



World Justice  
Project

# The Rule of Law in Belize

*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 Belize: 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 Belize, this report also presents select findings over time and compared to Belize's regional peers in Central America.

***This report represents the voices of people in Belize 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 2,004 Belizean 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 Belizeans. These thematic briefs focus on the current rule of law ecosystem in Belize while simultaneously illuminating changes over time and comparisons across the following regional peer countries: El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. 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 Belize: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021* report provides a comprehensive overview of how citizens perceive and experience the rule of law in Belize. 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 lack of accountability, bribery victimization, and police performance—persist.

## Section 1: Accountability and Fundamental Freedoms

### 1 GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

**Belizeans have more pessimistic views on government accountability than respondents from regional peer countries.** Only 22% of Belizean respondents believe that a high-ranking government official would be prosecuted and punished if they were to embezzle public funds for personal benefit, while this figure ranged from 38% to 51% in regional peer countries. Beliefs regarding checks on executive power have remained mostly stable in Belize, with 70% of respondents stating that they believe the prime minister should always obey laws and court decisions, even if they think they are wrong (73% of respondents reported the same in 2019).

### 2 FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

**When it comes to guarantees of fundamental freedoms, Belizeans have mixed views.** Belizeans believe that all dimensions of the freedom of expression have improved since 2019. Respondents have relatively positive views about their right to participate in political processes, despite some declines since 2017. In contrast, Belizeans hold more critical views on electoral freedoms, with only 59% reporting that they believe local government officers are elected through a clean process. While three out of four Belizeans agree that religious freedoms are effectively guaranteed, the percentage of respondents who believe that religious minorities can observe their holy days fell from 93% in 2017 to 75% in 2021.

### 3 CORRUPTION

**Perceptions of corruption in Belize improved across all institutions between 2019 and 2021.** Belizeans believe that members of the National Assembly are the most corrupt, with half (50%) of respondents reporting that most or all members of the legislative branch are involved in corrupt practices. Police officers are perceived to be the second most corrupt,



with 45% of respondents reporting that most or all police officers are involved in corrupt practices. Belizeans believe the judiciary is the least corrupt institution, with roughly one-third of respondents believing most or all prosecutors (35%), public defense attorneys (32%), and judges and magistrates (29%) are corrupt. While their perceptions have varied since 2013, respondents believe levels of corruption are lower in every institution since 2019.

#### 4 BRIBERY VICTIMIZATION

**Belizeans generally pay bribes more frequently than respondents in regional peer countries.** In the last three years, Belizeans reported paying bribes most often to request a government permit or document (27%) or to obtain a birth certificate or government-issued ID (25%). The only instance in which respondents from a regional peer country reported a higher bribery victimization rate was when requesting public benefits or assistance: 12% of Belizeans reported paying bribes to access public benefits or assistance, compared to 21% of Panamanians and 13% of Hondurans.

#### 5 TRUST

**Despite improvements since 2017, Belizeans have low levels of trust in the public and state institutions.** Less than half of the respondents in Belize (48%) reported having some or a lot of trust in people living in their community, followed by 42% trusting judges and magistrates and 40% trusting public defense attorneys. Fewer than 40% of Belizeans express at least some trust in national and local government officers and only 35% of Belizeans report trusting police officers. That being said, perceptions of trust across these groups have sustained improvements in Belize since 2017.

## Section 2: Police and Criminal Justice

#### 6 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

**Belizeans report higher levels of confidence in all dimensions of the criminal justice system than in 2018, though timeliness continues to be a top issue.** Over half of the respondents in Belize are confident that the criminal justice system provides equal service regardless of where people live (57%), ensures equal treatment of victims (56%), and safeguards the presumption of innocence (56%). In both 2018 and 2019, Belizeans reported the lowest levels of confidence in the criminal justice system's ability to deal with cases promptly and effectively (30% in 2018 and 44% in 2021), though this figure has improved.

#### 7 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTORS

**Belizeans have mixed views on key criminal justice actors.**

Belizeans reported having the highest levels of trust in judges and magistrates, with 42% of respondents reporting that they have at least some trust in them, followed by public defense attorneys (40%) and prosecutors (36%). Despite these low levels of trust, only 29% of respondents believe that most or all judges and magistrates are involved in corrupt practices, followed by public defense attorneys (32%) and prosecutors (35%). Over half of Belizean respondents believe that judges, magistrates, and prosecutors do their job well, while only 40% of Belizeans believe that public defense attorneys do their job well.

#### 8 POLICE

##### *Police Perceptions*

**Belizeans have moderate perceptions of police performance.**

Over half of Belizeans believe that the police resolve security problems in their community (64%), serve the interests of their community (60%), and serve the interests of regular citizens (58%). Meanwhile, only 43% of respondents believe that the police respond to crime reports and perform effective and lawful investigations. Additionally, while most Belizeans (68%) believe that the police treat all people with kindness and respect, only 47% of respondents believe that the police do not use excessive force.

Over half (55%) of Belizean respondents believe both that the police are not involved in corrupt practices and that they investigate crimes in an independent manner. Perceptions on police accountability in Belize are generally lower, with only 35% of respondents reporting that they believe that the police are investigated for misconduct and only 36% reporting they believe that the police are held accountable for seeking bribes. Just over one-third (35%) of respondents reported that they trust the police.

### Police Interactions

**Belizeans tend to have more positive perceptions of the police during voluntary interactions as opposed to involuntary interactions.** Nineteen percent of Belizean respondents voluntarily contacted the police in the last 12 months. Of those respondents, 32% were reporting a crime or requesting help or information. Most respondents who contacted the police felt that the police controlled the situation (61%) and that the police listened to them (83%) during the interaction.

Nearly a quarter (24%) of Belizean respondents reported having had an involuntary contact with the police in the last 12 months. Of those who had an involuntary interaction, respondents most frequently reported that they were stopped for a routine check or so that the police could provide assistance (46%). An overwhelming majority (91%) of Belizeans who had an involuntary interaction reported that the police controlled the situation, though only 65% believe that the police had a legitimate reason to stop them.

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

**Belizeans who interact more frequently with the police tend to have more trust in the police.** Belizean respondents who reported seeing the police more frequently in their neighborhood also reported having higher trust in the police. Conversely, those who reported that the police rarely or never patrol their neighborhood have lower levels of trust in the police, are less likely to believe that the police resolve security problems, and are less likely to believe that police act according to the law. Belizeans who reported feeling unsafe in their neighborhood at night or who think the police are involved in corrupt practices tend to have lower levels of trust and are less likely to believe that the police resolve security problems in their community.

### 10 CRIME VICTIMIZATION

**Fourteen percent of Belizean respondents were a victim of at least one crime in the past year.** When asked about the crime that they most recently experienced, most respondents reported being a victim of a property crime (10%), followed by crimes against life and integrity (8%) and corruption, financial, and commercial crimes (3%). Of the respondents who were victims of crime, only 44% reported the crime and, of those, 75% filed an official crime report. The most common reason listed by Belizeans for not reporting the crime was the belief that reporting would not help (39%). In Belize, men, people who are financially secure, and individuals in urban areas were victims of crime more often than other demographic groups in 2021. The frequency of crime reporting was lowest among women, financially secure individuals, and respondents from urban areas.

### 11 VICTIM SUPPORT

**Most Belizeans are not confident that crime victims receive adequate resources and protection.** A minority of

respondents in Belize believe crime victims receive effective and timely medical attention (36%), receive information and legal advice when going to the authorities (38%), or are believed when they report a crime (39%). Respondents are more confident that crime victims are addressed by the police using accessible language (58%) and that crime victims are guaranteed their rights in criminal justice proceedings (52%).



## Section 3: Gender, Security and Migration

### 12 GENDER ROLES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

**Belizean men and women have similar opinions about family roles, though views toward domestic violence differ.**

Both men (87%) and women (84%) agree that a man should be responsible for all of his family's expenses. The largest difference between men and women's opinions on gender roles is evident in their beliefs on childrearing, with 37% of men and 30% women agreeing that women who work outside of their home neglect their children. When asked what actions respondents would take in response to domestic violence from a partner, 29% of men and 35% of women said that they would call the police. Only 8% of men said that they would hit their partner back and 4% of women said that they would not do anything.

### 13 SECURITY

**Belizeans felt safer in 2021 than in past years and perceptions of safety are generally consistent across most sociodemographic characteristics.** Most respondents report feeling safe walking in their neighborhood at night (73%), marking a 27-point increase from 46% of respondents in 2019. The majority of respondents (60%) also reported feeling safe riding the bus. Twenty-two percent of Belizeans believe that the most frequent crime in their neighborhood is gang and youth violence, followed closely by street violence (21%) and domestic violence against women (17%). Belizeans who were previously a victim of a crime and/or do not have a high school diploma are slightly less likely to feel safe or very safe while walking in their neighborhood at night than respondents with other sociodemographic characteristics.

### 14 INTERNAL MIGRATION

**Twenty-eight percent of respondents in the cities of San Ignacio and Santa Elena reported having migrated there from another city in Belize.** Fewer respondents reported having migrated to either Belize City (14%) or Belmopan (10%). In Belize City and Belmopan, most respondents reported better economic or educational opportunities as their reason for migration, whereas in San Ignacio and Santa Elena, the highest reported reason for migrating was family reasons. Respondents who are financially insecure are more likely to have migrated within Belize.

### 15 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

**One in five Belizeans would prefer to move permanently to another country.** However, only 10% of respondents reported having made plans to move internationally in the next 12 months. Twenty-two percent of respondents from San Ignacio and Santa Elena would prefer to move to another country, while respondents from Belmopan are the most likely to have had made plans to move internationally in the subsequent 12 months. Across all cities, the most common

reason behind a desire to migrate was better economic or educational opportunities. Respondents who are younger than 30, have previously attempted to move to the United States, have been a victim of a crime in the last 12 months, and/or are financially insecure are more likely to have made plans to move internationally.

### 16 MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

**Ten percent of Belizeans have attempted to migrate to the United States.** The majority (60%) of respondents who attempted to enter the United States were successful. Of that group, the most common reason for leaving the US was family or social reasons (32% of respondents chose this option), while 23% said they had changed their mind. Forty percent of respondents who reported having attempted to migrate to the United States did not end up entering the country. Of those, 44% were unable to enter because they did not receive correct permits or visas, 27% did not enter because they changed their mind, and 14% did not enter because they ran out of funds.

## II

# Thematic Findings



## **Section 1**

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

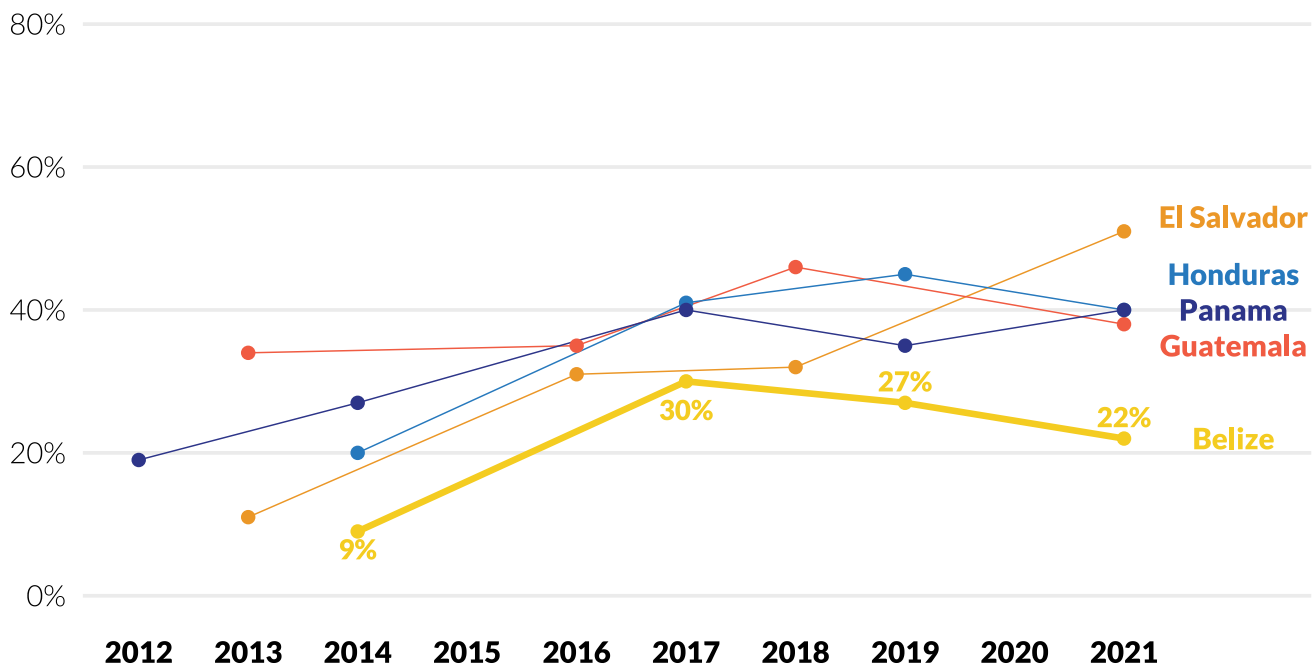
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# Government Accountability

