

PRP Member Interviews Results Report

Ipsos Puerto Rico

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1. Introduction

The U.S. 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. One of the provisions requires PRPB to conduct a survey under the oversight of a court-appointed Monitor and 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 research, conducted during the last quarter of 2025 and early 2026, was to explore in depth the perspectives of Puerto Rico Police members to complement the findings of the quantitative phase of 2024 and contrast with results from the first qualitative exploration of 2023.

Through an in-depth exploration of PRPB members' perceptions, the study sought to examine:

a. Implementation of Police Reform
    - Training and resources
    - Administrative Processes
    - Supervision and internal leadership
    - Use of technology
    - Protocols and procedures (including Use of Force)
    - Public information / Statistics
    - Discriminated-against and minority groups

2. Study Methodology and Sample

Maintaining the sample distribution from 2023, this study included 39 in-depth interviews, covering three rank groups within PRPB: Officers, mid-level supervisors, and senior/command-level supervisors. The interviews were conducted virtually and lasted about 1 hour. Below is the sample distribution for this study:

	Target	Men	Women	Total
Rank-and-file officer	Officers	**9**	**6**	**15**
Mid-level supervisors	Sergeants	**4**	**3**	**7**
	Second Lieutenant	**2**	**1**	**3**
	First Lieutenant	**4**	**0**	**4**
	Captain	**2**	**0**	**2**
Senior/command-level supervisors	Inspector	**2**	**1**	**3**
	Commander	**3**	**0**	**3**
	Lieutenant Colonel	**0**	**2**	**2**
TOTAL		**26**	**13**	**39**

3. Results

3.1. Joining the Police and Initial Motivations

3.1.1. General Profile of Participants

One of the most visible elements within the profile of interviewees is that more than half have been in the institution for over 25 years, mainly those in mid-level or senior supervisory ranks. In this sense, many have been able to experience the institution's transition since the implementation of the Reform and are aware of the multiple changes in the different areas that make it up. However, it is important to mention that this leaves out the perspective of those who have recently entered the institution, a relevant point due to the high desertion rate – this will be discussed in the next section.

Several interviewees joined the Police motivated by family members and close individuals who were already part of the institution; many joined at a very young age and completed their studies during their time in the academy. Likewise, when reflecting on their motivations to join the Police, two major factors are highlighted by the interviewees: an inclination toward serving their communities and the promise of economic stability. Most continue to describe the first element as one of their main passions, while the majority do not feel comfortable with the current conditions of their economic compensation and working conditions. One of the interviewees expresses this while reflecting on the subject:

> *The most positive thing is that you have a good job, a good salary; at least they have improved it quite a bit. It is a fixed job, a permanent job, a risky but honest job; you don't have to get dirty laying blocks or working in construction [...], you will be clean working with the community. […] But the negative, as I said before, is retirement: when you started in this agency, you started with 75% for retirement and they have been reducing it.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

In this sense, while many joined the Police seeking stable and competitive income vs. other options, most believe this element has disappeared from the institution. Many are close to retirement age and feel very few guarantees about their future, which is why most are planning to seek alternative sources of income or stay within the labor market. For several, waiting for retirement age within the institution is no longer an option – they prefer to look for another job while they are still of productive age, due to the uncertainty that permeates the conditions of retirement and salary. This is shared among interviewees of all ranks, ages, and genders. Two interviewees express this while reflecting on their main concerns:

> *The concern of every police officer in this time is retirement. Sometimes, one wonders if it is worth it to stay and wait for retirement when one gets older, or if one is of productive age, to make some change, so that when one is older, one has that stability.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *I have 35 years of service, and I have not retired because of the pension we will receive when we leave the Puerto Rico Police. I had an expectation when I joined the Police; I planned to have my house paid off, to have a number of things, and to leave with a pension with which I estimated I could live comfortably and peacefully. But with the law changing, our retirement will be very different from what I expected.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Also, another of the elements that generates the most discomfort among the interviewees revolves around the assignments/transfers and the long commutes that many have to face. This is especially manifested by Officers and mid-level supervisory personnel. This situation has meant for many a loss of quality time with their families and to spend a significant share of their income on transportation costs. One of the mid-level supervisor participants, for example, recognizes that being located near his hometown was one of the main reasons for staying in the institution for so long. In this sense, the individual's location plays an important role in the high desertion rates among the most recent members and fosters scenarios of structural inequality for those assigned to work in the San Juan metropolitan area; this issue will be discussed in more depth in the Recruitment section. One of the interviewees expresses it this way:

> *If you work in the metropolitan area, then they should give you a bonus because you will have expenses for gas, tolls, car, oil, and tires. You have to buy a good car to travel there. And you will earn the same as the guy who works in Yauco and lives in Yauco. […] Recruitment should be a little more attractive and offer, I don't know, bonuses for being in the San Juan area, the metropolitan area. Maybe some place where they can stay overnight; that the agency buys a building that is only for police, with security and everything.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

3.1.2. Before and After

As mentioned in the previous segment, most interviewees recognize the visible changes between the institution they knew at the beginning of their careers and the experience of new members. One highlighted element by several is the flexibility in the training and onboarding process – while most remember the process as 'quasi-military', many consider that the current Academy is more like a university environment. One of the interviewees describes it this way: "The Academy process is not like it is now: […] the process was very demanding, but that structured me in police work. It taught me how to do things, how to withstand stress, how to talk to people, to speak to people as I like to be spoken to" **(Man, Officer).**

Interviewees also highlight that the training processes have become much more comprehensive and detailed – something that contrasts with their experience of 'learning on the go', as one of the interviewees recalls:

> *They told you how to write this, they gave a class on civil rights, but it wasn't reinforced later, it just stayed there. [You only had] what you learned at the Academy, and you learned the rest on the street. And if you got a mentor, at that time an old guard, that was the style you acquired.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

Interviewees also reflect on the recruitment program, and the limitations that continue to impact the personnel shortage currently affecting the Police. For many, it is clear that the institution closed its doors to many potential candidates over seemingly trivial issues – tattoos, beards, prior use of controlled substances in their youth and (until recently) age limits for younger applicants. This, for several, is a necessary adjustment that should have been made long ago, as one interviewee states:

> *I believe that that recruitment program, years after I entered, they wanted to make it so perfect that they included passing a polygraph test. I understand that this delayed and reduced the entry of police officers, because there are many people who perhaps committed some offense when they were young […]. I understand that the cornerstone of having so few police officers is that when you see that window, more or less from 2010 to 2015 or 2016, is that the academies were extremely small.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Finally, it is important to emphasize the particular experience of women within the institution. As will be discussed throughout this document, the machismo that still permeates the institution and the way its members are treated is not new – for many, it was present from their entry into the institution. One of the interviewees recalls this while speaking about her onboarding process during the early 2000s: "In training, women were not validated: I received a lot of verbal aggression, even intellectual, sexual harassment. I did not like that part" **(Woman, Officer).**

3.2. Assessment of Key Police Components

3.2.1.Recruitment Process and Programs for New Members

The recruitment process is one of the areas most criticized by participants across all levels. There is consensus that there are two main obstacles facing the current recruitment process: first, the working conditions offered to new recruits are not attractive enough to want to join the institution; second, these same working conditions and the reality of work vs. what was promised during the Academy make the retention capacity of new personnel relatively low. In this sense, when referring to this problem, many highlight how the Police is perceived as a 'springboard' to other agencies in Puerto Rico and the U.S. that offer better economic guarantees and working conditions. Current discussions regarding pension conditions have also discouraged long-term recruitment and retention. This is expressed by three participants reflecting on the high desertion rate:

> *We need to work on it because we aren't offering anything to those newcomers. What was, for me, finding some economic stability 22 years ago, is now not the case at all. […] And that is a clear answer to why we aren't recruiting: 100 enter and 60 leave. They use it as a springboard and go to federal agencies, or to the Army, or to other places or police departments within the U.S. We have no retention at all, and that's why.* ***(Woman, Officer)***

> *I have interacted in the districts with the new colleagues who have entered, and their comments are, 'I'm using the Police as a springboard, I'm using it for a secure job,' but I don't feel the vocation now, as a supervisor. The vocation is not seen."* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

> *I worked in Security and Protection for 11 years investigating candidates, and I am more familiar with the process. What would I change? I understand that if the Puerto Rico Police does not offer the candidate an attractive offer, it will not manage to increase recruitment: I'm referring to a salary increase, that is, an attractive salary and decent retirement conditions.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Related to the above, many participants highlight that the personnel crisis within the Agency has caused a rush to focus on quantity over quality, often recruiting personnel who do not express a genuine sense of vocation for the profession, mainly guided by economic stability. This is expressed both by Officers and by mid-level supervisors, who feel the effects of this shift in new personnel during their day-to-day. As several interviewees highlight, the urgency to resolve the shortage of uniformed personnel cannot push the Police to lower their standards and completely disregard the vocation for the profession. This is expressed by one of the participants who holds a Mid-Level Supervisory role:

> *I believe that right now the system is taking more quantity than quality […], now they look for everything for a secure salary, and because they have education in other aspects. I do not mean this in a derogatory way: for example, there are people who are civil secretaries, they come here and when they are already in the agency they do not want to be police officers, they come with the mentality of 'I want to be a secretary'.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

There are mixed opinions regarding the flexibility of certain selection criteria, mainly around recruiting people starting at age 18. While some believe that training such young personnel is a strength to 'shape them', others find that an 18-year-old may not have the maturity needed to face the realities of the role. This is consistent with the observations of several interviewed citizens, who strongly criticized the level of professionalism displayed by new recruits. This is expressed by an Agent from the Ponce area: "They are recruiting young people of 18 years – many of them have maturity, but many of them have not matured yet, so to speak. Being a police officer is not just about having a salary and a profession; you have to have character and be a bit strong" **(Man, Officer).**

Finally, there seems to be consensus among interviewees at all levels that the recruitment process needs to be modernized more to align better with the needs and lifestyles of current generations. On one hand, this includes a more strategic use of social media – something that was also suggested among focus groups with community members – citing the audiovisual strategies of other agencies as benchmarks. For several, social media is playing against the institution because it has negatively affected its reputation, as one of the interviewees acknowledges: "We can make all the effort and maybe we can recruit the staff, we achieve it. But they also hear the other side, because young people are immersed in everything related to technology, social media, [...] and what people think, that influences them" **(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor).**

