



World Justice
Project

The Rule of Law in El Salvador

*Key Findings from the General
Population Poll 2021*



Acknowledgements

The Rule of Law in El Salvador: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021 was produced by the World Justice Project under the research oversight of Alejandro Ponce and the executive direction of Elizabeth Andersen.

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Courtney Babcock, Abigail Broussard, and Mariana Lopez were the graphic designers for this report.

Photo for cover provided by Michael Swigart via Flickr

Sampling, fieldwork, and data processing in El Salvador, Belize and Panama were conducted by CID Gallup, based in Costa Rica. Data collection in Guatemala and Honduras was conducted by Mercaplan, based in Honduras.

Scripting of the questionnaire in the online platform SurveyToGo was conducted by Ezekiel Agwata of Polar Solutions.

The findings in this report are taken from the General Population Poll (GPP) conducted for the World Justice Project in 2021. The GPP's conceptual framework and methodology were developed by Juan Carlos Botero, Mark David Agrast, and Alejandro Ponce. The methodology for this iteration of the GPP was developed by Lindsey Bock, Natalia Rodríguez Cajamarca, Ana Cárdenas, Nora Futtner, Amy Gryskiewicz, Verónica Jaso, Ana María Montoya, Alejandro Ponce, Eréndira González Portillo, Tanya Primiani, Victoria Thomaides and Marcelo Torres.

This report was made possible with the support of the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' Office of Western Hemisphere. The views expressed in this report are those of the survey respondents and do not necessarily represent the views of INL.

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I

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

This report represents the voices of people in El Salvador 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 2,526 Salvadoran 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 Salvadorans. These thematic briefs focus on the current rule of law ecosystem in El Salvador while simultaneously illuminating changes over time and comparisons across the following regional peer countries: Belize, 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.

Note on El Salvador

The data presented in *The Rule of Law in El Salvador: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021* represents the perceptions and experiences of individuals living in El Salvador. The results show an increasingly favorable perception of the rule of law situation in the country, particularly when compared to results in El Salvador from previous years, or to other countries with similar governance structure and level of development.

The data presented in this report has undergone a rigorous validation process. The team conducted five separate tests to ensure the accuracy of data:

1. STATISTICAL VALIDATION

The team verified the data routing, labeling, and coding and did not find any issues.

2. SAMPLING PLAN VALIDATION

The team checked the consistency of the sampling plan against the data collected by the polling company. More information about the sampling plan is available in the Methodology section of this report.

3. INTERNAL CHECKS AGAINST DIFFERENT VARIABLES

The normalized scores of perception questions were checked against sociodemographic, socioeconomic and political characteristics (sex, age, income, educational level, ethnicity, urbanization, crime victimization, and political affiliation).

4. CHECKS AGAINST EXTERNAL QUANTITATIVE SOURCES

The team normalized the General Population Poll data in El Salvador and compared these scores to other external quantitative sources, including Latin American Public Opinion Project (LAPOP)'s AmericasBarometer, and Latinobarómetro. These checks compared similar perception questions in the questionnaires as well as overall trends for a broader set of questions on trust in political institutions and actors, crime and bribery victimization, and migration. The AmericasBarometer and Latinobarómetro data revealed similar trends in that they also showed improved perceptions in El Salvador on measures of government accountability, fundamental freedoms, trust in institutions, support for victims of crime, and security.

5. CHECKS AGAINST EXTERNAL QUALITATIVE SOURCES

The team reviewed current events as well as qualitative reports from other organizations such as Human Rights Watch, Transparency International, Freedom House, and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem).

The results of our various checks confirmed the internal validity of our data, in that it accurately represents the views and experiences of respondents in El Salvador at the time the data was collected. However, there are discrepancies

between our data and other data sources coming from expert assessments. For instance, the data collected from experts in El Salvador by the WJP in the Qualified Respondents' Questionnaires in 2021 presents a departure from the views of the general population. Other human rights organizations and regional experts such as Human Rights Watch, Transparency International, Freedom House, and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) have also expressed alternate views from the data presented in this report. These organizations highlight the challenges that El Salvador is facing with accountability, civil liberties, judicial independence, due process, security, and other thematic topics discussed in this report.

As mentioned above, the data in this report highlights significant improvements in perceptions and experiences across many measures of the rule of law in El Salvador. El Salvador's president, Nayib Bukele, entered office in June 2019. Bukele and his Nuevas Ideas Party represent a significant shift from traditional party-sharing in El Salvador and have become widely popular among Salvadorans. Since taking office, Bukele has maintained an approval rating of at least 75%, with some surveys citing an approval rating as high as 93% in 2021. In our analysis of the GPP data for El Salvador, political affiliation was the variable most likely to explain statistically significant differences in perceptions. Indeed, most perception questions had higher normalized scores among respondents who identified with Nuevas Ideas than among respondents who identified with other political parties or no party at all. These results suggest that Bukele's popularity may be influencing the perceptions of people regarding governing institutions in El Salvador. Further information on the rule of law in El Salvador can be found at the [Country Insights](#) page from the WJP Rule of Law Index 2021®.

Executive Findings

The Rule of Law in El Salvador: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021 report provides a comprehensive overview of how citizens perceive and experience the rule of law in El Salvador. The thematic briefs summarized below draw on historical data and new data collected from the general public in 2021. Please see our **Note on El Salvador** for further considerations on these findings.

Section 1: Accountability and Fundamental Freedoms

1 GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Just over half of respondents in El Salvador believe government officials are held accountable for breaking the law. When asked if high-ranking government officials would be held accountable for breaking the law, 51% of respondents in El Salvador believe that the government officer would be prosecuted or punished. Compared to regional peers, Salvadorans have the most positive perceptions of government accountability. Moreover, these perceptions of government accountability have improved more between 2013 and 2021 in El Salvador than in other regional peer countries. That being said, standards for checks on executive power are lower in El Salvador than in regional peer countries – only 60% of respondents in El Salvador believe that the president must obey the laws and the courts even if they disagree.

2 FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

When it comes to guarantees of fundamental freedoms, Salvadorans have generally positive views. Salvadorans are the most optimistic about their religious rights, with 91% of respondents reporting that religious minorities are free to observe their holy days. In contrast, Salvadorans are the least optimistic about the legitimacy of local elections, with 70% saying local government officials are elected through a clean process. Though progress in the country has been inconsistent since 2013, Salvadorans' perceptions of their rights have improved in every dimension since 2018. The largest improvements are evident in questions on voting freely without feeling harassed or pressured and the freedom to express opinions against the government, which both saw increases of 30 percentage points between 2018 and 2021.

3 CORRUPTION

Salvadorans reported low levels of corruption across all state actors and institutions, demonstrating an improvement in perceptions since 2018. Members of the Legislative Assembly in El Salvador are seen as the most corrupt institution, with 38% of respondents believing most or all people working in the legislature are involved in corrupt practices. Additionally, executive officials tend to receive less favorable views than other actors, with roughly a third of respondents in El Salvador reporting that most or all local

and national government officers are corrupt (32% and 29%, respectively). Salvadorans say public defense attorneys are the least corrupt state actor, with only 25% believing most or all are involved in corrupt practices. While their perceptions have varied widely since 2013, respondents believe levels of corruption are much lower in every institution since 2018.

4 BRIBERY VICTIMIZATION

Salvadorans pay bribes less frequently than respondents in regional peer countries. In the last three years, Salvadorans reported paying bribes most often to request a government permit (12%) or request public benefits or assistance (11%). Five percent (5%) said they paid a bribe either to obtain a birth certificate or government issued ID or to request public benefits or assistance. Very few respondents reported paying bribes to access public health services (2%), marking the lowest reported bribery victimization rate amongst regional peer countries for any service. Salvadorans reported the lowest rates of bribery victimization in each of these service categories, while Belizeans often reported the highest.

5 TRUST

Despite improvements since 2018, most Salvadorans lack trust in the judiciary, executive officials, and police officers. Less than one-third of respondents reported having some or a lot of trust in judges and magistrates (29%) or defense attorneys (30%). Their judicial counterparts perform slightly better, with 34% of Salvadorans saying they trust prosecutors. Only 31% of respondents trust local government officers, and less than half (48%) trust both national government officers and police officers. In contrast, 55% of respondents stated that they have some or a lot of trust in people living in their communities. Salvadorans reported sharp positive increases, ranging as high as 35 percentage points, in their trust across all groups and institutions between 2018 and 2021.

Section 2: Police and Criminal Justice

6 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Salvadoran's perceptions of the criminal justice system have improved in all dimensions since 2018, though timeliness continues to be a top issue. Most respondents feel confident that the criminal justice system ensures that everyone has

access to justice (59%), is effective in delivering justice (58%), and provides a fair trial for all (56%). In both 2018 and 2021, Salvadorans reported the lowest levels of confidence in the criminal justice system's ability to deal with cases promptly and effectively (29% in 2018 and 46% in 2021), though this figure has improved.

7 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTORS

The public's views on the performance of key criminal justice actors in El Salvador have improved over time. While levels of trust in criminal justice actors remain fairly low, Salvadorans report an improvement in perceptions between 2018 and 2021. Roughly one in four respondents believe that most or all prosecutors (26%), judges and magistrates (26%), and public defense lawyers (25%) are involved in corrupt practices. These perceptions of corruption have improved since 2018, with nearly 50 percentage point decreases for all three actors. The majority of Salvadorans believe that both prosecutors (56%) and judges and magistrates (53%) do their job well, while only 32% believe the same of public defense attorneys.

8 POLICE

Police Perceptions

Salvadorans have conflicting views on police performance. In the category of police effectiveness, Salvadorans responded most negatively when asked if the police respond to crime reports, with only 42% of respondents believing that this is always or often the case. In contrast, over three-quarters of Salvadorans (79%) believe that the police are generally available to help when needed. Most Salvadorans (81%) believe that the police treat all people with kindness and respect, but only 40% believe that the police respect the rights of suspects and 44% believe that the police do not use excessive force. Although 74% of respondents believe that police officers are generally not involved in corrupt practices, 52% believe that the police do not serve the interests of gangs and only 36% believe that the police do not serve the interests of politicians. Perceptions of accountability in law enforcement are similarly unfavorable, with less than half of Salvadorans believing that the police are held accountable for violating the law (40%) or seeking bribes (41%).

Police Interactions

In both voluntary and involuntary interactions with the police, a majority of Salvadorans reported that the police controlled the situation and treated them with respect. Respondents who contacted the police voluntarily most often contacted them to report an accident or medical emergency (37%). During these voluntary interactions, over half of Salvadorans reported that the police controlled the situation (65%) and arrived promptly (56%). Nearly nine in ten (87%) reported that they felt that the police listened to them, and 89% reported that the police treated them with kindness and respect.

Most Salvadorans who were involuntarily contacted by the police reported that they were stopped for a routine check or for the police to provide assistance (63%). During the interaction, 86% of respondents believed that the police were able to control the situation, and 80% said they were treated with kindness and respect. While 71% felt that police clearly explained the reasons for their actions, only 64% of individuals who experienced involuntary police interactions believe that they were stopped for a legitimate reason.

9 COMMUNITY POLICING, VIGILANTE JUSTICE, AND TRUST

Salvadorans living in communities with a greater police presence have more trust in the police and are more likely to believe that the police effectively resolve security problems in their neighborhood. Public levels of trust in the police are correlated to additional factors, such as previous crime victimization, how safe people feel walking in their neighborhood at night, and perceptions of corruption among police officers. Respondents who reported that the police never allow members of their community to suggest solutions to local issues also have less trust in the police (53% have a lot or some trust) than those who reported that the police very frequently or frequently do so (85% have a lot or some trust).

10 CRIME VICTIMIZATION

Nearly one in five Salvadorans were victim of a crime in the last year. Of the 18% of respondents who experienced a crime, only 32% reported it to the police or another authority and of those, 79% chose to file an official crime report. Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents did not report the crime, and the most frequently cited reason for their decision was fear of retaliation or concern for their safety (19%). Of the crimes experienced by Salvadorans, crimes against life and integrity were the most frequent (12%), followed by property crimes (10%) and corruption, financial, and commercial crimes (6%). Incidence of crime victimization was higher than national averages among men, financially secure individuals, and respondents between the ages of 18 and 29. When it comes to crime reporting, women, financially insecure respondents, and Salvadorans living in urban areas tend to report crimes less frequently than the national average.

11 VICTIM SUPPORT

Most Salvadorans are not confident that crime victims receive adequate resources and protection. Less than one-third of respondents are confident that crime victims are believed (28%) or receive prompt and courteous attention (29%) when they report a crime. Only 30% of respondents believe that victims are protected by the police when their safety is in danger while 33% say victims receive protection during criminal proceedings to prevent repeated victimization. More respondents are confident that victims are guaranteed their rights in criminal justice proceedings (53%) and that victims are addressed by the police using accessible language (55%).

Section 3: Gender, Security and Migration

12 GENDER ROLES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Men and women expressed similar views toward family roles and domestic violence. When asked if women who work outside the home neglect their children, a minority of men and women agreed or strongly agreed (44% and 46%, respectively). The largest difference between men and women's opinions on gender roles is evident in their beliefs on whether women should be as responsible as men for bringing money home, with 89% of women compared to 83% of men agreeing with the statement.

When respondents were asked to choose which actions they would take if faced with domestic violence from a partner, male respondents were most likely to choose "I would try to talk to them" (38% of respondents), while female respondents were most likely to choose "I would file a complaint" (48% of respondents).

