

Community Focus Group Results Report

Ipsos Puerto Rico

December 2025

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1. Introduction

The United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) established an agreement with the Government of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rico Police Bureau (PRPB) for the Sustainable Reform of the Puerto Rico Police Department, where one of the provisions requires the PRPB to conduct a survey, with the supervision of a Monitor appointed by the court and the oversight of the USDOJ.

The first phase of this study was conducted during 2022 (quantitative), followed by an in-depth qualitative exploration during 2023. In this sense, the objective of this study, conducted during the last quarter of 2025, was to conduct an in-depth study among key community segments and internal representatives of the PRPB to validate the findings of the quantitative phase of 2024.

Seeking to explore in-depth the perceptions of citizens and various communities, it sought to explore:

a. Knowledge about police reform in Puerto Rico
b. Perception of the Puerto Rico police:
    - Professionalism
    - Resources
    - Recruitment
    - Use of technology
    - Contribution to the community
    - Public information / Statistics
c. Interactions or experiences with the Puerto Rico Police
    - Procedures
    - Discriminated sectors

2. Methodology and sample of the study

Maintaining the sample distribution of 2023, this study had 32 video focus groups, exploring 12 population groups. The focus groups were conducted virtually and lasted about 1:30h. Below is the sample distribution for this study:

	Target	Region		Total
		San Juan - Metro	Rest Island	
1	Young adults 24 – 34 years	2	2	**4**
2	Adults 50 – 70 years	2	2	**4**
3	Members of the LGBTQIA+ community (24+ years)	1	1	**2**
4a	Residents of public housing 24 - 34 years.	1	1	**2**
4b	Residents of public housing 45 - 65 years	1	1	**2**
5	Black / Afro-Latin people (24+ years)	2	1	**3**
6	Dominican-born people living in Puerto Rico for 3+ years	2	1	3
7	Community leaders	1	1	**2**
8	Women victims of gender-based violence or sexual crimes in the past 2 years	1	1	**2**
9	Citizens with administrative complaints	1	1	**2**
10	Adults with physical disabilities	1	1	**2**
11	Adults with mental/cognitive disabilities (or their caregivers)	1	1	**2**
12	Citizens intervened by the Police in the last 2 years	1	1	**2**
	Total	**17**	**15**	**32**

3. Results

3.1. Concerns and perceptions about life in Puerto Rico

Participants from all groups express similar concerns to those explored during 2023, highlighting insecurity and current socioeconomic conditions as main themes. The instability in the island's economy and the rising cost of living continue to affect the daily lives of Puerto Ricans; younger people continue to face difficulties accessing the job market; corruption in various public spheres remains a central issue among older adults, and access to basic services (electricity, housing, health) is still a source of concern, especially among people with disabilities who require more specialized attention. In addition to this, there is an increase in concern regarding the political landscape in the United States, under the current presidency of Donald Trump, and what this means for Puerto Ricans.

One of the most mentioned topics by all groups centers on what many call 'a mental health crisis', which has transformed the social fabric among neighbors and citizens. This is described by one of the younger interviewees:

> *Before we could go out to the community and, I don't know, the neighbor would take care of the other and so on. But we are in a moment where each family is almost like a world apart, they take care of each other more, and the other can solve as best as they can. (Young people 24 – 34, Rest of Island)*

This disintegration of the social fabric is also reflected in daily acts of aggression that affect all interviewees, and has led many to modify their usual patterns of behavior, contributing significantly to the widespread feeling of insecurity that the majority of interviewees express feeling. In this sense, insecurity is not only defined through violent and media events (thefts, shootings, carjackings), but also in interactions with 'ordinary' citizens. This is expressed by one of the interviewees when reflecting on social transformations:

> *[Security is] being able to go out like one used to. One used to go out without fear. Not only the fear of being robbed, but also car accidents. Because people drive recklessly. There is no respect, there is no sensitivity towards the elderly either. (People with physical disabilities, San Juan - Metro)*

In this sense, many have chosen to reduce their time in public spaces, return home earlier than usual, avoid certain crowded spaces, or simply 'entrust themselves' to be able to return home safely. For many, this is the result of a 'loss of values', a concern most expressed by older participants. This phenomenon, in turn, intertwines with larger scale issues – drug trafficking, lack of job opportunities, migration of human talent to the United States – causing many no longer to recognize the island in which they grew up years ago. In this sense, for many interviewees, insecurity is not solved exclusively with police presence, but with investment in infrastructure, social services, psychosocial care, and education. This is manifested by one of the interviewees:

> *We have a government that is reactive, which, to combat crime, seeks more police officers. But instead of reactive, it can then be planning and increase social services. Because a criminal is not born – a criminal is made on the street and with the parents. (Public housing, 45 – 65 years, San Juan – Metro)*

This feeling of insecurity is also exacerbated by the increasing reports of corruption and ineffectiveness of the current government – this erodes trust in public institutions. This is expressed by one of the older interviewees:

> *When this government won, we had a person who led the emergency body of Puerto Rico [Nino Correa]. But do you know why the government removed him? Because he was not corruptible. This happens with the superintendent of police too. When there is a good one in this country, who does things right, they remove him because he is not political. And in this country, to have a big position you have to be political, you have to be hand in hand with the party that is in power. (Public housing, 45 – 65 years, San Juan – Metro)*

In summary, the interviewees seem to categorize the current situation in the country into two main areas. On one hand, the most media-covered and televised events are mentioned, which generate fear and are associated with macroeconomic and social structures (drug trafficking, economic crisis, lack of job opportunities), and whose responsibility is attributed directly to the State and its entities – including the Police: 'Security is that we have a quality security system, but we don't have it, we don't rely on it. In truth, I feel insecure. There are many fewer police officers, and they also do not have the necessary equipment to deal with any emergency' (Community leaders, San Juan – Metro). On the other hand, there are actions that, although they do not appear in the media or leave mortal victims, affect the daily lives of citizens and also cause fear (events on the road, cases of domestic violence and disputes between neighbors). These, although not disconnected from the Police and the State, respond more to a structural change in Puerto Rican society, as expressed by one of the participants living in public housing:

> *Maybe as a person one goes to a place to enjoy with a tranquil mind, and another person comes who does not have the same values as I do, because obviously we all think differently. Well, maybe this person does not share the same values as one, and is someone who likes problems, and the problem arises and we are in the wrong place. That for me is insecurity. (Public housing, 24-34 years, Rest of Island).*

3.2. Security components – what, who, and how security is defined

As mentioned in the previous section, insecurity is one of the main concerns among the interviewees, regardless of age, place of residence, or living conditions. This concern is more mentioned when compared with the results of the 2023 study. However, it is important to highlight that the perception of security is not homogeneous – it varies depending on the interlocutor's intersectionality (their sexual orientation, nationality, skin color, gender, age, and place of residence). In this sense, there are

two distinct levels of insecurity: a baseline experienced by all Puerto Ricans, and others that will vary based on their characteristics and living conditions.

This is clear among many participants, emphasizing that living in Puerto Rico and being a woman exposes them to a higher level of risk – including gender-based violence. One of the participants expresses her feeling of insecurity, and how it is heightened by being a woman:

> *The police do not give me any kind of relief, […] especially if you are a woman in Puerto Rico. Because really, there have been many femicides, […] and we have seen how the vast majority of victims have followed all the steps and still end up dead or in worse conditions. […] We have seen cases where women seek help and end up being harassed by the police officer who helped them. (Young people 24 – 34 years, Rest of Island).*

Something similar is seen among members of the LGBTIQ+ community, where many participants express continuing to experience cases of discrimination and hostile treatment: 'In my area, which is a neighborhood area, I do see that there is a predisposition towards certain stereotypes that can be dangerous, homophobia is still clearly perceived [...] despite all this about gender freedom and everything' (LGBTIQ+ Community, San Juan – Metro). In contrast, many Dominican participants refer to their past experiences in the Dominican Republic to reflect that, although there is an increase in violent events in Puerto Rico, they do not feel as insecure compared to how they felt in their country of origin.

Nevertheless, all participants seem to identify a growing wave of cases of shootings, robberies, femicides, and other violent events that were not seen with such frequency on the island. This is expressed by one of the participants:

> *Right now, there is a situation where there is killing happening in a way that did not happen before. And you don't see any action from the government saying 'no, we have to take the bull by the horns, we have to implement a plan, what are we going to do in the face of this wave of drug trafficking or in the face of this wave where one wants to govern, the other, what if the area of the point.' (Public housing, 24 – 34 years, San Juan - Metro)*

In line with the above, another participant expresses that they no longer feel safe in everyday activities, such as going to the bakery, because "an assault can happen anywhere you go right now. Everything is quite dangerous everywhere" (young people 24-34, Rest of Island). These two examples show how this perception of increasing insecurity is not only felt by older generations but also by young people.

