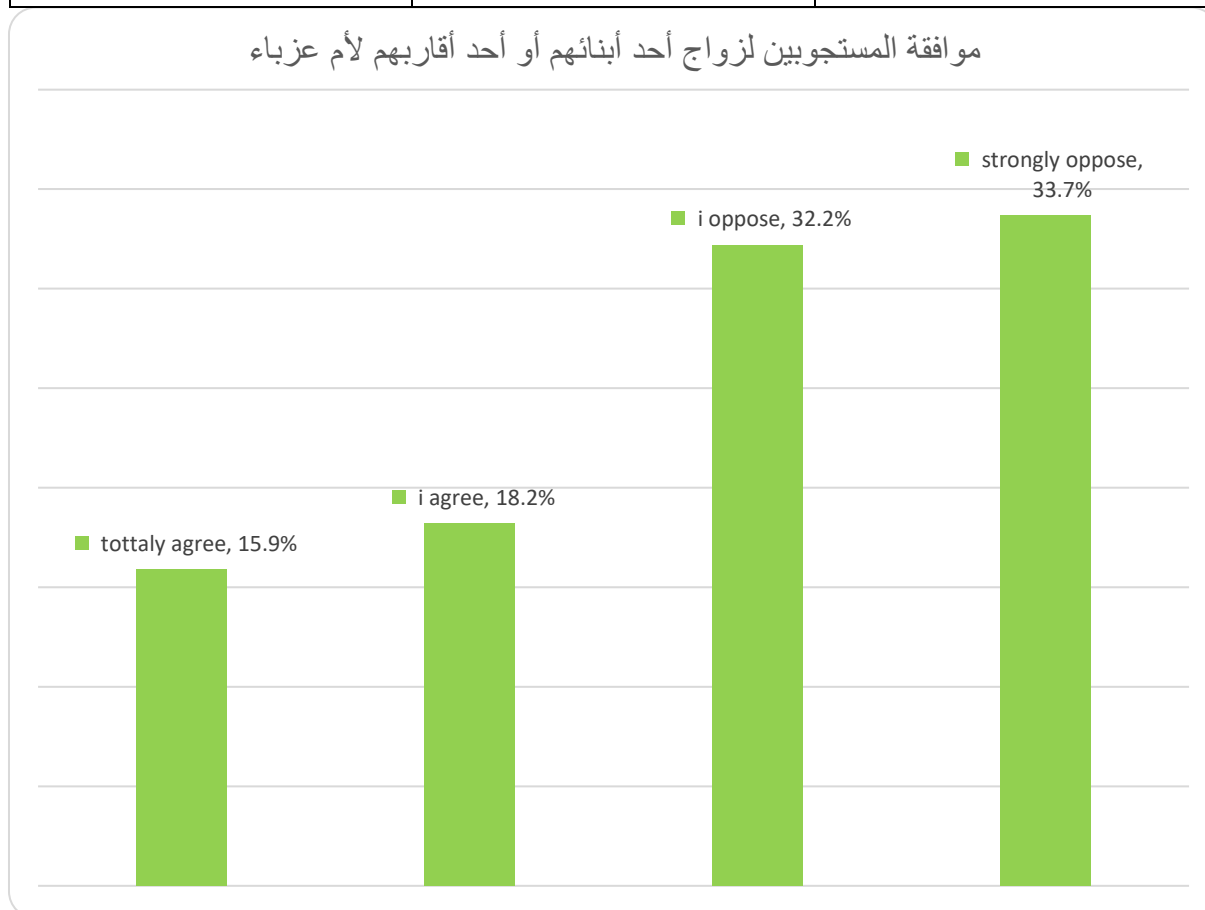


**-What would be your position if one of your children or relatives love marry a single mother?**

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	14.5	42
I agree	16,6	48
I oppose	29.3	85
I strongly oppose	30.7	89
Total	91	264
Unknown	9	26
Total	100	290

Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65.90%) do not agree with the marriage of their children or a relative to a single mother, while 34.1% do not reject this type of union.

