World Justice Project

The Rule of Law in Guatemala

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

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

The GPP was conducted in October and November of 2021 through face-to-face interviews administered to a nationally representative sample of 2,508 Guatemalan 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 Guatemalans. These thematic briefs focus on the current rule of law ecosystem in Guatemala, while simultaneously illuminating changes over time and comparisons across the following regional peer countries: Belize, El Salvador, 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 Guatemala: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021 report provides a comprehensive overview of how citizens perceive and experience the rule of law in Guatemala. 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, corruption, and lack of support for crime victims—persist.

Section 1:
Accountability and Fundamental Freedoms

1 GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Perceptions of government accountability in Guatemala are low and have worsened over time. Only 38% of Guatemalan respondents believe that a high-ranking government official would be prosecuted and punished if they were to embezzle public funds for personal benefit, a decline from 46% in 2018. Meanwhile, Guatemalans' views on presidential power have remained consistent over time. Two-thirds (67%) of respondents believe that the President should always obey laws and court decisions even if they disagree with them. Compared to respondents in regional peer countries, Guatemalans reported mid-range perceptions on government accountability and checks on the executive branch.

2 FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

When it comes to guarantees of fundamental freedoms, Guatemalans have generally positive views. Guatemalans believe that all dimensions of freedom of expression have improved or stayed the same since 2018. Respondents hold fairly positive views about their right to participate in political processes, and report that their freedoms to attend community meetings and join political organizations have improved. In contrast, Guatemalans hold the most critical views on electoral freedoms, with only 50% of respondents believing that local government officials are elected through a clean process. While the majority of Guatemalans agree that religious freedoms are effectively guaranteed, the percentage of respondents who believe that religious minorities can observe their holy days fell from 88% to 83% between 2018 and 2021.

3 CORRUPTION

Perceptions of corruption vary significantly across institutions in Guatemala. In both 2018 and 2021, the majority of Guatemalans (68%) believe that most or all members of the Congress of the Republic are involved in corrupt practices, while roughly half believe the same of police officers (48%), local government officers (50%), and national government officers (54%). Actors within the judiciary are perceived to be the least corrupt, and the percentages of respondents who believe prosecutors, public defense attorneys, and judges and magistrates are involved in corrupt practices have all decreased since 2018. Of this group, public defense attorneys perform the best, with only 32% of respondents believing most or all of them are involved in corrupt practices.

4 BRIBERY VICTIMIZATION

Guatemalans' experiences with bribery are middling in comparison to those of respondents in regional peer countries. One-quarter (25%) of Guatemalans paid a bribe in the last three years to request a government permit or document. Respondents also reported paying a bribe to request public benefits or assistance (13%), secure a place at a public school (7%), obtain a birth certificate or government issued ID (6%), and use a public health service (4%). These rates are relatively low when compared to bribery victimization rates in regional peer countries, with Salvadorans reporting the lowest rates of bribery victimization and Belizeans reporting the highest.

5 TRUST

Despite improvements since 2016, Guatemalans have low levels of trust in the executive, the judiciary, and the police. Less than half of respondents in Guatemala (46%) reported having some or a lot of trust in public defense attorneys, while only 37% and 39% of respondents reported at least some trust in judges and magistrates, or prosecutors, respectively. Public levels of trust in the police are similarly low (37%), though this figure improved by 25 percentage points between 2016 and 2021. In 2021, respondents least often expressed at least some trust in national government officers (28% of respondents) and local government officers (32% of respondents), and most often in people living in their community (59% of respondents).

Section 2: Police and Criminal Justice

6 CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

Guatemalans report higher levels of confidence in all dimensions of the criminal justice system than in 2018. In 2021, most respondents were confident that the criminal justice system safeguards the presumption of innocence (60%), ensures equal treatment of victims of crime (59%) and the accused (58%), and is accessible for everyone (58%). Guatemalans reported the lowest levels of confidence in the criminal justice system's ability to serve everyone equally regardless of location (53%), and to deal with cases promptly and efficiently (42%).

7 CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTORS

Guatemalans' views on the performance of key criminal justice actors have improved over time. Respondents reported having the highest levels of trust in public defense attorneys (46%), followed by prosecutors (39%), and judges and magistrates (37%). In line with these findings, Guatemalans perceive public defense attorneys to be the least corrupt criminal justice actor (32%), followed by prosecutors (34%), and judges and magistrates (36%). Each of these figures mark an improvement since 2018, with a ten-percentage-point decrease in both Guatemalans' perceptions of corruption among public defense attorneys and among prosecutors. Guatemalans believe prosecutors to be the most effective actor (57%), with judges and magistrates a close second (55%).

8 POLICE
Police Perceptions

Guatemalans have mixed views on police performance. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (65%) agree that the police resolve security problems in their community, but only 38% believe that police investigators perform effective and lawful investigations. Guatemalans reported similarly conflicting sentiments on due process — while only half (50%) of respondents believe that the police do not use excessive force, and only one-third believe that the police both act lawfully and respect suspects' rights (33% in each category), 78% believe that the police treat all people with kindness and respect.

Moreover, around half of respondents (52%) believe that the police are not involved in corrupt practices, but fewer believe that police do not serve the interests of gangs (43%) or politicians (31%). Only 36% of respondents believe that the police are investigated for misconduct or held accountable for violating the law.

Police Interactions

In both voluntary and involuntary interactions with the police, most Guatemalans 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 a medical emergency. During these voluntary interactions, most respondents reported that the police controlled the situation (61%) and arrived promptly (65%). Most respondents (84%) also reported that the police treated them with respect, and very few were solicited for a bribe or offered a bribe (6% and 4%, respectively).

Most Guatemalans who were involuntarily contacted by the police (78%) reported that they were stopped for a routine check or for the police to provide assistance. During the interaction, 73% of respondents believed that the police were able to control the situation. However, while 71% felt that police clearly explained the reasons for their actions, only 57% of individuals who experienced involuntary police interactions believe that they were stopped for a legitimate reason. In comparison to voluntary contacts, more people who had involuntary interactions with the police were solicited for a bribe or offered a bribe (13% and 9% respectively).

9 COMMUNITY POLICING, VIGILANTE JUSTICE, AND TRUST

Guatemalans living in communities with a greater police presence have more trust in the police and are less likely to accept vigilante justice than those who interact with the police less frequently. In contrast, respondents who say police rarely or never patrol their neighborhood are less likely to trust the police, believe they resolve security problems in the community, or believe they act lawfully. Levels of trust are also correlated with public participation in police affairs — respondents who said police rarely or never hold community meetings or welcome public input are statistically less likely to trust the police or perceive them as effective.

10 CRIME VICTIMIZATION

Nearly one in five (19%) Guatemalans have experienced at least one crime in the past year. Less than half (48%) of those who experienced a crime reported the incident to the police or another authority, and of those, 86% chose to file an official crime report. Fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents did not report the crime, and the most frequently cited reason for their decision was that they did not think reporting would help, with 48% of respondents choosing this option. Respondents experienced property crimes most frequently (14%), followed by crimes against life and integrity (12%). Incidence of crime victimization was highest among men, individuals between the ages of 18 and 29, and Guatemalans living in urban areas. Women, individuals between the ages of 18 and 29, and Guatemalans living in rural areas reported crimes least frequently.

11 VICTIM SUPPORT

Most Guatemalans are not confident that crime victims receive adequate resources and protection. Roughly one in four (25%) Guatemalans believe crime victims receive prompt and courteous attention, are believed when they report a crime (26%), and/or are confident that victims receive effective and timely medical and psychological care (31%). When it comes to protection, just over one-third (35%) of respondents believe that victims are both protected by the police when their safety is in danger and receive protection during criminal proceedings to prevent repeated victimization. Respondents are more confident that police address victims of crime using accessible language (50%) and that victims are guaranteed their rights in criminal justice proceedings (54%).

Section 3:
Gender, Security and Migration

12 GENDER ROLES AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Despite mixed views on gender roles, most men and women in Guatemala agree that a man should be responsible for his family's expenses. When asked if women who work outside the home neglect their children, men and women had similar views, with around half of respondents of both genders answering affirmatively (52% for men and 49% for women). The largest difference between men and women's opinions on gender roles is regarding beliefs on whether women should be as responsible as men for bringing money home, with 83% of female and 73% of male respondents agreeing with this statement.

When respondents were asked which actions they would take if faced with domestic violence from a partner, women and men chose differently — women most often indicated that they would file a complaint (43%), while men most often indicated that they would try to talk to their partner (39%).

13 SECURITY

While Guatemalans felt safer in 2021 than in previous years, perceptions of security are dependent on the sociodemographic characteristics of respondents. The percentage of Guatemalans who feel unsafe or very unsafe walking in their neighborhood at night has increased from 33% both in 2013 and 2016 to 57% in 2021. As compared to other sociodemographic groups, Guatemalans who have previously been a victim of a crime, who are female, and who are financially insecure are less likely to report feeling safe or very safe while walking in their neighborhood at night. Within the country, more respondents from the Greater Southwest region reported feeling unsafe walking in their neighborhood at night than those from other regions, while respondents in the Northeast more frequently reported feeling unsafe while riding the bus.

14 INTERNAL MIGRATION

Out of all respondents, internal migration rates were highest among those living in Quetzaltenango. One in five (20%) of respondents in Quetzaltenango reported that they had moved there from another city, and of that group, 60% said they had migrated in search of better economic or educational opportunities. Respondents in Chimaltenango reported the second highest internal migration rate, with 17% of respondents having moved there from another city. Of this percentage, most respondents chose to migrate due to family reasons (58%). Guatemalans under the age of 30 are more likely to move to a new area within Guatemala in the past three years than other sociodemographic groups.

15 INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION

While 29% of respondents in Guatemala indicated they would prefer to move to another country, only 7% reported that they had plans to move. Compared to respondents in regional peer countries, fewer Guatemalans said they would like to move permanently to another country than respondents in Honduras (49%) and El Salvador (39%). This figure was lowest in Belize and Panama, with 20% of respondents wishing to migrate internationally in both countries. Fewer Guatemalans (7%) reported having plans to move to another country than respondents in Honduras (18%), Belize (10%), and El Salvador (9%).

Among six Guatemalan cities, between 26% and 35% of respondents indicated a preference to move to another country, while between 1% and 12% had plans to move. In each city, most respondents reported that they wanted to move abroad for better economic or educational opportunities. Guatemalans 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 are more likely than other sociodemographic groups to have plans to move permanently to another country

16 MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES

Guatemalans attempting to immigrate to the United States are often unable to enter the country. Of the 9% of respondents who reported that they have tried to immigrate to the US in the past, only 36% reported being able to enter. Respondents who did not enter the US were most often unable to enter because they were sent back by law enforcement (29%), while 20% said they ran out of funds, and 18% said they changed their mind.

Among the group of Guatemalans who were able to enter the US, 29% stated that they left the US for family or social reasons, 13% were unable to adapt, and 12% were deported.