13 SECURITY

Perceptions of personal safety in El Salvador have improved by 50% since 2018, but differences in perceptions persist between different sociodemographic groups. Perceptions of personal safety vary across contexts in El Salvador, with only 29% of respondents feeling safe or very safe riding the bus while a majority (60%) feeling safe or very safe walking in their neighborhoods at night. Women and Salvadorans who have been victims of crime in the last 12 months were less likely to report feeling safe or very safe while walking in their neighborhood than other sociodemographic groups. When asked to identify the most frequent types of crime in their neighborhood, Salvadorans most often selected gang and youth violence, (26%), street violence (18%), and domestic violence against women (13%).

14 INTERNAL MIGRATION

Out of all respondents, internal migration rates were highest among those living in the western city of Santa Ana. Half (50%) of respondents in Santa Ana reported that they had moved there from another city, and of that group, 44% cited better economic or educational opportunities as the main reason for their move. Respondents in San Miguel reported the second highest internal migration rate, with 45% of respondents having moved there from another city. Of this percentage, most respondents chose to migrate due to family reasons (41%).

15 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

While 39% of respondents in El Salvador indicated they would prefer to move to another country, only 9% reported that they had plans to move. Salvadorans were more likely to report having plans to move to another country if they were under the age of 30, had previously attempted to immigrate to

the US, and/or were a victim of crime in the past 12 months. Compared to respondents in four regional peer countries, Salvadorans were the second most likely to prefer to move permanently to another country after Honduras.

Nearly half of respondents (47%) from the city of San Miguel would prefer to move permanently to another country, and 13% have plans to move in the next 12 months. Of those in San Miguel who would prefer to move, the top reason was for better economic or educational opportunities, with 89% of respondents choosing this option.

16 MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Sixteen percent of respondents reported that they tried to immigrate to the US in the past, and 39% reported being able to enter. Salvadorans who attempted but did not enter the US were most often unable to enter because they were sent back by law enforcement (29%), while 21% said they changed their mind. Of those who did enter the United States, 25% stated that they then left the US for family or social reasons and 22% reported that they were deported by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE).

II

Thematic Findings

Section 1

Accountability and Fundamental Freedoms

- 12 Government Accountability
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- 14 Corruption
- 15 Bribery Victimization
- 16 Trust

Government Accountability

Views in El Salvador 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

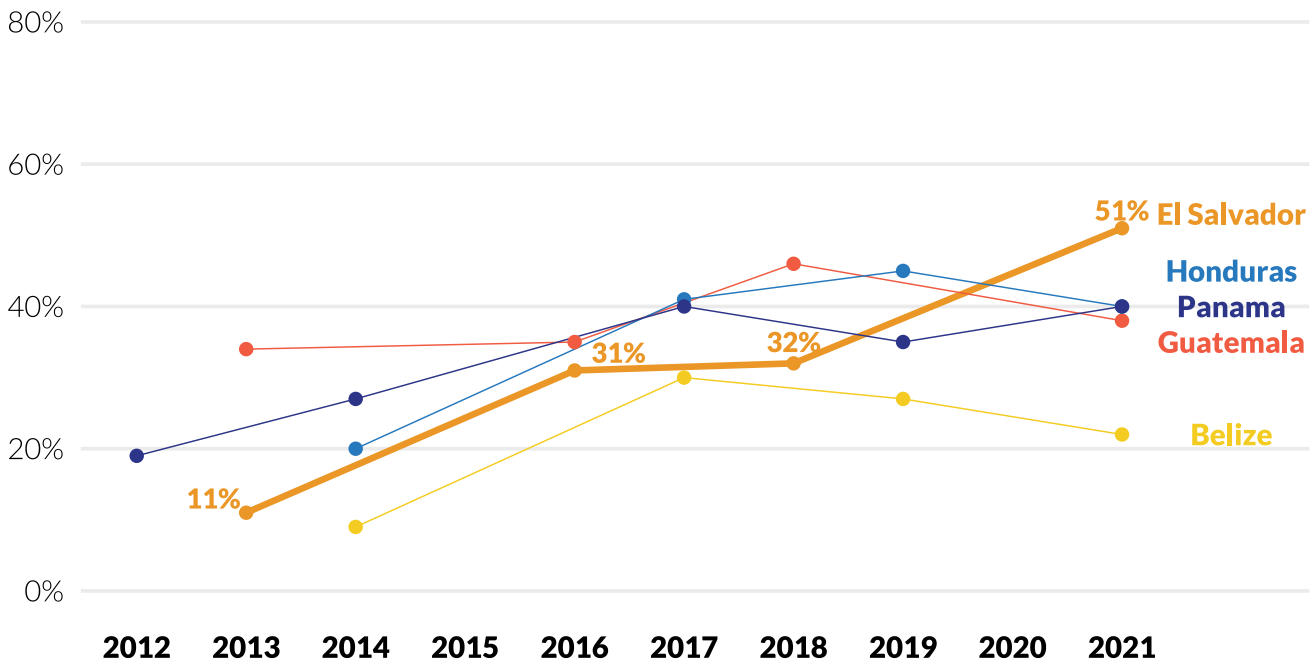
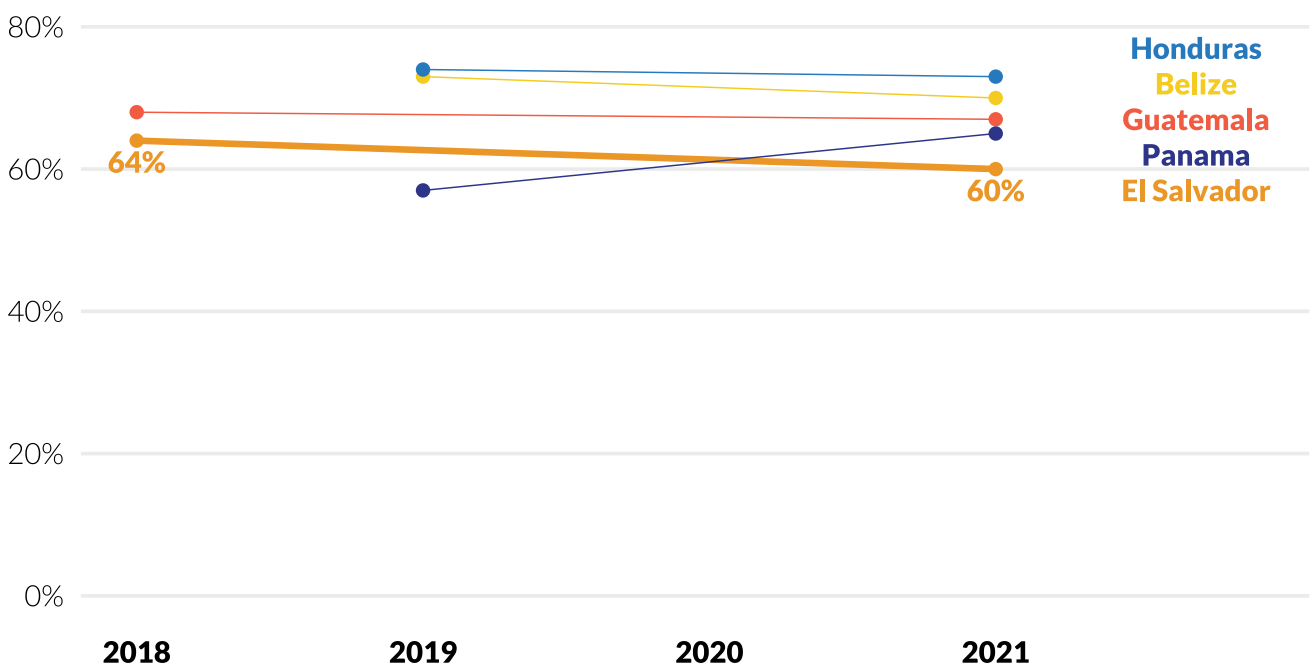


Chart 1b. Checks on Executive Power Over Time

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

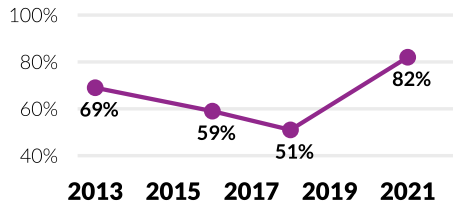
Views on the extent to which freedoms of expression, participation, elections, and religion are guaranteed.

Chart 2. Fundamental Freedoms in El Salvador Over Time

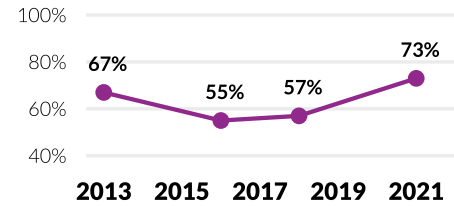
Percentage of respondents who believe that...

EXPRESSION

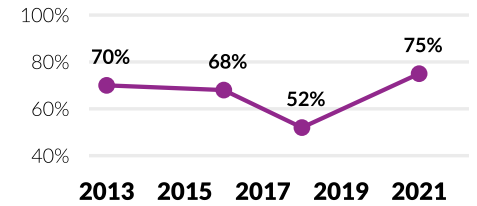
People can express opinions against the government



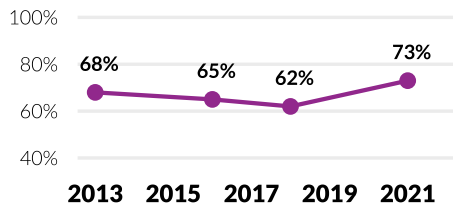
Civil society organizations can express opinions against the government



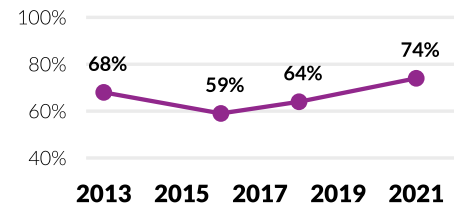
Political parties can express opinions against the government



Media can express opinions against the government without fear of retaliation

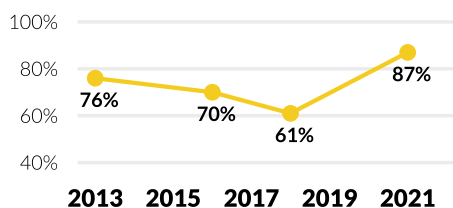


Media can expose cases of corruption

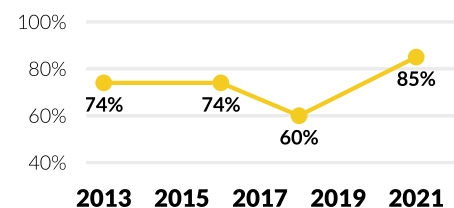


PARTICIPATION

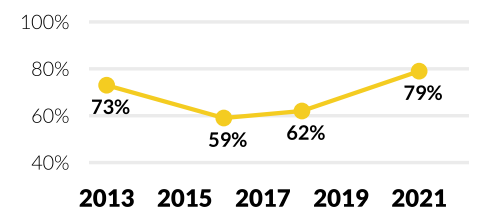
People can attend community meetings



People can join any political organization

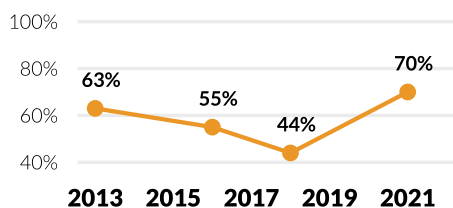


People can organize around an issue or petition

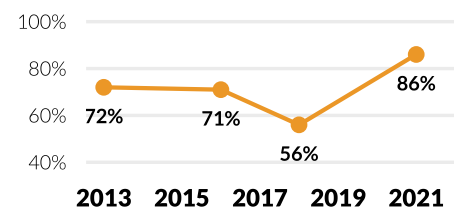


ELECTIONS

Local government officials are elected through a clean process

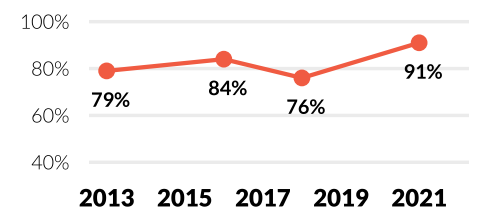


People can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured



RELIGION

Religious minorities can observe their holy days



Source: WJP General Population Poll 2013, 2016, 2018, and 2021

Corruption

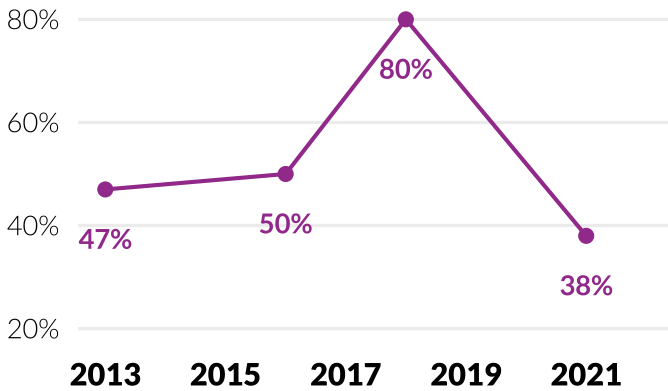
Perceptions of corruption in El Salvador.

