



World Justice  
Project

# The Rule of Law in Panama

*Key Findings from the General  
Population Poll 2021*





# Acknowledgements

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# About This Report



# About This Report

**EFFECTIVE RULE OF LAW** reduces corruption, combats poverty and disease, and protects people from injustices large and small. Strengthening the rule of law is an important objective for governments, donors, and civil society organizations around the world. To be effective, rule of law development requires clarity about the fundamental features that define the rule of law, as well as an adequate basis for its evaluation and measurement.

*The Rule of Law in Panama: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021* presents question-level data drawn from the General Population Poll (GPP), an original data source designed and collected by the World Justice Project. To provide a more in-depth view of trends in perceptions of rule of law in Panama, this report also presents select findings over time and compared to Panama's regional peers in Central America.

***This report represents the voices of people in Panama and their experiences with the rule of law in their country.***

The GPP was conducted in November of 2021 through face-to-face interviews to a nationally representative sample of 2,502 Panamanian households. This poll was designed to capture data on the experiences and perceptions of ordinary people regarding a variety of themes related to the rule of law.

The data derived from the General Population Poll is presented in this report as thematic briefs, each one highlighting a different dimension of the rule of law from the perspective of Panamanians. These thematic briefs focus on the current rule of law ecosystem in Panama while simultaneously illuminating changes over time and comparisons across the following regional peer countries: Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Each section touches upon perceptions of the following themes: accountability, fundamental freedoms, corruption, bribery victimization, trust in institutions, the criminal justice system and its actors, police performance, community policing, vigilante justice, crime victimization, support for victims of crime, gender issues, security, and migration.



# Executive Findings

*The Rule of Law in Panama: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021* report provides a comprehensive overview of how citizens perceive and experience the rule of law in Panama. The thematic briefs summarized below draw on historical data and new data collected from the general public in 2021. Despite improvements in certain rule of law outcomes over time, the results highlight the fact that many challenges—including bribery, lack of trust in institutions, and low crime reporting—persist.

## Section 1: Accountability and Fundamental Freedoms

### 1 GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Perceptions of accountability and checks on the executive branch in Panama have improved over time.** When asked if high-ranking government officials would be held accountable for breaking the law, 40% of respondents believe that the government officer would be prosecuted or punished, while only 19% reported the same in 2012. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents believe that the president should always obey court judgements, demonstrating an increase by eight percentage points since 2019. However, this figure is low when compared to the percentage of respondents with the same view in regional peer countries, with only Salvadorans reporting a lower percentage.

### 2 FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

**Panamanians have generally positive views on guarantees of their fundamental freedoms, though trends over time are inconsistent.** Regarding freedoms of expression, Panamanians are the least optimistic about the media's ability to express opinions against the government, with 62% of respondents agreeing that this freedom is guaranteed. Panamanians are generally more optimistic about freedoms of participation, as most respondents believe that people are able to attend community meetings (80%), join any political organization (76%), and organize around an issue or petition (72%) (despite moderate declines in these categories since 2019). Meanwhile, perceptions on electoral freedoms have improved, with the percentage of respondents who believe that local government officials are elected through a clean process increasing by ten percentage points since 2019 (41% to 51%).

### 3 CORRUPTION

**Panamanians' perceptions on corruption have remained generally stable since 2017 but vary across actors and institutions.** The perception of corruption among legislative officials is common in Panama, as roughly two-thirds (67%) of respondents believe most or all members of the National Assembly are involved in corrupt practices. This percentage is the highest among all actors across surveyed regional peer countries in 2021. Panamanians say actors within the judiciary are the least corrupt—public defense attorneys performed the best within this category, with only 37% of respondents believing most or all of them are involved in corrupt practices in 2021.

### 4 BRIBERY VICTIMIZATION

**Compared against rates in regional peer countries, bribery victimization is relatively common in Panama.** One-quarter of Panamanians paid a bribe in the last three years to request a government permit or document. Twenty-one percent of respondents paid a bribe to request public benefits or assistance, which is the highest rate of bribery victimization for this service across surveyed regional peer countries. Panamanians reported paying a bribe to obtain a birth certificate or a government-issued ID less often than other categories (11% of respondents paid a bribe for this service).

### 5 TRUST

**While half of Panamanians have a lot or some trust in people living in their community, levels of trust in various government and legal institutional actors are lower.** Second to people living in their community, 45% of respondents have at least some trust in police officers, marking an increase of ten percentage points since 2012. Reported levels of trust in actors of the executive branch are inconsistent over time. The percentage of respondents who reported having a lot or some trust in local government officers increased from 29% to 37% between 2019 and 2021, while trust in national government officers decreased from 31% to 27%. Respondents had the most critical views of national government officers (27% of respondents report having at least some trust), followed closely by judges and magistrates (29%).

## Section 2: Police and Criminal Justice

### 6 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Panamanians' perceptions of the criminal justice system have improved in all dimensions since 2019, though timeliness continues to be a top issue.** Most respondents (54%) are confident that the criminal justice system allows those accused of a crime to get a fair trial regardless of who they are, followed closely by 53% who are confident that the criminal justice system treats those accused of crime as innocent until proven guilty. Respondents felt least confident about the timeliness of the criminal justice system. Although confidence in this dimension increased by eight percentage points since 2019, only 40% of respondents feel confident that the criminal justice system deals with cases promptly and efficiently.

### 7 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTORS

**Panamanians have mixed views on the performance of key criminal justice actors.** Levels of trust in prosecutors, public defense attorneys and judges and magistrates have all improved slightly since 2019 but remain low in all categories. Respondents have the most trust in public defense attorneys, with 35% of respondents indicating that they have at least some trust in them, followed by prosecutors (33%) and judges and magistrates (29%). In line with this finding, respondents view public defense attorneys as less corrupt than other judicial actors. Thirty-seven percent of Panamanians believe most or all public defense attorneys are involved in corrupt practices, compared to 42% who say the same of judges, magistrates, and prosecutors. However, while nearly half of respondents believe that prosecutors (51% of respondents) and judges and magistrates (48% of respondents) do their job well, only 35% of respondents believe the same of public defense attorneys.

### 8 POLICE

#### *Police Perceptions*

**Respondents have mixed perceptions about the effectiveness and legitimacy of the police in Panama.** Although the majority of Panamanians believe the police are available to help when needed (70%) and resolve security problems in the community (58%), less than half believe that the police perform effective and lawful investigations (43%) or respond to crime reports (40%).

Respondents have similarly conflicting views on matters of police legitimacy. Nearly three quarters (74%) of Panamanians say the police treat all people with kindness and respect, but only 38% and 39% of respondents believe that the police respect the rights of suspects and that they do not use excessive force, respectively. Furthermore, while over half of respondents (62%) perceive that the police are not generally

involved in corrupt practices, only 35% believe that they do not serve the interests of politicians.

### *Police Interactions*

**In both voluntary and involuntary interactions with the police, a majority of Panamanians reported that the police controlled the situation and treated them with respect.**

Seventeen percent of Panamanian respondents contacted the police voluntarily in the last 12 months, and the most frequent reason for contact was to report an accident or medical emergency, followed by to request help or information. Most respondents who voluntarily contacted the police reported that the police listened to them (78% of respondents) and treated them with respect (82% of respondents).

Meanwhile, 23% of respondents reported being contacted involuntarily by the police in the last 12 months, with nearly half of those who were contacted (49%) reporting that it was due to a routine check or so that the police could provide assistance. During these interactions, experiences were mixed. Despite 74% of respondents reporting that the police controlled the situation, only 55% believed that the police had a legitimate reason to stop them. Still, 69% of respondents felt that the police listened to them and 77% said the police treated them with respect.

### **9 COMMUNITY POLICING, VIGILANTE JUSTICE, AND TRUST**

**Panamanians who interact more frequently with the police tend to have more trust in the police.** Respondents who reported that the police patrol their neighborhood frequently and/or that the police frequently provide opportunities for community members to suggest solutions to local problems also reported having higher levels of trust in the police than respondents who reported less frequent police interactions. Panamanians who reported that they do not feel safe walking in their neighborhoods at night, believe that most or all police officers are involved in corrupt practices, and/or had previously paid a bribe are more likely to have lower levels of trust in the police.

### **10 CRIME VICTIMIZATION**

**Twelve percent of Panamanians experienced a crime in the last 12 months, but over half (60%) said that they did not report the crime to the police or another authority.** The most common reason for not reporting a crime was that the respondent did not think reporting the crime would help. The most commonly experienced crimes in Panama are property crimes (10% of respondents), followed by crimes against life and integrity (7%). In Panama, respondents under the age of 44, people who are financially secure, and respondents in urban areas were victims of crime more often than other sociodemographic groups in 2021. The frequency of crime reporting among people over the age of 65 and financially secure respondents was lower than the national average.

### **11 VICTIM SUPPORT**

**Fifty percent or less of respondents are confident that crime victims receive adequate support and protection.** Half of Panamanians are confident that crime victims are addressed by the police using accessible language (50%) and 49% of respondents are confident crime victims are guaranteed their rights in criminal justice proceedings. Meanwhile, only a third (33%) believe victims receive prompt and courteous attention when reporting a crime. Respondents had the most pessimistic views when asked whether victims are believed when they report a crime, with only 28% feeling confident that this is the case.



## Section 3: Gender, Security and Migration

### 12 GENDER ROLES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Men and women in Panama hold similar opinions about family roles but differ in their hypothetical reactions to domestic violence.** Slightly more men than women agree that women who work outside the house neglect their children (44% of men and 39% of women), and that a man should be responsible for all of his family's expenses (88% of men and 86% of women). When asked what reactions respondents would have if their partner were to physically assault them, men most often said they would talk to their partner (34%), compared to only 14% of women. Conversely, women most often said they would call the police (33%), but only 19% of men chose this option.

### 13 SECURITY

**Perceptions of personal safety in Panama have improved since 2019, but differences remain across sociodemographic groups.** Over half (57%) of Panamanians reported feeling safe walking in their neighborhoods at night, marking an increase of 19 percentage points since 2019. Comparing sociodemographic groups, Panamanians who were previously a victim of a crime, are financially insecure and/or are women are less likely to feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night. Panamanians identify gang and youth violence as the most frequent type of violence in their neighborhood (29% of respondents), followed by street violence (25% of respondents) and domestic violence against women (22% of respondents).

### 14 INTERNAL MIGRATION

**Around one quarter of respondents from each of Panama's three major metropolitan areas reported that they migrated there from a different Panamanian city.** Respondents most often reported moving to Panama Metro or David for family reasons (47% and 50% of respondents, respectively), whereas in Colón, most respondents cited better economic or educational opportunities as their top reason (50% of respondents). Respondents under the age of 30 are more likely to have moved within Panama in the last three years than members of other sociodemographic groups.

### 15 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

**One in five Panamanians reported that they would prefer to move permanently to another country.** However, only 6% have plans to move within the next 12 months, which is the lowest percentage among surveyed regional peers. Out of Panama's three major metropolitan areas, respondents from David most frequently reported that they would prefer to move to another country. Across all metropolitan areas, the top reason for respondents' desire to move internationally was better economic or educational opportunities. The likelihood of a respondent having made plans to move internationally is

greater for those who are under the age of 30, have previously attempted to migrate to the US, and/or were previously a victim of a crime.

### 16 MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

**Nine percent of respondents from Panama have attempted to migrate to the United States, but most (69%) never entered.** Among respondents who attempted to migrate but did not enter the United States, the most frequently chosen justification was that they changed their mind, with 29% of respondents choosing this option. For the 31% of respondents who successfully entered the US, the top reason for subsequently leaving was family or social reasons (25% of respondents chose this option).

## II

# Thematic Findings

## **Section 1**

### ***Accountability and Fundamental Freedoms***

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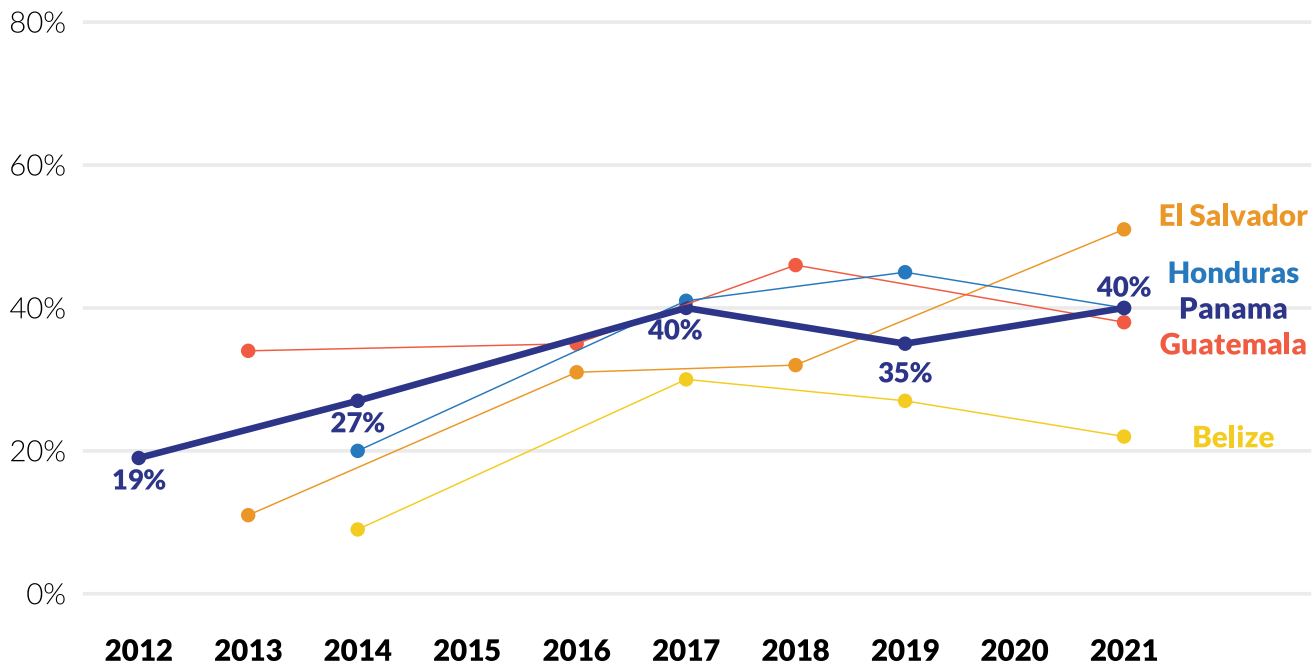


# Government Accountability

Views in Panama and regional peer countries regarding accountability under the law.

