

Media Observatory of Arrests Based on Sex Work from January 2024 to December 2024

Media Observatory 2024:

Media Observatory of Arrests Based on Sex Work from January 2024 to December 2024

Author

Seltur, a researcher with a focus on bodily rights and sexualities.

About Cairo 52

Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute, the inaugural regional legal institute with a distinctive emphasis on the matters concerning sexual and bodily liberties of marginalized communities. At Cairo 52, our institutional ethos is deeply grounded in the principle of intersectionality, acknowledging the intricate and intertwined nature of justice-related concerns.

Our primary objective entails advocating and advancing sexual and bodily freedoms, particularly for the marginalized and stigmatized segments of gender and sexual minorities, encompassing individuals who identify as LGBTQ+, those living with HIV, sex workers, and women.

www.cairo52.com
info@cairo52.com

Suggested Citation:

Seltur, Media Observatory of Arrests Based on Sex Work from January 2024 to December 2024, Cairo 52 Legal Research Institute, October 2025

All rights reserved Cairo 52 legal research institute
Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International(CC BY-SA 4.0)



Contents

1 Introduction

Executive Summary **4**

6 Methodology

Limitations **8**

10 Analysis and observations

Intersectional Analysis **16**

Conclusion **23**

Introduction

“Sex workers should be guaranteed all human and labour rights, including in relation to occupational health and safety, to ensure safe and non-exploitative work environments. They should have social protection and equal access to the full range of social, economic and health rights.”¹

While sex work in Egypt is criminalized, this does not mean that sex workers do not exist. It means that sex work takes place in a low-profile and pushed-aside pattern. This, by default, creates a dangerous work environment for sex workers and all those involved in its facilitation and management. Such an environment bans any formal access to health services, labour rights or justice systems, which conflicts with all international human rights frameworks and conventions. It goes beyond formal services to also include social stigma and discrimination.

The international human rights framework affirms that sex workers are entitled to the full spectrum of rights, especially health, safe labor, and bodily autonomy. It emphasizes the importance of consent and agency, rejecting discriminatory policies that treat sex work as inherently exploitative. States are obligated to uphold these rights without bias, ensure affected communities participate in policymaking, and provide access to justice². Furthermore, the 2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons defines trafficking broadly, focusing on coercion, fraud, or abuse for exploitation, including sexual exploitation. It states that a victim’s consent is irrelevant if coercive means are used³. The notion of “abuse of a position of vulnerability” invalidates consent but is vague, with unclear links to poverty or other forms of systematic injustice. The determinants of nullifying consent under factors of vulnerability are not clear and leave room for various interpretations. It also raises a question about the correlation between a state of vulnerability and the right to autonomy and decision-making⁴. Thus, laws that ignore sex workers’ agency and autonomy raise serious human rights concerns. Whether motivated by morality or protective intentions, laws that label all sex work as criminal or all sex workers as victims deny them decision-making power and shift that control to the state⁵.

By applying the abovementioned understanding on the Egyptian context, the legal status of sex work in Egypt has shifted repeatedly over the past two centuries, swinging between regulation, prohibition, and moral policing. These changes have rarely centred on the rights or well-being of sex workers. Instead, they reflect the economic needs, political agendas, and social anxieties of those in power.

Most recently in 2024, the Egyptian General Department of Passports, Immigration and Nationality issued a decision that bans women “from lower group/Al Fi’at Al Donia”⁶, as expressed in the decision, from travelling to Saudi Arabia without a travel permit. The decision, however formally unexplained, resources expressed to media sources that the decision is a part of the Egyptian endeavours to eliminate sex work and sexual exploitation⁷. The criteria for obtaining the permit rely mainly on the personal assessment of the Department’s employees and their overall impression of the permit seekers. This latest decision comes in a series of laws and regulations that seek to regulate women’s bodies and are centred on criminalising autonomous sexual acts, by either treating women as criminals or victims. The decision mentioned above adds a layer to the discrimination, discrimination based on class. It denies women their right to body autonomy, not only based on gender identity but also based on their social class.

1 [Eliminating discrimination against sex workers and securing their human rights \(January, 2024\) Human Rights Council, Working Group on discrimination against women and girls.](#)

2 Tandon, T., Armas-Cordano, G., Grover A. (21 October, 2014) [Sex Work and Trafficking: Can Human Rights Lead Us Out of the Impasse? Health and Human Rights](#)

3 [Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime \(2000\), article 3 \(a\) and \(b\)](#)

4 [For more insights about the impact of anti-trafficking laws see Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women \(2007\) Collateral Damage: The Impact of Anti-Trafficking Measures on Human Rights around the World](#)

5 [Don’t Outlaw Sex Workers’ Consent! - Policy Brief In Response To Law Proposal To Criminalise Sex Work & Calls For ‘abolition Of Prostitution’ In Spain \(2021\) European Sex Workers Rights Alliance \(ESWA\).](#)

6 Lower class (الفئات الدنيا) is defined by the decision as housewives, and women without higher degrees. The decision exclude women from the same categories who carry family visit visa and women with higher degrees.

