



الباروميتر العربي  
ARAB BAROMETER

# Arab Barometer IX

## Egypt Report



March 2026

## Executive Summary

Egypt's public mood is defined by a clear imbalance: economic strain is the dominant force shaping daily life, while the state retains meaningful credit for security and basic stability. The result is not blanket rejection of government, but a more conditional legitimacy—people want order, yet increasingly judge politics through whether it delivers affordability, jobs, and a sense of fairness.

Economic anxieties sit at the center of almost every other attitude in the survey. Egyptians describe the economy in overwhelmingly negative terms, with the cost of living and employment concerns driving how they define the country's "most urgent" problems. Hardship is not confined to the poorest; the data suggest that basic affordability worries cut across education and class, feeding a wider perception that burdens are unevenly distributed and that inequality is a serious social problem. Even so, this pessimism is paired with a notable thread of hope about the future, especially regarding the next generation—an outlook that helps explain why frustration does not automatically translate into demands for abrupt political change.

Views of the state are sharply differentiated. Many Egyptians report feeling safe and give comparatively positive assessments of the government's ability to maintain order and provide core utilities. But confidence drops when attention turns to services that structure everyday welfare — such as housing, healthcare, and education — and it declines further on the state's perceived ability to manage prices, create jobs, and reduce inequality.

Support for "democracy" exists in principle, but what people often mean by it is practical: dignity, basic necessities, and integrity, rather than elections as the defining feature. Many treat political systems as secondary to outcomes like economic relief and stability. This also aligns with a strong preference for gradual reform over disruptive change.

Civic and political engagement remains thin, trust in civil society is mixed, and political interest is generally low. When Egyptians talk about what civil society should do, they emphasize social support and service delivery far more than advocacy or holding officials accountable. Formal participation appears limited, suggesting that grievances are more likely to be expressed through private coping strategies than collective action.

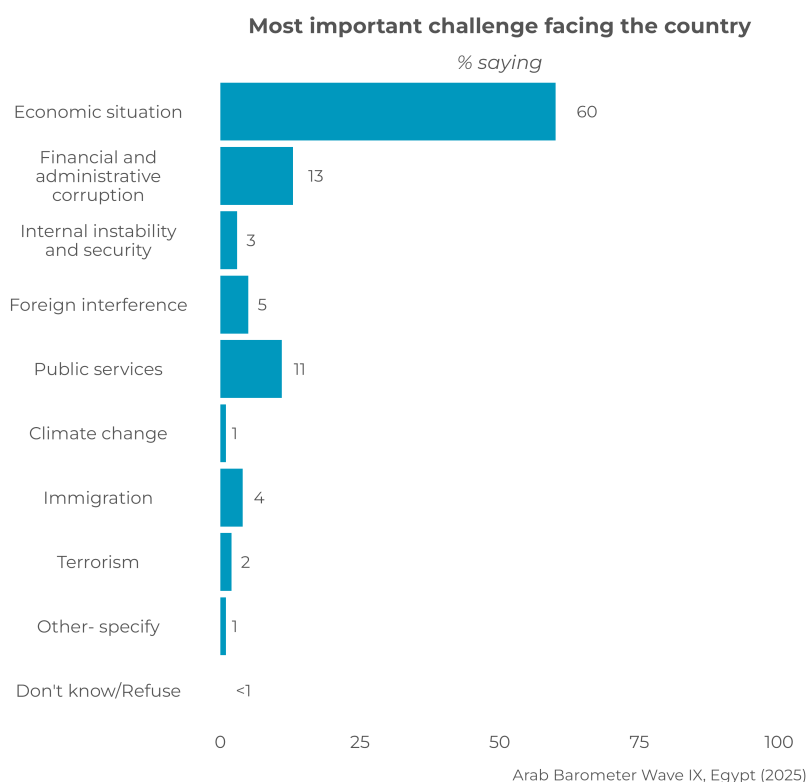
Information and geopolitics shape the backdrop, especially Gaza. Egypt's media environment runs on two main tracks—television and social media—split by age and education, creating parallel audiences for political narratives. Internationally, the survey shows sharp hostility toward Israel and deep skepticism toward U.S. influence, while several regional actors and China are viewed more warmly. Gaza, in particular, seems to act as a moral and political lens through which Egyptians interpret international legitimacy, regional order, and Egypt's stance in the world.

These are among the main findings of a nationally representative face-to-face survey conducted in Egypt. The survey included 1,225 randomly selected

citizens from across Egypt and was fielded from September 11 to 25 September, 2025 using a multistage clustered sample. The margin of error for the reported results is  $\pm 3$  percentage points. The surveys are part of Arab Barometer's ninth wave.

## Economic Anxieties

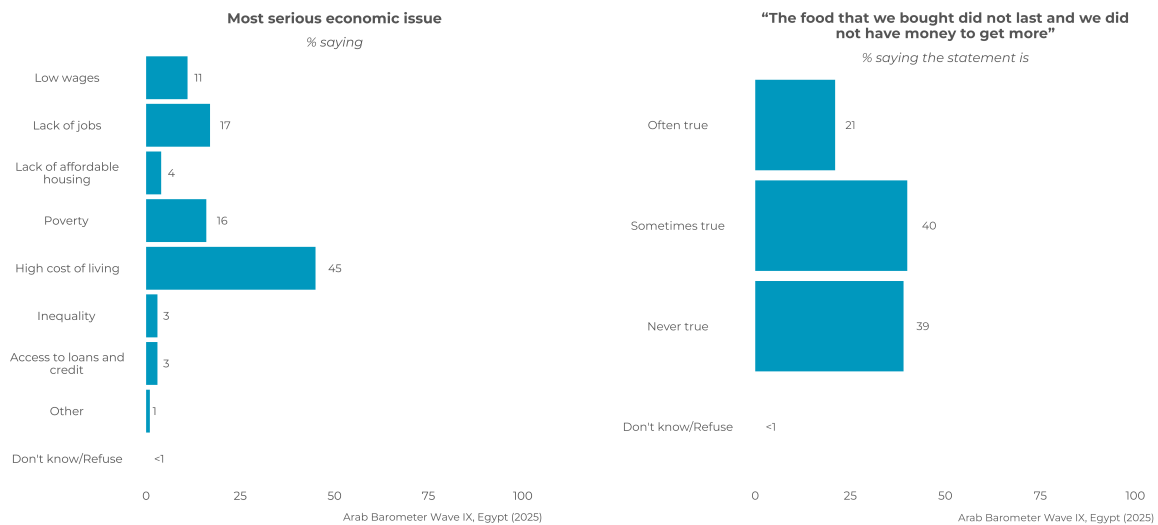
After successive exchange-rate adjustments—including sharp devaluations associated with Egypt’s IMF-supported stabilization program—households have faced recurring price shocks, periods of foreign-currency scarcity, and a prolonged cost-of-living squeeze. In everyday terms, these macroeconomic pressures translate into persistently high prices and heightened anxiety about basic affordability. Against this backdrop, evaluations of the economy are overwhelmingly negative: roughly 72 percent of Egyptians describe the economic situation as bad (45 percent) or very bad (28 percent). These assessments are notably more pessimistic than in 2022, when 35 percent described the economy as bad and 18 percent as very bad. This pessimism is broad-based across demographic groups, although it appears to be especially pronounced among women and among those in more economically vulnerable positions such as those outside of stable employment. Consistent with this, Egyptians overwhelmingly identify the economy as the country’s most urgent challenge.



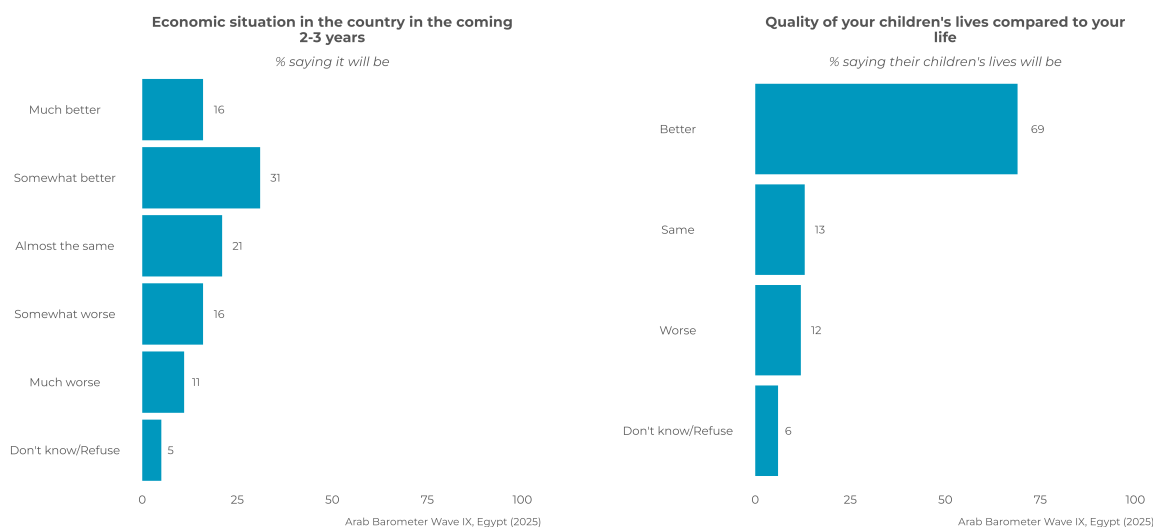
Across every demographic slice, the economy remains the dominant “most important challenge,” but its salience varies in predictable ways. Overall, 60

percent identified the economy as the most pressing issue facing the country, up from 47 percent in 2022. Women are substantially more likely than men to identify the economic situation as the top challenge (67 percent vs. 54 percent). Economic concern is also stratified by education, with the highest levels among those with no formal schooling, and declines with higher attainment. Employment status shows a similar gradient: those outside the labor force or facing labor-market vulnerability are most likely to prioritize the economy relative to those who are employed. By age, the economy is the plurality across all age groups, with relatively greater emphasis on corruption among those who are younger and a somewhat higher emphasis on public services among the oldest generations.