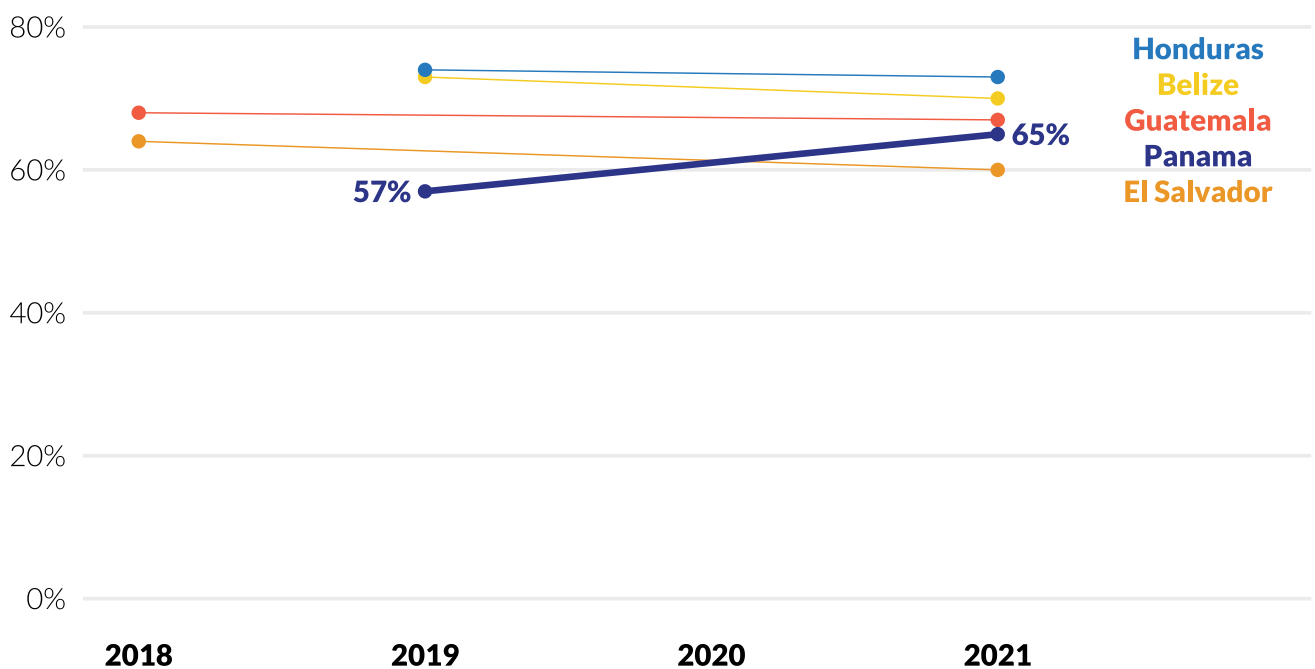
## Chart 1a. Perceptions of Accountability in the Region Over Time

Percentage of respondents who believe that high-ranking government officials would be held accountable for breaking the law



## Chart 1b. Checks on Executive Power Over Time

Percentage of respondents who believe that the president should always obey laws and court decisions, even if the president thinks they are wrong



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2012, 2013, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019, and 2021

# Fundamental Freedoms

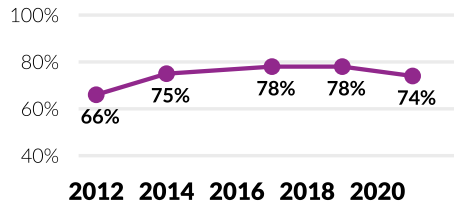
Views on the extent to which freedoms of expression, participation, elections, and religion are guaranteed.

## Chart 2. Fundamental Freedoms in Panama Over Time

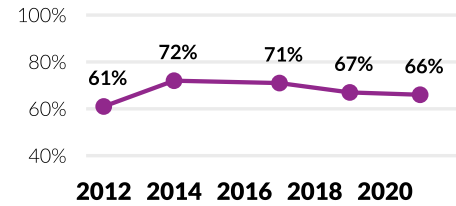
Percentage of respondents who believe that...

### EXPRESSION

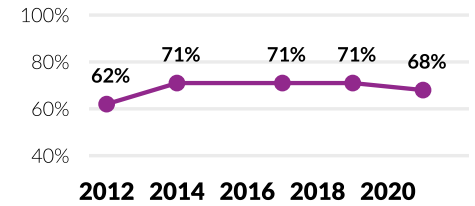
People can express opinions against the government



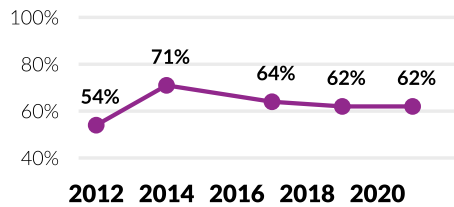
Civil society organizations can express opinions against the government



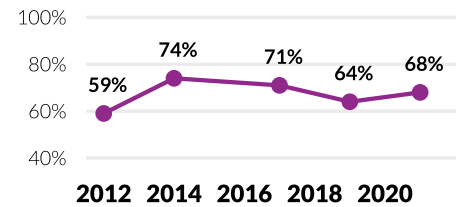
Political parties can express opinions against the government



Media can express opinions against the government without fear of retaliation

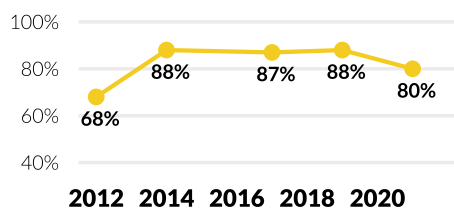


Media can expose cases of corruption

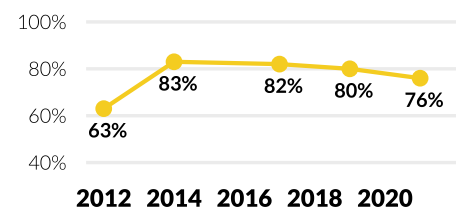


### PARTICIPATION

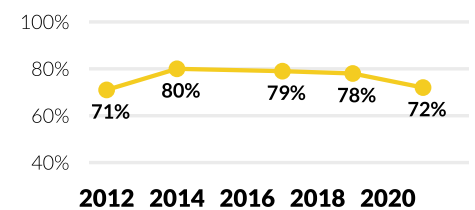
People can attend community meetings



People can join any political organization

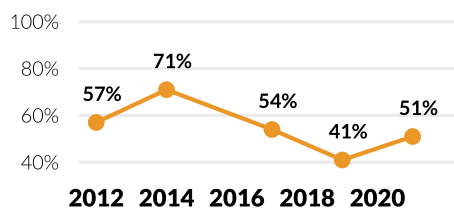


People can organize around an issue or petition

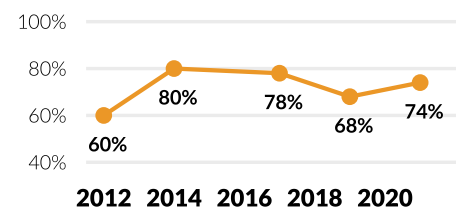


### ELECTIONS

Local government officials are elected through a clean process

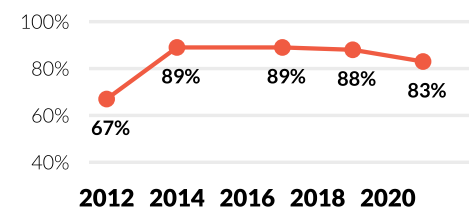


People can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured



### RELIGION

Religious minorities can observe their holy days



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2021

# Corruption

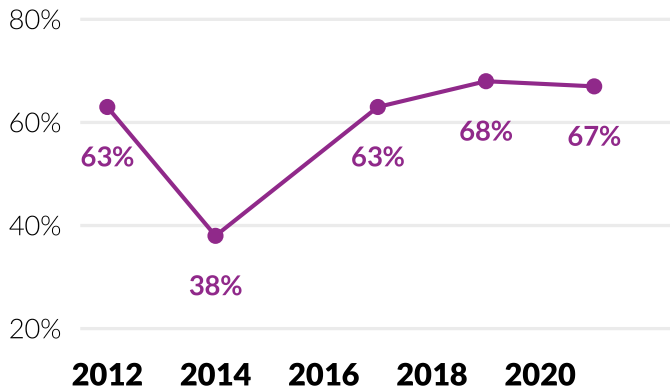
## Perceptions of corruption in Panama.

### Chart 3. Perceptions of Corruption by Institution Over Time

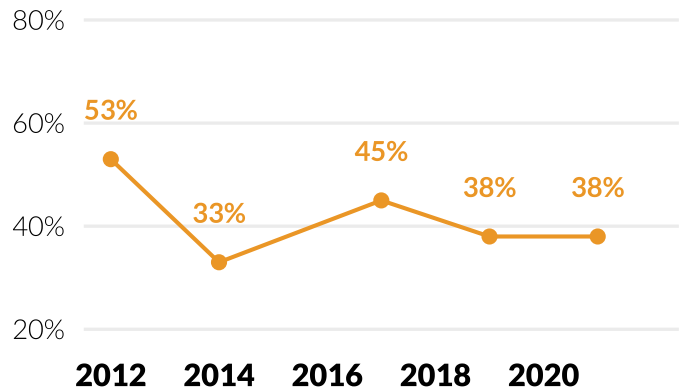
Percentage of respondents who believe that most or all people working in the following institutions are corrupt

#### LEGISLATIVE

(Members of the National Assembly)

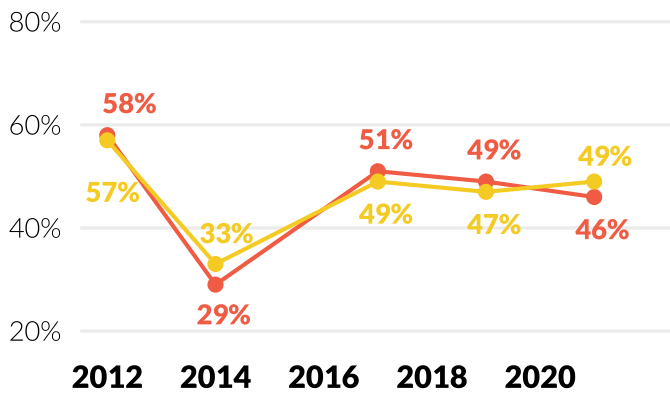


#### POLICE OFFICERS



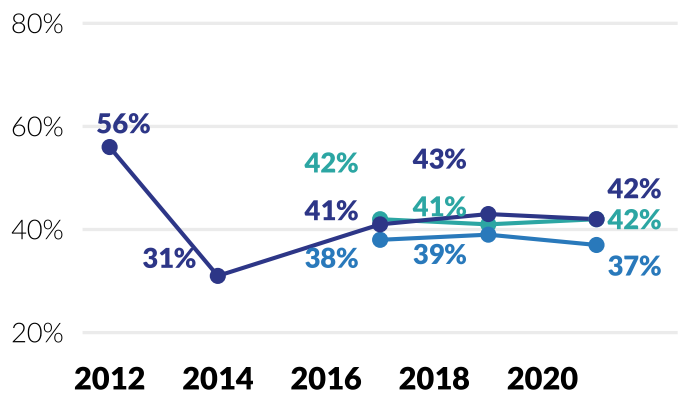
#### EXECUTIVE

(Local Government Officers and National Government Officers)



#### JUDICIARY

(Prosecutors, Public Defense Attorneys, and Judges and Magistrates)



● Local Government Officers ● National Government Officers

● Prosecutors ● Public Defense Attorneys ● Judges and Magistrates

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2021

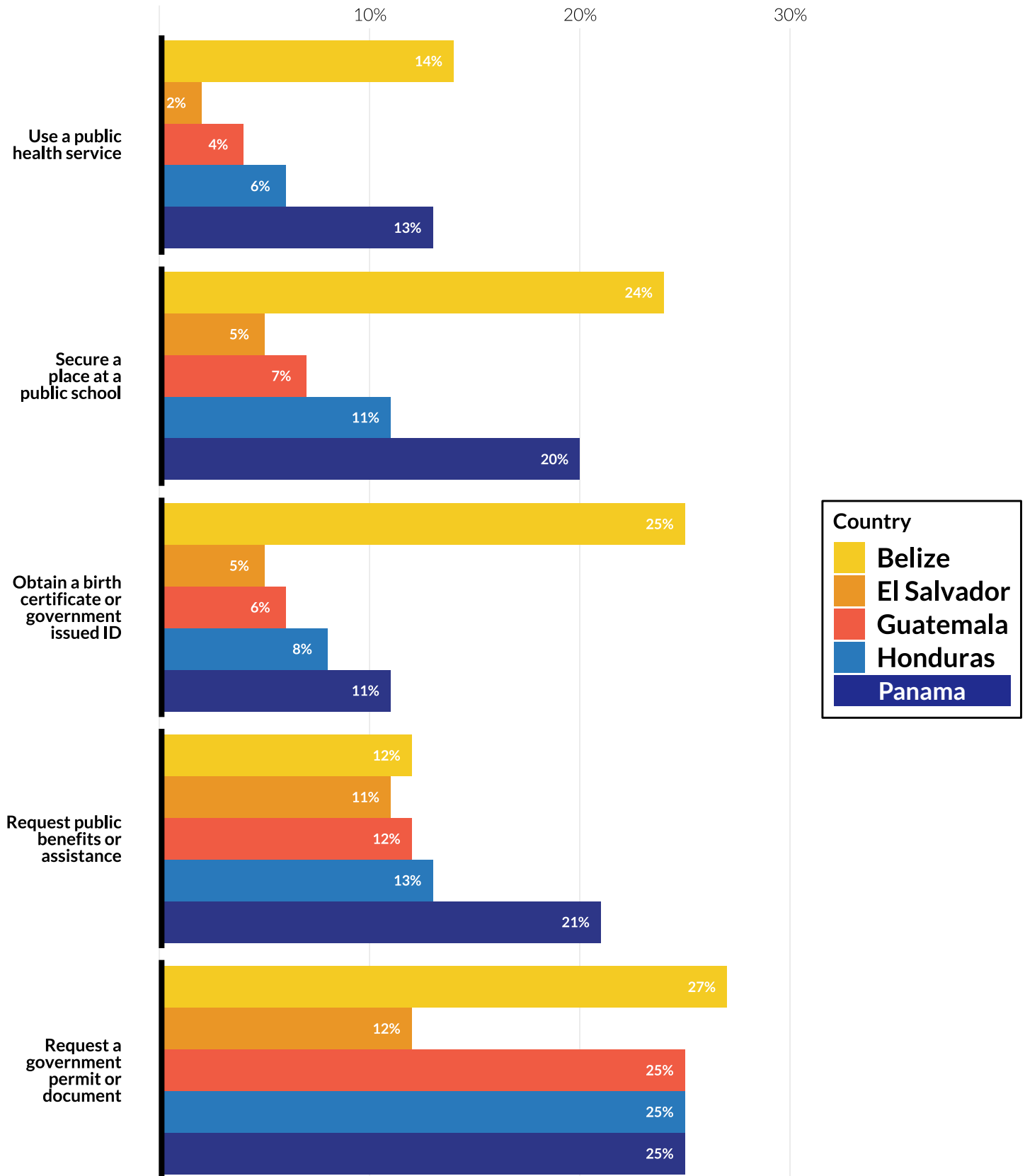


# Bribery Victimization

Data on bribes paid in Central America to access public services.