Chart 3. Perceptions of Corruption by Institution Over Time

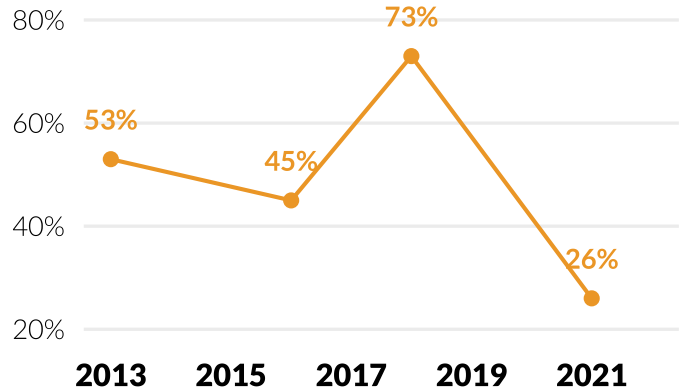
Percentage of respondents who believe that most or all people working in the following institutions are corrupt

LEGISLATIVE

(Members of the Legislative Assembly)

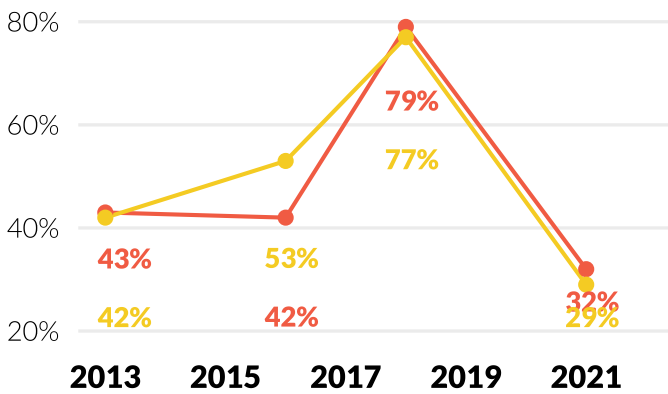


POLICE OFFICERS



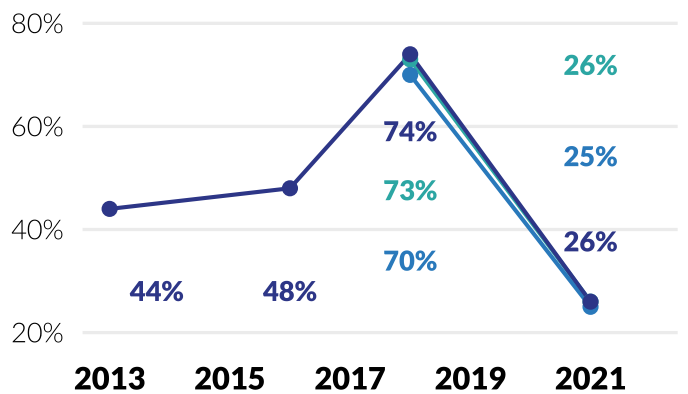
EXECUTIVE

(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

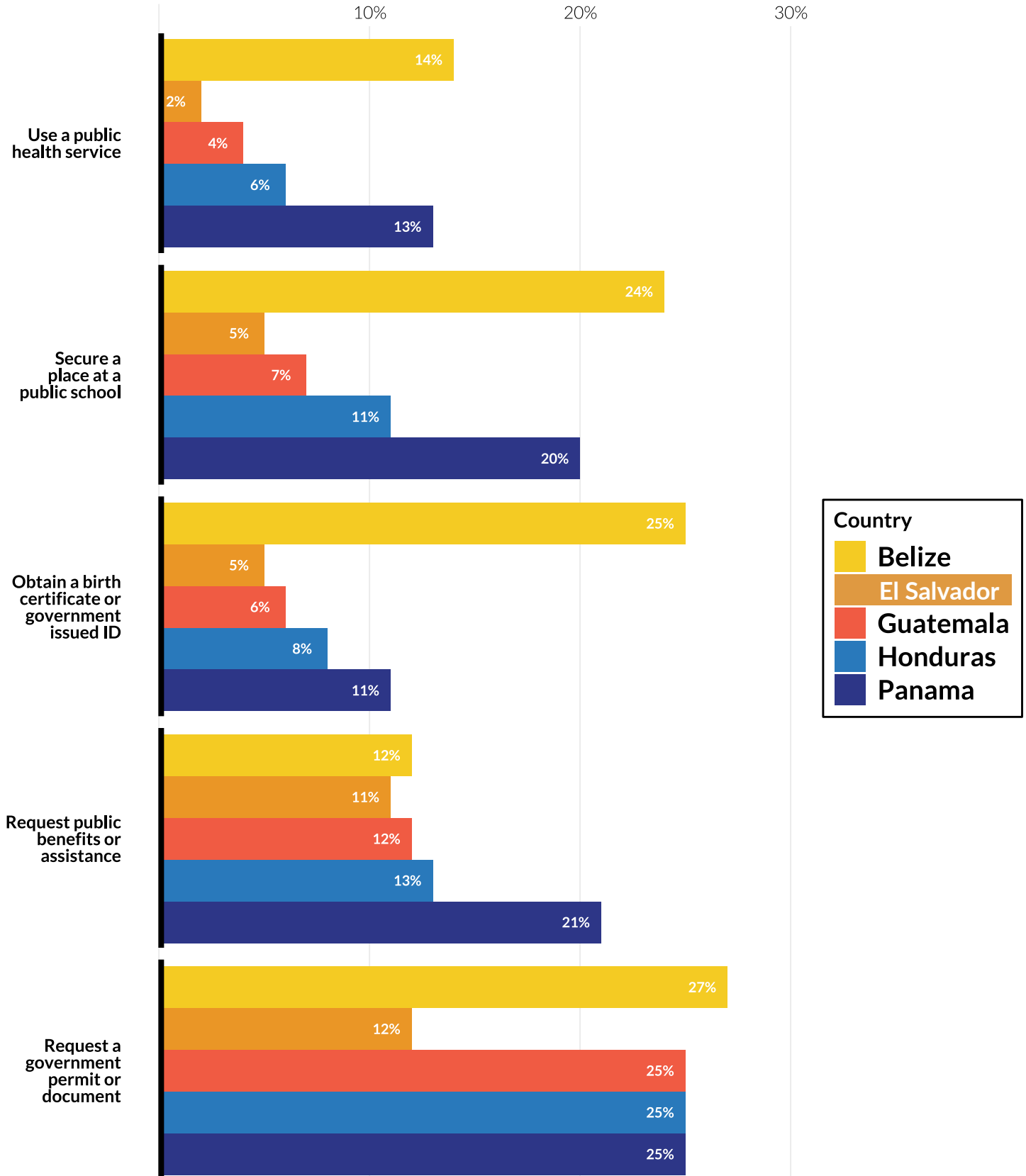
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2013, 2016, 2018, and 2021

Bribery Victimization

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

Chart 4. Bribery Victimization in El Salvador 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

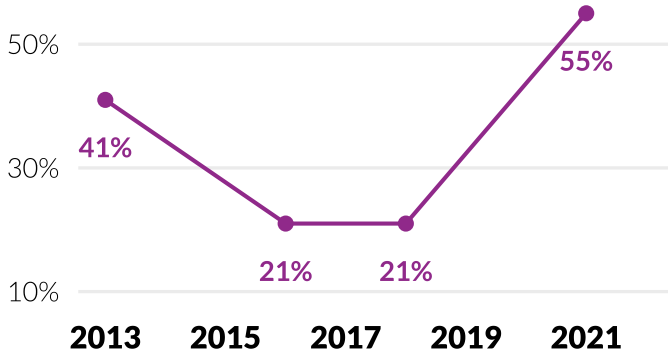
Trust

Extent to which people in El Salvador trust various groups and institutions.

Chart 5. Trust in Institutions Over Time

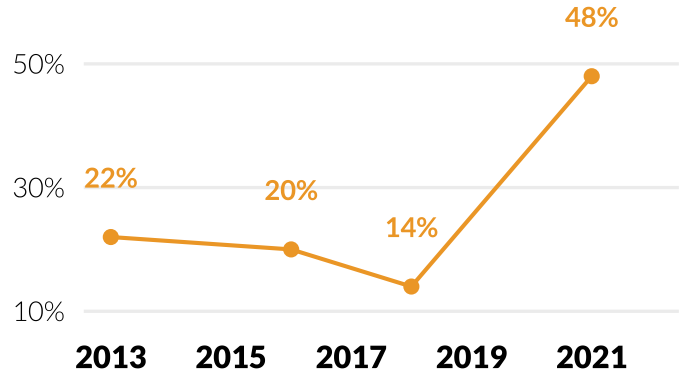
Percentage of respondents who have a lot or some trust in...

PEOPLE LIVING IN THEIR COMMUNITY



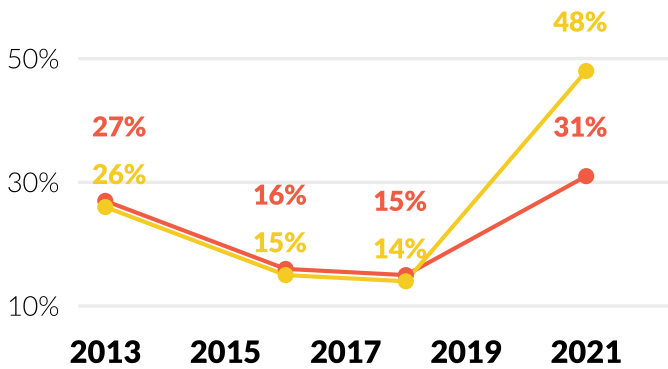
Note: Surveys administered before 2021 asked about "people in your country" instead of "people living in your community."

POLICE OFFICERS



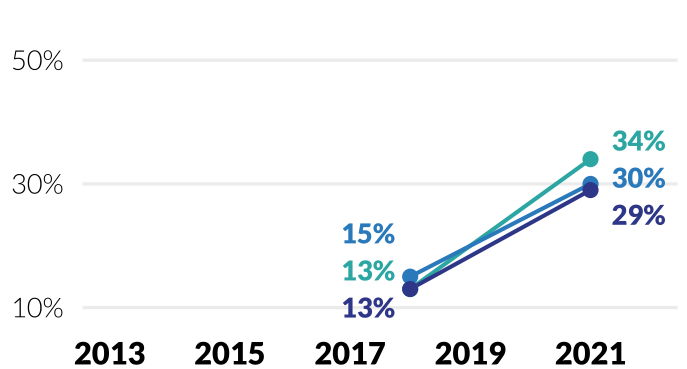
EXECUTIVE

(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 2013, 2016, 2018, 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

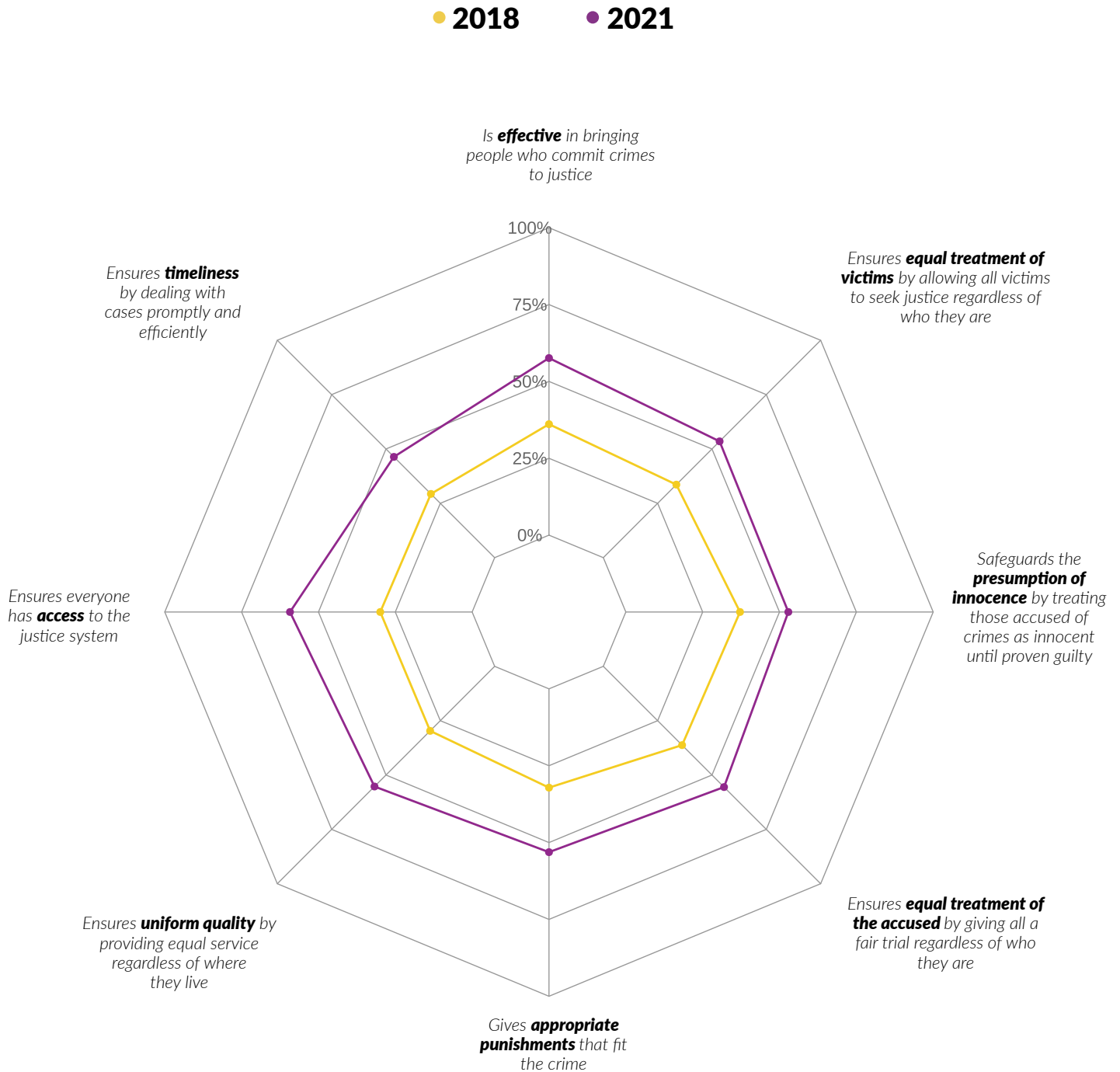
25 Victim Support

Criminal Justice System

Views on the criminal justice system in El Salvador.

