



World Justice  
Project

A photograph of the Washington Monument and the U.S. Capitol building at sunset. The sky is filled with warm, orange and yellow clouds. The Washington Monument is in the foreground on the left, and the U.S. Capitol is visible behind it on the right.

# The Rule of Law in the United States

Key Findings from the WJP General Population Poll 2021

# Acknowledgements

*The Rule of Law in the United States: Key Findings from the WJP 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.

The production of this report was led by Ana María Montoya and Tanya Primiani. This report was prepared by Santiago Pardo, Hannah Rigazzi, Victoria Thomaides, and Carlos Toruño.

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 Mark David Agrast, Juan Carlos Botero, and Alejandro Ponce. The production of this iteration of the country report series was developed by Ana María Montoya, Santiago Pardo, Alejandro Ponce, Tanya Primiani, Hannah Rigazzi, Natalia Rodríguez Cajamarca, Victoria Thomaides, and Carlos Toruño Paniagua with the support of Said Aarji, Erin Campbell, James Davis, Joshua Fuller, Skye Jacobs, and Moss Woodbury.

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## ABOUT THIS REPORT

6 About This Report

7 Executive Findings

# 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 the United States: Key Findings from the WJP 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 the United States, this report also presents select findings over time and compared to other countries in the international Group of 7 (G7).

The GPP was conducted through online interviews to a nationally representative sample of 1,258 U.S. households in 2021. 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.

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

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 people in the United States. These thematic briefs focus on the current rule of law ecosystem in the United States while simultaneously illuminating changes over time and comparisons across the following peer countries in the G7: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom. The sections of this report describe people's perceptions of and attitudes towards the following topics: accountability, authoritarianism, fundamental freedoms, corruption, trust in institutions, the criminal justice system and its actors, crime victimization, security, police performance, and discrimination.

# EXECUTIVE FINDINGS

*The Rule of Law in the United States: Key Findings from the WJP General Population Poll 2021* provides a comprehensive overview of how citizens perceive and experience the rule of law in the United States alongside comparative findings across the following peer countries in the G7: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the United Kingdom. Several themes in this report include regression analysis based on the political affiliation of respondents and select sociodemographic characteristics. The results show a decrease in the perception of the rule of law in the country, compared to results from previous years.

## SECTION 1

### Authoritarianism, Fundamental Freedoms, and Accountability

#### 1. Authoritarianism

Respondents in the United States had more positive attitudes toward concepts relating to democracy and the rule of law than towards authoritarianism, and they had more positive attitudes toward principles associated with rule of law compared to respondents in most other G7 countries. Perceptions of the actual functioning of institutional constraints on government powers were varied, however. Just 65% of respondents in the United States believed that the courts were likely or very likely to stop the president's hypothetical illegal actions, and 52% thought Congress could do so—lower expectations of constraints imposed by courts and legislatures than found among respondents in most other G7 countries. When considering political affiliation, there is no statistically significant difference between Republicans' and Democrats' attitudes toward democracy or perceptions of the actual functioning of institutional constraints on government powers.

#### 2. Fundamental Freedoms

The percentage of respondents who believe that freedom of expression, participation, and religion are guaranteed in the United States declined between 2018 and 2021. Among all the fundamental freedoms analyzed in this report, the only improvement captured between 2018 and 2021 was an increased belief that local government officials are elected through a clean process. The most significant trends between 2018 and 2021 regarding fundamental freedoms include declines in the perceptions that people can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured (down 15 percentage points), that people can express opinions against the government (down 14 percentage points), and that media can express opinions against the government (down 13 percentage points). Generally, people in the United States have less confidence that their fundamental freedoms are protected than in most other G7 countries, with the exception of Italy and, in some cases, France. Democrats are more likely than Republicans to believe that fundamental freedoms are guaranteed, with two exceptions: Republicans have more confidence that religious minorities can observe their holy days and that people can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured.

#### 3. Accountability

Less than one-quarter (24%) of people in the United States believe that high-ranking government officials would be held accountable for breaking the law, marking a significant decline since 2018 (down 10 percentage points). While 2021 data is not available for all G7 countries, there is a general decline in perceptions of accountability across all countries beginning as early as 2014.

## SECTION 2

### Corruption and Trust

#### 4. Corruption

Perceptions of corruption in the United States intensified between 2018 and 2021. The changes were largest in regard to the police. In 2021, 27% of people said that all or most police officers were corrupt, up from 15% in 2018. In 2021, people continued to perceive members of Congress as more corrupt than officials in other branches of government, with 54% saying that all or most members of Congress are corrupt (up from 50% in 2018). Perceptions of corruption in the justice system were lower than in other branches of government, but also rose. In 2021, 22% of people said all or most judges and magistrates were corrupt, compared to 16% in 2018.

#### 5. Trust in Institutions

Between 2018 and 2021, people's trust in a variety of public officials declined. The proportion of people in the United States who have some or a lot of trust in police officers, local government officers, judges, and prosecutors all fell. In 2021, people had the most trust in judges and magistrates (62%), and the least trust in national government officers (45%). More broadly, the proportion of people saying they have some or a lot of trust in people living in the United States fell from 69% in 2018 to 61% in 2021.

## **6. Political Perceptions of Corruption and Trust**

Perceptions of corruption across actors in the judiciary demonstrated no statistically significant difference between Republicans and Democrats. However, Republicans are more likely than Democrats to believe that both members of Congress and national government officers are corrupt at a statistically significant level while Democrats are more likely than Republicans to believe police officers are corrupt at a statistically significant level.

Republicans are more likely than Democrats to have a lot or some trust in the police at a statistically significant level. On the other hand, Democrats are more likely than Republicans to have a lot or some trust in national government officers and public defense attorneys at a statistically significant level.

## **SECTION 3**

### **Security and Criminal Justice**

#### **7. Crime Victimization**

**Fourteen percent (14%) of respondents in the United States reported experiencing a crime between May 2020 and May 2021.** Nearly two-thirds (64%) of respondents who were victims of a crime reported the crime to an authority and, of those respondents, 85% reported that the case ended in prosecution.

#### **8. Security**

**In the United States, most respondents (80%) reported feeling safe in their neighborhood at night in 2021,** marking a slight decline from 82% of respondents in 2018. Respondents were less likely to feel safe walking in their neighborhood at night if they were women, not white, did not have a bachelor's degree, or were financially insecure.

#### **9. Criminal Justice**

**Between 2018 and 2021, perceptions of the criminal justice system's performance deteriorated across all eight dimensions measured.** The biggest decline was in people's confidence that the system is effective in bringing people who commit crimes to justice (down 11 points to 56%). However, this is also the only area where at least half the people surveyed in 2021 were confident in the criminal justice system. People were least confident in the timeliness of the system (30%).

Across all dimensions of criminal justice system's performance, Republicans had more positive perceptions than Democrats. While Republicans were most often confident that the criminal justice system ensures widespread access (72%), Democrats were most often confident that the criminal justice system is effective (51%). Both Republicans and Democrats were least confident that the criminal justice system ensures timeliness (33% and 27%, respectively).

#### **10. Police Performance**

**When asked about their impressions of police performance, respondents in the United States were most confident that:**

- Police help them feel safe (78%)
- Police are available to help when needed (78%)
- Police resolve security problems in the community (75%)

**Respondents in the United States were least confident that:**

- Police investigate crimes in an independent manner (39%)
- Police are held accountable for violating laws (45%)
- Police respect the rights of suspects (60%)

In the United States, respondents most often indicated that citizenship status, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity would most likely be factors of discrimination in a criminal investigation.

Across nearly all dimensions evaluating the effectiveness and legitimacy of the police, Republicans have more positive perceptions than Democrats at a statistically significant level. The only dimension in which Republicans and Democrats do not have a statistically significant difference is the belief that police investigate crimes in an independent manner.

## SECTION 4

### Discrimination

#### 11. Discrimination

**Forty percent (40%) of people living in the United States reported having experienced some form of discrimination in the 12 months prior to the interview.** People who identified themselves as non-white, who are younger than 30 years old, or who are in a financially insecure situation are more likely to report having experienced discrimination in the previous year.

Reasons why people feel they have been victims of discrimination vary depending on the respondent's ethnic and racial background. People who identified as white reported that their age, gender, and physical appearance were the main reasons for the discrimination they suffered. On the contrary, people who identified as non-white reported that their ancestry, race, and skin color were the main reason for discrimination against them.

## THEMATIC FINDINGS

SECTION I  
**AUTHORITARIANISM,  
FUNDAMENTAL  
FREEDOMS,  
AND  
ACCOUNTABILITY**

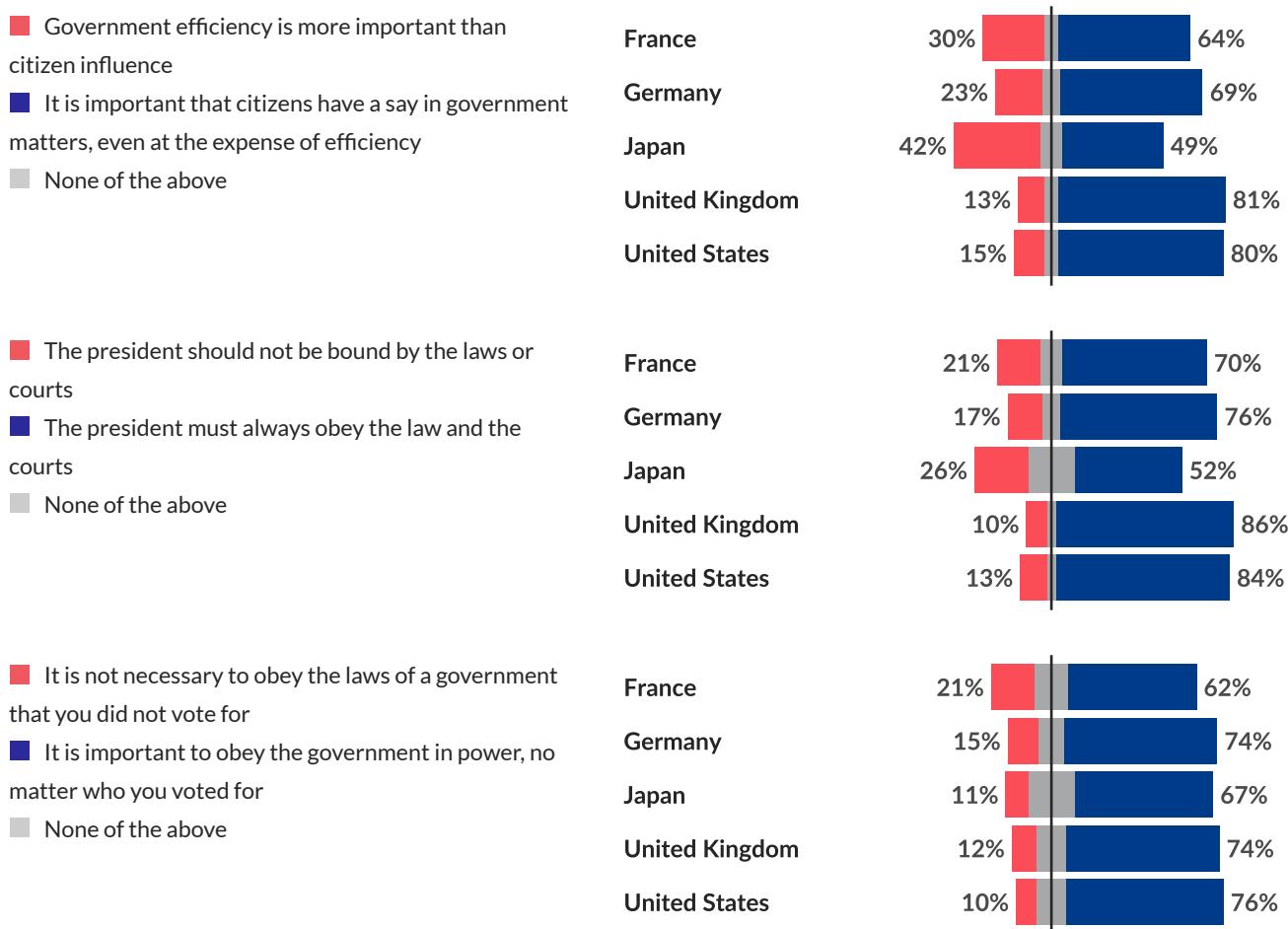
- 11 Authoritarianism
- 14 Fundamental Freedoms
- 19 Government Accountability

