



State of Justice

Summary

2025



State of Justice

Summary

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Translated by: Marcelo Esteban Madrigal Molina

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2025 Overall Assessment

The *State of Justice Report 2025* is released during an extraordinary period in Costa Rican democracy. Judiciary is under intense political attack, a situation unprecedented in the country's political history. This edition documents sustained assaults on its legitimacy and independence by members of other branches of government. Moreover, these attacks coincide with alarming violence against judicial offices and personnel by criminal actors amid a sharp rise in crime and public safety concerns.

Together, these developments signal a deterioration in the quality of Costa Rican democracy and pose a serious political risk. They target the principal guarantor of citizens' rights and freedoms and the only branch of government capable of monitoring and compelling political authorities to submit to the rule of law. Undermining the Judiciary would weaken protections for individuals, businesses, organizations, and academic institutions, as abuses could go unpunished if the justice system became subject to the whims of those in power.

However, attempts to weaken the Judiciary must be distinguished from legitimate public criticism of its persistent failures to deliver timely, effective, and equitable justice for all. Criticism is integral to democratic life and serves as a powerful mechanism for improving judicial services. This *Report* has consistently emphasized the need to modernize judicial administration that operates slowly and lacks strategic vision. Current attacks, by contrast, pursue a different objective: undermining the Judiciary's legitimacy to subordinate it to partisan interests. To achieve this, budgets are manipulated, pressure is applied to remove or appoint officials, efforts are made to influence or circumvent judicial proceedings, laws that erode institutional independence are proposed, and personal attacks are directed at judicial personnel.

This *Report* documents improvements in aggregate indicators of judicial performance between 2021 and 2024. Pending cases declined, resolutions increased, and cost containment measures maintained per capita judicial spending at 2016 levels. Yet, these improvements vary considerably across offices and jurisdictions and, compared to a decade ago, have not resulted in substantial improvement over that situation.

The persistence of these weaknesses leaves the Judiciary more vulnerable to attacks, which exploit them as justification. This represents self-inflicted damage with high institutional and political costs. The Supreme Court of Justice has demonstrated considerable momentum in advancing institutional openness and access to justice for vulnerable groups, yet this paradoxically generates unmet expectations and complaints due to limited implementation and results.

Public trust in the Judiciary has eroded. While radical criticism remains a minority position, it attracts significant numbers and is amplified by officials from other branches of government. Despite widespread distrust of the Judiciary, most people still believe in judicial independence as a principle and the institution's capacity for improvement. Consequently, defending the legitimacy and independence of the Judiciary through tangible improvements in judicial services is of paramount importance.

This extraordinary period coincides with high and increasingly complex demands on judicial services. Deteriorating public safety, escalating social violence, and the proliferation of organized crime and cybercrime are driving alarming increases in judicial caseloads, particularly those involving violence against women, juvenile criminal justice, and sophisticated crimes. These pressures are compounded by claims related to public services such as healthcare, which inundate the Constitutional Chamber.

To these challenges must be added the assignment of new competencies to the Judiciary by the Legislative Assembly: creation of new criminal offenses, procedural reforms, and specialized legislation, such as the Specialized Jurisdiction for Organized Crime, Access to Justice for Indigenous Peoples, Street Harassment and, Vicarious Violence against Women, to name a few. In many cases, these were approved without allocating resources for their implementation.

This *Report* demonstrates that rising conflict will place additional strain on judicial services, potentially leading to longer processing times if the institution continues its current trajectory. Given prevailing fiscal consolidation policies, the only path for addressing these new pressures is through increased effectiveness and efficiency. Improvements to governance and judicial procedures are essential in the face of these new demands and pressures.

This *Report* contributes to democratic deliberation on the changes the Judiciary requires. However, not just any reform is valid—only those that strengthen this pillar of justice and enhance its legitimacy within Costa Rica's liberal democratic framework. Weakening the Judiciary would mean that conflict resolution and the protection of rights would fall into the hands of individuals beholden to partisan political interests, a situation that would destroy judicial independence and leave citizens without recourse.

Based on these considerations, this *Report* presents three main ideas:

- Judiciary faces a dangerous political attack that erodes the quality of democracy.
- Shortcomings in effective and timely justice reduce the Judiciary's capacity to meet new obligations and pressures from rising social conflict.
- Inadequate judicial governance reforms hinder the implementation of innovative initiatives to expand access to justice for vulnerable populations.