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

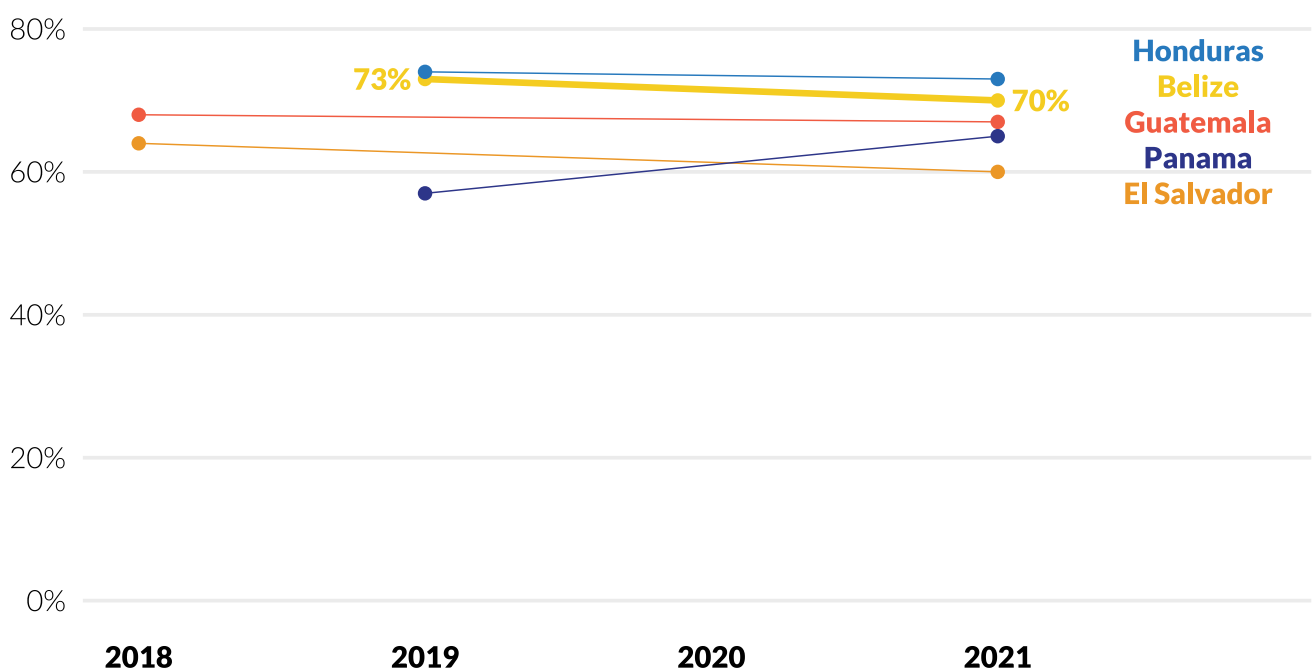
## Chart 1a. Perceptions of Accountability in the Region Over Time

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 prime minister should always obey laws and court decisions, even if the prime minister thinks they are wrong



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



# Fundamental Freedoms

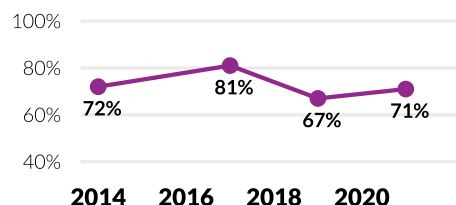
*Views on the extent to which freedoms of expression, participation, elections, and religion are guaranteed.*

## Chart 2. Fundamental Freedoms in Belize Over Time

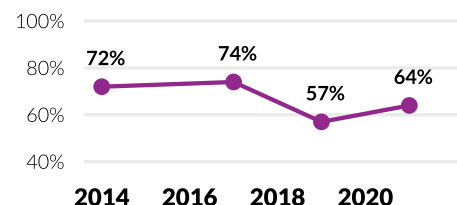
*Percentage of respondents who believe that...*

### EXPRESSION

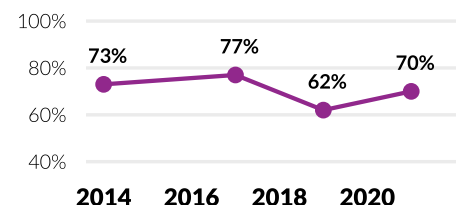
*People can express opinions against the government*



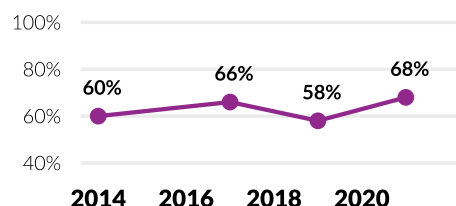
*Civil society organizations can express opinions against the government*



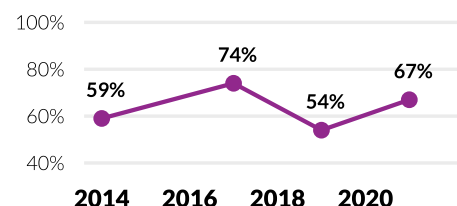
*Political parties can express opinions against the government*



*Media can express opinions against the government without fear of retaliation*

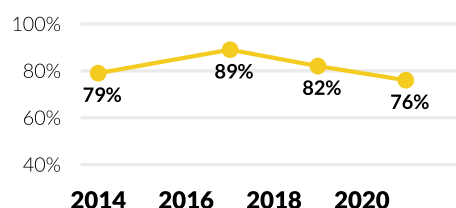


*Media can expose cases of corruption*

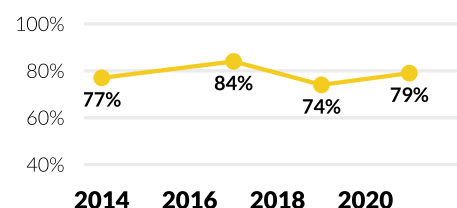


### PARTICIPATION

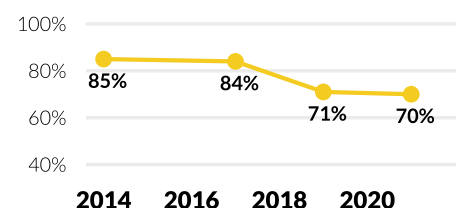
*People can attend community meetings*



*People can join any political organization*

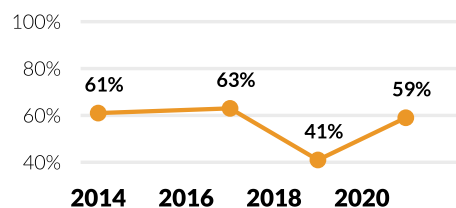


*People can organize around an issue or petition*

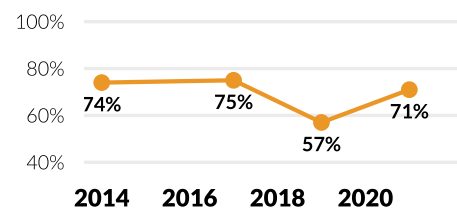


### ELECTIONS

*Local government officials are elected through a clean process*

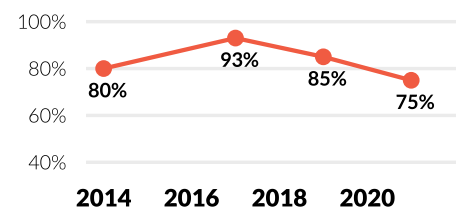


*People can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured*



### RELIGION

*Religious minorities can observe their holy days*



# Corruption

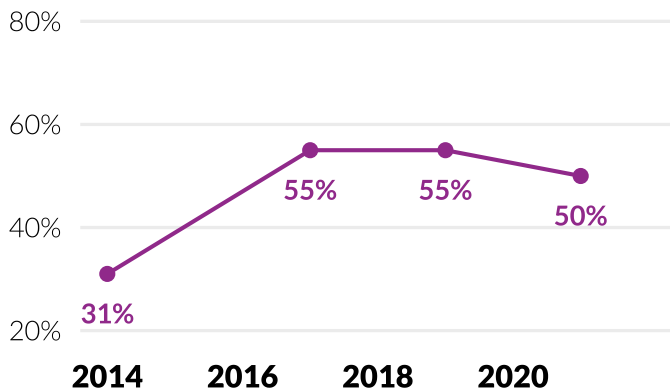
*Perceptions of corruption in Belize.*

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

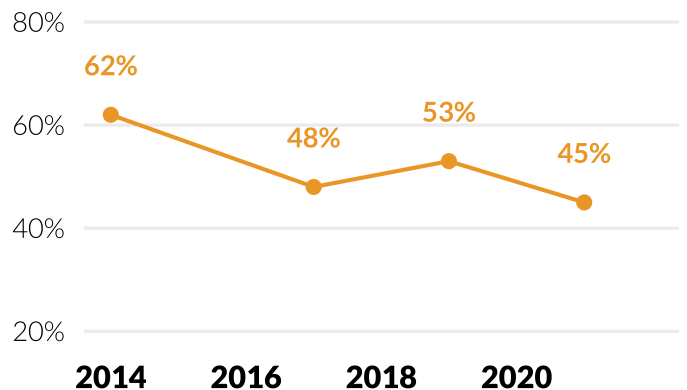
Percentage of respondents who believe that most or all people working in the following institutions are corrupt

### LEGISLATIVE

(Members of the National Assembly)