7 [سارة سيف الدين \(2024\) مصادر: «الأعمال المنافية للأداب» سبب حظر سفر النساء غير الحاصلات على مؤهل عالٍ للسعودية دون تصريح. مدى مصر](#)

Currently, law No. 10 of 1961,⁸ known as the “Law on Combating Prostitution,” which expanded criminal penalties not only to sex workers but also to anyone facilitating or profiting from prostitution, continues to shape Egypt’s approach to sex work, perpetuating the exclusion and repression of sex workers without addressing their rights or safety. In addition, Egypt has expanded its reach through cybercrime laws no. 175/2018 that criminalises online behaviour related to sex work. Article 25 of 175/2018⁹ penalises anyone who attacks “family principles or values in Egyptian society”¹⁰.

In the previous three reports, media observation of arrests based on sex work from January 2019 to December 2020 (which saw 138 arrests in 2019 versus 190 arrests in 2020) and media observation

⁸ الدليل القانوني لجرائم الاعتداء علي ممارسة الدعارة او الفجور. التحريض علي ممارسة الدعارة او الفجور والاعلان عنهما. بالاضافة الي جريمة الاخلال بالآداب العامة: مدعم بمبدي محكمة النقض ومذكرات دفاع من 8. واقع قضايا امام محاكم الجنج والاستئناف والنقض ومذكرة بعدم دستورية المادة 9(3) من القانون رقم 10/1961. (2021) نورا نورالله.

⁹ قانون مكافحة جرائم تقنية المعلومات رقم 175 لسنة 2018 - منشورات قانونية 9

¹⁰ Egypt: In security campaign to protect family values, Public Prosecution abdicates its duty to protect citizens (2020) Statements and Position Papers by CIHRS (Cairo Institute For Human Rights Studies)

Executive Summary

of arrests based on sex work from January 2021 to December 2022 (which in turn saw 132 arrests in 2021 as opposed to 124 arrests in 2022). In the last report, the media observatory documented 154 arrests in the period between January 2023 and December 2023. For 2024, we documented 30 pieces of news, which include 116 arrestees during the period of documentation (January 2024 to December 2024). All the arrests are related to cases involving prostitution, facilitation, or promotion of prostitution. So the total number is not only related to sex workers but also arrestees related to facilitation and promotion. These arrests took place across various Egyptian governorates between January and October, with notable patterns in timing, geography, and enforcement methods. Because the documentation relied on secondary data, the segregation of accusations, whether it is sex work or facilitation of sex work, is not clear. 63% of arrest cases were from Greater Cairo, with peaks in the arrestees in May, January and February. 75.9% of arrestees are documented to be working independently, meaning that they engage in sex work independently. Women made up the vast majority, with 83 individuals arrested, including 2 transgender women. Men comprised 31 of the arrested individuals, while the gender identity of 2 individuals was not disclosed. Of the 31 cisgender men arrested, 22 were arrested alongside women as facilitators or organisers for sex work. From 116 arrestees, 11 individuals are identified as queer. It is understandable that heterosexual individuals form the majority of the arrestees percentage (90.5%) and among the men arrested, nine were identified as gay by authorities or media coverage.

The report is divided into three sections:

- a. Methodology and Determinants: outlining our data-collection methods and the key variables under study;
- b. Key figures, statistics and observations
- c. Intersectional Analysis: presenting statistics and observations on the relations between the arrestees and their gender identity, sexual orientation, location, online vs offline presence, and type of management

At Cairo 52, we adopted an analytical, quantitative methodology to assess how various factors, gender, sexual orientation, and location, influence the landscape of sex work in Egypt. “Location” here

Methodology

encompasses both physical venues and virtual spaces (e.g., telephone or social media platforms). The report attempts to draw an intersectional analysis between the various factors such as gender identity, sexual orientation, location, online vs offline presence, and type of management.

The methodology in this report, same as the previous reports, relied on the analytical descriptive approach through research using certain keywords as “prostitution”, “prostitution network”, “immorality and debauchery”, “immorality”, “debauchery”, “vice”, “vice practice”, “human trafficking”, “the human trafficking”, “lady of the night”, and “ladies of the night” to search through the sites of both official and independent newspapers within a time frame from 1 January 2024 to 31 December 2024¹¹. The methodology was keen to research using the defined and undefined words, singulars and plurals of the same word, and using conjunctions to combine the two words. It also relied on manually following the tags used on news websites to categorize news pieces and searching on social media posts containing links to news websites to ensure that the information mentioned in the posts relies on actual news, not fabricated one.