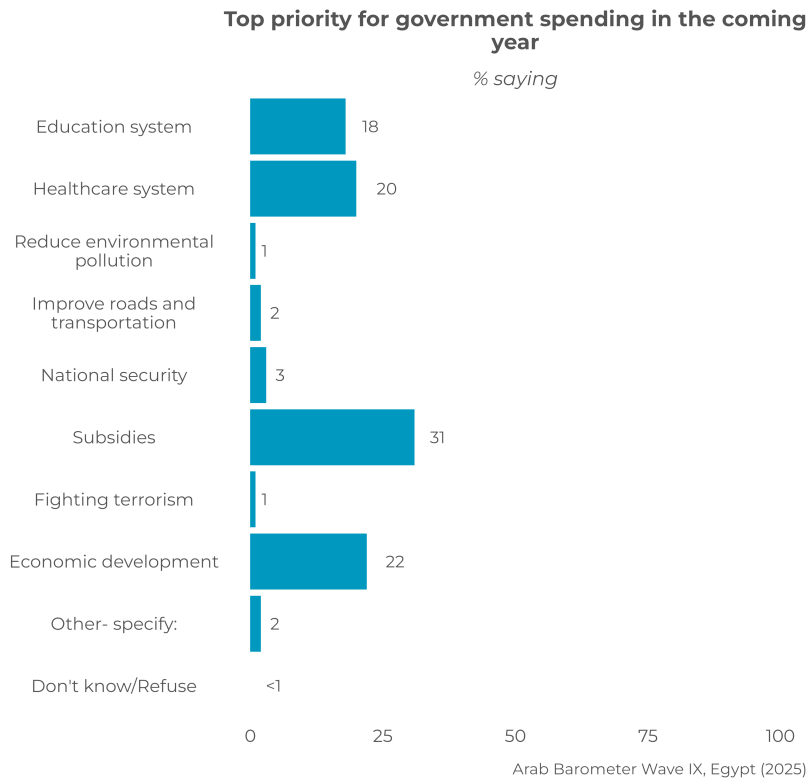
When asked to specify the most important economic issue, Egyptians most frequently point to the cost of living (45 percent), in addition to 17 percent who identified the lack of jobs and nearly 16 percent who identify poverty. Reported material hardship is also widespread: roughly 60 percent of Egyptians say that during the preceding 30 days they could not afford to buy enough food. A similar number say there was a time during the last year when they were worried that they would not have enough food to eat. Notably, food insecurity is not confined to populations we might traditionally consider vulnerable; for example, 38 percent of those with at least a bachelors degree reported that they were unable to buy enough food.



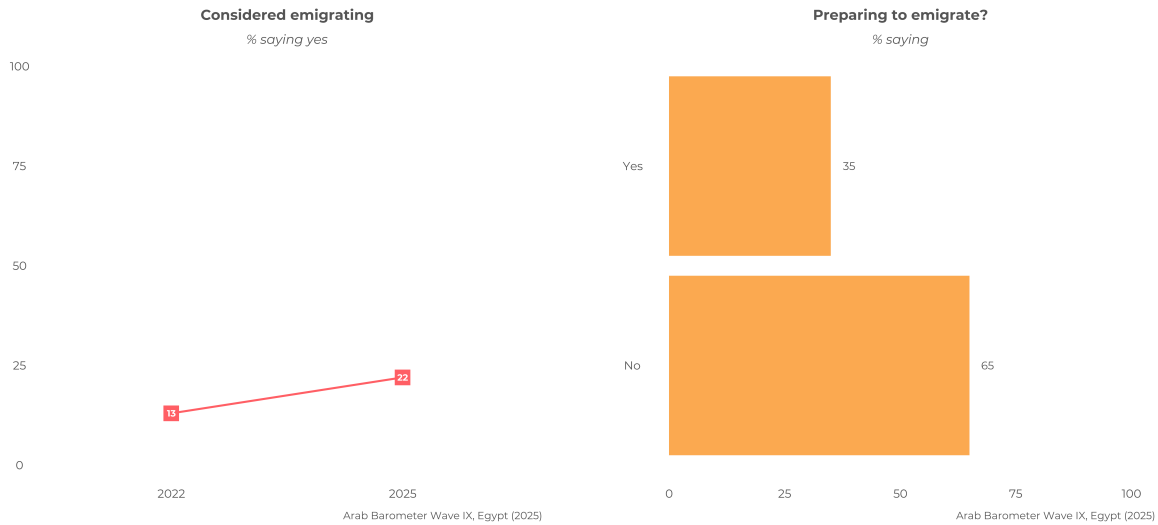
Concerns about distribution and fairness are also prominent. Many Egyptians view the gap between rich and poor as a serious problem, with 95 percent acknowledging that it is at least a problem to some extent, including 49 percent characterizing it as a great problem, reinforcing a broader sense that economic hardship is not only widespread but also unevenly borne. At the same time, pessimism about present conditions does not fully translate into uniformly bleak expectations about the future. For example, 47 percent anticipate that the economic situation in the next few years will improve, including 31 percent who expect it to be somewhat better and 16 percent who expect it to be much better. Optimism is even stronger when the horizon extends to the next generation: 69 percent believe their children’s quality of life will be better, while only 12 percent believe it will be worse.



Economic anxieties also shape policy preferences. Egyptians indicate that government spending should prioritize subsidies, followed by economic development, healthcare, and education. On employment policy, Egyptians tend to support expanding job opportunities in both the private and public sectors. Although most view public and private sector jobs as paying relatively similarly, public sector work is widely perceived as harder to obtain and more dependent on connections—and, crucially, as more stable and more desirable overall.



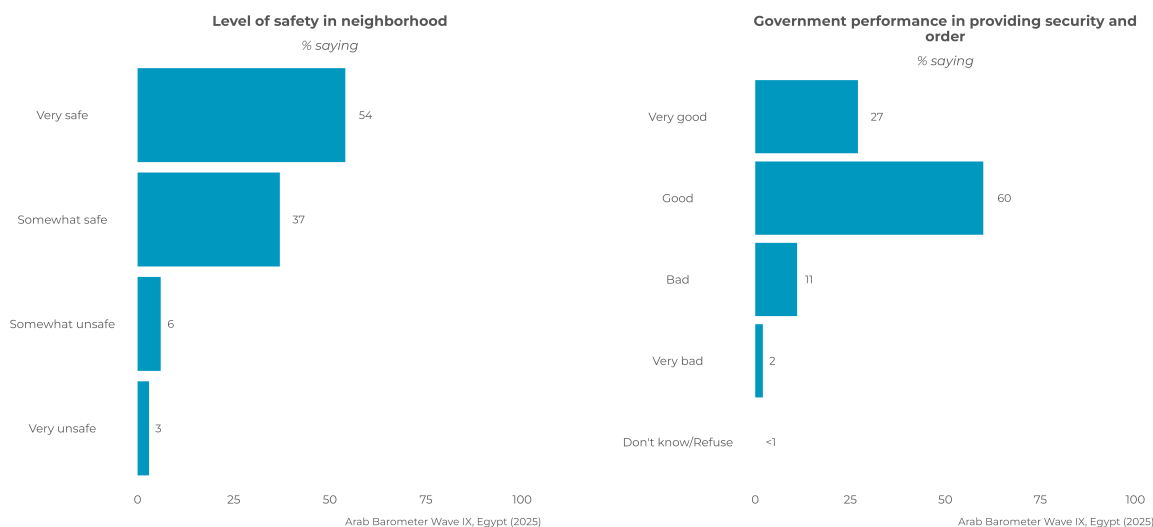
Economic pressures also appear to be pushing a meaningful minority of Egyptians to contemplate leaving the country. Fully 22 percent report having thought about emigrating, up from 13 percent in 2022. Unsurprisingly these feelings are concentrated among those who are younger and male. Students are the most likely group, with more than half reporting that they have considered emigration — a worrying sign of potential future brain drain. Higher-educated Egyptians are also more likely than those with a lower level of education to report having thought about emigrating. Among those who have considered leaving, roughly a third report taking concrete steps to prepare, suggesting that emigration is not merely abstract for many. When Egyptians explain why they would emigrate, motivations are primarily economic rather than political or security-related. At the same time, there is little appetite for irregular pathways: almost no one reports a willingness to emigrate illegally.