While the interviewees agree that these events of greater violence are more visible in the San Juan – Metro area, residents from other areas of the country agree that their communities no longer feel as safe as before:

> *In [Arecibo] and in the surrounding communities, there has recently been a high incidence of crime, and literally one feels unsafe already when night falls. […] Before, there was more police*

> *presence patrolling the communities; nowadays that is scarce, at least in the town, […] we have had to witness situations when they occur, and sometimes they take a long time to arrive, or simply do not arrive at all. (Community leaders, Rest of Island)*

In this sense, the Police begin to be mentioned as one of the main entities responsible for generating security, and there is consensus that the decrease in their presence in different areas of the country has contributed to a greater feeling of insecurity. For many, the little availability of Police encourages people to feel less restrained in committing illegal acts, as they know that probably the officers will not arrive to intervene on time. This is expressed repeatedly during one of the groups among young people (24-34 years old) in the San Juan – Metro area, reflected in the following quotes:

> *I feel that a large part of the reason why crime has increased is because people have realized that, maybe they think, 'oh, I can do it and they won't catch me,' or maybe they drive at 100 miles an hour and since they don't see any police, 'what does it matter, no one is going to stop me.' (Young people 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

> *I work at a gas station and I really do [not] feel safe at all. Sometimes we call the Police and they do not arrive for an hour or two, and well, we are having situations with someone who is being violent. Sometimes there are many drug users asking for money at the stations, and even they laugh at you because they say, 'What are you waiting for here, for the police?' […] They really know that the Police does not arrive […] it's just that they can't keep up. (Young people 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

The Police is not the only one responsible: for many participants, structural failures perpetuate a vicious circle that keeps criminals on the streets. Judicial processes fall apart easily and corruption in high ranks protects the most powerful – in summary, for many participants, impunity has become the new normal. One of the interviewees expresses this: "The laws are benefiting the criminal – for any technicality or for anything the criminal gets out, and your life is at risk; there is no one to support you" (LGBTIQ+ Community, Rest of Island).

In conclusion, participants believe that the triad Police – State – Government is primarily responsible for facing the current crisis of insecurity. Without a State that provides access to quality infrastructure and services, citizens are more prone to commit criminal acts. Likewise, without a government in power that guarantees transparency, justice, and efficiency with its policies, there is no sense of trust towards public entities, including the Police – which is perpetually seen as deficient due to its inability to confront the increasing security situations and crises across the island.

3.3. Description and characterization of the Police according to the interviewed group

3.3.1.Spontaneous associations

When directly mentioning the Police as an institution, the reactions among the interviewees do not differ much from what was observed during 2023. A distinction is made between the institution and the individual: while some empathy and personalization ('there are good people, there are people who

are not so good') are extended to the individual, the institution is evaluated more strictly. For many, the Police no longer represents that symbol of security, protection, and respect that many remember from past decades. This is especially true for older people, who remember a robust, effective, and imposing Police during the 1980s and 1990s. There is also a greater tendency among those residing in the San Juan – Metro area to be more critical of the institution, while residents from other areas of the island continue to express a greater level of respect and trust towards the institution. Two participants from different groups express this:

> *It is not 100% of what they already represent in terms of security. […] The police is now more like a ticket, they stop you for anything. In many cases, mistreatment. But now the police is no longer seen as it used to be, which was respect, it was the law. The Police of Puerto Rico no longer has much credibility. (Black people, Rest of Island)*
>
> *Here there is something that is said often, that police are taking advantage, that they are going to stop you for no reason, they are watching the car. […] You can have everything and still create fear because already within the same culture there is so much fear that they are going to do something just to charge or for no reason, because they want to exert power […] I don't know then who to be more afraid of, the criminal or the police. (Young people 24 -34 years, Rest of Island)*

Young people (24 – 34 years) residing in San Juan – Metro, members of the LGBTIQ+ community in San Juan – Metro, those living in public housing throughout the country, and some community leaders are the groups with more negative spontaneous associations towards the Police; they use words like 'corrupt', 'distrust', 'fines', 'armed wing of the government', and 'fear' to describe it. In contrast, groups of Dominican people, young people living outside of San Juan – Metro, and those who have had more direct interaction with the Police outside of San Juan – Metro (women victims of gender violence, people intervened in recent years, caregivers of people with mental disabilities) use words like 'respect', 'order', 'security', 'dedication', and 'support' to describe the institution. While they recognize that their service is not perfect, they express greater empathy towards the individuals that make it up due to the structural difficulties surrounding them. That is to say, while for the more critical groups the Police symbolizes an institution guilty of its ineffectiveness due to the loss of its values and integrity, for the less critical groups the Police is doing its best amid structural failures that hinder its efficient work.

This contrast is clearly seen in the following quotes:

> *I feel sorry for them… they are few, they are very poorly equipped, they have no backup. They are fighting two battles: against crime and against a system that does not help them. […] There is barely any police on the streets; others are with their arms crossed. (Community leaders, Rest of Island).*
>
> *There are three places where you can interact with the police in this country. Number one, on the highways, where the police is giving you tickets at all costs; number two, when an act of*

> *corruption is taking place, such as when a mangrove is being damaged, where the police will protect who is damaging the mangrove; and number three, at La Fortaleza, where the government in power lives that the country is going to protest there and there you will have a good interaction with the police. (Public housing, 45-65 years, San Juan – Metro)*

3.3.2.The best of the Police

For all the interviewees, and in accordance with what was observed during 2023, the best of the Police remains the dedication and goodwill that many of its members continue to demonstrate day by day, despite the difficult working conditions. As several participants highlight, the Police shine in the most difficult moments faced by the country:

> *The best are the good police, of which there are many. Even during Maria – when there was no traffic light – those people were there under the sun for long hours managing traffic. I live in San Juan, and here all the avenues were fine, there are always good police. (Black people, San Juan Metro)*

> *Regardless of when they are needed, they are there. I was in Maria, I was in the pandemic, I was in earthquakes, I was in Irma and the management they have had and their presence must be recognized: when situations arise, they take to the streets. (Dominicans by birth, Rest of the island)*

Another of the main victories recognized by the interviewees are the community outreach initiatives that they still maintain, especially the Police Athletic League and other similar groups. This is mentioned by those who reside in San Juan as well as in the rest of the island, although it is recognized that the reach of these programs is not homogeneous, and tends to have a greater reach in smaller regions and in certain neighborhoods of San Juan. In contrast, areas with a majority of public housing and 'bad reputation' usually receive a more limited community presence, as well as in more rural communities and those further away from municipal heads. Many participants highlight that the best interactions they have witnessed around the Police have a strong human and empathetic component, as these interviewees highlight among youth groups aged 24 to 34:

> *I remember an occasion where we were dealing with a person who became violent at the station, and the way the police officer approached was by saying 'I know your mom, your mom is so-and-so, and your grandmother, you're from up there, you're from such-and-such neighborhood.' And there, the person who was super violent calmed down. (Youth 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

> *Seeing these police officers interacting with children [...] in five housing projects that are quite heated here in Mayagüez, and I've seen how many kids say 'oh the cops are here', [...] but I've seen others who feel protected because the police officer, their agent, arrived, and when they enter the school premises all the kids run to hug them. (Youth 24 – 34 years, Rest of the island)*

Finally, it is important to highlight that many citizens mention that the Police plays an important role in their communities to feel protected and informed about what is happening around them, especially in areas outside the metropolitan area. This is expressed by one of the interviewees: 'The organization

where I live has a neighbors' council that meets monthly, and the police attend the meetings and present statistics' (Caregivers of people with mental disabilities, Rest of the island). This experience is also shared by several community leaders, who constantly collaborate with members of the institution and acknowledge receiving considerable support from them.

3.3.3.The worst of the Police

Despite the empathy expressed towards individuals, many interviewees are very critical of the Police as an institution. This position is particularly marked among residents of public housing (both age groups), community leaders, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, and the younger interviewees. For many, the Police has become a source of little trust and security, as reflected in the following interventions:

> *I think that the word 'Police' instead of giving a feeling of security, gives the opposite of what the word security should imply. I don't know if it happens to them, but the mentality is 'the last thing I'm going to do is call the police', simply because it is not a 'reliable source'. (Youth 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

> *When I was a child, for me the police was synonymous with respect. Nowadays, when I see a police officer, I don't see respect in him: since there have been so many cases of corruption, so many experiences that one sees in the police, one has lost trust in them and their credibility. I no longer see them with the respect I had when I was little. (LGBTIQ+ Community, San Juan – Metro).*

It is important to emphasize the role that different scandals of corruption, abuse of power, and negligence have played in shaping the negative perspective expressed by many. Among older interviewees, a fairly critical position emerges regarding the apparent alliances between the Police and the government, which for many blur the true purpose of the institution. This is expressed by one of the interviewees:

> *Recently, we just went through an electoral process that resulted in a new government, and we had a police chief who, in our opinion, was quite good. That was the perception of the country, that he was quite good. The government removed him and brought in a director from the FBI as police superintendent. And we said, 'wow, it's going to be better, because this guy is from the FBI and he's going to do a better job.' It has been the same wrapped-up mess. (Public housing, 45-65 years, San Juan – Metro).*

In this regard, in the eyes of many interviewees, it is recognized that the agents who patrol the streets and work in the precincts play a significant role in the performance of the institution, but do not bear the majority of the responsibility for the performance of the institution. In front of the officer, the majority express some empathy for the difficult situation that many face – poor salary compensation, unpaid overtime, little time with their families, unattractive retirement plans, and workload due to lack of personnel – while expressing a more critical position towards the higher-ups, whom they perceive as direct allies of the current political class: 'For me, the top management of the police is the one that

will make the decisions that will lead the police to be better or worse. They are the ones making the tough decisions. The one out there giving tickets and doing small things, that person doesn't have much influence' (Administrative complaints, San Juan – Metro).