Likewise, the importance of resuming recruitment processes within schools and universities is highlighted, a strategy that proved very effective during the 1990s and 2000s – in fact, a good portion of the interviewees was recruited this way. As one of the interviewees highlights, it is important to reach potential candidates in the spaces where they transit the most: universities, colleges, sports spaces, among others. Finally, elements like tattoos and use of beards are emphasized as criteria that should not disqualify possible candidates, considering that it is a practice much more common among Millennials and Gen Z. Below are three fragments of reflections around the topic:

> *I understand that they need to improve how the agency is projected in terms of technology, I feel that they are lagging in that promotion on social media. [...] That promotion, those videos, that is key for young people [...], they do not see a promotion as maybe they would have seen in the Marines or the Military.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***
>
> *We need to adapt to the times, we cannot continue with the police from 50 years ago. I understand that a candidate who comes with a tattoo does not mean that they are not suitable.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***
>
> *In recruitment, we are stagnant, we have to incentivize. We need to go to the streets, go to universities to look for candidates, as it was done before – today it is not done that way. […] Go to the high schools, to gather information from these kids who are interested in being police officers. […] We still have archaic mentalities in the police, people with 37, 38, with 40 years of service, repeating the same things they learned in their first year.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

3.2.2. Training and Professional Development

One of the components that is most praised is the advancement of training and education programs. For many, the focus on continuous education has been one of the great advances that has resulted from the Reform, something that contrasts with their initial experiences in the Police. While there are criticisms around the loss of discipline among new members – the effect of a model that is less military and more focused on academia – most acknowledge that the quality of training is higher, also recognizing the value of having incorporated distance education models. Those with more than 25 years in the institution are the ones who show more criticism towards the shift in training model, as reflected in this fragment:

> *I understand that there is a lack of discipline, I come from a time when as soon as you entered through that gate, discipline was military. Because at that moment it was almost a military body, and discipline and organization were excellent. Now that has been lost, it is almost like a university, there is no longer discipline, and those aspects are reflected when new people arrive at the commands.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Continuous training is valued by the majority of interviewees, although it is acknowledged that some are a bit repetitive and tedious, and especially not well adapted to the realities of an officer – someone who is already overworked, with little time available and who is not always in an office with the possibility of connecting to the internet and attending a virtual course. In this sense, it is also recognized that the current staffing shortage among mid-level and senior command personnel is affecting their ability to comply with training requirements while also carrying out their regular duties. One of the interviewees expresses it this way:

> *I have 10 agents under my charge, to say a number: maybe I can take three or four agents out to do a service, but I must have the rest undergoing training, plus others who are on sick leave, vacation leave. But I have to meet those trainings monthly. There are some trainings that are delivered in person, others that are delivered online, but you always have to be fulfilling that.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Another element that is applauded regarding the current training model is the inclusion of more modules around skills that go beyond the use of weapons – emotional management, civil rights, domestic violence, and others. However, some point out that this type of modules on emotional intelligence should be reinforced at all levels – especially with senior leadership. Finally, it is emphasized that the training models may be a bit 'generalized' in that they are not tailored to the specific needs by rank or specialty. One of the participants highlights this:

> *The positive aspect these days is precisely the number of trainings that are free and educational, they are good trainings, they help a lot [...]. But I am noticing, now we go to the bad part, that they give the same training to an agent, to a First Lieutenant and to a Captain – the same. And it cannot be the same because the work each one does is not the same."* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Finally, it is important to highlight that, for some interviewees, the new training cycles have had the collateral effect of losing focus on key concepts related to the actions of officers. One of the interviewees describes it this way:

> *I do not see that they are well informed in that area of the subject: what is a probable cause, what is a reasonable suspicion [...]. And those are things that need to be clear, that the police officer has a clear understanding of the probable cause: if you have probable cause, you can take the necessary action, and that within your application of work you have to escalate to certain levels, but you are protected by law.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

This is very relevant as it seems to be correlated with the fear expressed by several agents when having to resort to the Use of Force Protocol, a topic that will be delved into later.

3.2.3. Availability and Quality of Resources and Tools

The availability and quality of resources and tools are among the areas most positively evaluated by participants from all ranks, highlighting that the introduction of tools such as the baton and TASER have facilitated the work of the Police, especially for handling potentially dangerous situations. One of the interviewees highlights this:

> *In less lethal weapons, I understand that the police are quite well equipped, they have been provided with sufficient less-lethal weapons to use, and I believe we have reduced by about 90% the need for the police to physically engage that person to bring them into compliance, [...] the TASER has been the key tool in all this, because it has prevented the police from having to engage hand-to-hand with a person [...]. The police are being well trained, and they have been given the tools they need to be able to work.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Regarding aspects of improvement, two major elements are highlighted: the maintenance and quality of the equipment received and the distribution among different geographical regions. This was a topic that was also highlighted during the collection of data in 2023.

When referring to issues around maintenance and quality, most participants highlight the difficulties they face with the patrol vehicles – although they are available and some are relatively new, there is no budget line allocated for their maintenance, and they do not receive sufficient rest time. This inevitably results in patrol vehicles sustaining damage, but the repair process is slow and bureaucratic – this has caused many Mid-Level Supervisors to seek solutions independently to replace the necessary parts. Many times, this money comes out of the officers' own pockets. This is emphasized by two interviewees from Mid-Level Supervision:

> *The problem we have with the vehicles in the Police is that we do not have a contract with any civil or government agency that is responsible for fixing those vehicles. A vehicle gets damaged if it does not have a warranty. There it stays, and you're left without that car until you have the money to buy that part, get that part while it arrives, and then take it to the workshop of the*

> *area, of the command of the area to get that vehicle fixed. You were without that car for a while. And this is despite the fact that we are now fewer police.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***
>
> *When a part breaks [on the car] and there is no money in the area to repair the part, we even collect funds ourselves in order to continue providing service. Personally, if it is a part that costs $100 or $120, we collect $10 or $15 per shift, and due to the willingness to work, we manage to buy what needs to be bought, it can be repaired to at least keep the fleet up to date.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

Likewise, several participants criticize the distribution of resources – the San Juan metropolitan area tends to have greater coverage compared to more rural regions. This is especially true for equipment like TASERs, pepper spray, bulletproof vests, and others. Similarly, the resources received do not always adapt to the specific needs of the territory. This is emphasized by one of the interviewees working in a rural area, referring to the vehicle they have in their precinct:

> *I have to go into rural areas where they give me a car that cannot make it up the hill, I have to call the citizen and ask if they can come a little further down because this vehicle cannot get up there. I have to juggle to be able to access where that citizen is. They do not provide us with a vehicle that truly adapts to the needs of the police; I have vehicles that are for being in the city, but the town where I am is mostly countryside.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

In this sense, although on paper the equipment requirement is being met, it seems that the specific needs remain a secondary consideration – this ultimately privileges those who live in urban areas and marginalizes once again the inhabitants of rural spaces.

3.2.4. Promotions and Appointment to New Positions

Participants express an improvement in the promotion process since the implementation of exams as a method of promotion. For several, it was only from this new modality that they were able to advance within the institution, as it allowed them to detach from the logic of 'patronage' and political connections. However, it is important to emphasize that this process is not implemented at all levels: as highlighted by many participants from High supervisory levels, the promotion process for high-ranking officials remains different and is still perceived as strongly influenced by politics and personal connections. The above is reiterated in the following interventions:

> *As long as it is up to the rank of captain, there is fair competition. From the rank of captain and above, since these are merit ranks, you start to see other terms and situations: politics intervenes a lot [...], the people who know them and are in positions of Senate, House of Representatives, in different positions and have contact with the members of the Puerto Rico Police. Help is always seen toward them, and that is not something that is a secret; all the colleagues who are at rank know it. I heard a colleague once say that if I wanted to be promoted, I had to find a political pull because based on my merits I was not going to keep advancing.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

> *From the ranks of inspector to colonel is a different story, because there they created a board with five professionals who interview you. But regardless of your interview, politics is who selects. It's true, if you don't have a political pull, you are not going to be promoted.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***
>
> *Before, you took your exam and you either passed or you didn't, and you had the right to go to a challenge. [...] [But] I observed other people who went, and if you had the right connections, they gave you points, and if you didn't have any political pull, you were out of luck [...]. Now at least in these last exams, I saw that the ones who didn't score stayed out. They didn't give points, and that seems excellent to me.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

In this sense, although it is clear to many that the Reform has rectified several aspects of the promotion process and has increased confidence around its transparency, it is still perceived as highly politicized and mediated by social connections. This is consistent with observations made during 2023.

Participants also point to waiting times as a factor that could be improved. On one hand, it is noted that the waiting periods for the exam season are inconsistent – it is common for several years to pass without openings for promotion applications, and this has left many waiting for long periods without being able to move from their current position. Likewise, once the exams are taken and passed, several participants point out that the waiting times to formalize the promotion are also quite long. This is expressed by two interviewees who have gone through the process:

> *I believe that this should have been done more frequently because from 2016 to now, (2023-24), many years passed. All those people, including me, got stuck at the rank of lieutenant; I should have been a colonel or commander by now, but during all those years they maintained the ranks without conducting exams.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***
>
> *I already took the exam in September, and we are now in November and it's still the case that I have not been approved; I have already taken the training from the academy, and the list of eligibles has not come down yet. Imagine, I have already been sacrificed for 20 days, studying 15 hours a day, and I still have not been assigned. I have been waiting for this exam since 2015, [...] because I did not pass the first exam in 2015, and I had to wait 10 years to be able to take the exam now.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

In this sense, although the process is perceived relatively positively, there are still advances needed regarding its efficiency and flow.