# AUTHORITARIANISM

## CHART 1.

### Attitudes Towards Authoritarianism and Rule of Law

Percentage of respondents who agree with the following statements



Note: The data presented in this analysis is sourced from multiple editions of the WJP General Population Poll. Specifically, information for France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom is derived from the 2018 edition, while insights into the United States are based on data from the 2021 edition of the WJP General Population Poll.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2018 and 2021

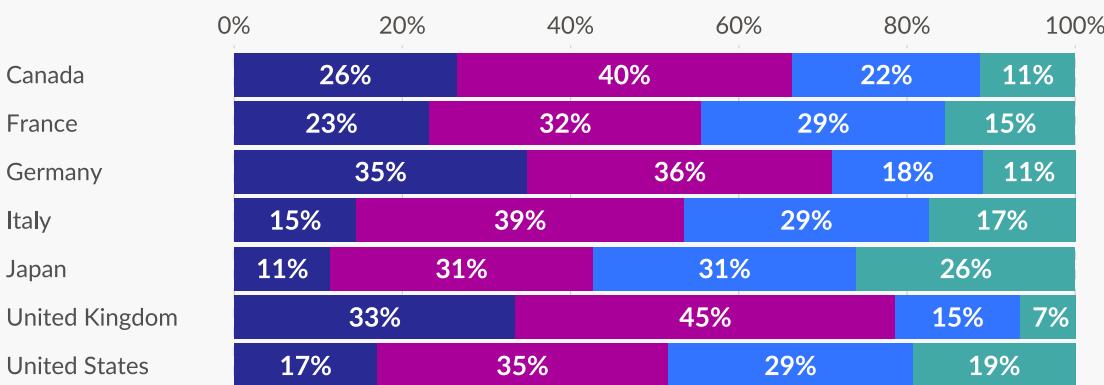
## CHART 2.

### Perceptions of Constraints on Government Powers

Percentage of respondents in the United States and other G7 countries who believe that various actors could hypothetically stop the head of state's illegal actions

● Very Likely   ● Likely   ● Unlikely   ● Very Unlikely

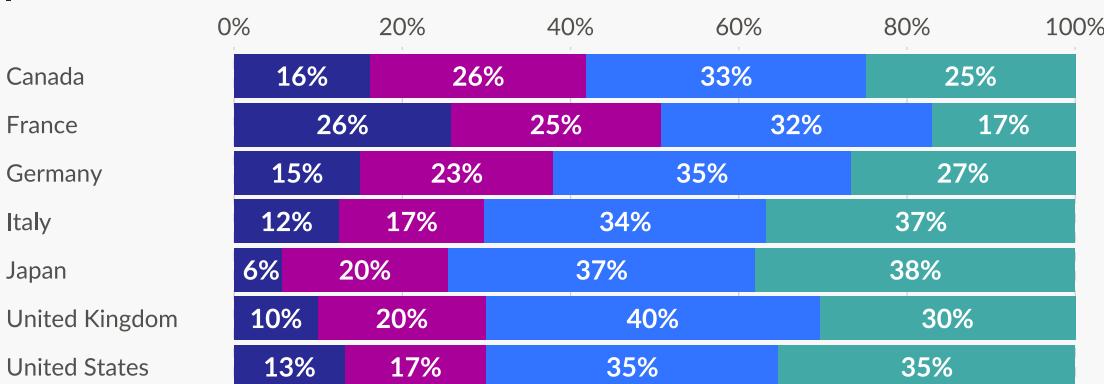
#### CONGRESS



#### THE COURTS



#### CITIZENS



Note: The data presented in this analysis is sourced from multiple editions of the WJP General Population Poll. Specifically, information for France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom is derived from the 2018 edition, while data concerning Canada and Italy is obtained from the 2017 edition. Notably, insights into the United States are based on data from the 2021 edition of the WJP General Population Poll.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2017, 2018, and 2021

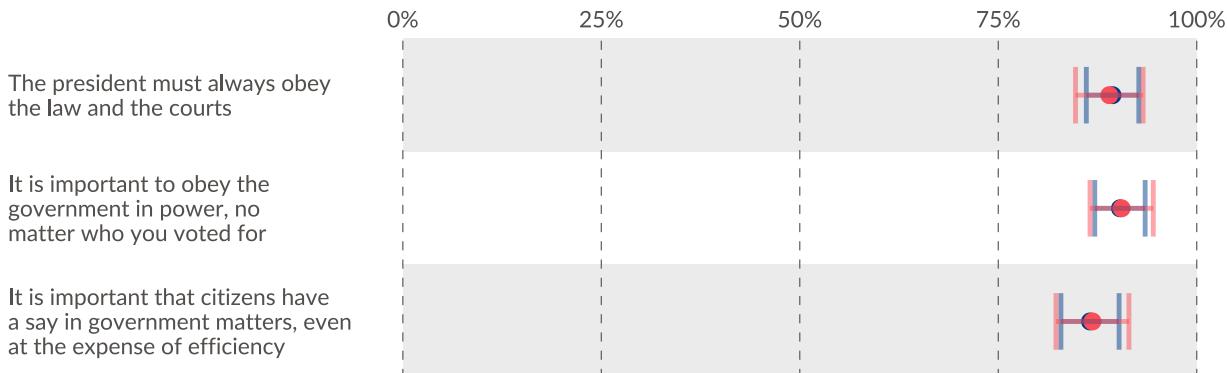
### CHART 3.

## Perceptions of Authoritarian Behavior and Constraints on Government Powers, by Political Affiliation

● Republican   ● Democrat

### AUTHORITARIAN BEHAVIOR AND RULE OF LAW

Percentage of respondents in the United States who agree with the following statements...



### CONSTRAINTS ON GOVERNMENT POWERS

Percentage of respondents in the United States who believe that the following actors could hypothetically stop the president's illegal actions



Note: The error bars encompassing the data points in our visuals are indicative of 95% confidence intervals. These intervals provide a reliable range within which we can reasonably infer that the true values lie.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

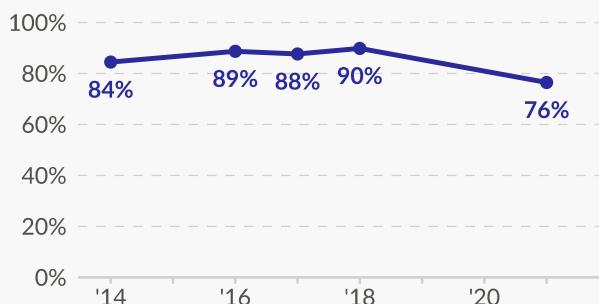
## CHART 4.

### Fundamental Freedoms in the United States over Time

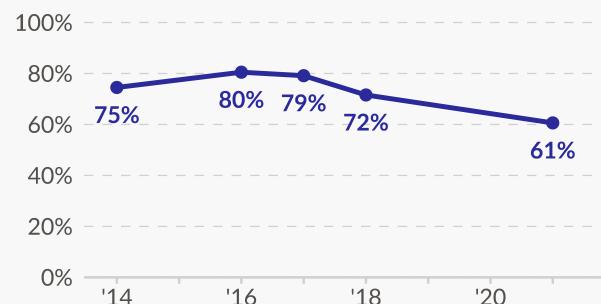
Percentage of respondents who believe the following statements

#### EXPRESSION

##### People can express opinions against the government



##### Civil society organizations can express opinions against the government



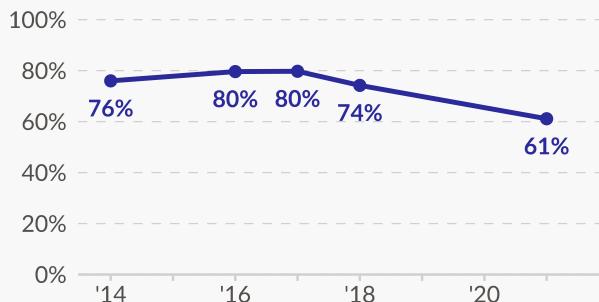
##### Political parties can express opinions against the government



##### The media can express opinions against the government without fear of retaliation



##### The media can expose cases of corruption



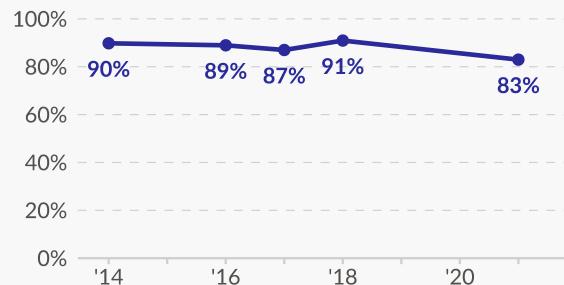
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021

## ■ PARTICIPATION

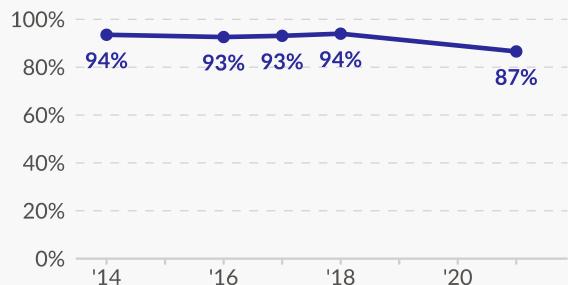
### People can attend community meetings



### 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 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021

## CHART 5.

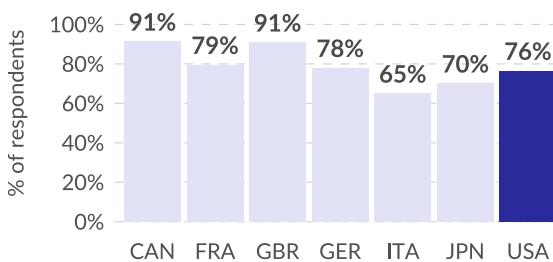
### Perceptions of Fundamental Freedoms in G7 Countries

*Percentage of respondents who believe the following statements*

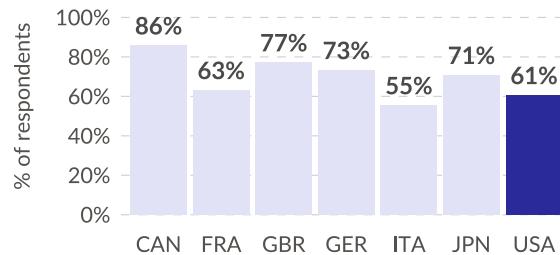
CAN = Canada    FRA = France    GER = Germany    ITA = Italy    JPN = Japan    GBR = United Kingdom  
USA = United States

#### EXPRESSION

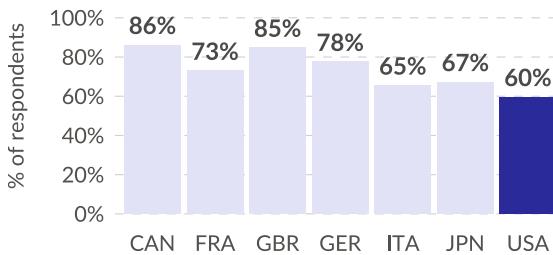
##### People can express opinions against the government