When finding news relevant to the research topic, the news is collected, cleaned, archived, and analysed by answering a few questions:

- What is the news headline?
- What is the content of the news?
- What is the date of the news?
- What is the newspaper publishing the news?
- How many are arrested in that news?
- What is the gender of the arrested?
- What is the sexual orientation of the arrested?
- What is the geographical area of the arrested? Zoning has been divided into: The Greater Cairo (which includes Cairo, Giza, and Helwan) - Alexandria (which includes Alexandria only) - The Canal (which includes Port Said, Suez, Ismailia, North Sinai, and South Sinai) - The Delta (which includes Beheira, Dakahlia, Sharkia, Gharbia, Qalyubia, Menofia, Damietta, and Kafr El-Sheikh) - Upper Egypt (which includes Aswan, Luxor, Assiut, Sohag, Red Sea, Qena, Minya, New Valley, Beni Suef, and Fayoum).
- What governorate did the incident take place in?
- What is the reason for the arrest (based on a report, investigation, or information)?
- What is the charge?
- What is the location of the incident (residential unit, social media websites, both (they are arrested for both in the same case), health clubs/clubs or other private properties)?
- What is the type of administration (independent or non-independent), meaning is it managed by a pimp or by the sex worker themselves?
- What is the decision of the prosecution?
- Is the news related to previous news or not (to avoid calculating duplicate inputs)?

This study’s determinants are drawn entirely from secondary sources—primarily media reports from news platforms, such as Al Masry Elyoum, Telegraph, Masrawy, El Watan, rather than direct evidence

¹¹ The key searching words are based on the terms used in the laws and news to refer to sex work and sex workers.

Limitations

such as case files, police transcripts, or interviews with arrested sex workers or law-enforcement personnel. Relying on the available information in the news pieces limits the clear segregation of accusations for each arrestee, the prosecutor's decisions or the details of the trial processes. While these secondary materials are available, access to primary data is severely constrained: police departments routinely withhold case reports and arrest statistics; political actors decline to cooperate with independent researchers; and social stigma discourages those arrested from speaking openly. In addition, one major challenge in understanding sex work in Egypt is the absence of reliable data. In the late 90s, the Ministry of Interior published annual reports on crimes, including prostitution and debauchery¹². These reports were discontinued without explanation, leaving researchers to rely on sporadic media coverage and reports from non-governmental organisations. This opacity makes it difficult to assess trends or argue for evidence-based reforms.

Additionally, accurately identifying the gender identity and sexual orientation of LGBTQ+ individuals presents a particular challenge, as Egyptian media frequently employ stigmatising labels like "sexual perversion" and conflate gender identity with sexual orientation, especially in coverage of transgender people. These obstacles limit the granularity of our findings and underscore the need for more transparent data and field-based inquiry. The documented news does not allow an elaborate analysis of the reason for arrest, for example, if the arrest is based on an investigation, there is no information about the process of such investigation prior to the arrest. Also, the news relied on glorifying the police personnel involved in the arrest, rather than stating facts and information about the arrest incidents. Finally, the news does not follow through, mostly, the prosecution's decisions or final verdicts in cases where the arrestees are held in trials.

جريدة الوطن - - 17 يناير 2018 تقرير الأمن العام... منجم معلومات الجريمة محظور من التداول 12

Analysis and observations

The report documents 30 pieces of news, which include 116 arrestees during the period of documentation (January 2024 to December 2024). All the arrests are related to cases involving prostitution, facilitation, or promotion of prostitution. So the total number is not only related to sex workers but also arrestees related to facilitation and promotion. These arrests took place across various Egyptian governorates between January and October, with notable patterns in timing, geography, and enforcement methods. As mentioned in the limitation section, the secondary data didn't offer a clear segregation of accusations for each arrestee, but rather a total number of the arrestees in each police raid.

A. Number of arrests distributed to months

The distribution of arrests across months reveals distinct fluctuations in state enforcement activity. Arrests peaked significantly in May, with 32 individuals apprehended, followed by January (24) and February (20). These months stand out not only in terms of absolute numbers but also as periods when police activity appeared more concentrated and targeted. In contrast, the lowest arrest numbers occurred in August (1) and March (2), suggesting either reduced operations or shifts in focus away from prostitution enforcement during these periods.

Arrests Related to Sex Work in Egypt (2024)



Figure (1): Distribution of arrestees per month.

Number of arrests distributed to months



B. Number of arrests based on the governorate

The spatial distribution of arrests highlights a continued focus on urban areas, particularly the Greater Cairo region, which accounted for over 63% of arrest cases. Within this, Cairo and Giza reported 34 and 28 individual arrests respectively, reinforcing the area’s centrality in state policing efforts around morality laws.