**Chart 4. Bribery Victimization in Panama and Regional Peer Countries**

Percentage of respondents who paid a bribe in the last three years to access the following services



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

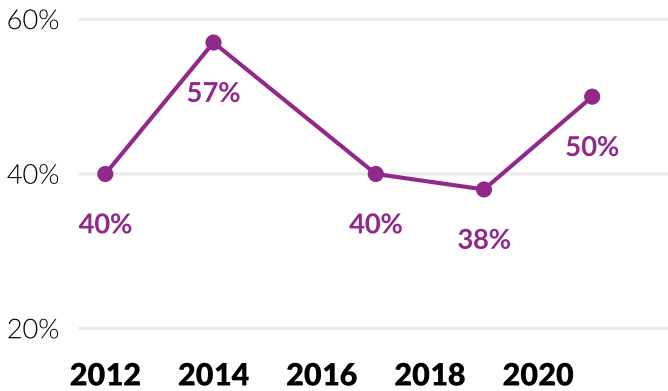
# Trust

Extent to which people in Panama trust various groups and institutions.

## Chart 5. Trust in Institutions Over Time

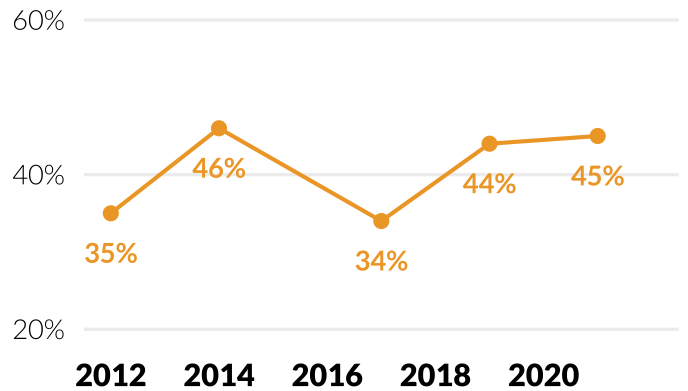
Percentage of respondents who have a lot or some trust in...

### PEOPLE LIVING IN THEIR COMMUNITY



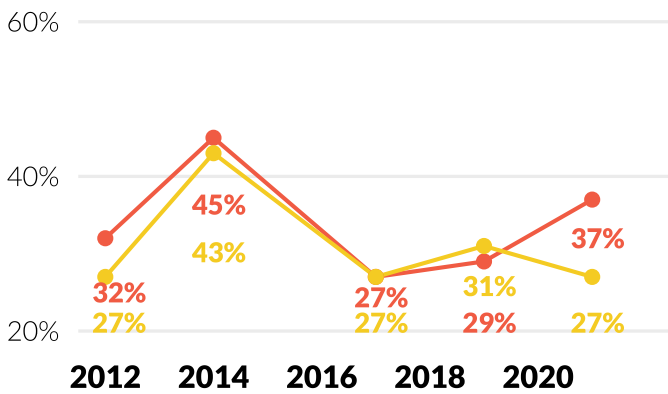
Note: Surveys administered before 2021 asked about "people in your country" instead of "people living in your community."

### POLICE OFFICERS



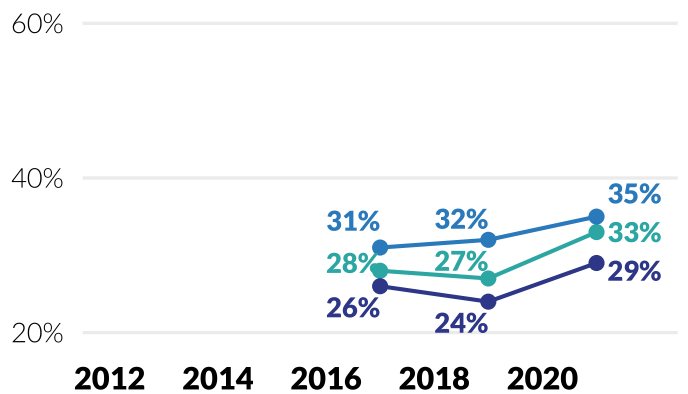
### EXECUTIVE

(Local Government Officers and National Government Officers)



### JUDICIARY

(Prosecutors, Public Defense Attorneys, and Judges and Magistrates)



● Local Government Officers ● National Government Officers

● Prosecutors ● Public Defense Attorneys ● Judges and Magistrates

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2021

## **Section 2**

### ***Police and Criminal Justice***

18 Criminal Justice System

19 Criminal Justice Actors

20 Police

22 Community Policing, Vigilante Justice, and Trust

23 Crime Victimization

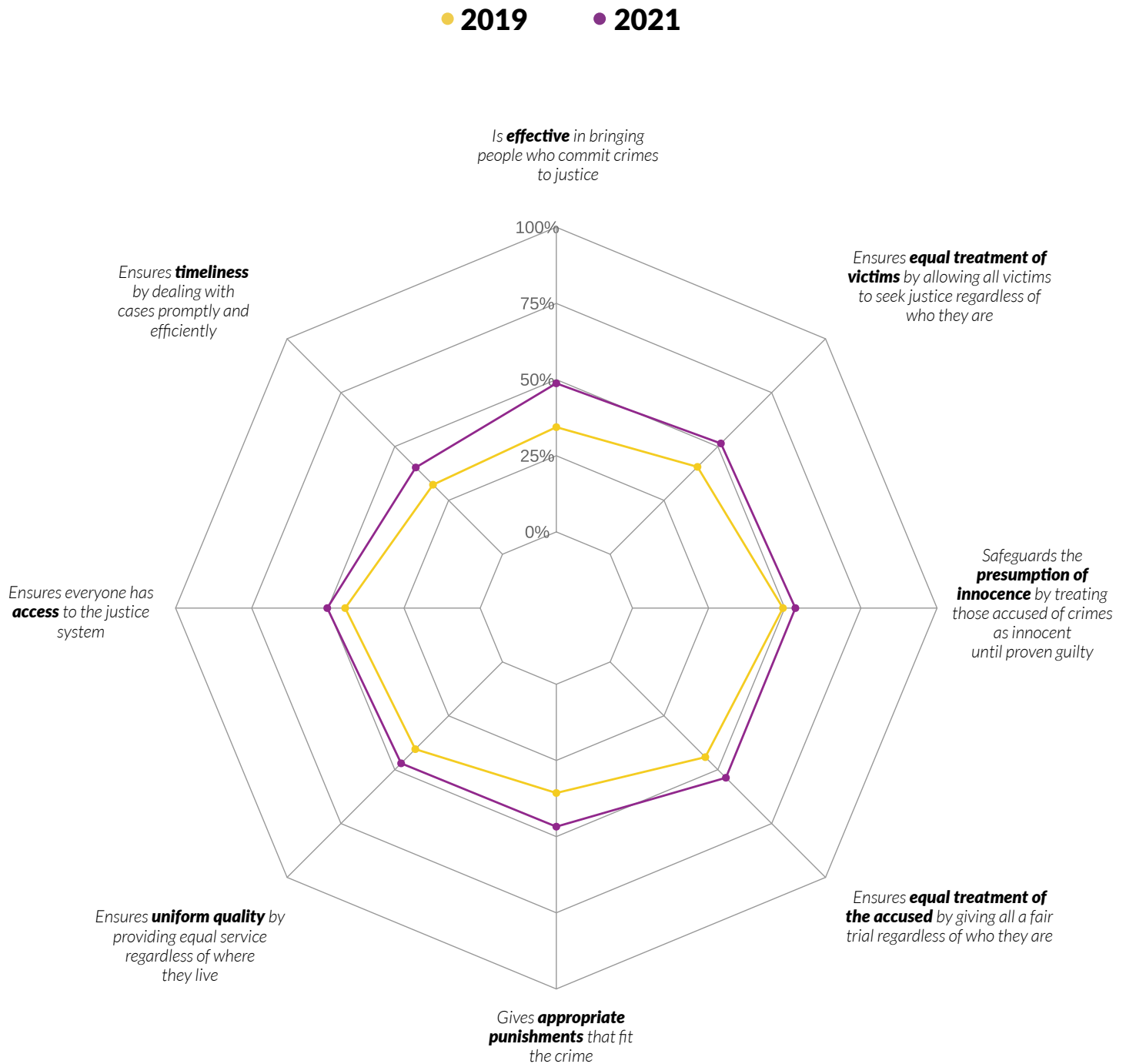
25 Victim Support

# Criminal Justice System

Views on the criminal justice system in Panama.

## Chart 6. Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System Over Time

Percentage of respondents who are confident that the criminal justice system...



Note: For additional information on how Chart 6 was produced, please see the Appendix.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2019 and 2021



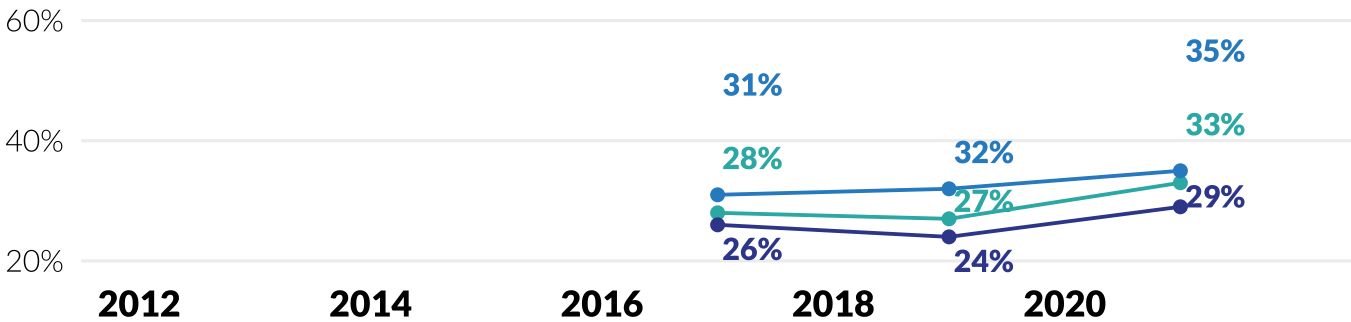
# Criminal Justice Actors

Views on the performance of criminal justice actors in Panama.

● Prosecutors ● Public Defense Attorneys ● Judges and Magistrates

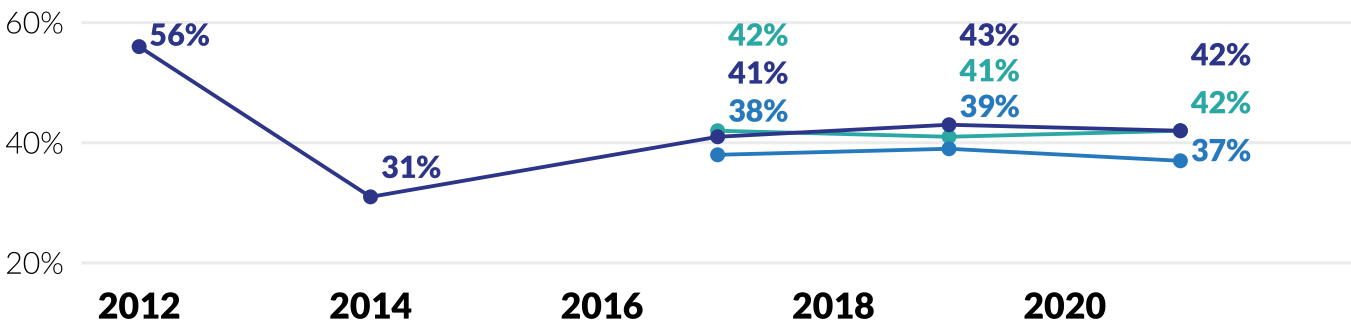
## Chart 7a. Trust in Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

Percentage of respondents who have a lot or some trust in prosecutors, public defense attorneys, and judges and magistrates



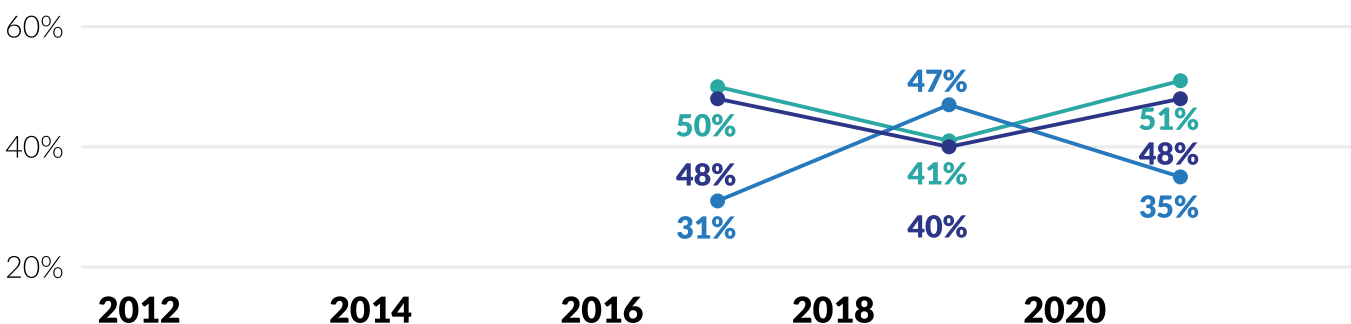
## Chart 7b. Perceptions of Corruption Across Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

Percentage of respondents who believe that most or all prosecutors, public defense attorneys, and judges and magistrates are corrupt



## Chart 7c. Perceptions of Effectiveness Across Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

Percentage of respondents who believe that prosecutors, public defense attorneys, and judges and magistrates do their job well



Note: Variables in Effectiveness category are as follows: **Prosecutors** prosecute crimes committed in an independent manner and are not subject to any sort of pressure (strongly agree/agree); **Public defense attorneys** do everything they can to defend poor people that are accused of committing a crime (often/sometimes); **Judges** decide cases in an independent manner and are not subject to any sort of pressure (strongly agree/agree).