Finally, and in line with what was observed during 2023, one of the elements that seems to play a significant role in the construction of the negative imaginary around the Police is the treatment they have given to citizens in recent demonstrations and protests. This is primarily expressed by the younger interviewees and those belonging to social collectives and movements, as reflected in the following quotes:

> *I understand that the Police has, to some extent, lost its shine or image of being seen as allies, they do not represent me. [...] They are often associated with politics, because they are seen at activities and protests, and they are seen up front giving blows and that. (Youth 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro).*
>
> *I saw on television when [the protests against] Luma, I did see on television that they were there in San Juan and they behaved very badly, the police pushing people in a very bad way. (People with administrative complaints, Rest of the island)*

3.4. Knowledge and perception of the Police Reform

3.4.1.Spontaneous reactions and level of knowledge of the Reform

A good part of the interviewees were unaware of the existence of the Police Reform, or had heard about it, but had little knowledge of its content. This aligns with what was observed during 2023, where most of those aware of the topic were among the older participants and community leaders. When inquiring about news or information about the Police, most continue to refer to issues related to their pension, staff shortages, or unpaid overtime. In contrast to what was observed during 2023, there is an increase in the mention of the decrease in Police members.

Those who know more about the Reform are part of groups of community leaders, members of the LGBTIQ+ community, and older citizens; furthermore, greater knowledge of the topic is seen among those residing in the San Juan - Metro area. They know about the existence of a monitor and some of the changes that were demanded from Police members, but most express exhaustion or disinterest in the topic due to a lack of visible and concrete advances since its creation. As previously mentioned, many see the Reform as 'empty promises' that do not manifest in structural changes; even when there have been individuals who have attempted to implement it, they have encountered institutional barriers that prevent them from making progress. This is expressed by four different groups when reflecting on the topic:

> *Until recently, they had a monitor. Currently, it is unknown if they still have one because no one knows the name, if there is anyone. In fact, this monitor was around for many years; different*

> *police unions complained that it often prevents them from doing their job in a way they can call 'effective'. (Black people, San Juan - Metro)*
>
> *We have a syndic who is responsible for ensuring that the Police Reform is fully implemented. But I believe that syndic is more biased than I don't know what, because you can see every day how the Police commits so many errors and injustices. And where is that syndic? (Public housing residents, 45 - 65 years old, San Juan - Metro)*
>
> *Look, as long as politics continues within the Police, the problems will continue. Because they put someone there for a political position who is not prepared, simply because they are friends with the government, with the party that is in power. What happens? That causes terrible damage to any plan, any reform, anything they do. (Community leaders, San Juan - Metro).*
>
> *If there is no willingness on the part of the State to really make any change in any of the agencies - properly train their team, their police, equip them – they could put 7 monitors in place, or annually make a new reform, and nothing will happen. (Caregivers of people with mental disabilities, San Juan - Metro)*

One of the main criticisms towards the implementation of the Reform has been the lack of communication that has occurred with the citizenry regarding it. Many participants comment that it is difficult to oversee the implementation of something if its content is not deeply understood: 'no one has given a summary [to the citizenry] of what this reform is, what the benefits are, what was there before and what is there now, what is going to change. Since no one knows that, we err from ignorance.' (Black people, San Juan Metro). Likewise, distrust in the process is manifested because its effects have been more superficial than substantive:

> *Yes, there was a financial injection to improve some vehicles; yes, security cameras were improved, certain things have been changed. […] Yes, they changed the chiefs, as always, and they have a good salary, but what happens to those who are in the middle, there in the fire, putting their lives on the line to protect us? That's where we need that Reform. (Administrative complaints, San Juan - Metro)*

In summary, most participants see the Reform as a symbol of good intentions that can hardly materialize when the conditions to do so do not exist - a budget that provides better working conditions for agents and motivates prepared individuals with vocation to join, and that in turn allows to supply the personnel deficit that causes the structural failings that citizens experience daily.

3.4.2.Map of emotions

Most of the interviewed groups consistently mention having negative and passive feelings towards the Reform, mainly those who are more informed about the topic. In contrast to the results from 2023, where the emotion 'Annoyed' was mentioned several times, the population seems to have migrated towards a feeling of greater apathy, disillusionment, and sadness - there is a certain feeling of defeat and disinterest because they feel that the promises made will not be fulfilled. Some express curiosity or interest, but this is mainly manifested by those who had not heard about the Reform previously.

The feelings of confusion, indifference, disappointment, concern, and tiredness are the most expressed across all interviewed groups, with community leaders, younger individuals (24 - 34 years), younger public housing residents (24 - 34 years), and caregivers of mentally disabled individuals being the most critical of the Reform. Among the positive feelings, gratitude, optimism, and curiosity stand out, mainly among those who have not heard anything about the Reform. The groups with the most positivity towards the Reform are those born in the Dominican Republic, Black individuals, and older public housing residents (45 - 65 years).[1]

3.5. Valuation of elements that make up the Police

3.5.1.Level of professionalism

For many interviewees, the level of professionalism among uniformed personnel has visibly decreased in recent years, a phenomenon that many attribute to the low level of education and training that new recruits are receiving, to the few agents available to cover the high demand at the national level and, more recently, to the age of the new Police entrants. This last element will be explored further in the recruitment subsection. In this sense, the perception of professionalism seems to have declined compared to 2023.

The interviewees recognize that the Police is currently facing a crisis due to the low availability of personnel, and that many of the shortcomings they identify in the actions of the agents respond to these structural gaps. Through their direct interactions with various low-ranking police officers, several participants (especially in San Juan - Metro) comment on how the lack of human capital and adequate work tools inhibits the agents from fulfilling their duties properly. Many agents are already of an advanced age and close to retirement, and the new recruits have little experience and are mostly quite young. This last factor, for many, has lowered the quality standards when interacting with the citizenry and behaving professionally, and is mentioned by both those residing in San Juan and the Metro area as well as those in other areas of the country:

> *Unfortunately, professionalism has decreased. I have a friend who […] is a police officer, and now he complains that the new ones coming in, or the few that exist, are not very professional. Those who entered in the old school are not well trained and those who were well trained, speaking of education, have left. So, those who were good, according to how the public treats them outside, well now they are not very professional either, as if they are in decline, as if they don't care. (People with physical disabilities, Rest of the island)*

In line with the above, many comment that the way they behave when wearing the uniform is not representative of the values that the institution symbolizes – many do not care about complying with the rules that they demand from citizens, undermining credibility and professionalism in their

[1] Refer to Annex 2 for the breakdown of the emotion map by interviewed group.

presence. This is commented by a participant who has frequent interactions with uniformed personnel in the San Juan – Metro area:

> *I think that once they put on that uniform, even if they are not on active duty, that should represent the highest social standard as an example to follow. […] But I know police officers who tell me that, during shifts, since they are alone and do not feel safe, they lie down to sleep under trees in patrol cars or watch Netflix, because they are not going to patrol knowing that something could happen and there is no partner on patrol. (Young people 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

And although many interviewees empathize with the structural difficulties faced by the Police, they continue to express dissatisfaction with the treatment and service they receive on the streets and in precincts. As expressed by an interviewee among the black individuals, 'instead of being friends with the citizen, they have become more aggressive with the citizen. Sometimes, when they stop you, instead of coming kindly, sometimes they come very aggressively: 'give me your license now, get out of the car'' (Black people, Rest of island). The consensus among all the interviewed groups is that most officers lack a generalized sense of empathy towards citizens, causing a decrease in trust towards the institution. One of the interviewees recounted a recent encounter at a precinct in San Juan:

> *I went to the precinct on Tuesday and I would literally say it was very unprofessional. There were a lot, they were joking around, there was one who had a gun, […] they were all making jokes. I filed a complaint and literally everything was like thrown on the floor, very poorly done. The one who attended to me did it well, but it was like no professionalism. (Young people 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

None of the explored groups mention the performance evaluation systems of officers, implying that they are not aware of this figure.

Finally, it is important to highlight that several interviewees – mainly those residing outside the Metro area – recognize that professionalism and respect is a two-way street: respect cannot be demanded from the agent if they are not treated with dignity. Although the Police must embody the values of the entity – what many define as 'vocation' for the profession – the interviewees also understand that these agents are human: tired, fearful, without salary incentives, and with little institutional support.