An unexpected concentration of arrests was also recorded in Dakahlia, a governorate in the Delta region, which alone accounted for 38 arrested individuals, more than any other governorate. Although only six cases were reported across the entire Delta region, the high number of individuals per case in Dakahlia suggests large-scale operations or possibly raids targeting organized networks. In contrast, Sohag, Upper Egypt, showed minimal enforcement, with only one arrest case and one individual.

Arrested individuals by governorate in Egypt

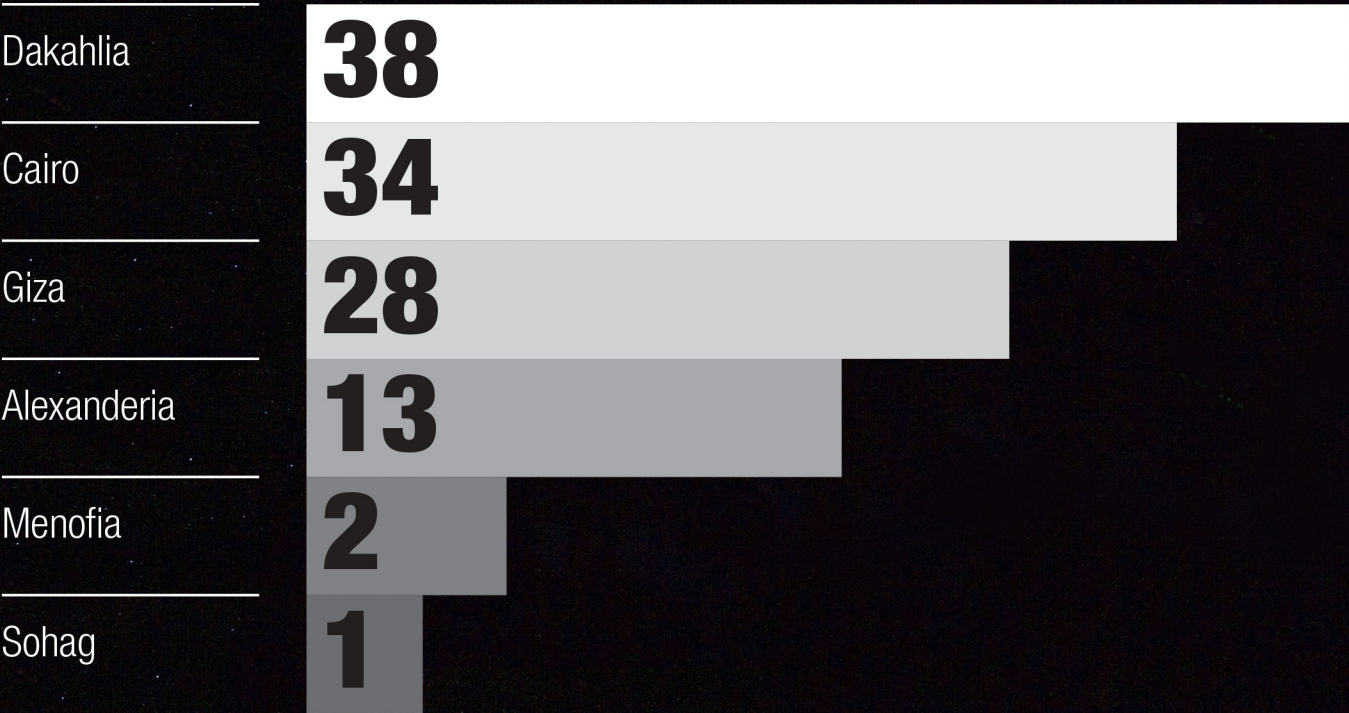


Figure (2) Distribution of arrestees based on governorate

C. Number of arrestees based on reason/bases (information, investigation, report)

The majority of arrests were based on formal police investigations, accounting for 81 individuals, or nearly 70% of the total. Far fewer arrests stemmed from informants (13 individuals) or direct public reports (8 individuals).

Arrested individuals by case type

Investigation

79.4%

Information

12.7%

Report

7.8%

Figure (3) Distribution of arrestees based on reason/bases

D. Number of arrestees based on the type of management:

The distribution between independent (61) and non-independent (53) work leans mostly towards independence, meaning that the arrestees engage in sex work without a pimp or a third party managing the work. These workers typically have more autonomy over their schedules and earnings but face significant risks, including legal repercussions and a lack of protection that back-up or management might offer¹³.