This first chapter, "Synopsis," develops these ideas and offers an overview of the Judiciary's current situation and prospects. It offers an integrated, synthesized presentation of the studies conducted in accordance with the research approach approved by the Advisory Council. The remainder of the *Report* explores these thematic areas in depth, and readers interested in greater detail may consult the corresponding chapters.

The Judiciary faces a dangerous political attack that undermines democracy

The first main idea of this Synopsis characterizes the political situation currently confronting Costa Rica's judiciary and its impact on the quality of democratic life. It draws attention to the attacks on judicial institutions and personnel over the past three years. These assaults have sought to undermine the constitutional system of legal oversight of public administration and erode public trust in judicial independence. The persistence, intensity, and variety of these attacks are unprecedented since the establishment of liberal democracy in the second half of the twentieth century.

The assaults on one of the branches of government have been both rhetorical and material, and in either form, have exceeded the bounds of constructive public criticism. The principal, though not sole, source of rhetorical attacks has been the Executive Branch under the

Chaves Robles administration. Similarly, government supporters across the Executive and Legislative Branches, along with other actors aligned with the administration, have led public mobilizations against the Judiciary.

A second form of political aggression exacerbates these challenges. This edition documents attacks perpetrated by actors linked to organized crimes against judicial facilities and personnel, in some cases with tragic consequences. These attacks add to attempts to infiltrate the Judiciary through the co-optation of judicial personnel.

Political aggression and co-optation attempts are neither extraordinary nor unique when analyzed from a comparative perspective. International research provides ample evidence that they form part of processes of democratic erosion (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018; Stokes, 2024; Ríos, 2022; Sobreira, 2024; Botero et al., 2022; Weyland, 2022). In dozens of countries, democratically elected leaders seek, with varying degrees of success, to subordinate the Judiciary, eliminating its independence as an essential precondition for concentrating political power and dismantling the system of checks and balances characteristic of liberal democracy. In Costa Rica, the emergence of some of these symptoms creates a hostile environment for the Judiciary and poses a democratic risk for society.

Properly characterizing this political climate is the essential starting point for this edition of the *Report*, which assesses the Judiciary's capacity to deliver independent, timely, and effective justice. To address said issue, this section is divided into three subsections. The first traces the chronology and nature of these attacks based on available open sources. The second demonstration demonstrates their adverse effects on national political life, as reflected in available international assessments of democracy and the rule of law. Finally, the third subsection adds a troubling piece of information: the emergence of a substantial segment of the public with a radical critique of the justice system, alongside another segment holding critical but more moderate views.

An Era of Sustained Attacks by Political Actors

Criticism of the Judiciary's performance or rulings is part of democratic life. This branch of government is subject to public scrutiny, and people are free to express their opinions on the actions of any public institution. Nonetheless, in a democratic rule of law, criticism by

citizens and political actors has defined limits: acceptance of the Judiciary's legitimacy to— independent of any political or economic interference—safeguard rights and freedoms, hold those in power accountable to the law, and resolve social conflicts through legal means. Challenges become attacks when they question this legitimacy and the independence of judicial functions.

One strategy for systematically delegitimizing judicial authority is "trash-talking." In recent years, democratically elected populist leaders have employed this tactic against judiciaries, viewing judicial independence as an obstacle to concentrating political power in the Executive Branch, in contravention of constitutional and legal provisions. Stokes (2025) analyzes the application of this strategy in the United States, Mexico, and South Africa, concluding that it forms part of the process of democratic erosion:

"Unlike military leaders who abruptly destroy democracies through coups, elected leaders who gradually erode them must maintain some level of popular support. To achieve this, they foster polarization among citizens and discredit their own democracies, claiming that the institutions they attack are corrupt and incompetent. They tell voters these institutions must be torn down and replaced with institutions controlled by the Executive Branch."

Costa Rica exhibits clear symptoms of "trash-talking." In 2023 and 2024, the Executive Branch weaponized its public platform to continually attack the Judiciary, an unprecedented development since the establishment of the so-called Second Republic. They did so through their *poder del megáfono* (megaphone power) strategy, an informal power¹ denoting the capacity of political actors holding high government positions to communicate narratives about the state of the nation, characterize their adversaries, and shape perceptions of government performance (PEN, 2024).