Avoid the method of indifference in socialization with the need to monitor children	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	65.9	191
I agree	26,2	76
I oppose	4,8	14
I strongly oppose	1	3
Total	97,9	284
Unknown	9	6
Total	100	290



#### 4- The role of the family and the state:

##### 1.4 Role of the family:

##### 1.1.4 The role of the family towards children to reduce the phenomenon of single mothers.

**- According to your opinion, what are the obligations that the family must make towards their children to reduce the phenomenon of single mothers?**

Sex education culture within the family	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	61	177
I agree	26.6	77
I oppose	3.8	11
I strongly oppose	5.5	16
Total	96.6	281
Unknown	3.1	9
Total	100	290

Avoiding family disintegration and breaking family ties (divorce)	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	65.5	190
I agree	27.9	81
I oppose	3.1	9
I strongly oppose	1	3
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.49	7
Total	100	290

Avoid authoritarian socialization and excessive surveillance	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	62.8	182
I agree	29.7	86
I oppose	4.1	12
I strongly oppose	1	3
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

Respect for individual choices and freedoms	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	65.5	190
I agree	28.6	83
I oppose	2.1	4
I strongly oppose	1,4	6
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

Respect for individual choices and freedoms	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	58.6	170
I agree	29.3	85
I oppose	6.9	20
I strongly oppose	2,4	7
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

Percentage	Number	Encouraging young people to marry
63.8	185	I totally agree
28.6	83	I agree
4.5	13	I oppose
0.7	2	I strongly oppose
97.6	283	Total
2.4	7	Unknown
100	290	Total

After reviewing the tables, we conclude that more than 90% of the respondents believe that the family should make some obligations towards construction to reduce the phenomenon of single mothers, the most important of which are:

- Avoid family disintegration and the rupture of family ties (divorce).
- Avoid the method of indifference in socialization with the need to monitor children.
- Avoid authoritarian socialization and excessive surveillance.
- The culture of dialogue within the family.
- The culture of sex education within the family.
- Encouraging young people to marry.

The culture of dialogue within the family	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	68.3	198
I agree	27.2	79
I oppose	1.7	5
I strongly oppose	0.3	1
Total	97.6	283
Unknown	2.4	7
Total	100	290

- Education on freedom and responsibility.
- Respect individual choices and freedoms.

#### **2.4 Role of the State:**

**\* Distribution of respondents according to their opinions on the state's support for single mothers.**

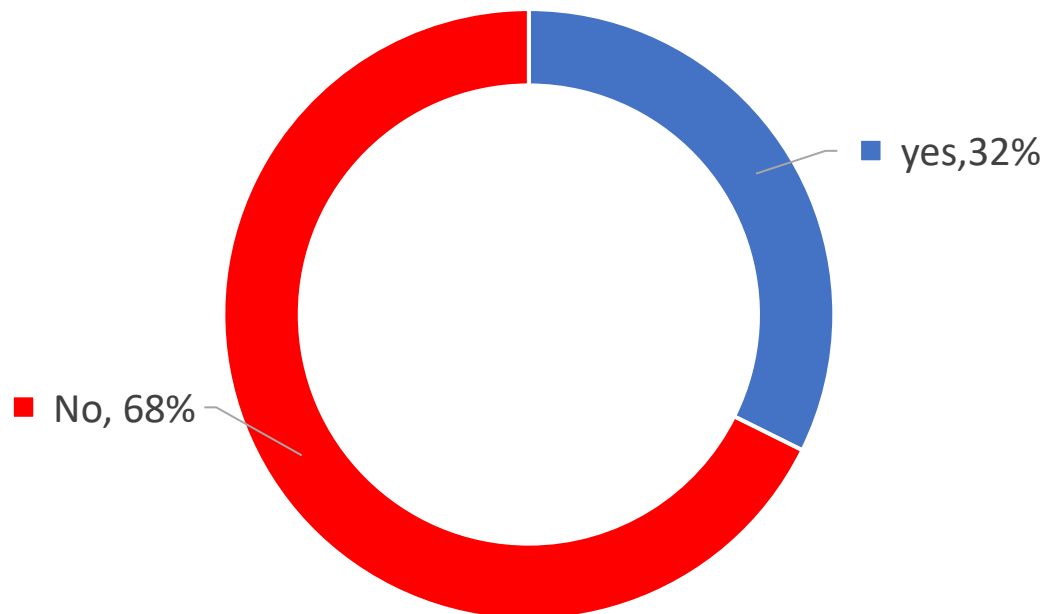
**What is the support from the state for single mothers and their children?**