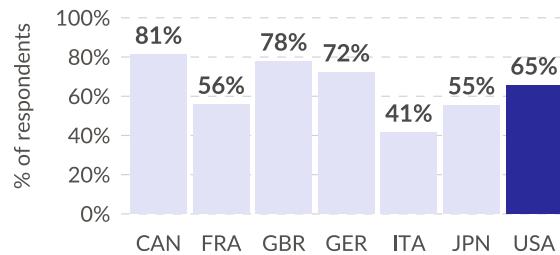
##### Civil society organizations can express opinions against the government



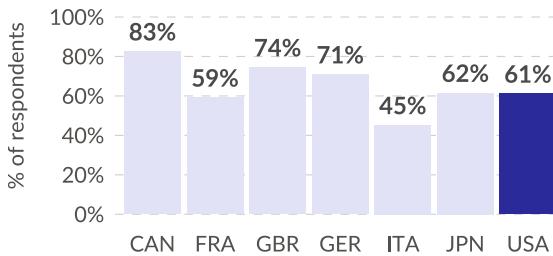
##### Political parties can express opinions against the government



##### The media can express opinions against the government without fear of retaliation



##### The media can expose cases of corruption

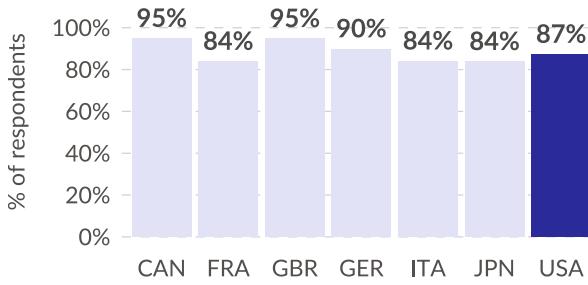


Note: The data presented in this analysis is sourced from multiple editions of the General Population Poll. Specifically, information for France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom is derived from the 2018 edition, while data concerning Canada and Italy is obtained from the 2017 edition. Notably, insights into the United States are based on data from the 2021 edition of the General Population Poll.

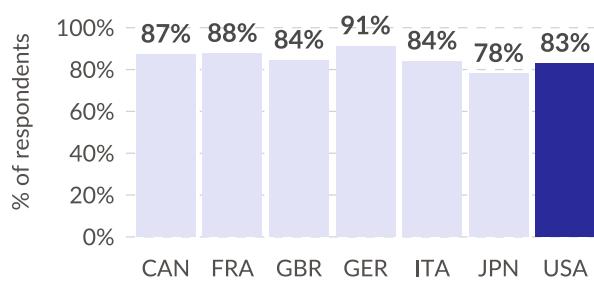
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2017, 2018, and 2021

## | PARTICIPATION

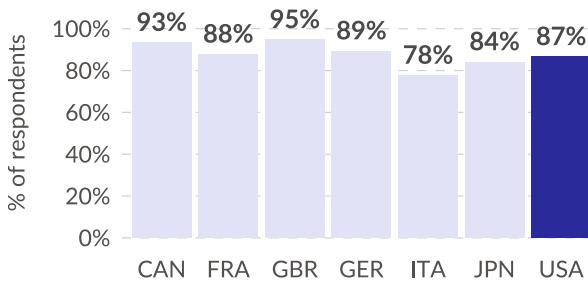
### People can attend community meetings



### People can join any political organization

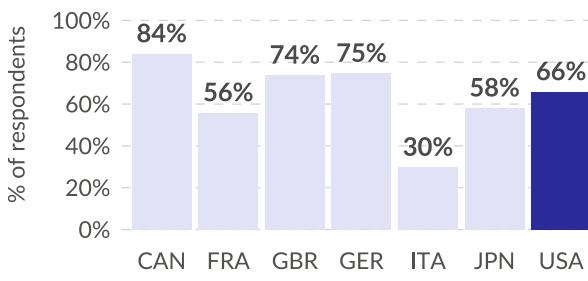


### People can organize around an issue or petition

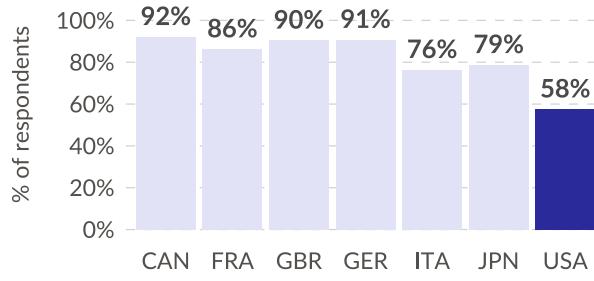


## | ELECTIONS

### Local government officials are elected through a clean process

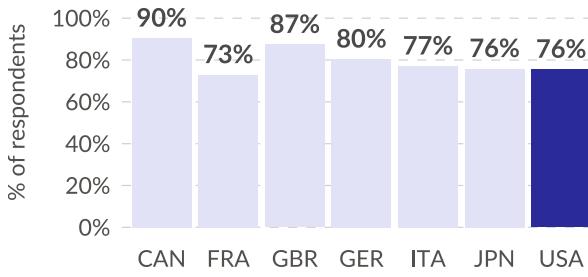


### People can vote freely without feeling harassed or pressured



## | RELIGION

### Religious minorities can observe their holy days



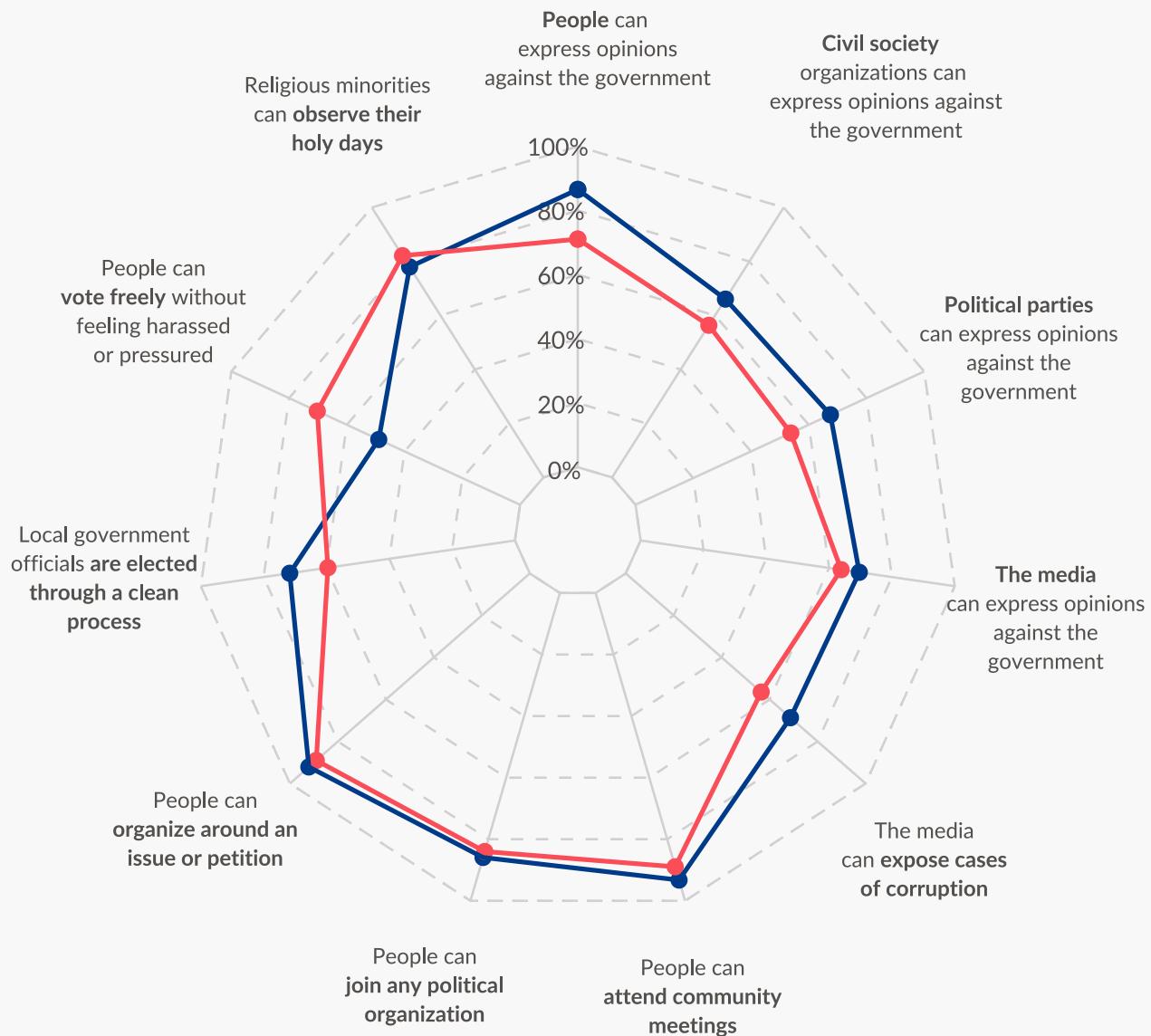
Note: The data presented in this analysis is sourced from multiple editions of the General Population Poll. Specifically, information for France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom is derived from the 2018 edition, while data concerning Canada and Italy is obtained from the 2017 edition. Notably, insights into the United States are based on data from the 2021 edition of the General Population Poll.

## CHART 6.

### Perceptions of Fundamental Freedoms, by Political Affiliation

Percentage of respondents who believe the following statements

● Republican    ● Democrat



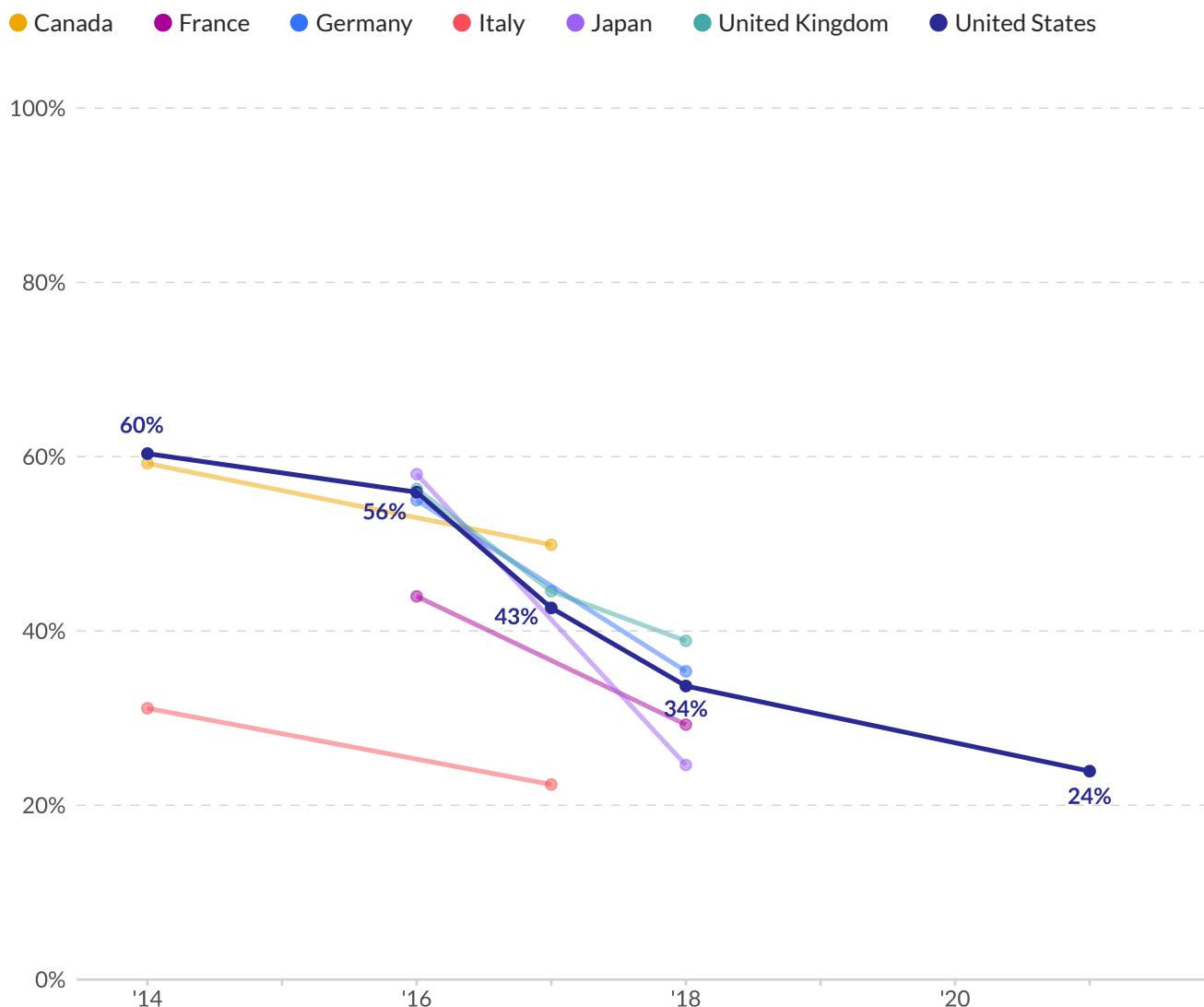
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