II

Thematic Findings

Section 1
Accountability and Fundamental Freedoms

Government Accountability

Views in Guatemala 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
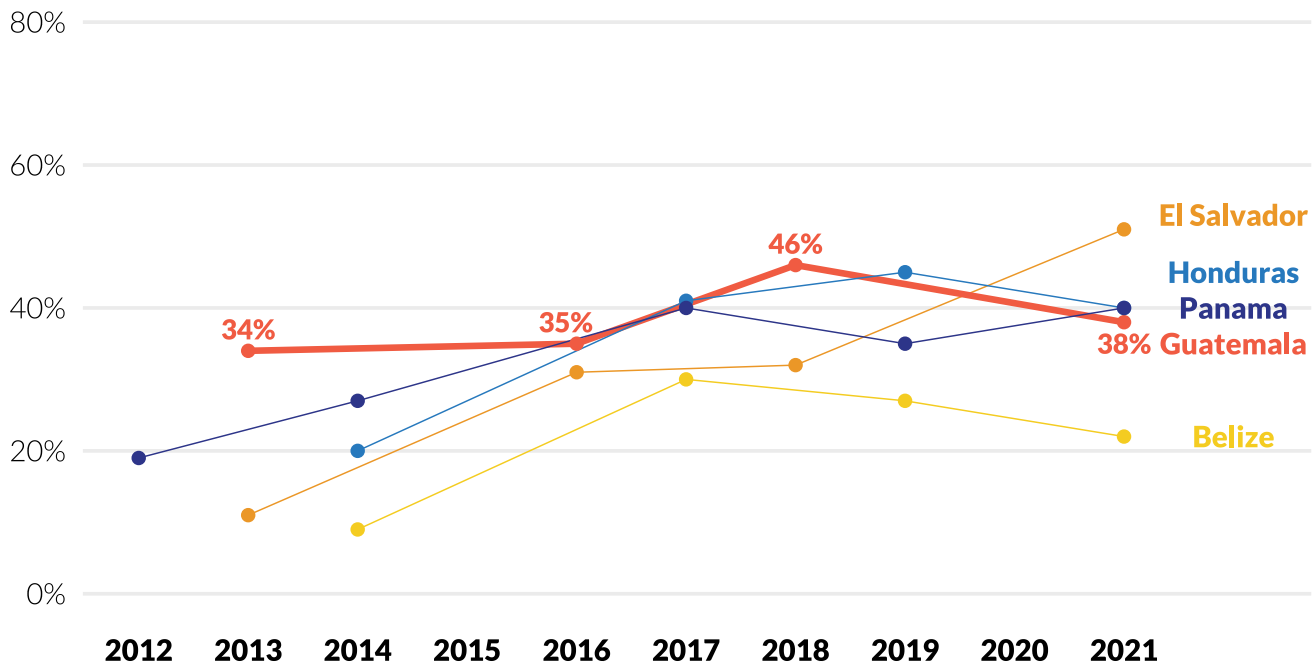
Chart 1b. Checks on Executive Power Over Time

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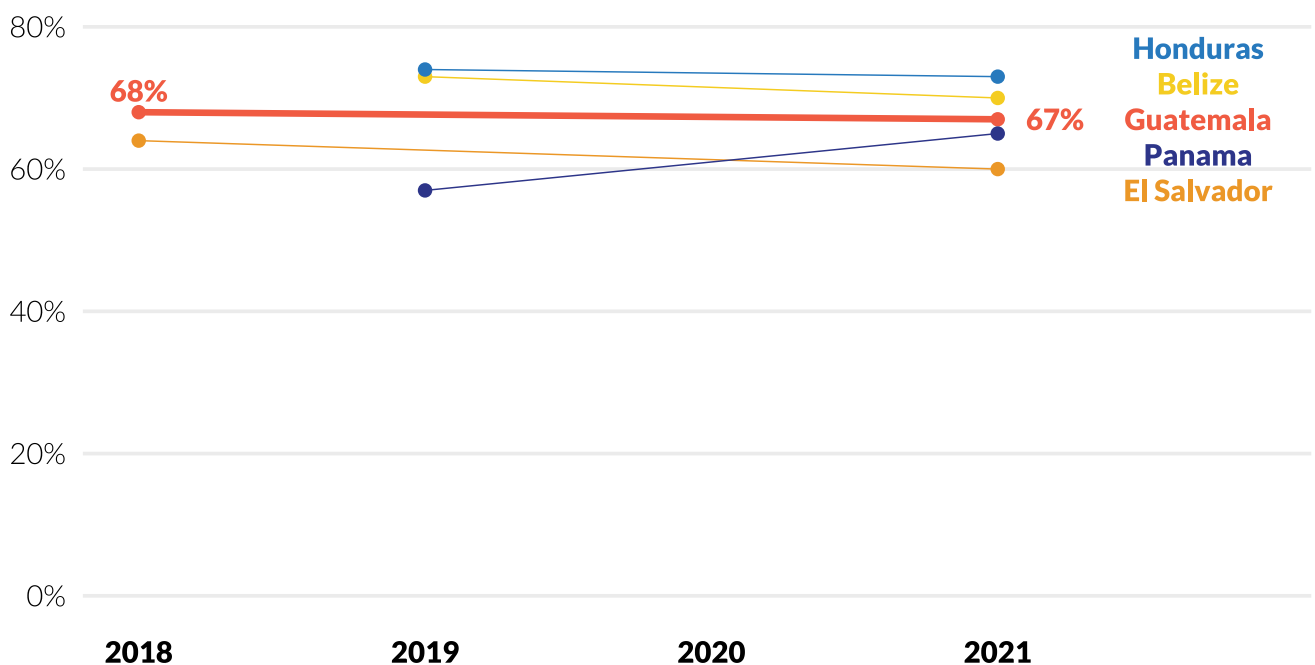
Fundamental Freedoms

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

Chart 2. Fundamental Freedoms in Guatemala Over Time
Percentage of respondents who believe that...

EXPRESSION

People can express opinions against the government

66% (2013), 72% (2016), 73% (2018), 79% (2021)
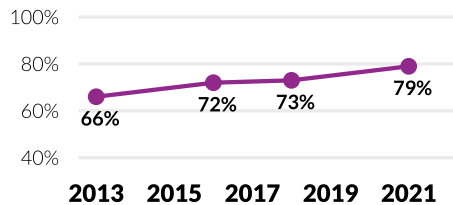
Civil society organizations can express opinions against the government

58% (2013), 61% (2016), 61% (2018), 67% (2021)
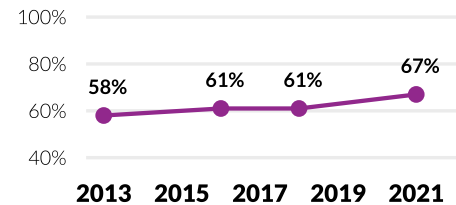
Political parties can express opinions against the government

68% (2013), 62% (2016), 66% (2018), 67% (2021)
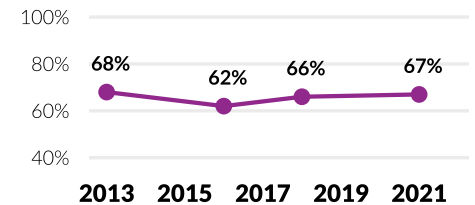
Media can express opinions against the government without fear of retaliation

65% (2013), 64% (2016), 62% (2018), 62% (2021)
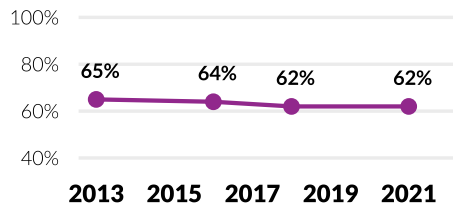
Media can expose cases of corruption

64% (2013), 65% (2016), 64% (2018), 68% (2021)
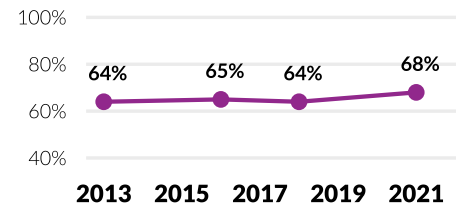
PARTICIPATION

People can attend community meetings

82% (2013), 77% (2016), 79% (2018), 84% (2021)
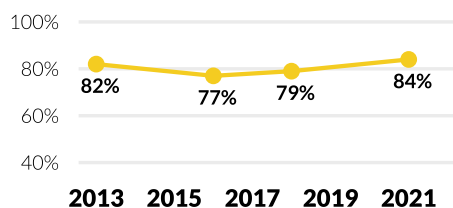
People can join any political organization

78% (2013), 73% (2016), 77% (2018), 80% (2021)
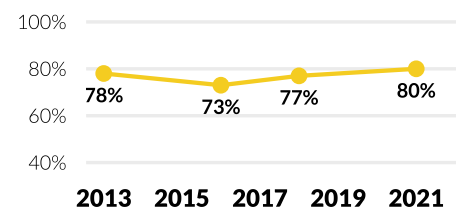
People can organize around an issue or petition

73% (2013), 65% (2016), 82% (2018), 79% (2021)
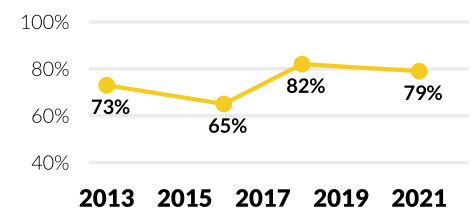
ELECTIONS

Local government officials are elected through a clean process

56% (2013), 50% (2016), 46% (2018), 50% (2021)
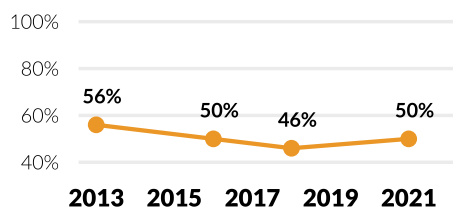
People can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured

75% (2013), 71% (2016), 66% (2018), 72% (2021)
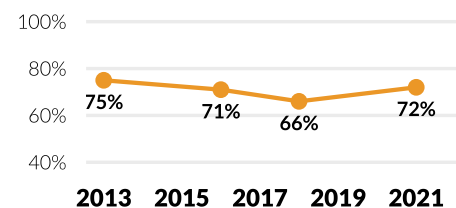
RELIGION

Religious minorities can observe their holy days

87% (2013), 87% (2016), 88% (2018), 83% (2021)

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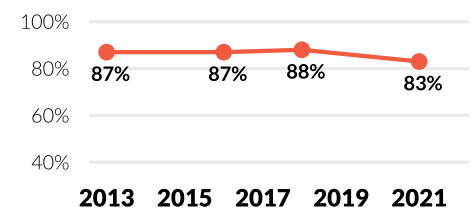
Corruption

Perceptions of corruption in Guatemala.

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 Congress of the Republic)
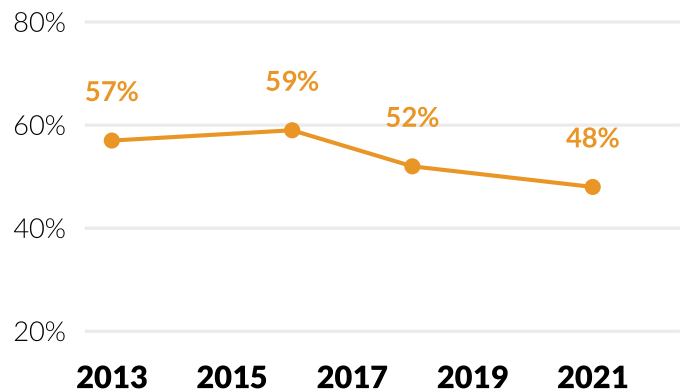
LEGISLATIVE chart — values by year:
- 2013: 48%
- 2016: 64%
- 2018: 68%
- 2021: 68%

POLICE OFFICERS

POLICE OFFICERS chart — values by year:
- 2013: 57%
- 2016: 59%
- 2018: 52%
- 2021: 48%

EXECUTIVE
(Local Government Officers and National Government Officers)

EXECUTIVE chart — values by year:
- Local Government Officers — 2013: 39%, 2016: 54%, 2018: 60%, 2021: 50%
- National Government Officers — 2013: 52%, 2016: 66%, 2018: 58%, 2021: 54%

● Local Government Officers ● National Government Officers

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

JUDICIARY chart — values by year:
- Judges and Magistrates — 2013: 37%, 2016: 39%, 2018: 44%, 2021: 36%
- Prosecutors — 2018: 44%, 2021: 34%
- Public Defense Attorneys — 2018: 42%, 2021: 32%
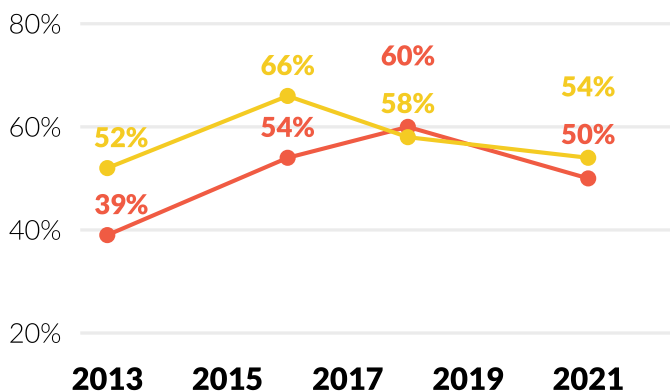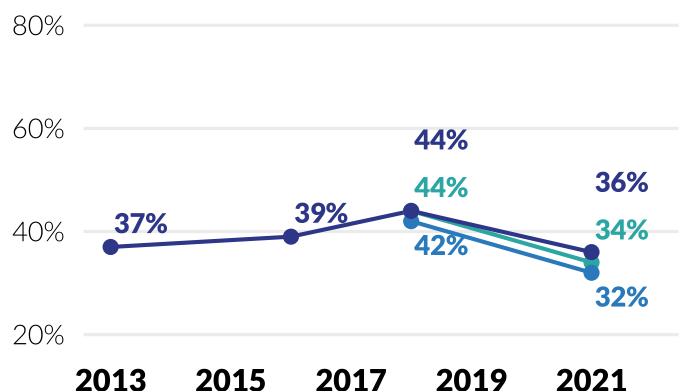
● Prosecutors ● Public Defense Attorneys ● Judges and Magistrates