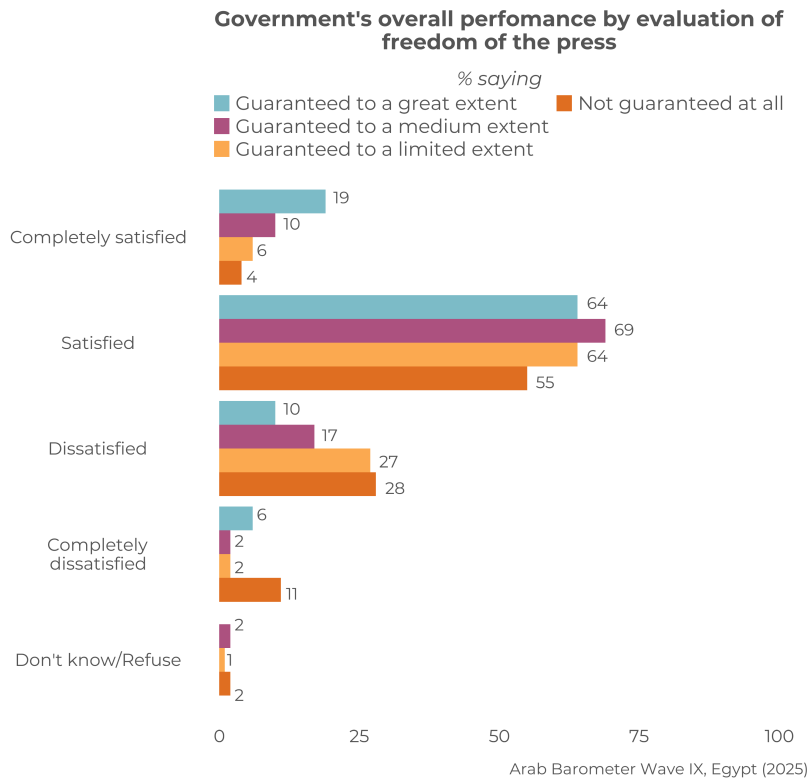
Finally, despite the prominence of migration in public discourse, most Egyptians report that they do not receive remittances, indicating that for many households, financial support from abroad does not function as a meaningful buffer against domestic economic stress.

## Institutions, Governance, and Public Services

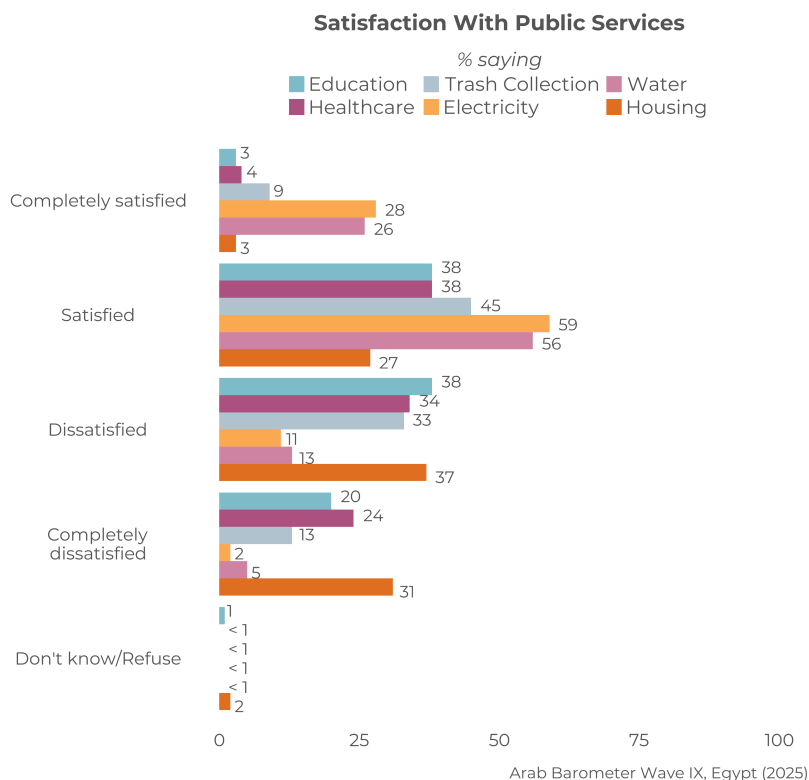
Despite deep pessimism about the economy, Egyptians' assessments of security and several core public services are comparatively more positive. Across demographic groups, the vast majority report feeling that their neighborhoods are at least somewhat safe with more than half reporting feeling very safe. Evaluations of the state's performance on security similarly lean favorable. In other words, even where day-to-day economic strain is widespread, many Egyptians still see the state as delivering order and basic safety.



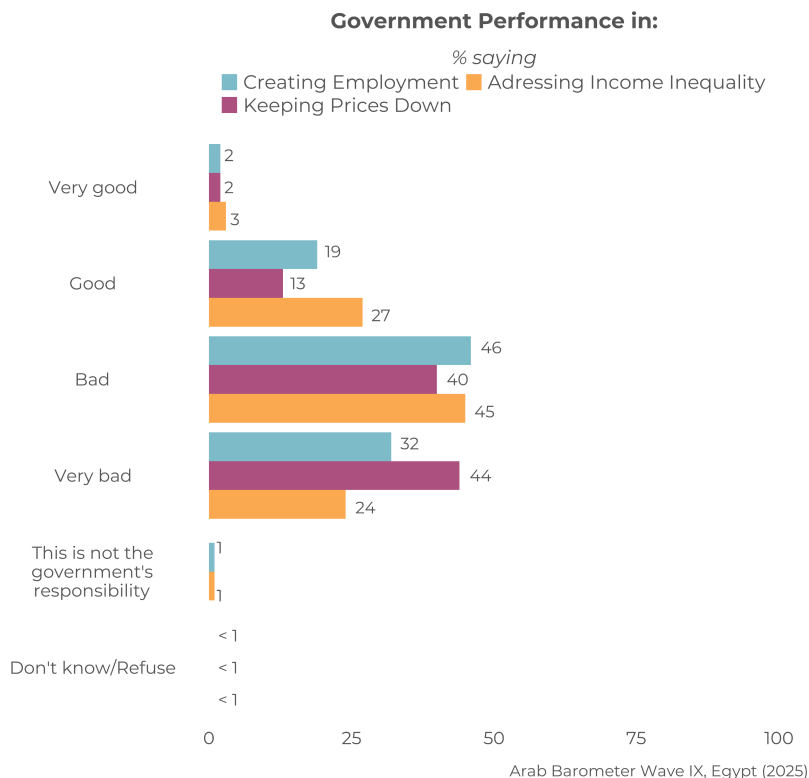
Views become more mixed once the focus shifts from security to governance and service delivery. Overall government performance is rated relatively positively across the majority of demographic groups, albeit with individuals working in the private sector being somewhat more willing to report dissatisfaction. Overall, more than 70 percent report being satisfied with government performance. Interesting variation does appear however, when this question is compared with questions asking about various freedoms: Egyptians who believe rights are not guaranteed are consistently more likely to report dissatisfaction with government performance. Among those who say that freedom of expression is guaranteed to a great extent, only nine percent report being dissatisfied and four percent completely dissatisfied. Among those who say it is guaranteed only to a limited extent, dissatisfaction is higher (27 percent dissatisfied; two percent completely dissatisfied). The sharpest shift is among those who say the freedom to express opinions is not guaranteed at all: 23 percent report dissatisfaction and 11 percent report being completely dissatisfied. A similar pattern appears for freedom of the press. Egyptians who believe press freedom is guaranteed to a great extent report 10 percent dissatisfaction and six percent complete dissatisfaction. By contrast, among those who say it is not guaranteed at all, dissatisfaction rises to 28 percent and complete dissatisfaction to 11 percent. Here the gradient is especially clear: weaker perceived rights protections correspond to consistently more negative assessments of government performance.



Assessments of key public services, however, are more ambivalent and often negative. Education, healthcare, and trash collection each show a split public that leans dissatisfied, with 58 percent of the population identifying that they're either dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied with both the education and healthcare systems and 46 percent of Egyptians with the trash collection system, suggesting persistent frustration with service quality and day-to-day responsiveness. By contrast, basic utilities fare better. Electricity provision is evaluated quite positively with 87 percent of Egyptians answering either satisfied or completely satisfied, and the government's ability to maintain the water supply is viewed similarly favorably with 81 percent saying the same. Consistent with the broader cost-of-living theme, housing stands out as a clear weak point: 68 percent report being either dissatisfied or completely dissatisfied), aligning with the pressures Egyptians describe elsewhere in the survey.



Moreover, when asked about the government’s performance on specific economic governance tasks, evaluations turn sharply negative. Egyptians overwhelmingly judge the state as performing poorly at creating employment, with 46 percent reporting that they feeling the government is doing badly here and 32 percent report that it is doing very badly. Assessments are even harsher on the government’s ability to keep prices down with 85 percent responding that the government is doing badly or very badly. Perceptions are similarly negative on addressing the gap between rich and poor, with 69 percent rating performance bad or very bad. Notably, integrity and accountability look somewhat less bleak than economic management: majorities say the government is countering corruption to at least a medium extent, including 47 percent who answered to a medium extent and an additional 23 percent who answered to a large extent.