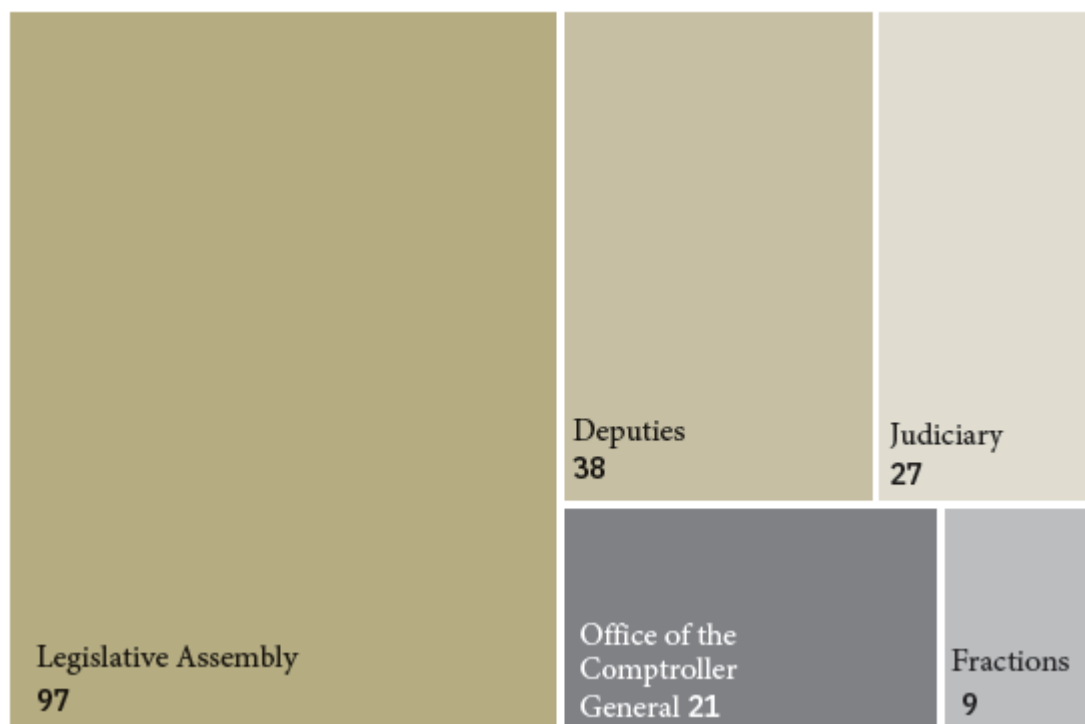
In presidential press conferences, the Legislative Assembly is mentioned most frequently, followed by Judiciary. Review of these mentions reveals that they were not neutral references to the Judiciary, but rather criticisms of its operations, its rulings, and, in some cases, the conduct of individual judicial personnel. In third place is the Office of the

¹ While formal powers are those clearly defined in the legal framework, informal powers are more diffuse and difficult to identify, as they depend on circumstantial and idiosyncratic factors. These are political instruments that emerge in actual political practice, and their use is defined and shaped by those who wield them according to their own criteria of what is right and wrong. In a democratic regime, these tools are subject to the framework of legality and political scrutiny (PEN, 2024).

Comptroller General (Graph 1.1). Presidential mentions also include the press, universities, the Ombudsman's Office, and other entities with autonomy that do not subscribe to the administration's policies (Proledi, 2025).

Graph 1.1

Total Mentions of Public Institutions in Government Council Press Conferences, 2022-2024



Source: Alfaro et al., 2024; based on PEN's Government Council press conference database.

The issue extends beyond the frequency of mentions targeting the Judiciary—the focus of this Report—to encompasses their content and messaging. The primary argument in presidential interventions against Judiciary has been to hold it responsible for the homicide crisis. This crisis is attributed to flawed decisions by judges who release offenders and to the extensive duration of legal proceedings². The suggested alternative is a "tough-on-crime" approach that views incarceration as the solution to insecurity (Arrieta, 2023).

Criticism has also targeted specific individuals within the Judiciary: Constitutional Court justices, the Attorney General, the director of the Organismo de Investigación Judicial (OIJ, Judicial Investigation Agency), the Supreme Court Chief Justice, and particularly Criminal

² For further information, see Arrieta (2023), Chacón (2023), and Bermúdez (2023).

Court judges. The President has even mentioned the full names of judges who rule on high-profile cases in ways that run counter to his expectations (Chacón, 2024)³.