Of those who submitted their permits, they represented only 56.6%, 67.7% of them reported that there was no state support for single mothers and their children, representing 38.30% of the total number of respondents. 32.3% denied this. The majority of respondents reported that this support was poor and scarce.

	Percentage	Number
Yes	18.3	53
No	38.3	111
Total	56.6	164
Unknown	43.4	126
Total	100	290



**Distribution of respondents according to their opinions on the state's support for single mothers**

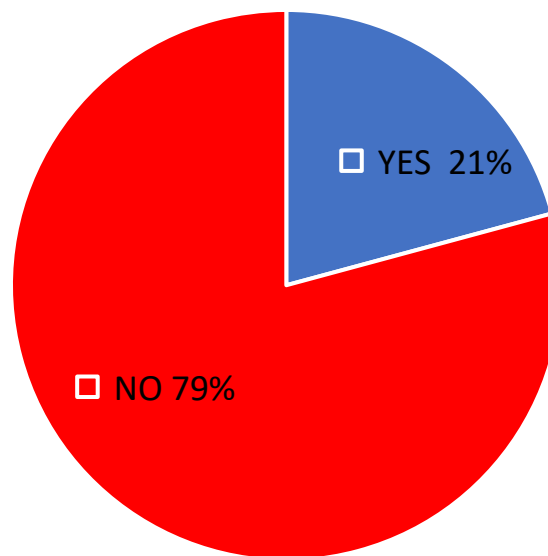


**\* Distribution of respondents according to their opinion on the extent to which single mothers and their children enjoy their rights.**

**In your opinion, single mothers and their children enjoy their full rights?**

Only 63.10% of respondents reported whether single mothers and their children enjoy their full rights or not, 79.20% of them stated that they do not enjoy them, unlike 20.80% of them.

**Distribution of respondents according to their opinion on the extent to which single mothers and their children enjoy their rights**



#### **4- The role of the state in protecting the category of single mothers**

**Distribution of respondents according to their views on the measures that the state must take to protect single mothers.**

**In your opinion, what measures should the state take to protect single mothers?**

Providing financial assistance to associations in charge of single mothers	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	47.9	139
I agree	34.1	99
I oppose	13.1	38
I strongly oppose	2.8	8
Total	97,9	284
Unknown	2.1	6
Total	100	290

Facilitate the process of issuing licenses to establish associations that sponsor single mothers	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	43.4	126
I agree	37.2	108
I oppose	13.8	40
I strongly oppose	2.1	6
Total	96.6	280
Unknown	3,4	10
Total	100	290

Providing a monthly income for single mothers to cover their needs	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	42.4	123
I agree	29.7	86
I oppose	16.2	47
I strongly oppose	8.6	25
Total	96.9	281
Unknown	3.1	9
Total	100	290

	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	74.5	216
I agree	21	61
I oppose	0.7	2
I strongly oppose	1.7	5
Total	97.9	284
Unknown	21	6
Total	100	290