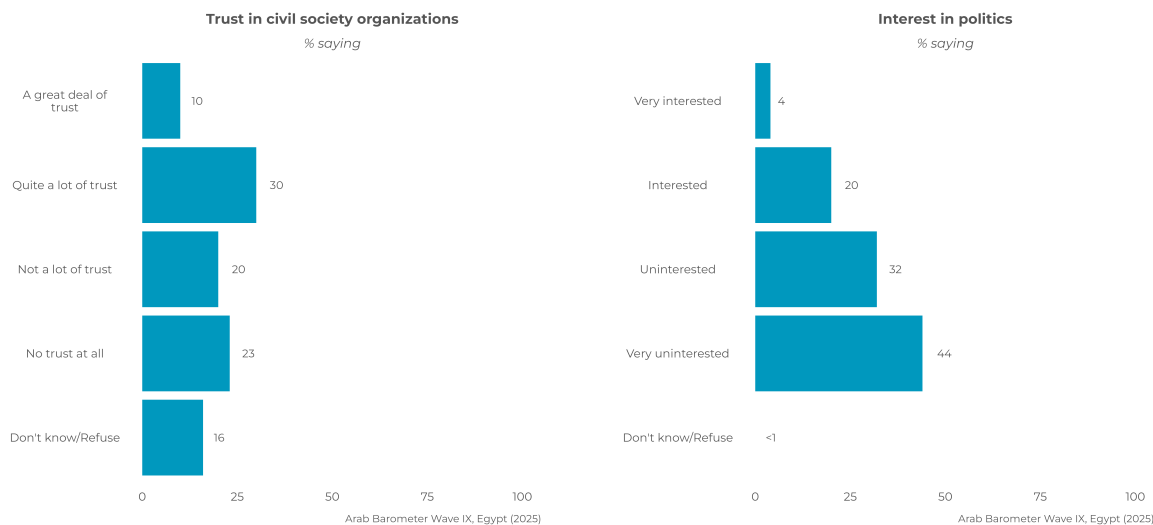


Taken together, this pattern—stronger approval on security and basic utilities, weaker approval on services, jobs, prices, inequality, and housing—suggests that Egyptians distinguish between the state’s capacity to provide order and core infrastructure versus its ability (or willingness) to deliver economic relief and distributive fairness. The result is therefore not uniformly negative: many Egyptians credit the state for safety and essential provision while simultaneously expressing dissatisfaction with economic management and the domains of governance most directly tied to household welfare.

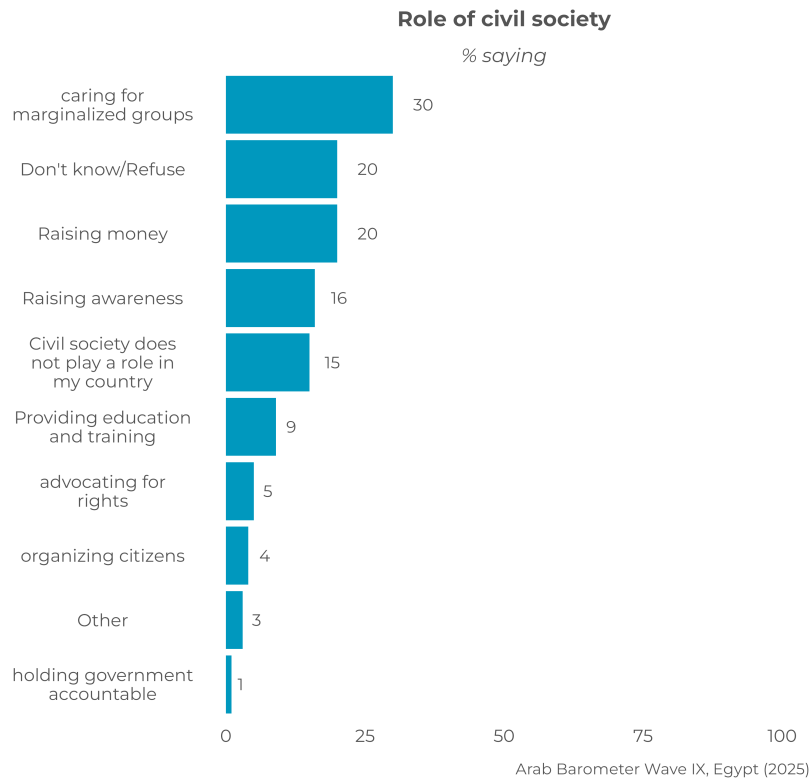
## Civil Society and Political Engagement

Egyptians’ views of civil society are strikingly mixed — with 10 percent indicating that they have a great deal of trust, 30 percent indicating that they have quite a lot of trust, 20 percent responding with not a lot of trust, 23 percent indicating that they have no trust at all, and an additional 16 percent suggesting that they don’t know — suggesting neither broad-based trust nor uniform skepticism. This ambivalence sits alongside a public that is largely disengaged from formal politics: most report being relatively uninterested in politics (76

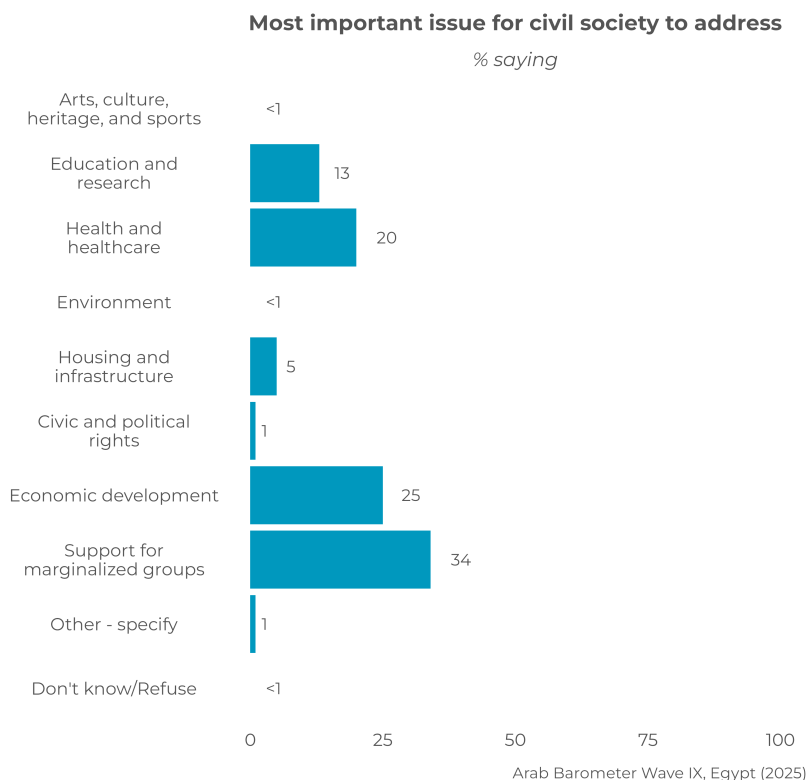
percent suggest that they are either very uninterested (44 percent) or uninterested (32 percent)). Taken together, this points to a civic landscape where expectations of organized public action exist, but political appetite — at least as expressed through self-reported interest — remains limited. It's worth noting however that the percentage of Egyptians who indicated that they were uninterested in politics has decreased since 2022, when 90 percent answered either uninterested or very uninterested.



When asked to describe what role civil society plays in Egypt, most often it is defined in social-support and welfare terms rather than explicitly political ones. The most common role assigned to civil society is caring for marginalized populations, followed by raising money and raising awareness/solving community problems. Smaller shares emphasize providing education and skills or organizing around shared interests. Explicitly political functions are far less salient: relatively few identify rights advocacy as civil society's role, and almost no one points to holding the government accountable. Notably, a meaningful portion (15 percent) of Egyptians say civil society has no role at all, underscoring the extent to which the sector's legitimacy and purpose remain contested.

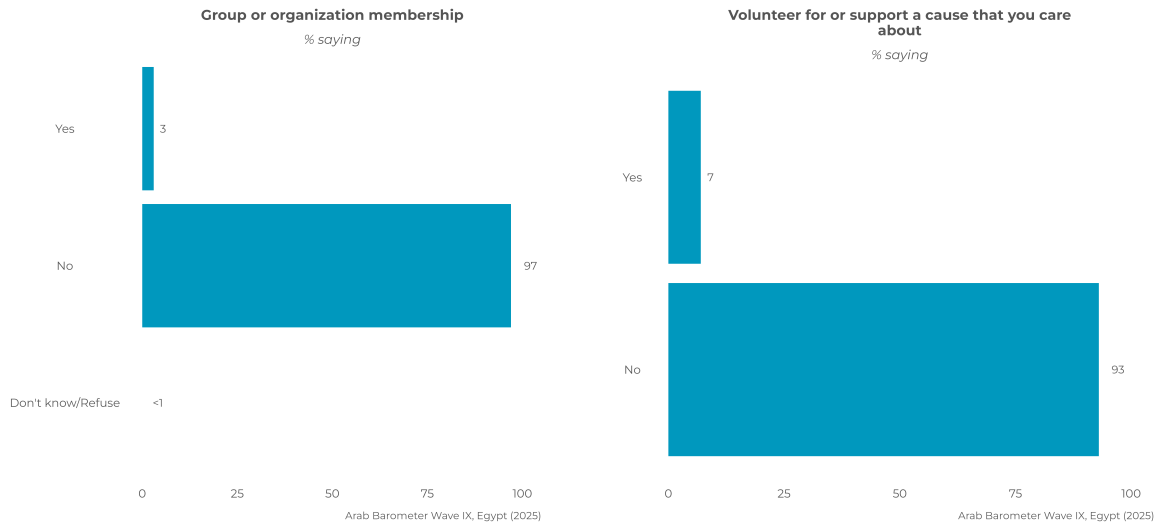


Asked about priorities, Egyptians most often select support for marginalized groups as the most important issue for civil society to address, with economic development also emerging as a prominent concern — consistent with the broader economic anxieties visible elsewhere in the survey. Overall, the survey portrays civil society as viewed primarily through a charitable/service-delivery lens, with limited public emphasis on advocacy or accountability—and with substantial uncertainty about what civil society is for in the first place.