## CHART 7.

### Perceptions of Accountability in G7 Countries over Time

Percentage of respondents in the United States and other G7 countries who believe that high-ranking government officials would be held accountable for breaking the law



Note: The data presented in this analysis is sourced from multiple editions of the General Population Poll. Specifically, information for France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom is derived from the 2018 edition, while data concerning Canada and Italy is obtained from the 2017 edition. Notably, insights into the United States are based on data from the 2021 edition of the General Population Poll.

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

## THEMATIC FINDINGS

## SECTION II CORRUPTION AND TRUST

- 21 Corruption
- 23 Trust
- 24 Political Perceptions

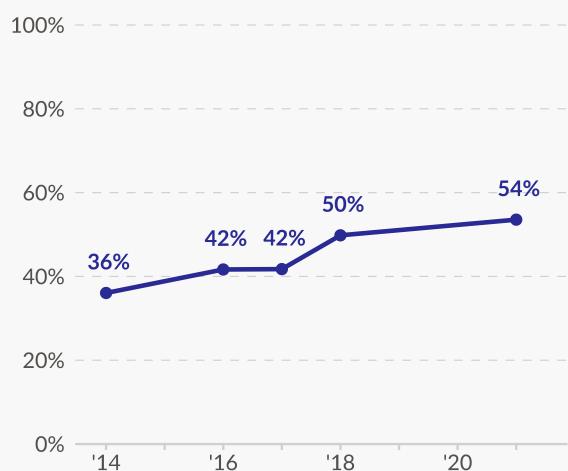
# CORRUPTION

## CHART 8.

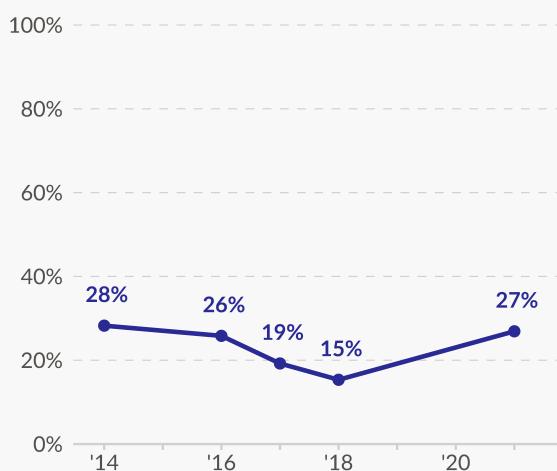
### Perceptions of Corruption by Institution over Time

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

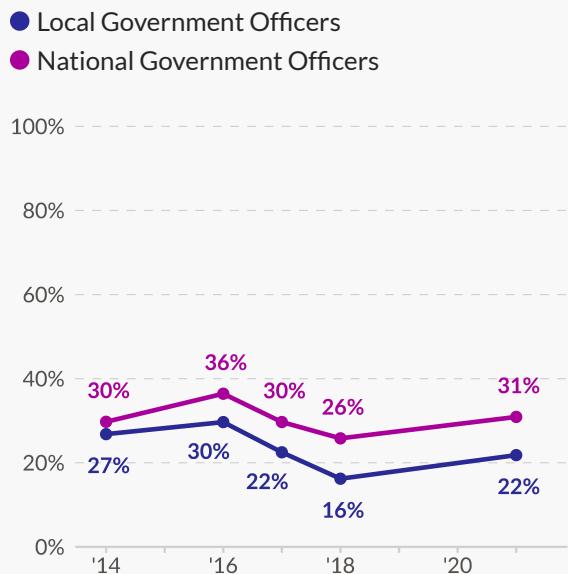
#### MEMBERS OF CONGRESS



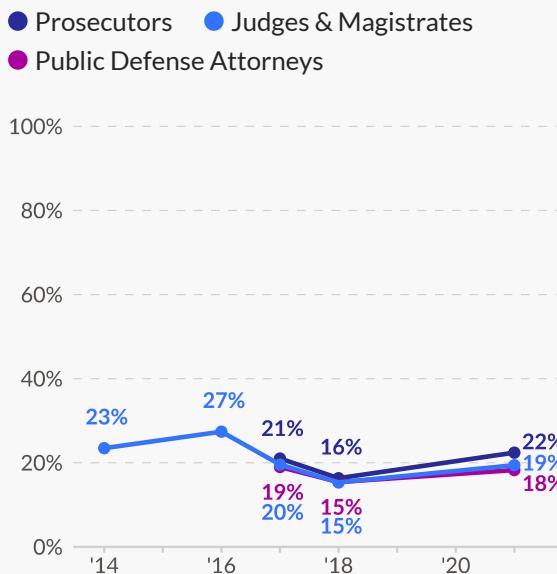
#### POLICE OFFICERS



#### EXECUTIVE



#### JUSTICE SYSTEM



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

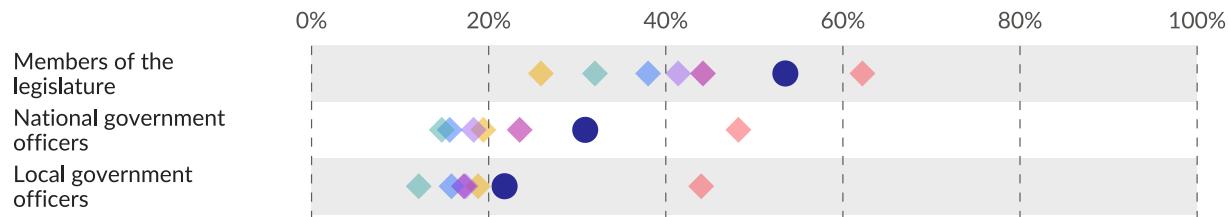
## CHART 9.

### Perceptions of Corruption in the G7 Countries, by Institution

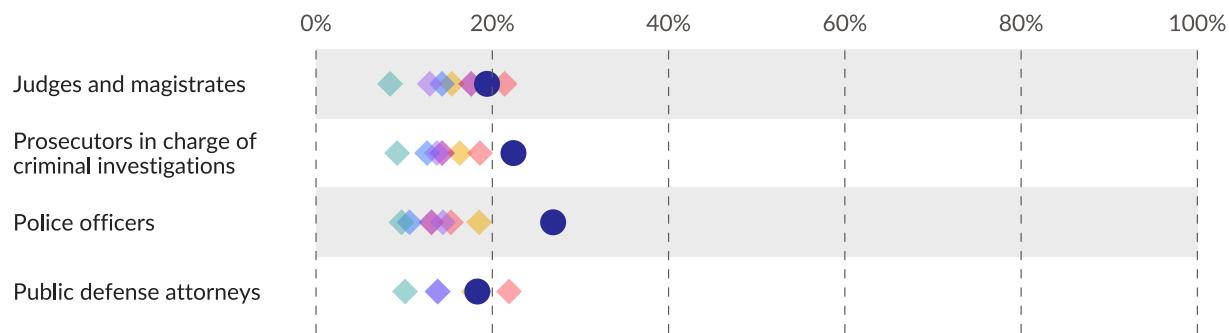
Percentage of respondents who think people in the following groups are involved in corrupt practices

◆ Canada    ♦ France    ▲ Germany    ◊ Italy    △ Japan    ▲ United Kingdom    ● United States

#### NATIONAL AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT



#### SECURITY AND JUSTICE INSTITUTIONS



Note: The data presented in this analysis is sourced from multiple editions of the General Population Poll. Specifically, information for France, Germany, Japan, and the United Kingdom is derived from the 2018 edition, while data concerning Canada and Italy is obtained from the 2017 edition. Notably, insights into the United States are based on data from the 2021 edition of the General Population Poll.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2017, 2018, and 2021