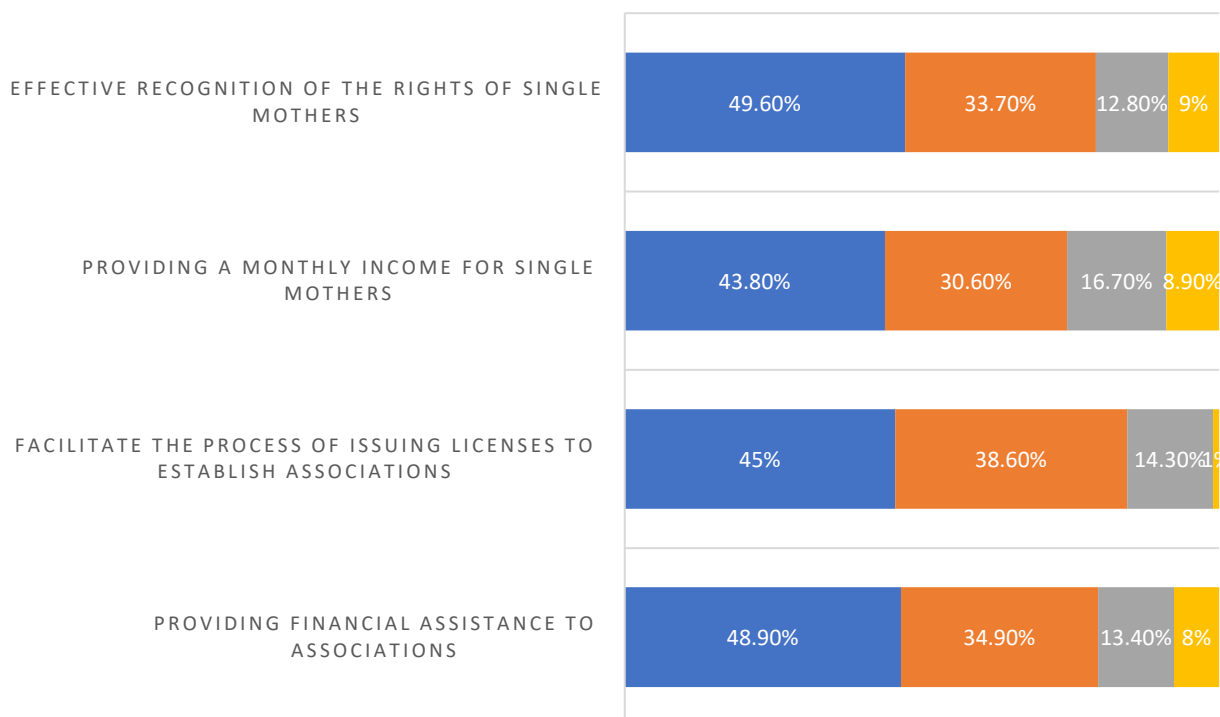
Effective recognition of the rights of single mothers	Percentage	Number
I totally agree	48.3	140
I agree	32.8	95
I oppose	12.4	36
I strongly oppose	3.8	11
Total	97.2	282
Unknown	2.8	8
Total	100	290

We note very high percentages ranging between 83.3% and 97.6% of the respondents who agree and emphasize the need for the state to adhere to measures to protect the category of single mothers, the most important of which are:

- Providing financial assistance to associations sponsoring single mothers (83.8%)
- Facilitating the process of issuing licenses for the establishment of associations to sponsor single mothers (83.60%)
- Providing a monthly income for single mothers to cover their needs (74.40%)
- Effective recognition of the rights of single mothers (83.30%)
- Facilitating the integration of single mothers into the labour market (91.10%).
- Oblige parents to assume their full legal and social responsibilities towards children born out of wedlock (97.60%).
- Implementation of the conventions ratified by the State before international bodies (94.2%)

## DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR VIEWS ON THE MEASURES THAT THE STATE MUST TAKE TO PROTECT SINGLE MOTHERS