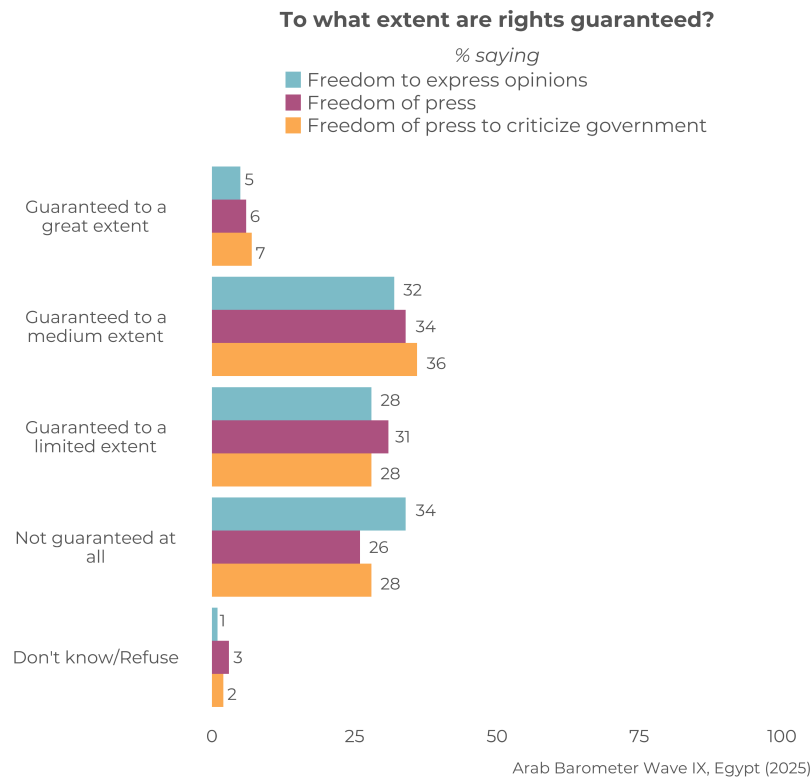
This combination — low political interest, a dominant welfare/service-delivery framing of civil society’s role, and the near-absence of a role for bodies designed to keep public officials accountable — suggests that many Egyptians do not primarily imagine civil society as a vehicle for political contestation. Instead, civil society appears to be understood more as social-support infrastructure: filling gaps, helping vulnerable groups, and providing community assistance in ways that are adjacent to the state but not overtly oppositional.

If attitudes toward civil society are mixed, actual civic participation appears extremely limited. Almost no Egyptians report being members of any organizations or groups. This low level of formal membership is mirrored in behavior: very few report volunteering time on a monthly basis. Taken together, these indicators suggest that whatever expectations Egyptians may have for civil society tend to be oriented toward what organizations should provide, rather than reflecting a broad culture of mass participation through membership, volunteering, or regular associational life. It’s worth noting briefly that it’s possible that these measures might underestimate civic life. Many Egyptians may not conceptualize neighborhood help, mutual-aid networks, or ad hoc community and religious activities as “formal” membership or volunteering when answering survey questions and so the results should not be read as evidence of a complete absence of social or civic ties. In explicitly political terms, however, organized participation still appears strikingly muted.

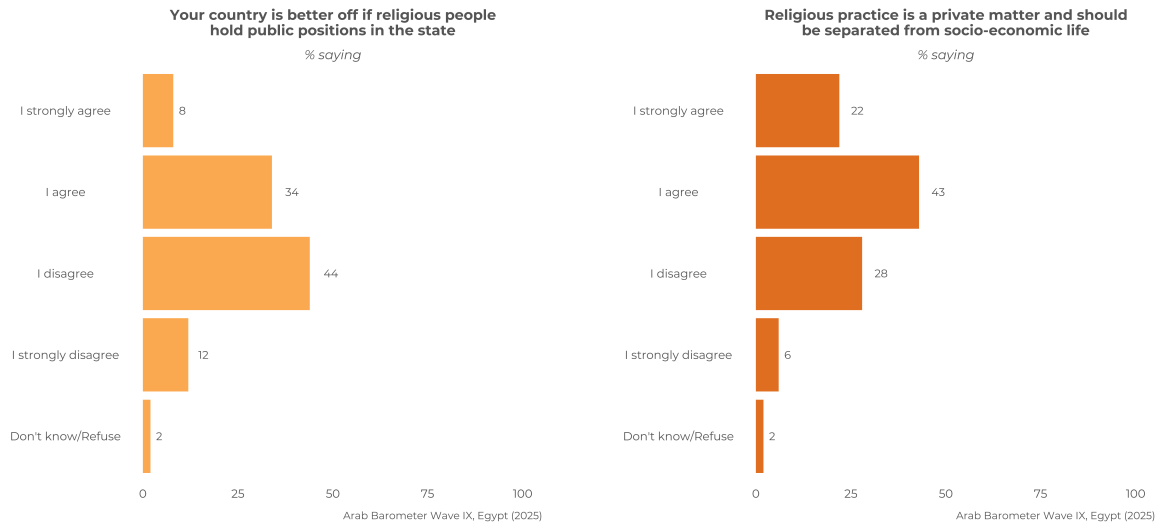


## Rights, Freedoms, and Political Reforms

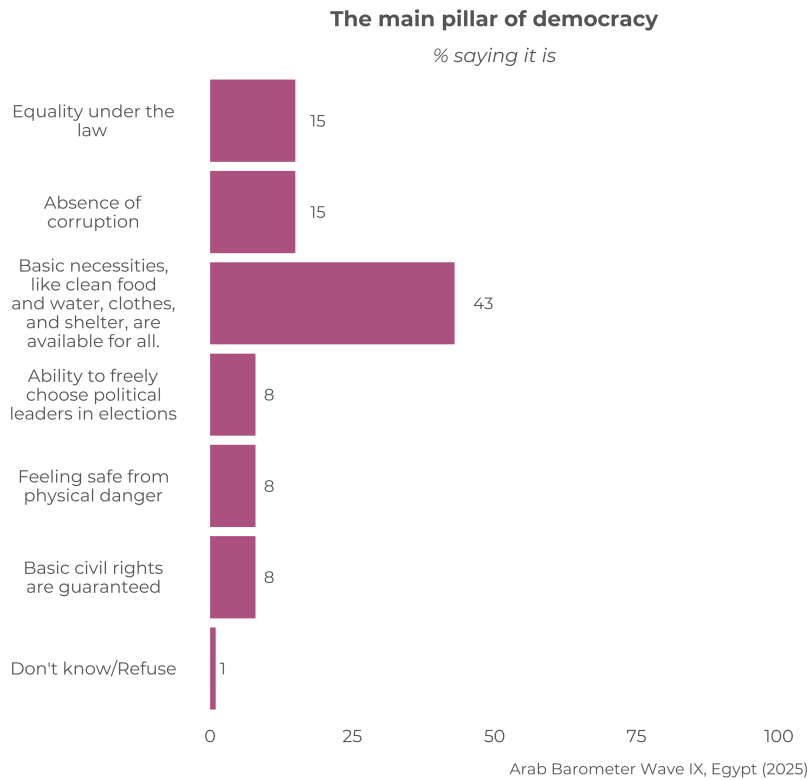
Perceptions of basic political freedoms are cautious and constrained. On freedom of expression, 5 percent feel that it is guaranteed to a great extent, 32 percent to a medium extent, 28 percent to a limited extent, and 33 percent that it is not guaranteed at all. Views of media freedom are similarly muted: assessments of press freedom cluster around “medium” (34 percent), “limited” (31 percent) and “not at all” (26 percent), and the same pattern appears when asked specifically whether the press can criticize the government with 28 percent saying that the right of the press to be critical of the government is not guaranteed at all compared to just seven percent who felt that it is guaranteed to a great extent. The most common answer was again that this right was guaranteed to a medium extent (36 percent). Taken together, these responses suggest that many Egyptians do not experience an environment characterized by robust open speech or independent media; rather, perceived freedoms are often described as partial at best and absent at worst.



Preferences for political change, by contrast, are clearer: Egyptians overwhelmingly favor gradualism. Nearly three-quarters (74 percent) say reform should happen “little by little” rather than abruptly, consistent with an orientation toward stability and incremental improvement over disruptive political transformation. Attitudes toward religion in public life are also mixed and internally bounded. Egyptians disagree over whether the country is better off when religious people hold public office, with a slight majority leaning negative, suggesting no settled consensus on how religious identity should translate into political authority. Perceptions of whether religious scholars actually influence politics are similarly divided. At the same time, many prefer a clear boundary around religious practice, with the dominant view holding that religion should be a private matter.