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 Guatemala and Regional Peer Countries
Percentage of respondents who paid a bribe in the last three years to access the following services

10%   20%   30%

Use a public health service
- Belize: 14%
- El Salvador: 2%
- Guatemala: 4%
- Honduras: 6%
- Panama: 13%

Secure a place at a public school
- Belize: 24%
- El Salvador: 5%
- Guatemala: 7%
- Honduras: 11%
- Panama: 20%

Obtain a birth certificate or government issued ID
- Belize: 25%
- El Salvador: 5%
- Guatemala: 6%
- Honduras: 8%
- Panama: 11%

Request public benefits or assistance
- Belize: 12%
- El Salvador: 11%
- Guatemala: 12%
- Honduras: 13%
- Panama: 21%

Request a government permit or document
- Belize: 27%
- El Salvador: 12%
- Guatemala: 25%
- Honduras: 25%
- Panama: 25%

Country
- Belize
- El Salvador
- Guatemala
- Honduras
- Panama

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

Trust

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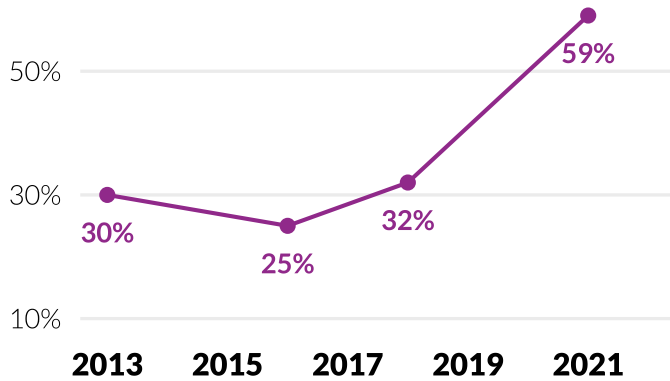
Note: Surveys administered before 2021 asked about "people in your country" instead of "people living in your community."

POLICE OFFICERS
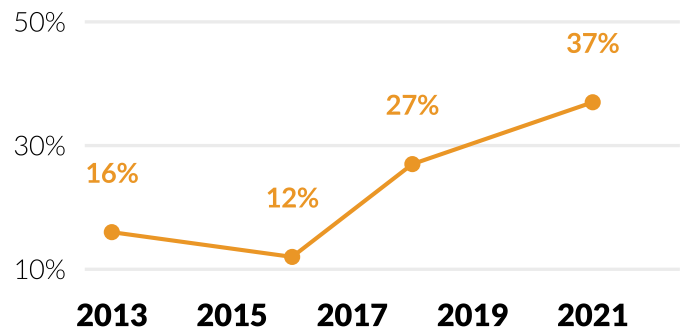
EXECUTIVE
(Local Government Officers and National Government Officers)
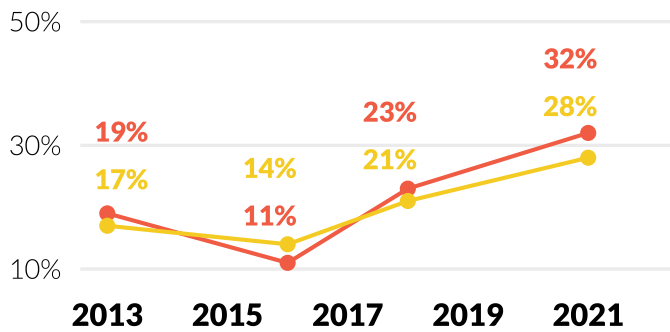
● **Local Government Officers**   ● **National Government Officers**
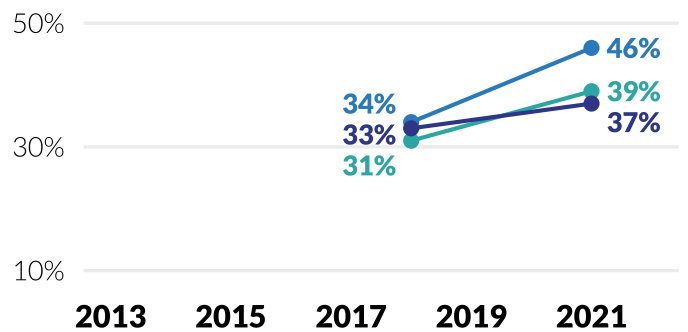
JUDICIARY
(Prosecutors, Public Defense Attorneys, and Judges and Magistrates)

● **Prosecutors**   ● **Public Defense Attorneys**   ● **Judges and Magistrates**

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

Section 2

Police and Criminal Justice

Criminal Justice System

Views on the criminal justice system in Guatemala.

Chart 6. Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System Over Time
Percentage of respondents who are confident that the criminal justice system...
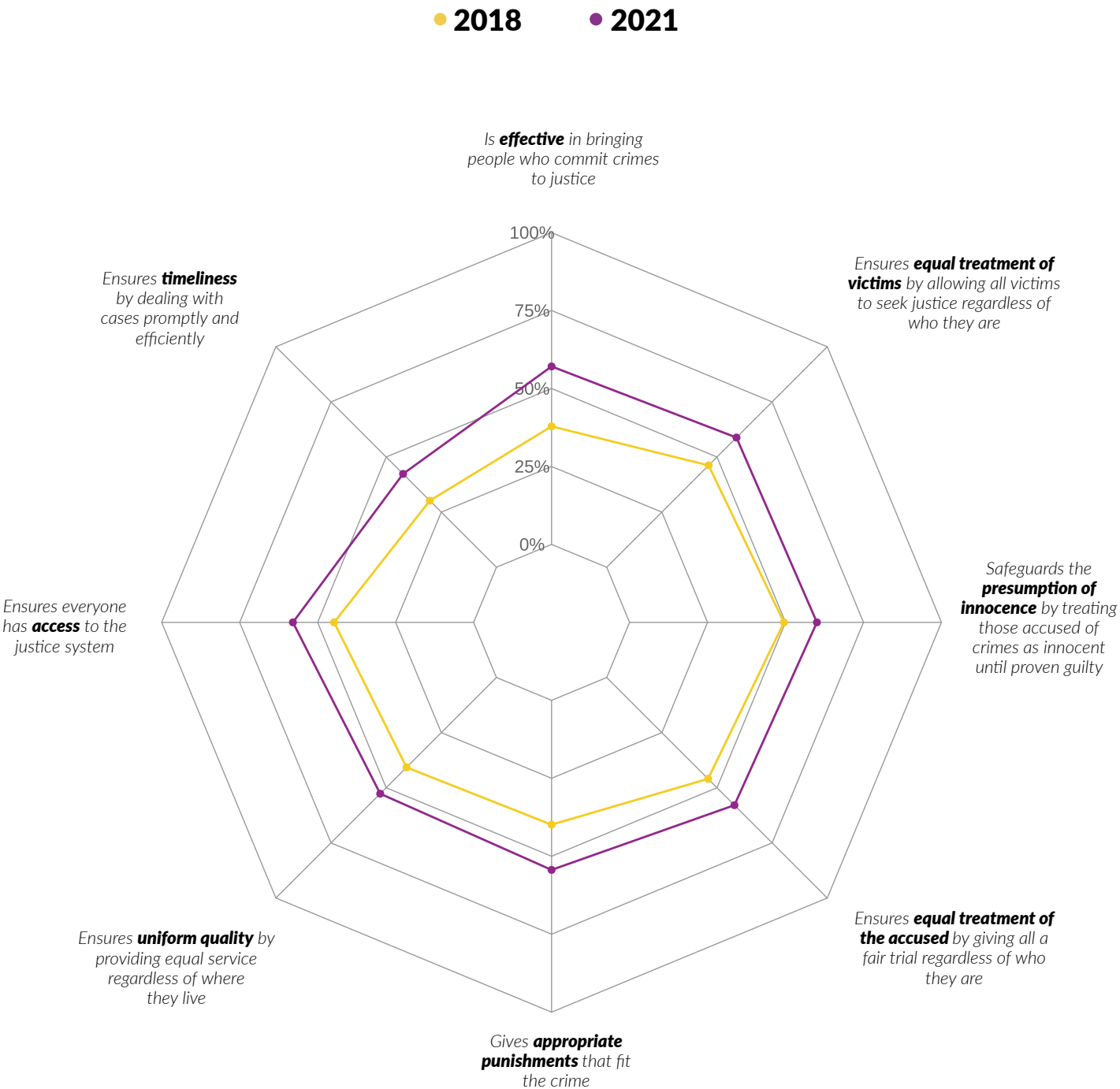
● **2018**   ● **2021**

*Is **effective** in bringing people who commit crimes to justice*

*Ensures **equal treatment of victims** by allowing all victims to seek justice regardless of who they are*

*Safeguards the **presumption of innocence** by treating those accused of crimes as innocent until proven guilty*

*Ensures **equal treatment of the accused** by giving all a fair trial regardless of who they are*

*Gives **appropriate punishments** that fit the crime*

*Ensures **uniform quality** by providing equal service regardless of where they live*

*Ensures everyone has **access** to the justice system*

*Ensures **timeliness** by dealing with cases promptly and efficiently*

100%
75%
50%
25%
0%

Criminal Justice Actors

Views on the performance of criminal justice actors in Guatemala.

● **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

- 34% → 46% (Public Defense Attorneys)
- 33% → 39% (Prosecutors)
- 31% → 37% (Judges and Magistrates)

2013 · 2015 · 2017 · 2019 · 2021
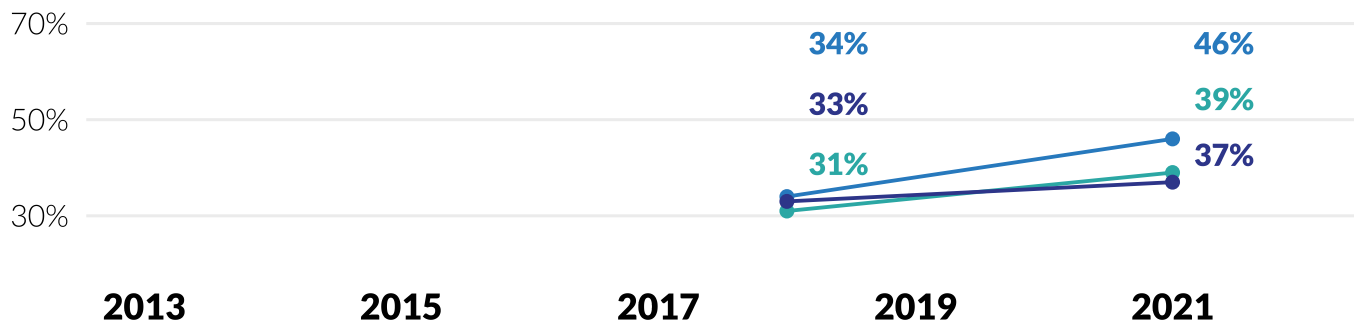
Chart 7b. Perceptions of Corruption Across Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