A relevant point regarding promotions is the interconnectivity between promotions and administrative processes. This is a painful point that several people mention when reflecting on the blind spots of the system and areas of possible corruption. On one hand, there is consensus that those with ongoing administrative processes cannot be promoted, and this is problematic because closing an administrative complaint file can take months to years – during this limbo, the officer cannot do anything but wait. On the other hand, and perhaps even more delicate, is the report that this tool is used by other officers to derail or stall the careers of other colleagues or as a form of punishment. This is expressed by some interviewees:

> *If you are not a friend, they create frivolous administrative investigations and do not comply with the terms established by the regulations. Those investigations stay there with the purpose of not letting you advance: if you advance and if you are from the group, then they give you good and well-paid positions; if not, then they throw you to the most difficult places to work.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

> *When there are problems, that is when they are treated with favoritism or I will try to give you a complaint so that you help me that it goes well or that it goes badly. The opposite can happen, if I want to harm someone, there are many of the complaints - I would say that 90% of those complaints that were reported were not from the citizens, they were police officers themselves who make complaints against police officers.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Finally, for many interviewees the process is not giving enough urgency to generational change, a highly important issue since most of those in high command are close to retiring. As one of the senior/command-level interviewees points out, "to most of us who are commanding an area, in a year or two, when all those people leave, where are the officers who are going to occupy those positions?" **(Man, senior/command-level supervisor).**

3.2.5. Administrative Processes

For the majority of interviewees, administrative processes still have the greatest amount of room for improvement, mainly due to their long waiting times. It is recognized that processes have been simplified by allowing uniformed personnel to complete administrative procedures remotely, as one interviewed officer describes: "administrative matters have improved a lot, since the police have taken some electronic measures through the Internet; before one had to go to San Juan to do administrative things, now at least one has a computer and can do it" (Man, Officer). However, both those who have gone through complaint processes and those who have worked inside this department highlight a shortage of personnel that makes it practically impossible to meet the deadlines established by the procedures. This perspective is shared by members of all the interviewed groups. This, as one of the interviewees emphasizes, is an issue that ultimately punishes the entire precinct, not just the one being investigated, since their periods of suspension involve internal reorganizations that create gaps within the normal functioning structure.

Speaking about this issue, these two interventions refer to the topic from both perspectives – as the subject being investigated and as the investigator of complaints:

> *Administrative processes are very slow when it comes to administrative investigations, they are too slow. Right now, I filed a complaint regarding a disarmament procedure that was carried out against me, and they did the entire protocol wrong. I wrote a document in which I wrote to high-ranking police officials, high stars. 30 days passed, I was called and I spoke. When I call after 30 days, they tell me no, that they had requested an extension of 90 days. 90 days passed, I called again, and the investigator told me, 'no, we requested a reconsideration to give us another 90 days'.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *That is very delayed. I worked there two years ago, and the reality is that it is a disaster in the sense that, yes, there is an established protocol; yes, there is a manual, there are regulations, but there is no staff. In the office where I worked, they brought administrative complaints and there were only three of us […] they were complaints from Mayagüez, from Cabo Rojo, from Aguadilla, and the office was in the Florida precinct, […] There are agents who have administrative complaints that are in extension, […] but it is supposed to be three extensions of 30 days. And there are people who have been waiting for years for results of their complaints, and at the end of the day they have to archive it because as it no longer went through the appropriate administrative process, the complaint ultimately goes nowhere. But it's not the investigator's fault.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

On the other hand, one of the senior/command-level interviewees emphasizes how the process has improved in terms of timelines, without excessively harming the person investigated: "That has changed a lot: now the administrative investigation is concluded in six months or nine months, and if the person had to comply with any term of days, they comply before losing a rank due to that situation" (Man, senior/command-level supervisor). This difference in perspective seems to be an example of how the speed of these processes varies depending on the rank and connections of the affected person. One of the interviewed Officer also highlights this, referring to the influence of 'favoritism' in the process: "Administrative procedures do move forward. [As for] transparency, at least the Police tend to always seek the truth, but there is always a case, a difference, due to favoritism. Here the problem is politics and favoritism/cronyism ("panismo")." **(Woman, Officer).**

In this sense, when referring to the transparency of the process, although the majority recognizes that there have been many improvements regarding the reliability of the process, cases of complaints filed among colleagues as punishment and favoritism mediated by connections and positions of power persist. Particularly, several highlight that trust decreases when the complaint is made against high-ranking members. This criticism is mainly expressed by officers and mid-level supervisors, but the higher levels are not exempt from these dynamics. This is highlighted by two interviewees who are facing complaints in the process of closure, after speaking out against their superiors:

> *I filed a complaint against several lieutenants, yet they made me a witness in their favor. And I say, but what is this? What investigation is this? Because since they are bosses, one cannot do anything, they leave it like that. One has to look for and sue in civil court. This is how the police defend high officials.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *I am the best example, because by reporting two colonels and a commander, they filed a complaint against me with a civilian and transferred me. I had a confidential/unmarked license plate, and they took my license plate away. They do not allow me to dye my hair, although I have a skin condition. They transferred me to another area, and after they transferred me, they created a position that does not exist within PRPB. I am the joke of the Puerto Rico Police, and on top of that now they take away my vehicle to travel.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

On this issue, one of the interviewees highlights the role of the Department of Public Safety (DSP), and the change that she has observed since the Police administratively and operationally separated from this agency in 2025. One of the interviewees emphasizes:

> *After we became part of the DSP, they were quite clear, they were quite transparent, and they audited, they cared more about making the process fair. Regardless of what specific administrative process we were talking about, they seemed more transparent. Now that we are no longer part of the DSP, I have started to see unfair transfers - unfair in both ways. Someone who does not deserve to be in a specialized division, they have already sent and placed him there just because he is a friend of whoever, as I have also seen that you did something against a politician and you were transferred. And it is not because of the demands of that service, but as punishment for what you did.* ***(Woman, Officer)***

In this sense, the greatest criticism expressed by the interviewees regarding administrative processes is that there is no prior filter to decide whether the complaint warrants investigation and completion. This is generating an overload on the system that translates into delays that harm the entire chain. As one of the participants expresses, celebrating that this is a priority issue for the new superintendent:

> *I applaud [that] to the new superintendent Joseph González. I heard initially that he is working on a new public policy to change the punishments, in these historical moments where the Puerto Rico Police does not have personnel and you punish for something that doesn't make sense – 45 days of employment and salary of a colleague. You are punishing the citizens; you are punishing the supervisor and the colleagues who are working.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

3.2.6. Supervision

When speaking of supervision within the Police, many of the interviewees recognize that the shortage of personnel remains one of the main obstacles to the efficient execution of the structures. This often causes mid-level supervisors to perform duties that do not correspond to their rank, and to break the chain of command dictated by the Reform. The participants also mention that there is a disparity in the distribution of human resources, as some stations have much more personnel compared to others that require more. This is expressed by two of the interviewees:

> *There are not enough personnel, so the supervisor instead of focusing on supervising the personnel has to focus on performing officer-level duties. Sometimes even the directors who are lieutenants have to do the officer-level duties because there are not enough police officers. The shortage is so great that I feel that the supervision and direction, that is the lieutenant and the supervisor are not carrying out their roles as they should.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

> *There is quite a bit of supervision, but what happens is that the resources are poorly allocated. Sometimes a division or a precinct has three supervisors, while a division with limited public-facing duties has four or five.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

The power structures within the precincts also generate some conflict when a person rises to a position of greater power and remains within the same group, they have worked and grown with. For some interviewees, especially those in senior supervisory roles, it is necessary for those who rise to the

Medium level to be relocated to other stations to avoid conflicts of interest with their colleagues. This is equally relevant when situations of unethical investigation occur, fostering the scenarios of 'favoritism/cronyism' that continue to happen within the institution. This is described by one of the interviewees:

> *There is a reasonable number of supervisors that I see are not carrying their supervisory rank to the level they should. What happens? Our culture, I have to say, we are Hispanic: jumping from agent rank to supervisor there is a line of friendship, that we know each other. […] I am one of those who thinks that if that colleague was promoted, they need to be removed from that unit, they should not stay in that unit. […] If this supervisor works in this precinct and was promoted to sergeant, he is not going to stay in this precinct, we move him to another precinct. If this is a sergeant who was promoted, or a lieutenant who was promoted, and is in an investigative section, he needs to be removed and reassigned so that everyone can develop capacity and avoid conflicts of interest.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Likewise, the members of higher rank also feel the structural gaps due to lack of personnel, a crisis accelerated by the fact that most people in high positions are nearing retirement age. In this sense, although there are several people taking exams for promotion, the deficit continues due to the high number of people leaving the Police. This is expressed by a commander reflecting on the topic:

> *We lack many sergeants because our agency has created that the supervisor can supervise ten agents, it is what imaginatively or through studies our own agency has created […]. Now the police is soon to administer the candidate sergeant exam, but what happens? They gave the lieutenant exam and the lieutenant exam was based on 600 sergeants, so what we are going to do is practically replace those who are going to be promoted to lieutenant, so you are not going to grow.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Beyond the gaps generated by the shortage of personnel, the interviewees also emphasize opportunities for improvement within the attitudes expressed by those in senior leadership. This is manifested by several as 'lack of empathy' towards those in middle-level roles and those working as Officers. Productivity is placed above the individual, without taking into account that most members are already performing roles that exceed their capacities, without receiving additional pay and with very little flexibility towards their personal life. This is expressed by two of the interviewees:

> *One tries to talk to [the bosses] and they don't solve things for you, really. […] They don't have that tact, they don't have that kindness: they are in an office, 'I sign this, that, and you figure it out as you can.' And that bothers, because they are the ones who can help you, and they put barriers for you to be able to resolve.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *We are fewer each day, […] there are more people leaving than those who are being promoted and staying. Therefore, the workload is increasing, but we do not see any kind of economic incentive. In my case, I was added to a Use of Force board, which is totally apart from what I do in my district, but I am not paid for that. You have to do it, period. There is no additional compensation.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Finally, it is important to highlight the particularities of this topic from a gender perspective – as seen in the previous study, macho attitudes towards women and people from the LGBTIQ+ community

persist, especially towards those in high positions. This is confirmed by one of the interviewees: "I would say that female police officers are a minority group because it's the truth, and the discrimination against us is very strong. The higher rank you have, the stronger the discrimination." (Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)

3.2.7. Investigation of Unethical Conduct

When referring to the process of reporting and investigating unethical conduct, several interviewees express little confidence in the system, especially when reports are made against people of high ranks. This aligns with what was observed when talking about administrative processes; for most interviewees, both topics are deeply intertwined. As seen when discussing administrative processes, the investigation process around unethical conduct does not function uniformly, as the effectiveness and speed of the process largely depend on who is making the report, who is being accused, and what the issue at hand is:

> *It depends on what context [the report is made in], because if it is something that involves sexual harassment, and most are men, there is a tendency to defend the male officer. In the context of workplace harassment, let's say it's a 50-50, it all depends on what is occurring, but it's not so transparent. It's not that we can complain and nothing will happen.* ***(Woman, Officer)***

Likewise, in line with what has already been mentioned in the previous section, the investigation of unethical conduct is seen by several as a tool for punishment among colleagues with internal conflicts. The sense of trust surrounding these reports is also eroded because many express that those who report are penalized through strategies that, although they do not infringe the law, undermine a space of trust and transparency. This is expressed by one of the interviewed Officers:

> *Colleagues sometimes fear filing ethical complaints due to reprisals or situations that may arise against them, mostly when they are complaints against superiors – lieutenant or captain and things like that. […] Many colleagues remain silent because if they file a complaint, they can be transferred, they face reprisals against them, in the sense that they can be assigned bad shifts.* ***(Man, Officer)***

In this sense, many advocate for an external investigation system to the Police – something that had already been mentioned in the previous study. For many, as long as this system remains within the institution, there will not be due process or guarantees of transparency that encourage reports to be made, especially by those in lower ranks. Likewise, as several interviewees express, the same existing control mechanisms to appeal investigations end up revictimizing the person involved, making it inefficient and unreliable. This is expressed by one of the interviewees:

> *I understand that there should not be police investigating police – I understand that a separate division should be created: perhaps with retired judges, prosecutors, people who have knowledge of the law and who are far from the police, from that network of*

> *favoritism/cronyism ("panismo"). They come in, create frivolous and unfounded investigations, and if you are not a friend of the friend, they approve it and impose punishment on you.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

However, it is important to mention that these reporting channels do provide some protection to officers and have helped raise certain standards of behavior among their members, even when they are not in uniform. As one of the interviewees mentions, it is through this mechanism that officers involved in cases of domestic violence have been investigated and punished.

3.2.8. Use of technology

The use of technology continues to be one of the most valued elements among interviewees, as observed during the 2023 study. Participants see visible improvements in the use of tools for filing and processing reports, patrolling the streets, and systematizing information. Although there are still opportunities in the distribution of tools throughout the territory – with more rural populations having less access – it is recognized that there have been significant advances in this matter and that this has facilitated the work of the officers. This is described by two participants:

> *We did everything on paper, that was until maybe six or seven years ago, when we automated the reports and integrated other tools, such as protection orders with COPOP [Center for Operations and Processing of Orders], which is with the Justice System, and they included everything with our email. We started to take advantage of Outlook; we started to work with Teams and all these things. […] Even for our timekeeping process, we used to log it in a book and that was a nightmare during audits. Now, we clock in with our fingerprints.* ***(Woman, Officer)***

> *It has been improving quite a bit. There are many applications being used for the investigative branch like Crime Mapping, that didn't exist before. It checks where crime or criminal incidents are distributed and where to target. […] There are vehicles that have this system that detects license plates and can know if the vehicle has been reported as stolen, if the registration is up to date. All this system has been gradually improved.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Among the tools that are most valued by interviewees, electronic license-plate readers in patrol vehicles, the use of bodycams to protect both officers and civilians, and the widespread incorporation of digital systems for creating reports in police stations stand out. This has provided more efficiency to processes and transparency in case complaints are filed against officers. However, some lagging issues that were already highlighted during 2023 persist, mainly regarding the unequal access to technology between more remote areas and the failures in the system within police stations during overnight system downtime, which disproportionately affects those working night shifts and forces them to double their work due to a structural failure. This is described by one of the officers in the San Germán area:

> *[We still have] problems with computers, the internet system works when it wants to and sometimes it is a problem. Another problem with the equipment is the system for filing complaints: every day from 12:00 to 3:00 a.m. it does not work because it is resetting, and when you are working nights and trying to file complaints and doing your reports and things, you already know that from 11:15, 11:30, the system is going to start having problems.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

3.2.9. Implementation of the Use of Force Protocol

One of the focal points of transformation within the Police, for most interviewees, has focused on the Use of Force Protocol. A good part of the participants acknowledge that it is one of the aspects that has improved the most, and the change has been visible for several years. This is consistent with what was observed during 2023. The changes are considered largely positive, as there are greater guarantees of protection for citizens and officers, who are no longer forced to use their firearms as a first resort. The Protocol also provides a standardization regarding the expected reactions based on the different situations presented – this protects officers against possible complaints and cases of police abuse, as they can rely on a common, predetermined framework.

However, there are those who consider that the Protocol has complicated the daily execution of police duties, mainly mentioned by the Officers, who feel more affected by their response capability while patrolling. Several of them express feeling more restricted by some of the criteria of this protocol – something that has generated more fear of reacting under pressure in rapidly evolving situations to unexpected situations with citizens. At the same time, for many, this has resulted in a loss of respect for the institution because they know that the Protocol does not allow them to react to certain situations. This is described by some of the interviewees:

> *Whenever this happens in the field, it involves risk: for them no, for them you first have to talk, talk, talk and talk; when he comes to attack you, then you have to act. That's why I don't quite agree.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *If we are patrolling right now and suddenly a motorcycle speeds by, popping wheelies, doing whatever it wants, we are sometimes restricted from pursuing them. We cannot go after them because the Reform says that if we go after that person and that person has an accident, or falls and dies, or kills someone else, it is the Police's fault. So, how are we going to be able to intervene? And offenders already know this and take advantage of it: they pass us by on the side accelerating the motorcycle.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *We judge them, of course, sitting at a desk reading a case file, and we are not feeling what he felt when he made the decision. We have to move to what he was feeling, we have to understand that what he used was just reasonable with the reaction of the other person […] To avoid having to document so much, [thinking] 'I'm going to be investigated administratively', the officer sometimes makes delayed decisions.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

In this sense, while most feel that the Use of Force Protocol was a necessary measure to standardize response criteria, in practice these scales of use of force hardly translate to the complexity of real life, especially when responding to a changing and potentially dangerous scenario. Another of the main criticisms of the process established by the Protocol is the extensive bureaucratic documentation process that follows each Use of Force, something that had already been highlighted in 2023 and that discourages many from using the proper channels. As several participants recount, many Officers choose not to intervene in certain situations and thus avoid having to activate the requirements detailed by the protocol:

> *Nowadays for the police it is very complicated, very difficult, so much so that sometimes one works with fear because now everything has to be written down, everything has to be put in a report. Now, if I take out the taser to aim at a person, then I have to notify, I have to make a use of force, I have to make a report, it has to be matched with the same partner who was with me, we have to more or less write the same.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *[The Officers] save themselves the task, they say 'better we patrol, we observe, but we don't intervene. We see a violation of the law, possibly the biggest one we see is a traffic violation, and we don't intervene because that violation can generate or escalate, and I have to go in and document. I prefer not to intervene, so I don't have to document because it is very burdensome for me.'* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

In this sense, one of the main modifications suggested by the interviewees is to simplify the documentation requirements associated with the Use of Force Protocol so they better reflect the time and operational demands involved in completing the required reports. This is a process that affects all levels, as one of the mid-level interviewees highlights, who must supervise these processes while also trying to ensure the safety and well-being of the officer involved:

> *The amount of documents, reports that officers who use force have to fill out is too tedious. […] The reports are required to be made within eight hours of the arrest – and then you have to take them to the hospital to treat them, then you have to take them to the prosecutor's office, maybe to consult the case with a prosecutor, and maybe to the judge. It has already been 10 hours of work. How are you going to tell them that they have to make the report during their work shift, when they are already tired, both physically and mentally, and you have to sit them at a computer to draft a report?* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

3.2.10. Community Interaction

The interaction with communities has been one of the focal points within the Reform, and many of the participants recognize that there have been good advances, mainly through initiatives such as Community Policing and the Police Athletic League. This coincides with what was observed during 2023, where advances were recognized around building trust and collaboration through joint work with community leaders and civil society organizations. One of the interviewees expresses this when reflecting on the topic:

> *I have seen that nowadays the community is having a little more trust in the Puerto Rico Police. Let me explain: many years ago, a police officer would go to a community, and they would reject him or speak badly of him, or insult him because they saw the police officer as an abusive police officer, a police officer who did what he wanted in his neighborhood. […] That is something good in reality, that the police integrate into the community to create trust between the police and the community.* ***(Man, Officer)***

Among the highlighted recommendations, several mention that more resources are needed to give more stability to these initiatives – this refers both to personnel dedicated exclusively for community engagement duties as well as tools (cars, technology) that guarantee availability to perform the role fully, and not as a secondary priority. One of the interviewees expresses this: "They should be available seven days a week. Disconnect them from street investigations and only use them for community matters: to give talks, go to schools, go to different nursing homes" (Man, mid-level supervisor). On the other hand, there are those who believe that this type of initiative should be put on pause while the shortage of personnel is widespread throughout the institution. Some interviewees, mainly among Officers and mid-level supervisors, believe that the role has been distorted and has placed the Police in roles that should be the responsibility of other institutions, neglecting the main mission of the Police:

> *The Police have taken on a responsibility that does not belong to them, which looks very nice, because all the work that one does voluntarily, that one does from the heart, looks very nice. I do not go against that, but in these critical moments for the Police, the Police should offload that responsibility to whom it corresponds, which is the municipality.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

> *What we need are patrols. We need Police intervening, not police dealing with relationships with the community, who are sent to a nursing home to make jokes to the elderly. Yes, that is also needed, but where they are truly needed is in the streets, investigating complaints.* ***(Man, Officer)***

In this sense, and in accordance with what was observed in 2023, community initiatives are not applied uniformly throughout the institution – they will depend heavily on the particular interest shown by those in charge of each precinct. This inconsistency has affected the credibility of these initiatives, which explains why when speaking with members of civil society there is great diversity of opinions on the subject: while some highlight the goodwill and participation of officers within their communities, others mention being unaware of this type of initiative. One of the interviewees describes it, who currently works in this division:

> *I never thought I would be in Community Relations, but since I was in operational branches, I always saw, especially the bosses, that they are not interested in listening to community leaders at all. Now when a meeting comes, or the monitor comes, or the governor comes, then you see that they ask for statistics and go and visit the neighborhood and are the ones who want the community the most. But if you go day to day and interview people, sometimes in the year you don't see them at all.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