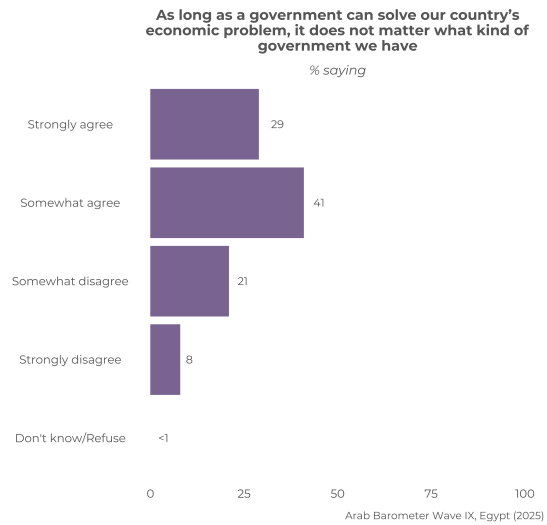
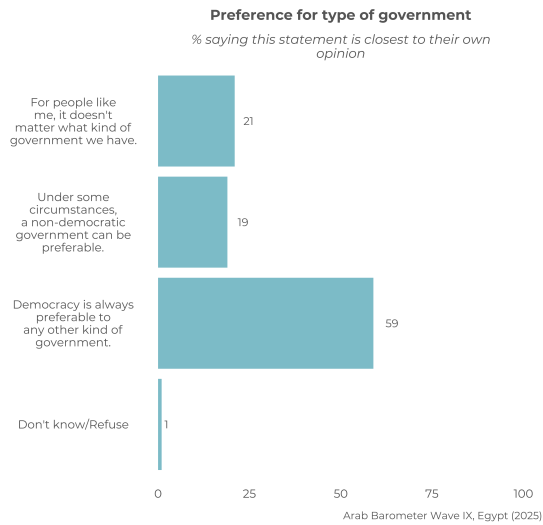


At the same time, Egyptians' commitment to democracy remain notable, with 59 percent affirming that "democracy is always preferable to any other kind of government". This correlates loosely with education, where the least educated groups are most likely to report that "For people like me, it doesn't matter what kind of government we have." Yet what people mean by "democracy" often appears to be grounded more in outcomes than in procedures. When asked to identify the main pillar of democracy, 43 percent prioritize guaranteeing basic necessities for all. "Absence of corruption" and "Equality Under the Law" are distant seconds with 16 percent and 15 percent respectively. "Freely choosing political leaders" is among the least selected options, with only eight percent. Finally, eight percent selected the guaranteeing of basic civil liberties. This implies an understanding of democracy that is heavily performance oriented — linked to welfare, dignity, and distribution — rather than centered on elections as the core defining feature. This again correlates somewhat with education, with those having a lower level of education being more likely to emphasize the importance of basic necessities, and more educated cohorts putting somewhat more emphasis on equality under the law and basic civil liberties



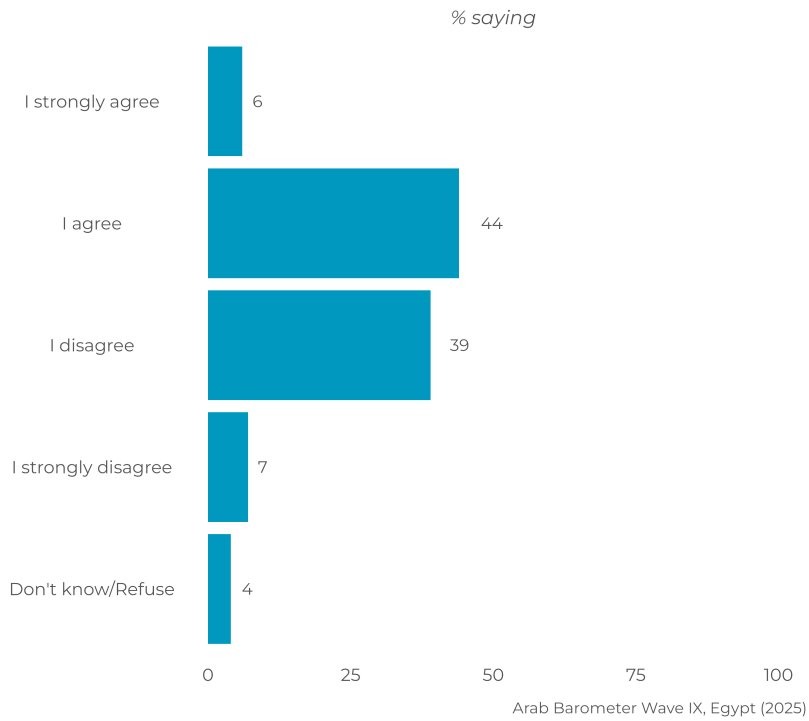
Even so, endorsement of democracy in the abstract does not translate into unequivocal confidence in democracy for Egypt. When asked about democracy’s suitability for the country, responses suggest lukewarm support rather than firm conviction. When asked to rate democracy’s suitability for Egypt on a 0–10 scale, responses cluster in the mid-to-high range (especially 5–8), with relatively few choosing the lowest scores or saying they don’t know. Despite this fact, responses to questions that position democracy as conditional suggest a significantly more ambivalent attitude. 71 percent indicated that they somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that as long as economic problems are solved, the type of political system matters less, suggesting that material outcomes can override procedural commitments. A similar pattern appears for order and stability, where 68 percent answered the same. For both statements, only eight percent and nine percent respectively answered that they strongly disagreed.

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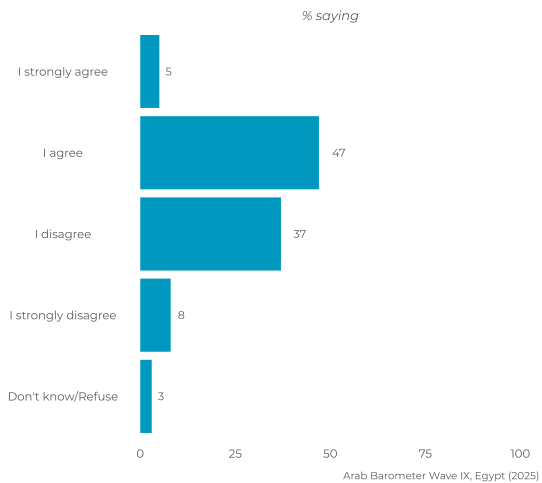


Furthermore, Egyptians hold mixed expectations about how democracies actually perform. They are nearly evenly split on whether democracy produces good economic performance, whether democratic governments perform well overall, and whether democratic systems are good at providing stability. Even so, when asked directly in comparative terms, many still indicate a preference for democracy. Overall, the picture is of a public that is cautious about how democracy might operate in practice and uncertain about its outputs, but nonetheless a majority still favor the concept of “democracy” — often understood through the lens of material protection and social provision.

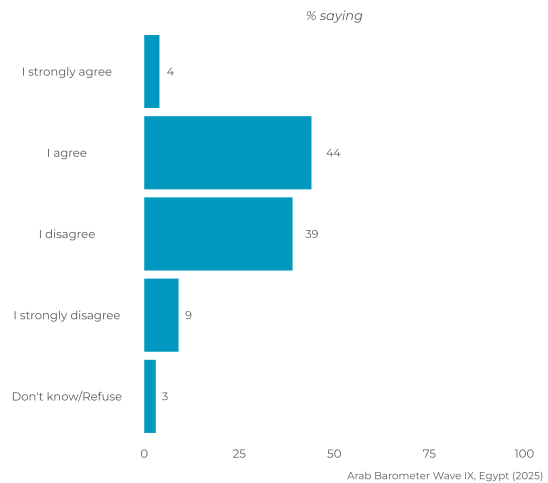
**Under a democratic system, the country's economic performance is weak**