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 2018 and 2021

Criminal Justice Actors

Views on the performance of criminal justice actors in El Salvador.

● 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

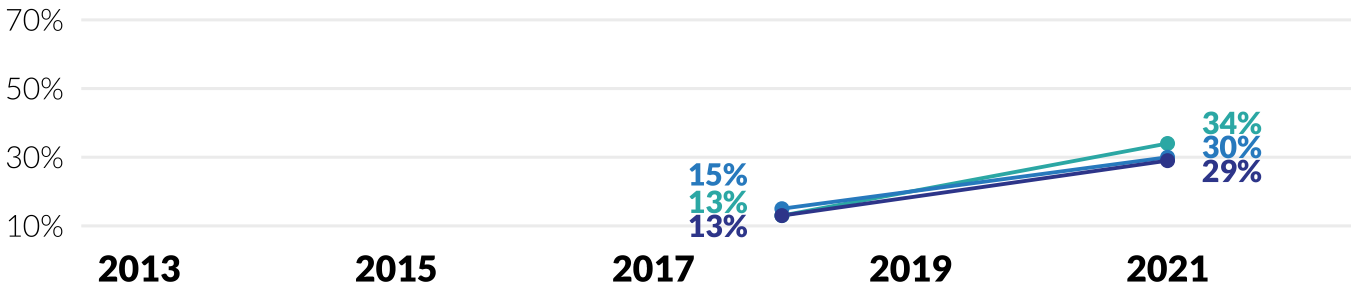


Chart 7b. Perceptions of Corruption Across Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

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

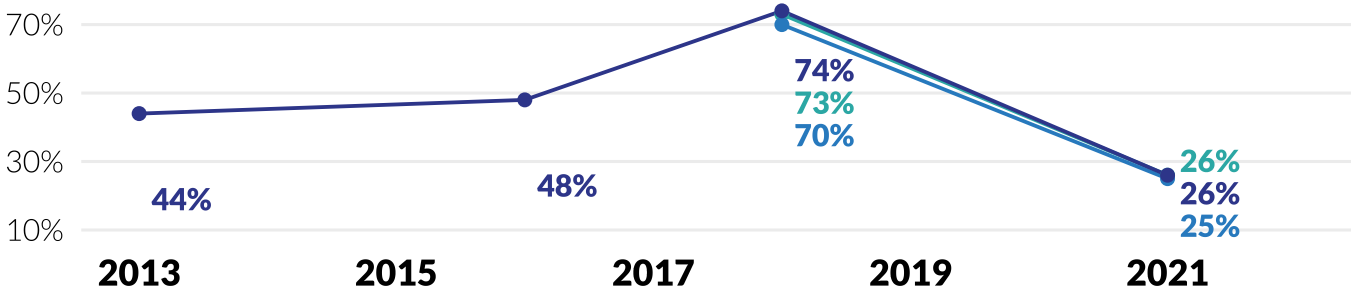
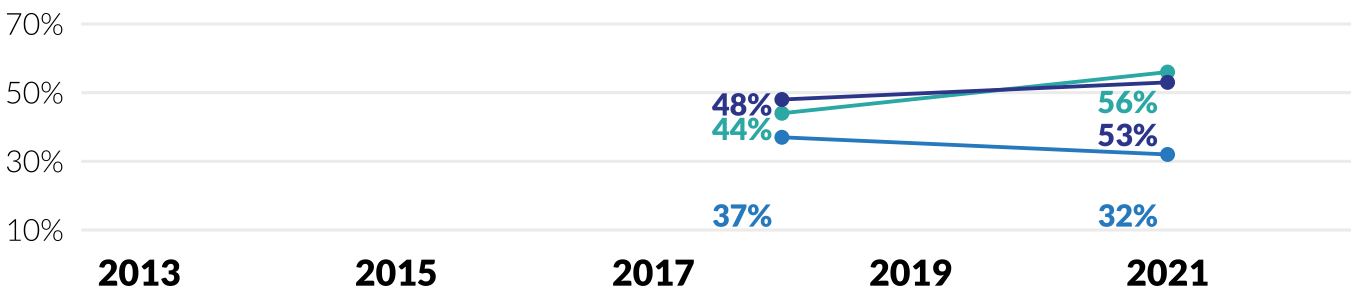


Chart 7c. Perceptions of Effectiveness Across Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

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 2013, 2016, 2018, and 2021

Police

Views on police performance in El Salvador.

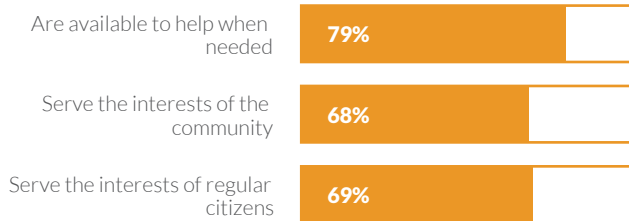
Chart 8a. Perceptions of the Police

Opinions on effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement

EFFECTIVENESS

SERVE THE PUBLIC

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



CRIME CONTROL AND SAFETY

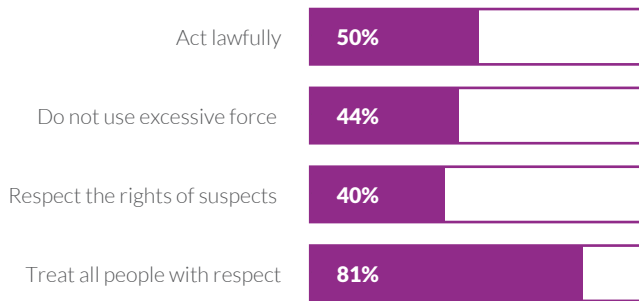
Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



LEGITIMACY

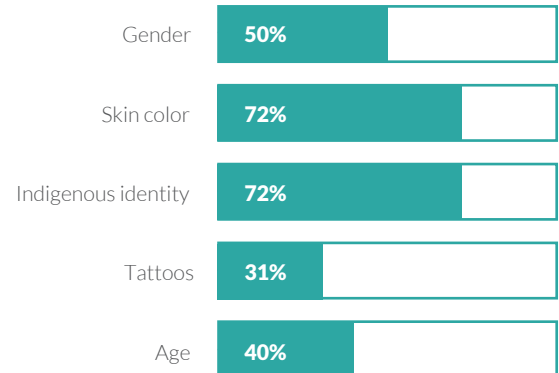
DUE PROCESS

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



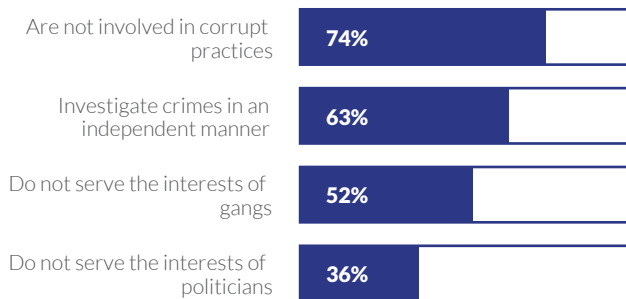
DISCRIMINATION

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



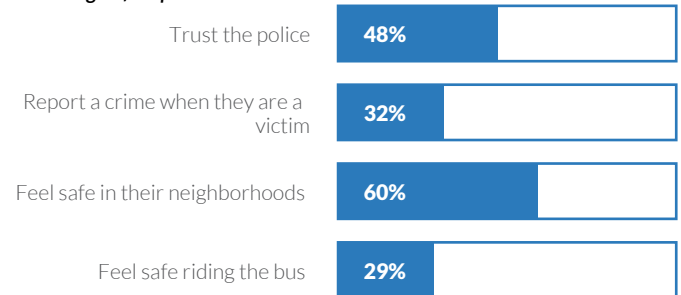
CORRUPTION

Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...



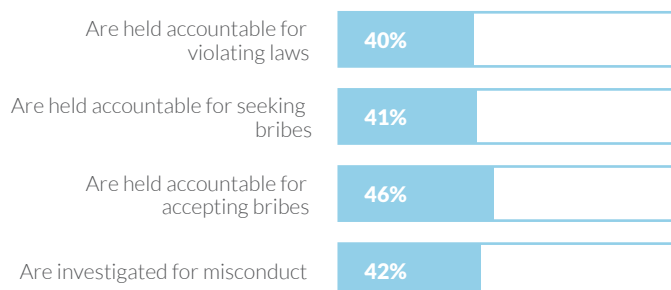
TRUST AND CRIME REPORTING

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 El Salvador.

Chart 8b. Interactions with the Police

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

VOLUNTARY

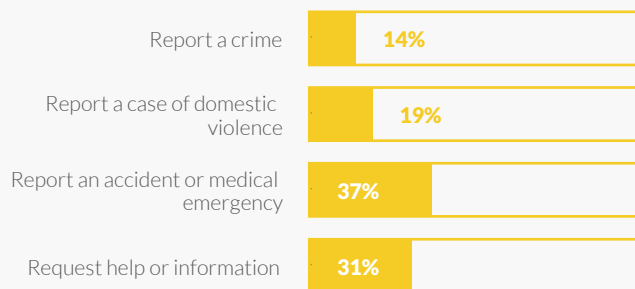
TOTAL VOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS

Percentage of respondents in El Salvador who contacted the police in the last 12 months

15%

CAUSES

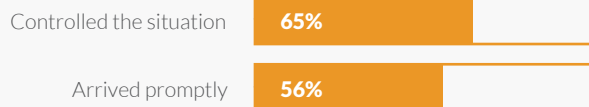
Reasons reported by respondents who contacted the police:



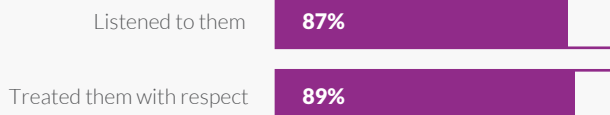
EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION

Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

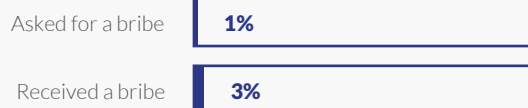
SERVE THE PUBLIC



DUE PROCESS



CORRUPTION



INVOLUNTARY

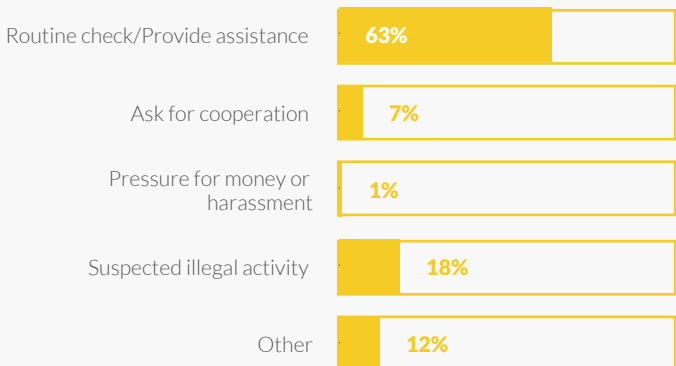
TOTAL INVOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS

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

22%

CAUSES

Reasons reported by respondents who were contacted by the police:



EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION

Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

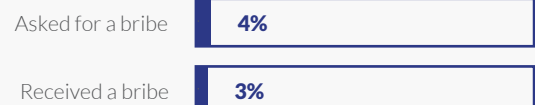
SERVE THE PUBLIC



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

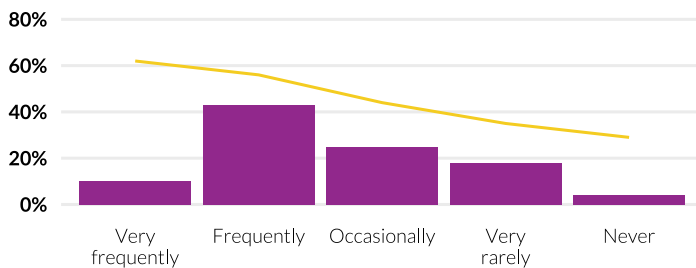


Chart 9b. Community Meetings and Trust

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

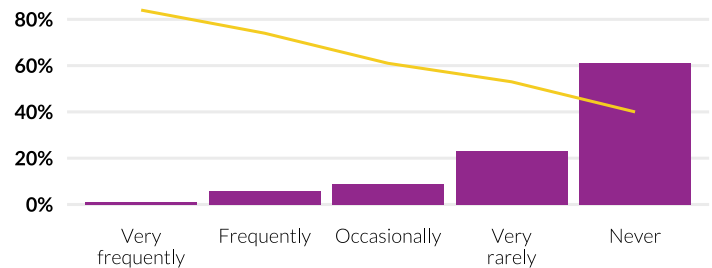


Chart 9c. Public Participation and Trust

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

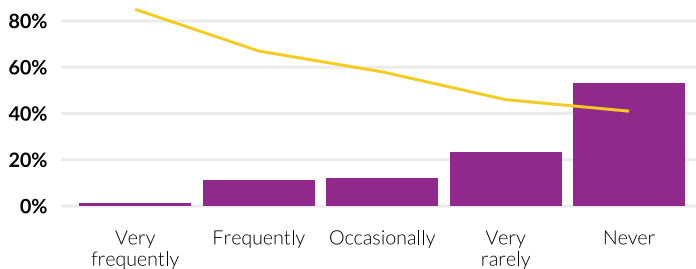
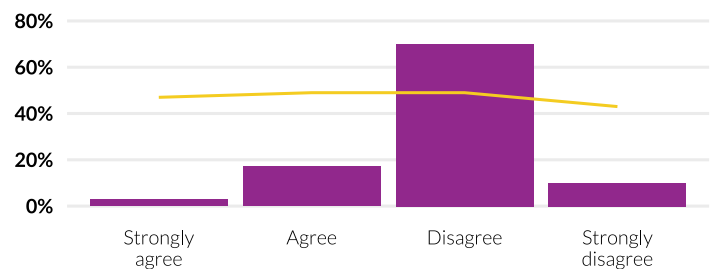


Chart 9d. Vigilante Justice and Trust

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	X	X	X
Do not feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night	X	X	X
Were previously asked for a bribe			
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	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 El Salvador.