3.5.2. Use and availability of resources and tools, and use of technology

One of the most praised elements is the increasing use of technology and better tools among uniformed personnel throughout the island, being better evaluated than during the 2023 study. The tool most mentioned by all the interviewed groups is the electronic reading of the Marbete, an innovation that many applaud for its level of precision and effectiveness. Likewise, a modernization of the vehicle fleet is mentioned, present both in San Juan and other areas of the country:

> *They have improved the vehicle fleet, they have modern vehicles I have seen, which have cameras, bulletproof vests. They have made some progress regarding the materials they need to go out to combat crime, because crime in Puerto Rico is really high, and the police do not want to go to the police academy because they fear for their lives. (Public housing, 45 – 65 years, Rest of island)*

Regarding the provision of uniforms, the interviewees also highlight new vests – something that was heavily criticized during the 2023 study, where many commented that most were expired – and new uniforms. However, there are still certain areas where these changes have not been visible, as commented by a resident of public housing in the San Juan – Metro area: 'But not all police officers have that equipment. Let's be realistic: if there is a TASER, three of San Juan will have it. The police who work at the McDonald's here, that bulletproof vest does not protect them. God protects them, no one else' (Public housing, 45 – 65 years). Another common comment among the interviewees (mainly in the San Juan – Metro area) revolves around how, while there have been improvements, criminal groups continue to be better armed than the police themselves. In summary, the advancements are applauded, but they do not seem to keep pace with the growth of crime.

Regarding the use of bodycams and TASERS, there are still conflicting opinions on the matter – as observed during 2023. Most applaud the use of bodycams as a tool for protection and oversight, which protects both citizens and uniformed personnel in case a complaint arises or to report some abuse, but several still distrust that the officers will give them adequate and transparent use. This is mostly expressed by the younger population and minority groups, as reflected in the following interventions:

> *I have my doubts because I don't know how that works, […] they tell me that, if they don't press the button, that camera doesn't record, […] so they are aware of that and the day they want to do something wrong, they simply don't press the button and don't record the intervention. (Young people 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

> *I tell you that the cameras are rigged, because about a year ago I had a confrontation with a sergeant and I had a small argument about what he was doing and he turned it off, ended up with me, and turned it back on. That's why I say he didn't record the intervention 100%. (LGBTIQ+ community, San Juan – Metro)*

Something similar is expressed regarding the use of TASERS, as many still distrust that the uniformed personnel will give them the appropriate use, instead of turning them into a tool to abuse their power. Regarding this issue, there is a repeated insistence from the citizens that the tools per se are not enough – they must always be accompanied by training and psychosocial training, to ensure that their incorporation is in favor of the citizens and the personal safety of the agent.

Although it is not specific to the technological tools of the Police, many participants mention the use of social media as a strategic communication component. For most, this resource is underutilized by the institution, as the visibility they have through these channels is very low. As one of the participants

expresses, most media focus on showing only the corruption scandals of abuse of power – but little is said about the achievements of uniformed personnel. Some, for example, mention how encountering videos on TikTok of uniformed personnel doing their job in a jovial and close manner to the community improved their perspective on the professionalism of members of the Police.

Finally, the importance of maintaining and following up on these initiatives is mentioned – citing past cases where significant investments have been made in equipment, but once the licenses expire or some piece stops functioning, they are forgotten and become a 'white elephant'. In this regard, examples are cited around security cameras that no longer work, or tools like ShotSpotter, which have fallen into disuse due to lack of funding.

3.5.3.Recruitment process

In line with what was explored during 2023, recruitment continues to be one of the main criticisms that participants express towards the Police. Although not many are fully aware of the process, they point out the abundance of younger and less qualified personnel - a situation that seems to have increased between 2023 and 2025. Given the difficulty in finding motivated personnel to join the Police, exacerbated by the number of officers who have left the streets upon entering retirement, the majority of interviewees describe the current recruitment situation as 'desperate,' where 'they accept anyone who applies' and place less importance on elements such as physical condition, academic preparation, or 'vocation.' This concerns most interviewees, as they feel that the current solution (lowering selection standards and recruiting young people) will become a problem for the citizens and the institution itself in the medium term. This is a feeling shared across all regions of the country and different groups of interviewees, as evidenced by the following comments:

> *Now to enter the police academy they are not asking for the degrees that were required before. I understand the need to have more police force, but at the same time, they do not have qualified individuals to make decisions in strong and extreme situations that they are exposed to every day. (Young people 24 - 34 years, San Juan - Metro)*
>
> *Well, I believe that there are so few candidates to be police officers that they practically have to take them without evaluation. We are talking about right now there is one police officer for every thousand people in Puerto Rico. So imagine, if now they get 20 applications, they say 'I need this police officer. At least they have the interest, so let me take them.' But the reality is that they are not the right people. (Community leaders, Rest of the island)*
>
> *Many times they take kids who just graduated from high school: they haven't studied, they haven't done anything else, and they take them and put them in the Police. And what do they learn? They learn from the streets practically. (People with physical disabilities, Rest of the island)*
>
> *I think it's a double-edged sword because you're not going to tell me that you're going to accept a kid who just graduated from high school, who has his brains blown, who doesn't want to study - that you're going to give him a gun and give him authority. That can be problematic. (People with administrative complaints, San Juan - Metro)*

In this sense, and in line with what has already been described in the professionalism subsection, many consider that the new members of the institution have lowered the quality standards that once characterized the Police of Puerto Rico. This is manifested in an increase in cases of abuse of power and mistreatment, poor handling of the language and reading comprehension, and more cases that are dismissed in court for not following the necessary steps. It's not coincidental that one of the greatest requests shared by all interview groups is a greater level of respect, empathy, and psychosocial training. Again, this relaxation of standards has weakened public trust in the institution:

> *I have obviously had to review my fines and others. And I tell the judges, 'look, but it's not just the fines: it's the attitudes, the behaviors, the rest.' These are things that leave you wondering,*

what are they teaching them? They should have psychology courses or educate them better, I don't know. Because respect has gone away. (Public housing, young people 24 - 34 years, San Juan - Metro)

My perception is that they have softened to take anyone - fat, thin, unkempt, well-groomed, educated, uneducated. Then, this has become a political body for personal interests, particularly of the governor and the government above. (People with physical disabilities, San Juan - Metro)

Finally, it is possible to confirm through the testimonies of several participants (mainly in the rest of the island and from low-income backgrounds) that the main barrier to wanting to join is the economic compensation:

About a year ago I talked to my wife because I thought about entering the academy, because you can join even with a high school diploma. They prepare you, but really, as my colleagues say, the pay really doesn't cut it. And at least I would say that if there was life insurance that, in case I were to pass away, at least my family wouldn't be left in the lurch, I would take the risk. (Public housing, young people 24 - 34 years, Rest of the island)

3.5.4.Training and exercises

The evaluation around training and exercises shows few variations vs. what was compiled in 2023: people request greater psychosocial preparation and emotional intelligence, more legal knowledge, better preparation to submit cases, and specialized knowledge in minority and neurodivergent populations. This perspective is shared by all the interview groups and in all regions of the country. Those who are part of minority groups emphasize the need to conduct training focused on identifying and addressing situations with people with autism, schizophrenia, and other similar scenarios. In particular, those who care for people with these types of afflictions are very nervous when interacting with the Police because they cannot trust that they will know how to react with this population without resorting to force:

Some police officers who receive reports of certain complaints do not have the study or the means to deal with some people who are mental patients. As has happened before, they resort to giving them a TASER, to immobilize them, they have even caused deaths. (People intervened by police, Rest of the island)

In my case, for example, my kids shout a lot - sometimes they become violent. […] And then there's that doubt: can one call the police [when they become violent]? Because the police [does not] know how to handle my kids, will they not kill them? (Caregivers of people with mental disabilities, San Juan - Metro)

Another issue mentioned among several participants, but especially by those residing outside the Metro area, is the poor condition of the precincts and academies where the training is conducted - to the point that sessions have had to be suspended due to the poor condition of the buildings. This is reported by a person close to someone who is currently being trained: 'I have a very close friend who is in the academy, and even the academy where he was was not in adequate conditions for them. This

year they had to take them out of the academy and send them to do their work in retention for a while' (Community leaders, Rest of the island).

Regarding other topics of interest suggested by participants, there is a demand to prepare the Police as First Responders - that they be experts in First Aid and have the psychological and technical tools to respond to life-or-death situations. Finally, several participants emphasize that the training received by the agents should be continuous and updated, instead of leaving it as a one-time event at the beginning of their careers. Finally, there is an emphasis on the need to incorporate greater knowledge around cybersecurity, use of technological tools, and new types of crime that affect new generations. This is highlighted by one of the interviewees, a mother of a teenager who experienced a related situation and saw little preparation in the staff who attended to her:

> *My youngest son was a victim of one of these cyber crimes. He browses the Internet, and a group of people was extorting him. When I became aware of this, I called the police immediately to file a report, and three police officers came to my house. I must say that the oldest of them, who seemed to be older, was the one who sat with my son and explained to him what was happening. The other two, who were much younger, stayed away, took notes for the report, but it was the older police officer who sat with the child and explained. (People with intellectual/mental disabilities, San Juan - Metro)*

3.5.5. Community work

Community work is one of the most highlighted elements by most participants, showing certain advances in contrast to the results of 2023. Although it is recognized that there is still much to progress in terms of preventive presence (instead of reactive), many participants highlight the work of the Police in conjunction with the community. In other words, while almost everyone agrees that it has decreased compared to their childhood and early adulthood years, an advancement is recognized compared to the last few years. This is especially mentioned in smaller communities, where the social bond seems to remain stronger and where police officers know the citizens better. Several interviewees emphasize this:

> *The activity in the community, in schools, churches, what is known here as the community police. There has been an increase: they have tried to carry out talks, to establish that bond between the police and the community, to demonstrate that they are not bad people, but rather someone here to protect us, to help us. (Youth 24 - 34 years, Rest of the island)*
>
> *I don't know if they do this everywhere, but I have seen some campaigns in public housing [...] where there is a fair, inviting people from outside these communities, conducting campaigns to collect unregistered weapons, to guide people. At least here in Ponce, during the time I have been living here, I have seen that. It's a campaign that I liked very much. (Public housing, youth 24 - 34 years, San Juan - Metro)*
>
> *There is the Police Athletic League: there are children, but parents are also interacting with them. There are also what they call Government Chaplains, who mainly go to the spiritual level,*

> *where they go to the offices. They emphasize not only on coercion or attack issues but also on this issue of spirituality. (LGBTIQ+ Community, Rest of the island)*

However, there are still shortcomings in community interaction, a gap that is more marked among those residing in public housing in the San Juan - Metro area. Interviewees from these groups emphasize that interaction with the police remains very reactive and at times violent, and there is some prejudice among officers when they arrive in these neighborhoods. This is expressed by an interviewee residing in public housing in San Juan - Metro, who is also the mother of a young person with an intellectual disability:

> *Well, I live in public housing and my son plays on a court. [...] He has his little friends; it's a group of all Type 1 autistic kids. [...] Sometimes I get scared that something might happen, even though he is not in a place where he shouldn't be, but I worry that a police officer might not know how to handle the situation. Because we are in public housing: I was born and raised in Manuela Pérez, and there are good people here, but we have that mark that distinguishes us. (Caregivers of people with mental/intellectual disabilities, San Juan - Metro)*

In summary, most interviewees warmly welcome initiatives to work with children and adolescents; this makes the Athletic League one of the most valued and rated elements by all participants. Although it is recognized that its reach has decreased due to the reduction of the body of officers, its effects are still present among those who remember it with affection and nostalgia from their childhood, as well as among those currently raising children and highlighting the positive effects that this type of approach has among the younger ones.

3.5.6.Credibility and access to statistics

As observed during the collection of data in 2023, there is still a lot of distrust towards the statistics presented by the Police. This opinion is shared by most interviewees in San Juan - Metro and other areas of the country, although others admit to being unaware of the issue. As was expressed during 2023, statistics are viewed by most as manipulated and arranged information to serve the interests of local leaders - in this sense, most do not resort to them because they consider them a symbol of the widespread corruption in different government entities. The most critical groups regarding the use of statistics are inhabitants of public housing, community leaders, and members of minorities; in terms of location, those living in San Juan - Metro express a higher level of distrust. Here are some examples of what has been described:

> *They do what the Governor says; the information is not correct. 'No, don't say I am from Caguas, don't say this time they killed 30, say 20.' So the information is never correct because they hide it themselves, for what? So that the people are not affected, so that society does not say anything. [...] That's how it is in this country. Here nothing happens. (Public housing, 45 - 65 years, San Juan - Metro)*

> *They also change zones a lot. For example, if something happens at the border of Trujillo and Caguas, they always try to balance: 'wait, how many crimes are there in Caguas? Well, Caguas is short 5, let's assign this to Caguas.' That is done; it's makeup they work with to change the statistics in general. (Black people, San Juan - Metro)*

> *For me, it has never been credible because they use it as a springboard to say they tackled crime and those things for political purposes. (Community leaders, San Juan - Metro)*

In addition to the widespread distrust, another barrier mentioned by several participants is access and availability of this information. Most learn about these statistics through the media but do not know of an official portal where they can access updated and truthful information. Others question who is responsible for gathering this information, wondering if there is any oversight process that gives credibility to the presented information. Related to this, as mentioned in the subsection on recruitment and use of technology, one of the major criticisms several interviewees make of the Police is their limited communication with the citizenry – this is reflected in the little knowledge of the Reform, the unawareness of new procedures and technology, and even when it comes to recruiting new members: 'I would say there needs to be someone from the police dedicated to providing some kind of data, public updates on such matters. It is not known what new equipment has been acquired, if they have received training, if they are prepared' (Caregivers of people with mental disabilities, Rest of the island).

3.6. Interactions with the Police

3.6.1. Treatment of minority populations – LGBTIQ+ Community, people of Dominican origin, black people, or those with motor/intellectual disabilities

As we delve into the treatment offered by the Police to minorities, several opportunities and biases in the treatment received by citizens continue to be identified. This is more marked among those residing outside the San Juan – Metro area, although cases of discrimination still occur in the Metro area. Several of the interviewees who are part of the LGBTIQ+ community express one of the lowest levels of trust towards the Police, more marked among women. This discrimination is not exclusively exercised by male officers, but is also reproduced by women who make up the Police. This is described in three accounts among different studied groups:

> *I was with a friend who is gay and we were stopped, and since he was expressing his opinion, the officer who stopped us said to him: 'shut up, you have nothing to do here, especially because of your way of dressing', because he dresses like a woman. These are words and things that a guard is not supposed to say to a person they are stopping (LGBTIQ+ community, Rest of the island).*

> *I am from the community and I am afraid [to interact with police]. […] I have had coworkers throughout my life who have experienced situations of abuse of power and who have been in situations of sexual abuse by the Police due to their community. I do not feel safe. (Young people 24 – 34 years, Rest of the island)*

> *Honestly, I do not [trust], it depends on the officer who has stopped me, because I have been stopped several times and I have not felt safe. Once, I cried because the officer who stopped me was ordering me to get out of the vehicle when it was almost 1:00 a.m. […] He wanted me to get out, to turn off the vehicle, to get out of the car when he was only giving me a ticket for the tint. Since then, I do not feel very safe when an officer stops me. (LGBTIQ+ community, Rest of the island)*

In contrast, interviewees of Dominican and Black/Afro-Latino descent describe considerably higher levels of trust, expressing that they do not feel particularly discriminated against because of their background or skin color. They acknowledge that there are still people with biases and disrespectful treatment, but that this is not exclusive to the Police; particularly, Black individuals use cases of abuses of power in the United States related to racial issues to assert that 'this does not happen in Puerto Rico'. It is worth clarifying that this does not deny the existence of prejudices around skin color: racism in Puerto Rico behaves differently, less evidently, making it harder to detect. This issue will be explored further in the next subsection.

Dominican participants, for their part, claim to have heard isolated experiences from third parties, but do not recognize discrimination in their interactions with the Police. However, it is important to mention that many Puerto Ricans interviewed – especially younger people, community leaders, and members of other minorities – openly denounce the abuses they themselves have witnessed against the Dominican population, particularly within the framework of the Trump administration:

> *I wish you could see how they have treated the Dominican community here. I say it is something incredible, because they are sometimes neighbors and brothers of one. […] Here simply the officer comes and talks to you, when they hear you have an accent, they detain you on a corner and call ICE. Everything has been seen here. Here in this area where I am, Villa Palmera, I can vouch for what I am talking about. (Black individuals, San Juan – Metro)*

> *It has never happened to me, but I have heard from my friends [Dominicans], they have told me 'this officer stopped me for any nonsense, just for being Dominican', […] and if they have a business, they go and look for the seven legs of the cat to try to close the business." (Mini group Dominicans)*

Finally, when referring to the experiences lived by individuals with physical or intellectual disabilities, direct discrimination is not identified – but a failure in handling certain situations due to lack of knowledge is recognized. In other words, structural discrimination is identified – due to lack of conditions to meet their particular needs – but not so present among the individuals who have attended to them. As previously described in earlier sections, those who care for individuals with cognitive disabilities have little trust in their direct interactions with members of the Police, as they feel that the latter do not have the proper training to know how to respond to situations related to mental health or neurodivergences.

3.6.2.Treatment by geographic area and socioeconomic level

One of the most consistent observations throughout the study, and in accordance with what was observed in 2023, is that the Police show bias in their response depending on the socioeconomic level with which they are interacting. In this sense, it is no coincidence that those living in public housing have had a greater number of negative experiences with the Police. As several describe, there is a preconception around those who live in these neighborhoods that causes the uniformed personnel to act 'with more caution', and their presence is reduced to responding to emergency situations, where 'they enter hostile to the public housing' (Public housing, Young people 24 - 34 years, San Juan – Metro).