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

- 37% (2013) · 39% (2015) · 44% · 44% · 42% → 36% · 34% · 32%

2013 · 2015 · 2017 · 2019 · 2021
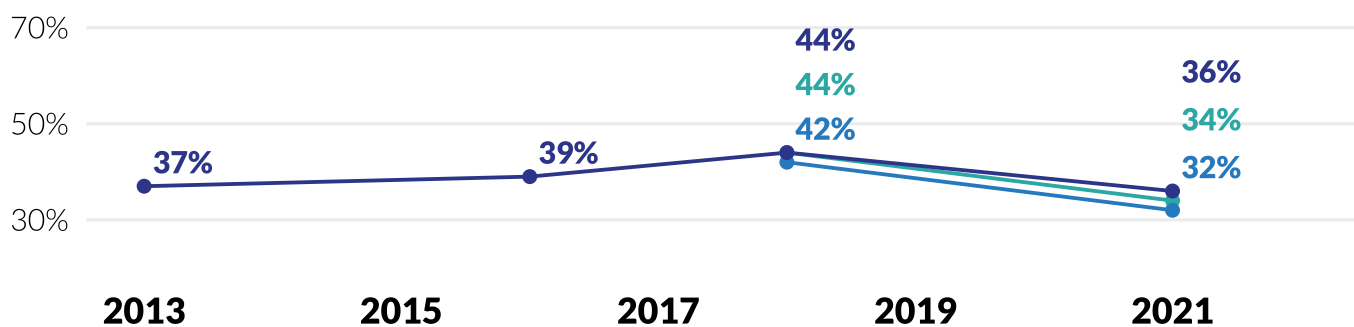
Chart 7c. Perceptions of Effectiveness Across Criminal Justice Actors Over Time

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

- 51% → 57%
- 50% → 55%
- 33% → 36%

2013 · 2015 · 2017 · 2019 · 2021
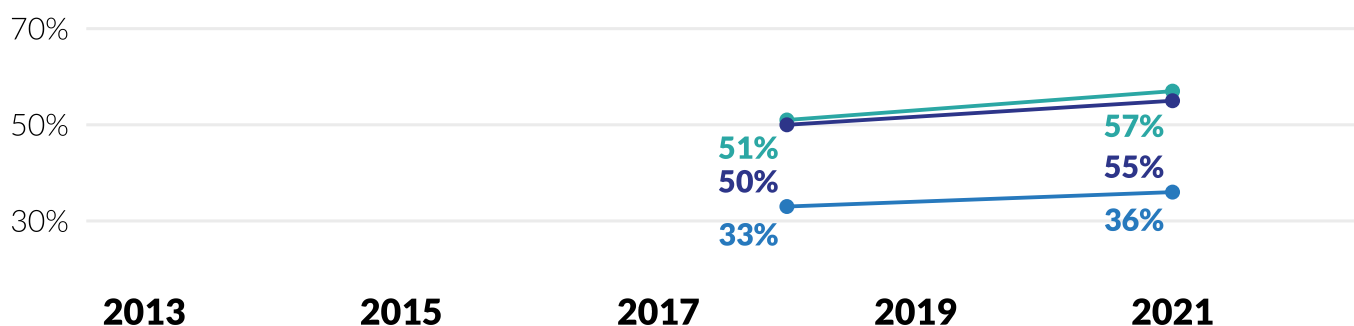
*Note: Variables in Effectiveness category are as follows: **Prosecutors** prosecute crimes committed in an independent manner and are not subject to any sort of pressure (strongly agree/agree); **Public defense attorneys** do everything they can to defend poor people that are accused of committing a 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 Guatemala.

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…

Are available to help when needed	75%
Serve the interests of the community	62%
Serve the interests of regular citizens	61%
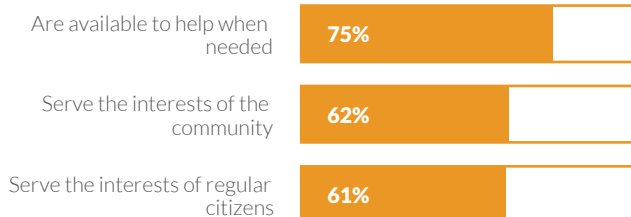
CRIME CONTROL AND SAFETY
Percentage of respondents who believe that the police…

Respond to crime reports	40%
Resolve security problems in the community	65%
Perform effective and lawful investigations	38%
Assist crime victims	25%

LEGITIMACY

DUE PROCESS
Percentage of respondents who believe that the police…

Act lawfully	33%
Do not use excessive force	50%
Respect the rights of suspects	33%
Treat all people with respect	78%

CORRUPTION
Percentage of respondents who believe that the police…

Are not involved in corrupt practices	52%
Investigate crimes in an independent manner	62%
Do not serve the interests of gangs	43%
Do not serve the interests of politicians	31%

ACCOUNTABILITY
Percentage of respondents who believe that the police…

Are held accountable for violating laws	36%
Are held accountable for seeking bribes	40%
Are held accountable for accepting bribes	42%
Are investigated for misconduct	36%

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

Gender	45%
Skin color	61%
Indigenous identity	56%
Tattoos	40%
Age	56%

TRUST AND CRIME REPORTING
Percentage of respondents who…

Trust the police	37%
Report a crime when they are a victim	48%
Feel safe in their neighborhoods	57%
Feel safe riding the bus	29%

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 Guatemala.*

Chart 8b. Interactions with the Police
Experiences of respondents in Guatemala who interacted with the police in the last 12 months

VOLUNTARY

TOTAL VOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS
Percentage of respondents in Guatemala who contacted the police in the last 12 months

18%

CAUSES
Reasons reported by respondents who contacted the police:
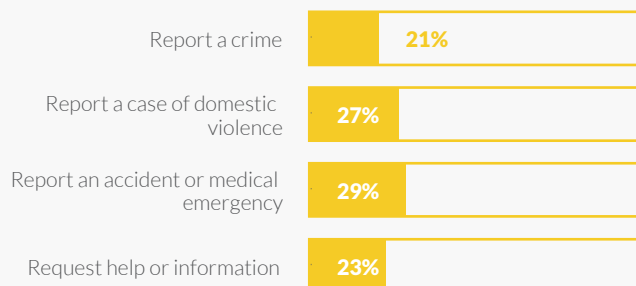
Report a crime	**21%**
Report a case of domestic violence	**27%**
Report an accident or medical emergency	**29%**
Request help or information	**23%**

EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION
Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

SERVE THE PUBLIC

Controlled the situation	**61%**
Arrived promptly	**65%**

DUE PROCESS

Listened to them	**82%**
Treated them with respect	**84%**

CORRUPTION

Asked for a bribe	**6%**
Received a bribe	**4%**
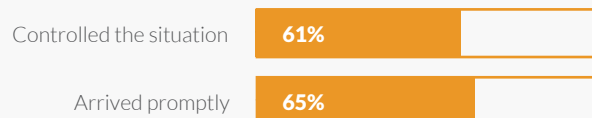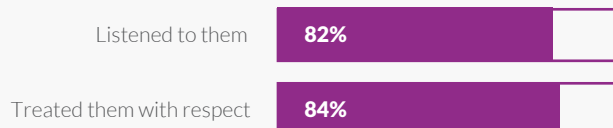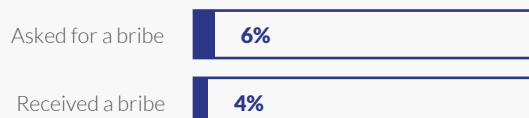
INVOLUNTARY

TOTAL INVOLUNTARY INTERACTIONS
Percentage of respondents in Guatemala who were contacted by the police in the last 12 months

33%

CAUSES
Reasons reported by respondents who were contacted by the police:

Routine check/Provide assistance	**78%**
Ask for cooperation	**3%**
Pressure for money or harassment	**1%**
Suspected illegal activity	**12%**
Other	**6%**

EXPERIENCE DURING THE LAST INTERACTION
Percentage of respondents who said that the police...

SERVE THE PUBLIC

Controlled the situation	**73%**

DUE PROCESS

Had a legitimate reason to stop them	**57%**
Explained the reasons for their actions	**71%**
Did not threaten them	**90%**
Did not use physical force against them	**95%**
Listened to them	**78%**
Treated them with respect	**83%**

CORRUPTION

Asked for a bribe	**13%**
Received a bribe	**9%**
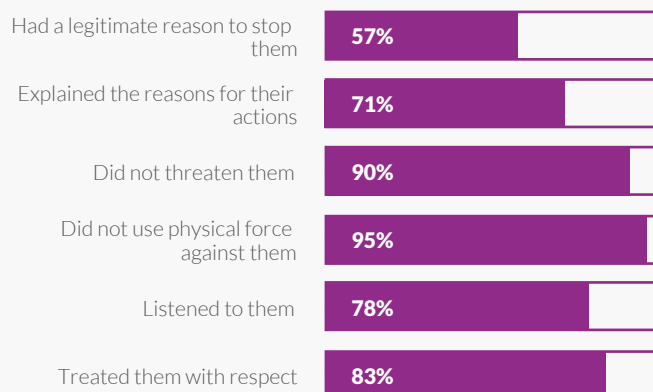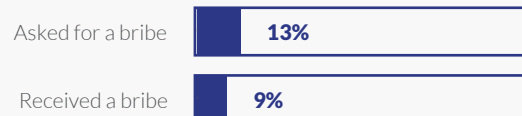
Note: For additional information on how Chart 8b was produced, please see the Appendix.
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

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
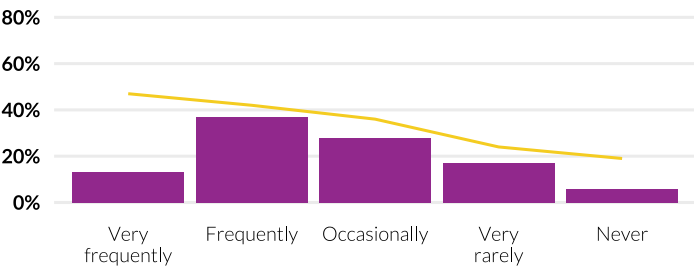
Chart 9b. Community Meetings and Trust

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
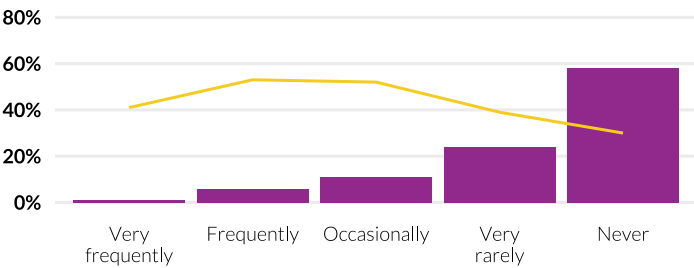
Chart 9c. Public Participation and Trust

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
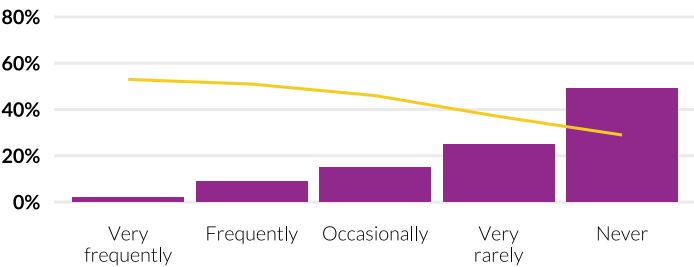
Chart 9d. Vigilante Justice and Trust

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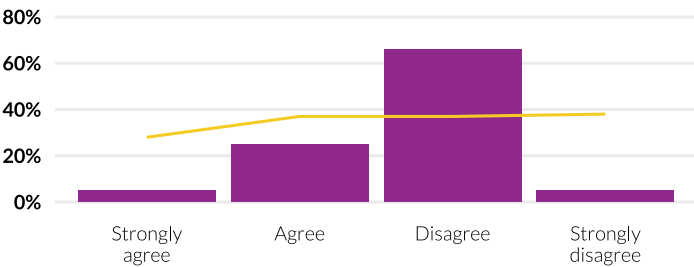
Note: The yellow line represents the percentage of respondents who answered "some" or "a lot" to the question "How much trust do you have in [the police]" that corresponds to each response category represented on the x axis.

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	
Do not feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night	X	X	X
Were previously asked for a bribe		X	
Believe most or all police officers are corrupt	X	X	X
Report that the police rarely or never patrol their neighborhood	X	X	X
Report that the police rarely or never hold meetings to discuss crime in their neighborhood	X	X	
Report that the police rarely or never allow people in their neighborhood to suggest solutions to local problems	X	X	

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

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

Crime Victimization

Crimes experienced by people in Guatemala.