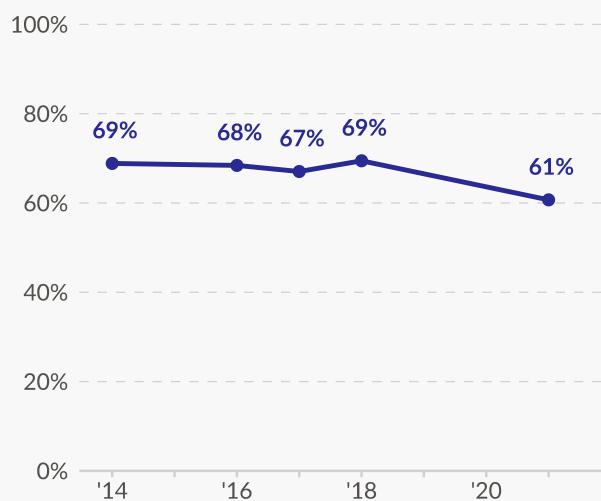
# TRUST

## CHART 10.

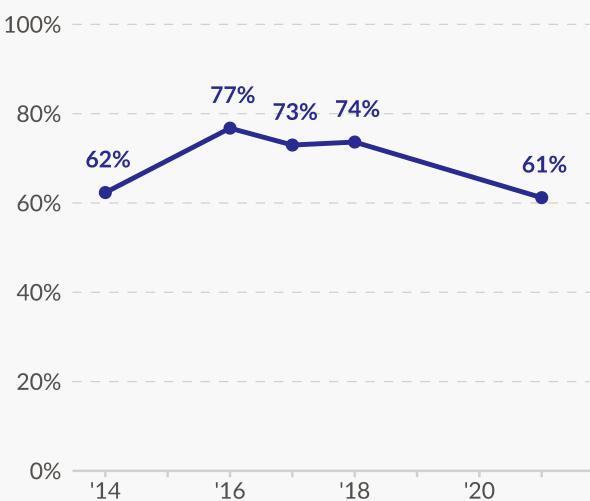
### Trust in Institutions Over Time

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

#### PEOPLE LIVING IN THEIR COUNTRY

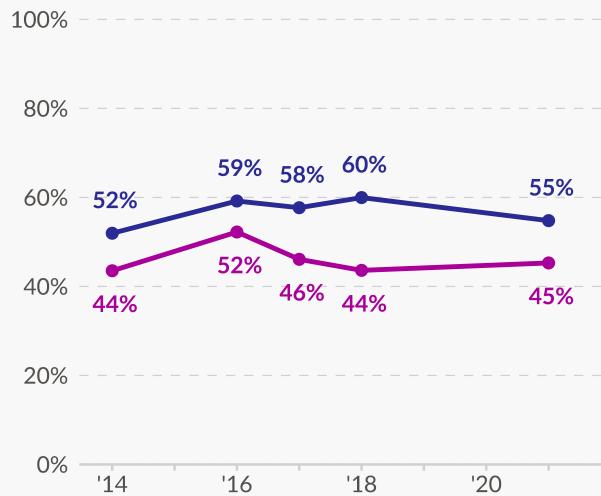


#### POLICE OFFICERS



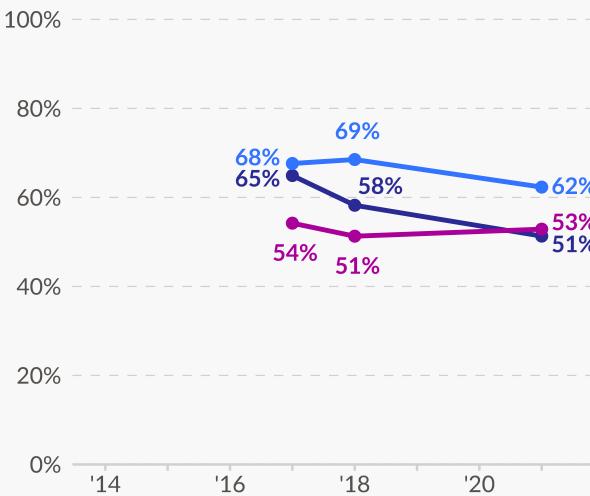
#### EXECUTIVE

- Local Government Officers
- National Government Officers



#### JUSTICE SYSTEM

- Prosecutors
- Judges & Magistrates
- Public Defense Attorneys



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

# POLITICAL PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION AND TRUST

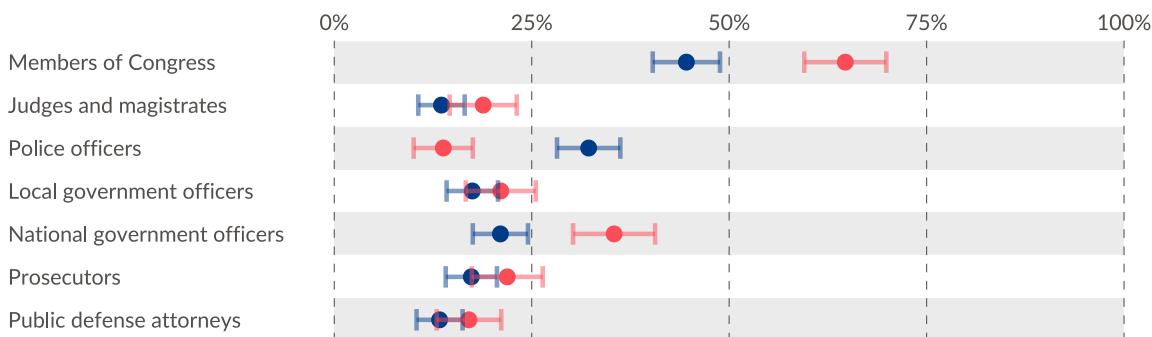
## CHART 11.

### Perceptions of Corruption and Trust, by Political Affiliation

● Republican   ● Democrat

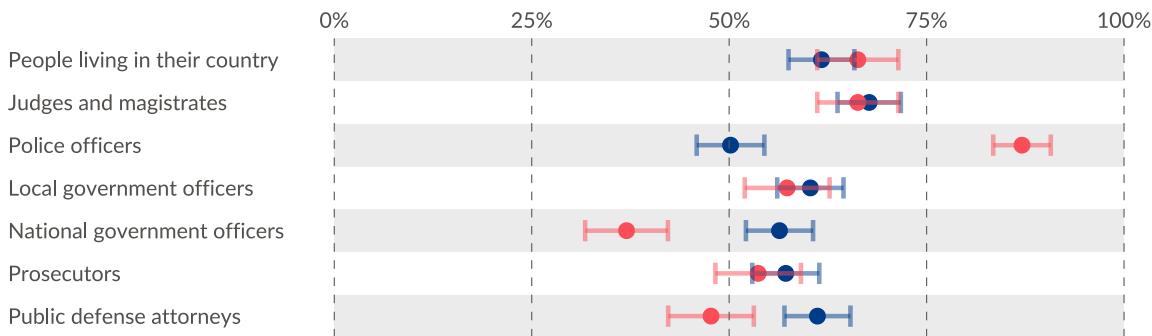
## CORRUPTION

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



## TRUST

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



Note: The error bars encompassing the data points in our visuals are indicative of 95% confidence intervals. These intervals provide a reliable range within which we can reasonably infer that the true values lie.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

## THEMATIC FINDINGS

SECTION III  
**SECURITY AND  
CRIMINAL  
JUSTICE**

26 Crime Victimization

27 Security

28 Criminal Justice

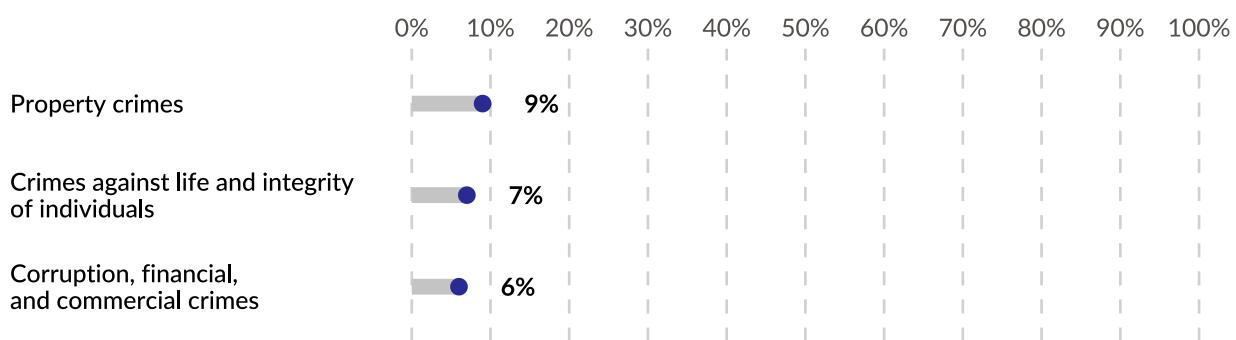
31 Police

# CRIME VICTIMIZATION

## CHART 12.1

### Types of Crimes Experienced by People in the United States

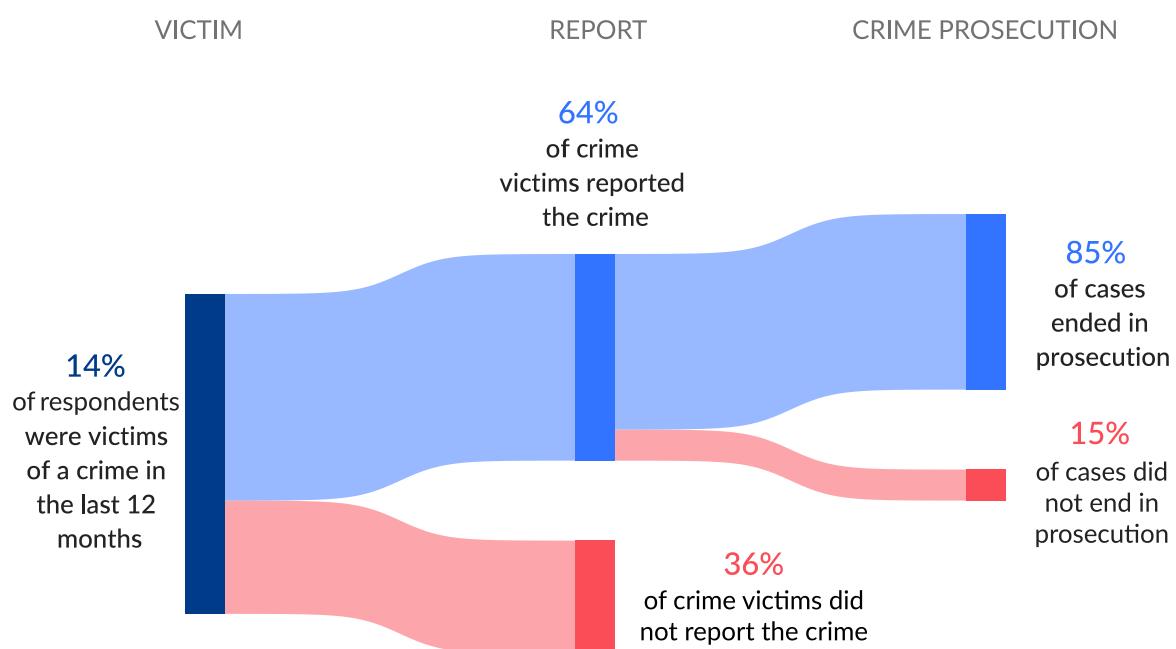
*Victimization rate, by type of crime*



## CHART 12.2

### Crime Victimization Rates and Reporting

*Data on crime victimization, reporting, and prosecution in the United States*



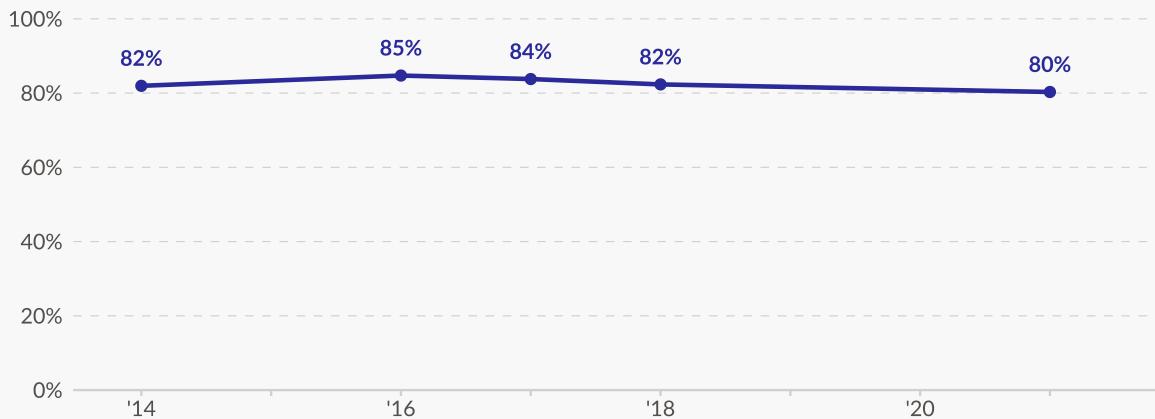
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