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2012, 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2021

# Police

## Views on police performance in Panama.

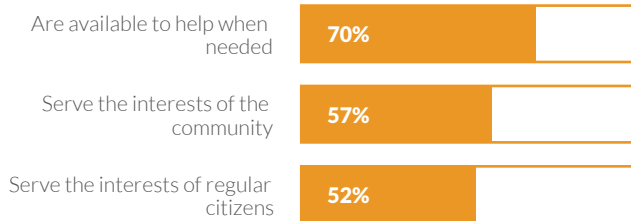
### Chart 8a. Perceptions of the Police

Opinions on effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement

#### EFFECTIVENESS

##### SERVE THE PUBLIC

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



##### CRIME CONTROL AND SAFETY

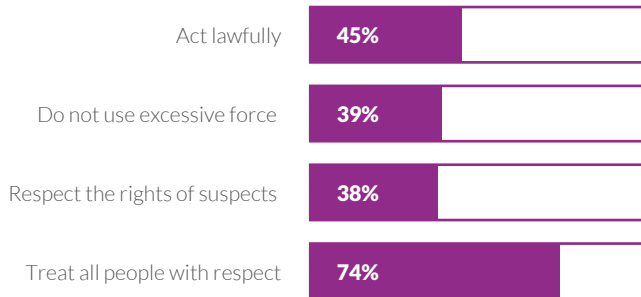
Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



#### LEGITIMACY

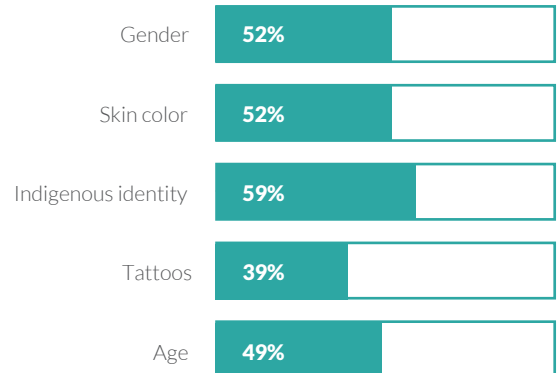
##### DUE PROCESS

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



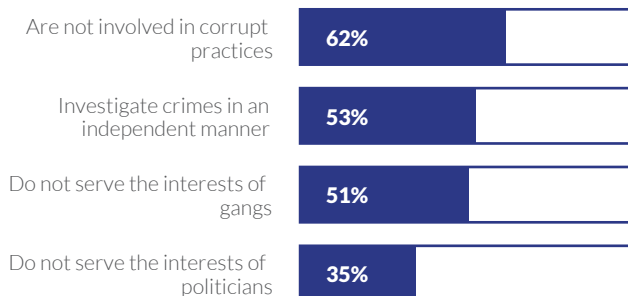
##### DISCRIMINATION

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police do not discriminate against suspects based on...



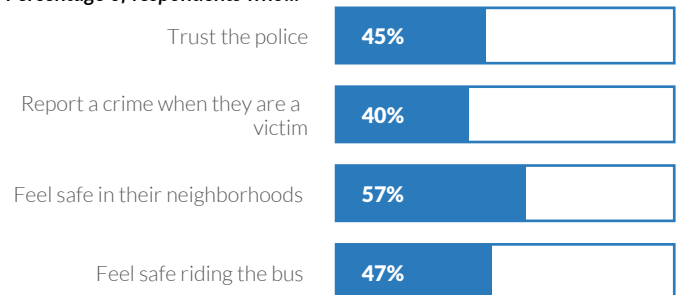
##### CORRUPTION

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



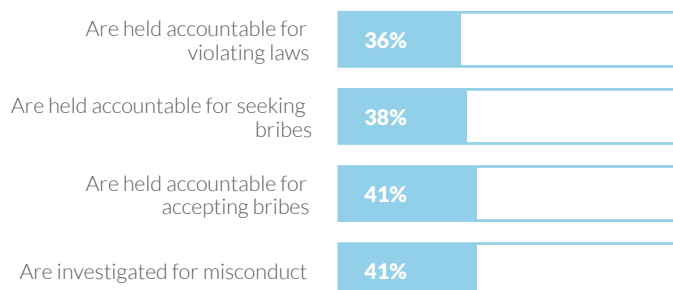
##### TRUST AND CRIME REPORTING

Percentage of respondents who...



##### ACCOUNTABILITY

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



Note: For additional information on how Chart 8a was produced, please see the Appendix.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Police, continued

## Views on police performance in Panama.

### Chart 8b. Interactions with the Police

Experiences of respondents in Panama who interacted with the police in the last 12 months

#### VOLUNTARY

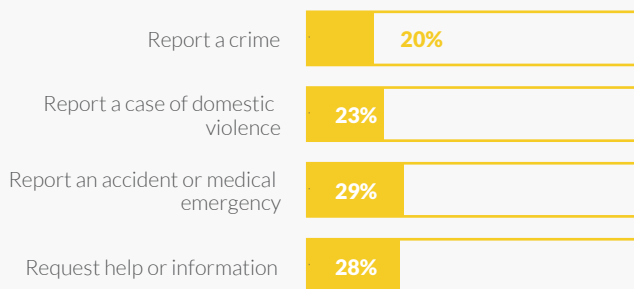
##### TOTAL VOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS

Percentage of respondents in Panama who contacted the police in the last 12 months

17%

##### CAUSES

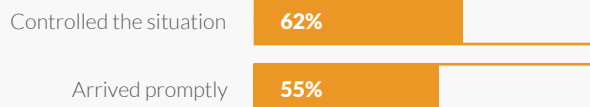
Reasons reported by respondents who contacted the police:



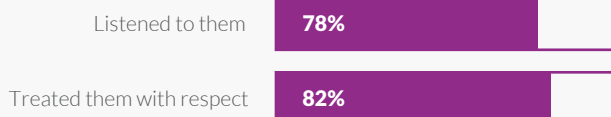
##### EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION

Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

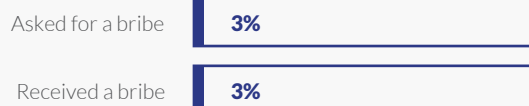
##### SERVE THE PUBLIC



##### DUE PROCESS



##### CORRUPTION



#### INVOLUNTARY

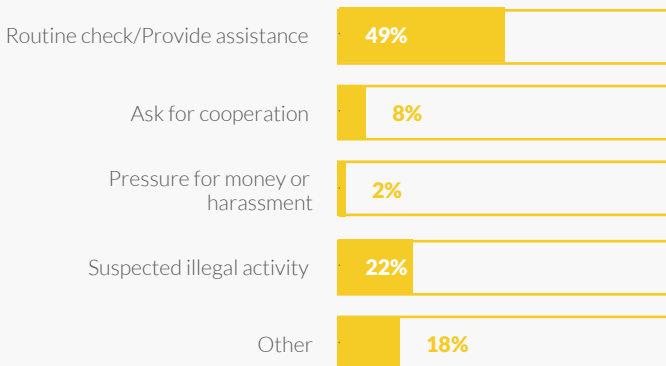
##### TOTAL INVOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS

Percentage of respondents in Panama who were contacted by the police in the last 12 months

23%

##### CAUSES

Reasons reported by respondents who were contacted by the police:



##### EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION

Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

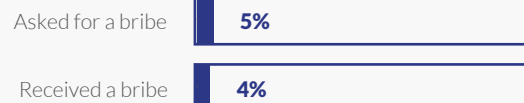
##### SERVE THE PUBLIC



##### DUE PROCESS



##### CORRUPTION



Note: For additional information on how Chart 8b was produced, please see the Appendix.

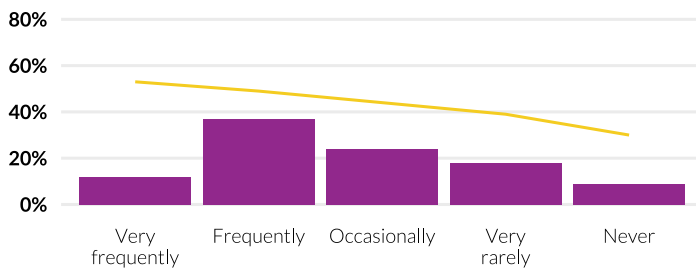
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Community Policing, Vigilante Justice, and Trust

## Relationship between community policing, vigilante justice, and trust.

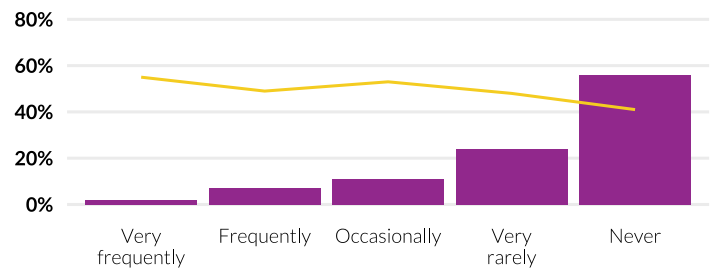
**Chart 9a. Police Patrolling and Trust**

Percentage of respondents who reported how frequently the police patrol their neighborhood vs. Percentage of respondents who trust the police



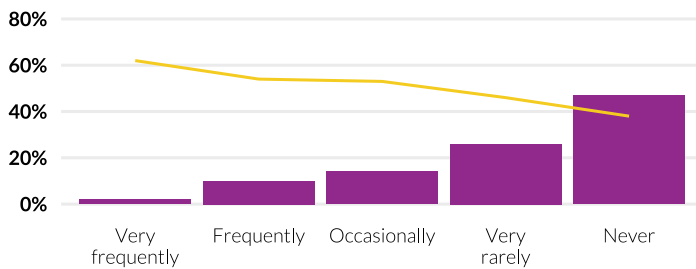
**Chart 9b. Community Meetings and Trust**

Percentage of respondents who reported how frequently the police hold meetings to discuss crime in their neighborhood vs. Percentage of respondents who trust the police



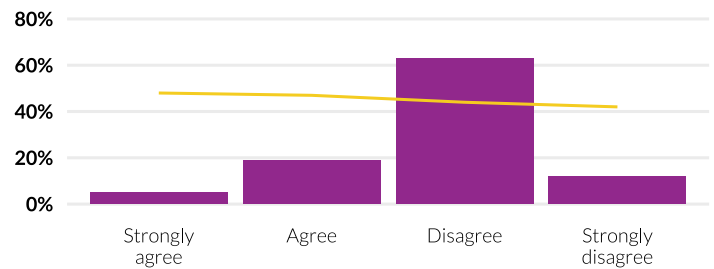
**Chart 9c. Public Participation and Trust**

Percentage of respondents who reported whether the police allow people in their neighborhood to suggest solutions to local problems vs. Percentage of respondents who trust the police



**Chart 9d. Vigilante Justice and Trust**

Percentage of respondents who reported whether it is acceptable for people to beat up a person who is suspected of committing a crime vs. Percentage of respondents who trust the police



Note: The yellow line represents the percentage of respondents who answered "some" or "a lot" to the question "How much trust do you have in [the police]" that corresponds to each response category represented on the x axis.

## Chart 9e. Impact of Experiences with Law Enforcement on Perceptions of the Police

Positive perceptions of the police are lower among respondents who...

	(Lower) Trust in the police	(Lower) Perception that the police resolve security problems in the community	(Lower) Perception that the police act lawfully
<i>Have been a victim of crime</i>			
Do not feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night	X	X	
<i>Were previously asked for a bribe</i>			
Believe most or all police officers are corrupt	X	X	X
Report that the police rarely or never patrol their neighborhood	X	X	X
Report that the police rarely or never hold meetings to discuss crime in their neighborhood		X	X
Report that the police rarely or never allow people in their neighborhood to suggest solutions to local problems	X	X	

Note: Each column consists of a logit regression. Only variables with a coefficient significant at the 95% confidence level are marked with an X. All regressions include controls for gender and financial security (not reported in the table). For additional information on how Chart 9e was produced, please see the Appendix.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021



# Crime Victimization

Crimes experienced by people in Panama.

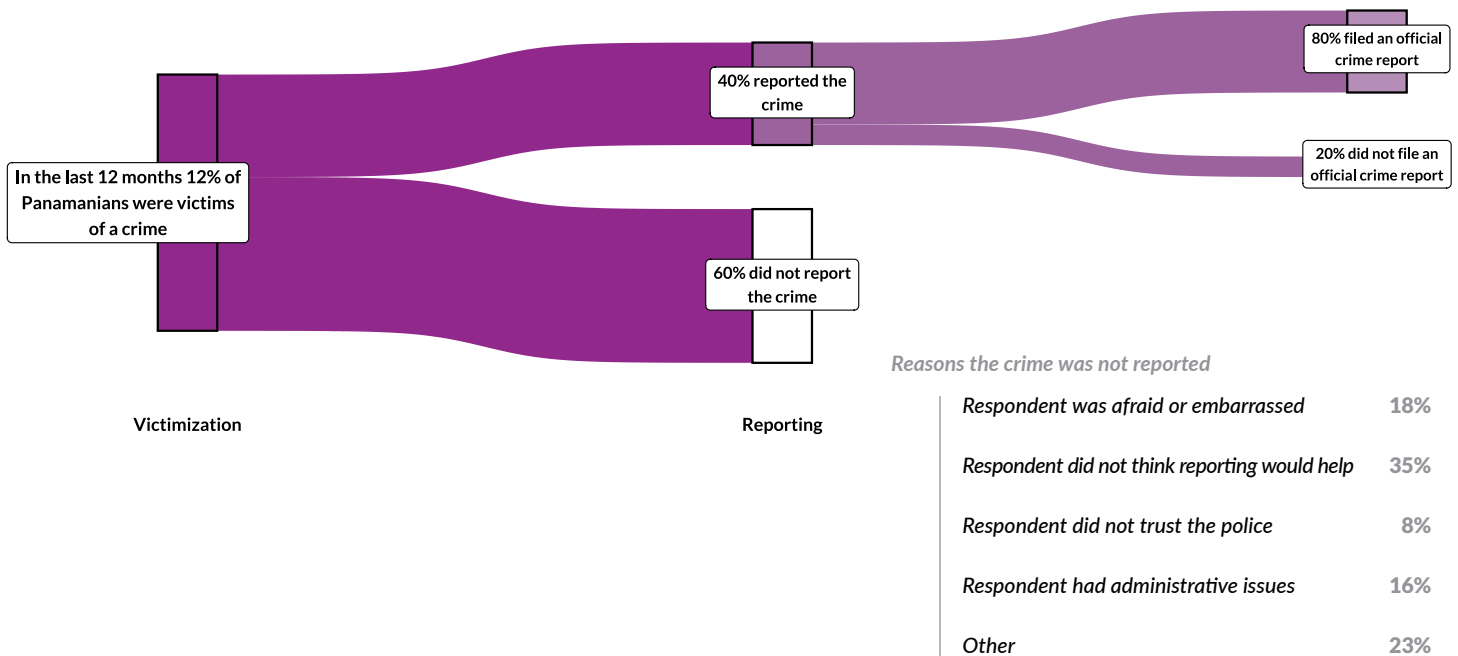
**Chart 10a. Types of Crimes Experienced by People in Panama**

Victimization rate, by type of crime



**Chart 10b. Crime Victimization Rates and Reporting**

Data on crime victimization and reporting in Panama



Note: For additional information on how Chart 10b was produced, please see the Appendix.