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

Victimization rate, by type of crime

Type of crime	Rate
Property crimes	14%
Crimes against life and integrity of individuals	12%
Corruption, financial, and commercial crimes	8%

0%   5%   10%   15%   20%
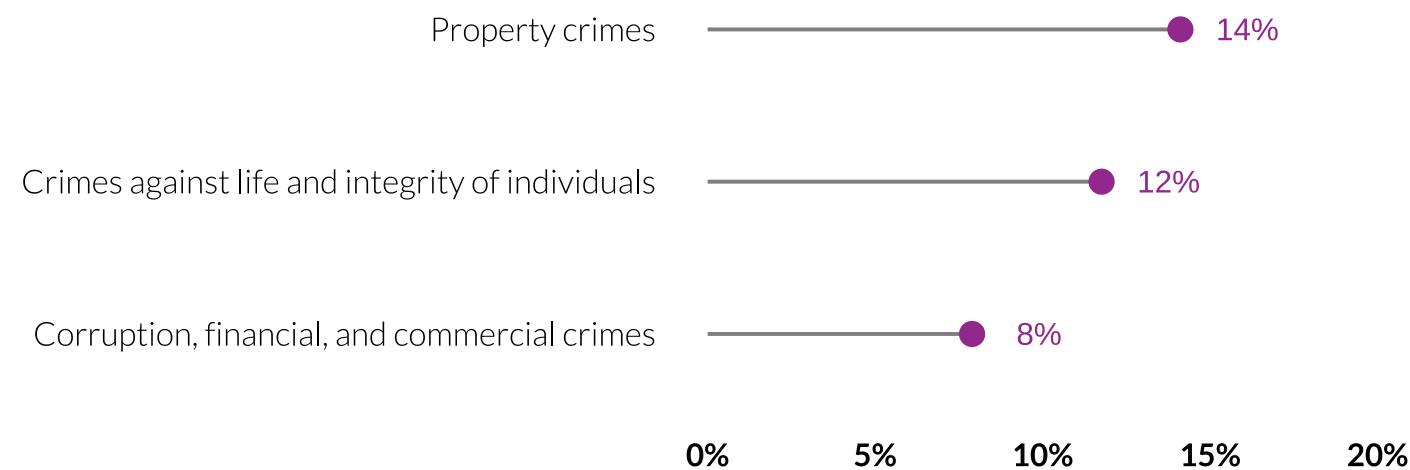
Chart 10b. Crime Victimization Rates and Reporting

Data on crime victimization and reporting in Guatemala

In the last 12 months 19% of Guatemalans were victims of a crime

48% reported the crime

52% did not report the crime

86% filed an official crime report

14% did not file an official crime report

Victimization

Reporting

Reasons the crime was not reported

Respondent was afraid or embarrassed	**20%**
Respondent did not think reporting would help	**48%**
Respondent did not trust the police	**4%**
Respondent had administrative issues	**12%**
Other	**15%**

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 Guatemala.

Chart 10c. Crime Victimization by Sociodemographic Characteristic

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

National average	19%
GENDER	
Male	22%
Female	17%
AGE	
18-29	23%
30-44	21%
45-64	14%
65+	9%
FINANCIAL SITUATION	
Financially insecure	19%
Financially secure	20%
URBANIZATION	
Urban	20%
Rural	18%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%
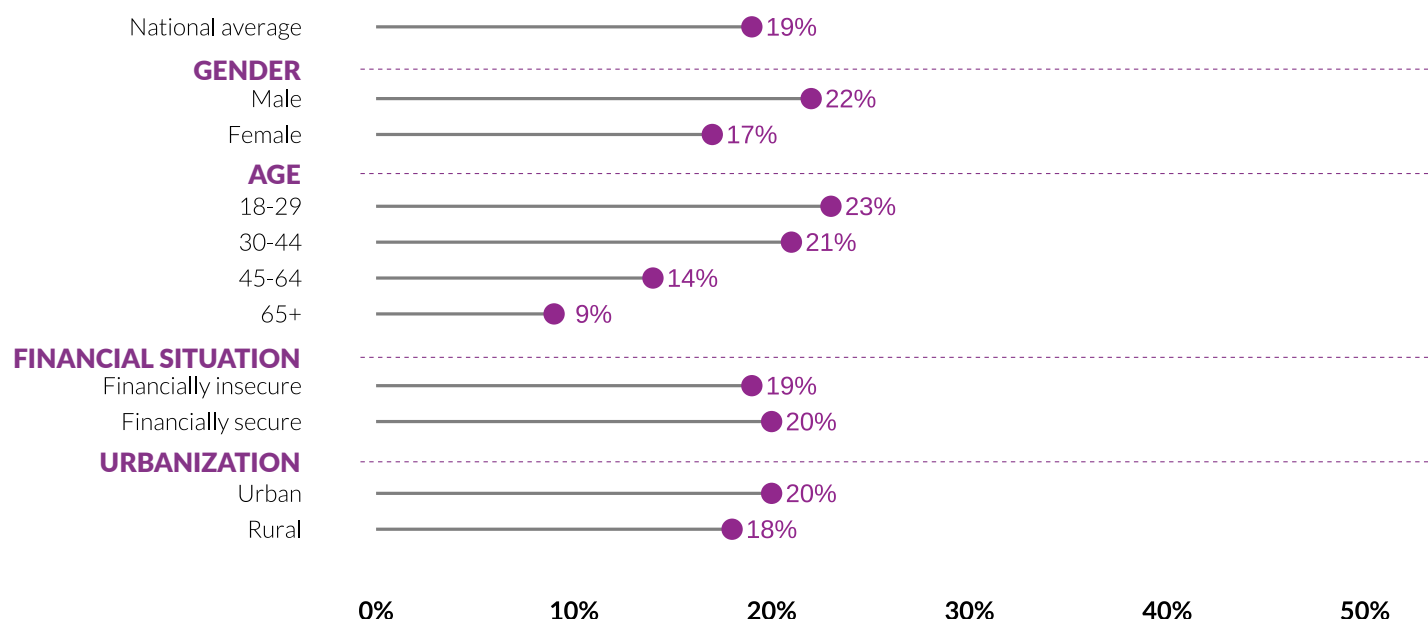
Chart 10d. Crime Reporting by Sociodemographic Characteristic

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

National average	48%
GENDER	
Male	49%
Female	46%
AGE	
18-29	43%
30-44	54%
45-64	50%
65+	45%
FINANCIAL SITUATION	
Financially insecure	48%
Financially secure	47%
URBANIZATION	
Urban	48%
Rural	47%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50%

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021
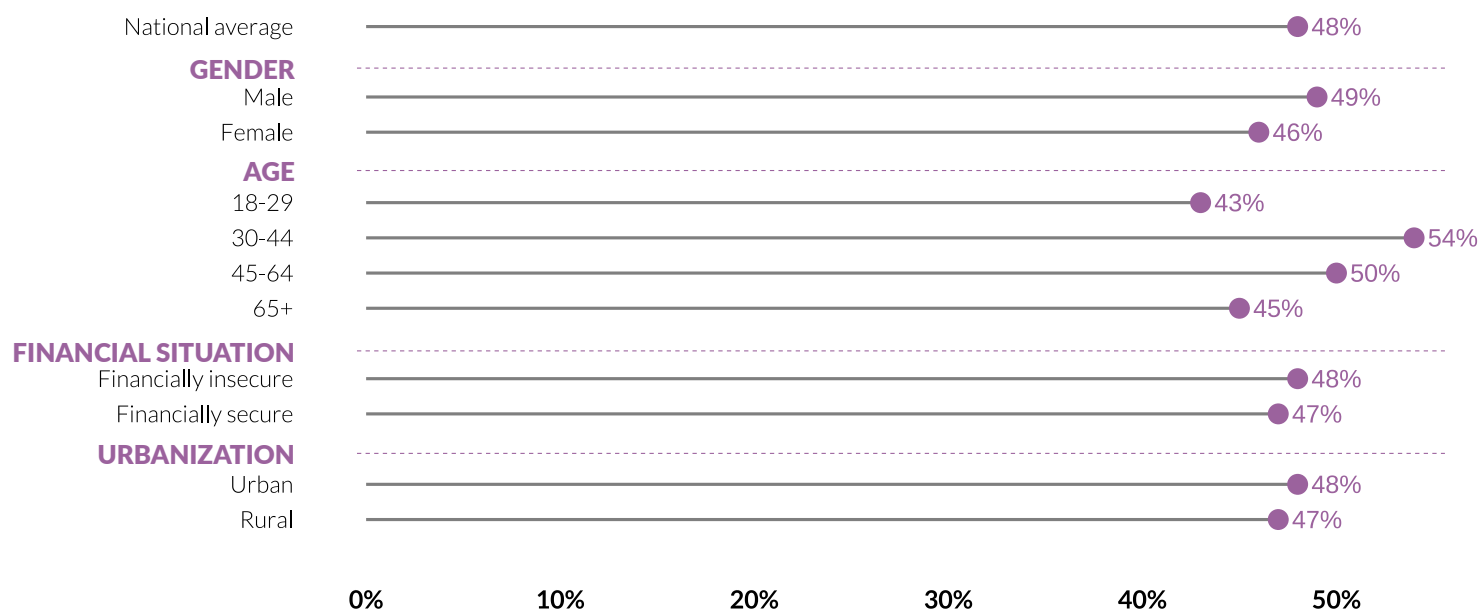
Victim Support

Views on support for crime victims in Guatemala.

Chart 11. Perceptions of the Treatment of Crime Victims

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

31%
Receive effective and timely **medical and psychological care**

34%
Receive **information and legal advice** when going to the authorities

26%
Are **believed** when they report a crime

35%
Receive **protection** from the police if their safety is in danger

25%
Receive **prompt and courteous attention** when they report a crime

35%
Receive protection during criminal proceedings to **prevent repeat victimization**

54%
Are **guaranteed their rights** in criminal justice proceedings

36%
Receive adequate care and protection as **victims of sexual crimes**

50%
Are addressed by the police using **accessible language**

40%
Receive adequate care and protection as **victims of domestic violence**

47%
Receive a **clear explanation** of the process when reporting a crime to the police

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

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 Guatemala by Gender

Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements
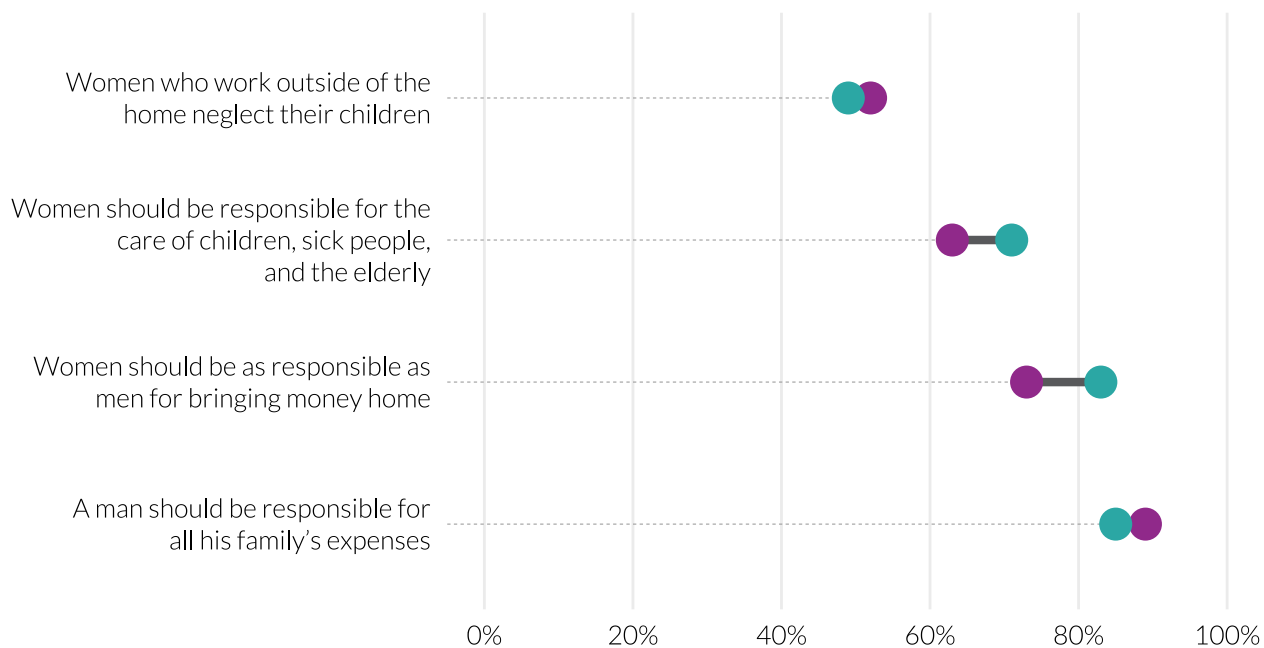
Chart 12b. Hypothetical Reactions to Domestic Violence by Gender