# SECURITY

## CHART 13.1

### Perceptions of Security in the United States over Time

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

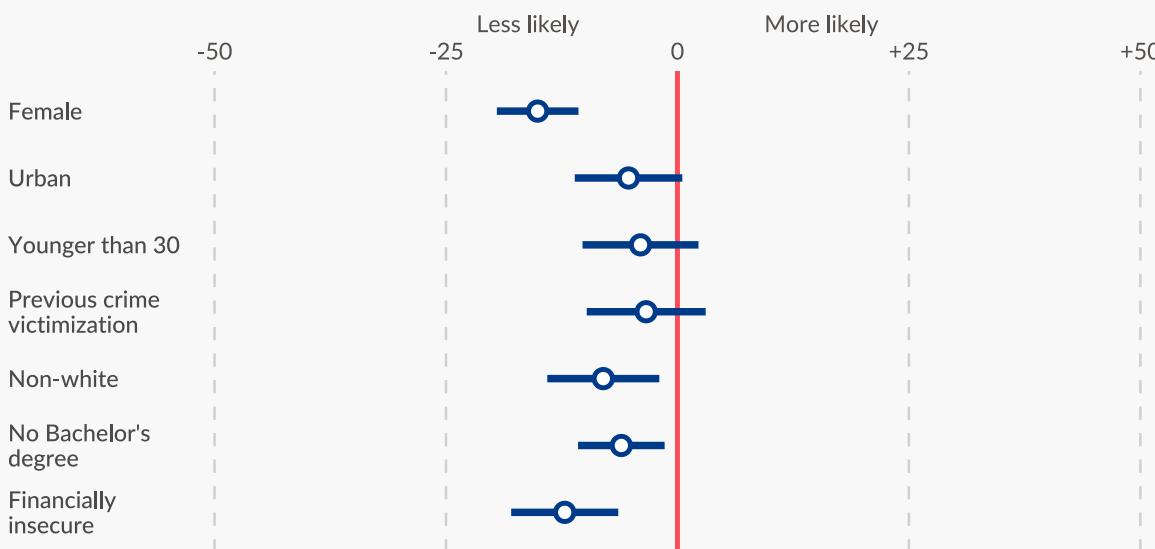


Source: WJP General Population Poll 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021

## CHART 13.2

### Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Perceptions of Safety

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



Note: The results in this infographic were obtained from a logit regression. Each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability of a respondent to answer "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.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

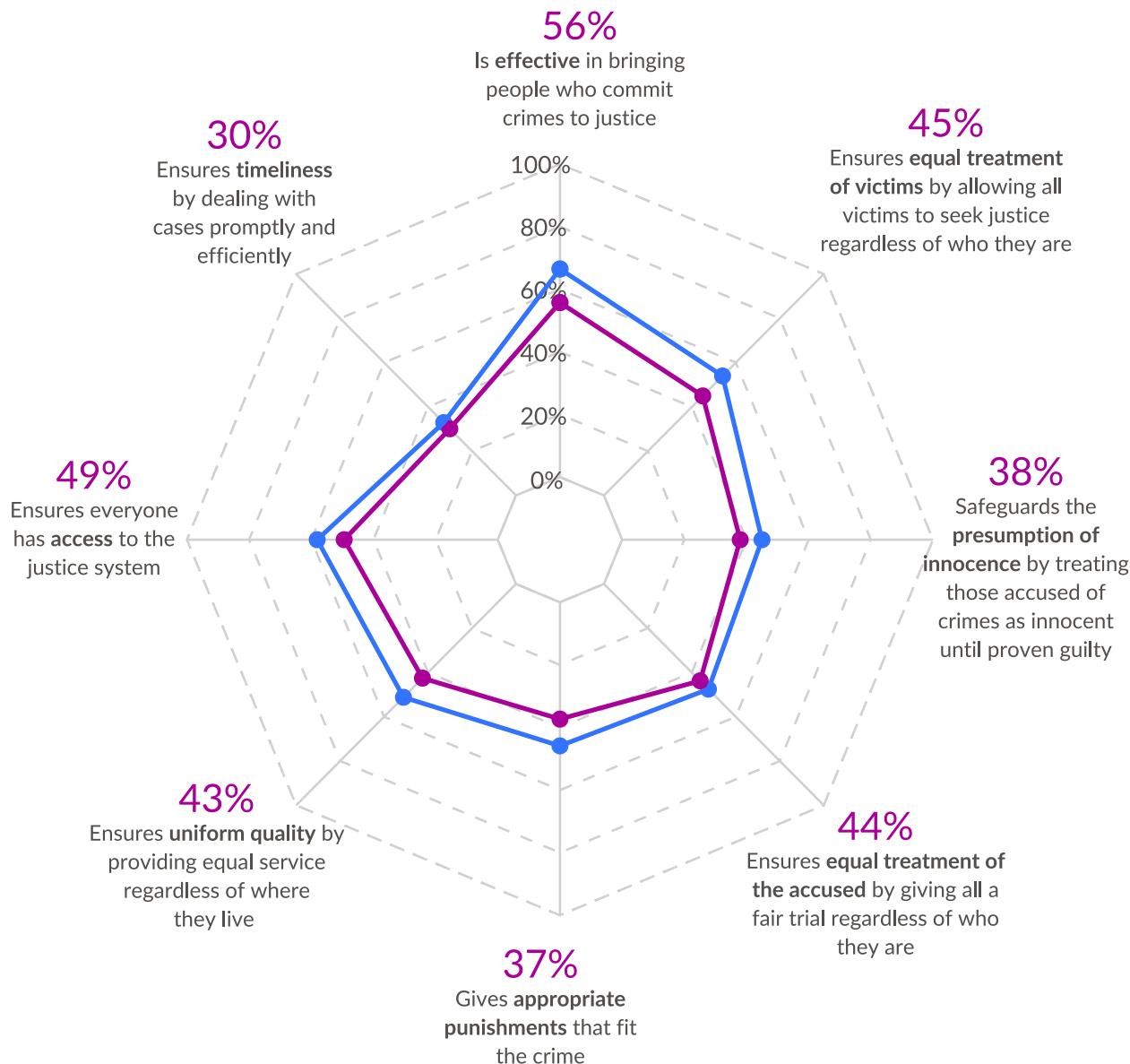
# CRIMINAL JUSTICE

CHART 14.

## Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System in the United States

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

● 2021    ● 2018



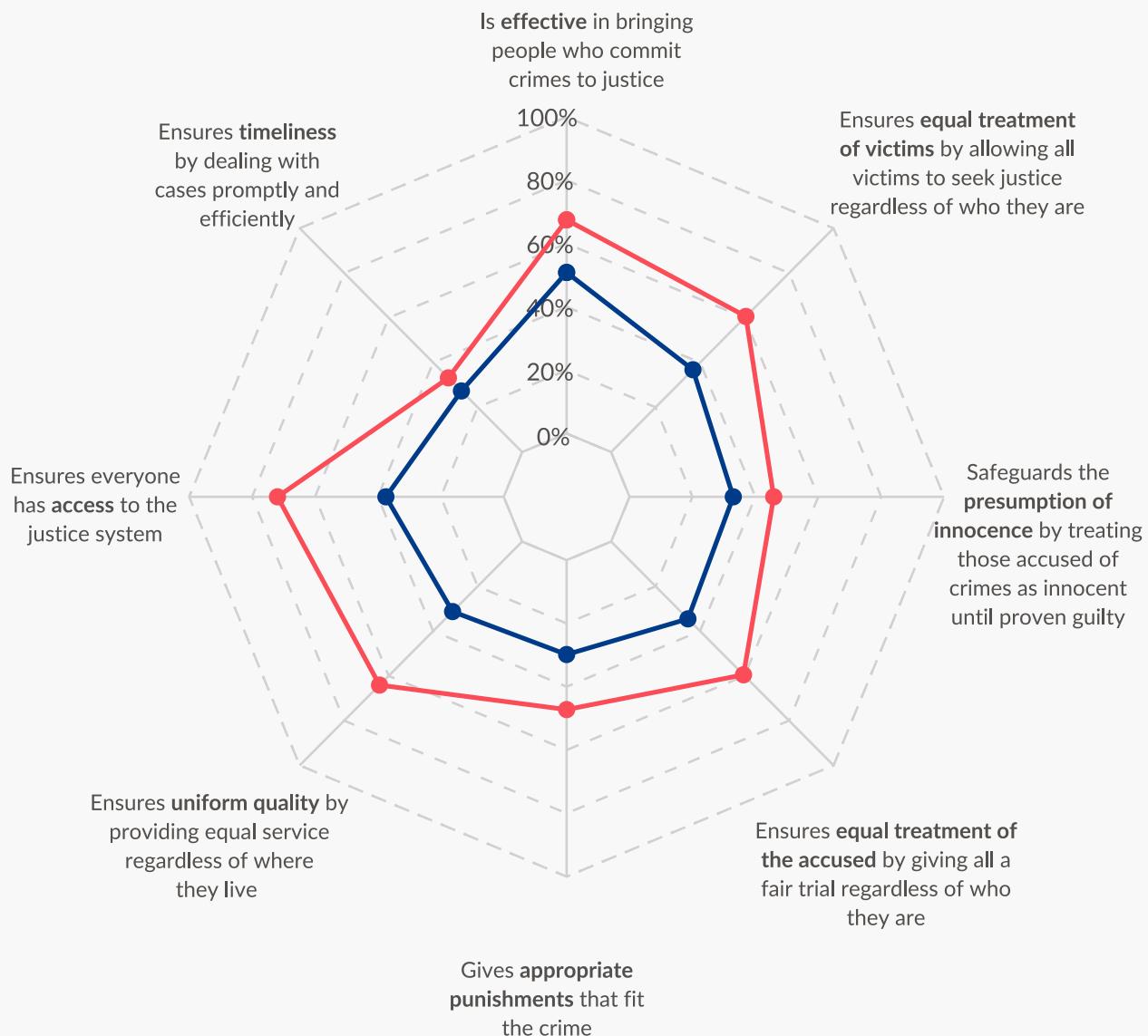
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2018 and 2021

### CHART 15.

#### Perceptions of the Criminal Justice System, by Political Affiliation

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

● Republican    ● Democrat



## CHART 16.

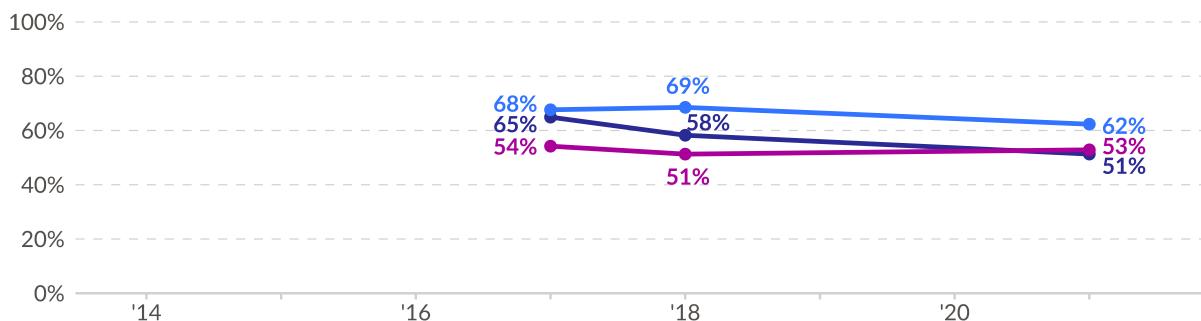
### Criminal Justice Actors

*Perceptions of criminal justice actors in the United States*

● Prosecutors   ● Public Defense Attorneys   ● Judges & Magistrates

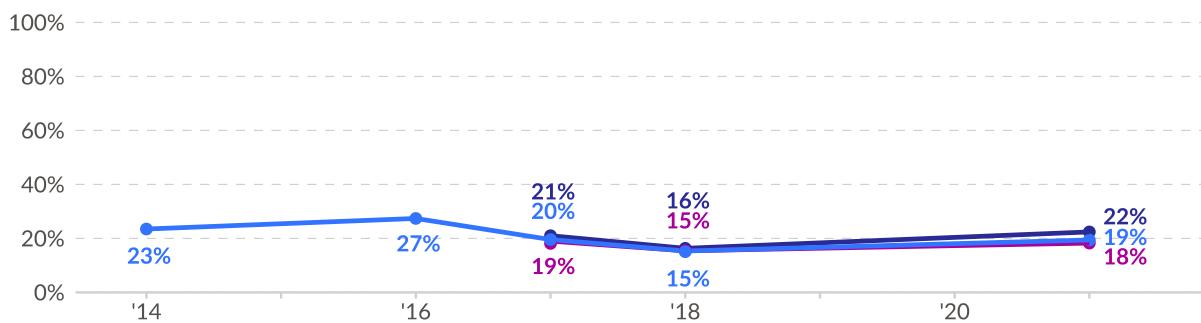
#### TRUST IN CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTORS OVER TIME