**Democratic regimes are indecisive and full of problems**

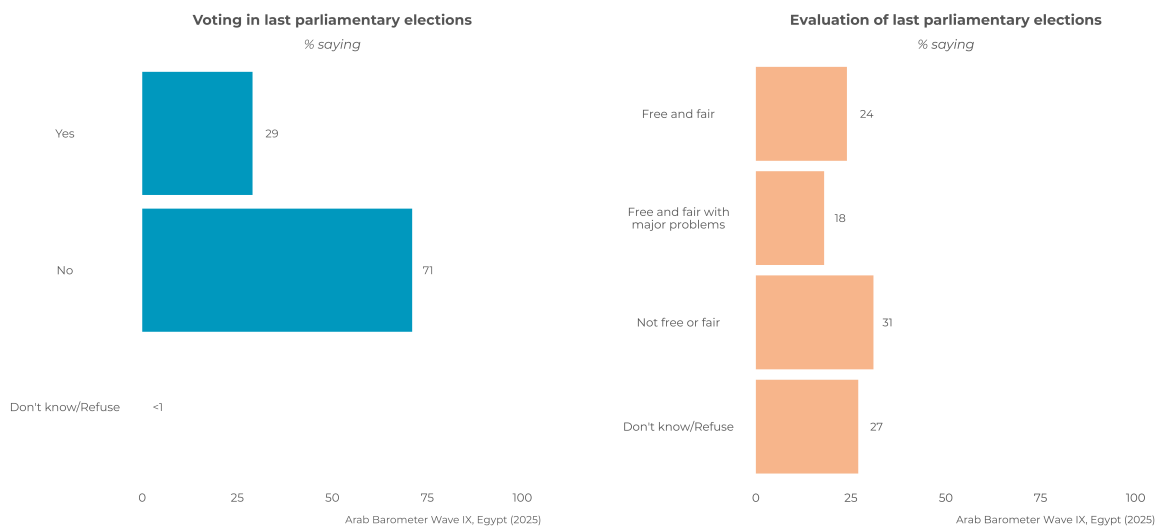


**Democratic systems are not effective at maintaining order and stability**



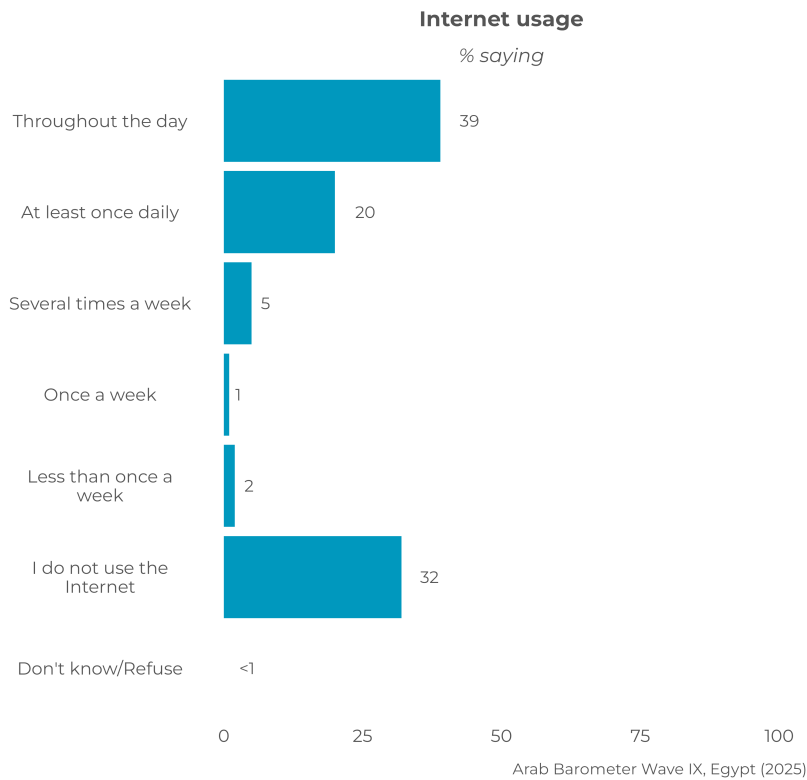
These attitudes toward democracy play out in a context of limited electoral engagement and contested perceptions of election integrity. Seven in ten report

that they did not vote in the last legislative election and Egyptians expressed significant disagreements as to whether recent elections were free and fair, with 31 percent answering that they were not, 24 percent answering that they were, and over a quarter (26 percent) answering that they did not know. Together, these patterns suggest that pro-democracy sentiment does not necessarily translate into high participation, and that doubts about electoral credibility may be part of what weakens elections as a central “pillar” of democracy in the public mind.



## Media Use and the News

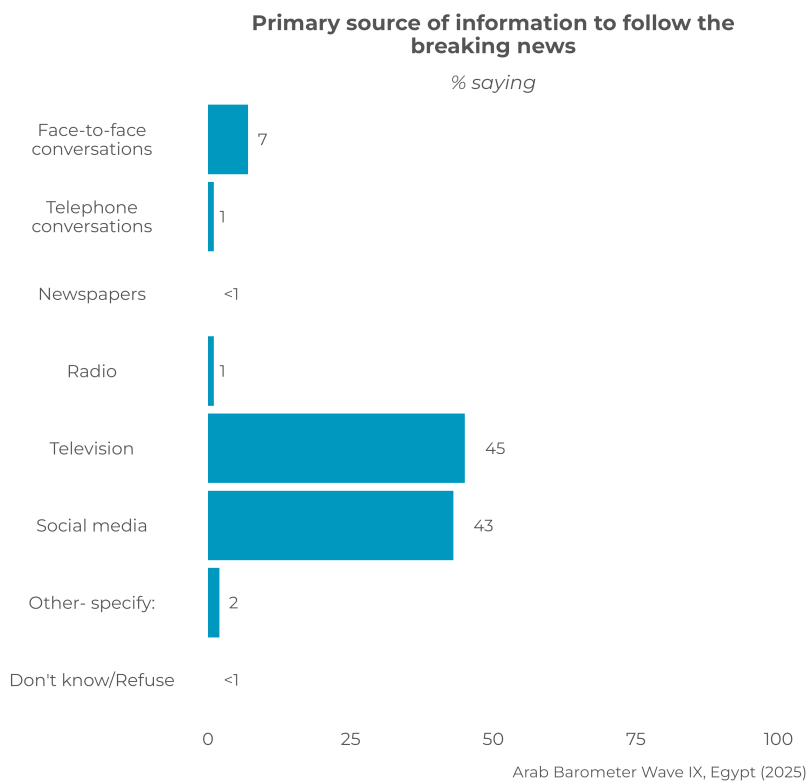
Egyptians’ media environment is shaped by a sharp digital divide. On the one hand, 2/3 of Egyptians report at least sporadic usage of the internet, with just shy of 60 percent reporting that they go online once a day or more. On the other, roughly a third report not using the internet at all, suggesting that a substantial segment of the public remains outside the daily online information ecosystem (although this portion is down from 43 percent in 2022). This gap matters for how news and political messaging travel: for many Egyptians, on-line platforms are central to everyday information and communication, while for others they are largely irrelevant. As expected, internet use is higher among those who are younger and more educated.



Among those who do engage online, social media use is common but not necessarily extreme. The modal amount of daily social media time is 0–2 hours, followed by 3–5 hours, indicating that most usage clusters in the low-to-moderate range rather than at very high levels. Usage is higher among younger and more educated Egyptians than among older and less educated ones, reinforcing the generational and educational contours of the digital divide. Platform preferences are fairly concentrated: the most commonly reported are Facebook, followed by WhatsApp, YouTube, and TikTok, with the latter overwhelmingly favored by younger audiences. Overall, this pattern suggests a media landscape in which a few major platforms dominate — mixing traditional “social networking” (Facebook), private and semi-private messaging (WhatsApp), video as an information format (YouTube), and short-form algorithmic feeds (TikTok).

When asked about their primary source of news, Egyptians overwhelmingly point to television and social media: 45 percent name TV and 43 percent name social media, while all other channels trail far behind. This reinforces the dual structure of Egypt’s information environment: broadcast TV remains central for mass audiences, while social media functions as a parallel (and often competing) pathway for news—especially for those who are online daily. There are clear patterns of type of media consumed by age and education: those who are younger rely far more heavily on social media, while TV becomes increasingly dominant moving into older age groups, where social media plays a much

smaller role. A similar gradient appears across education, with television most prominent among those with less schooling, and social media accounting for a much larger share among those with secondary and post-secondary education—suggesting that the “two-track” media system is also stratified by both generation and educational attainment.

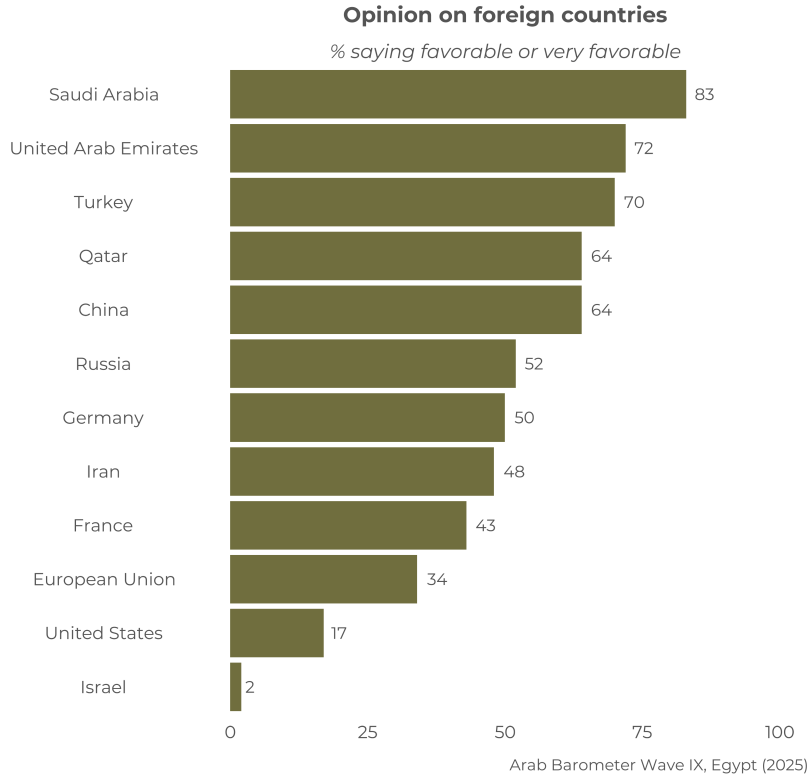


## International Relations

Egyptians’ views of global politics reflect both skepticism toward Western leadership and a comparatively warmer orientation toward several regional and non-Western powers. When asked to rate countries as democracies on a 0–10 scale, Egyptians place the United States and China at medians of seven and Germany at a slightly higher median of eight, while rating Egypt notably lower at a median response of five. This gap suggests that even as Egyptians distinguish their country from major and regional powers on democratic attributes, they do not draw especially sharp lines between the U.S., China, and Germany on this specific “democracy” measure.