Other sex workers rely on intermediaries, such as pimps or brokers, who facilitate client connections and provide logistical support. These intermediaries often take a substantial portion of the earnings and may exert control over the workers, leading to potential exploitation¹⁴. Another way to look at working through pimp is the legal cover. In a study by Sara Abed about *How do Sex Workers Perceive their Working Identity? Case Studies in Egypt*¹⁵, One respondent arranged a sort of marriage agreement with her pimp: if she were ever arrested, he would claim that he forced her into sex work, even though she was not coerced. She believes this strategy could help her avoid punishment, arguing that men, unlike women, can more easily evade legal consequences in such situations.

Arrested individuals by type of management

Independent

52.6%

unidentified

1.7%

Non-independent

45.7%

Figure (4): Distribution of arrestees based on the type of management

E. Number of arrestees based on location (offline/online presence)

The data shows a diverse range of environments in which sex work-related activity took place. 47 individuals were arrested in residential units, while 52 others were apprehended while working from health

¹³ It is important to take into consideration that 25 women from the 53 working non-independently were arrested in a single raid in one arrest.

¹⁴ A Pyramid like no other: The Social Structure of the Sex Work Industry in Egypt (2020) Nora Noralla

¹⁵ Sara Abed. «How do Sex Workers Perceive their Working Identity? Case Studies in Egypt». Kohl: a Journal for Body and Gender Research Vol. 2 No. 2 (2016): pp. 245-261. (Last accessed on 23 May 2025).
doi: <https://doi.org/10.36583/2016020215>

clubs/spas or cafes, suggesting semi-public venues are increasingly targeted. For those arrests, the news pieces do not mention the exact source of information or investigation; rather, they settle for using the vague expression “information” or “investigation”.

Notably, 11 individuals were arrested based solely on their social media activity, and 7 others were arrested in relation to both social media use and physical locations (such as residential units). This points to a growing state interest in monitoring digital platforms, particularly where women or queer individuals use the internet to advertise or connect with clients. The criminalization of online activity underlines the expanding scope of surveillance and the broadening definition of “promotion” of sex work.

Arrested individuals by location (online/offline)

Clubs/Health clubs/stores.. etc

44.8%

Residential unit

40.5%

Social media

9.5%

Social media & Residential units

5.2%

Figure (5): Distribution of arrestees based on location/place of arrest (offline/online presence)

Intersectional Analysis

A. Gender identity

The gendered pattern of arrests in Egypt reveals how the policing of sex work functions as a broader mechanism for regulating women's bodies. Of the 116 individuals arrested, 83 were women, including two transgender women who were misrepresented in the media news piece. The language used in these media news pieces reflects not only the criminalisation of sex work but also the stigmatisation of trans people, where trans women are not recognised as such, but rather portrayed as deceptive or fraudulent. While the law ostensibly targets all workers in sex work, its enforcement disproportionately impacts women. Rather than portraying sex workers as passive victims of structural inequality, it is essential to recognise their engagement in sex work as a form of labour, sometimes constrained, strategic, and often both. Women navigate sex work in ways that reflect agency, pragmatism, and resistance to limited options in gendered labour markets¹⁶. A gender analysis rooted in historical and intersectional inquiry reveals that what is policed is not just the act of selling sex, but the assertion of autonomy itself in defiance of moral and gendered expectations¹⁷.

Men made up 31 of the arrested individuals, while the gender identity of 2 individuals was not disclosed. Of the 31 cisgender men arrested, 22 were arrested alongside women as facilitators or organisers for sex work. This reveals that cis men are not primary targets of enforcement; instead, they are criminalised through their association with women's work. While the law criminalises facilitation and immunises clients, it is undeniable that women bear the utmost legal burden. Men's role may be transactional, managerial, or participatory, but their gender identity shields them from the type of identity-based targeting faced by women. This reinforces the trend where women face more frequent criminal targeting under sex work-related charges. As stated in article 9 of Act No. 10 of 196, anyone who engages in prostitution (for women) or debauchery/Fujur (for men) shall be liable to a term of up to three years of imprisonment¹⁸.

Gender Analysis of Arrests in Sex Work

Women (Inc. Transwomen)

83

2 Trans Women (Framed as Men)

Men

31

22 Men Linked to Women's Work

Gender was not disclosed

2

¹⁶ Omar Sa'is (2014) *نبيع الهوى ونشتري قهراً*, Mada Masr

¹⁷ van Nederveen Meerkerk, Elise. 2017. "A Gender Analysis of Global Sex Work." In *Selling Sex in the City: A Global History of Prostitution, 1600s–2000s*, edited by Magaly Rodríguez García, Elise van Nederveen Meerkerk, and Lex Heerma van Voss, 799–827. Leiden: Brill.