■ totally agree   
 ■ I agree   
 ■ I oppose   
 ■ strongly oppose

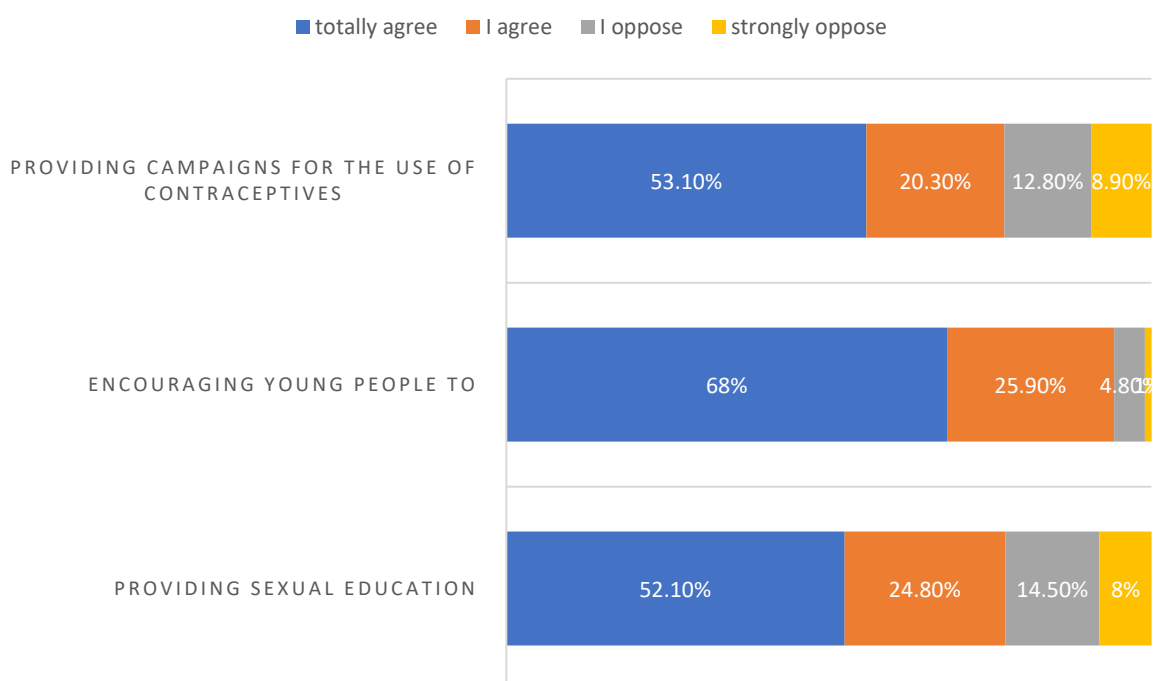


### 4.2.2 The role of the State in reducing the phenomenon of single mothers:

**\* Distribution of respondents according to their opinions on the measures that the state should take to reduce the phenomenon of single mothers.**

**What measures are needed by the state to reduce the phenomenon of single mothers?**

## DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONDENTS ACCORDING TO THEIR OPINIONS ON THE MEASURES THAT THE STATE SHOULD TAKE TO REDUCE THE PHENOMENON OF SINGLE MOTHERS



The state should take measures to curb the phenomenon of single mothers, according to a percentage of respondents ranging from 73.4% to 94.20%.

These are some of the measures to name a few:

- Introduction of sexual education in educational programs (76.90%).
- Helping and encouraging young people to marry (94.20%).
- Intensifying awareness campaigns for young people on the use of contraceptives (73.40%).

# CONCLUSION

In this field research, we relied on a sample consisting of 137 males and 153 females aged between 20 and 78, originating from Gabes Governorate, distributed in municipal (urban) and rural areas, with varying educational levels and different economic activity.

The results of this study revealed to us that individual freedoms are a human right, but we note that there are supporters and opponents of their enjoyment and therefore we find ourselves facing a society made up of individuals including those who believe in the enshrinement of individual freedoms and see them as a gain and a human right, and among them are those who oppose this type of freedoms and consider them as barbarism, immoral practices, corruption and moral dissolution, and it is believed that individual freedom contradicts the values of the society in which we live, and it obliterates the identity of the people.