In this same line of thought, those residing in public housing – especially in the age range between 24 and 34 years – report being stopped more frequently for searches, to check the tint of their vehicles, or even to accuse them of crimes that do not involve them at all. This is particularly evident regarding prejudices related to drug trafficking. This is how two individuals who suffered the direct effects of this profiling recount:

> *I think that the police in Puerto Rico are more focused on drug trafficking. I had a situation [in 2025] where I was driving on the highway […] The police opened fire [at our car] without knowing that there were minors. I was shot three times in the neck area. (Resident of public housing, 24 - 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

> *I lived in public housing and the officers came out and intervened with the drug dealers, and when they came out they started hitting my car. When I go out, because I hear a lot of commotion, and I see an officer hitting my vehicle. I claim what happened to my vehicle and he quickly starts hitting me, simply to create a name, 'they are the drug dealers'. They fabricated seven charges against me. […] I was confined for 24 days: it ended up being nothing because they apologized publicly. (Resident of public housing, 24 - 34 years, San Juan – Metro)*

Likewise, the treatment will also vary depending on the intersectionality of the person (concept mentioned in chapter 3.2. of this document), where elements such as skin color, 'urban' appearance, or sexual orientation will further affect the type of treatment received from uniformed personnel. This idea is analyzed by one of the participants living in the San Juan – Metro area:

> *If you are in a Hyundai and you are a poor guy, the police will stop you. If you are Black and driving a Mercedes Benz, you stole it. But if you are Black and driving a Hyundai, then you bought it somewhere, it may be that [they let you pass]. [If walking], it all depends on how you dress, how you project yourself with your clothing and all those things. (Resident of public housing, 45 – 65 years, San Juan – Metro).*

Speaking on a regional level, there seems to be consensus that treatment is usually better in regions outside the Metro area, where officers are more willing to engage in dialogue and show more empathy toward the public. However, those residing in more rural areas are the most affected by the lack of human and technological resources, and often receive very limited service coverage:

Puerto Rico has four very important municipalities, five maybe, San Juan, Ponce, Mayagüez, and Caguas. That's where you will see that police investment centered to make believe that work is being done. But when we go to mountain towns, where there are no resources for these police officers, nothing arrives, and these police officers cannot speak. (Public housing residents, 45 – 65 years, San Juan – Metro)

I am from the countryside, and the police officers in my area are more kind and empathetic. In contrast, those in the metro area, I think that, due to having more crime and more problems to solve, are not as understanding, nor as willing with people. (Gender violence victims, rest of the island)

3.7. Recent experiences with the Police

3.7.1.Knowledge and evaluation of procedures

There is good knowledge among all the interviewees about the necessary procedures in case they need the Police. Although not everyone is clear about the internal division between the different levels, most know they can turn to one of the lines they know, or go directly to their closest precinct to receive assistance. The real problem is not in the lack of knowledge, but in the lack of personnel in moments of need. This has left many participants waiting for assistance for hours, or even never receiving it. As mentioned before, this attention tends to be more delayed in rural areas, but it also affects the San Juan – Metro area.

Most recent interactions with the Police have been related to traffic incidents – fines, traffic accidents, vehicle immobilization – and some cases of complaints against neighbors or other civilians. In this regard, participants state that the Police is more visible on the roads and highways, and they tend to stop many people 'fishing' to issue fines. Those who have been involved in traffic accidents report having waited several hours before seeing a patrol arrive to assist them; for this reason, most people choose to go directly to the precinct. A similar situation occurs with the reporting of crimes such as thefts or other types of complaints: people feel that the Police will not be able to resolve them or will not give them the required attention, so many refrain from making the report directly. Below are several experiences that reflect these reflections:

Every time someone hits you, you have to go to the precinct. The officer can't even get to you." (Youth 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)

I who have gone to file a complaint, have to see if there is a system, from one precinct they send me to another, they tell me 'I'll call you later with the complaint number'… it's not something so fluid." (Youth 24 – 34 years, rest of the island)

I had an accident and the necessary processes were not taken to take the complaint, and my car was a total loss, and they literally almost blamed me when the person was drunk and they didn't even do a breath test. They failed in many aspects. (Gender violence victims – rest of the island)

Finally, when exploring the experiences of people with special needs, there is a mixed recount of positive and negative evaluations regarding the topic. While some express having received empathetic treatment accommodating their particular needs, others encountered multiple structural barriers throughout their process with the Police. Below are two examples of recent interventions experienced by people with diverse disabilities:

> *I have an electric scooter that the health plan gave me. And about a year and a bit ago, […] a woman came from Piñero on the right, even though the light was red, and hit me in my cart. It really didn't knock me down, but it hit me and hurt my back a lot. We called the officers and the officer put me in a bind because I was not supposed to be walking on the street. I say, 'but I can't on the sidewalks because there are parked vehicles, I have to take the avenue because I can't transit on the sidewalk with the vehicle.' […] I waited almost six or seven months to get a report of the accident complaint. […] They hadn't paid me from the fund, waiting for that police report." (People with physical disabilities, San Juan – Metro)*
>
> *Maybe not all police officers, or most, know how to handle them. But I have to say that, in my brother's case, who has differentiated schizophrenia since he was 22 years old, I have not had any bad experience. When I call them because he becomes aggressive, they assist me quickly, take out the law to admit him, go with me to court. In that part, I understand that they are quite prepared. (Caregivers of people with disabilities, San Juan – Metro)*

3.7.2.Administrative complaints and people intervened by the Police

Most interviewees have made use of claims for fines or complaints, primarily used to request a review of traffic fines. Many agree that officers often do not attend the review appointments, causing many cases to simply fall through. For many, this reduces the seriousness of the process and becomes a waste of time for all parties involved. Below are two examples of recent experiences from participants who used the review resource:

> *When I stopped [in my vehicle], [the officer had] a little pistol, that little pistol from the times of the guácara, and said to me, 'this is the speed.' I said to him, 'but how did you measure my speed, if I wasn't close', and look what that shameless guy told me, which makes me angry: 'no, it's just that this measures unlimited distance'. […] The thing is that I said, 'no problem, I'm going to request a review resource': I went by again, recorded the whole area, recorded where they were standing […], presented everything and I told the judge that I am a responsible citizen, if I had genuinely been speeding past that facility, I assume my responsibility. […] And nothing, thank God the judge [ruled in my favor]; he didn't go to the review resource." (Person with an administrative complaint, San Juan – Metro)*
>
> *When you know that your rights have been violated, you go to court and I notice that their attitude when they go there is defensive, as if they do not accept that this is a normal process and a right that citizens have to seek a review. If you had to leave your shift or your day off to go to court to deal with these cases, look, that's your job, you have to go with the best attitude. (Person with an administrative complaint, rest of the island)*

In line with what was explored in previous sections, those who have been intervened by the Police recently also recount variations in the treatment they received – while those living in the San Juan –

Metro area reported a violent and disrespectful experience, those in other areas of the country mention a much more humane treatment:

> *I was cooking and they let my husband eat and shower before taking him, they stayed like 3 hours at home, ate and everything" (People intervened by Police, rest of the island)*
>
> *"It was crazy, they are dumb, it's not the same to be stopped at the toll or on the street, as it is to have an operation while you're sleeping in your house and they break down your door." (People intervened by Police, San Juan – Metro)*

3.7.3.Experiences related to gender-based violence and hate crimes

Several of the participants reported having suffered situations of gender-based violence or domestic violence, including people living in same-sex partnerships. One of the main comments made regarding the issue, both by those who have experienced it firsthand and by those who have only heard accounts, is that the attention given to this type of case varies significantly depending on who is filing the complaint – again, the intersectionality of the victim will play an important role. The individuals who report a more positive experience are heterosexual women living in San Juan – Metro or in more urban municipal leaders. Meanwhile, individuals belonging to minorities (LGBTIQ+ community, migrants, people with disabilities) and people living in more rural areas had more mixed experiences. This is expressed by one of the participants when referring to the experiences of many same-sex couples:

> Let's start with something simple, Law 54: when a man makes the call, he's almost always mocking; yes, there is always a predisposition regarding homosexuality, the same when it is male couples, or when one of the women is more pronounced. […] We say they should be educated, but for years they have been given some sociology courses, but it seems like they don't really get it. (LGBTIQ+ community, San Juan – Metro)

Meanwhile, one of the participants of Dominican origin reports a much more positive experience, with a lot of professionalism and empathetic attention:

> *I am a victim of domestic violence. The municipality of San Juan took me out of my home for safety; that's where I met the 939 Contigo line. They installed an application on my phone, so that whenever I didn't feel safe, I could press a button, it was just pressing a button and they would come to me. I had phone and physical monitoring; they also came to my house or my work weekly. […] Before I didn't feel safe, today I feel very safe with the Police. (Dominicans by birth, San Juan – Metro).*

Sadly, this is not the experience lived by many victims. Many of them cannot tell it directly, as the inoperability of the different entities cost them their lives. Several participants commented feeling re-victimized during the reporting process at the precinct, receiving questions such as 'did you do something for him to react this way?'. Others mention how the bureaucracy of the process left them unprotected – exposing them to dangerous situations while the paperwork was being completed. One of the participants recounts it this way:

> *When I arrived at the precinct and explained the situation, I arrived with my daughters, and the person who attended to me was a woman. She seemed not to want to help me. It was like, 'yes, we already went through the process, you have to wait,' and I told her that I couldn't go home with my three daughters. I was telling her, 'I already made the complaint, I need you to help me.' I had to call my sister to get to the court, and then at the court they could help me and react quickly, because waiting at the precinct was useless. Even when they went to get him at his house, he was just chilling with the girls and laughing, as if I were the guilty one. (Victim of gender violence, San Juan – Metro)*

This type of negative experiences, as recounted by another participant, has discouraged other people from reporting their own cases of abuse: "I was afraid to report it for situations like this: I had already heard that they didn't help, or they made you feel guilty, and since I didn't want to go through that process, I haven't reported absolutely anything" (Gender violence, San Juan - Metro).