¹⁸ *قانون مكافحة الدعارة في الجمهورية العربية المتحدة لسنة 1961*

B. Sexual orientation

Most of the documented news pieces don't state clearly the sexual orientation of the arrestees, except in cases of homosexual men. From 116 arrestees, 11 individuals are identified as queer. Among the men arrested, nine were identified as gay by the media coverage. Although a small subset, the focus on their sexual orientation suggests that these arrests may have been motivated less by involvement in sex work and more by the desire to police sexual identity and non-conforming gender identity and performance. In Egypt, vaguely worded debauchery laws, particularly Article 9(c) of Law No. 10 of 1961, have long been used to criminalise same-sex relations under the guise of regulating public morality and combating sex work or debauchery. Queer men and trans women are not just targeted for their sexual or gender identities, they're targeted for how they embody those identities. Trans women are misgendered and described as "men in women's clothing," while gay men are marked for failing to project normative masculinity. This signals that policing is not only about sexual morality, but also about controlling how gender is performed.

The orientation of the 83 arrested women is not disclosed in the media coverage, indicating that the women's orientation is assumed to be heterosexual. The silence about their orientation raises questions about the state's stance on gender identity and its relation to sexual orientation. Gender structures assume heterosexuality as default, enforce respectability through moral judgment, and claim authority over how bodies are seen, used, or punished. The enforcement of sex work laws is not only heteronormative, but also deeply invested in maintaining gender discipline, punishing both those who deviate from sexual norms and those who are not conforming with gendered expectations of passivity, privacy, and respectability.

Heterosexual

LGBTQI+

90.5%

9.5%

Sexual Orientation Breakdown of Arrested Individuals

Figure (7): Sexual orientation of arrested individuals

C. Gender identity and Sexual orientation in relation to the type of management

The data reveals distinct patterns in the work environments of individuals arrested under sex work-related charges, highlighting how gender and sexual identity influence access to different modes of labor and the types of risks each mode imposes on sex workers. Among 81 cisgender women, the distribution between independent (42) and non-independent (39) work leans mostly towards independence. This suggests a range of working conditions. Women may prefer independent work for its autonomy, more control over their income, but independent work comes with many risks, for example, a lack of protection and the burden of managing clients. Others may find themselves in non-independent arrangements due to economic pressures, coercion or by choice to achieve some sort of protection. It is important to take into consideration that 25 women from the 39 working non-independently were arrested in a single raid.

For LGBTQI individuals, all 11 arrested, comprising 9 gay men and 2 transgender women, were working independently. While this might suggest agency, it also proposes isolation that might be due to social stigma and exclusion. In contrast, the 22 men arrested were exclusively involved in non-independent roles, all in connection with women’s cases, where they worked as facilitators or organisers.