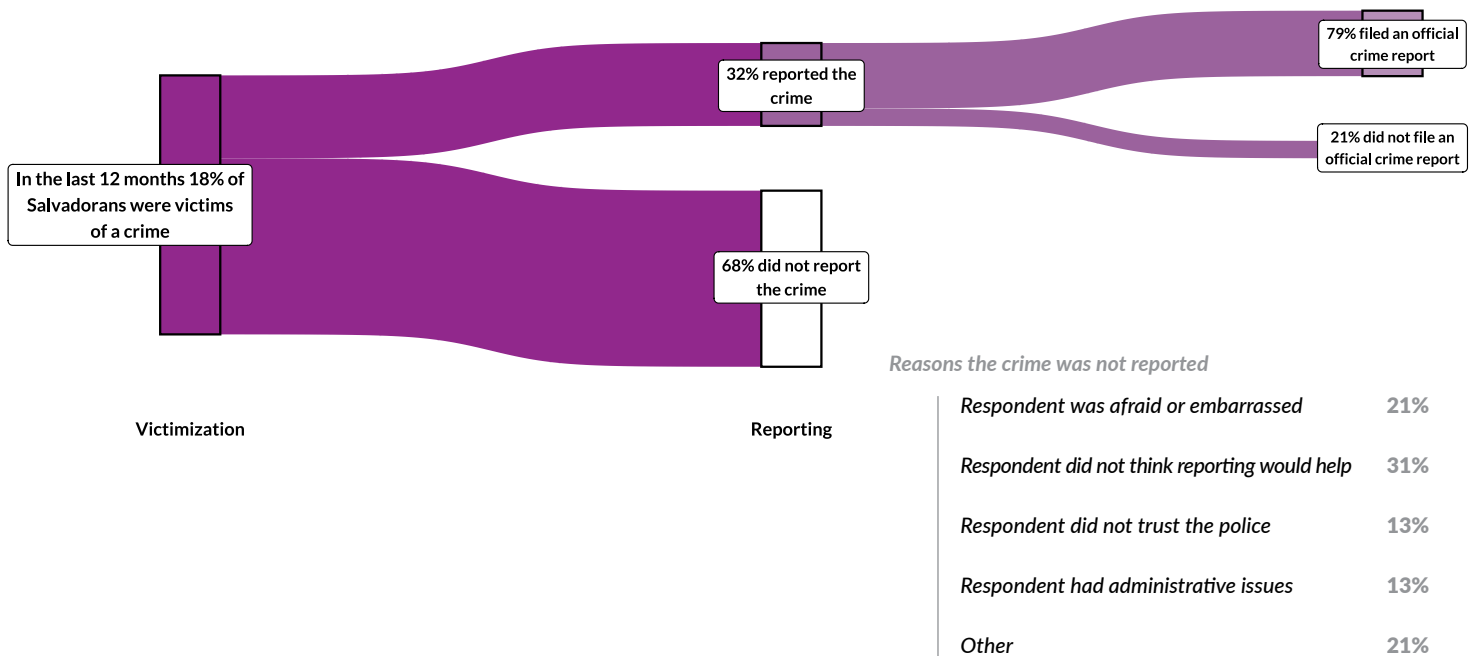
Chart 10a. Types of Crimes Experienced by People in El Salvador

Victimization rate, by type of crime



Chart 10b. Crime Victimization Rates and Reporting

Data on crime victimization and reporting in El Salvador



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 El Salvador.

Chart 10c. Crime Victimization by Sociodemographic Characteristic

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

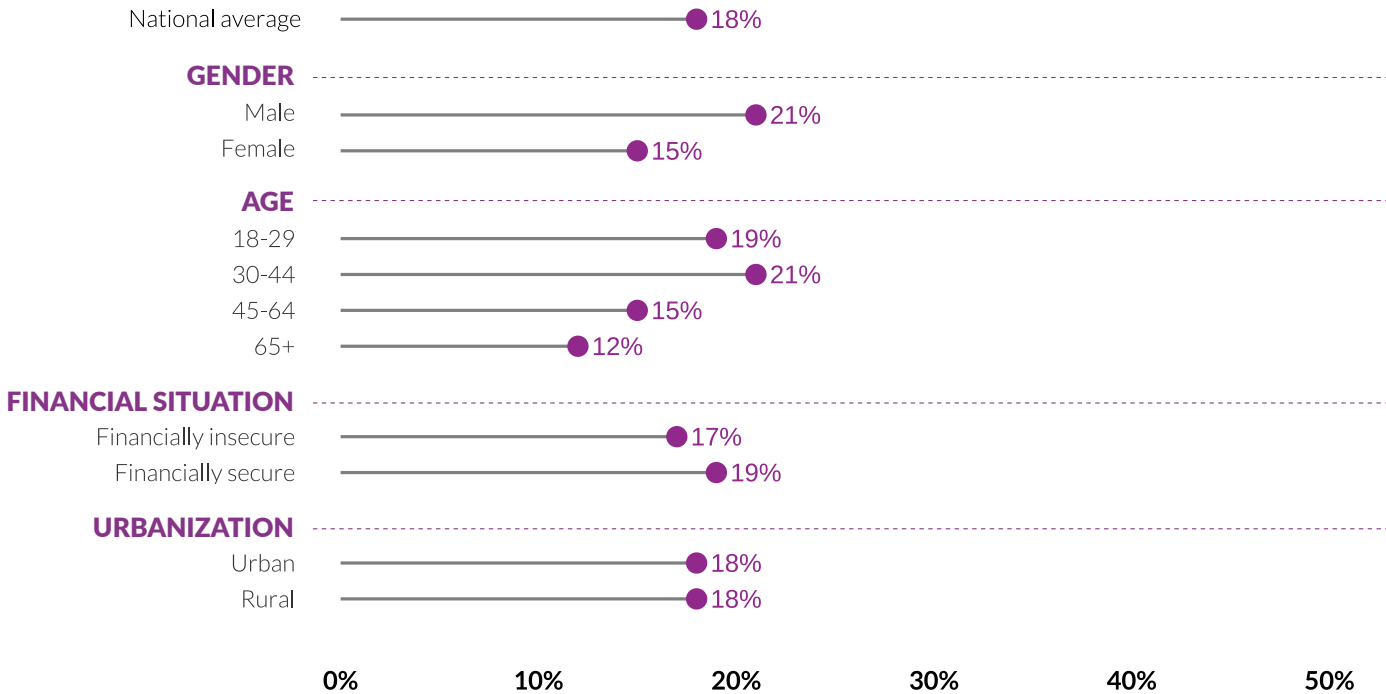
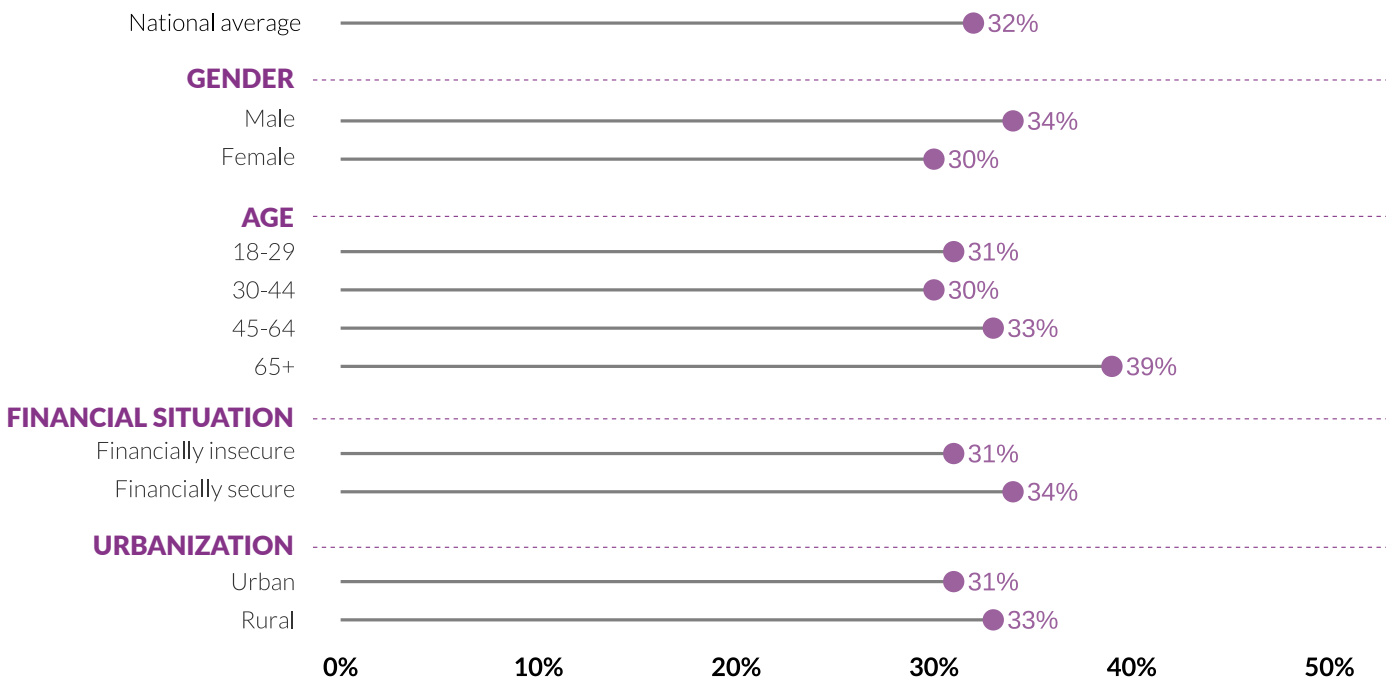


Chart 10d. Crime Reporting by Sociodemographic Characteristic

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



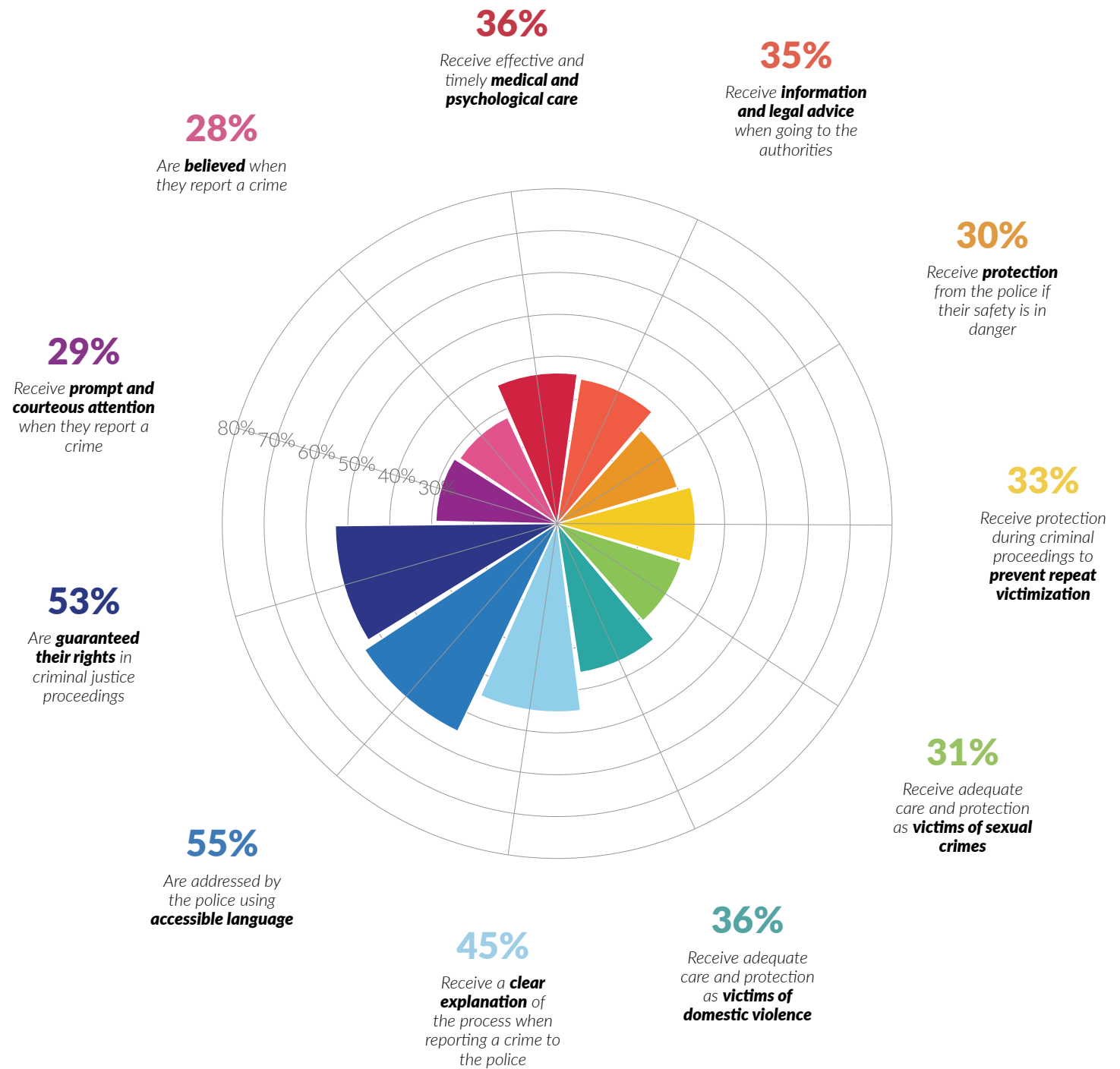
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

Victim Support

Views on support for crime victims in El Salvador.