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

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021
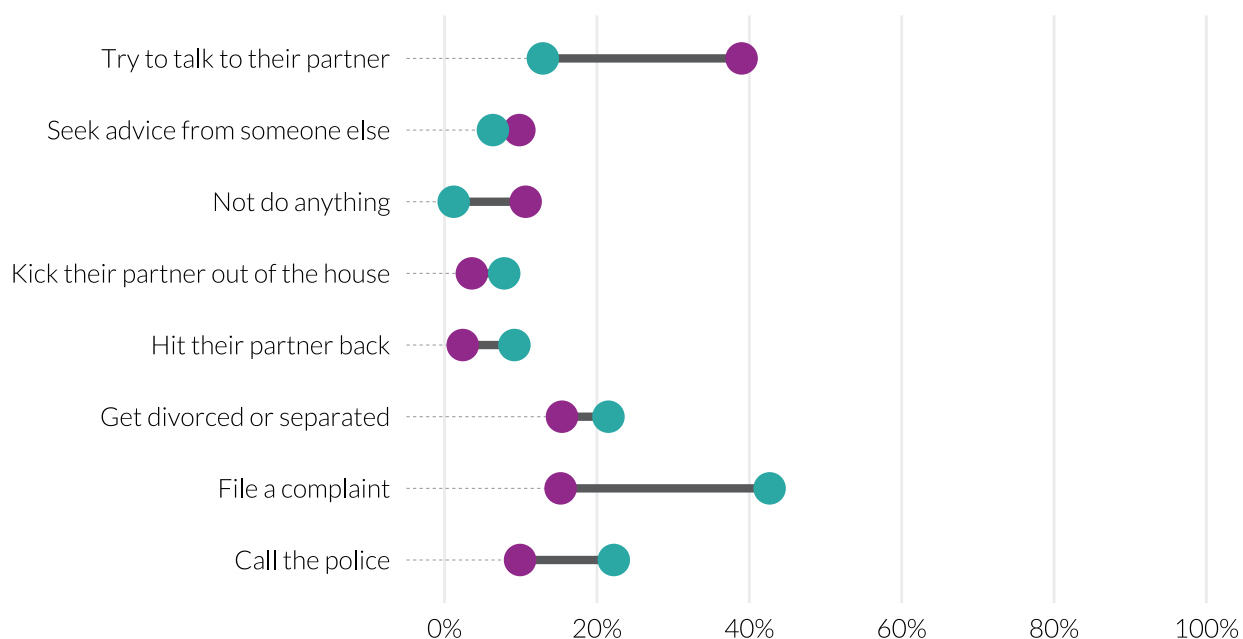
Security

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

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

National average

GENDER
Men
Women

AGE
18-29
30-44
45-64
65 & over

FINANCIAL SITUATION
Financially insecure
Financially secure

REGION
Northeast
Central
Southwest
Greater Southwest

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%   60%   70%   80%

● **Walking in their neighborhood at night**

● **Riding the bus**
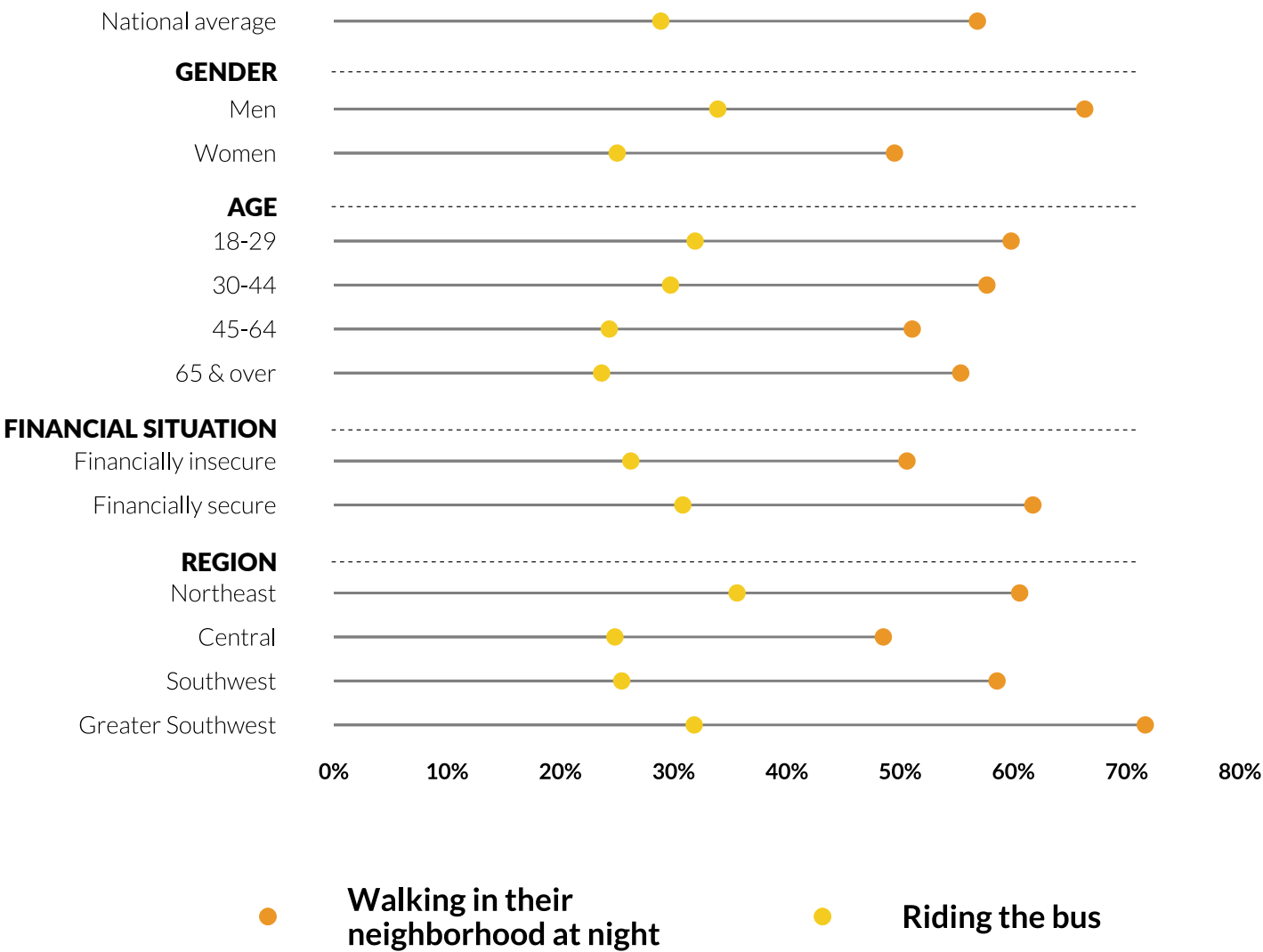
Security, continued

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

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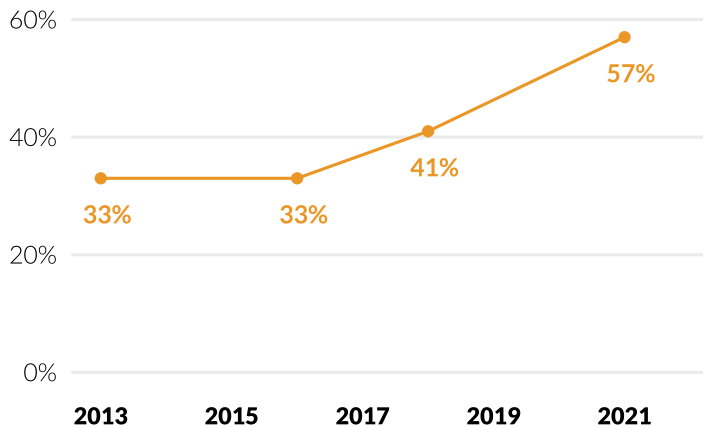
Chart 13c. Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Perceptions of Safety

Likelihood that respondents feel safe or very safe walking in their neighborhood at night
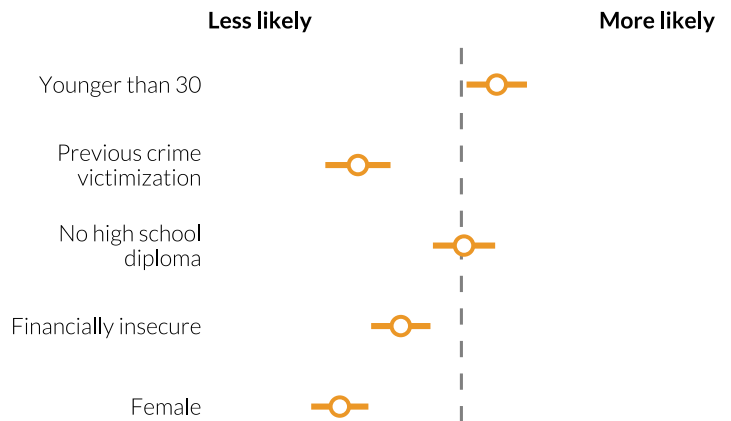
Note: Each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability in a logit regression that a respondent answers "safe" or "very safe" to the question "How safe do you feel walking in your neighborhood at night?" The lines indicate 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

Type of crime	Percentage
Domestic violence against children	19%
Domestic violence against women	27%
Violence against women	16%
Street violence	32%
Gang and youth violence	27%
Violence from state institutions	10%
Organized crime	18%
Disappearances	16%

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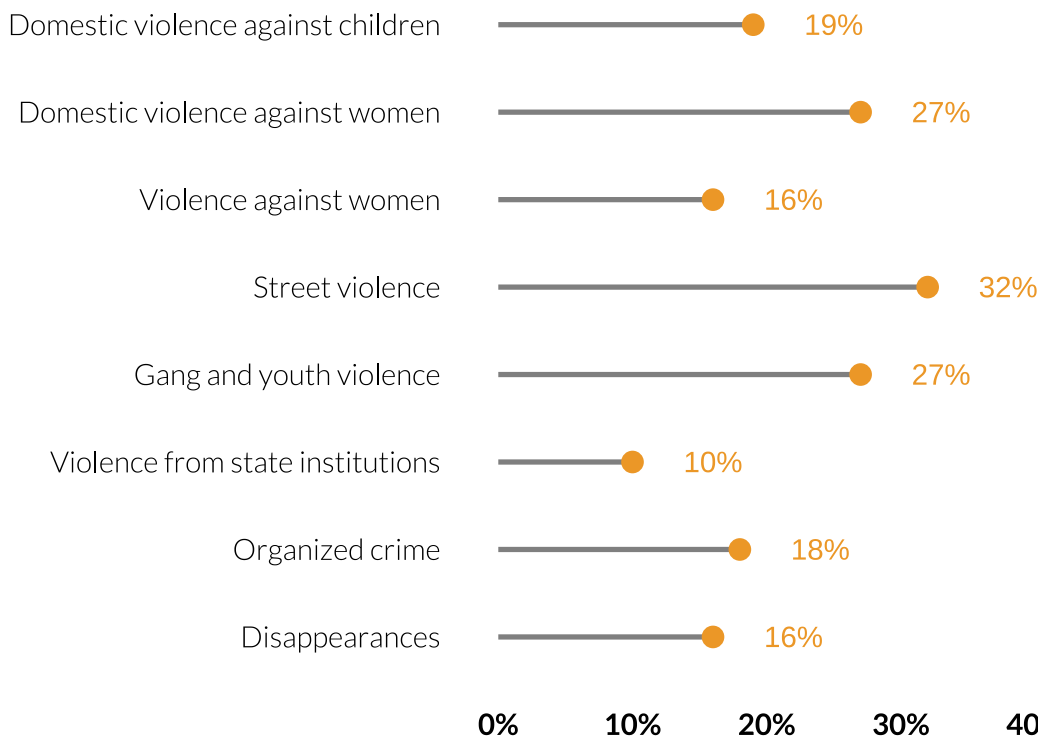
Internal Migration

Experiences with migration within Guatemala.