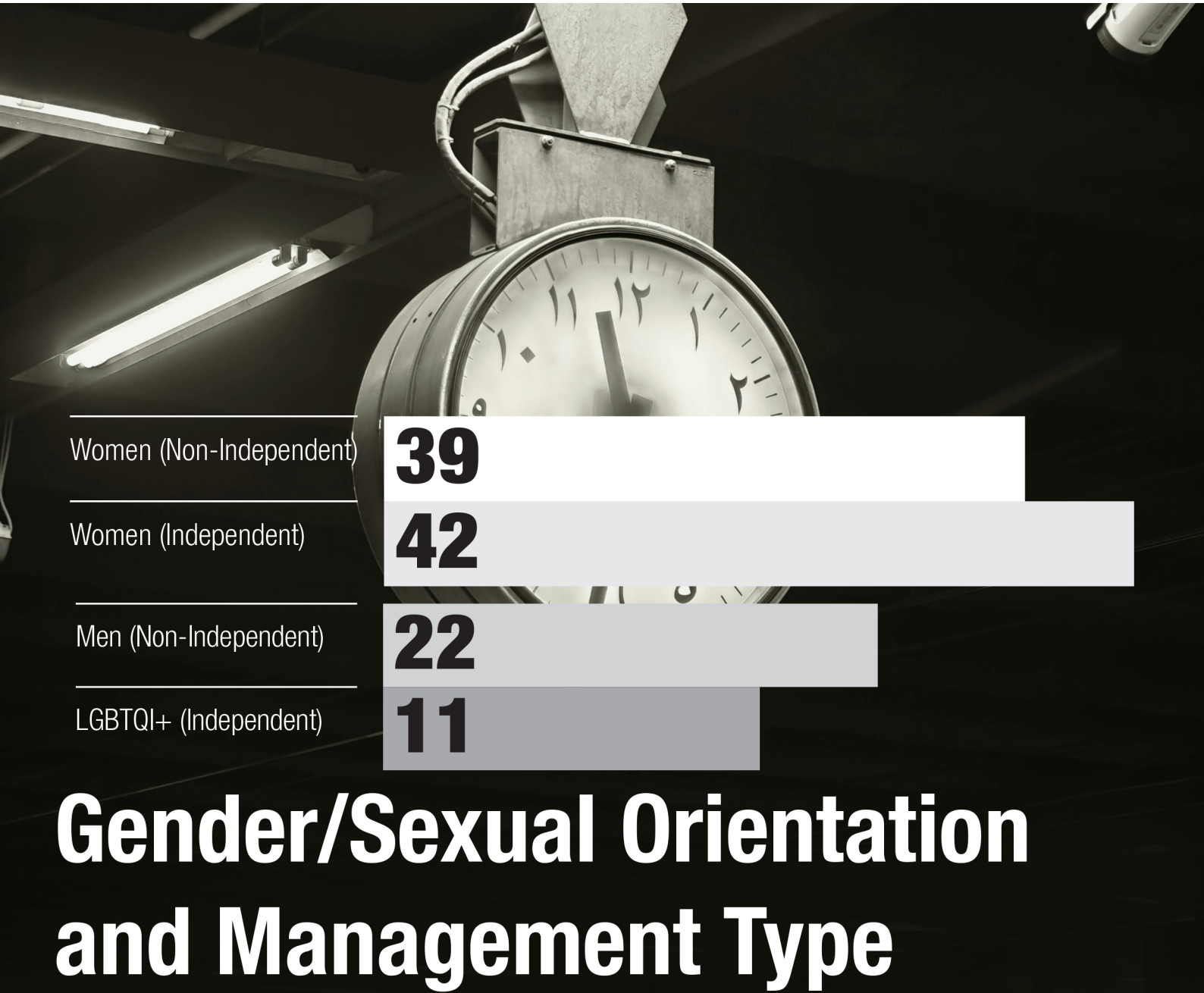


Figure (8): Gender/sexual orientation and management type

D. Gender identity and sexual orientation in relation to the location/place of arrest

The arrest data reveals how gender identity and sexual orientation intersect with state surveillance, particularly under Egypt's Cybercrime Law No. 175/2018, and more specifically Article 25, which criminalises online activity that "violates family principles or public morals." Of the 11 people arrested solely for their social media presence, nearly all were queer or women. These arrests did not stem from any direct act of sex work, but from digital visibility, profiles, posts, or self-promotion that were construed as promoting, offering or facilitating debauchery or "prostitution". The Internet might provide a bigger market and better access to the clientele, but it also poses high legal risks due to the cybercrime law and surveillance units. Under the general direction of digitalising Egypt, in 2019, the Egyptian Public Prosecutor established the Communication, Guidance, and Social Media Department to protect the "cyber border". The unit works as a tool of cyber surveillance and preserves the family's morality.

Another 6 individuals, 1 queer, 4 female, and 1 male (who were arrested along with women) were arrested through combined online and residential surveillance, showing how digital activity can lead directly to home raids. This pattern is particularly pronounced in urban areas, where digital policing is more active and coordinated.

47 individuals were arrested from private residences: 7 queer men, 30 women, 8 men, and 2 individuals of undisclosed gender. The highest number of arrests (52 individuals) occurred in public or semi-public venues such as health clubs/spas and cafés. These arrests involved 40 women and 12 men, and overwhelmingly point to non-independent structures, particularly in Delta cities.



7 Individuals were arrested through combined online and residential surveillance

1 Queer Person

4 Females

2 Males
who were arrested along with women

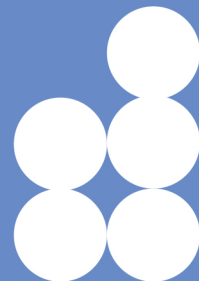
47 Individuals were arrested from private residences