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 El Salvador by Gender

Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements

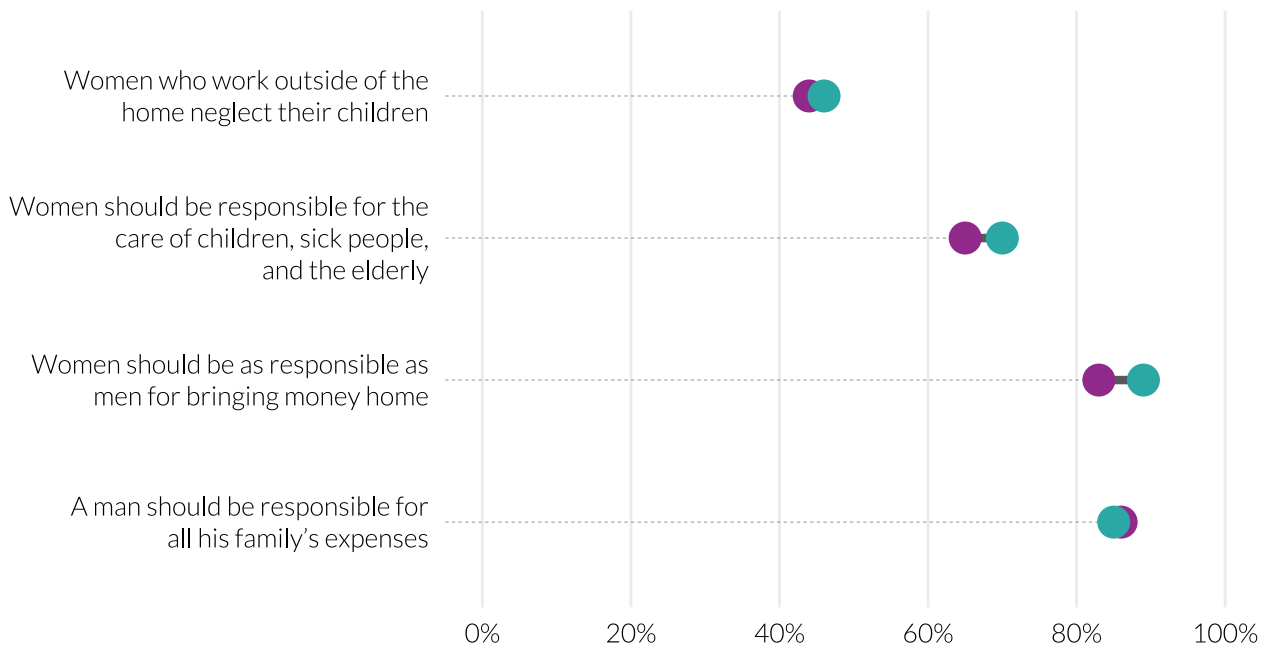
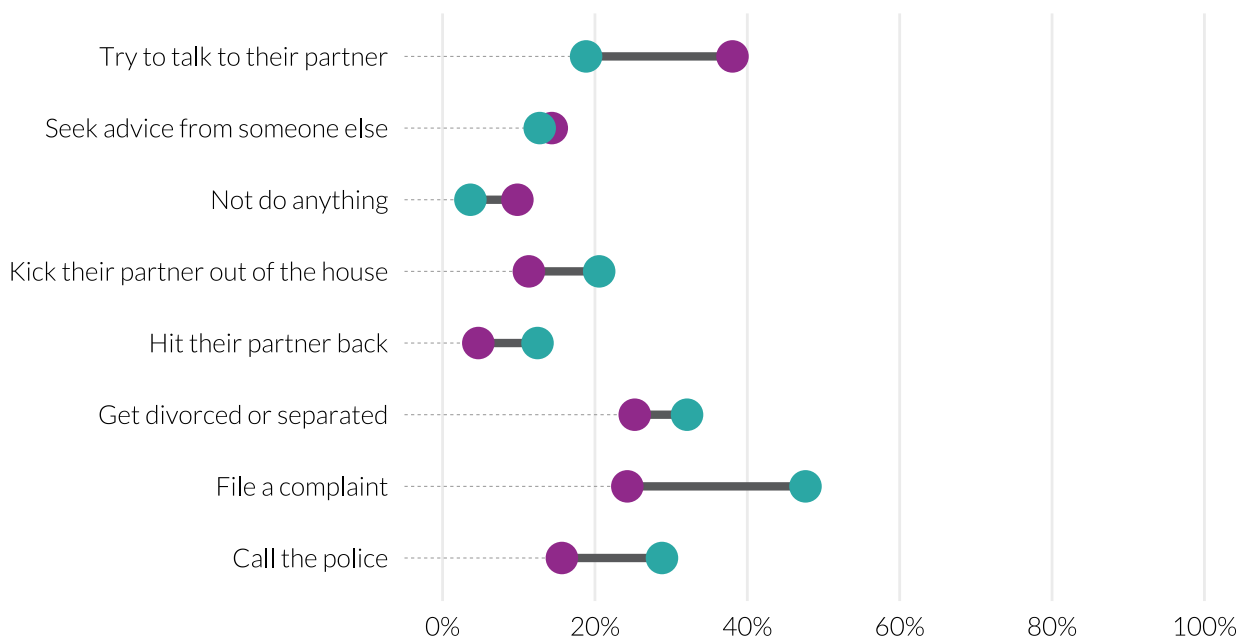


Chart 12b. Hypothetical Reactions to Domestic Violence by Gender

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

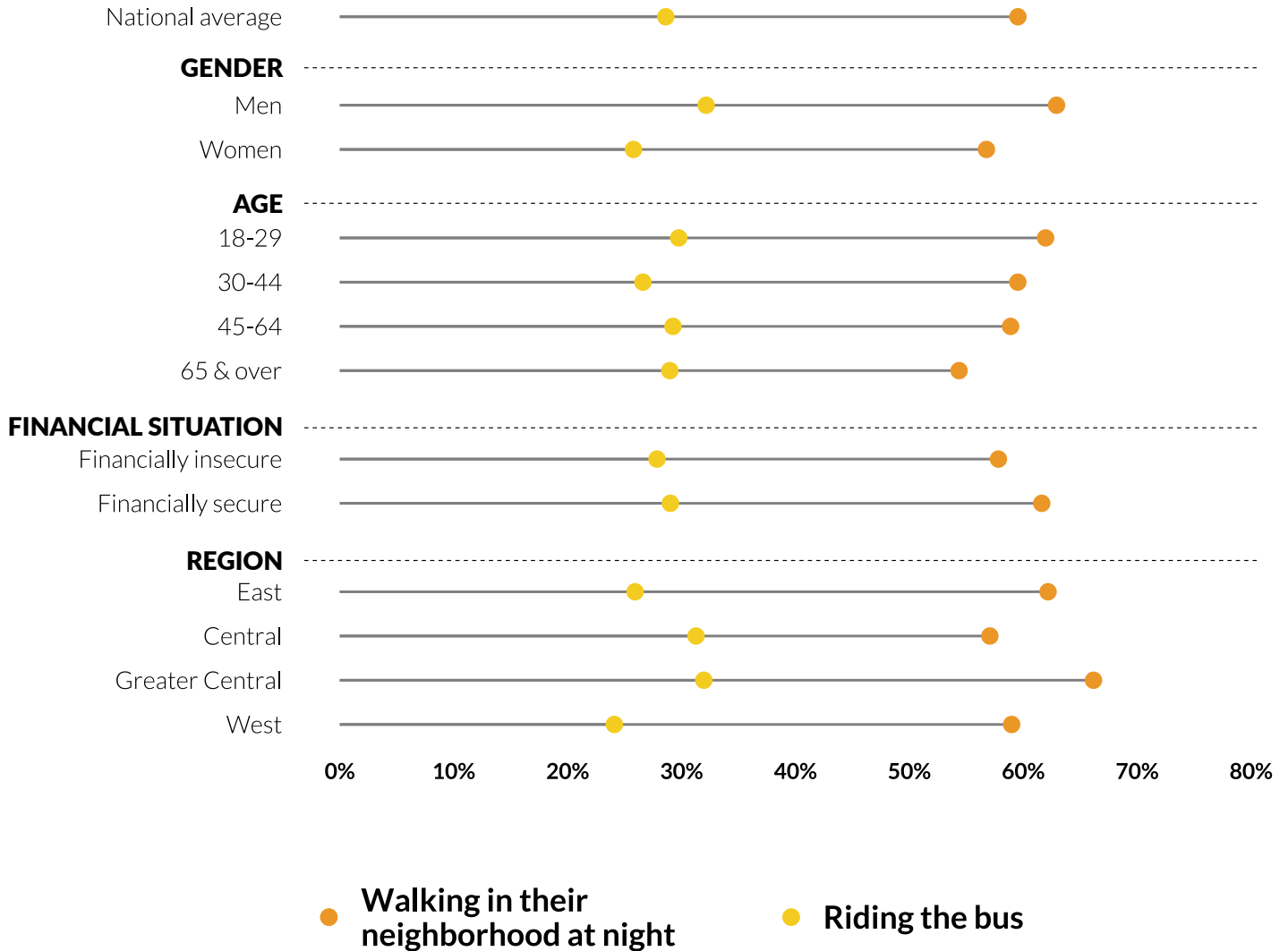


Security

Perceptions of safety and crime at the local level in El Salvador.

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 El Salvador.

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

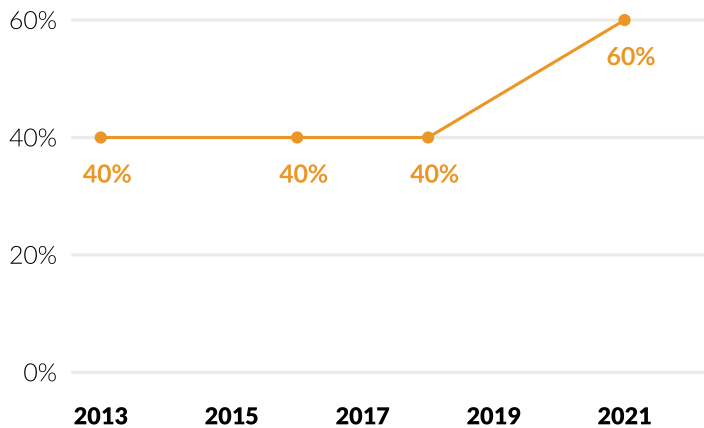
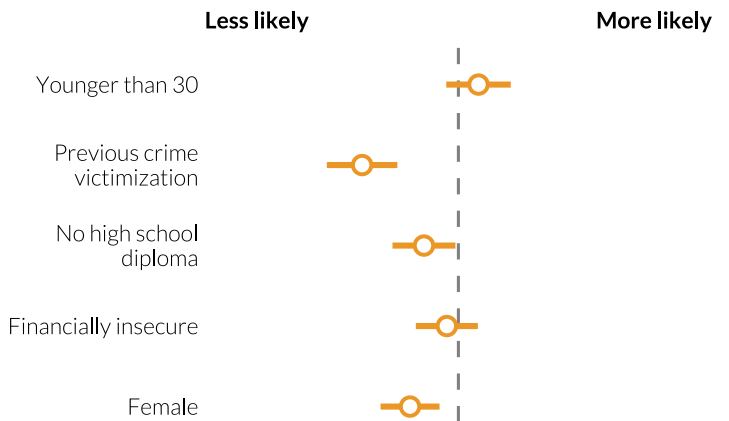


Chart 13c. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Perceptions of Safety

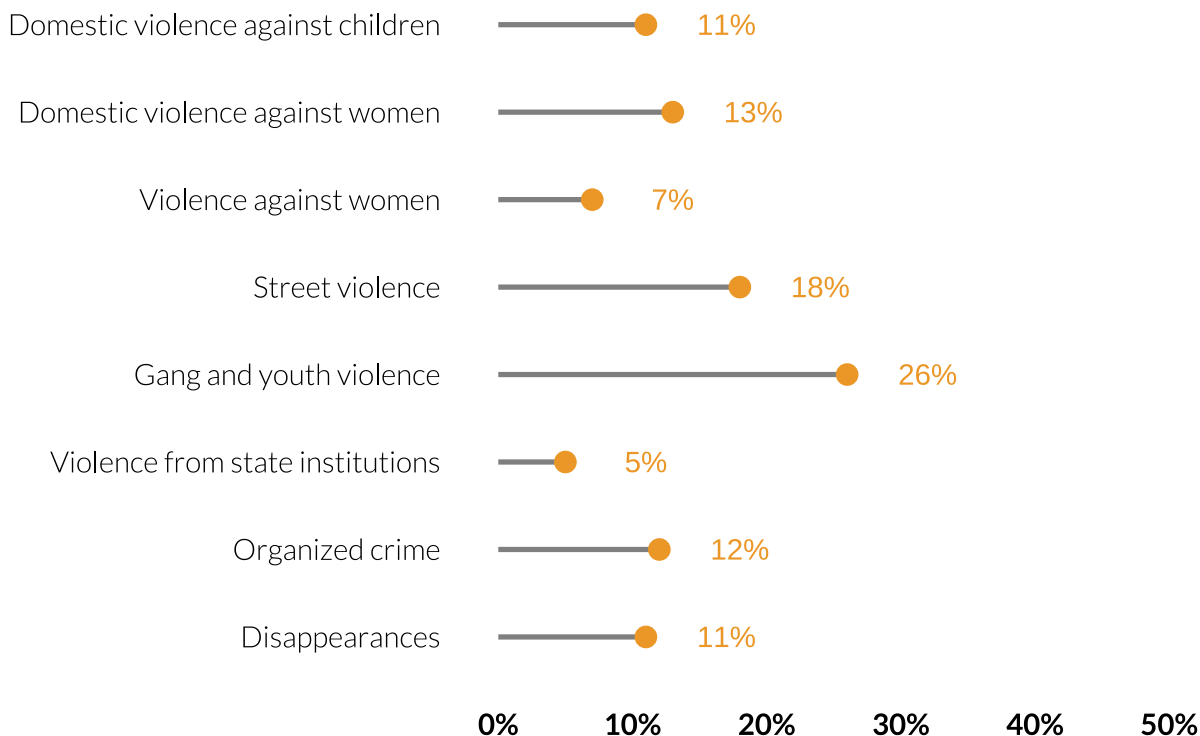
Likelihood that respondents feel safe or very safe walking in their neighborhood at night