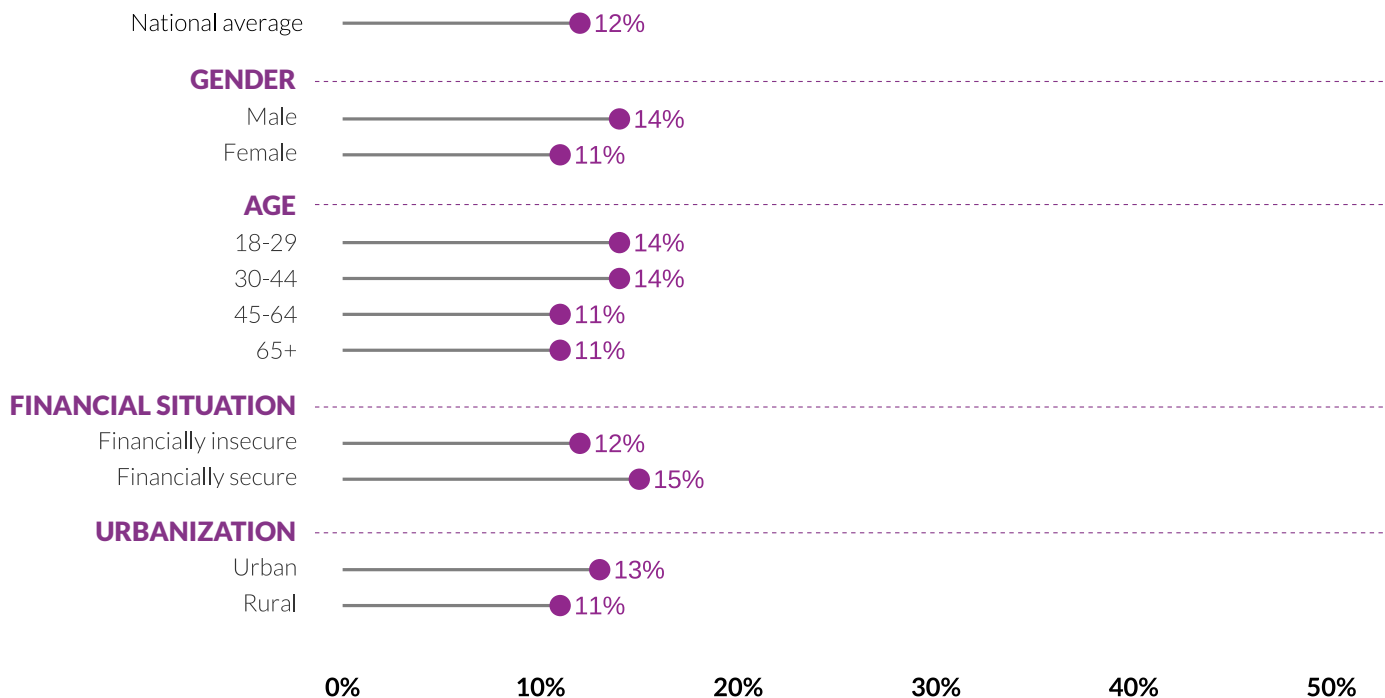
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Crime Victimization, continued

Crimes experienced by people in Panama.

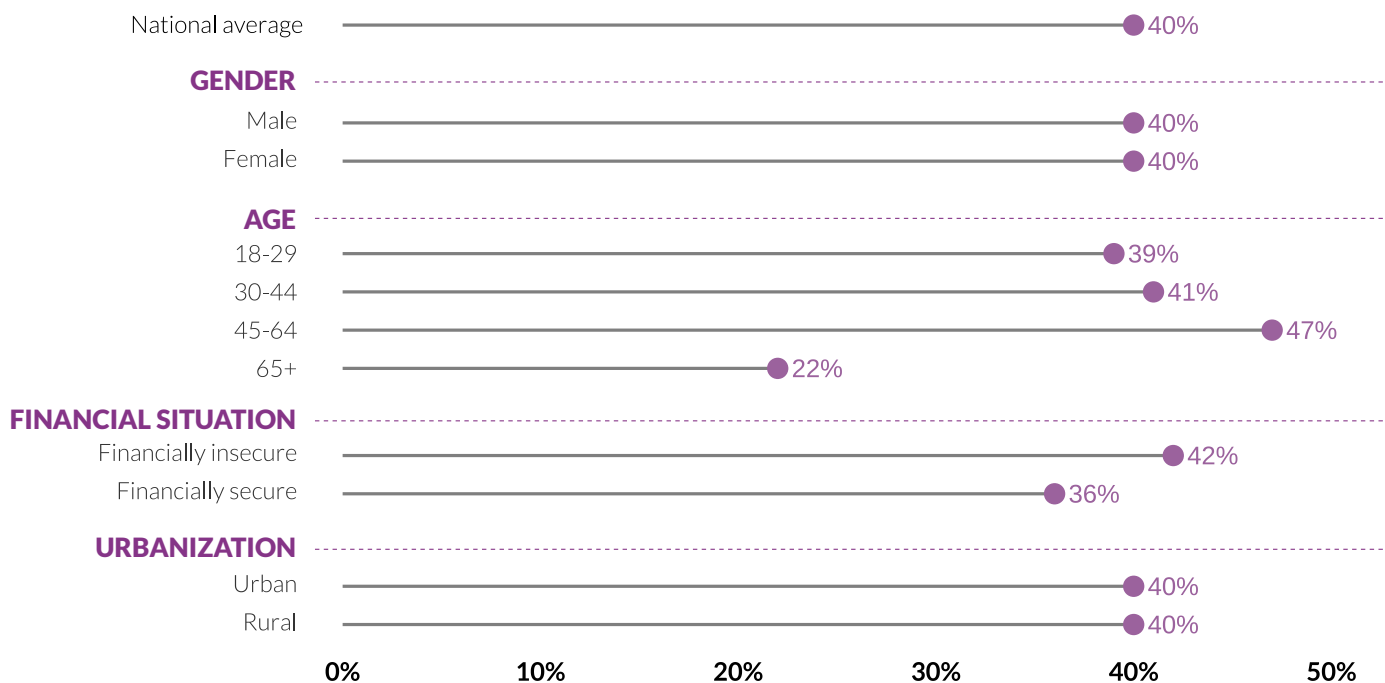
## Chart 10c. Crime Victimization by Sociodemographic Characteristic

Percentage of respondents who experienced a crime in the last 12 months



## Chart 10d. Crime Reporting by Sociodemographic Characteristic

Percentage of respondents who reported a crime in the last 12 months, out of those who experienced at least one crime



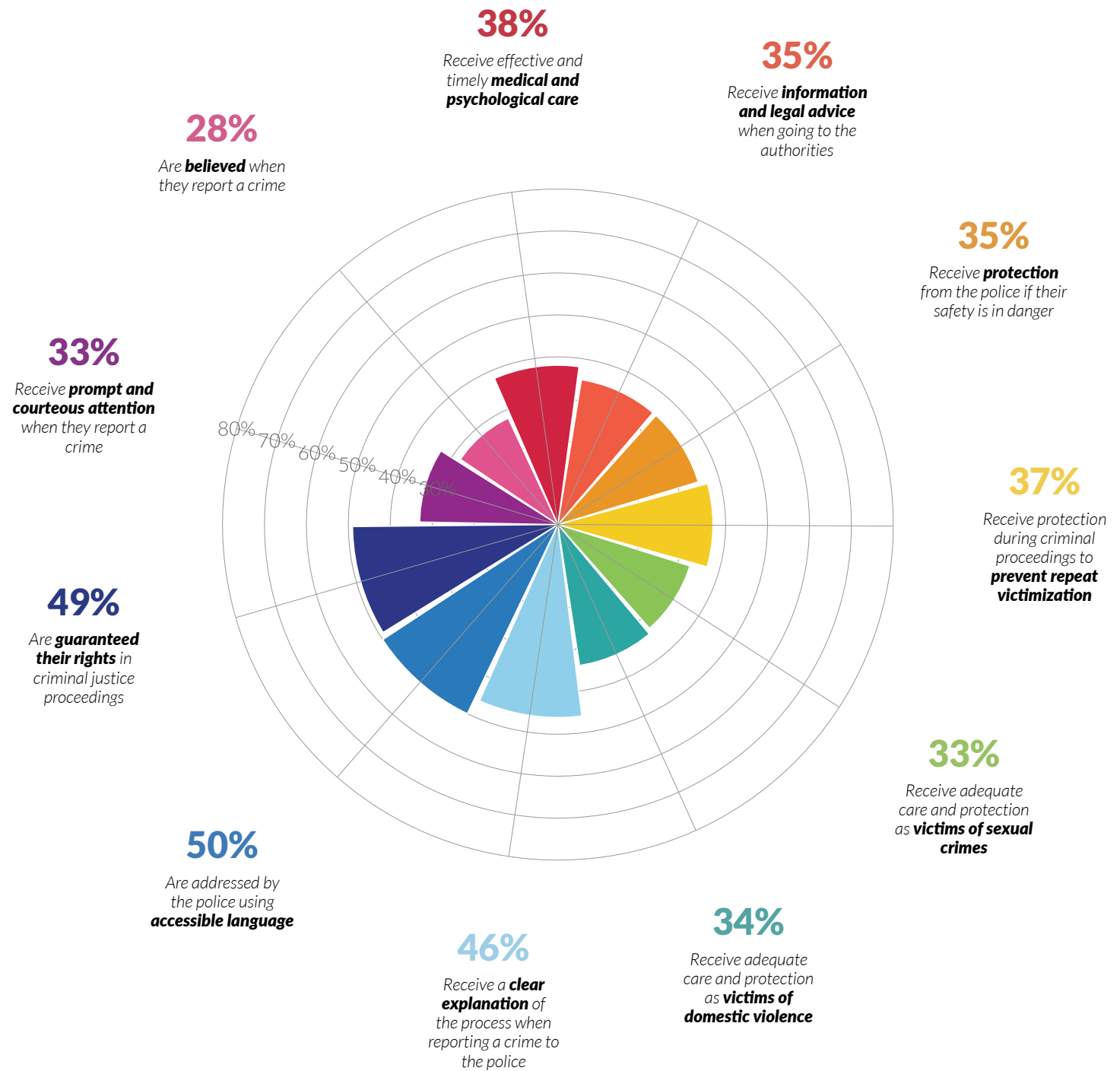
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Victim Support

Views on support for crime victims in Panama.

Chart 11. Perceptions of the Treatment of Crime Victims

Percentage of respondents who are confident that crime victims...



Note: For additional information on how Chart 11 was produced, please see the Appendix.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

## **Section 3**

### ***Gender, Security, and Migration***

27 Gender Roles and Domestic Violence

28 Security

30 Internal Migration

31 International Migration

33 Migration to the United States

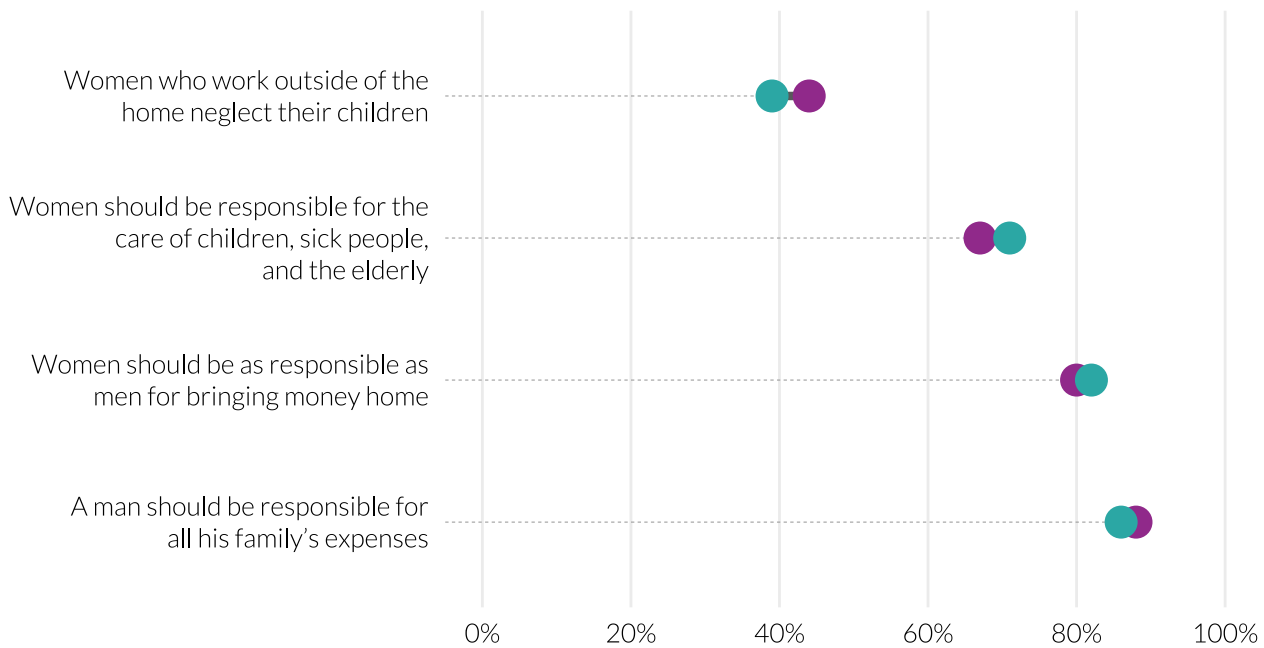
# Gender Roles and Domestic Violence

Perceptions of roles within the family and hypothetical reactions to situations of domestic violence.

● Male ● Female

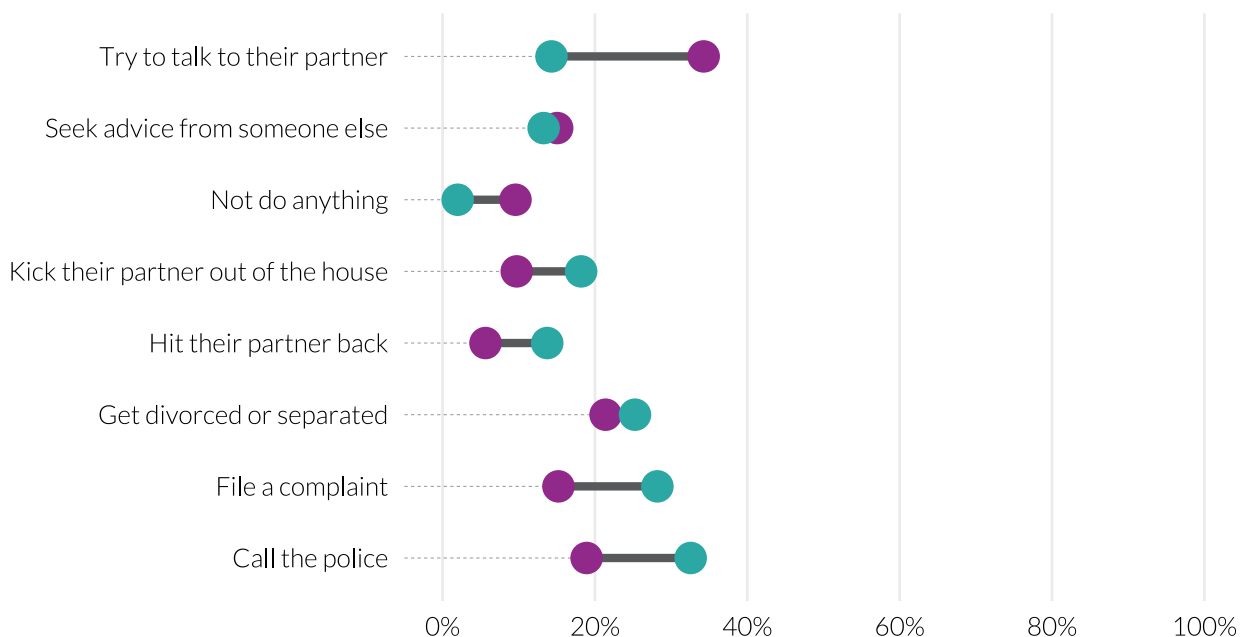
**Chart 12a. Attitudes Towards Gender Roles in Panama by Gender**

Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements



**Chart 12b. Hypothetical Reactions to Domestic Violence by Gender**

Percentage of respondents who, if their partner were to physically assault them, would...