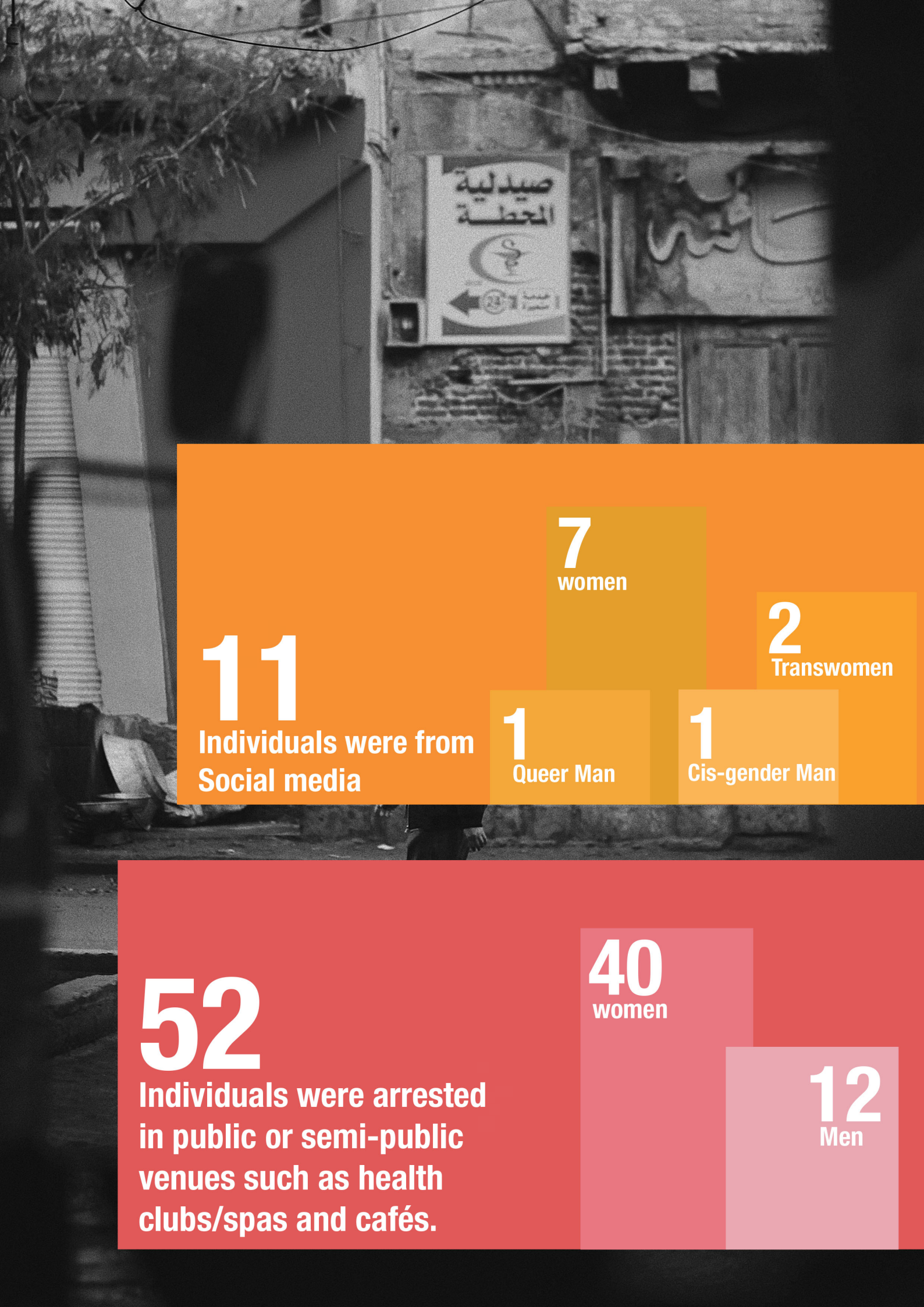
7 Queer men

30 Women

8 Men

2 individuals of undisclosed gender





11

Individuals were from
Social media

7

women

2

Transwomen

1

Queer Man

1

Cis-gender Man

52

Individuals were arrested
in public or semi-public
venues such as health
clubs/spas and cafés.

40

women

12

Men

Conclusion

Cairo 52's reports from 2019 to 2024 reveal consistent trends in Egypt's policing of sex work: persistent gender bias, growing digital surveillance, and laws that criminalise identity. The arrest patterns reveal intertwined systems of injustice, ones that punish women based on their nonconformity with their gender's sexual behaviour, and centre the state as the protector of morality. The moral panic is the dominant characteristic of the arrest, with no regard for sex workers' labour rights or safety.

Cisgender women made up the majority of arrestees in 2024, with 83 out of 116. LGBTQI individuals, though fewer (11 in 2024), were disproportionately arrested while working independently, often under debauchery laws like Article 9(c) of Law No. 10 of 1961. The shift toward policing online activity is stark. In 2024, 11 individuals were arrested solely for their social media use, and 7 through combined digital and physical surveillance. Article 25 of Law 175/2018 has become a primary tool for prosecuting digital expression, especially for queer and female-identifying individuals. Greater Cairo and the Delta regions and Dakahlia appear to be hotspots in 2024. Public venues and non-independent work structures are heavily policed, while queer individuals are largely arrested in independent contexts.

Across Cairo 52's media observatory reports including this one, the state's strategy remains punitive and discriminatory. Legal reform is urgently needed. Decriminalising consensual sex work, ending the use of morality laws to target identity, and protecting digital expression are essential steps. But beyond legal change, there must also be a shift in how society understands labour, dignity, and the right to exist without fear.



القاهرة ٥٢

للأبحاث القانونية

CAIRO 52

LEGAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Media Observatory
of Arrests Based on Sex Work from
January 2024 to December 2024