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

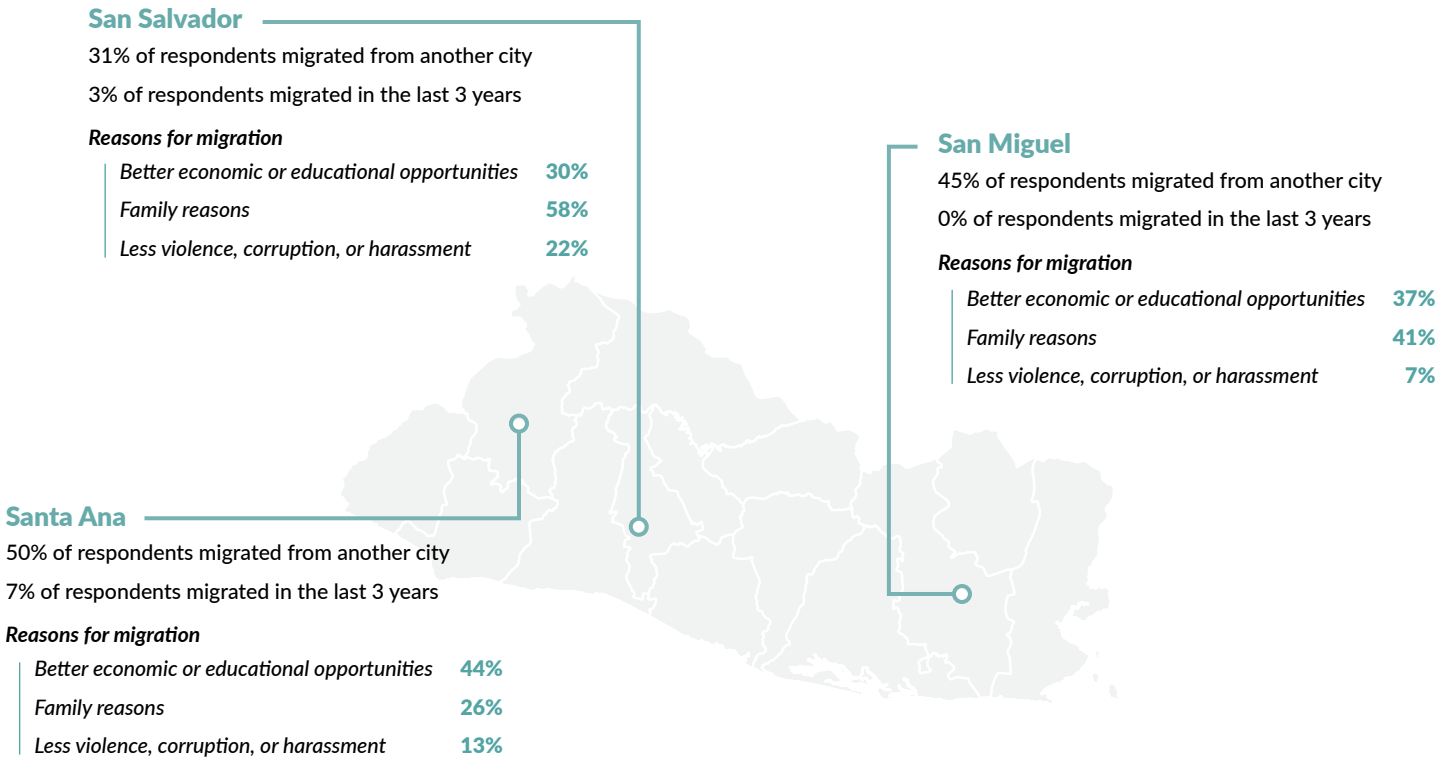


Internal Migration

Experiences with migration within El Salvador.

Chart 14a. Internal Migration by City

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

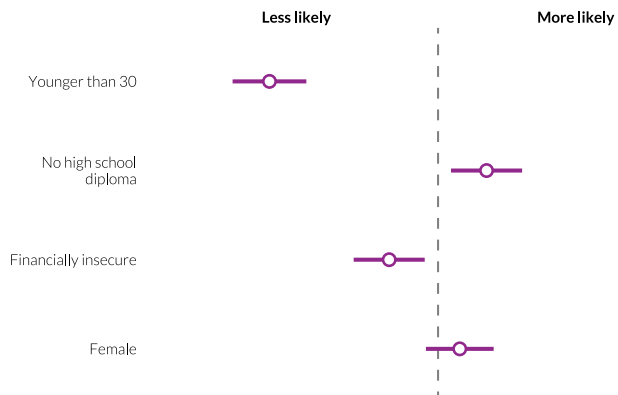


Note: For more information on how Chart 14a was produced, please see the Appendix.

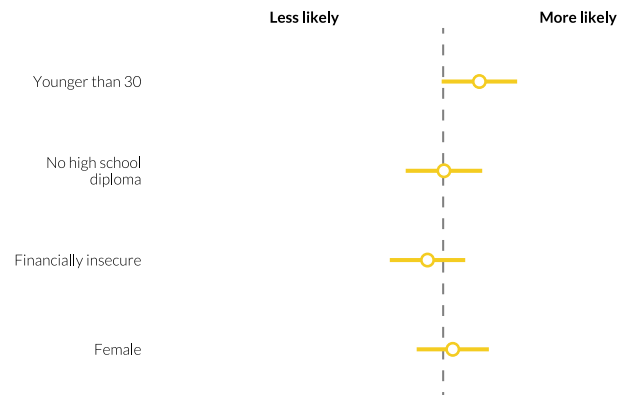
Chart 14b. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Internal Migration

Likelihood that respondents...

Have migrated within El Salvador



Have migrated within El Salvador 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

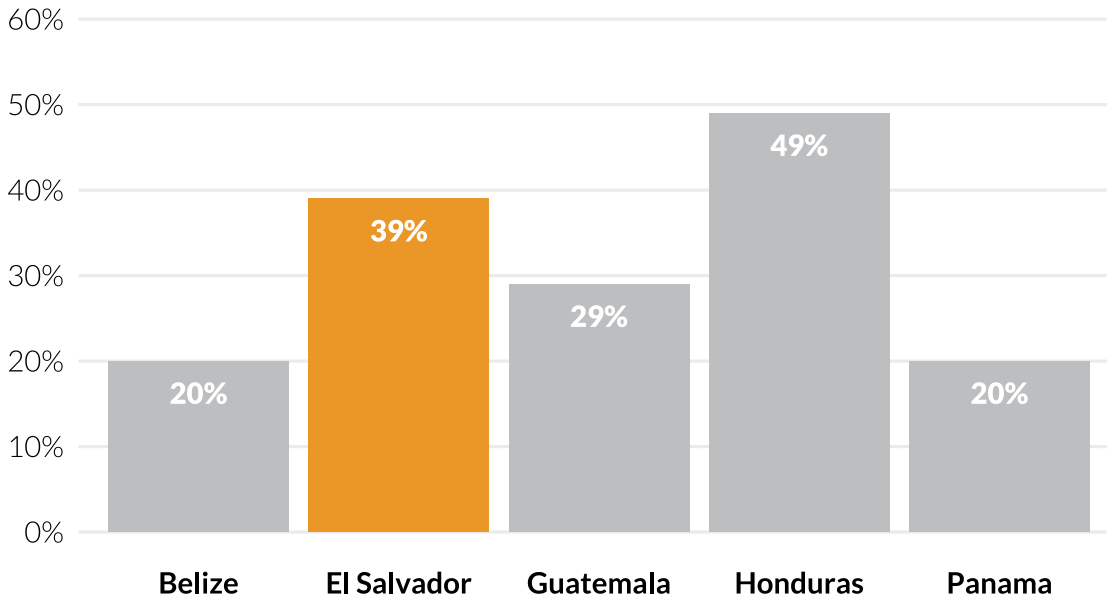
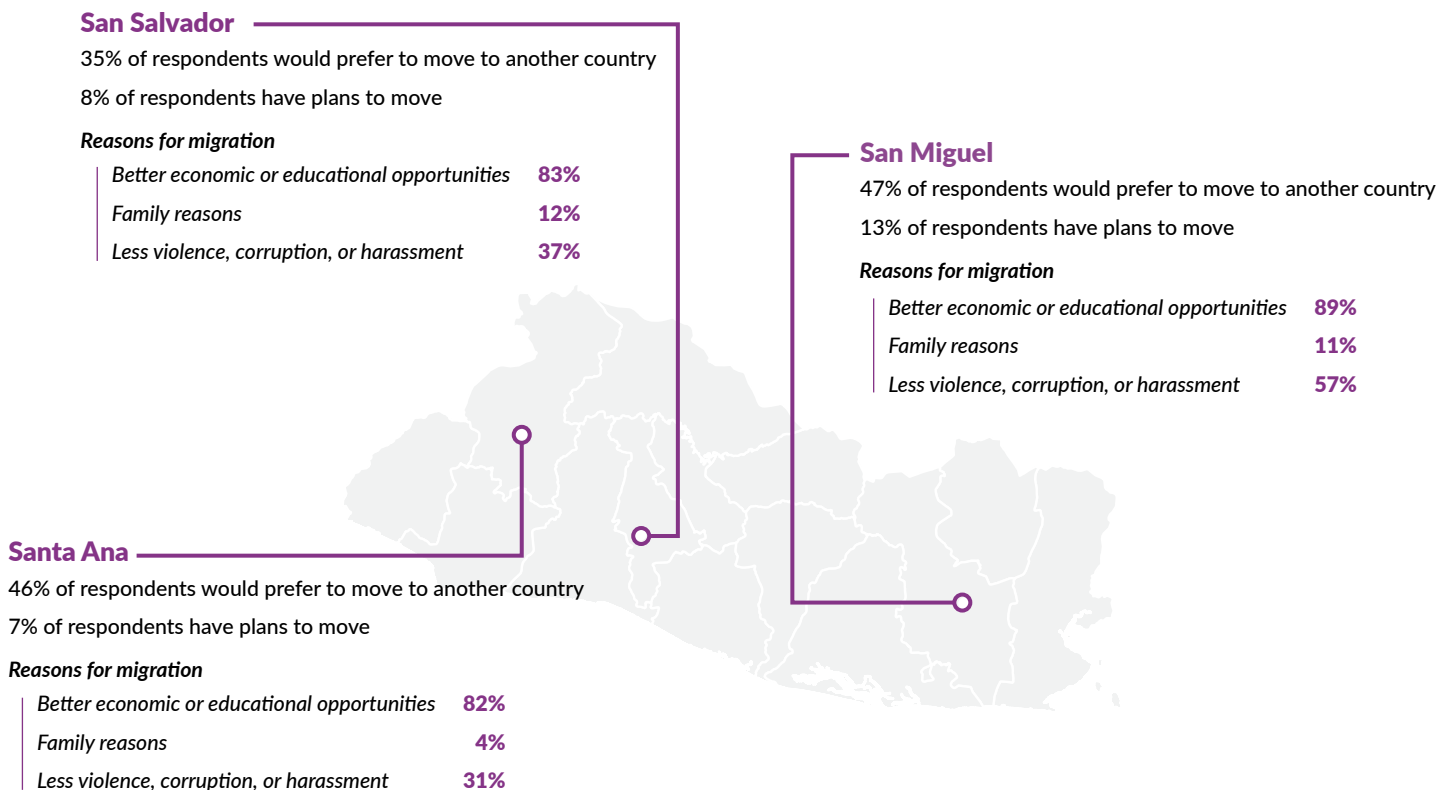