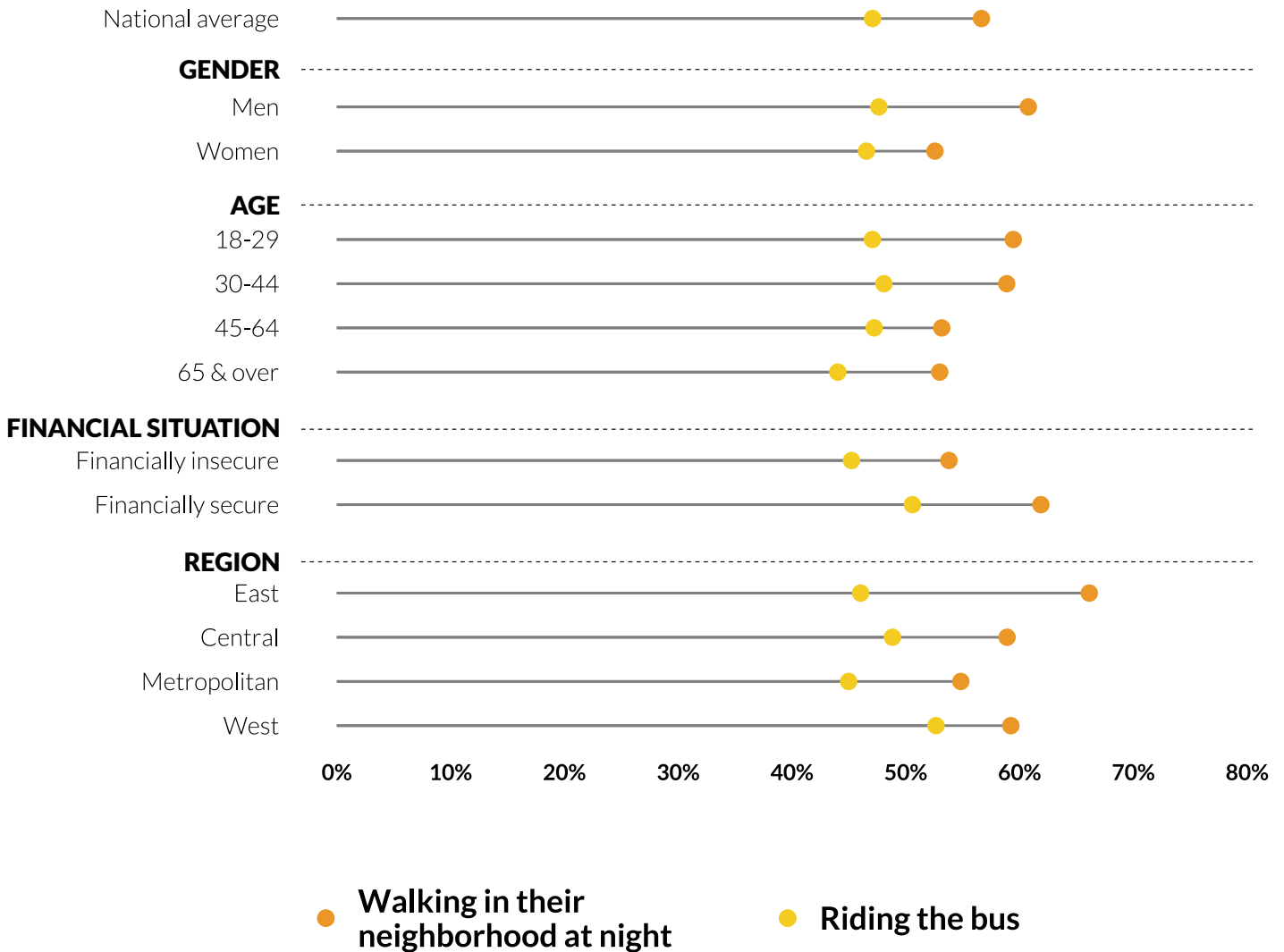


# Security

Perceptions of safety and crime at the local level in Panama.

## Chart 13a. Perceptions of Safety by Sociodemographic Characteristic

Percentage of respondents who reported that they feel safe or very safe walking in their neighborhood at night or riding the bus



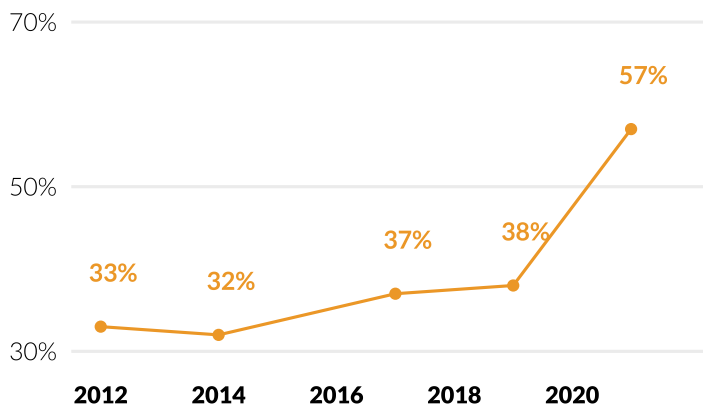
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Security, continued

## Perceptions of safety and crime at the local level in Panama.

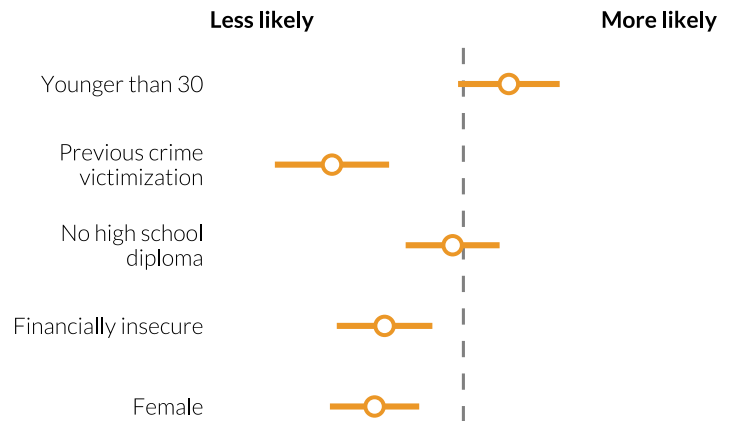
**Chart 13b. Perceptions of Safety Over Time**

Percentage of respondents who reported that they feel safe or very safe walking in their neighborhood at night



**Chart 13c. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Perceptions of Safety**

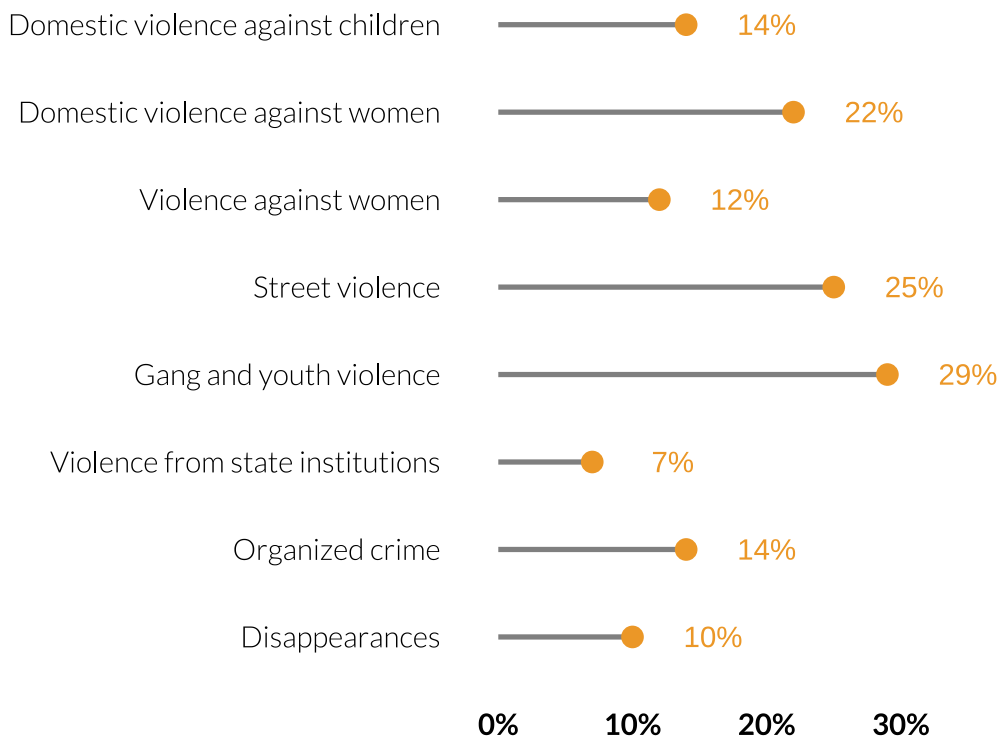
Likelihood that respondents feel safe or very safe walking in their neighborhood at night



Note: Each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability in a logit regression that a respondent answers "safe" or "very safe" to the question "How safe do you feel walking in your neighborhood at night?" The lines indicate the 95% confidence intervals of each average marginal effect. For additional information on how Chart 13c was produced, please see the Appendix.

**Chart 13d. Perceptions of Crime at the Neighborhood Level**

Percentage of respondents who think that crime is frequent in their neighborhood, by type of crime

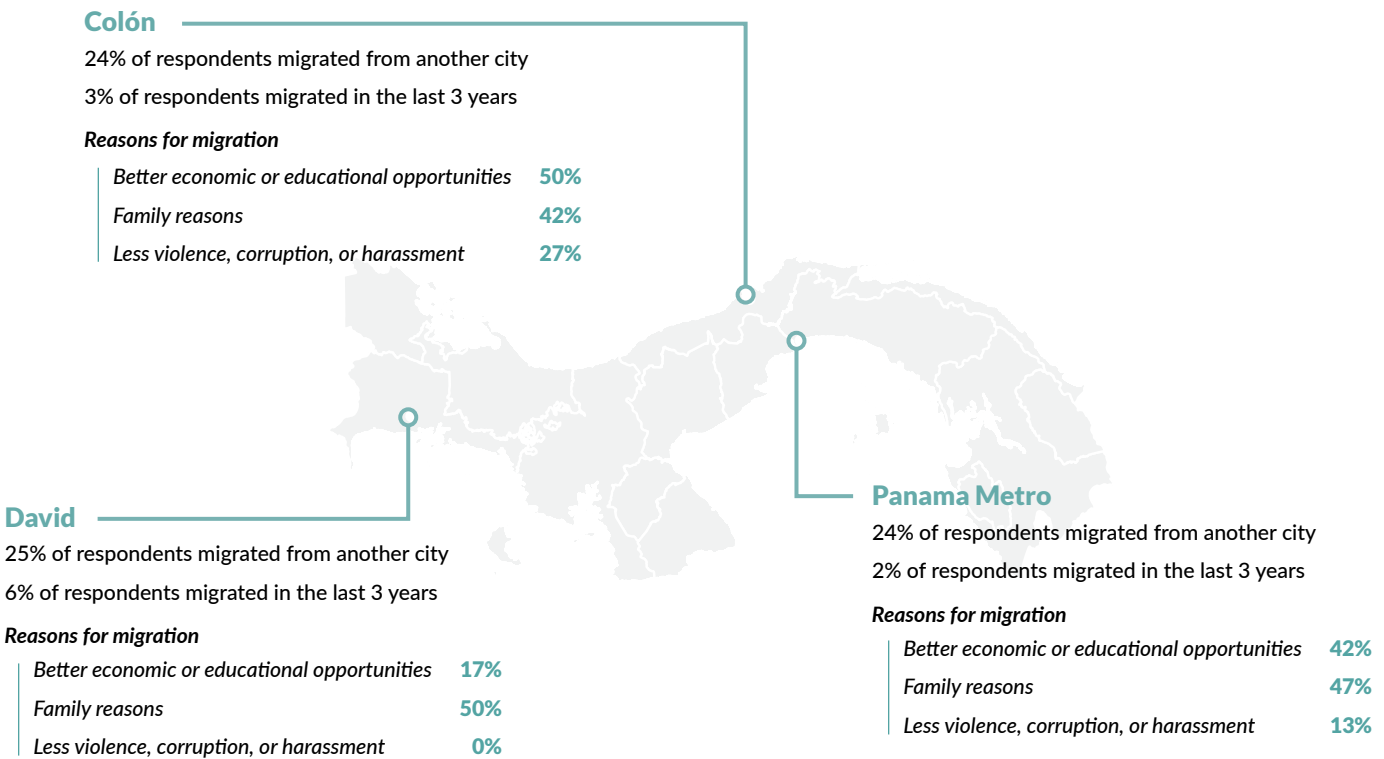


# Internal Migration

Experiences with migration within Panama.

## Chart 14a. Internal Migration by City

Percentage of respondents who have moved internally within Panama, and their reasons for moving

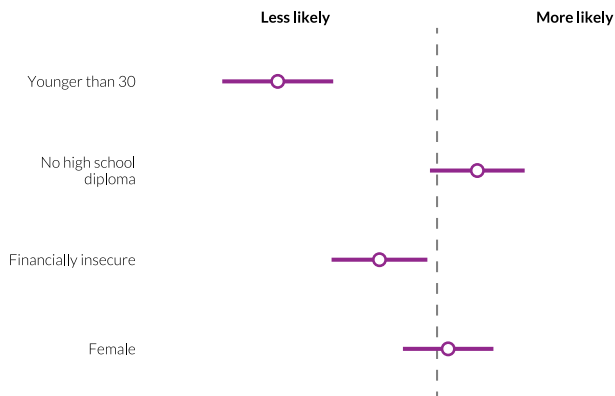


Note: For more information on how Chart 14a was produced, please see the Appendix.