3.2.11. Statistics and Public Information

Confidence in official statistics has improved significantly among officers, showing more advances compared to what was observed in 2023. However, it is recognized that the perspective from the citizens contrasts in its credibility, as the idea persists that the Police adjust its figures, mediated by political interests. This is consistent with what was observed during focus groups with members of civil society in 2023 and 2025. This reflection is shared by two interviewees from different levels:

> *The Puerto Rico Police has statistics that we can reasonably say are reliable. What happens? We live in a culture and in a society where we have a sensationalist press that tends to highlight the most negative or alarming events […] but the statistics, the publicity, and what is reported by the agency, we have also greatly improved. It is no longer like in the past, when things were hidden, when information that was not true was given, that has ended.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

> *I would dare to say that now it is a little more transparent than before, as a lot of complaints, punishments, management of statistics, and all those things have emerged that have instructed them that it is better to say what happened and not to make things up.* ***(Woman, Officer)***

Still, some comments suggest that figures are unreliable or adjusted to fit institutional needs or targets, or that it does not receive the seriousness it deserves. This is expressed especially by mid-level and senior/command-level supervisors, who have seen how the information is recorded sometimes in a less precise manner to 'help' the metrics of the region: “there are times when you go and there is a forensic or something, and you know it is a murder, but to help they say it is a suspicious death” (Woman, senior/command-level supervisor). This is also due, as others express, to technical ignorance among several uniformed officers when it comes to recording a crime, using the parameters of the NIBRS [National Incident-Based Reporting System] inappropriately:

> *Well, there I have to tell you that the statistics of the Police have not improved. I am an instructor on the NIBRS topic, and the management does not take seriously that the NIBRS is structured by the FBI so that they speak the same language at the level of Puerto Rico and all the States. Once the Police present evidence that the officer has been trained to correctly fill out the NIBRS complaint report, they will get the FBI accreditation. […] But they lowered that training to 8 hours, and it is impossible for a police officer to understand that FBI NIBRS manual in eight hours. It is impossible for them to fully learn how to document incidents correctly so that the statistics are transparent and correct.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Finally, some improvement comments also suggest implementing the gathered information as a basis for creating intervention plans adjusted to the reality of the territory.

3.3. Evaluation and Perception of the Police Reform

3.3.1. Current Institutional Performance within the Police Reform Framework

When directly asking about the implementation of the Police Reform, the majority of interviewees agree on the tangible benefits that it has brought for the institution and for the execution of its tasks. As mentioned at the beginning of this document, the vast majority of participants have been in the Police for many years – this has allowed them to compare the before and after of the Reform's implementation, leading many to conclude that the Puerto Rico Police of the past was much more abusive and arbitrary toward citizens, and that a change was necessary:

> *At first, it was difficult because I was not used to the trainings, I was not accustomed to certain steps. Initially, since it was a training today, another training tomorrow, another for the next day, one would say, 'but what is happening'. [But] when you took that training, you came out and said 'wow, we really needed that'.* ***(Man, Officer)***

Undoubtedly, the main barrier currently faced by the institution is the lack of personnel and resources, which in turn has generated a widespread feeling of hopelessness and demotivation. As previously mentioned, the members comprising the institution are overworked, underpaid, anxious about their pension situation, and surrounded by colleagues who openly express their desire to leave their roles. In this regard, several interviewees feel they are working against the current:

> *Most of those who are there are thinking about wanting to leave, and that is difficult in a job when you lose that, because that emotion is contagious. […] If you see another colleague saying, 'I don't want to be here,' working like that is complicated."* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *I understand that they are working, although they are working without motivation. Because most of the Puerto Rico Police are an aging police force, exceeding 40 years, exceeding 20 years of service. If you look through all the towns of Puerto Rico, you will see that in the precincts you will not find young people. The young people have already left […], because as I said at the beginning of the interview, no one wants to enter this profession because it is not attractive."* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

In this regard, the institution continues to be affected by structural limitations that require capital and resource injection to be able to meet the fundamental difficulty – attractive working conditions and dignified retirement conditions, which allow for increased recruitment and retention figures of personnel and provide existing members confidence regarding their future.

3.3.2. Main Benefits of the Reform

For several of the interviewees, the Reform has been primarily beneficial in professionalizing the everyday activity of the Police, through tools, technology, training, and clear protocols. Many recall how the Police went from being an organization associated with violent and abusive practices to a

much more structured and respectful institution towards the citizen, something that several interviewees from all profiles see as the main gain:

> *The police before the reform was a violent police force, I can tell you, I come from a police family, […] and what I saw was that the police officer did not tolerate much, it was violent. And that is why I like that the Reform has arrived, because it has educated many.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *Throughout my years as a police officer, I have seen both sides: without Reform and with Reform. I spent many years working in a specialized unit in the San Juan area, where really, when there was no reform, a specialized unit, practically […] we would arrive at the place to hand out beatings, as people say, and nowadays that specialized unit no longer exists.* ***(Man, Officer)***

The inclusion of more tools, technology, and trainings is another of the main elements highlighted spontaneously when talking about the Police Reform. As already explored in 2023, the use of tasers, bodycams, modern patrols vehicles, and various software management in precincts and patrols is emphasized by most as elements that have improved their work. Compared to 2023, the electronic reading of "marbetes" (vehicle registration stickers) is mentioned as a well-received novelty, as well as greater coverage of this type of tools across the territory. The trainings continue to be a valued element, although some still perceive that they tend to be a bit repetitive and lengthy – something particularly relevant due to the staff shortage:

> *It brought us more resources, tools that the agent uses to counteract the Use of Force. The Reform brought more trainings, both virtual and in-person, which did not exist before. Those retrainings – the only training they gave you was on weapons, but now no, now they give you everything: Use of Force, ethics, the general order of Reform, how to deal with the elderly, how to deal with the LGBTIQ+, how to deal with children, how to deal with patients 408, trainings that did not exist.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Finally, the community-focused approach prioritized by the Reform is also highlighted by several as a great gain of the Reform. This refers both to the formalization of the Use of Force Protocol and the adoption of community work initiatives. This aligns with the previously expressed sentiment of seeking to restore confidence between the citizens and the institution, something that had been affected after numerous media scandals of corruption, police abuse, and confrontation with demonstrators. This aspect still has a lot of work pending, as evidenced in focus groups held with members of civil society, but it is important to see that the individuals comprising the Police recognize the task ahead and the necessary steps to achieve it.

3.3.3. Main Obstacles to the Reform

In line with what was expressed during 2023, one of the main criticisms of the Reform by members of the Police remains the additional workload and bureaucracy that has arisen from the different protocols, especially around the Use of Force. This is particularly difficult for Officers and mid-level

supervisors, who have seen their work hours multiply amid a scenario constrained by limited staffing and without additional compensation:

> *Maybe the paperwork, what happens is that there are many documents that need to be filled out, and I understand that there are many that are repetitive: if the report I make also has to be made by a sergeant, a supervisor, and it has to be made by an area commander.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *I belong to the board that evaluates those Uses of Force. I think that the person who is there on that board has to dedicate themselves solely to that. In my case, I cannot lead a district and belong to the board, because the reality is that in Bayamón there are many uses of force every day and I do not have the time.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Another of the obstacles highlighted by several interviewees, especially among Officers and mid-level supervisors, revolves around the senior leadership of the institution – something that had already been mentioned during 2023. On one hand, there is a greater reluctance to change within the highest and most powerful levels – a mix of personnel with many years within the institution and with less flexibility to adopt change and a fear of losing power. These senior leaders also begin to reinforce the so-called favoritism/cronyism ("panismo") that was constantly mentioned during the study. This also correlates with the use of administrative processes and processes for investigating unethical behaviors as methods of coercion and punishment against individuals who have reported senior leadership for inappropriate behaviors or actions:

> *The blind spot is really not the reform; it is that there is no rotation of supervision or chiefs. That is terrible, because […] those colonels should be rotated, because each colonel accommodates people from their side, […] and you create an internal hierarchy. If you do not change that, then you continue doing the same as that person says to do.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *I believe that senior leadership, the people who have been in the Police for 39 years and who were in the Police of the past, in some way I see that it has been difficult for them to adapt to the new. Because a new officer comes out well prepared from the Academy and understands what the Reform is and works well. But they face that what they were told in the academy is one thing and what is done at the level of high supervision, the barracks, and the transfers is another. You create confusion, you create discouragement, you create demotivation, and what happens is that people leave the police.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

This is something that one of the interviewees occupying a High level of supervision calls the "administrative mafia": a system that has been organized to keep power concentrated in certain hands, that leaves little room for substantive transformations or generational changes away from political and social connections, and that uses the structures built by the Reform against its own individuals. This participant refers to her personal case and the difficulties she has faced for confronting these power structures:

> *I call that the "administrative mafia," it is a mafia because if you are not connected, all the punishments are for you, the transfers are for you, and there is no transparency, then your reputation continues to be affected […]. Even though I have won almost all [the unfair*

> *complaints], that stays on your record, and when you go to forums, they say 'wow, the inspector has 8 on investigation and workplace harassment, oh no, but this is a harasser.' But they do not enter into the investigation and the details that stays with you.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Finally, as mentioned earlier, several of the interviewees mentioned how the Reform has restricted their ability to respond to dangerous situations and, as a consequence, the reputation of the Police has lost authority and respect among citizens:

> *I know that before, one must say it, there was abuse. But apart from that abuse, there was respect. Because before, if someone disrespected you, you could act. Now you cannot. Now they can call you '"perro muerto" [local insult]', they can call you '"cabro grande/cabro chiquito" [local insults]' and that has been part of the change.* ***(Man, Officer)***

3.3.4. Emotion Map

Most interviewees express positive and neutral feelings towards the Reform. Among Officers, the most expressed feeling is the peace of mind from being able to work in a structure that supports them and that has given them more tools, but with some mentions of skepticism or disappointment regarding the full implementation of the Reform or the limitations they encounter regarding the new protocols:

> *I can feel that now with the Reform, they gave us the equipment that we did not have before, and now I feel more confident being on the street. And safe, because I have tools that I can use without causing harm to people, which we did not have before. That is why I am grateful, confident, and safe for the tools I have to be able to work and be well on the street.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *Confused, because here the Reform says one thing and here in the Police they tell you another. That if you act they are going to fire you. Disillusioned, because when one wants to go to work as it is, the Police puts a foot on you.* ***(Man, Officer)***