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



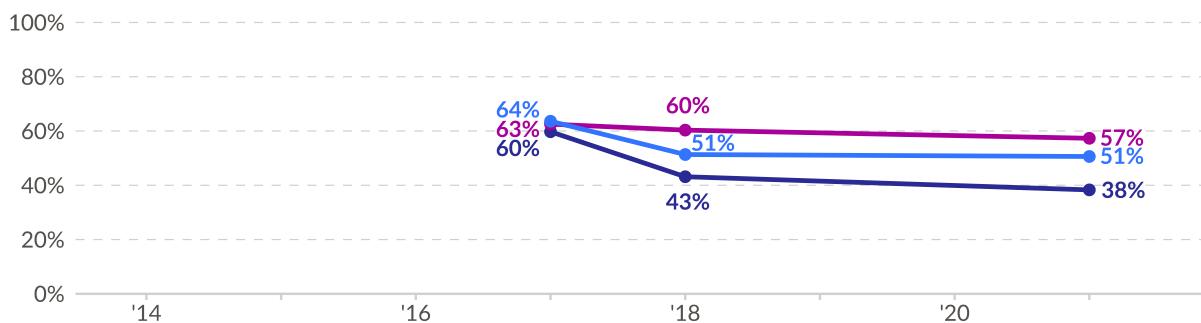
#### PERCEPTIONS OF CORRUPTION ACROSS CRIMINAL JUSTICE ACTORS OVER TIME

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



#### PERCEPTIONS OF INDEPENDENCE AND 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; Public defenders do everything they can to defend poor people that are accused of committing a crime; Judges decide cases in an independent manner and are not subject to any sort of pressure.

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

# POLICE

## CHART 17.

### Perceptions of the Police

*Opinions on the effectiveness and legitimacy of law enforcement*

#### TRUST AND SAFETY

*Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...*



#### ACCOUNTABILITY AND 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...*



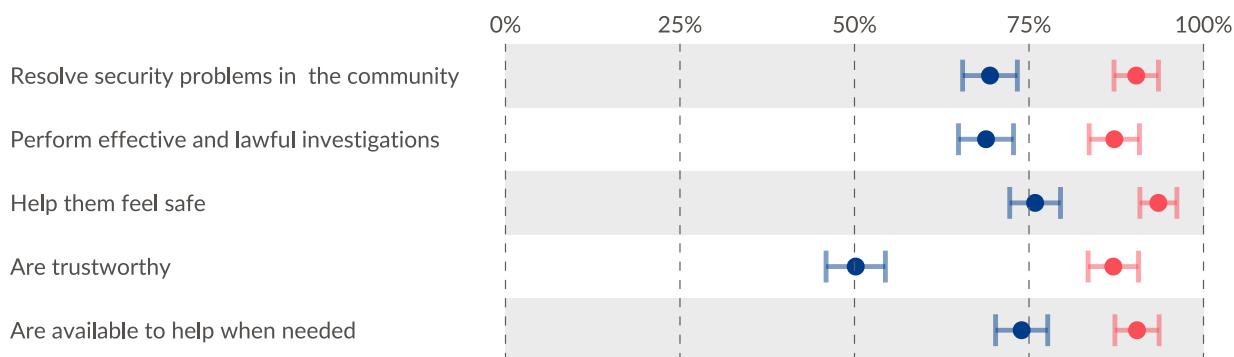
## CHART 18.

### Perceptions of the Police, by Political Affiliation

● Republican   ● Democrat

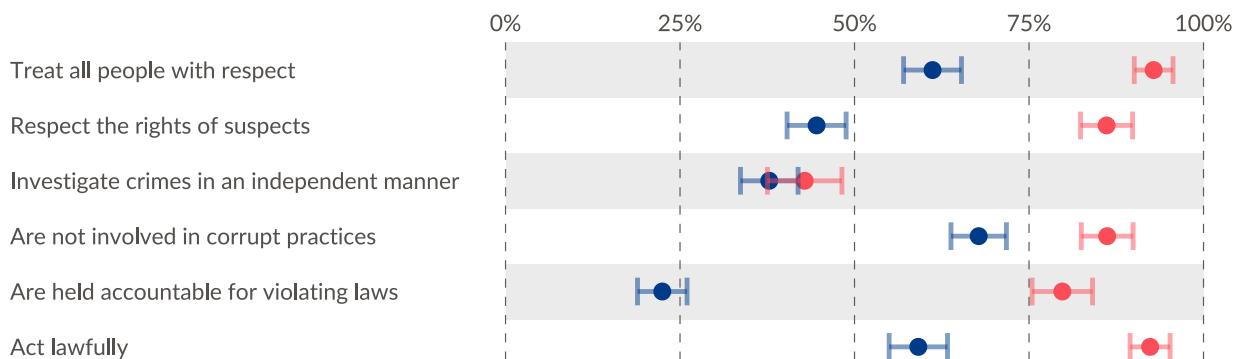
#### TRUST AND SAFETY

*Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...*



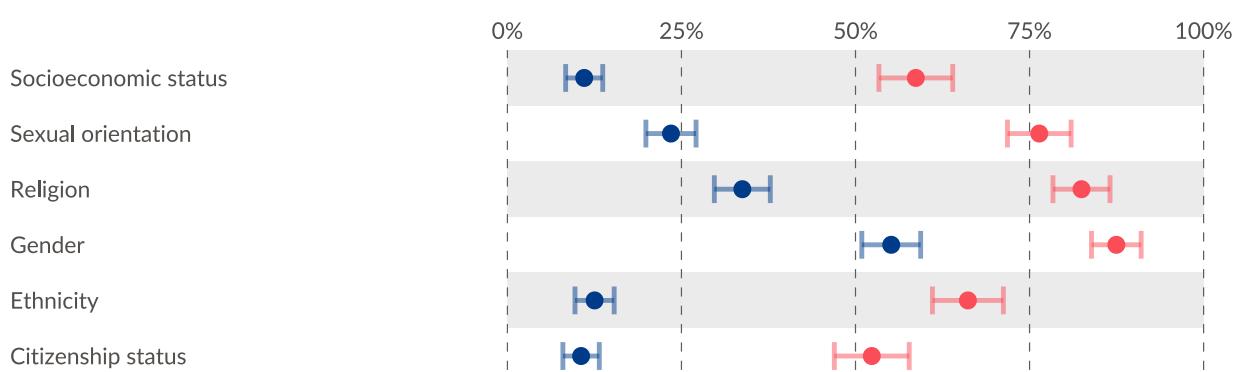
#### ACCOUNTABILITY AND DUE PROCESS

*Percentage of respondents who believe that the police...*



#### DISCRIMINATION

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



Note: The error bars encompassing the data points in our visuals are indicative of 95% confidence intervals. These intervals provide a reliable range within which we can reasonably infer that the true values lie.

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

## THEMATIC FINDINGS

### SECTION IV DISCRIMINATION

34 Discrimination

# DISCRIMINATION

## CHART 19.1.

### Discrimination Experiences

Percentage of respondents in the United States who reported having experienced some form of discrimination



Note: The WJP General Population Poll captures five different discrimination-related situations: a) "You are treated with less courtesy or respect than other people," b) "You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores," c) "People act as if they think you are not smart," d) "People act as if they are afraid of you," and e) "You are threatened or harassed."

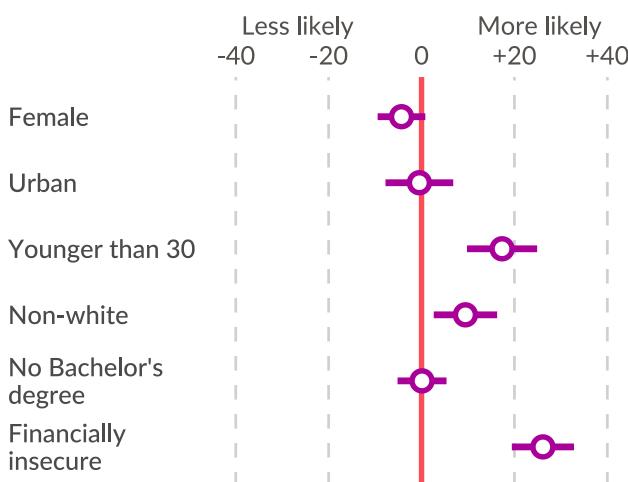
Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

## CHART 19.2.

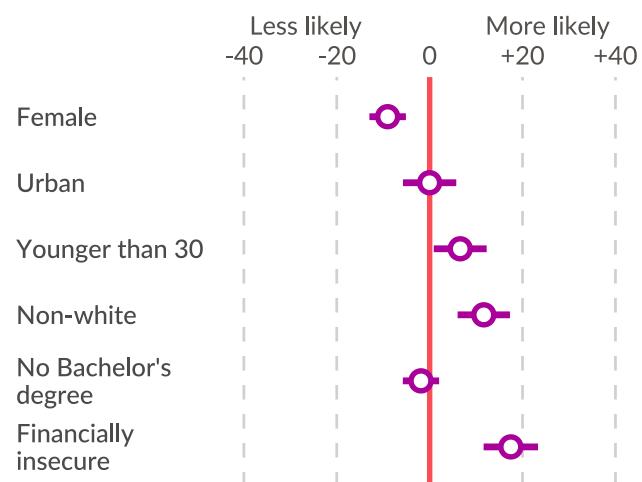
### Impact of Sociodemographic Characteristics on Discrimination

Likelihood that, at least once a month, respondents feel that...