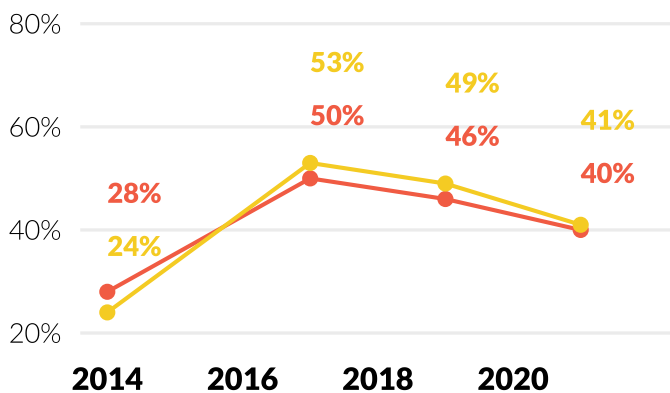


### POLICE OFFICERS



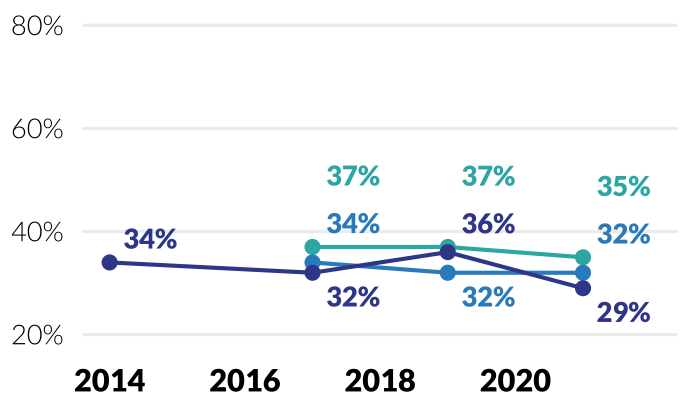
### EXECUTIVE

(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

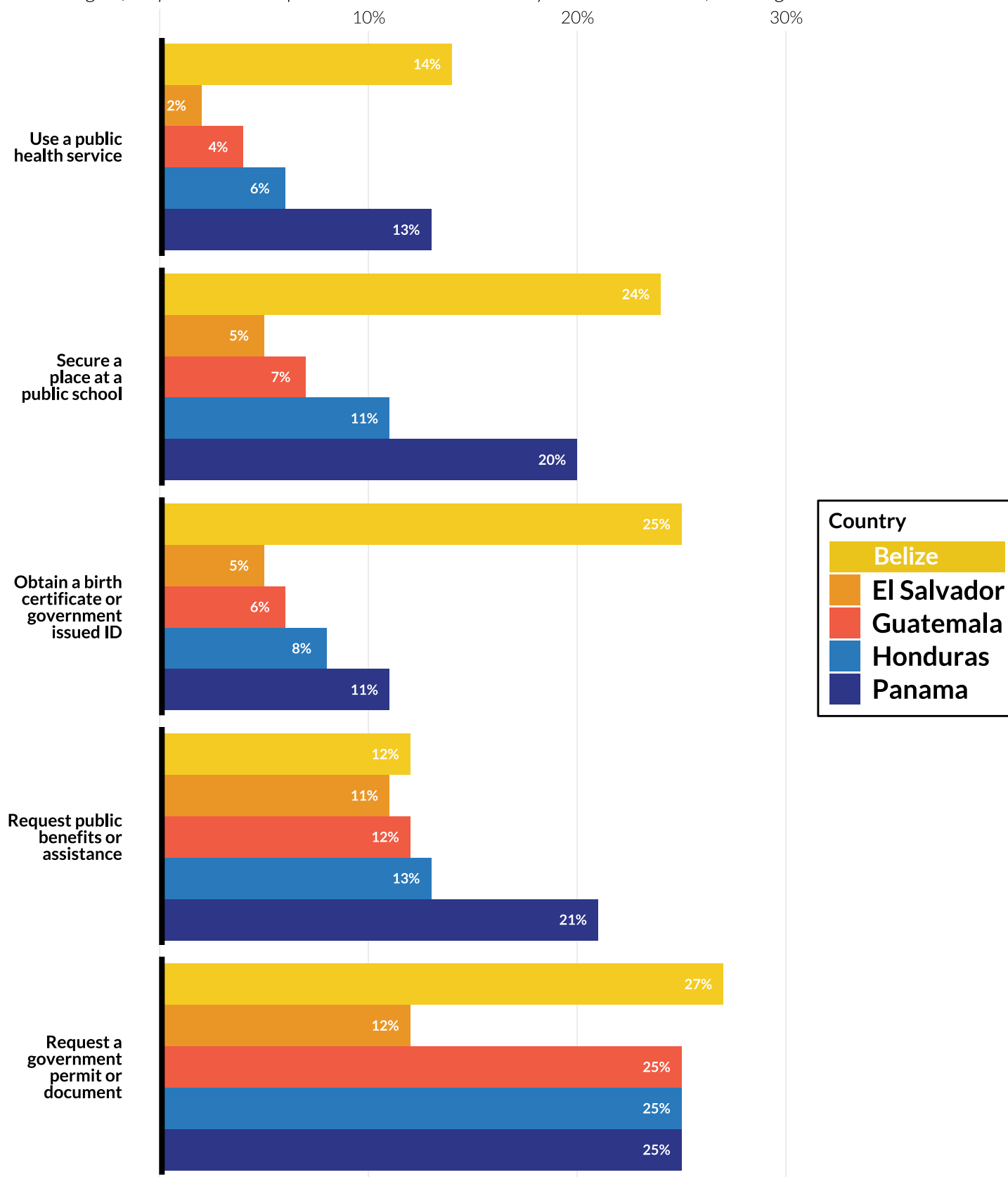
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2021

# Bribery Victimization

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

Chart 4. Bribery Victimization in Belize 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



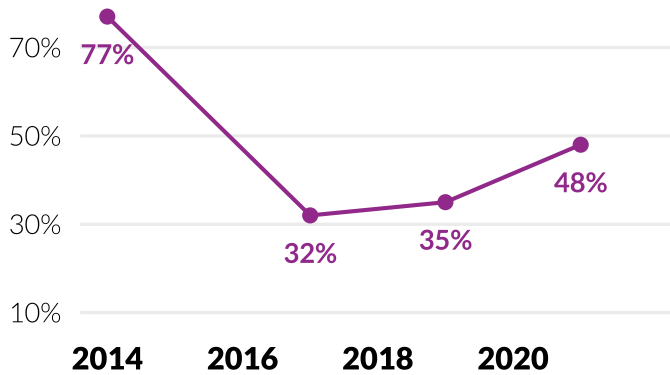
# Trust

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

## Chart 5. Trust in Institutions Over Time

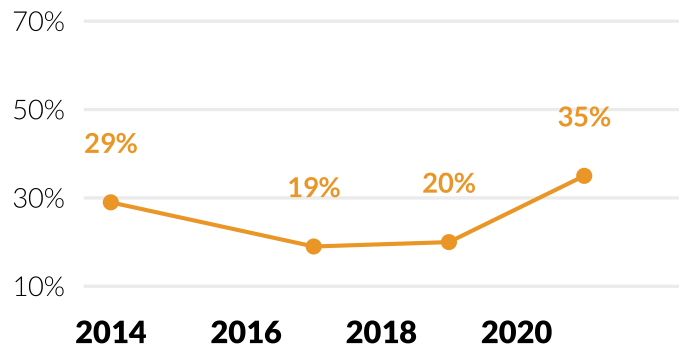
Percentage of respondents who have a lot or some trust in...

### PEOPLE LIVING IN THEIR COMMUNITY



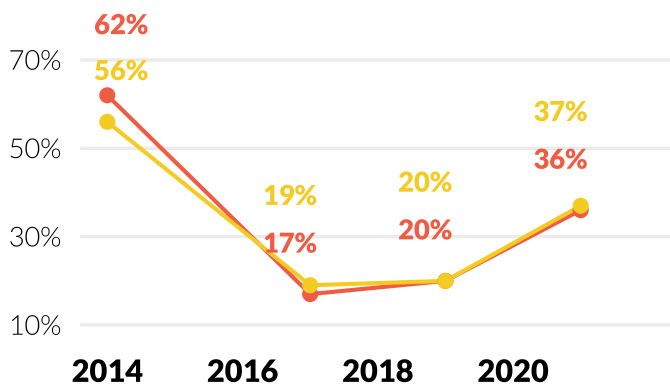
Note: Surveys administered before 2021 asked about "people in your country" instead of "people living in your community."

### POLICE OFFICERS



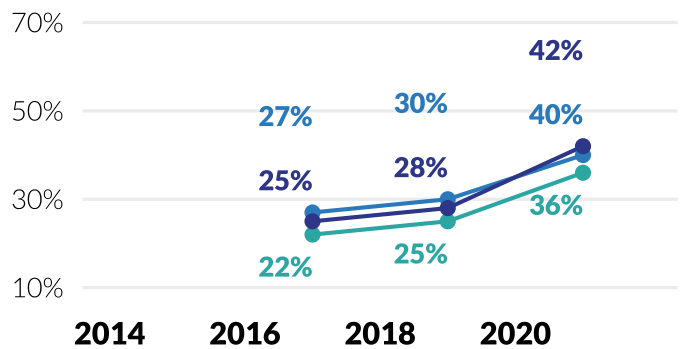
### EXECUTIVE

(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 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2021

## **Section 2**

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

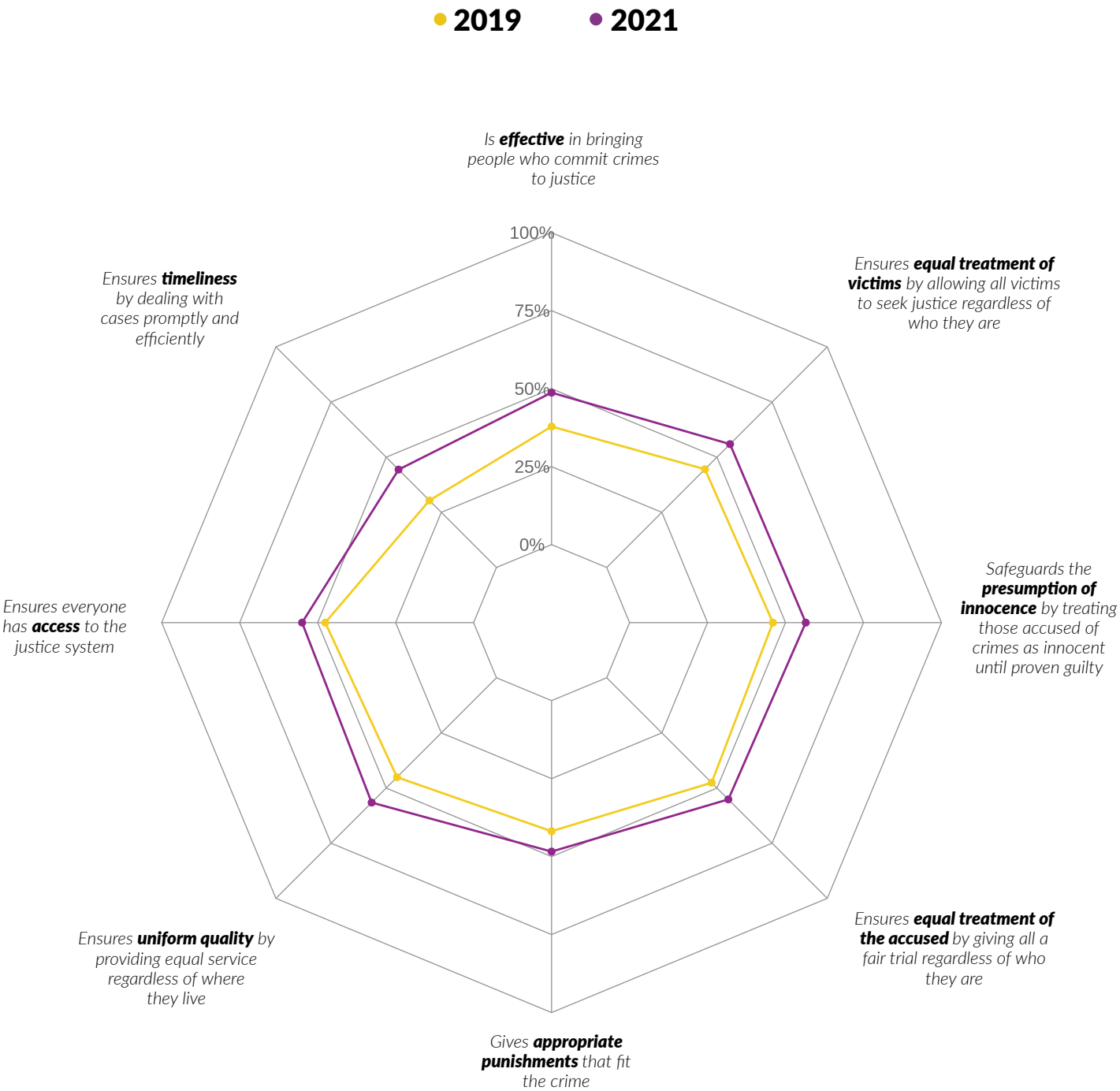
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# Criminal Justice System

Views on the criminal justice system in Belize.

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



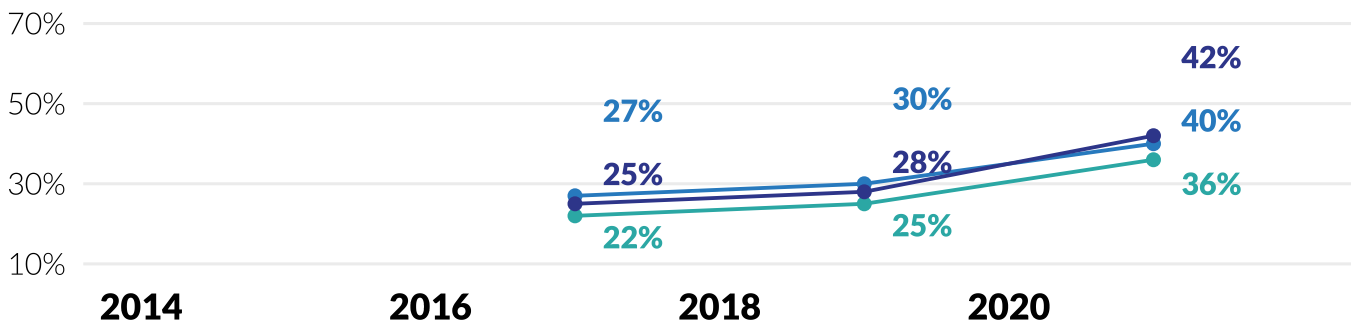
# Criminal Justice Actors

Views on the performance of criminal justice actors in Belize.