Chart 14a. Internal Migration by City

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

Chimaltenango

17% of respondents migrated from another city

3% of respondents migrated in the last 3 years

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	25%
Family reasons	58%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	8%

Ciudad De Guatemala

10% of respondents migrated from another city

1% of respondents migrated in the last 3 years

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	58%
Family reasons	34%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	8%

Huehuetenango

15% of respondents migrated from another city

2% of respondents migrated in the last 3 years

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	36%
Family reasons	71%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	0%

Puerto Barrios

10% of respondents migrated from another city

1% of respondents migrated in the last 3 years

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	73%
Family reasons	9%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	0%

Quetzaltenango

20% of respondents migrated from another city

4% of respondents migrated in the last 3 years

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	60%
Family reasons	32%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	4%

Escuintla

16% of respondents migrated from another city

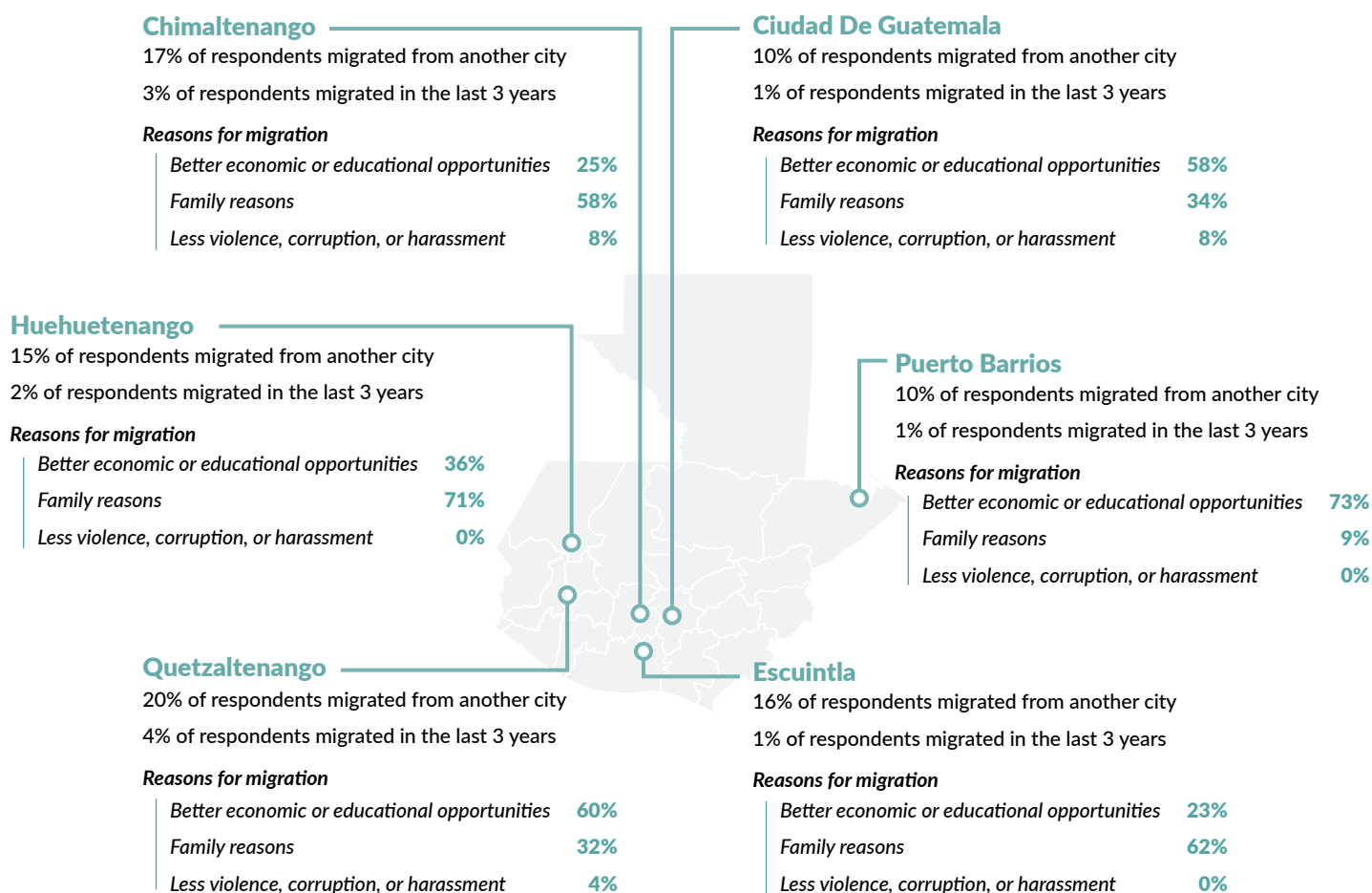1% of respondents migrated in the last 3 years

Reasons for migration

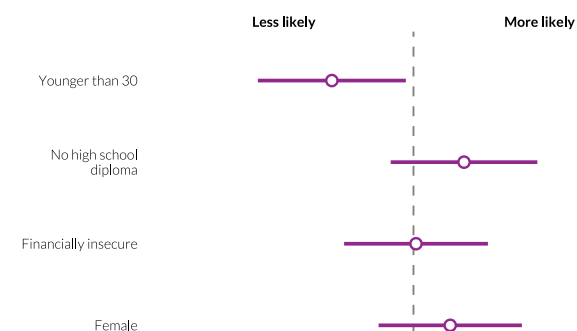|	
Better economic or educational opportunities	23%
Family reasons	62%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	0%

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 Guatemala

Have migrated within Guatemala in the last 3 years
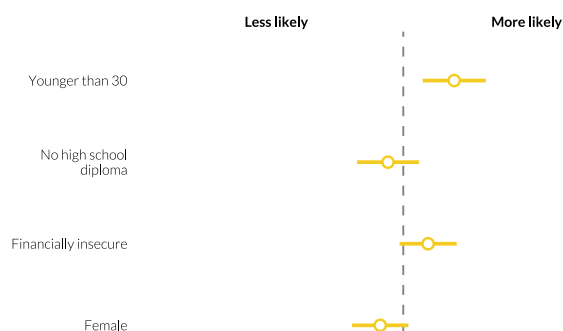
Note: These figures show the results of two logit regressions. On the left, each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability that a respondent answers "no" to the question "Do you live in the same city in which you were 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

Country	Percentage
Belize	20%
El Salvador	39%
Guatemala	29%
Honduras	49%
Panama	20%

Chart 15b. International Migration by City

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

Chimaltenango

26% of respondents would prefer to move to another country

3% of respondents have plans to move

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	61%
Family reasons	17%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	28%

Ciudad De Guatemala

31% of respondents would prefer to move to another country

8% of respondents have plans to move

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	88%
Family reasons	6%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	30%

Huehuetenango

29% of respondents would prefer to move to another country

1% of respondents have plans to move

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	69%
Family reasons	8%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	12%

Puerto Barrios

35% of respondents would prefer to move to another country

12% of respondents have plans to move

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	100%
Family reasons	6%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	6%

Quetzaltenango

31% of respondents would prefer to move to another country

4% of respondents have plans to move

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	76%
Family reasons	10%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	11%

Escuintla

26% of respondents would prefer to move to another country

7% of respondents have plans to move

Reasons for migration

Better economic or educational opportunities	90%
Family reasons	10%
Less violence, corruption, or harassment	33%

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

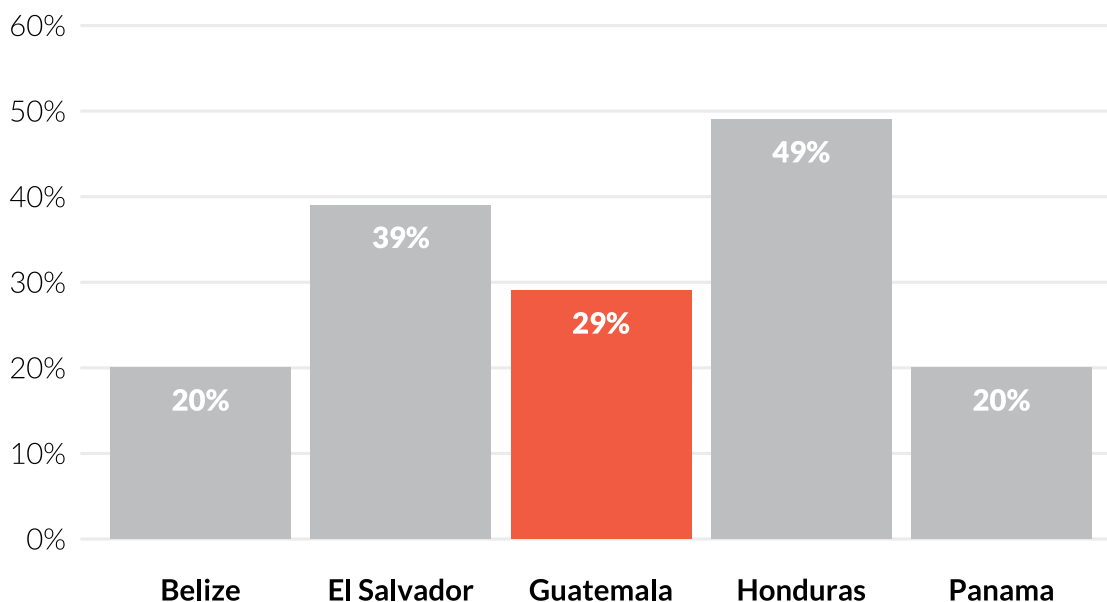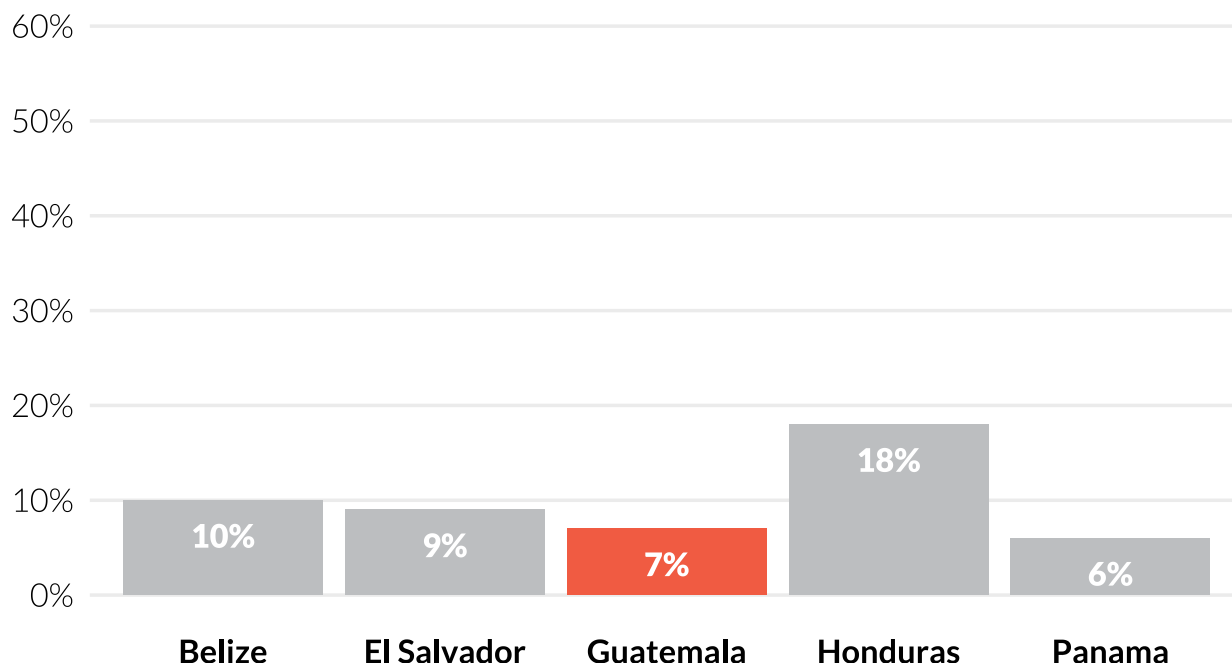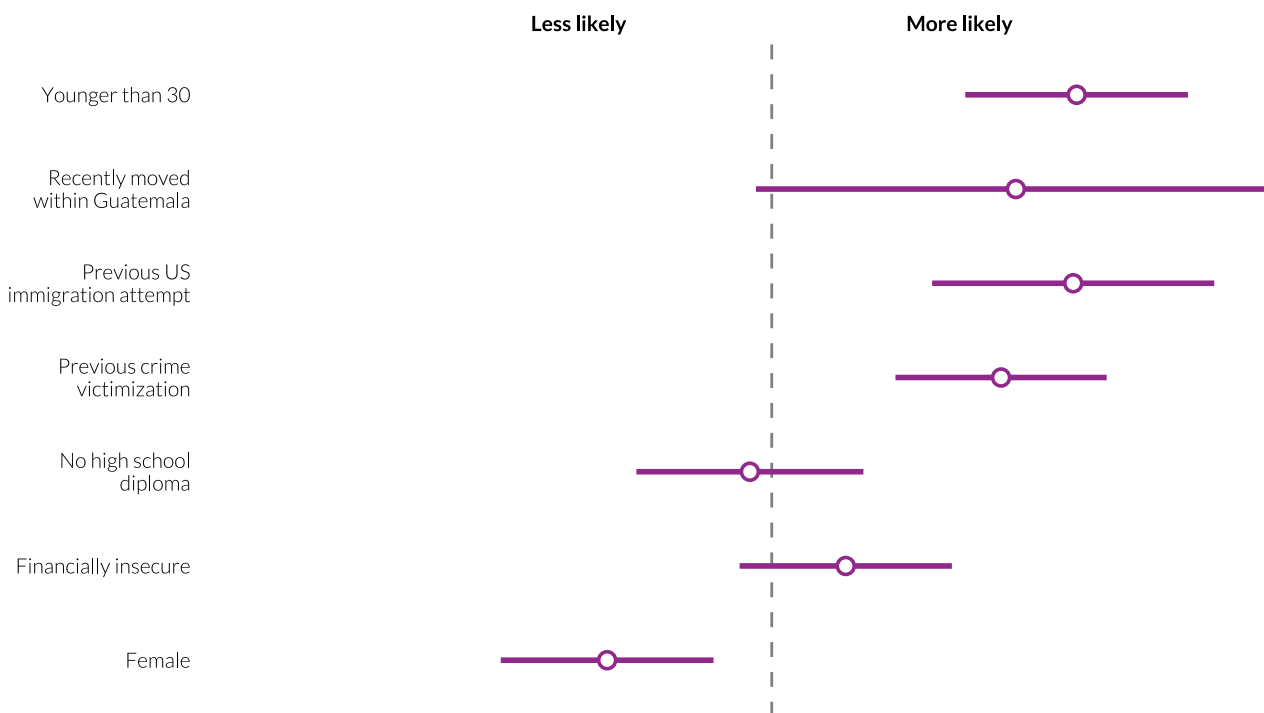| Country	Percentage
Belize	10%
El Salvador	9%
Guatemala	7%
Honduras	18%
Panama	6%