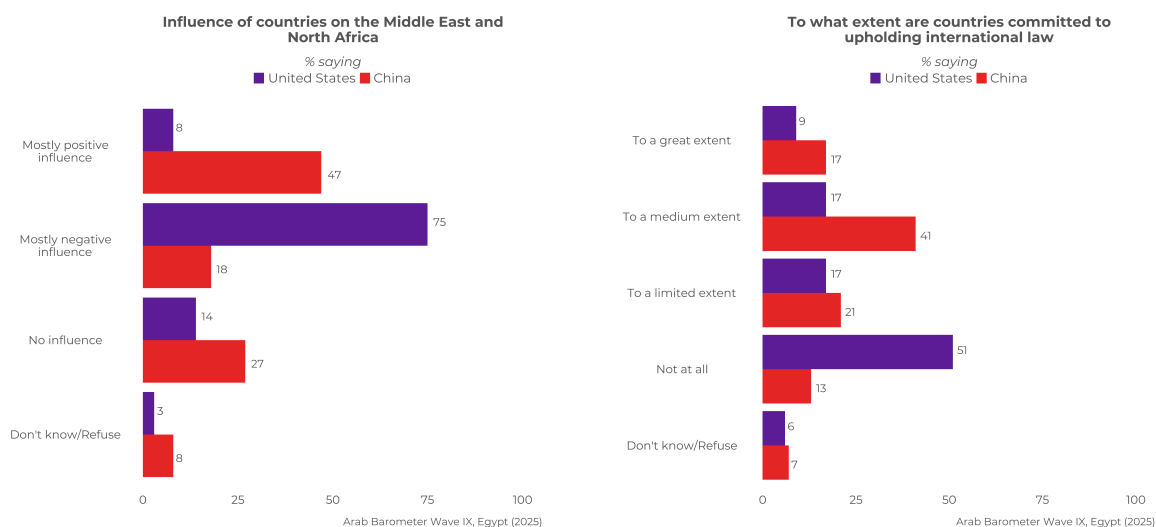
Country impressions, however, are far more polarized. The United States is viewed very unfavorably, with 53 percent reporting that they see the US very

unfavorably and another 26 percent reporting a somewhat unfavorable view. Israel is viewed even more negatively: 95 percent report very unfavorable views, with an additional two percent somewhat unfavorable. By contrast, Egyptians express broadly favorable views of several regional states—especially Saudi Arabia (83 percent favorable), Turkey (70 percent), the UAE (72 percent), and Qatar (64 percent). Views of Iran lean favorable but are more mixed (about 48 percent favorable, and six percent “don’t know”). Among non-regional powers, France is viewed slightly more negatively than positively (50 percent unfavorable vs. 43 percent favorable), while Germany fares modestly better (50 percent favorable vs. 42 percent unfavorable). About half view Russia favorably (52 percent), even as a larger share reports disapproving views of the EU (58 percent). China stands out with 64 percent reporting favorable views. Overall, the picture is not one of blanket anti-foreign sentiment, but of sharp differentiation: pronounced hostility toward the U.S. and Israel, warmer affect toward Gulf partners and Turkey, and comparatively strong receptivity to China.



These differences also extend to how Egyptians evaluate major powers’ intentions and conduct. On adherence to international norms, the United States is widely seen as indifferent to international law: more than half say the U.S.

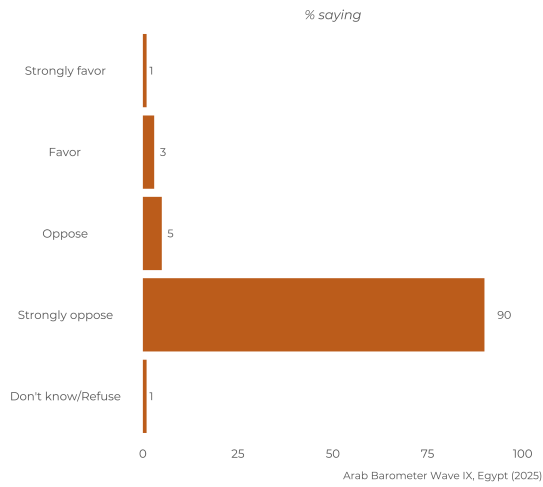
does not care about international law at all, compared to roughly 13 percent who say the same about China, 20 percent about Russia, and 27 percent about Iran. On several comparative items, China is also evaluated more positively than the United States—particularly on development, security, freedoms, and Palestine—reinforcing a broader perception of China as the more constructive external actor in the region. Consistent with this, Egyptians are far more likely to characterize U.S. influence in the Middle East as mostly negative (75 percent) than mostly positive (eight percent), while evaluations of China tilt in the opposite direction (47 percent mostly positive vs. 18 percent mostly negative). Even where Egyptians are not uniformly pro-China, the relative comparison is clear: U.S. influence is met with deep suspicion, while China is more often treated as credible or beneficial by comparison.



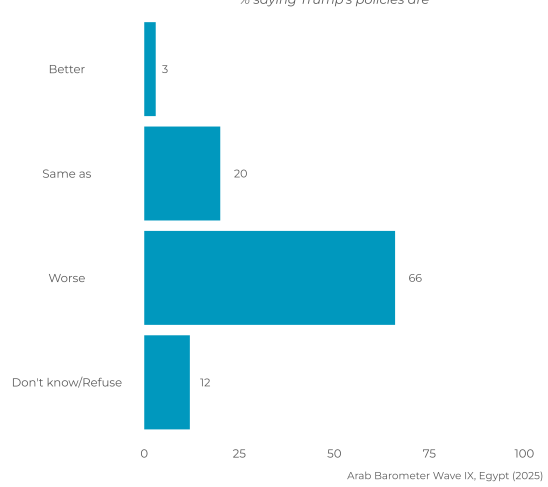
On regional questions, there is heavy opposition to normalization with 90 percent of Egyptians strongly opposing normalization and an additional five percent opposing. On Gaza, the modal descriptor of recent events is “genocide”. The overwhelmingly majority (94 percent) indicate that Egypt is more committed to defending Palestine than Israel and strongly reject the idea that the United States is suited to broker a political solution in Palestine. Finally, evaluations of U.S. leadership are not neutral: 66 percent view Trump as worse for the region than Biden, 20 percent see them as being equal, and only three percent see a Trump presidency as better for the Middle East, reinforcing the larger theme that U.S. influence is viewed with suspicion even as Egyptians differentiate across American leaders.

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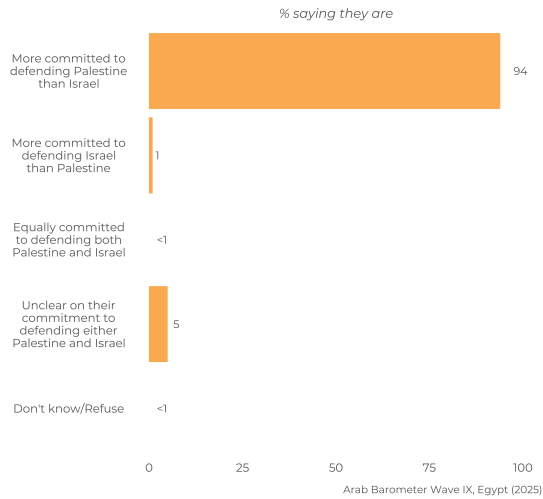
## Normalization of relations between Arab states and Israel



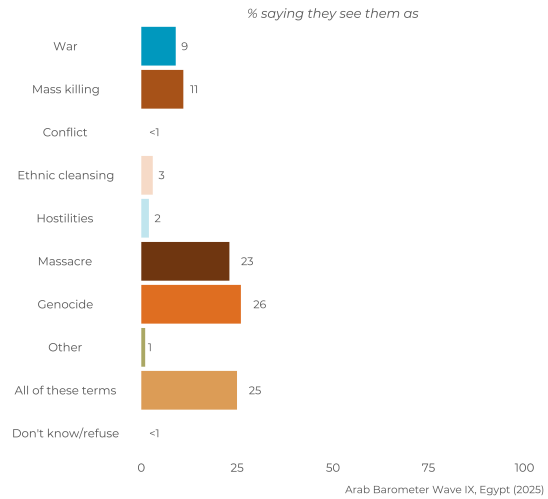
## Biden vs. Trump's policies in MENA



## Stance of Egypt on Israel-Palestine



## The latest events in Gaza



## Preferred Broker for an Israeli-Palestinian Political Solution





## About Arab Barometer

Arab Barometer is the leading and most influential research network on public opinion in the Middle East and North Africa. We are nonprofit and nonpartisan, hosted at Princeton University and the University of Michigan.

Founded in 2006, we are the longest-standing research network that conducts rigorous and nationally representative public opinion surveys in the Arab world. We disseminate the findings through analyses and reports to deepen public conversations and facilitate data-driven solutions to the pressing problems facing ordinary citizens across MENA.

Our public opinion surveys give ordinary citizens a stronger voice, and our analysis, highlighting key demographic differences and changing trends, help comprehend MENA citizens' shifting views, attitudes, and behaviors.



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