● Prosecutors ● Public Defense Attorneys ● Judges and Magistrates

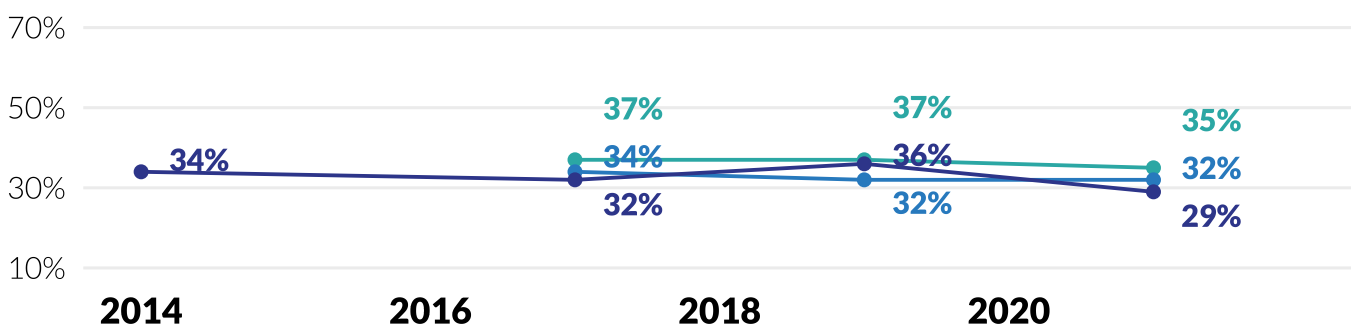
## Chart 7a. Trust in Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

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



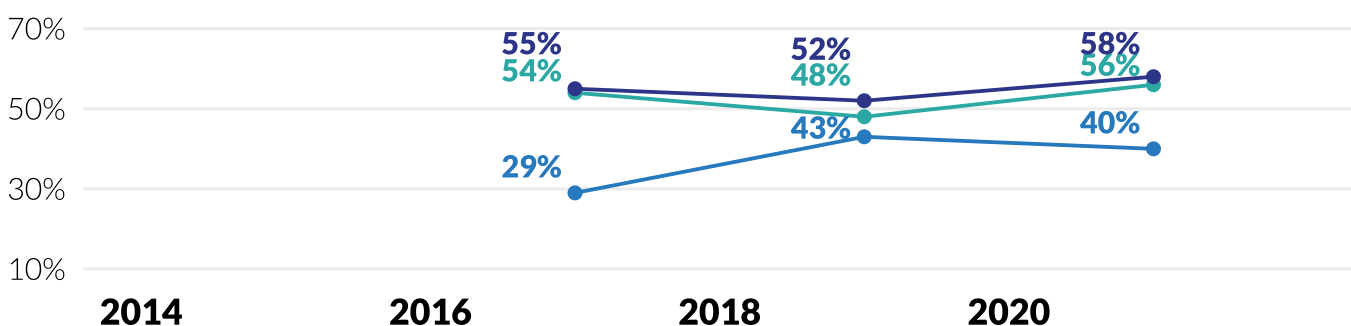
## Chart 7b. Perceptions of Corruption Across Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

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 2014, 2017, 2019, and 2021

# Police

## Views on police performance in Belize.

### 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

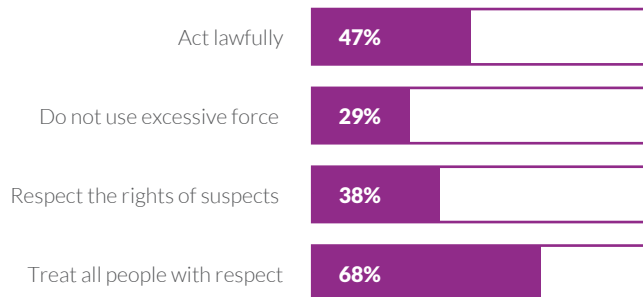
Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



#### LEGITIMACY

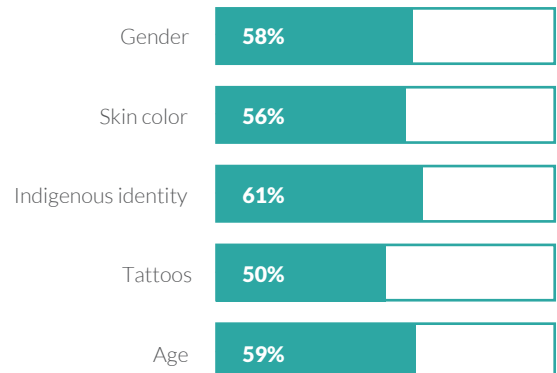
##### DUE PROCESS

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



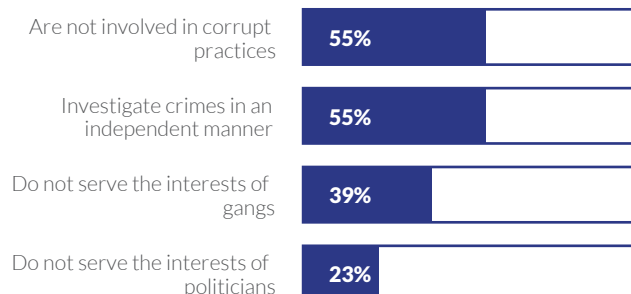
##### DISCRIMINATION

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



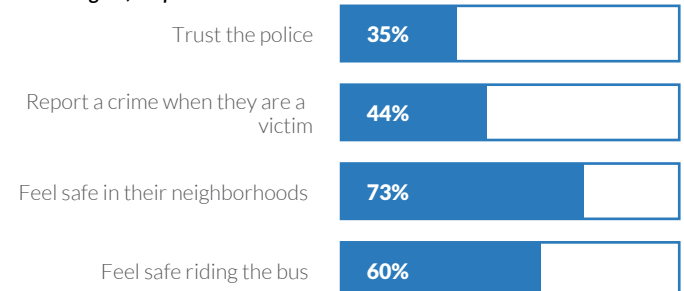
##### CORRUPTION

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



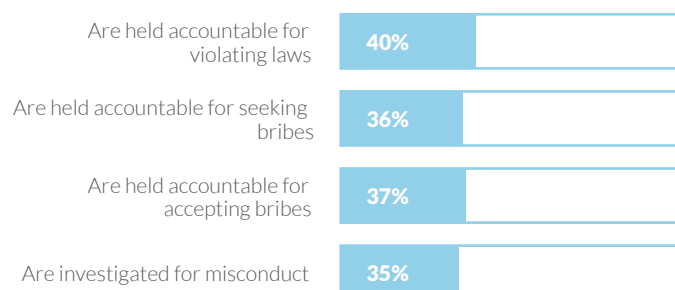
##### TRUST AND CRIME REPORTING

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 Belize.

### Chart 8b. Interactions with the Police

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

#### VOLUNTARY

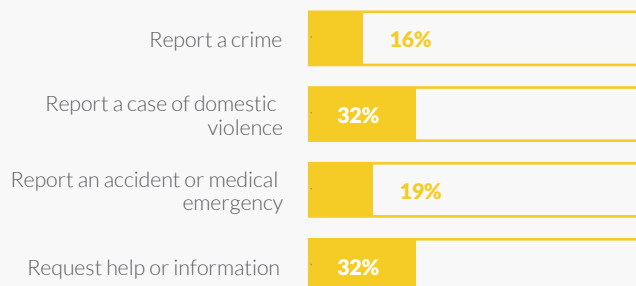
##### TOTAL VOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS

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

19%

##### CAUSES

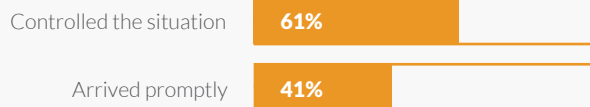
Reasons reported by respondents who contacted the police:



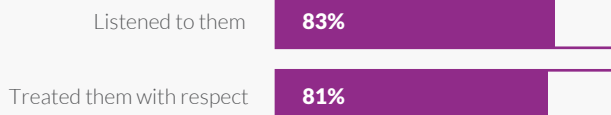
##### EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION

Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

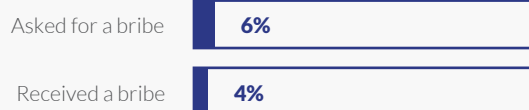
##### SERVE THE PUBLIC



##### DUE PROCESS



##### CORRUPTION



#### INVOLUNTARY

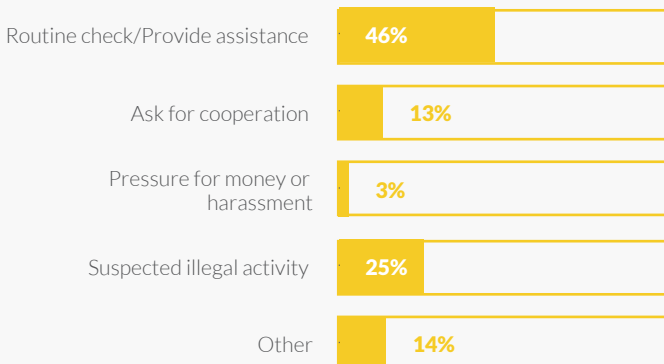
##### TOTAL INVOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS

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

24%

##### CAUSES

Reasons reported by respondents who were contacted by the police:



##### EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION

Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

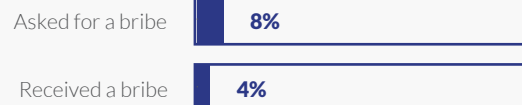
##### SERVE THE PUBLIC



##### 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

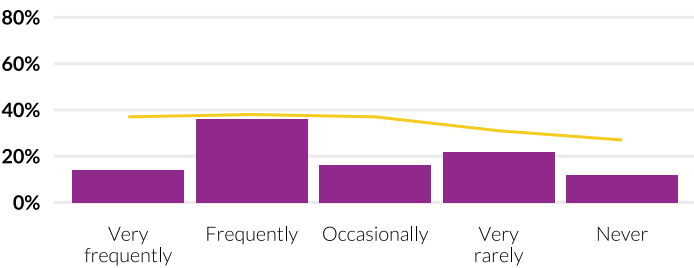


Chart 9b. Community Meetings and Trust

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

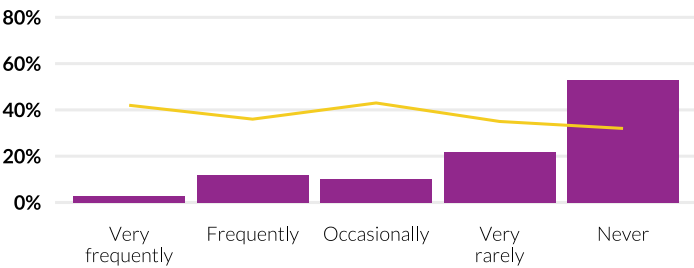


Chart 9c. Public Participation and Trust

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

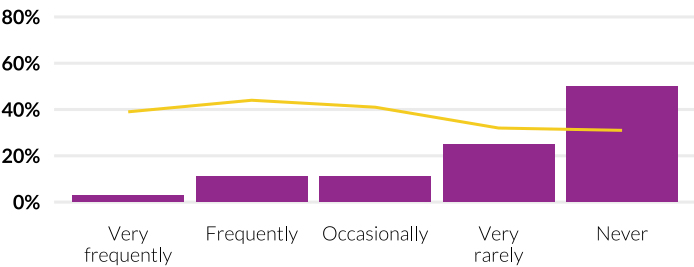
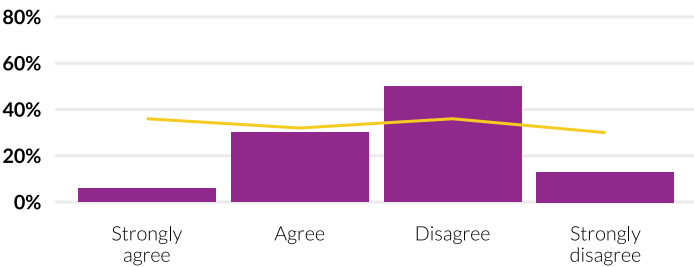


Chart 9d. Vigilante Justice and Trust

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
Have been a victim of crime			
Do not feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night	X	X	
Were previously asked for a bribe			
Believe most or all police officers are corrupt	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		

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 Belize.