3.8. If the Police were…

3.8.1.A person

When doing personification exercises around the Police as a person, the results maintain quite a few similarities with the results observed in 2023. Most participants visualize the Police as a middle-aged man (40s-50s), or as a young person with little experience, who lacks professionalism. Several individuals from different groups mentioned visualizing the Police as a female body, with an athletic physical state and a slightly more youthful appearance (in their 30s).

Those who imagine the Police as a middle-aged man describe him as inflexible, prejudiced, 'old-fashioned' but trying to modernize. The majority describe him as being in a declining physical state and having lazy or defeatist attitudes. Meanwhile, those who see the Police as a young boy describe him as a person covered in tattoos and displaying a more 'urban' aesthetic, with good physical condition but somewhat coarse and arrogant. In summary, a somewhat intimidating, narrow-minded person, who does not convey a sense of care or safety. However, some still hold a vision of the Police shaped by a more nostalgic imaginary – someone classic, old-fashioned but with values, always willing to help their neighbors. Below are some personifications:

> *I see him as a person with an inner war, a person trying to prove he has control, and who is afraid, like any other person. I see him as an insecure person, with many things in his head, in that war of 'either I'm good or I'm bad, or I feel safe because I have a gun or I feel unsafe because I can get killed'. (Community leaders, Rest of the island)*

> *Let's take a 32-year-old police officer: I see him as cocky, gym-going, tattooed on the arms, with a car with tinted windows, loudmouthed and a salsa dancer. (LGBTIQ+ community, San Juan – Metro)*

> *I consider him an adult, well-dressed, with a very nice, classic car. I see him among neighbors, being at their service, I see him with respect." (Community leaders, San Juan – Metro)*

3.8.2.An animal

Many participants see the Police as ambivalent animals, which have apparently negative characteristics, but with the capacity for change. One of the most mentioned animals is a dog/rabid dog – this one attacks when ordered and/or to defend itself, but can be trained to act differently. Likewise, it is seen as a chameleon – difficult to know its 'true self', as it is always adapting to the conditions of its environment. Many also associate it with a lion – aggressive, the 'king of the jungle' and attacks without measuring its strength. One of the participants living in public housing describes it this way:

> *I would categorize it as a trained dog that is going to attack. […] The Police as such, that bursts into a public place to start hitting people, to be taking people out and that, no, I haven't seen that. Now, if there is some kind of demonstration and the audience of that demonstration turns towards the police, there a problem can form and they are going to come out to defend themselves. But it's not that they promote the encounter or the situation." (Public housing, 45 - 65 years, Rest of the island)*

3.8.3.A superhero

The most mentioned superhero when describing the Police is Superman – although in this case it was discussed more in terms of duty. For many participants, this superhero represents empathy, a sense of vocation for his work, altruism, protection for the weakest, and humility. Spider-Man is also mentioned a lot – for his quick response capability, sense of vocation, and agility. Finally, Batman is frequently mentioned, due to his variety of tools and gadgets, his quick response, and his commitment to always helping the weakest and combating the corrupt.

3.9. Ideal of Police

3.9.1.An ideal Police

In line with what has been expressed throughout this document, many participants believe that an ideal Police is one that disconnects from political interests and serves all citizens regardless of their resources, sexual orientation, religion, or appearance. For many, (re)building a sense of trust towards the institution requires seeing it as an independent entity, with oversight over its members and, of course, fulfilling all its functions in a timely and efficient manner. This also implies that the politicization of the entity should no longer be reflected in its top ranks, and that its members should be treated with dignity and respect – receiving the financial compensation they deserve and having their labor rights respected.

Likewise, there is a strong emphasis on the professionalism and treatment of the officer towards the citizenry – as many highlight, it is not necessary to be hostile or violent to carry out their work. One of

the most mentioned words throughout all the groups is 'empathy,' as for many it is a quality that is quite absent among the uniformed. This is expressed by one of the participants:

> *I understand that for me, the ideal police officer should be respectful, cheerful, and should be an example for those other officers to see how a person should be treated. […] In the end, they were given the ticket, they are doing a job, and for that job, they are receiving compensation. But the treatment must be a treatment of respect. (Black people, Rest of the island)*

Finally, the Police are asked for more preventive work with communities, and not just to show up in times of crisis. Many mention the benefits of initiatives like the Athletic League, and say this is the type of action they would like to see more often among the uniformed – creating ties with the community in which they work, and starting to see them as allies:

> *That we be given the opportunity to participate in community meetings, and that we be invited to bring our concerns and complaints to them so that they can understand us. Because there must be a dialogue: communicating verbally is enough, but if you are going to communicate with mistreatment and blows and pulling out weapons, no one is going to want to respect you like that. (Community leaders, San Juan – Metro)*

In this sense, contrary to what one might think, the Police are not asked for more 'brute force' to face the criminality that worries all citizens – they are asked for a more humane, empathetic, respectful, timely treatment backed by training and continuous education.

3.9.2.Main improvements and updates

Most interviewees focus their requests for improvement on two major areas: a more rigorous selection process, despite the urgency currently existing due to the lack of personnel, and increasing channels of transparent and direct communication with the citizenry. Both topics converge on a common theme – better communication and outreach strategies for those currently studying in universities and educational spaces. This is expressed by one of the interviewees among the younger participants:

> *They should have more presence [in universities], perhaps informational tables, active recruiters who can reach a greater number of people within that community. I just graduated, and I think I never saw anyone advising on how to enter the Police Academy. (Young people 24 – 34 years old, San Juan – Metro)*

In line with the above, many suggest opening more communication spaces to inform the citizenry, among other things, about progress regarding the Reform and the changes that have been implemented, creating spaces for citizen oversight and more transparent communication. In this regard, many recommend expanding the use of social media as a closer channel to inform the citizenry about news, initiatives, and achievements. This is commented by one of the participants: 'At least I don't see much on social media from Police or things like that. I understand that there needs to be more interaction from the school, and more with adults on social media, where most spend their time' (Public housing, Young people 24 - 34 years old, Rest of the island).

However, for all participants, it is clear that none of these initiatives will be effective if the real underlying problem is not resolved: it is not possible to build a robust and well-prepared Police if its potential members are not offered attractive salaries or dignified working conditions. If the current conditions continue, people with the vocation, age, and academic preparation will prefer to go to the private industry or migrate to the United States, losing valuable human resources that could transform the Police from within. This is expressed by one of the participants: 'I would say there needs to be a publicity measure, good salaries, good benefits, good health insurance, opportunities […] [so they think] 'I'm not leaving, I'll be here in my country, I'll try to give service here' (Dominicans by birth, Rest of the island).

Finally, for many interviewees, it is crucial that those who make up the Police receive continuous education on various topics (emotional and psychosocial intelligence, working with minorities and individuals with intellectual disabilities, laws), but also that they themselves receive internal psychological support to help them process the difficult situations they face daily, and that these do not affect their personal lives. As several participants highlight, there have been several cases of femicides and/or suicides committed by members of the institution – evidence that there is sufficient oversight over the personnel that makes up the Police, even when there is already evidence of their misconduct:

> *To my understanding, for some reason X there is no oversight, it is let go. Look, if you had a case, why then do you continue with a weapon in hand? If you mistreat your wife, why do you remain a police officer? And that, for me, is part of the problem, the oversight in that sense. (Public housing, 45 - 65 years old, San Juan – Metro).*

In summary, participants suggest an institution composed of trained and well-compensated personnel, who have the (physical and structural) tools to carry out their duties in the best way without deteriorating their personal lives. This, in other words, is giving relevance to quality through guarantees and dignified working conditions.

4. Findings and final considerations

This study explored the ways in which the population of Puerto Rico perceives and evaluates the Police and the Police Reform that is still being implemented, using the results obtained during 2023 as a point of comparison. Overall, most of the findings explored during the earlier analysis remain relevant, and some of them even more urgent:

- **Discussions around corruption and the politicization of institutions feel even more urgent than before: This may be influenced by the selection of the new Police director, by the current sociopolitical context of the United States and its effects on Puerto Rico, or the**

evolution of a grievance that had already been clearly manifested during 2023. This context is relevant as it permeates the understanding of the Police as an institution, as most interviewees see the government and the Police as components of a symbiosis. This is also reflected in the weariness and fatigue that many express through the emotion map when referring to the Police Reform – this has, for many, become the symbol of another unfulfilled promise by the State, further eroding trust towards the institution.