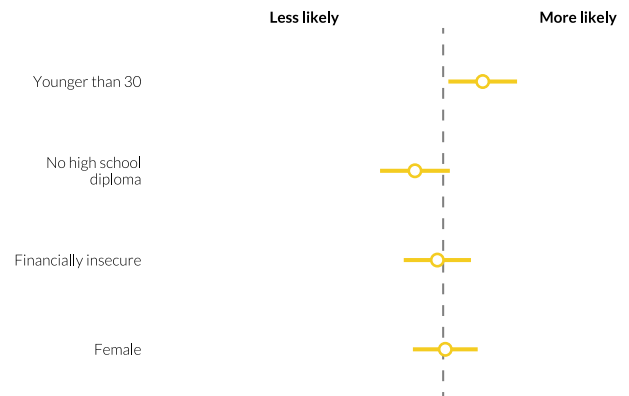
## Chart 14b. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Internal Migration

Likelihood that respondents...

### Have migrated within Panama



### Have migrated within Panama in the last 3 years



Note: These figures show the results of two logit regressions. On the left, each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability that a respondent answers “no” to the question “Do you live in the same city in which you were born?” On the right, each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability that a respondent answers “less than a year” or “1-3 years” to the question “How long have you lived in this city?” The lines indicate the 95% confidence intervals of each average marginal effect. For additional information on how Chart 14b was produced, please see the Appendix.

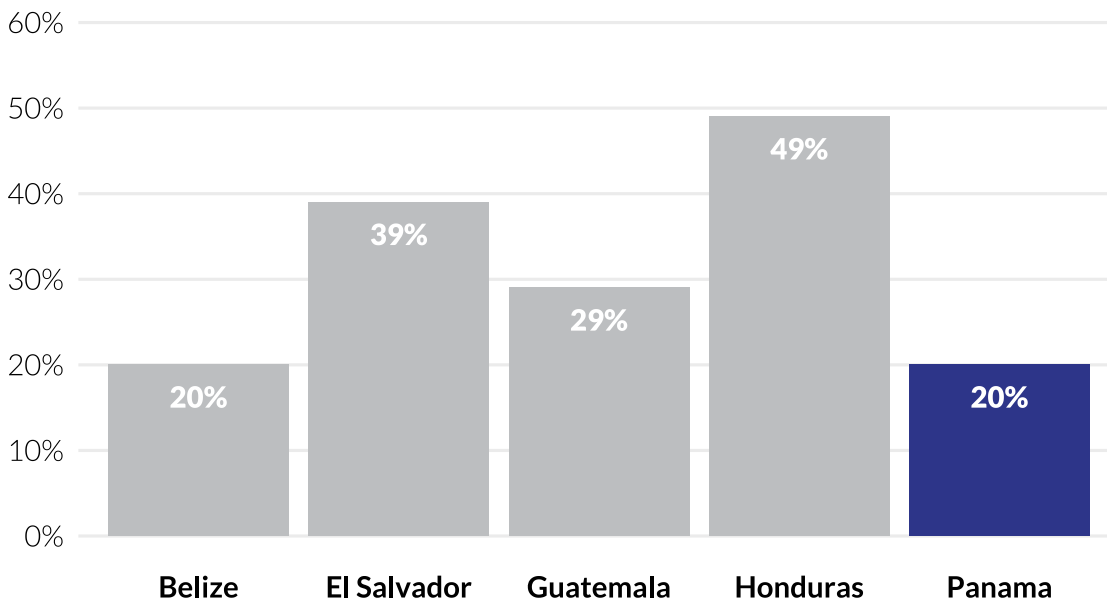
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# International Migration

## Intentions to migrate internationally.

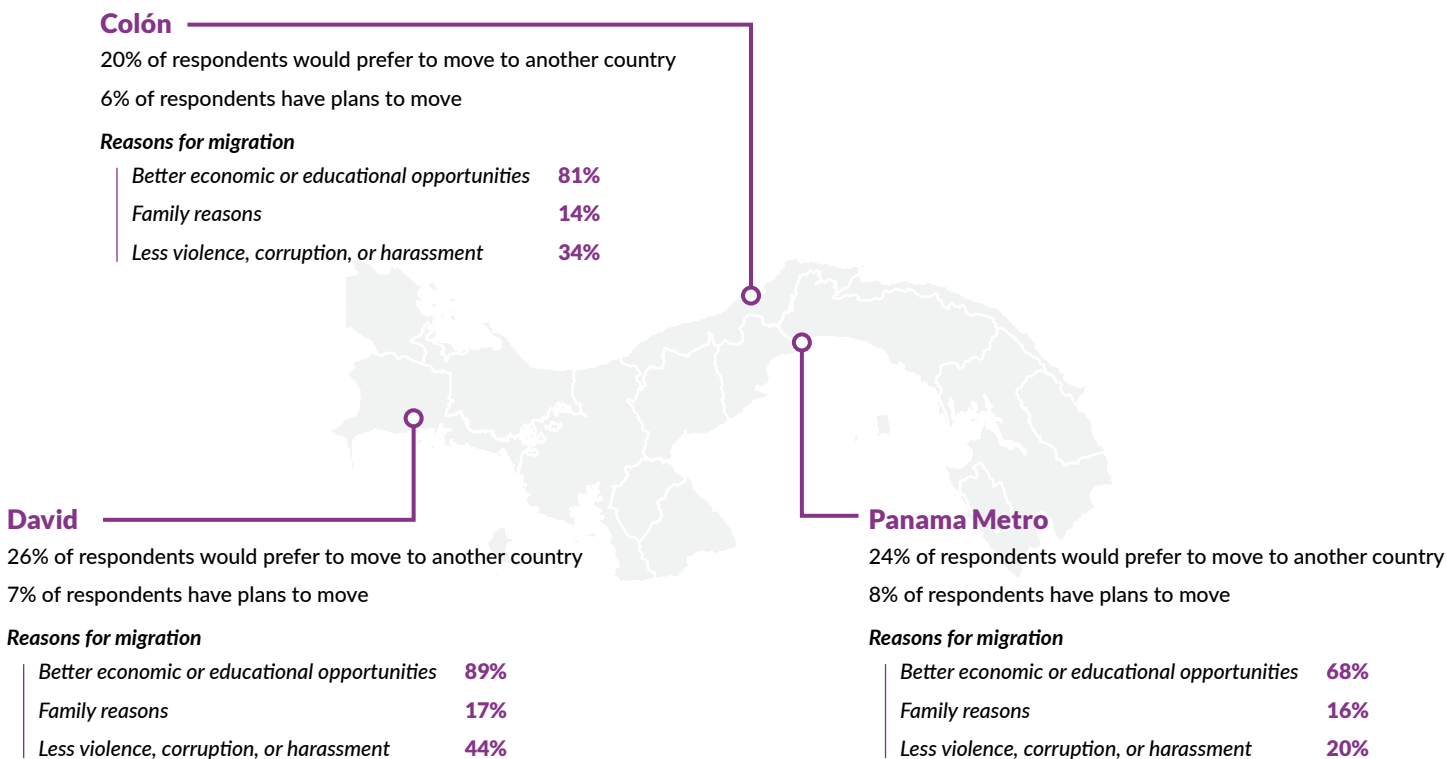
**Chart 15a. Desire to Migrate Internationally**

Percentage of respondents who would like to move internationally, by country



**Chart 15b. International Migration by City**

Percentage of respondents who would like, or have plans, to migrate internationally, by city



Note: For more information on how Chart 15b was produced, please see the Appendix.

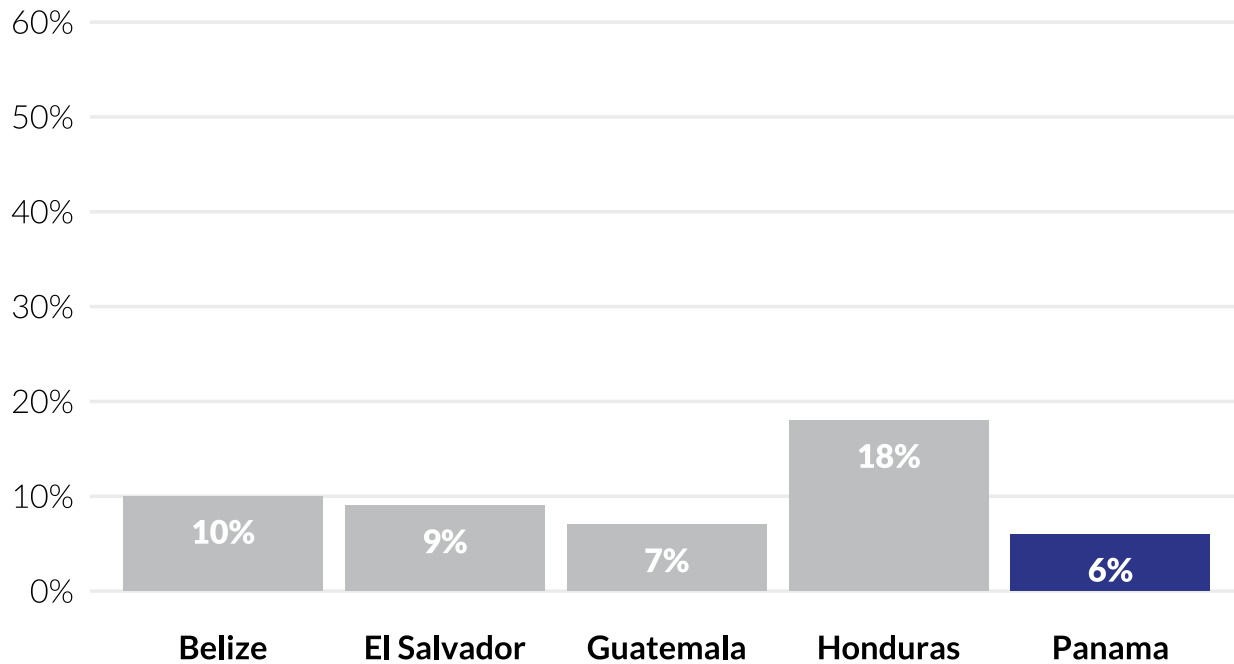
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# International Migration, continued

*Intentions to migrate internationally.*

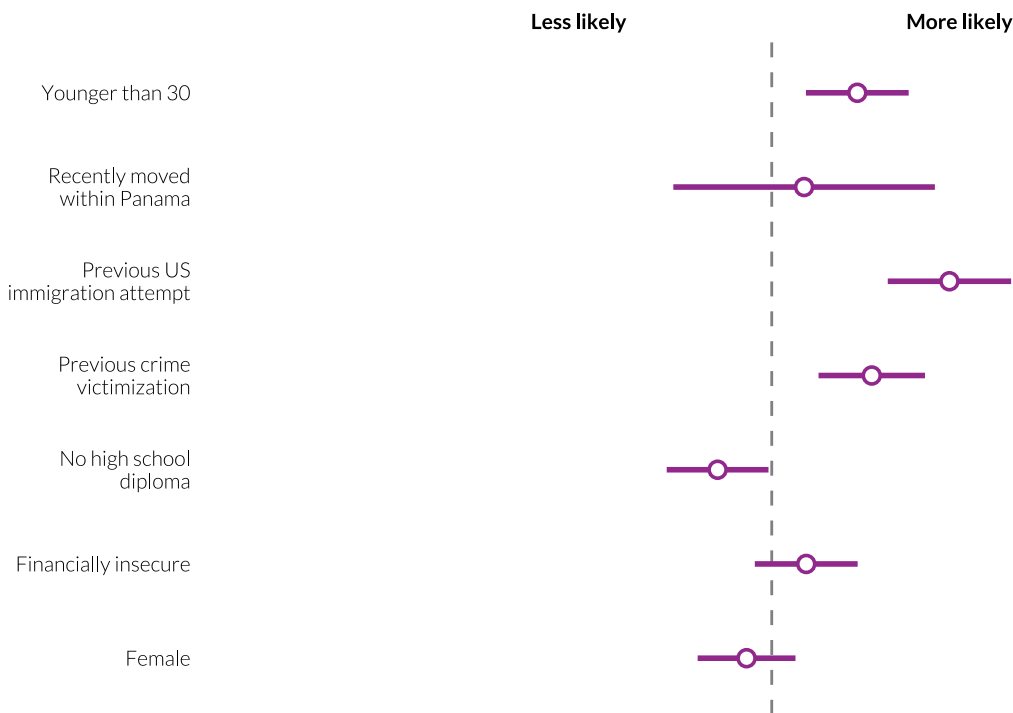
**Chart 15c. Intentions to Migrate Internationally**

*Percentage of respondents who have plans to move internationally, by country*



**Chart 15d. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Intentions to Migrate Internationally**

*Likelihood that respondents have plans to move permanently to another country*



*Note: Each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability in a logit regression that a respondent answers "yes" to the question "Are you planning to move permanently to another country in the next 12 months?" The lines indicate the 95% confidence intervals of each average marginal effect. For additional information on how Chart 15d was produced, please see the Appendix.*

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

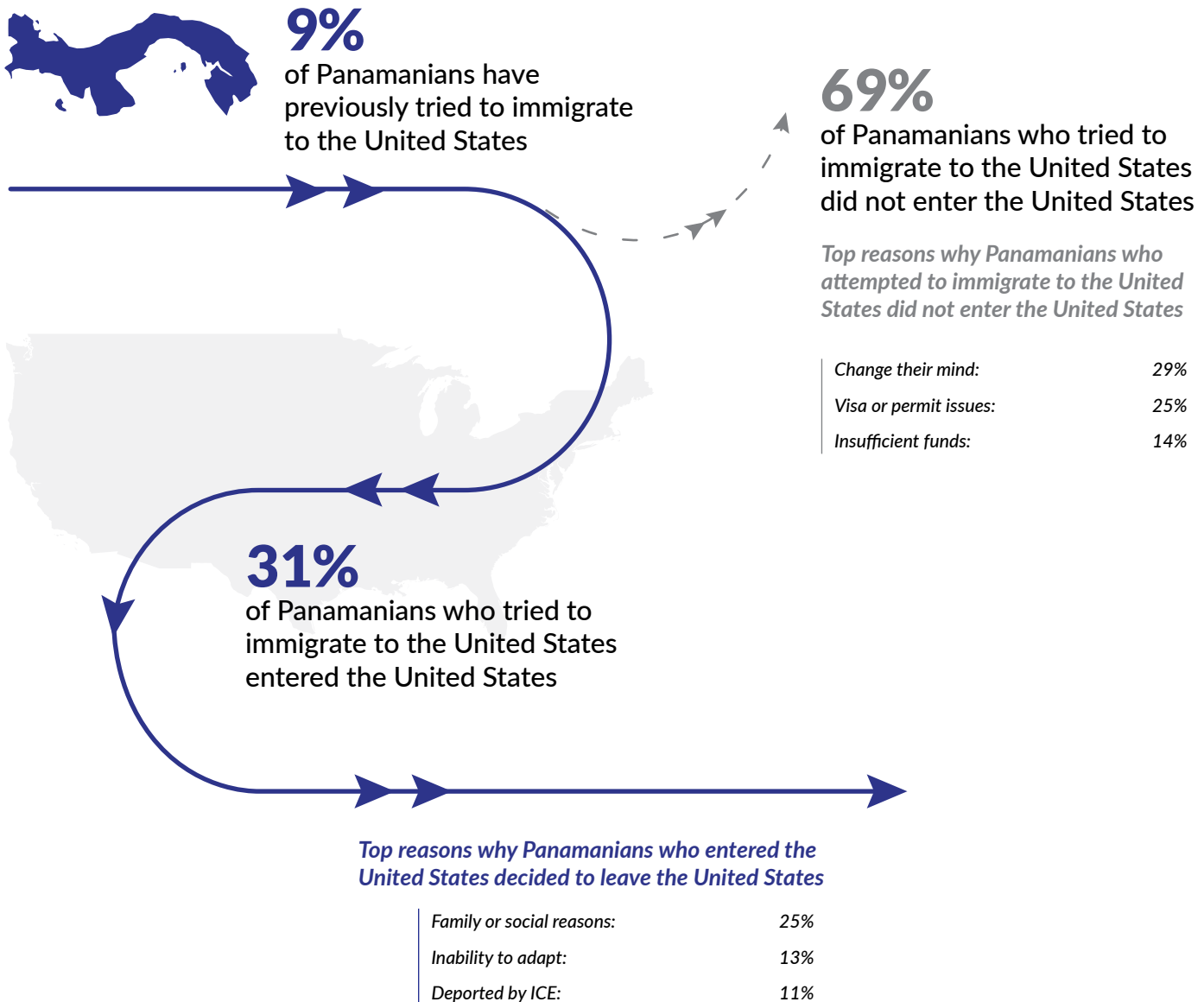


# Migration to the United States

*Experiences and challenges migrating to the United States.*

## Chart 16. Pathway to the United States

*Experiences of Panamanians who reported attempting to migrate to the United States*



Note: In Chart 16, "Family or social reasons" reflects related responses under the "To visit family or friends, go on vacation, or attend a social or religious event" and "Other (specify)" categories in the question "What was the main reason you left the US?"