Chart 10a. Types of Crimes Experienced by People in Belize

Victimization rate, by type of crime

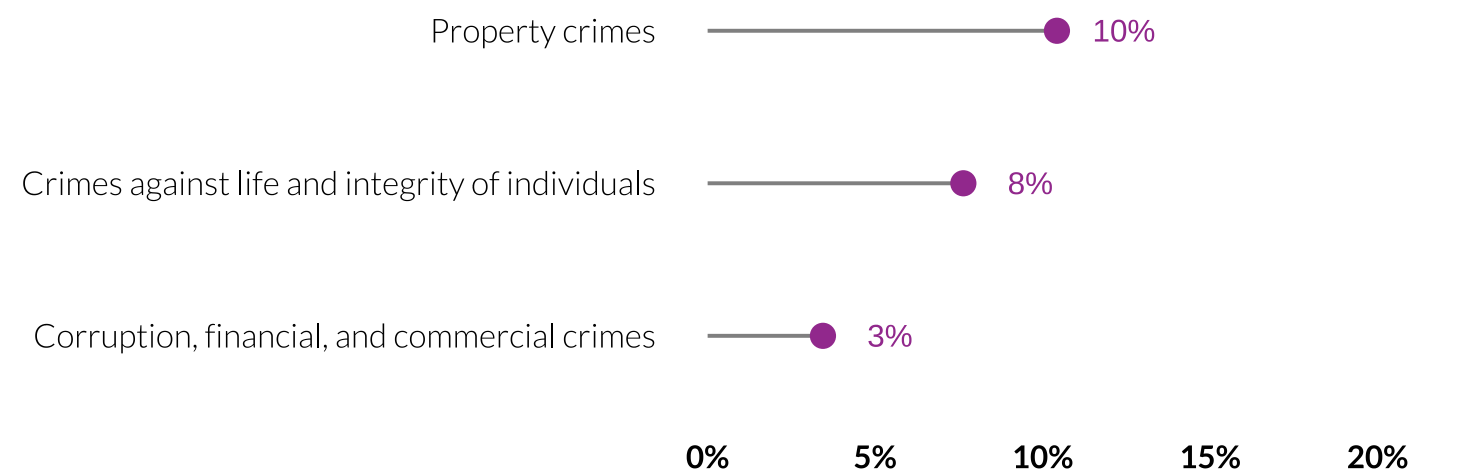
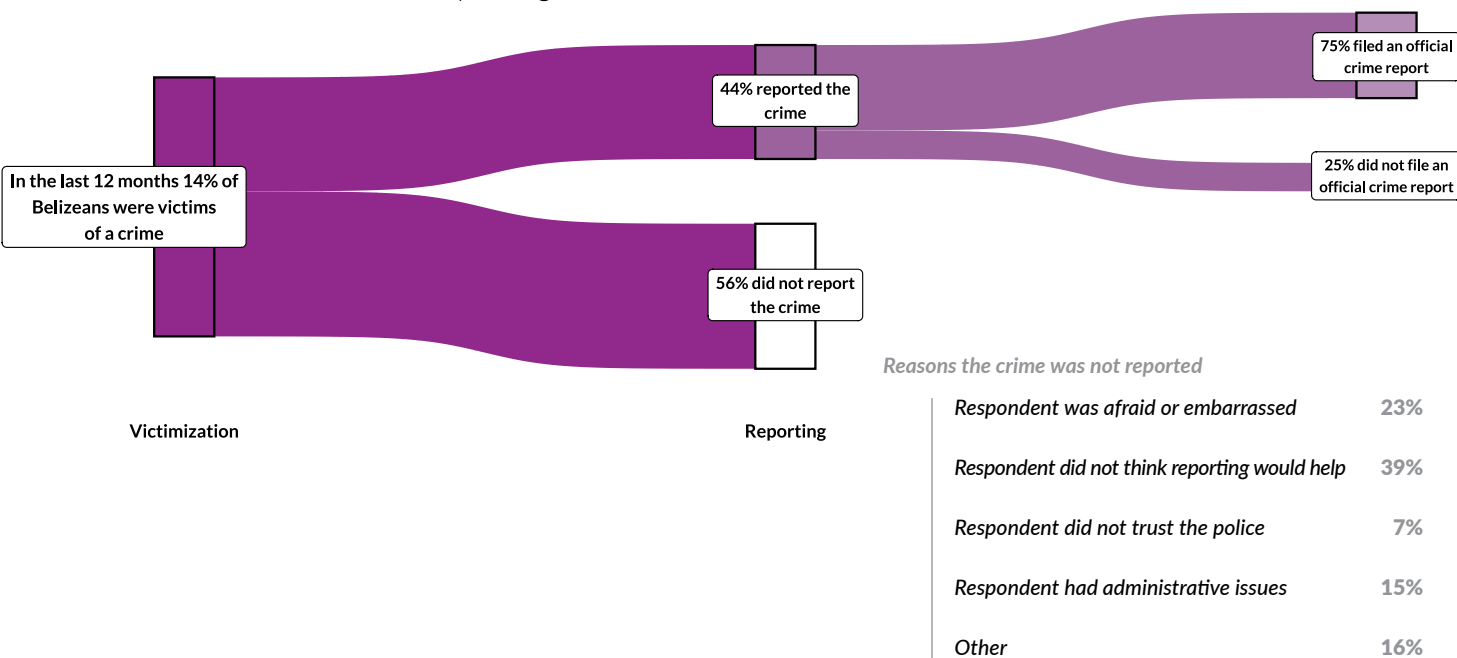


Chart 10b. Crime Victimization Rates and Reporting

Data on crime victimization and reporting in Belize



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

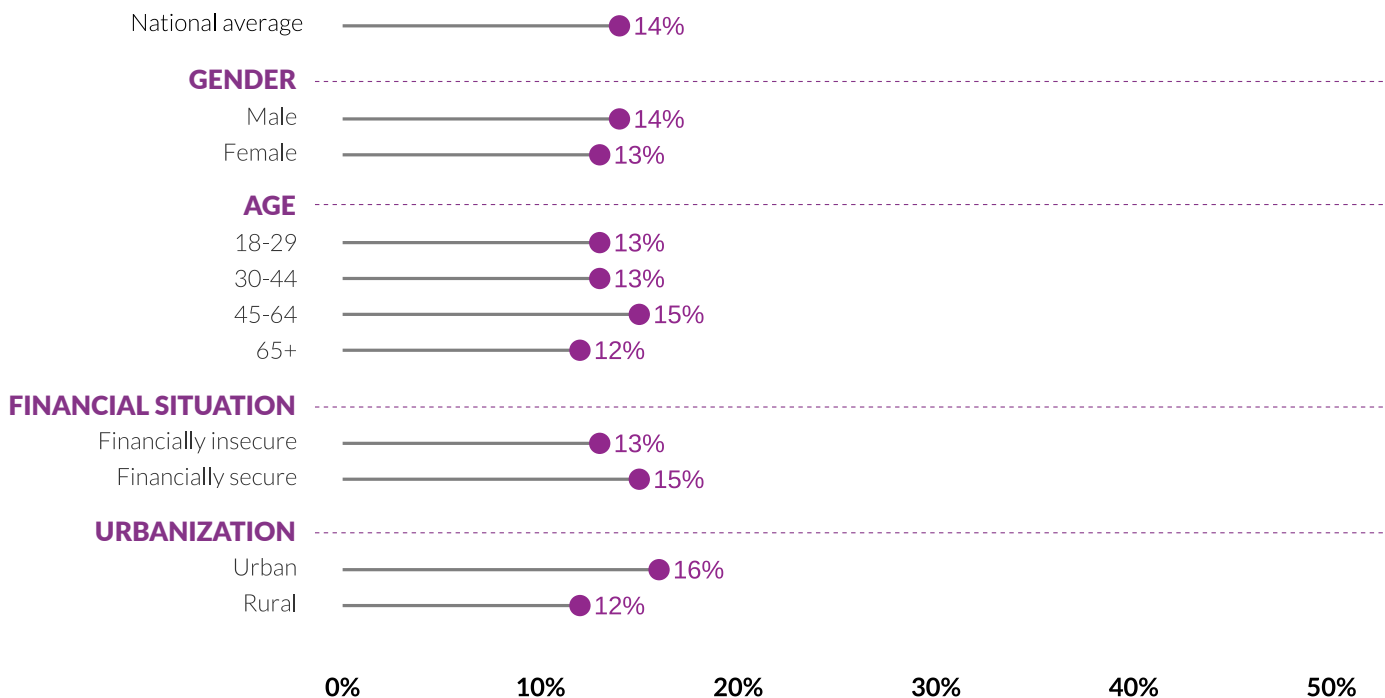
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Crime Victimization, continued

Crimes experienced by people in Belize.

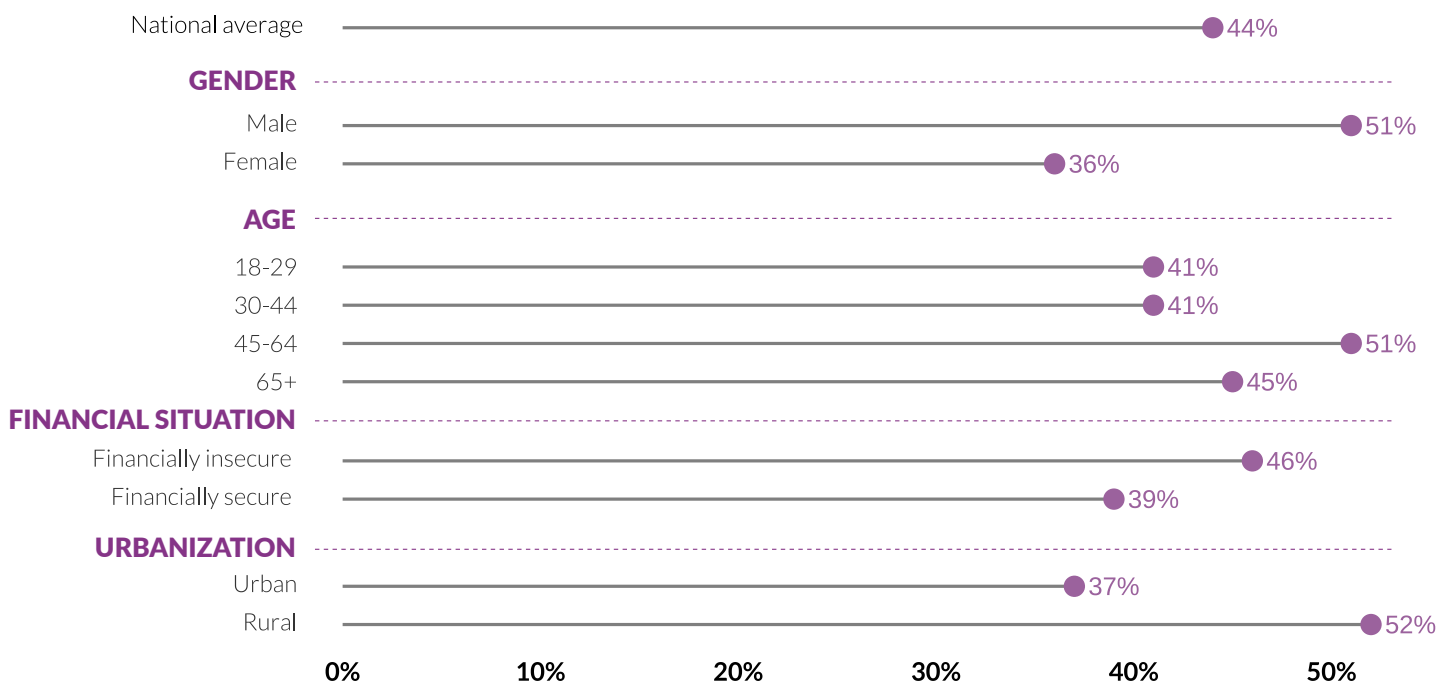
## Chart 10c. Crime Victimization by Sociodemographic Characteristic

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



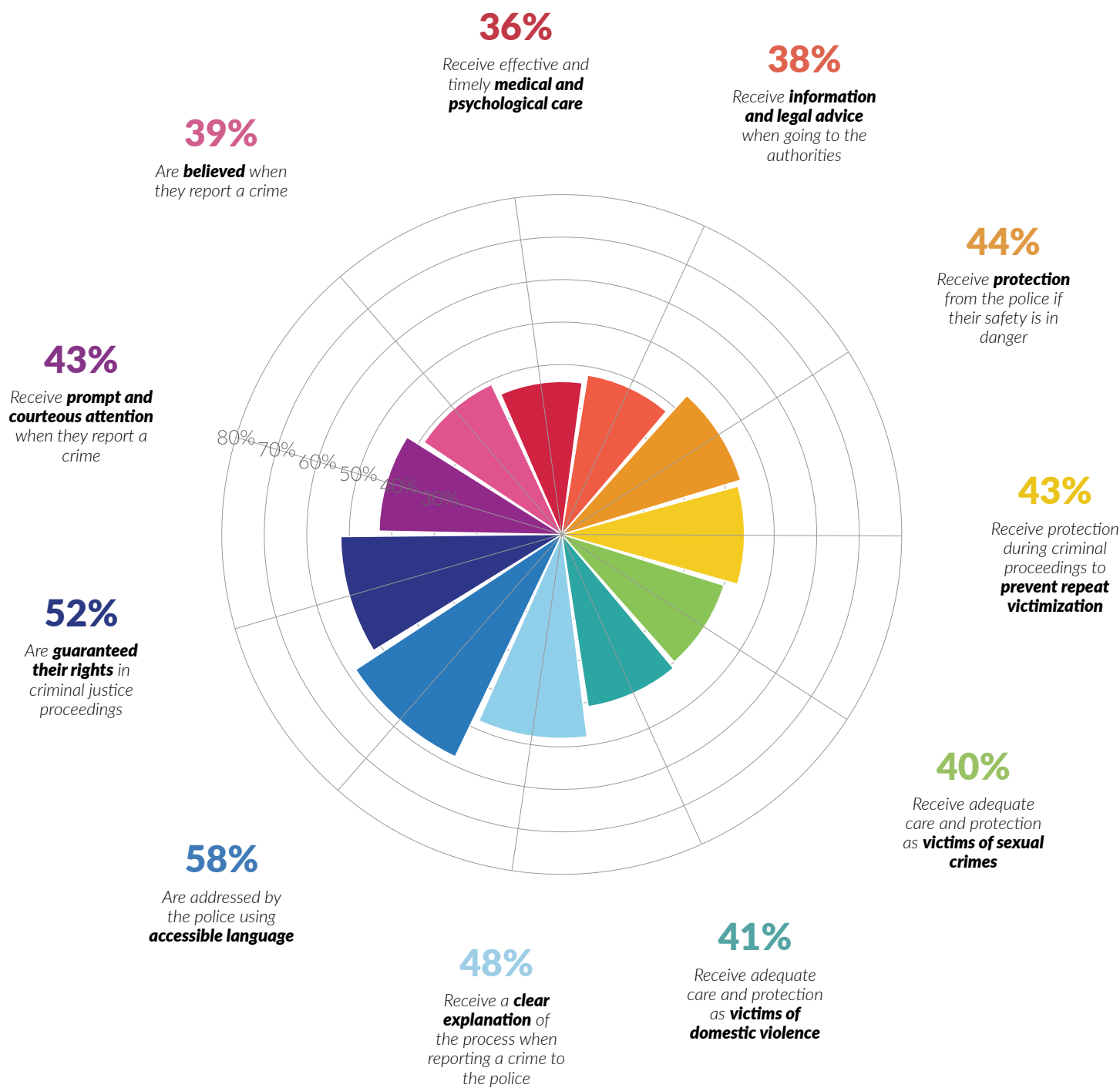
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Victim Support

Views on support for crime victims in Belize.