On the other hand, Mid-Level supervisors mention feeling confident, proud, and calm, due to the fact that relationships with the community have improved through more professional attention from the institution. There are mentions of disappointment and sadness, due to feeling that the implementation of the Reform has been extended indefinitely, something that has diminished the weight of the transformation process:

> *I feel disappointed because I feel that we are being deceived: we were told at the beginning that the Reform was going to be for such a time, that good things were going to come, and despite the fact that good things have indeed come, I feel that what has been taken from us has carried more weight than what has been gained. Although training has arrived, which is important, it has not worked for retention.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

> *I feel safe because I understand that before the Reform there were many people with their own protocols on how to work with certain things, and the Reform came to make everyone work under the same pattern, under the same protocol.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

Finally, among senior/command-level participants, feelings of trust, happiness, and gratitude for the implementation of measures that have benefited the functioning of the institution are manifested. Some mentions of negative feelings such as disappointment or confusion also stand out, due to the misuse of administrative structures (the so-called 'administrative mafias'):

> *[I feel confident] Because with the tools that the government is giving us, the Puerto Rico Police now, going out on the street is a little safer, it is safer than before. I feel confident both in that and in what is being done with training and so on.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

3.4. Compliance and Opportunities for Improvement in the Police Reform

3.4.1. Perceptions of Compliance by Interviewed Group

The majority of the interviewed groups believe that the Reform is being implemented throughout the territory. Those who monitor its compliance confirm that the statistics validate these transformations – although there are still issues to improve, it is clear that there has been a before and after. This is expressed by one of the interviewees:

> *I have a quarterly meeting in San Juan, and we work on different facets of compliance with the Reform; most of them are about 80%. We are working with human beings, and I understand that this will never reach 100%. If the Reform aims to reach 100%, I don't know, but it is always around 75% or 80% above where it should be.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

As has been discussed, Officers and mid-level supervisors are somewhat more critical of its implementation due to the apparent loss of respect from citizens and the extensive bureaucratic processes that make up the new procedures – a situation that makes it difficult for them to carry out their daily tasks. This has also reduced the legitimate use of force and non-lethal weapons, for fear of being sanctioned and opening administrative processes that can take years. This is expressed by two of the interviewees:

> *Before, the Police were more daring in the aspect of intervening in various places, in sites of criminal incidence. They did not enter with the fear of 'they are going to record me, they can charge me,' and there is nothing corrupt about the way to intervene. There was more respect towards the Police before, in the way things were done.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *Now the Police are a bit fearful of sometimes taking action because they understand that they can be sanctioned. Maybe if I hit with the TASER more than three times, I will be sanctioned, and maybe I had to do it because there are people who get up and continue to fight, […] and the General Order specifies that you cannot hit more than three times because otherwise you will be sanctioned.* ***(Man, Mid Level)***

Another comment shared by several interviewees, mainly among the Mid and High levels, is the difficulty in maintaining the intensity and direction of the Reform with the constant changes in senior leadership. This is something that had already been mentioned during 2023. For many, this has prevented the Reform from meeting its goals at 100%, generating a widespread sense of stagnation with its progress:

> *Since Michelle Hernández left, who is the colonel, and Clementina Vegas, [with] these two it all looked very advanced, very developed; the proposals and projections were seen quickly, to the fullest. But now it is not perceived that way, I feel a stagnation because we are about to achieve everything at 100%, but it does not happen: I don't know if it is due to a shortage of police officers, lack of money, lack of a good economic injection and salary increase.* ***(Man, Mid Level)***

This feeling of stagnation is shared by several participants, who feel that it is necessary for the Reform to complete its process and become the new normal. One participant compares the process to 'taking a class that never ends' (Man, Officer), while another expresses that keeping the process open indefinitely can generate that 'the positive effect it has had can become burdensome' **(Man, senior/command-level supervisor).**

3.4.2. Groups Requiring Additional Support

Although several interviewees believe that all Police members have adopted the Reform positively, there is a significant number of participants who are critical of the high command of the Police and their reluctance to change. For some, this resistance among the higher ranks to transform internal power structures is one of the main reasons why the Reform has not been fully adopted, and this is seen in the distrust that persists among many regarding administrative processes and the investigation of unethical conduct. Below are two interventions that exemplify this situation:

> *Well, I think the group that the Reform should focus a little more on is senior leadership, because the time they have is so limited, the demand for work is so great, the responsibility is so much that, at the time of that training for awareness and professionalization, sometimes the position forces them not to dedicate the necessary time to knowledge and learning. This results in the importance or quality not being the same […] those people with old, archaic mindsets should be required to retire, but I feel that this population should be a little more empathetic.* ***(Man, Mid Level)***

> *I believe that not everyone is so clear about it in high hierarchy. I worked in field operations, and there you get to know all the heads of the areas […]. You will hear other officers from other [areas] who will not accept it in front of you or anyone, but inside they say 'what he did was destroy us, what he did was take away our authority, take away this, take away that, this was never a blessing.' Because they have that regressive mindset, that it was an imposition.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Likewise, and in line with what was observed during 2023, several interviewees agree that older uniformed officers have had greater difficulty adopting the changes and seeing the Reform with openness. This is particularly mentioned by the Officers, who see in some of their superiors and colleagues these more conservative mindsets and a longing for a past of 'greater respect' from the community, imposed by force:

> *There are those who never advanced and stayed in an era and from there did not move on, I have many of those here in Arecibo who do not support the Reform. They understand that this is a waste of time, that things were better when you slapped and things were resolved, that the Reform has only taken away our power or respect, […] [but] I see attitudes in my colleagues*

> *that make the citizen lose respect for them. It is not because the Reform has imposed these protocols on us, it is that simply they do not know how to interact, my friend, they do not know how to say things, they do not know how to be empathetic.* ***(Woman, Officer)***
>
> *For the Puerto Rico Police to improve, it must move beyond the old guard, because the Police cannot evolve while they remain in place. Here you cannot work with a beard because of those the old guard who are up there in limbo. Up there.* ***(Man, Officer)***

In this same line, the agents also emphasize requesting empathy from their superiors – understanding their needs as individuals and protecting their well-being amidst the challenging working conditions faced by the institution. This translates into a better balance with their personal lives, greater access to mental health and recovery services to avoid burning out. This is a reflection shared by several Mid-Level supervisors, mentioning that many of the services available to the Police are currently underutilized: 'The alternatives are there, because there are psychologists here, there is a general practitioner here, there is help when there are crisis interventions […]. There are many things that can be used to help the staff, and they are not used because they are only thinking about working, fulfilling the 8 hours, and investigating' **(Man, Mid-Level).**

Among senior/command-level interviewees, there is also a mention of the need to provide additional training and reinforcement on the Use of Force Protocol so that the uniformed officers feel more confident in its implementation, and can use it with greater confidence when the situation demands it:

> *My job, I am almost always in the office, I am reviewing Use of Force, with the platform here, I keep reading the policy, reviewing it. But there should be workshops for the officers for that type of subject, to watch videos, videos that we have on Use of Force so that they can be applied.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

3.4.3.Topics Requiring Greater Emphasis

In line with the previous section, many of the interviewees consider that placing greater emphasis on the human factor and empathy is crucial for caring for the staff that currently makes up the Police, especially in the midst of a challenging period affected by staff shortages and high rates of desertion. Recent statistics and several media cases have highlighted how mental health among uniformed personnel is a particularly relevant issue, and how this crisis has resulted in tragedies at home, such as femicides or suicides. One of the interviewees cites the recent case of a suicide within the institution, saying: “when institutional power comes down on you, it is frustrating because they annihilate you, they annihilate you in silence. […] It is the fault of the people representing the Agency, they let the power fall on them and they were silently annihilated” **(Man, mid-level supervisor).** Likewise, other

interviewees highlight the importance of being able to strengthen training around emotional intelligence and conflict management.[1]

Another issue highlighted by several interviewees is the transparency of investigations and internal processes – managing investigation processes externally to the institution is a suggestion that had already been mentioned in 2023. The independence of powers is considered crucial to restore complete trust in administrative processes, for which at least investigations led by people from other regions and without a conflict of interest are required. This is expressed by one of the interviewees:

> *Should investigate another unit: for example, if I am from Isabela, don't investigate me from the same Isabela, let them come from other places so that there is no conflict of interest. I understand that it should at least be that way, […] if I'm from the same Aguadilla and Aguadilla people come, I am friends with one or a cousin of the other, or I hang out with them, or we have a beer with those over there.* ***(Man, Officer)***

Finally, when talking about recruitment, several highlight the urgency of increasing the retention rate of new personnel, as many new recruits see the institution as "a springboard" to move up to other entities, without really expressing intentions to develop a career as a Police officer. This, as has already been discussed, goes hand in hand with the offer of a more attractive salary package and better working conditions.

3.5. Procedures for Priority Groups

3.5.1. Vulnerable and Minority Populations – LGBTIQ+ Community, People of Dominican Origin, Older Adults, Victims of Gender-Based Violence, and People with Physical or Intellectual Disabilities

Tailored treatment of historically discriminated-against and minority populations is one of the main themes addressed by the Reform, and where the majority agrees that visible improvements have been achieved. The LGBTIQ+ community and migrants are cited as the groups for which the greatest progress has been observed, a perception shared by all interviewed groups. Meanwhile, the majority believe there are greater opportunities for improvement regarding people with physical or intellectual disabilities, mainly in training and improving infrastructures. There is not much discussion around the relationship with prisoners and ex-convicts, and the majority does not consider low-income or racialized individuals as part of minority groups, so they do not find it necessary to mention a particular protocol for them.

[1] Recent research concludes that "the Puerto Rico Police produces, proportionally, more than four times the number of femicide perpetrators found in the general population of non-police men" (Kilómetro Cero, 2024).