Chart 15b. International Migration by City

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

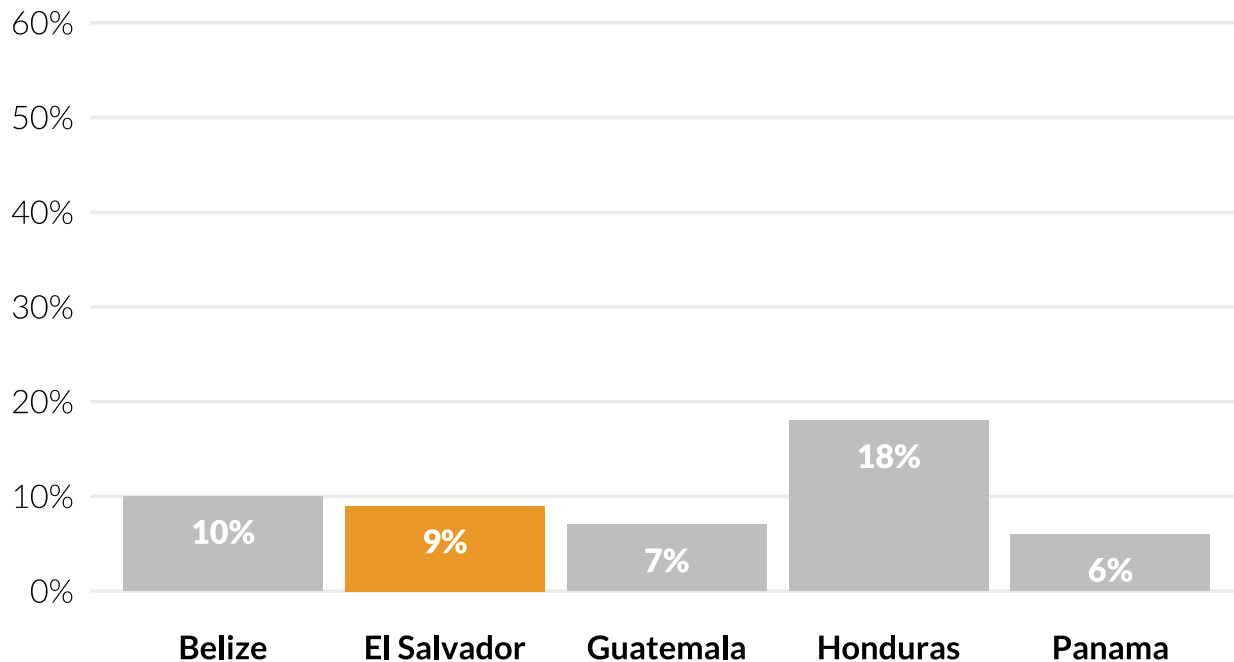
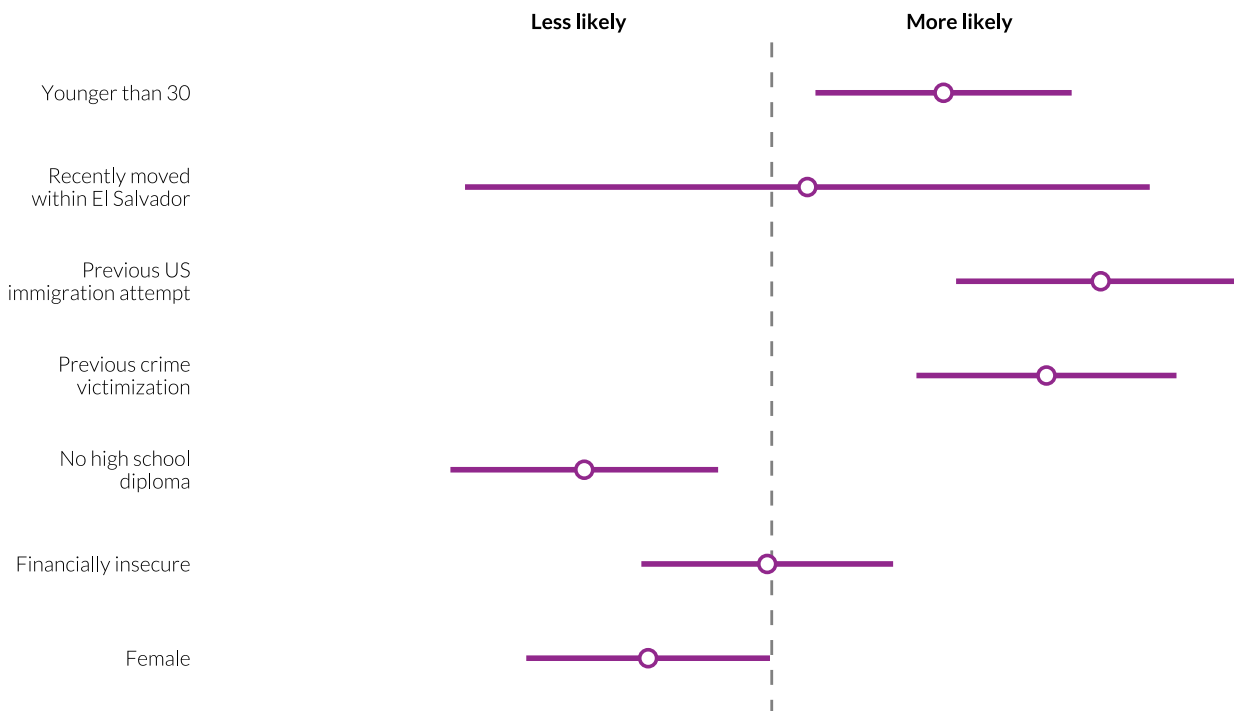


Chart 15d. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Intentions to Migrate Internationally

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.

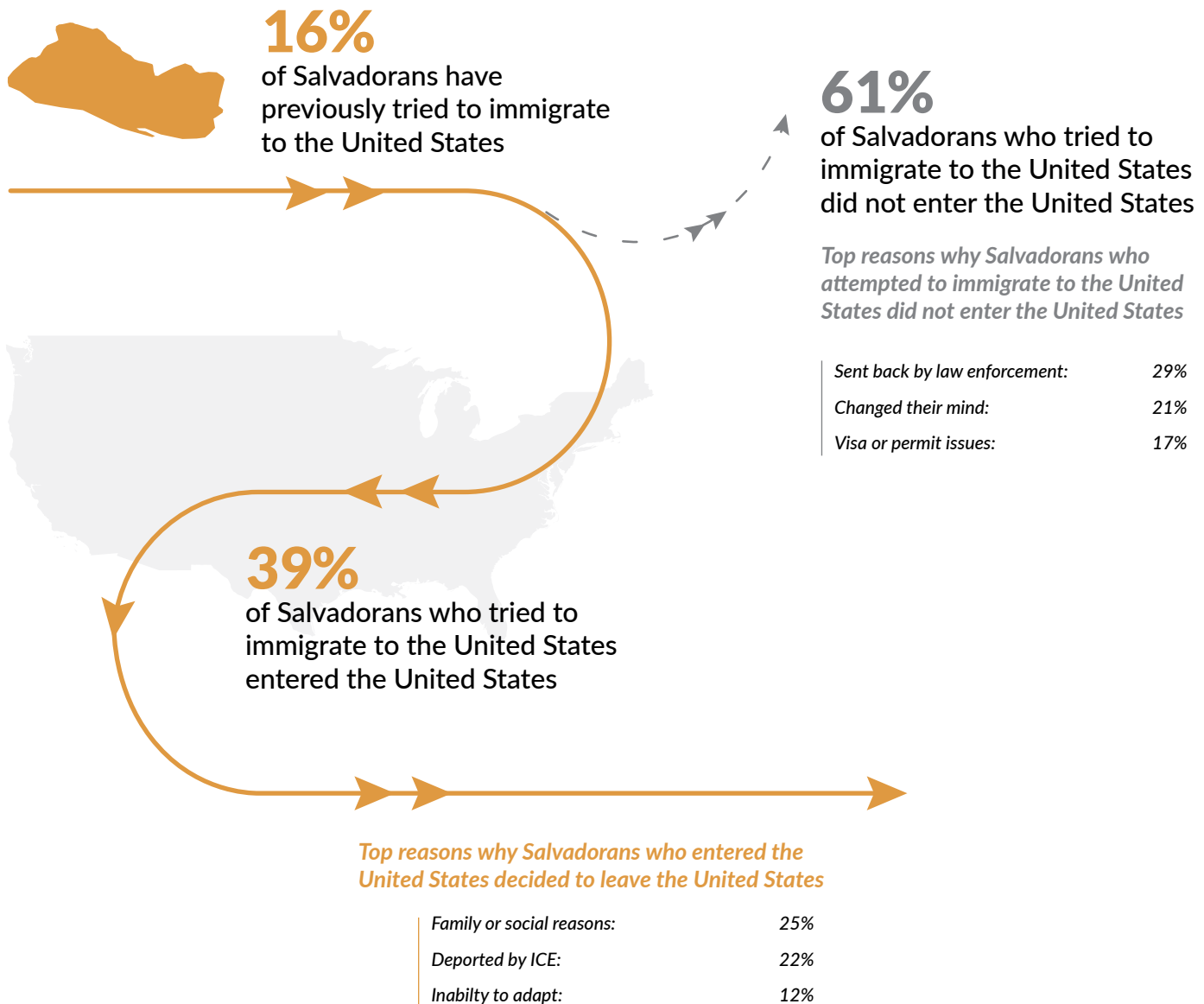
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

Migration to the United States

Experiences and challenges migrating to the United States.

Chart 16. Pathway to the United States

Experiences of Salvadorans 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 El Salvador was conducted for the WJP's *The Rule of Law in El Salvador: 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 Salvadorans aged 18 years or older residing across all 14 departments of the country.

SAMPLING SIZE AND SAMPLING FRAME

The General Population Poll in El Salvador represents an achieved total sample size of 2,526 interviews distributed proportionally across all four regions. CID Gallup based the sampling frame on the 2018 updated population figures from the General Directorate of Statistics and Censuses (DIGESTYC), 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 departments were selected to achieve a nationally representative sample of the country. Within municipalities, sampling segments were selected using probability proportional to size sampling and each consisted of 6 interviews at the cantón, or 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 303 substitutions in total.

Challenges to data collection in El Salvador included the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, security concerns, 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 Central and Paracentral regions (57%), followed by the Western region (23%) and Eastern region (20%).

GEOGRAPHY: Thirty-three percent (33%) of respondents reside in rural areas and municipalities and 67% of respondents reside in metro areas or cities.

ETHNICITY: Most respondents identified themselves as Mestizo (72%), followed by Indigenous (12%) and White (7%).

GENDER: Fifty-five percent (55%) of respondents were female and 45% were male.

EDUCATION: Most respondents (51%) reported that they had received at least a high school diploma or vocational degree, and the remaining 49% of respondents received a middle school diploma or less.

Response Rates

Eligible household, non-interview	1,821
<i>Refusals</i>	1,402
<i>Break-off</i>	71
<i>Non-contact</i>	303
<i>Other reason</i>	45
Ineligible household	265
<i>No eligible respondent in the household</i>	78
<i>Quota filled</i>	147

Interviewing and Quality Control

In total, 52 interviewers worked on this project, including 32 female interviewers. Enumerators worked in 13 groups of four interviewers with one supervisor per group. Interviews were conducted in Spanish.

The supervisory team directly oversaw 37% of interviews in the field. During data processing, 33% of the interviews were selected for audio validation. After quality control, 48 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 50 minutes in length and ranged from 42 to 102 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 El Salvador are comparable to trends in perceptions data measured by other indices, the experiences and perceptions presented in this report do not necessarily coincide with the reality of El Salvador'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.

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

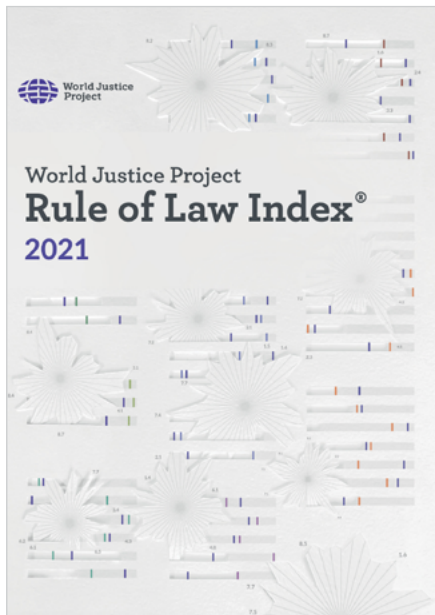
About the World Justice Project

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.

Other Publications



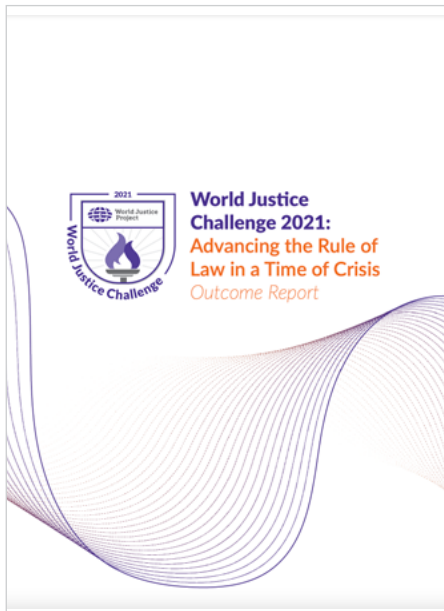
WJP Rule of Law Index 2021



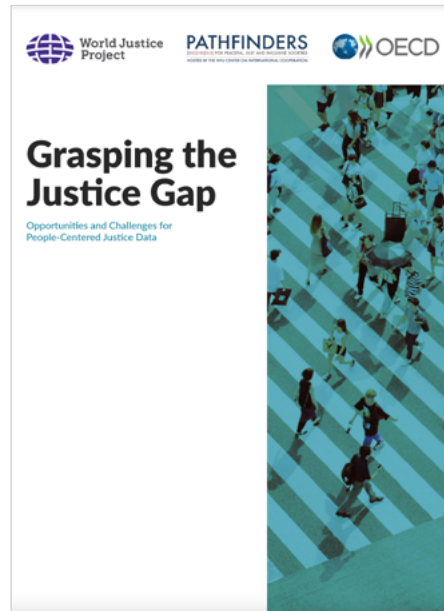
WJP Rule of Law Index 2021 Insights
Highlights and data trends from the WJP Rule of Law Index 2021



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
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