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 Belize by Gender

Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements

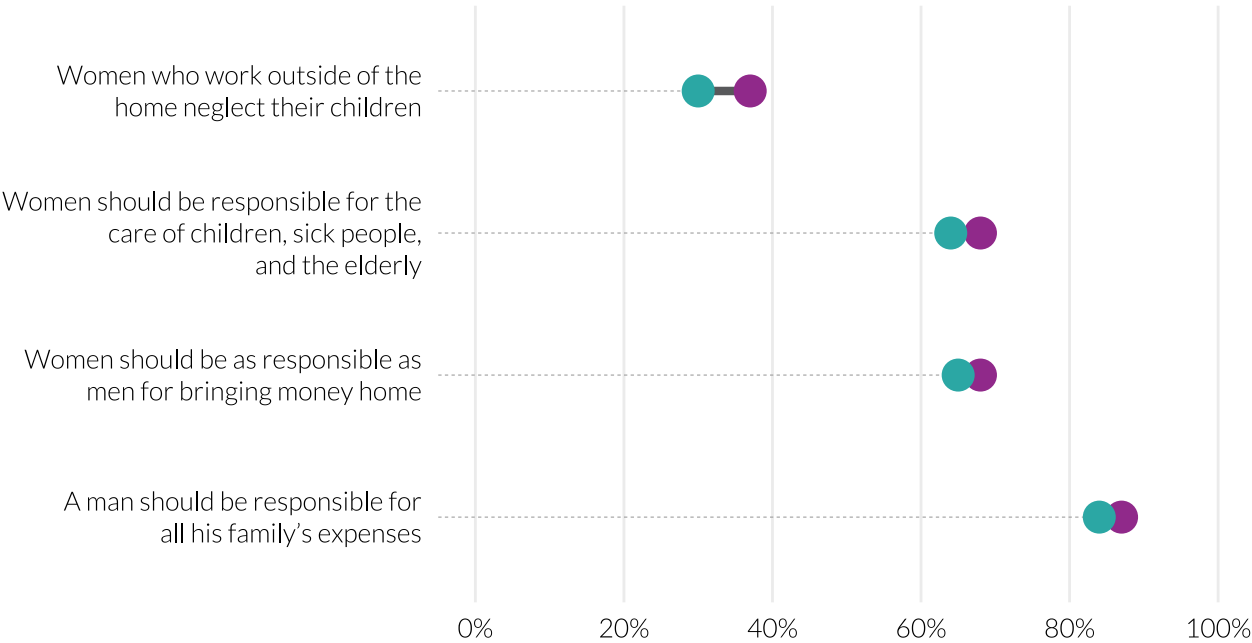
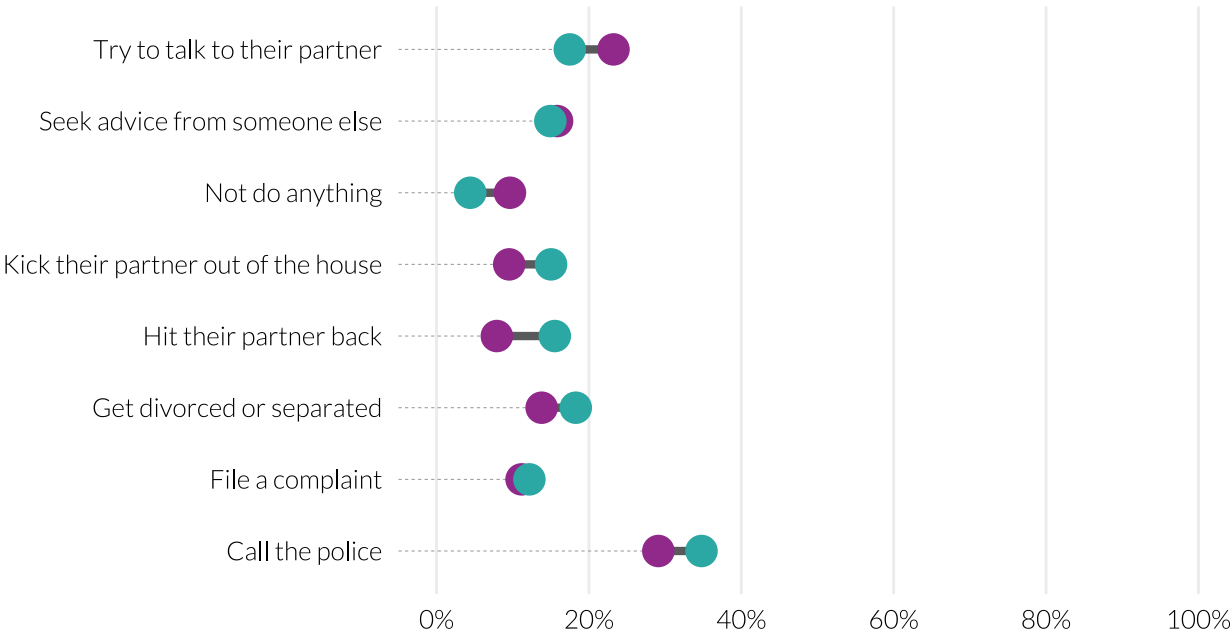


Chart 12b. Hypothetical Reactions to Domestic Violence by Gender

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



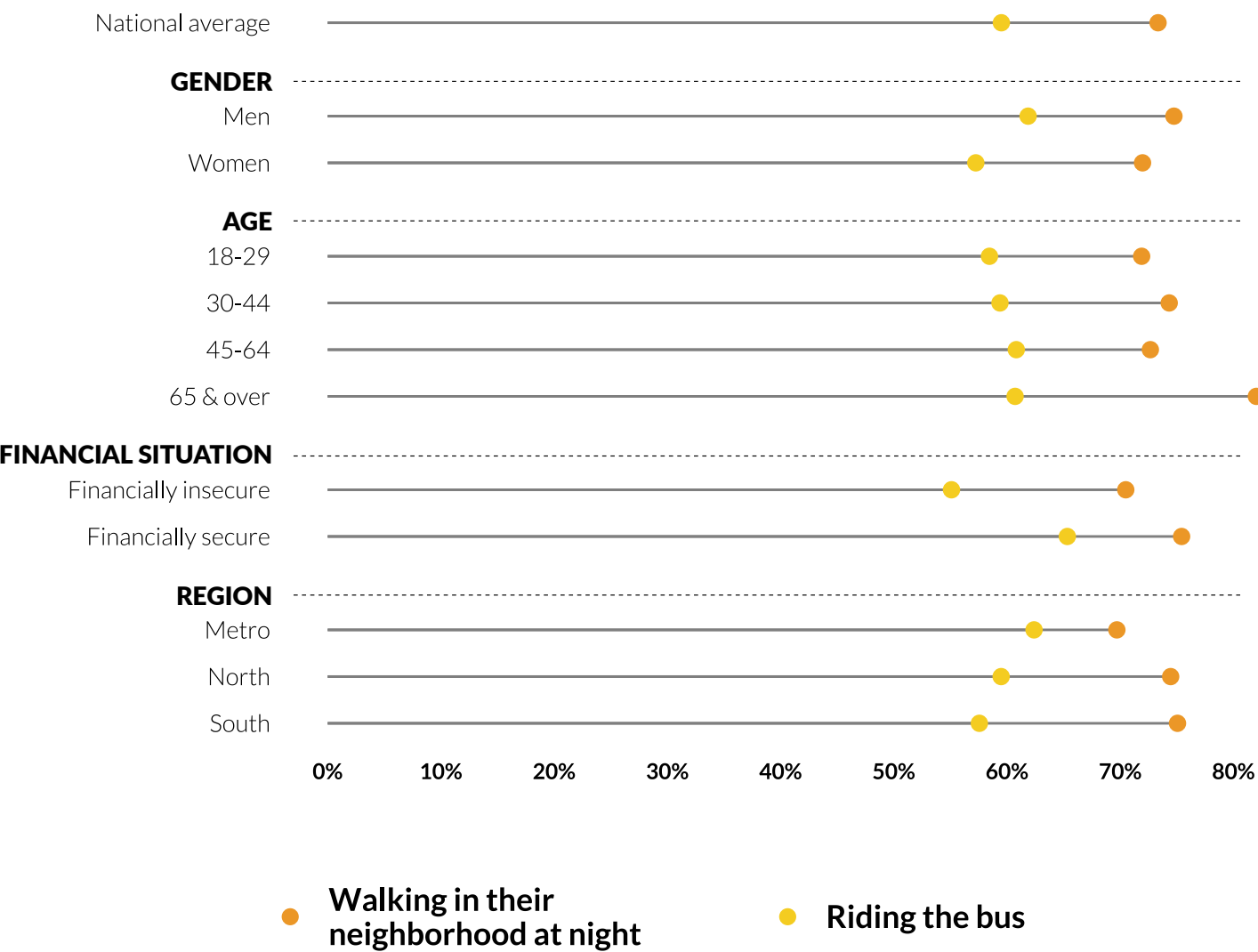
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Security

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

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



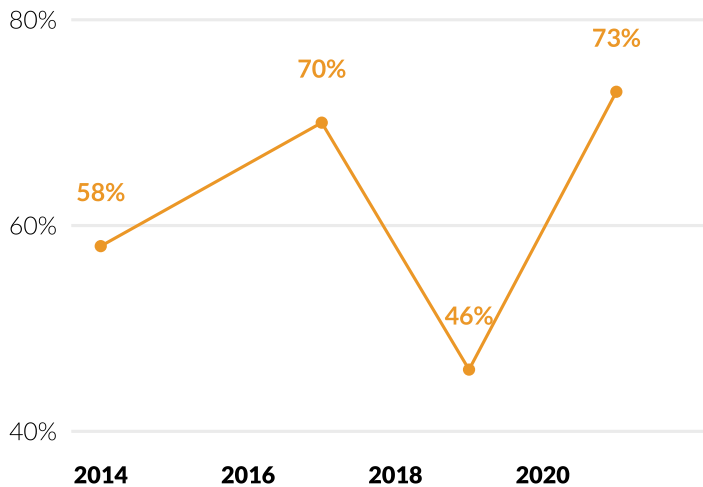
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Security, continued

**Perceptions of safety and crime at the local level in Belize.**

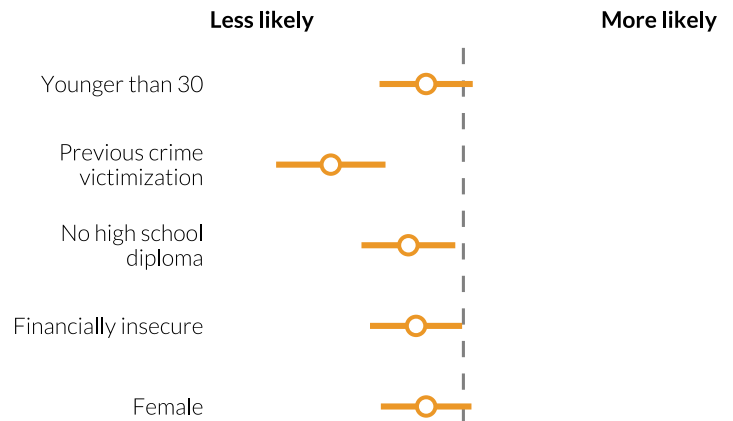
**Chart 13b. Perceptions of Safety Over Time**

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**

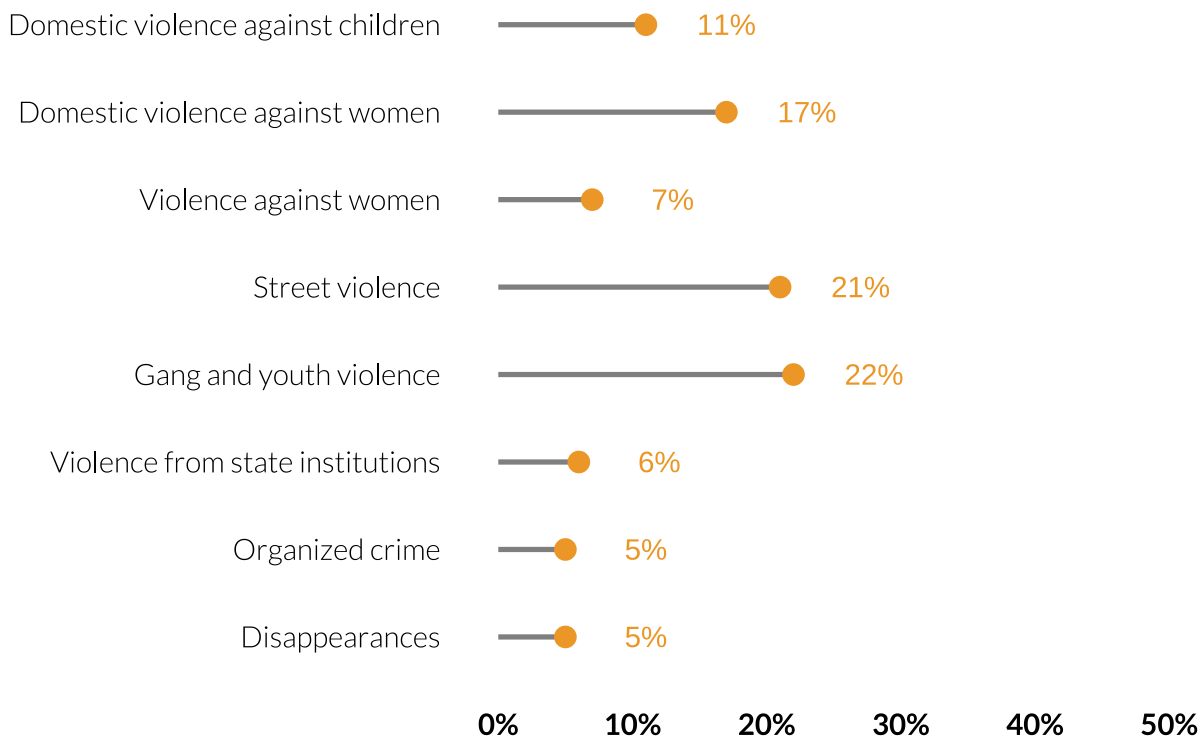
Likelihood that respondents feel safe or very safe walking in their neighborhood at night