Thus, the representation of the interviewed group reveals the contradictions of the collective mind and thus we note that a large part of society is eager to achieve change and to embrace the values and principles of human rights and human values such as synergy, support and understanding without falling into value judgements and another part that adheres to its traditional structures and remains bound by

traditions, customs, controls and beliefs that cannot be exceeded for fear of being punished by the family or society in which it lives.

The results of the questionnaire also confirmed that men and women do not enjoy the same individual rights and freedoms as a result of the lack of gender equality in the society in which they live. We note that the issue of equality between men and women occupies an important place among individuals, which indicates that despite the development of society and women's access to the public space and the achievements they have made in all fields, they continue to have an inferior position and rank in the social mind and in the social representations that have endowed all norms with masculine dominance.

The study also demonstrated that the phenomenon of single mothers has been widespread in recent years and that cases of childbearing outside marriage are on the rise. Knowing that the society in which they live looks at them negatively and does not consider them to be ordinary mothers, rather they are victims of society, stigma and social offenders, on the one hand.

On the other hand, this society considers that a woman's pregnancy as "lawful" is an affront to her honour and a desecration of the family's reputation, a moral offence for which both men and women



must be held accountable, since women are not solely responsible for such pregnancy but it is a joint responsibility between the two parties.

Moreover, a large part of society rejects that this practice be a woman's right or a right to motherhood under the guise of "personal freedom". They are exposed to many problems, such as physical, verbal and moral violence, and they suffer from exclusion, alienation and social rejection from the family and society. They are also subject to marginalization and humiliation, as if they are receiving collective punishment for breaking social controls and undermining the family's position as a basic nucleus in society.

Single mothers suffer even from the people closest to them, as well as loneliness, isolation, psychological suffering, many social difficulties, and the loss of friends, jobs, and homes.

As for the "illegitimate" child, as described by the male and female respondents, the results of the questionnaire proved that society's view of him was less severe than his mother's and he was not considered guilty, but rather a victim of a sin committed by his parents, but at the same time, however, he was exposed to various problems such as deprivation of certain rights and society did not allow him the opportunity to highlight his abilities, success and excellence along with health, educational and social

neglect.

The study highlighted the importance of the services that should be provided for the benefit of mothers who have given birth to children within the framework of an extramarital sexual relationship, whether in terms of material, moral, psychological, social or even professional aspects.

The results of the research also showed that free extramarital relationships exist in the governorate of Gabes, but society's perception of such relationships varied, from those who viewed them as personal freedom and could normally be practised, and those who saw them as corruption, moral dissolution, adultery and disgrace to women.

Perhaps one of the most important reasons that make individuals reject such practices are religious reasons and to avoid catastrophic outcomes such as illegal pregnancy, loss of virginity and the avoidance of sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS and ... especially since these relationships are not in line with customs, traditions, mores and family education. In addition, society does not judge men who engage in extramarital affairs in the same way that it judges women who do not enjoy the same physical freedom as men, given that the society in which we live is a male-dominated society.

The results of the study also revealed the extent of community solidarity with single mothers in the

governorate of Gabes, where we find those who do not see any objection to extending a helping hand and providing them with assistance in any field, in addition to approving the rental of residential premises for them and their employment on the one hand.

On the other hand, there are those who do refuse to mix their children with normal children and interact with them in the school environment or other spaces. And there are those who do not accept or approve of the marriage of one of his children or relatives to a single mother and also strongly oppose his wife's friendship with her.

The most important suggested recommendations:

Added to the recommendations included in the questionnaire, the respondents (male and female) suggest that the following procedures be taken :

1- The role of the family :

- Instilling confidence in children and awarning them.
- Continuous guidance for children.
- Good behavior in front of children.
- Listening to children and following up their psychological problems and moral needs.
- Proper education of children.
- Providing security and material stability
- Avoiding violence.
- Education and Cultivation

- Child development during adolescence.
- Awareness since childhood.
- Non-discrimination between a son and a daughter.
- Working to change mentalities within the family