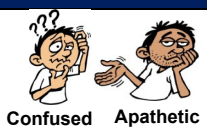
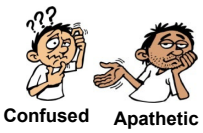
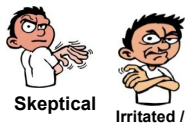
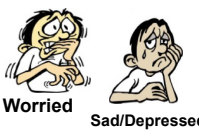
- **The main barriers around the Reform explored during 2023 seem to still be in effect: the interviewees express the same concerns that were mentioned in the previous survey when talking about the Reform. Many still consider that communication with the citizenry has not been efficient or clear – a good part of the participants were not even aware that it existed. Likewise, the feelings around its implementation continue to be very similar – skepticism, confusion, fatigue, and disillusionment. Finally, its continuity remains a concern, a consideration closely intertwined with the current government.**
- **Professionalism and recruitment suffer in public perception, while equipment and community work show improvement: there seems to be consensus among the interviewees regarding the level of professionalism among the uniformed as a considerable problem. In addition to delays in response times – which were already present in 2023 – there is an increase in comments about the unacceptable behavior that many officers exhibit towards the population. This relates to the variable of recruitment, where there is also a consensus on how the criteria have declined due to the urgency of hiring new personnel. In other words, many do not see the newest personnel as a gain for the institution, but rather as a reflection of its structural problems. In contrast, the majority applaud the use and availability of better tools and technology – this variable shows improvement especially outside the Metro area. Community interactions are also highlighted, although with more uneven reach.**
- **When responding to the current situation of the country, soft skills continue to be valued over brute force: although many interviewees mention countries like El Salvador or the United States as their ideal police references at the international level, when exploring the qualities that would make up an ideal institution, none of the groups mention the implementation of more force and severity. Instead, there is a consistent request for more empathy, greater emotional intelligence, more psychosocial training, and more direct work with the community. This reveals that the participants do not yearn for a punitive and authoritarian police, they desire a helping hand – without that meaning it cannot be professional – with which to build social ties and trust.**

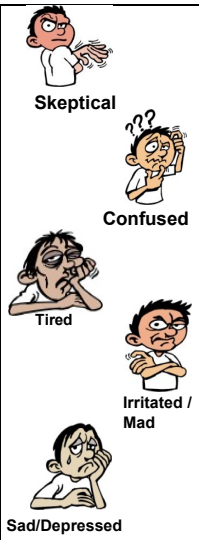
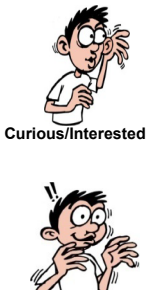
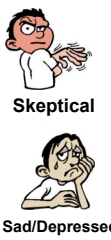
5. Annexes

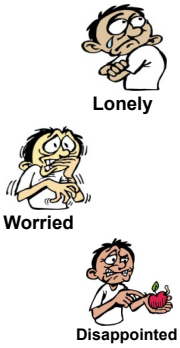
5.1. Annex 1 – Media consumption by interviewed group

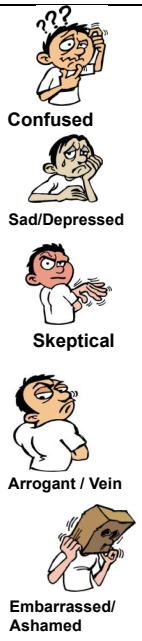
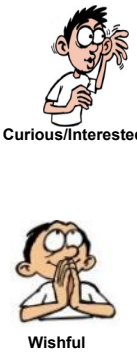
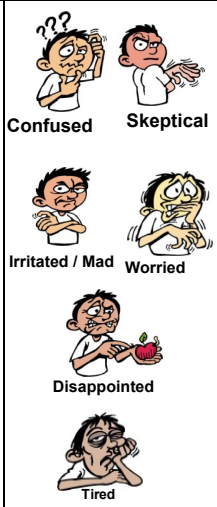
INTERVIEWED GROUP	REGION	Face-book	Insta-gram	X	Tik Tok	You-Tube	Press	TV	Radio	IA
Youth 24 – 34 years	SJM	x	x				x	x		
Young people 24 – 34 years	R.I.	x				x		x	x	
Adults 50 – 70 years	SJM	x	x			x	x	x		
Adults 50 – 70 years	R.I.									
LGBTIQ+ Community	SJM	x	x				x	x		
LGBTIQ+ Community	R.I.	x	x	x			x	x	x	
Public residences, 24 – 34 years	SJM	x	x					x	x	
Public residences, 24 – 34 years	R.I.	x	x		x			x		
Public residences, 45 – 65 years	SJM	x			x			x	x	
Public residences, 45 – 65 years	R.I.	x				x	x	x	x	
Black race people	SJM	x	x	x		x	x	x		
Black race people	R.I.	x	x					x		
Dominicans by birth	SJM	x	x		x			x		
Dominicans	R.I.	x	x		x		x	x		
Community leaders	SJM	x	x			x	x	x		
Community leaders	R.I.						x	x	x	
VBG Victims	SJM	x	x					x		
VBG Victims	R.I.	x	x	x	x					
Administrative complaints	SJM									
Administrative complaints	R.I.	x	x			x				x
Physical disability	SJM					x	x	x		
Physical disability	R.I.	x					x	x		
Intellectual disability	SJM									
Intellectual disability	R.I.	x	x					x	x	
Intervened by Police	SJM	x	x	x				x		
Intervened by Police	R.I.	x	x					x	x	

5.2. Annex 2 – Emotion map by interviewed group

INTERVIEWED GROUP	NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	POSITIVE / NEUTRAL EMOTIONS	REASONING
Young people 24 - 34 years	    	 	Emotions very similar to those expressed during 2023, led by negative and passive emotions. Many express seeing few changes in the Police since the start of the Reform, or not knowing its content well due to lack of dissemination. A slightly more positive feeling is expressed among those living in the Rest of the island. "I don't know since when the Reform has been implemented, but I haven't seen changes. [...] In the case of the cameras, they have a way to turn it off, so it's not effective. Beyond indifferent, I feel disappointed." (Young people 24 – 34 years, San Juan – Metro)
Adults 50 – 70 years	   		There is a lot of disappointment manifesting regarding the lack of implementation and the current state of the Police; there is not much hope that things can change soon. It is very in line with what was expressed during 2023. "Disappointed because constantly with every government change they mention some things, the country elects its government and expects things to improve, one always has hope, but no, that is why I am disappointed." (Adults 50-70 years, San Juan – Metro)
LGBTIQ+ Community	  	 	They express more negative emotions due to the lack of implementation and progress after years of promises and news about it. Some still maintain hope and excitement that the Reform will materialize, mainly in groups from the Rest of the island. "I know that police reform has been going on for many years, and perhaps they haven't been able to achieve the end they wanted to make good interventions." LGBTIQ+ Community, Rest of the island)

Residents of public housing, 24 - 34 years			One of the most critical groups regarding the implementation of the Reform, due to the lack of concrete results after years of implementation. These groups express feeling little motivated by the current state of corruption and ineffectiveness, and feel it is unlikely that things will change. "The skeptic, because obviously there is no action. It's like many public policies in Puerto Rico, [...] that are made in this country and are not put into action". (Public housing, 24 -34 years, San Juan - Metro).
Residents of public housing, 45 – 65 years			Several are aware of the Reform and express strong feelings of disappointment and annoyance at the few advances in its implementation. Others still express hope for change in the future. Among those who had not heard of it, some do not see it as viable; others are curious and interested. "[I feel eager] because I hope that what you just mentioned, all that nonsense that the government and the police have said they want to implement, becomes a reality." (Residents of public housing, 45 – 65 years, Rest of the island)
Black people			This group expresses a higher level of optimism and hope regarding potential outcomes, but those with greater knowledge of the Reform show some fatigue/disappointment. "I wrote feeling grateful and optimistic. Because if they make the change they are going to make, and we help them, it can be achieved". (Black people, Rest of the island)
			This group expresses more neutral and ambivalent feelings regarding the Reform - they do not have much faith that it can be fully implemented, but there is enthusiasm for the idea of positive changes for both them and the uniformed.

Dominicans by birth			"I am really skeptical about that, I would say that a new generation needs to come for any tangible change to be seen. Remember that within the police conglomerate, there are practically old people there, because right now almost no one is enlisting." (Dominicans by birth, Rest of the island)

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Community leaders</td><td rowspan="2">
</td><td rowspan="2">
</td><td>It is one of the groups with the most knowledge about the issue, and those who express the most annoyance at the lack of results due to corruption and association with the government. However, some maintain hope that the Reform will materialize.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"I feel disappointed, worried, and sad. As I told you, the reform has been trying to be implemented for much more than 13 years, and I haven't seen any change. [...] Why do they change the Superintendent of the Police? Because it has to be a person trusted by the governor. [...] And what reliability can one see in that?" (Community leaders, Rest of the island)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Victims of gender violence</td><td colspan="3">Information not collected</td></tr>
<tr><td>People with administrative complaints</td><td colspan="3">Information not collected</td></tr>
<tr><td>People with physical disabilities</td><td colspan="3">Information not collected</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Caregivers of people with mental disabilities</td><td rowspan="2">
</td><td rowspan="2">
</td><td>They express good knowledge of the Reform, especially in San Juan - Metro, but they are quite critical of its implementation. Its results have fallen short of the expectations created.</td></tr>
<tr><td>"I would say confused for that reason, because if the Reform is there, why haven’t they been able to implement it? There is no movement, there is no change, there is no desire to be able to do it". (Caregivers of people with mental disabilities, Rest of island)</td></tr>
<tr><td>People intervened by the Police</td><td colspan="3">Information not collected</td></tr>
</table>