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



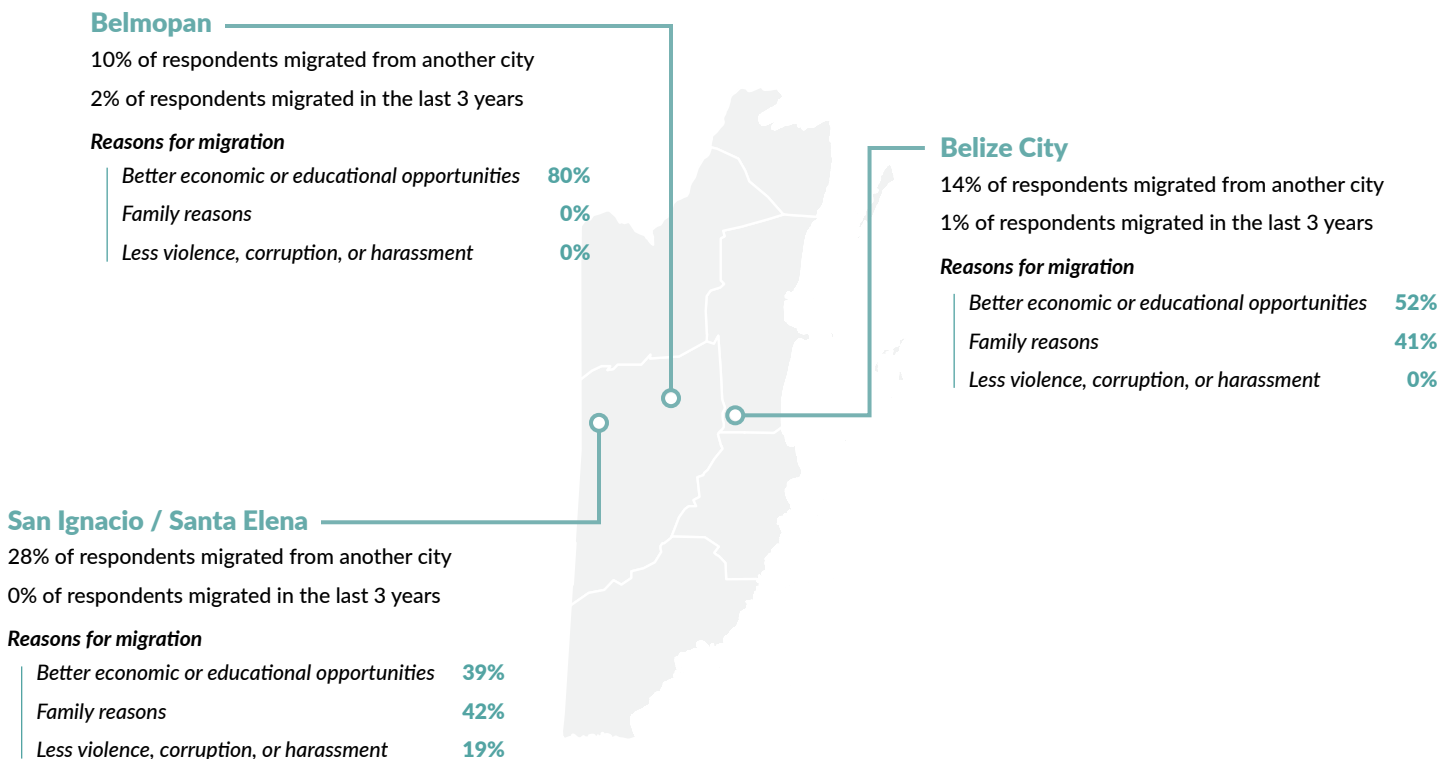


# Internal Migration

Experiences with migration within Belize.

## Chart 14a. Internal Migration by City

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

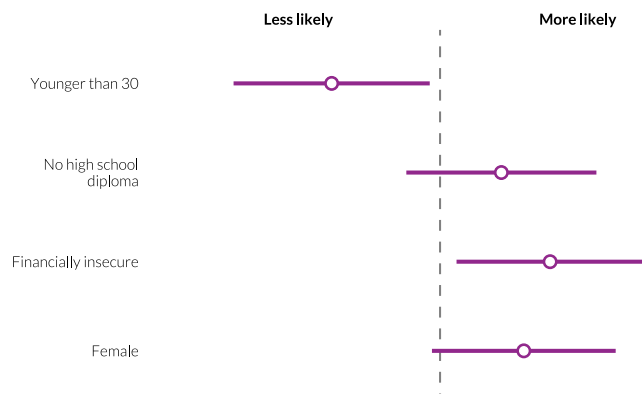


Note: For more information on how Chart 14a was produced, please see the Appendix.

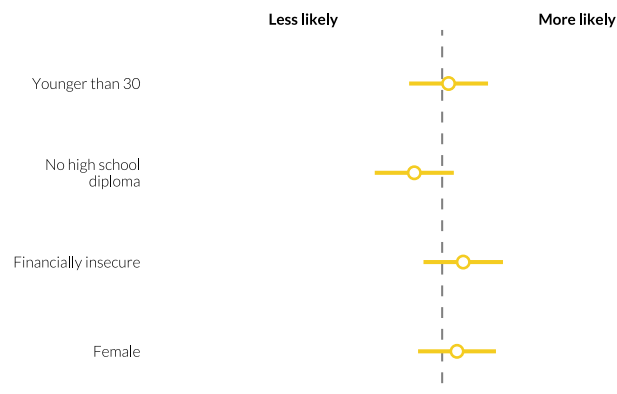
## Chart 14b. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Internal Migration

Likelihood that respondents...

### Have migrated within Belize



### Have migrated within Belize 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.

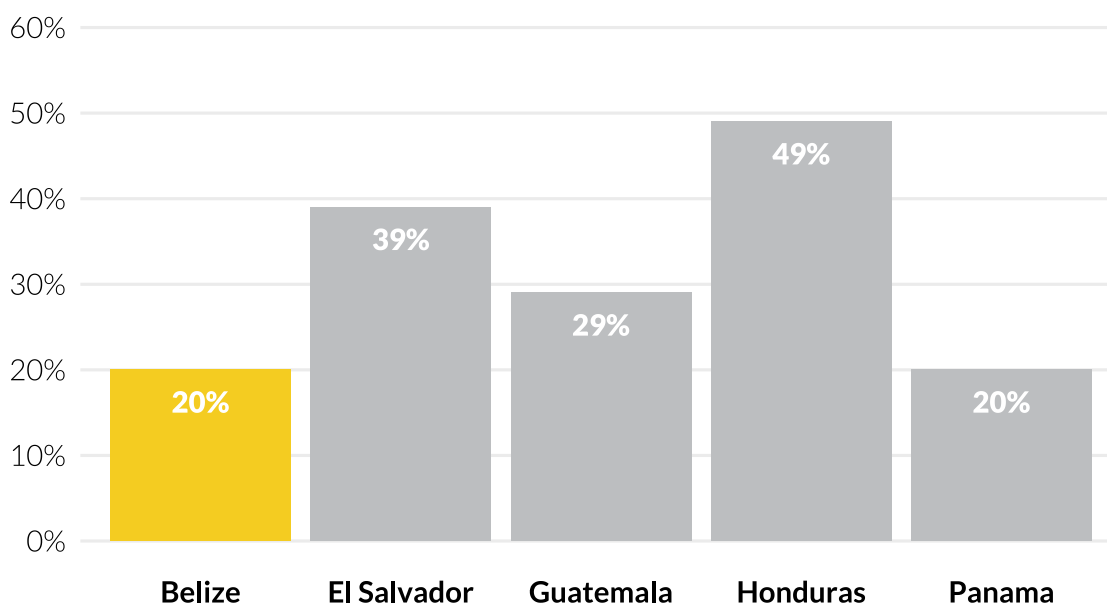
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# International Migration

## Intentions to migrate internationally.

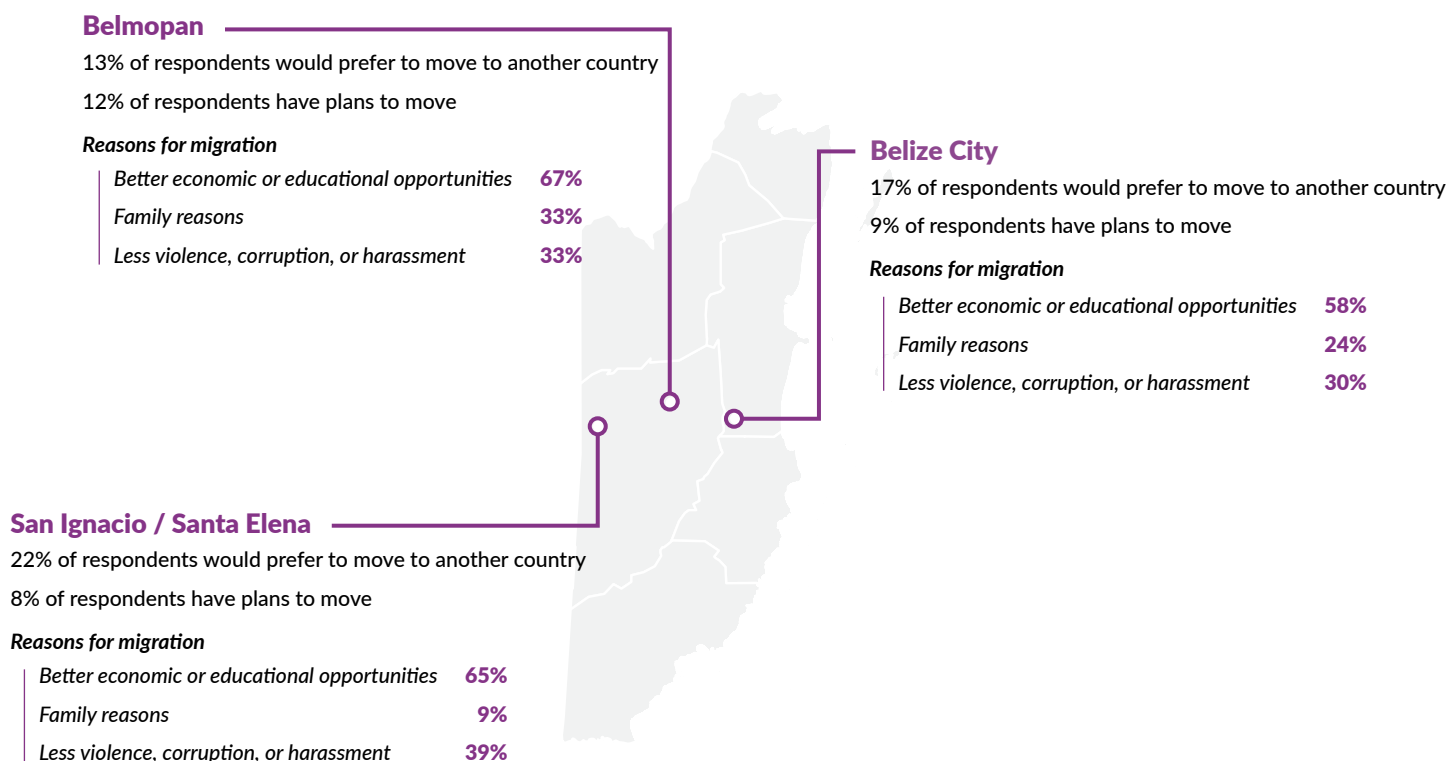
**Chart 15a. Desire to Migrate Internationally**

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.