#### | They are treated with less courtesy than other people



#### | People are afraid of them



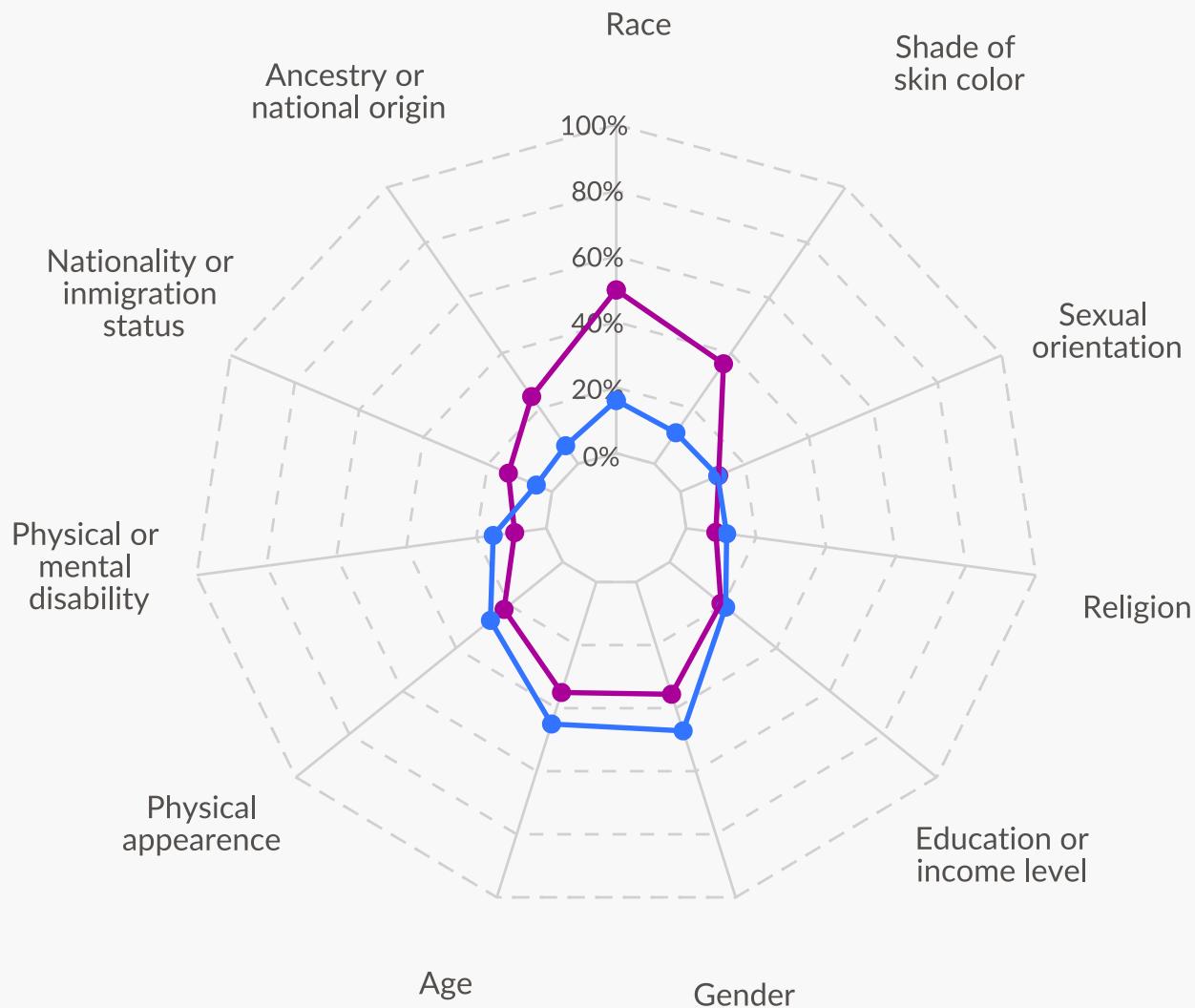
Note: These figures show the results of two logit regressions. On the left, each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability that a respondent answers a frequency of at least once a month to the question "How often do any of the following things happen to you? You are treated with less courtesy or respect than other people." On the right, each point indicates the average marginal effect of the corresponding sociodemographic characteristic on the predicted probability that a respondent answers a frequency of at least once a month to the question "How often do any of the following things happen to you? People act as if they are afraid of you."

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2021

**CHART 20.****Reasons Why People Feel Discriminated, by Shade of Skin Color**

*Percentage of respondents who think that the main reason why they experience discrimination is due to their...*

● Non-white    ● White



Note: The General Population Poll captures five different discrimination-related situations: a) "You are treated with less courtesy or respect than other people," b) "You receive poorer service than other people at restaurants or stores," c) "People act as if they think you are not smart," d) "People act as if they are afraid of you," and e) "You are threatened or harassed."

Source: WJP General Population Poll 2022

## PROJECT DESIGN

37 Methodology

# 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 WJP General Population Poll used to collect data in the United States in 2021 features several questions that highlight perceptions on salient issues, including authoritarian behavior, corruption, criminal justice, fundamental freedoms, security, and discrimination. In total, the WJP General Population Poll questionnaire includes 88 perception-based questions and 69 experience-based questions, along with sociodemographic information on all respondents. Additionally, the GPP in the United States was administered to a sample of 1,258 respondents.

## Data Collection

The GPP in the United States was conducted for the WJP's *The Rule of Law in the United States: Key Findings from the WJP General Population Poll 2021* with sampling, fieldwork, and data processing by YouGov, Nordic, based in Copenhagen, Denmark. YouGov Nordic administered the surveys in May 2021, conducting computer-assisted web interviewing (CAWI) using a stratified random sampling design. The target population group for this survey included people living in the United States aged 18 years or older.

### SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLE FRAME

The WJP General Population Poll in the United States represents an achieved total sample size of 1,258 interviews distributed proportionally across four regions. YouGov based the sampling frame on the most recent population estimates from the United States Census Bureau, acquiring a proportionally stratified sample by region, 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.

### SAMPLING

All interviews in the United States were conducted using a computer-assisted web interviews (CAWI) methodology. All respondents are registered members of the YouGov Survey Panel. They were selected based on their place of residence, age, gender, and reported income in order to fulfill predefined quotas to achieve a nationally representative sample. Participants were chosen via a meticulous stratified random sampling technique that considered various demographics.

It is important to note, however, that while efforts were made to ensure a balanced representation, the demographic breakdown, particularly in terms of race and ethnicity, was subject to the inherent randomness of the selection process. Within the surveyed population, 80% self-identified as white, leaving only 20% identifying in other categories. Consequently, the estimations presented in this report regarding perceptions of corruption, lack of trust in institutions, and negative attitudes towards the police should be viewed as conservative approximations, representing the lower bounds of the country's rule of law. This cautious interpretation stems from consistent observations that non-white respondents tend to hold more negative perspectives on these issues, suggesting that the actual state of affairs might be more pronounced.

For further insights into the rule of law in the United States, readers are encouraged to refer to the Country Insights page of the WJP Rule of Law Index 2023®.

## DESCRIPTION OF THE SAMPLE

**COVERAGE:** Interviews were distributed across regions to create a nationally representative sample. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the interviews took place in the South region, 28% in the West, 20% in the Midwest and the remaining 17% of the interviews took place in the Northeast region of the country.

**GEOGRAPHY:** Fifteen percent (15%) of respondents resided in rural areas, while 85% of respondents resided in metro areas or cities.

### RACIAL AND ETHNIC

**BACKGROUND:** Eighty percent (80%) of respondents identified themselves as White, followed by Hispanic (5%) and Black (5%). The remaining 10% of respondents identified themselves as part of other ethnic groups.

**GENDER:** Fifty-two percent (52%) of respondents were female and 48% were male.

**EDUCATION:** Most respondents (94%) reported that they had received at least a high school diploma or vocational degree.

## RESPONSE RATES

Incomplete and rejected surveys	209
Rejected Submissions	113
Break-off	96

## INTERVIEWING AND QUALITY CONTROL

All interviews were conducted online in English. As part of quality control, the duration of all completed surveys was checked and any surveys that were completed in less than 7 minutes were flagged and rejected from the final sample.

## DATA REVIEW AND VALIDATION

The data presented in this report has undergone a rigorous validation to ensure its accuracy and reliability. As part of the data analysis process, the team consulted 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 Varieties of Democracy Project (V-Dem), Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index, the Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BTI), and Freedom House's Freedom in the World. It is essential to acknowledge that discrepancies may arise when comparing our data with other sources, particularly those derived from expert assessments. Notably, our findings consistently indicated lower levels of fundamental freedoms compared to the most recent data from Freedom House and Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem). This systematic difference may stem from inherent disparities in how experts and the general public formulate their perceptions and assessments.

## HISTORICAL DATA

Historical data in this report derives from the *WJP Rule of Law Index®*'s General Population Poll that is typically administered every two to three years using a nationally representative probability sample ranging from 500 to 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 Canada and Italy was collected in 2014 and 2017. Data for France, Germany and Japan was collected in 2016 and 2018. Data for the United Kingdom was collected in 2016, 2017, and 2018. Data for the United States was collected in 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2021.

## APPENDIX

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42 Other Publications

# APPENDIX

## Methodological Materials

### GENERAL POPULATION POLL (GPP)

The General Population Poll in the United States 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 authoritarianism, government accountability, bribery, corruption, police performance, security, and criminal justice.

[World Justice Project General Population Poll 2021 – United States Survey Instrument](#)

### VARIABLES USED IN INFOGRAPHICS ON CRIME VICTIMIZATION

This table lists the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used to construct Chart 12.1 and Chart 12.2.

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

### REGRESSION TABLES FOR REGRESSION ANALYSIS USED IN INFOGRAPHIC ON PERCEPTIONS OF SECURITY

This document includes the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used in the regression analysis and the regression results featured in Chart 13.2.

[World Justice Project Regression Tables - Perceptions of Safety](#)

### 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 14 and Chart 15.

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

### VARIABLES USED IN INFOGRAPHIC ON THE POLICE

This table lists the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used to construct Chart 17.

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

### REGRESSION TABLES FOR REGRESSION ANALYSIS USED IN INFOGRAPHIC ON DISCRIMINATION

This document includes the question-level variables from the General Population Poll used in the regression analysis and the regression results featured in Chart 19.2.

[World Justice Project Regression Tables - Discrimination](#)



## ABOUT THE WORLD JUSTICE PROJECT

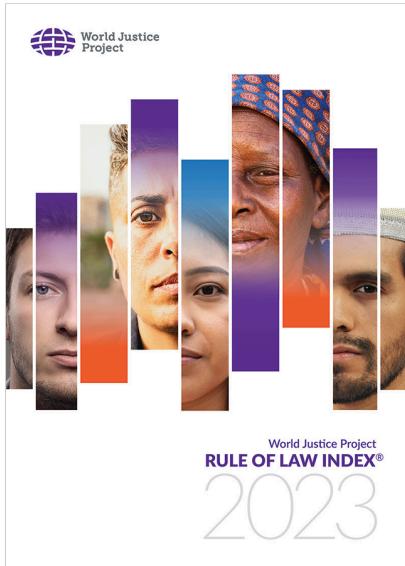
The World Justice Project (WJP) is an independent, multidisciplinary organization working to create knowledge, build awareness, and stimulate action to advance the rule of law worldwide. Effective rule of law is the foundation for communities of justice, opportunity, and peace—underpinning development,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

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

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

# OTHER PUBLICATIONS

For more information click on the publication.



**WJP Rule of Law Index 2023**



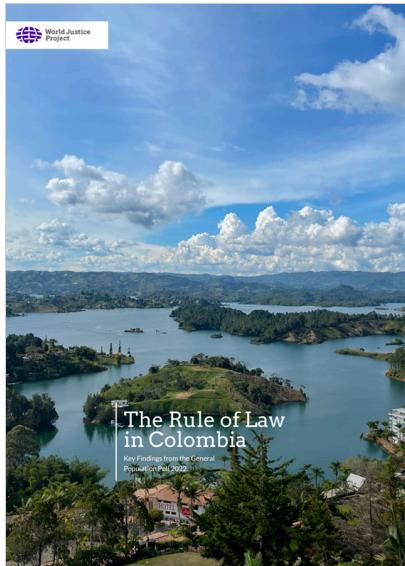
**WJP Rule of Law Index 2023 Insights**

Highlights and data trends from the  
WJP Rule of Law Index 2023

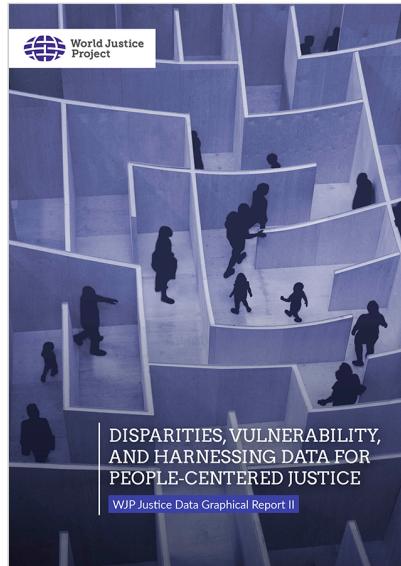


**WJP Mexico States Rule of  
Law Index 2022-2023**

Perceptions and experiences in 32  
states



**Rule of Law Surveys in Latin American  
and Caribbean Countries**  
Outcome Report



**WJP Justice Data Graphical Report  
Part II  
2023**



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

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



World Justice  
Project