When talking about the treatment of the LGBTIQ+ population, the majority are open to recognizing that discrimination was frequent among various uniformed personnel, especially those of older age. The Reform protocols have standardized the treatment of citizens above the personal beliefs of the uniformed personnel, something that was also communicated during conversations with the public. The application of these differential protocols has managed to reduce discrimination and re-victimization throughout complaints and investigation processes. Three of the interviewees express this:

> *There was something in the Puerto Rico Police that, when a case involving this group occurs, many times that case has to be passed from one colleague to another, depending on the division to which it has to be referred. And every time it reached that division, they victimized them more because they would start asking for their name again, whether they were a man or a woman, and so on. That has changed, now in the Puerto Rico Police, the first officer who investigates has to inform the other agents how that person wants to be called […] so that the other colleagues, two or three colleagues who come later, treat them as they said from the beginning.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***
>
> *I can attend to a female or a male, and suddenly I think it's a male and it turns out to be a woman, I continue treating them with respect and love. When they show me their identification, I realize that their name is so-and-so and I don't question, I don't ask, I just look at the identification and address them the same way.* **(Man, Officer).**
>
> *That has helped the LGBTIQ+ community a lot: before those people were more criticized, discriminated; now that is more open, more accessible. It is treated with more respect, with the same respect given to other people. I understand that this has helped this population, and one has to treat the person as they want to be treated.* **(Man, Officer).**

This change has become more tangible when dealing with cases of domestic violence among same-sex partners, a scenario where there were high probabilities of re-victimization and discrimination against complainants. However, other interviewees express that many of these discriminatory behaviors persist among some uniformed personnel, something that was also mentioned during focus groups with members of civil society. For some, a situation similar to what is described with the Use of Force Protocol occurs with these differential approaches, where there is a certain fear among some uniformed personnel of not using the correct terminology or treatment due to ignorance of the new discourses surrounding gender identity and sexual diversities. One of the interviewees describes it this way: "There are still colleagues who are afraid, who don't know how to work with these people, sometimes see them as timid because they think, 'how will I do it, will I be disrespectful, will I say something that will offend them,' and they seem to have a bit of fear in working with this community." **(Man, Officer).**

When talking about the migrant population, with particular emphasis on people of Dominican origin, several interviewees also agree that progress has been made in the treatment they receive as civilians, mainly in the separation of powers between them and federal agencies (Border Patrol and ICE mainly).

One of the interviewees confirms this: "Before, if we encountered a Dominican person, for example, who was undocumented, we would call ICE to come and pick them up for immigration. That can no longer be done. […] That is not our problem, that is the problem of federal agencies." **(Man, mid-level supervisor).** Likewise, several interviewees express a more equal treatment to the population regardless of their immigration status, contrary to how it was handled in previous years. One of the interviewees located in a coastal area with a high incidence of migrant population recalls:

> *Twenty years ago, when I was just starting in the Police, […] a boat would arrive with 10 Dominicans and we would intervene, arrest them and then we would call Border Patrol. And I would think, 'why are we arresting them if they were not robbing, not committing any crime, simply because of their skin color and because they were in that area?' Over time that has improved.* ***(Man, Officer).***

The interviewees express similar feelings when talking about the handling of domestic violence cases, one of the most criticized points among civil society. While there are still structural gaps in the protection of victims and resolution of domestic violence and femicide cases, most agree that there has been significant improvement in this aspect – especially in the standardization of protocols to avoid potentially dangerous situations or re-victimization. Although for some this new protocol seems too extensive and can become an invasive process, most consider that these new initiatives have led to greater openness from citizens to report cases of abuse and continue with the judicial process, even if it does not always culminate in the desired outcome. Below, two perceptions on the subject that express both improvements within police actions and the institutional obstacles that continue to perpetuate this type of crime:

> *Now there are very different protocols, an empathy with people who suffer from domestic violence situations, which did not exist before. Before, it could be said that sometimes it was even mockery, but now it is not; now it is treated with much, much more respect.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

> *They themselves get tired of the process, which is long in the courts, which is no longer our issue, it is a court issue. We already reach there and, just to file on the first day, that is a whole day that the person has to be there. Sometimes, the person avoiding that system prefers to do nothing and continues in the same cycle.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

Regarding the protocol for assisting people with physical or intellectual disabilities, a good part of the interviewees agrees that there is still much to advance, especially in improving infrastructure and training. In equipment, it is recognized that many police stations are not equipped to receive people with physical disabilities, sometimes making it impossible for this population segment to attend these spaces; the institution has also not fully complied with all guidelines to provide dignified care to people with mental disabilities: "They were supposed to provide special vehicles to transport mental health patients; since the Reform arrived, that was said, and to this day they have not bought those special

vehicles to transport a mental patient to a psychiatric hospital, or an emergency room" **(Man, mid-level supervisor).**

At the training level, most highlight that they lack knowledge to communicate in sign language or to respond appropriately to crisis situations with neurodivergent citizens, especially in front of those who tend to react violently when feeling threatened. This is expressed by one of the interviewees, referring to a recent conversation with the mother of a person with autism, and how this influences her perception of the Police:

> *She fears for her son's life, […] she fears that her son will go calmly down the road, the police will stop him and the boy will get nervous, he won't want to get out of the car, for example, and the Puerto Rico Police will use the Force against that person, […] because some people do not present how to identify and treat a person, for example, with autism.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor).***

Finally, there is more sporadic mention of the population of older adults, where a less specialized protocol is recognized, but with a more empathetic treatment of their particular needs and difficulties.

3.5.2. Variations by Geographic Area and Socioeconomic Level

One of the main contrasts observed among the interviewees was seen in the geographic areas where they were working – a sign that implementation of the Reform is far from homogeneous but is very correlated with the high command of each police station. While some highlight the good actions of their superiors and colleagues, others comment on strong resistance among their colleagues to fully adopt the measures of the Reform. These contrasts are also reflected in the availability of equipment and the status of infrastructure according to access to resources. This is consistent with what was observed during 2023, where it was seen that many of the initiatives of the Reform – especially around community and training programs – relied heavily on the interest that the person in charge of each station would give to the subject.

Next, some contrasting experiences that evidence these differences:

> *A year ago, I worked in another region, which I served for almost 21 years, and it was like saying a portal to another world: there are excellent, capable, prepared supervisors. Now that I am in this new region, I cannot say the same: I do not see that they are prepared, I do not see them in many aspects, even psychologically. […] The [region] I am working in now is even frustrating to a certain extent, because it is as if I had entered a portal that took me 20 years back.* ***(Woman, Officer)***
>
> *Some places are good: for example, I have a display, a large screen of more than 60 inches where I can make a presentation and give a class. In other training rooms or police stations, that does not exist. […] There were training rooms that were classrooms for children. Not that. […] In other areas, for example, in Bayamón, you might find a better training center, perhaps*

> *because it is closer to the metropolitan area, unlike areas like Aguadilla or Mayagüez, which are more lagging behind.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

As mentioned in previous sections, one of the most used institutional punishment mechanisms is the relocation of personnel to areas far from their residences, and these abrupt changes are commented by several as one of the most difficult aspects of the job.

Finally, as has already been commented, not all precincts have adopted the Reform measures with the same level of urgency, mainly those considered less 'urgent':

> *I implement [community initiatives], but the reality is that almost no lieutenant or director likes it or has the time. Their personal reasons. I do like to work with activities in schools, children, and with private companies. […] I would say it depends on the district, a district that does not generate many complaints may have time to do it.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

3.6. Personification

In the exercise of personification, the participants' responses fall into two main profiles, responding to a profile very similar to what was observed during 2023. On one hand, a good part of the interviewees describe the Police as an elderly person – a tired person, with a certain feeling of defeat, overwhelmed by the system, but still doing their best to fulfill their role and help those around them. This description is especially shared among Officers. This is how some interviewees describe it:

> *A person who is aging, who worked their whole life, studied, professionalized, but ended up working at a fast-food restaurant and will have to keep working their whole life, if they want to stay afloat. […] Maintains dignity, empathy, loyalty, responsibility. […] Lost their youth, lost their shine, lost their loyalty, the love they had, the respect.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *A tired person, an older person. Over 60 years old as far as we go, an older adult already: tired, overwhelmed, with multiple diseases. Values – may have respect, may give trust, but at the same time will be tired, overwhelmed, stressed, wrinkled, heartbroken. […] Already says, 'look kid, I've lived what I had to live, you go on with your life, I'll do mine because I've been hit hard; I've been worn down.* ***(Woman, Officer)***

It is worth noting that there is a version of this personification that sees the Police as an elderly person but from a more positive light - many describe it as a person 'like me': a distinguished man of a certain age, respected by the community, and with good values. This is especially expressed by people at medium and high levels:

> *Around my age, dressed in uniform, a serious guy, a disciplined person, a person who follows protocols and guidelines. I would say a well-pressed person, with clean shoes, with all their gear clean on their waist. A model, I would say. […] An intelligent person, a person who can understand another person. Here the police were almost always psychologists or teachers, social workers, we do everything, even people who stop on patrols too.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

> *He would be about 60 years old, looking at him in the mentality of a person. Of course, with professionalism, the Puerto Rico Police will be a professional. […] Recently, he takes care of himself and I understand that he is a person who exercises and putting the issue of training into perspective, yes, he exercises. […] He relates well to people. A varied personality because he deals with so many different people and has to assess how he is going to express himself, because it is not the same to deal with a peaceful person as it is to deal with an aggressive person. But I understand that the personality is humble, respectful."* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Finally, there are those who see the Police as a young and immature person, "a teenager around 14 to 15 years old who has his hormones in turmoil and is still not structured and has no experience. He still has a long way to go" **(Man, mid-level supervisor).** Meanwhile, others describe her as a young person who has started to mature through processes such as the Reform: "I would say around 30, who is starting to mature, who is already maturing, with goals, projections, on the right path. […] He is unmotivated, a little more could be done to truly be a totally robust person, that weakens him" **(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor).**

3.7. An Ideal Police Bureau

3.7.1. Main Areas for Improvement

For most interviewees, one of the main improvements that the Police must implement is related to salary increases and stronger employment incentives and benefits. For most, this is the main obstacle to ensuring the retention of new personnel and maintaining the motivation of uniformed officers. This aligns with what was observed during 2023, making this topic one of the most highlighted comments. This is expressed by two of the interviewees:

> *One of the things that needs to be improved, and I would say that, if they did that, the Police would be more motivated and would give much more, and it is something very essential in our agency is the salary. The most essential nowadays.* ***(Man, Officer)***

> *Here the ideal police would be, aside from giving us an excellent vehicle fleet, to recruit personnel by vocation, not by quantity. Training continues, that is continuous, that keeps improving. And to deal with better retirement and salary for the police, because they are the people who, one way or another, leave their own families to serve and protect the families of an entire community.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