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

III

# Project Design

# Methodology

To present an image that accurately portrays the rule of law as experienced by ordinary people, data in this report is drawn from the General Population Poll (GPP), an original data source designed and collected by the World Justice Project (WJP). The GPP captures the experiences and perceptions of ordinary citizens concerning the performance of the state and its agents and the actual operation of the legal framework in their country.

The General Population Poll used to collect data in Central America in 2021 features three new modules that highlight perceptions on issues salient to the region: Insecurity, Gender Roles, and Migration. In addition, new questions measuring the acceptance of vigilante justice, police performance, and prevalence of community policing were added to existing modules. In total, the General Population Poll questionnaire includes 124 perception-based questions and 85 experience-based questions, along with sociodemographic information on all respondents. Additionally, the GPP in Central America was administered to a sample ranging from 2,000 to 3,000 in Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. Historically, the GPP was administered to a sample of 1,000 respondents in these countries.

## Data Collection

The GPP in Panama was conducted for the WJP's *The Rule of Law in Panama: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021* with sampling, fieldwork, and data processing by CID Gallup, based in San José, Costa Rica. CID Gallup administered the surveys in November 2021, conducting face-to-face interviews using a multi-stage random sampling design. The target population group for this survey included Panamanians aged 18 years or older residing across 10 provinces and 3 comarcas of the country.

### SAMPLING SIZE AND SAMPLING FRAME

The General Population Poll in Panama represents an achieved total sample size of 2,502 interviews distributed proportionally across all 4 regions. CID Gallup based the sampling frame on projected population figures based on the 2010 census collected by the National Institute of Statistics and Census of Panama (INEC), acquiring a proportionally stratified sample by department, age, gender, socioeconomic status, and level of urbanization.

In order to address all relevant topics while controlling the questionnaire length, the World Justice Project split three of the survey modules into two versions (Option A and Option B) and randomly assigned one option to each respondent for each module. These modules included: Hypothetical Situations, Civic Participation, and Institutional Performance. Aside from these modules, the questionnaires are identical. The complete survey instrument, in English and Spanish, can be found in the Appendix of this report.

### SAMPLING

Regions and provinces were selected to achieve a nationally representative sample of the country. Within districts, sampling segments were selected using probability proportional to size sampling and each segment consisted of 6 interviews. Within the sampled segments, survey administrators performed a systematic random route to sample households and used a Kish grid to select respondents. If the selected respondent declined to be interviewed or otherwise did not meet the characteristics of the target quota, the interviewer moved on to the next household. Survey administrators attempted up to two contacts per respondent and ultimately made 455 substitutions in total.

Challenges to data collection in Panama included the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the survey's length.

## Description of the Sample

**COVERAGE:** Interviews were distributed across regions to create a nationally representative sample. The majority of interviews were conducted in the Metropolitan region (62%), followed by the Central and Western regions (18%). The lowest number of interviews were conducted in the Eastern region (3%).

**GEOGRAPHY:** Thirty-two percent (32%) of respondents reside in rural towns and villages and 68% of respondents reside in metro areas or cities.

**ETHNICITY:** Most respondents identified themselves as Mestizo (44%), followed by White (23%), Indigenous (20%), and Afro-Panamanian (11%).

**GENDER:** Fifty percent (50%) of respondents were female and 50% were male.

**EDUCATION:** Forty-five percent of respondents (45%) reported that they had received at least a high school diploma or vocational degree, and the remaining 55% of respondents received a middle school diploma or less.

## Response Rates

<b>Eligible household, non-interview</b>	<b>1,655</b>
<i>Refusals</i>	<b>1,043</b>
<i>Break-off</i>	<b>101</b>
<i>Non-contact</i>	<b>455</b>
<i>Other reason</i>	<b>56</b>
<b>Ineligible household</b>	<b>177</b>
<i>No eligible respondent in the household</i>	<b>53</b>
<i>Quota filled</i>	<b>124</b>

## Interviewing and Quality Control

In total, 88 interviewers worked on this project, including 69 female interviewers. Enumerators worked in 22 groups of 4 interviewers and 1 supervisor each. Interviews were conducted in Spanish.

The supervisory team directly oversaw 43% of interviews in the field. During data processing, 42% of the interviews were selected for audio validation. After quality control, 43 interviews were rejected from the final sample. Additional quality control measures included GPS validation of all sampling segment interviews, checks for abnormal interview length, and review of audio quality. Interviews averaged 53 minutes in length and ranged from 43 to 99 minutes.

## Data Review and Justification

Prior to data collection in Central America, the World Justice Project team conducted background research on the following thematic topics in order to adapt the General Population Poll to the Central American context: interactions with the police, perceptions of the police, police abuse, discrimination, violence against women and intimate partner violence, and migration. In addition, the team conducted research on rule of law trends and issues within each country studied and monitored current events before, during, and immediately after the data collection process.

As part of the data analysis process, the team consulted both this background research and several third-party sources in order to contextualize and validate perceptions-based data captured by the General Population Poll and compare it with the objective rule of law situation in-country. Peer data sources consulted include select indicators measured by the Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)'s *AmericasBarometer*, *Latinobarómetro*, Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), Transparency International's *Corruption Perceptions Index*, the Bertelsmann Stiftung's *Transformation Index* (BTI), and Freedom House's *Freedom in the World*. While certain trends captured by the 2021 General Population Poll in Panama are comparable to trends in perceptions data measured by other indices, the experiences and perceptions presented in this report may not always coincide with the reality of Panama's rule of law performance.

## Historical Data

Historical data in this report derives from the *WJP Rule of Law Index*®'s General Population Poll that is administered every two to three years using a nationally representative probability sample of 1,000 respondents. These household surveys were administered in the three largest cities of most countries until 2018, when the World Justice Project transitioned to nationally representative coverage as the preferred methodology for polling. The historical polling data used in this year's reports was collected in the following intervals: Data for Belize and Honduras was collected during the fall of 2019, 2017, and 2014. Data for Panama was collected during the fall of 2019, 2017, 2014, and 2012. Data for El Salvador and Guatemala was collected during the fall of 2018, 2016, and 2013.

## Additional Countries

This report includes comparisons to the following Central American countries surveyed by the World Justice Project during the same period: Belize, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras. Together, these five countries are a portion of the 139 countries and jurisdictions included in the *WJP Rule of Law Index 2021* report.\*

Detailed information regarding the methodology of the Rule of Law Index is available at: [www.worldjusticeproject.org](http://www.worldjusticeproject.org).

<b>Country</b>	<b>Coverage</b>	<b>Polling Company</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Sample</b>
<b>Belize</b>	Nationally representative	CID Gallup	Face-to-face	2,004
<b>El Salvador</b>	Nationally representative	CID Gallup	Face-to-face	2,526
<b>Honduras</b>	Nationally representative	Mercaplan	Face-to-face	3,003
<b>Guatemala</b>	Nationally representative	Mercaplan	Face-to-face	2,508
<b>Panama</b>	Nationally representative	CID Gallup	Face-to-face	2,502

\*Due to the staggered timelines of data collection for the *World Justice Project Rule of Law Index 2021* (polling started in the fall of 2020 and concluded in the summer of 2021) and data collection for the General Population Poll in Central America (polling took place in the fall of 2021), the data collected in Central America is not included in the *WJP Rule of Law Index 2021*.



IV

# Appendix

# Appendix

## Methodological Materials

### **GENERAL POPULATION POLL (GPP)**

The General Population Poll in Central America was designed to capture high-quality data on the realities and concerns of ordinary people on a variety of themes related to the rule of law, including government accountability, bribery, corruption, police performance, crime and insecurity, and migration.

[World Justice Project General Population Poll 2021 – Central American Survey Instrument \(English Versions A & B\)](#)

[World Justice Project General Population Poll 2021 – Central American Survey Instrument \(Spanish Versions A & B\)](#)

### **VARIABLES USED IN INFOGRAPHIC ON THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM**

This table lists the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used to construct Chart 6.

[World Justice Project Criminal Justice System Variable Map](#)

### **VARIABLES USED IN INFOGRAPHICS ON THE POLICE**

This table lists the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used to construct Chart 8a and Chart 8b.

[World Justice Project Police Performance Variable Map](#)

### **VARIABLES USED IN INFOGRAPHIC ON CRIME VICTIMIZATION RATES AND REPORTING**

This table lists the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used to construct the “Reasons the crime was not reported” table in Chart 10b.

[World Justice Project Crime Rates and Reporting Variable Map](#)

### **VARIABLES USED IN INFOGRAPHIC ON PERCEPTIONS OF CRIME VICTIM SUPPORT**

This table lists the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used to construct Chart 11.

[World Justice Project Victim Support Variable Map](#)

### **VARIABLES USED IN INFOGRAPHICS ON MIGRATION BY CITY**

This table lists the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used to construct the “Reasons for Migration” tables in Chart 14a and Chart 15b.

[World Justice Project Migration Variable Map](#)

### **REGRESSION TABLES FOR REGRESSION ANALYSIS USED IN SECTION II AND SECTION III**

This document includes the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used in the regression analysis and the regression results featured in the following infographics: Chart 9e in Section II and Chart 13c, Chart 14b, and Chart 15d in Section III.

[World Justice Project Regression Tables](#)



World Justice  
Project

# About the World Justice Project

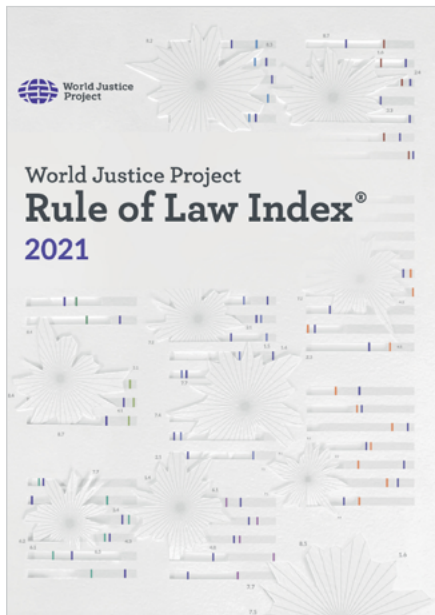
**THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT (WJP)** is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action to advance the rule of law worldwide. Effective rule of law is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development, accountable government, and respect for fundamental rights.

The WJP builds and supports a global, multidisciplinary movement for the rule of law through three lines of work: collecting, organizing, and analyzing original, independent rule of law data, including the *World Justice Project Rule of Law Index*®; supporting research, scholarship, and teaching about the importance of the rule of law, its relationship to development, and effective strategies to strengthen it; and connecting and building an engaged global network of policymakers and advocates to advance the rule of law through strategic partnerships, convenings, coordinated advocacy, and support for locally led initiatives.

Learn more at: [worldjusticeproject.org](http://worldjusticeproject.org).



# Other Publications



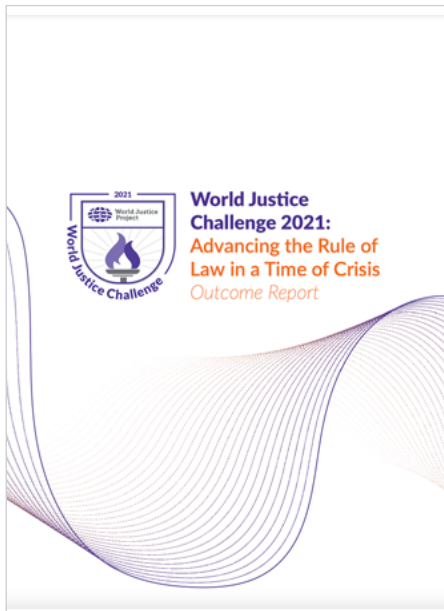
*WJP Rule of Law Index 2021*



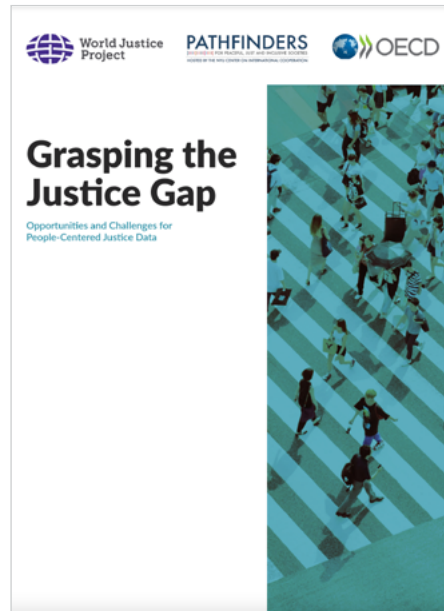
*WJP Rule of Law Index 2021 Insights*  
Highlights and data trends from the WJP Rule of Law Index 2021



*WJP Mexico States Rule of Law Index 2020-2021*  
Perceptions and experiences in 32 states



*World Justice Challenge 2021 Outcome Report*



*Grasping the Justice Gap*  
2021



*Environmental Governance Indicators for Latin America & the Caribbean*  
2020

For more information or to read these reports, visit [worldjusticeproject.org/our-work](https://worldjusticeproject.org/our-work)



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