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

Likelihood that respondents have plans to move permanently to another country

Less likely — More likely

- Younger than 30
- Recently moved within Guatemala
- Previous US immigration attempt
- Previous crime victimization
- No high school diploma
- Financially insecure
- Female

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.
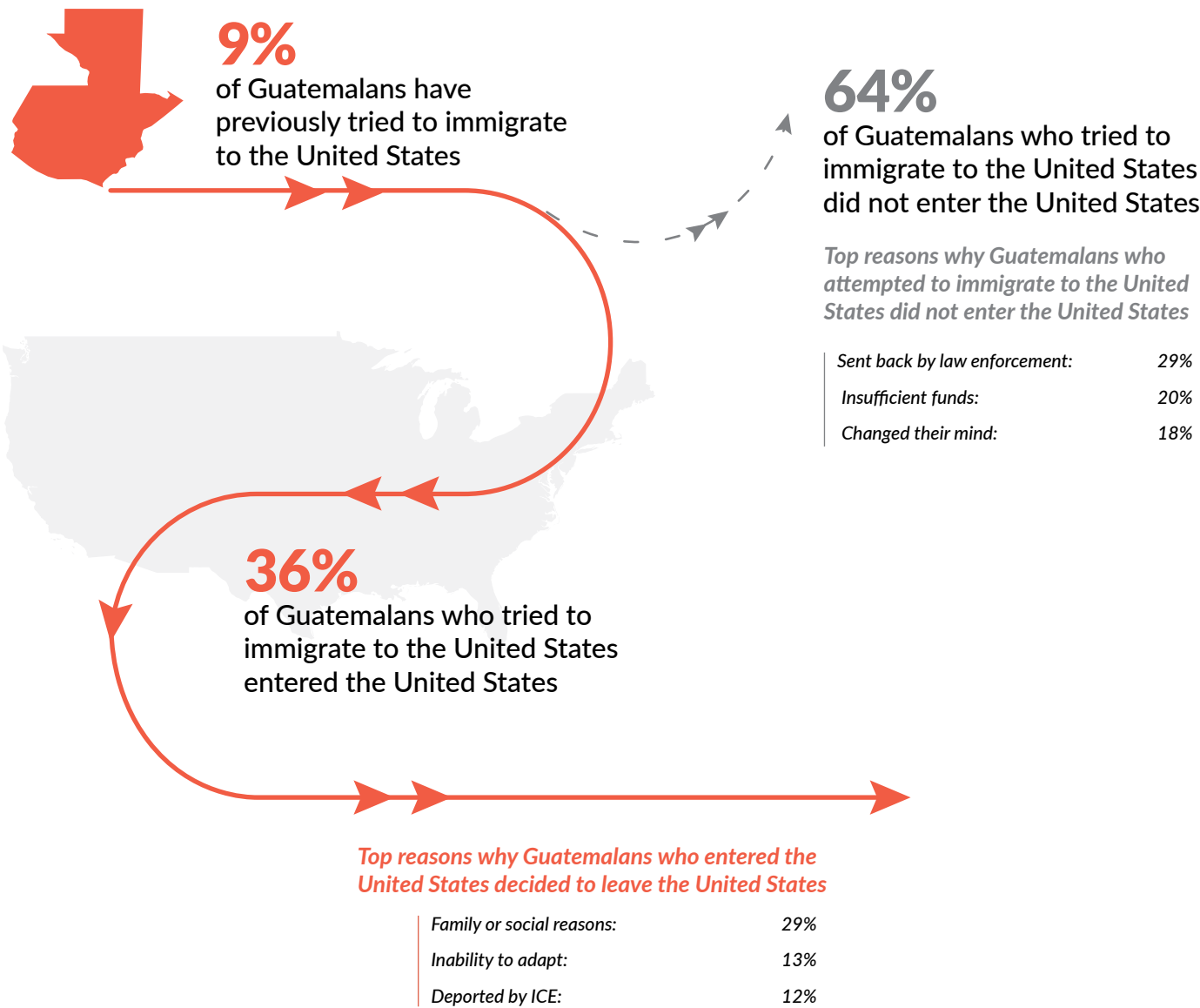
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

Migration to the United States

Experiences and challenges migrating to the United States.

Chart 16. Pathway to the United States

Experiences of Guatemalans who reported attempting to migrate to the United States

9%
of Guatemalans have previously tried to immigrate to the United States

64%
of Guatemalans who tried to immigrate to the United States did not enter the United States

Top reasons why Guatemalans who attempted to immigrate to the United States did not enter the United States

Sent back by law enforcement:	*29%*
Insufficient funds:	*20%*
Changed their mind:	*18%*

36%
of Guatemalans who tried to immigrate to the United States entered the United States

Top reasons why Guatemalans who entered the United States decided to leave the United States

Family or social reasons:	*29%*
Inability to adapt:	*13%*
Deported by ICE:	*12%*

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 Guatemala was conducted for the WJP's *The Rule of Law in Guatemala: Key Findings from the General Population Poll 2021* with sampling, fieldwork, and data processing by Mercaplan, based in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Mercaplan administered the surveys between October and November 2021, conducting face-to-face interviews using a multi-stage random sampling design. The target population group for this survey included Guatemalans aged 18 years or older residing across 21 departments of the country.

SAMPLING SIZE AND SAMPLING FRAME

The General Population Poll in Guatemala represents an achieved total sample size of 2,508 interviews distributed proportionally across all four regions. Mercaplan based the sampling frame on the 2018 updated population figures from the National Statistics Agency (INE), 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. A link to 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, cities and towns were selected using probability proportional to size sampling. Sampling units were created by randomly selecting neighborhoods within each selected city or town. Each sampling unit was selected randomly according to its population size, and between 10 and 20 interviews were assigned to each unit, based on its population. Within the sampled units, survey administrators performed a systematic random route to sample households and used the Last Birthday method 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.

Due to a lack of accessibility, the Baja Verapaz Department, located in the Northeastern region of Guatemala, was excluded from the sample. Due to security issues, four sampling units within the Quiché Department and three sampling units within the Totonicapán Department were substituted for seven sampling units in the Sololá Department. The replacement sampling units also belong to the Greater Southwestern region and share the same socioeconomic classification as the original sampling units. Additional obstacles to data collection in Guatemala included COVID-19 restrictions 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 region (34%) and Northeastern region (31%), followed by the Southwestern region (27%) and Greater Southwestern region (8%).

GEOGRAPHY: Thirty-nine percent (39%) of respondents reside in rural areas and municipalities and 61% of respondents reside in metro areas or cities.

ETHNICITY: Most respondents identified themselves as Mestizo (72%) or Mayan (15%).

GENDER: Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents were female and 43% were male.

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

Response Rates

Eligible household, non-interview	3,988
Refusals	3,750
Break-off	200
Non-contact	38

Ineligible household	265
No eligible respondent in the household	40
Quota filled	225

Interviewing and Quality Control

In total, 38 interviewers worked on this project, including 18 female interviewers. Enumerators worked in seven groups of five to six interviewers with one supervisor per group. Interviews were conducted in Spanish.

The supervisory team directly oversaw all interviews in the field and validated 128 interviews (5% of the sample) in-person. During data processing, 200 interviews (approximately 8% of the sample) were selected for audio review by the central office and 430 interviews (17% of the sample) were backchecked via telephone. After quality control, 55 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 45 minutes in length and ranged from 15 to 96 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 perception-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 Guatemala 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 Guatemala's rule of law performance.

Historical Data

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

Additional Countries

This report includes comparisons to the following Central American countries surveyed by the World Justice Project during the same period: Belize, El Salvador, 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 *World Justice Project 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*.
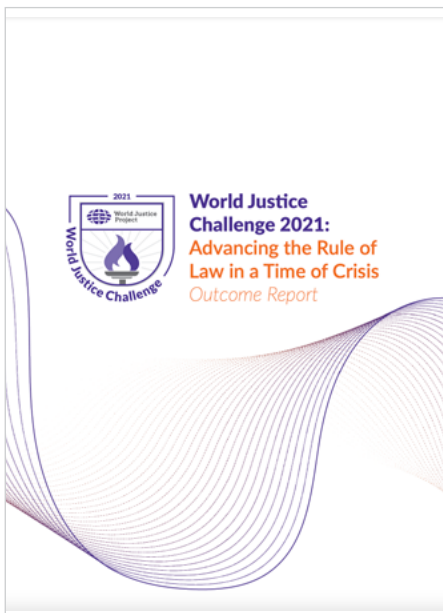
Other Publications
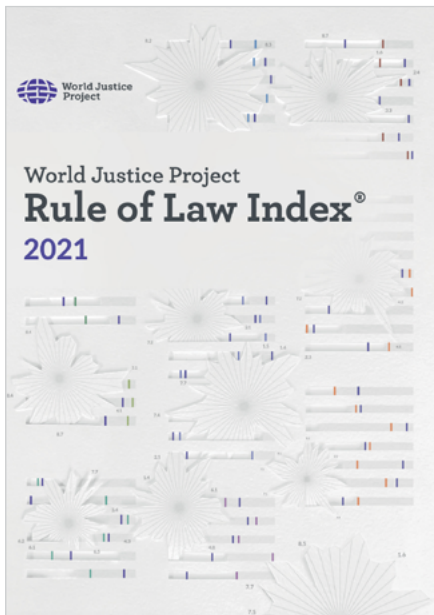
WJP Rule of Law Index 2021

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
2021

Environmental Governance Indicators for Latin America & the Caribbean
2020

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