Similarly, the humanity and empathy from the senior leadership toward mid-level supervisors and Officers is mentioned as another of the main themes for improvement. This is mentioned in greater proportion by women. This is expressed by two of the interviewees:

> *No, there is no empathy, there is no humanity and empathy, there is no understanding that we are employees. One has to go to a new era of administration, seeking the needs for both employees and the agency that complement that balance to create a favorable environment so that we can all work as a team, with the same purpose. […] The Reform gives us the tools*

> *and they are there, but unfortunately the high hierarchy is not implementing them 100%.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***

> *Well, we have to start with empathy. Sorry to mention it so much, but believe me, if I were given the choice of something to significantly improve the Police, it would be to remove all those old colonels that are up there. There must be empathy in leadership, treating people. I understand that this treatment with the community has to improve, with minority groups, treating ourselves in middle management: meaning captain, inspectors, to commanders.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

As a consequence of the above, several comment that the sense of vocation has been lost among new and old members, something that correlates with salary compensation and the conditions of the profession. This has affected the professionalism of the agency as an institution:

> *I understand that the human quality of many police officers at this moment is good, they are good people who truly have a vocation and like to help. […] In terms of the agency, it is quite the opposite, there is no motivation. The people who enter here right now, I believe they do it, in addition to a training opportunity and perhaps moving to another side, they do it because they like the work. I really don't see any motivation compared to other places.* ***(Man, mid-level supervisor)***

This correlates with another of the comments made regarding the quality of supervision - something that happens as a consequence of the staff shortage and workload overload. This is expressed by one of the high-level interviewees:

> *Here many of the colleagues do not perform the functions they have to perform because the follow-up that is being given to supervision is minimal: the higher the rank, the less follow-up to supervision there is. Many colleagues want to give their best, but if you have 5 supervisors and one gives their best and the other four do not, then that creates concern and neglect among the colleagues who are below rank.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Finally, referring again to the senior leadership of the institution, some interviewees refer to the politicization of the institution and the complications this brings for the effective implementation of the Reform. This is something that was also mentioned by several participants during 2023 and seems to be linked to the highest echelons and their reluctance to fully adopt the Reform. This is expressed by two of the interviewees:

> *The Puerto Rico Police is in a reform, but as long as at the top, there are those old, obsolete ideas - that is going nowhere, there will be no improvement.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

> *Our police are directed by one person, but our country is governed by a government, and sometimes, for the most part, the government influences the directions of government agencies. And possibly the government sometimes places people in positions that are not suitable for that position, so right now we have a superintendent who, for me, has an incredible desire to work and to transform the police, and is a man with honesty, humility, and a desire to change this and transform this, but we must let him do it.* ***(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)***

3.7.2. Characteristics of the Ideal Institution and Members

When talking to participants about the ideal police institution, the main quality mentioned is empathy and respect, especially from the higher ranks towards their teams and other members of the community. This is consistent with what was expressed during 2023 and aligns with what was expressed by citizens through focus groups. Although training and education are considered very important, many emphasize that the humanity, empathy and the vocation for community work – the foundations of the institution – cannot be overlooked. Here, qualities such as kind, cooperativeness, politeness, and values are also mentioned. This is how two of the participants describe it:

> *They must be kind, not be so tough sometimes, because sometimes the officer is speaking, and it's their way of being, but it sounds like they are scolding, and one is not in the Police to scold anyone, because here no one is our child.* ***(Woman, mid-level supervisor)***
>
> *Respectful, empathetic, sensitive to the needs of others and suffering. They must be skilled, because there are moments, especially with people who are in crisis […]. You have to have courage, but courage is not synonymous with abuse, but the courage to face a situation. You have to treat people with respect, empathy: I would summarize it all in empathy.* ***(Woman, senior/command-level supervisor)***

Participants also highlight the importance of discipline, proactivity, and vocation for the profession. Some mention the need to rejuvenate the police force, associated with good physical condition and continuous training. One of the interviewees expresses it this way: 'They have to be a disciplined person, they have to be a person with vocation, they have to be an educated person. And when I say educated, I don't mean they have a master's degree or a bachelor's. A person who has values, who grew up in a safe environment at home and knows how to treat others with respect and empathy' **(Man, mid-level supervisor).**

3.7.3. Key Updates and Highlighted Recommendations

Among the main improvement recommendations made by the interviewees, the importance of greater training for diverse populations is again emphasized, especially for people with disabilities. In this regard, several participants highlight the importance of having personnel knowledgeable in sign language and adapting facilities to ensure they are functional for people with reduced mobility: 'the Puerto Rico Police does not have training that, at least in some or several of the stations, or in each station or precinct, has a couple of colleagues who can work with the people who are deaf or hard of hearing, and that is a concerning issue in the Puerto Rico Police' **(Man, senior/command-level supervisor).**

In this same line, some participants mentioned the importance of focusing trainings and education on the realities on the ground and distancing them a bit from the theoretical framework. In particular, middle-level agents and supervisors highlighted that the way the courses are designed does not always fit with their routines, and they are more designed for people working from an office. In this regard, several suggest reducing the length of these trainings and making the formats more user-friendly for those working on the ground. One of the interviewees summarizes it this way: 'I would like that at some point these people who are in the Academy, who only know content, sit down with field officers and understand what the work looks like on the street because I have to do the modules while I am attending to a person' **(Man, mid-level supervisor).**

Another point addressed focused on the image of the Police as an institution, and the importance of using the media more strategically – a point mentioned both in the 2023 study and in focus groups with civil society. One of the interviewees describes it this way: 'exposure through positive announcements on television, radio, and in the press. The police are here to serve; the police are here to help. The police are not our enemy. Because society's perception is that the police are the bad guys and the villains are the good ones, for Puerto Rican culture' **(Man, mid-level supervisor).**

4. Findings and Final Considerations

The experiences and opinions of the 39 participants who are members of the Puerto Rico Police show many similarities with the findings of 2023. In some ways, there has been progress, with notable gains observed in access to technology mentioned through examples such as electronic license plate reading and greater access to Bodycams and other tools. The coverage and distribution of these tools also appear to have improved compared with 2023, and there is greater confidence in statistics and management of public information. This reveals the importance of involving external agencies (as is the case with NIBRS) and the positive effect this has on the credibility and traceability of information.

However, many of the opportunities highlighted during 2023 remain unresolved: the personnel shortage feels more evident and urgent to address as the retirement age of several uniformed officers approaches. This structural problem – caused primarily by the lack of economic resources to offer more competitive salaries – manifests itself in other elements: incomplete supervision due to lack of personnel, less allocation of resources and personnel for community initiatives, and administrative processes delayed due to system and personnel overload. At the same time, concerns about transparency within the institution have not been fully resolved, as many processes are still considered permeated by internal corruption, politicization, 'favoritism/cronyism' and mechanisms of punishment among uniformed officers through administrative structures. This issue had already been anticipated

in 2023, where one of the main recommendations was to detach investigative processes from the Police.

It is clear that the Puerto Rico Police is going through a difficult time, and that it currently has generational gaps that hinder the homogenization of its members. As has been demonstrated in recent years, it is unlikely that members of the 'old guard' will completely change their behaviors, and until the highest ranks are occupied by people who have been educated and trained in the context of the Reform, it will be difficult for its implementation to be total. This must go hand in hand with an injection of capital that allows the institution to offer competitive salaries and labor packages to new members – with conditions that motivate them to develop professionally within the agency, instead of maintaining the loss of trained personnel to other agencies currently observed. Until this can happen, fundamental transformation will remain difficult to achieve.

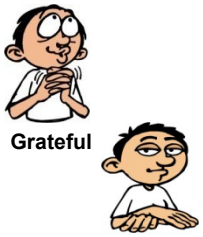
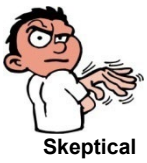
Finally, it is important to highlight that the Reform began as a process with a beginning and an end, but the path toward completion has become unclear. The lack of clarity regarding its completion has made its objectives less clear, causing many of its advances to lose momentum. This may be contributing to many uniformed officers feeling that the Reform has caused citizens to lose respect for the institution – not because it operates with greater transparency and respect for human rights, but because the Police has remained in a continuous state of review and self-monitoring, without advancing to the next level of adopting learnings and structural transformation.

5. Appendices

5.1. Appendix 1 – Media Consumption by Interviewed Group

INTERVIEWED GROUP	Facebook	Instagram	X	TikTok	YouTube	Press	TV	Radio	Internal
Officers	X	X		X	X		X		
Mid-level supervisors	X	X		X	X	X	X		
Senior/command-level supervisors	X	X			X	X	X		

5.2. Appendix 2 – Emotion Map by Interviewed Group

INTERVIEWED GROUP	POSITIVE / NEUTRAL EMOTIONS	NEGATIVE EMOTIONS	RATIONALE
Officers			Most Officers feel that the Reform has given them more tools to feel secure and confident in their work; it has become their new normal and therefore they feel peace of mind and calm. Some comment that they feel skeptical that the Reform will ever be fully completed. "First, they gave us the equipment that we didn't have before, and now I feel more confident being on the street and safe because I have tools that I can use without causing harm to people, which we didn't have before. And for that, I am grateful, confident, and secure: for the tools I have to be able to work and be well on the street." **(Man, Officer)**
Mid-level supervisors			There is a lot of gratitude and peace expressed around the Reform for the tools and technology it has brought to the institution, and there is pride in the changes that have been achieved so far (even though there are still things to improve). However, there is a bit of disappointment and sadness that the process has not yet closed, and it feels like an indefinite process. "I feel safe because I understand that before the reform there were many people with their own protocols on how to work with certain things and the reform came to ensure that everyone works under the same pattern, under the same protocol." **(Man, mid-level supervisor)**
			The professionalization of the institution has generated feelings of pride and security among high-level individuals, and some express a certain disappointment that the institution is still so strongly affected by political elements.

Senior/command-level supervisors	 Proud / Self Esteem  Grateful	 Disappointed	"Many people, including my case and many colleagues from different ranks, are grateful for the reform because number one, clear and specific policies were created. Before we didn't have that clear and specific policy, but the same work was required. Secondly, the equipment arrived to work in the street: gas, baton, techniques, and training. Many people are grateful for that." **(Man, senior/command-level supervisor)**

6. Bibliography

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