## 2- The role of the state :

- Ensure the psychological support of the single mother and child.
- Enacting and implementing laws
- Creating vocational training centers for single mothers to enter the labor market.
- Awareness campaigns and the enactment and implementation of laws that preserve the rights of this category
- Raising awareness through flashes on social networking sites.
- Enabling individuals to enjoy the freedom of choice
- Integration of sex education
- Returning to awareness-raising work with regard to informing youth and adolescents
- The need to enact laws obliging the father to spend and bear the responsibility for the child (the obligation to recognize paternity)

## Advocacy recommendations

- The need to review the Personal Status Code in accordance with the constitution and international agreements, especially CEDAW convention, the Istanbul Convention, and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its protocol.

### Updating the Personal Status Code

the Personal Status Law of 1956; It will be updated after the promulgation of the 2022 Constitution and the ratification of the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa (Pursuant to Law No. 2018-33 of July 2018). It is mainly on the equality of men and women in matters of inheritance, the granting of citizenship, and tax equality; Equality in guardianship over children, the issue of proving parentage, the rights of a child born out of wedlock, and the inclusion of his right to inheritance.

### Unconstitutional Penal Code

The Tunisian Penal Code issued in 1913; It is one of the most texts that maintained a stranglehold on freedom. After the adoption of the 2022 constitution, this law should have been compatible with the new constitution and in particular with the principles of protecting individual freedoms and ensuring a decent life (Article 21); protection of the right to life (Article 22); protection of dignity (Article 23); Protection of privacy, the inviolability of the home, and the confidentiality of correspondence, communications, and personal data (Article 24). Based on these principles, a new penal code should be adopted to abolish certain offenses such as homosexuality, adultery, sex work, moral offenses: offenses against modesty or

good morals ... to review some penalties and replace short-term penalties (equal to or less than two years) with alternative sentences ... Remember that a committee has been appointed since 2014, responsible for penal code reform, but no project has been proposed until today.

Child Rights :

23. Under its Constitution, Tunisia pledged to uphold the best interests of the child (Article 47), a principle that is also enshrined in all national legislation (Child Protection Law) and in the conventions and protocols ratified by Tunisia. However, national legislation still contains aspects that discriminate against children.

Thus, Tunisian law (Article 15 of the Constitution) continues to discriminate against children born out of wedlock (even those recognized by their parents) to prevent them from inheriting from their fathers like their brothers and sisters born in wedlock.

- Ensuring the proper implementation of the law in all its provisions by the administrative authorities, the judicial police and the judicial authorities, especially through the enactment of executive texts.
- Eliminating all cases of survival and discriminatory gaps from national legislation that weaken the protection of women's rights and the principle of gender equality.

- Implementing the provisions of the law related to multi-sectoral support through the application and legal updating of the sectoral protocols and the multi-sectoral agreement

Defining the public policy for prevention &quot;in times of crisis&quot;;

- Reviewing the budget and financing system to combat violence and discrimination against women, including single mothers, in order to provide national and regional institutions and associations working in this field with the necessary means to take care of women.
- Reviewing regulatory laws related to sheltering women victims of violence and legal aid, through consultation with concerned civil society associations.
- Adopting awareness-raising and training measures for judges and specialized units in the police for effective care for single mothers as victims as well.
- Ratifying the Istanbul Convention, the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. Istanbul 11 V 2011

In the field of awareness and sensitization work:

- The need to integrate sex education in educational institutions
- The necessity of sensitizing the responsibility of both parties in the relationship of childbearing and in the relationship of sexuality
- Returning to awareness campaigns related to reproductive health
- Working on a national strategy to introduce the law of violence against women and the rights they enjoy under it.

In the areas of social and economic briefing :

- The need to regulate public policies that work to integrate women, including single mothers, and empower them economically
- Providing training courses to enable them to acquire professional skills that facilitate their access to work
- Providing economic financing programs to enable this category to live a decent life
- Facilitating procedures for access to work and financing micro-enterprises
- Facilitating procedures for placing children in kindergartens for free and enabling mothers to work