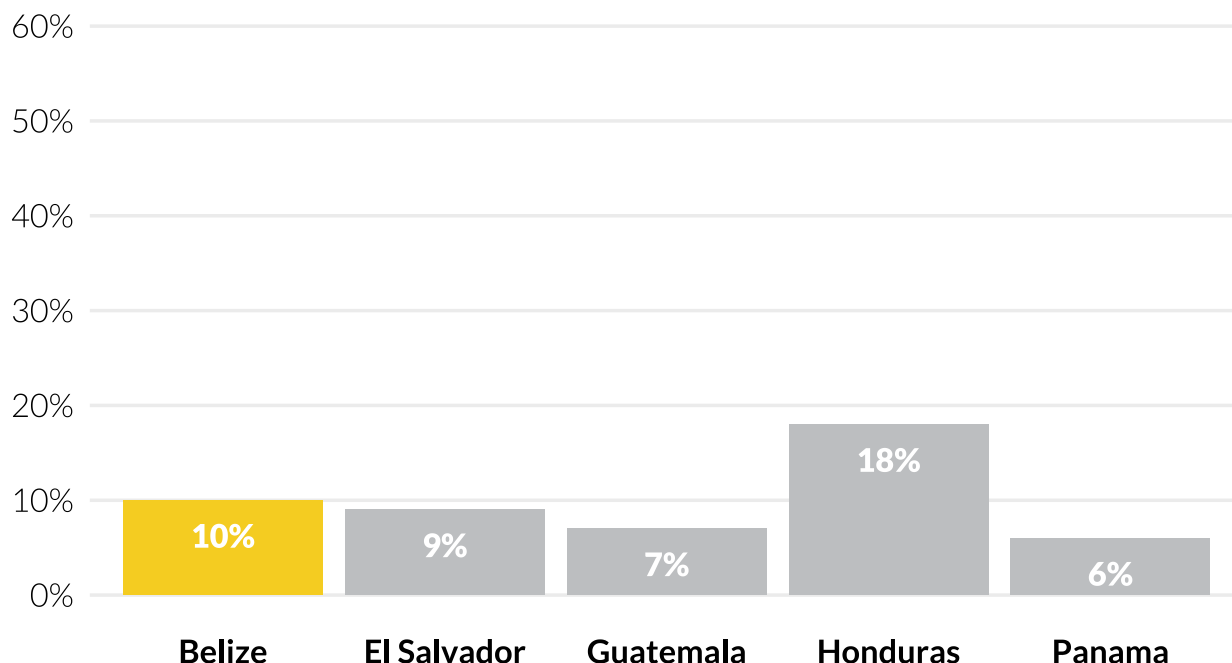
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# International Migration, continued

*Intentions to migrate internationally.*

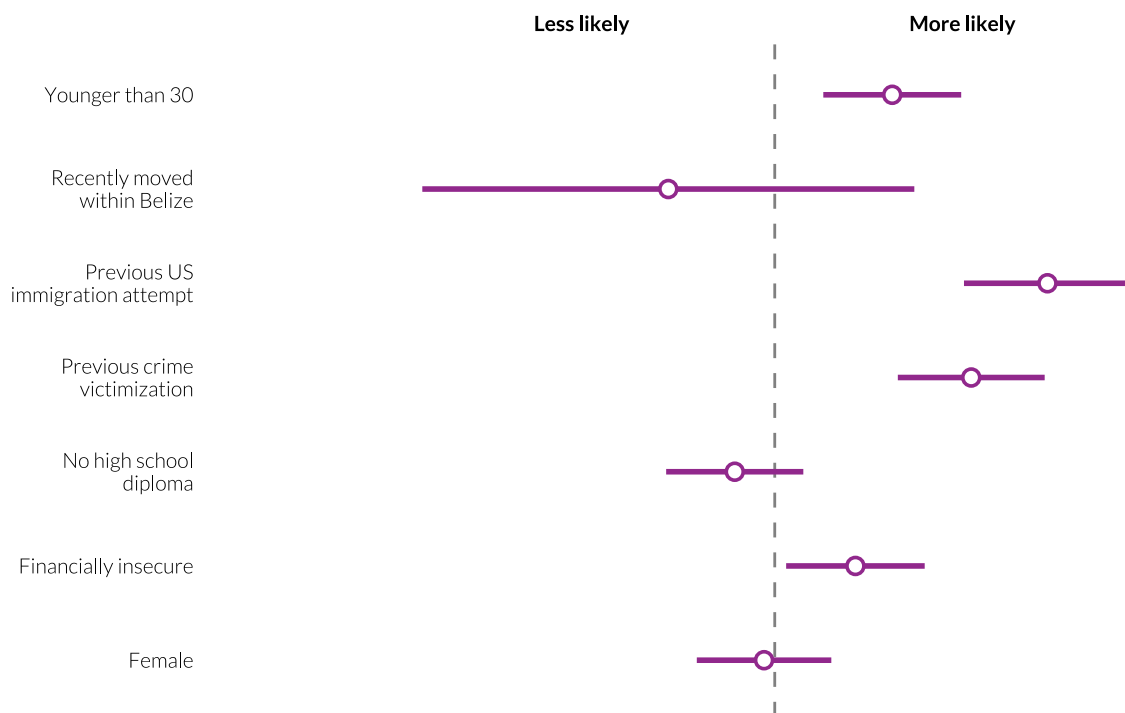
**Chart 15c. Intentions to Migrate Internationally**

*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.*

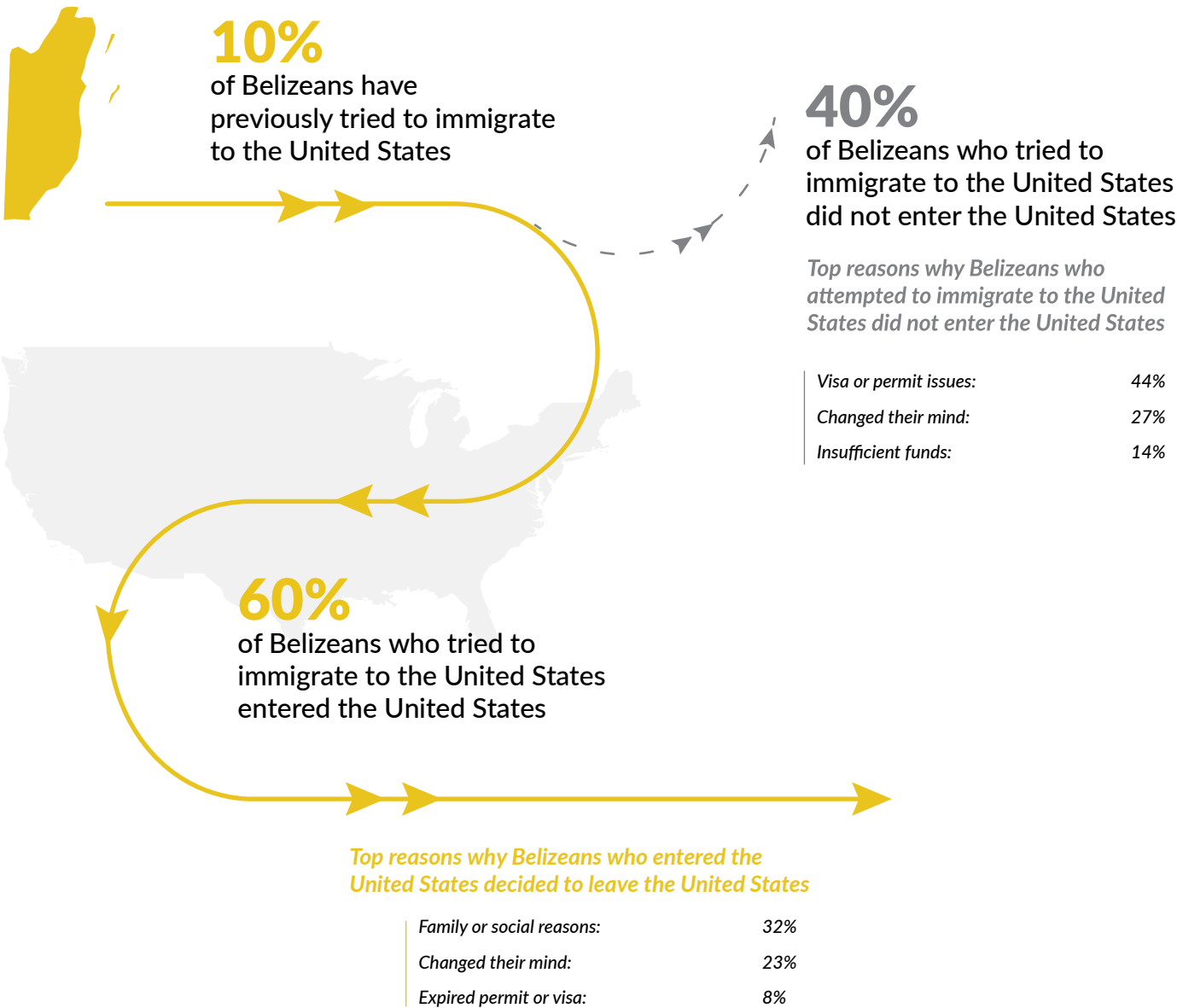
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Migration to the United States

Experiences and challenges migrating to the United States.

Chart 16. Pathway to the United States

Experiences of Belizeans 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?"

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 Belize was conducted for the WJP's *The Rule of Law in Belize: 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 Belizeans aged 18 years or older residing across all 6 districts of the country.

### SAMPLING SIZE AND SAMPLING FRAME

The General Population Poll in Belize represents an achieved total sample size of 2,004 interviews distributed proportionally across all 3 regions. CID Gallup based the sampling frame on the 2010 Belize Population Census, 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 districts were selected to achieve a national representation of the country. Within cities and towns, sampling segments were selected using probability proportional to size sampling and each consisted of 12 interviews at the neighborhood level. 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 437 substitutions in total.

Challenges to data collection in Belize 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 Southern region (43%), followed by the Metro region (29%) and Northern region (28%).

**GEOGRAPHY:** Fifty-four percent (54%) of respondents reside in rural towns and villages and 46% of respondents reside in metro areas or cities.

**ETHNICITY:** Most respondents identified themselves as Mestizo (57%), followed by Creole (24%) and Indigenous (8%).

**GENDER:** Fifty-one percent (51%) of respondents were female and 49% were male.

**EDUCATION:** Forty-one percent of respondents (41%) reported that they had received at least a high school diploma or vocational degree, and the remaining 59% of respondents received a middle school diploma or less.

## Response Rates

<b>Eligible household, non-interview</b>	<b>1,469</b>
<i>Refusals</i>	<b>848</b>
<i>Break-off</i>	<b>184</b>
<i>Non-contact</i>	<b>437</b>
<b>Ineligible household</b>	<b>100</b>
<i>No eligible respondent in the household</i>	<b>16</b>
<i>Quota filled</i>	<b>84</b>

## Interviewing and Quality Control

In total, 40 interviewers worked on this project, including 24 female interviewers. Enumerators worked in ten groups of four interviewers with one supervisor per group. Interviews were conducted in English.

The supervisory team directly oversaw 43% of interviews in the field. During data processing, 36% of the interviews were selected for audio validation. After quality control, 56 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 55 minutes in length and ranged from 38 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 Belize 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 Belize'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, Guatemala, Honduras, and Panama. 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

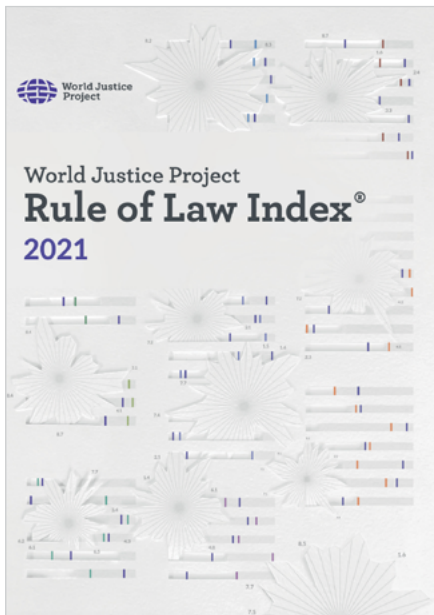
# About the World Justice Project

**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](https://worldjusticeproject.org).

# Other Publications



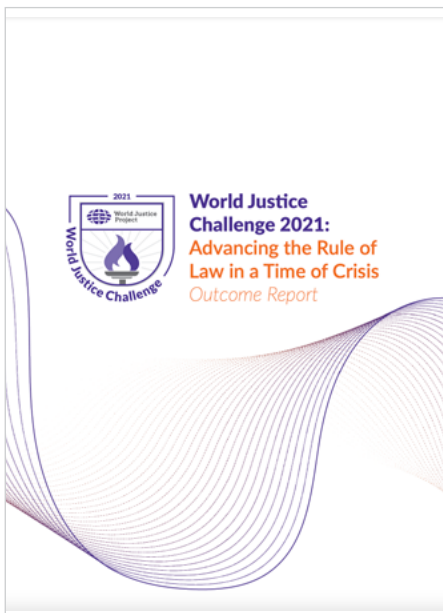
*WJP Rule of Law Index 2021*



*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)