The Executive Branch's aggressive posture has intensified when the Judiciary intervenes in matters related to the President or his initiatives. In three years of the current constitutional term, Costa Rica's Fiscalía (Prosecutorial office) has opened 104 criminal proceedings against the President, of which 70 remain under investigation (Murillo, 2025). Additionally, the Constitutional Court has found constitutional conflicts in flagship policies of his administration, such as the "Jaguar" bill, and has emphatically ruled against Executive intimidation of the press (rulings No. 2023-12085, No. 2024-21375, No. 2024-28774).

The Executive Branch has characterized this volume of judicial proceedings as outright political persecution against the President and his cabinet—an attempt to thwart governmental efforts to eliminate privileges for public officials and reform an inefficient institution responsible for the rise in criminal violence in Costa Rica.

The Supreme Court Chief Justice, judicial associations, and other political actors have countered this "trash-talking" by publicly calling on the Executive Branch to respect the separation of powers and judicial independence⁴. This ongoing confrontation — characterized as "crossfire" in the *State of the Nation Report* (PEN, 2024)— has brought inter-branch collaboration to a standstill. The impasse is particularly detrimental to efforts to address citizen security, the country's most urgent challenge. Since August 2024, the Executive Branch has boycotted regular inter-branch meetings on security priorities.

Rhetorical attacks have been accompanied by calls for public demonstrations against the Judiciary—unprecedented political events in recent decades. In February 2023, a protest was organized outside the Constitutional Court after it struck down the Government Council's "precautionary measure" dismissing the Board of Directors of the Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social (CCSS, Costa Rican Social Security Fund). Subsequent protests followed rulings declaring the "Ley Jaguar" bill—presented as one of the Executive Branch's flagship proposals—unconstitutional. In March 2025, the President and several

³ For further information, see Chacón (2024a), Madrigal (2024), and Murillo (2024a).

⁴ For further information, see Chinchilla (2022), Sequeira (2022), Murillo (2024), May (2024), Angulo (2024), and Chacón (2025).

ministers and pro-government legislators led a march demanding the Attorney General's resignation (Murillo, 2025).

The rhetorical attacks and citizen mobilizations against the Judiciary have prompted international organizations to intervene. On December 4, 2024, Margaret Satterthwaite, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, issued a communication (Other Letter)⁵ to the State of Costa Rica regarding the situation of judicial independence in the country. The Rapporteur requested information from the Government on its measures to comply with international standards and guarantee judicial independence (Satterthwaite, 2025).

The UN Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers—typically activated for at-risk countries—has issued three statements on Costa Rica in recent years. In February 2025, the Rapporteur sent a note to the Government mentioning the tension and persecution facing the Judiciary since May 2022 (Satterthwaite, 2025)⁶. The Government responded by explaining the cited legal reforms. However, the response omitted any reference to confrontations during press conferences (Chacón, 2025).

Costa Rica has received similar warnings previously, though for different reasons. In 2020 and 2022, the UN Rapporteur sent notes alluding to institutional design problems that undermine judicial independence: the judicial appointment process and the approval of reforms that modify working conditions for judicial personnel (García-Sayán, 2022)⁷. This marked the first time the country was questioned due to conflicts between the Executive and Judicial Branches.

A third type of attack completes the adverse political situation facing the Judiciary.

"Criminal attacks on physical facilities and assaults on judicial personnel have joined trash-

⁵ An "Other Letter" issued by the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers is a formal communication addressed to member states and other relevant parties to supplement or update previously submitted information. These letters serve to monitor critical situations, such as violations of judicial independence, and advocate for corrective or preventive measures.

⁶ "Since May 2022, President Rodrigo Chaves has allegedly created growing tension and persecution toward the Judiciary and undermined judicial independence through verbal attacks on the bench and unfounded questioning of the impartiality of the judicial system, accompanied by labeling and insinuations, especially when he disagrees with rulings or judgments issued." The Rapporteur requested that the Government take measures to "ensure that judges can carry out their legitimate work in a safe and conducive environment without fear of threats or acts of intimidation and harassment" (Satterthwaite, 2025).

⁷ Similarly, in November 2024, Costa Rica underwent its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the UN Human Rights Council. In this context, the Alternative Report submitted by civil society organizations included a section addressing the Costa Rican State's failure to guarantee judicial independence protection, particularly focusing on inadequacies in the judicial appointment process (Cejil and Foro de Justicia, 2024).

talking" and government-organized citizen mobilizations. The Batán and Pococí offices were hit by high-caliber gunfire, and in Limón, a witness entering the courthouse was murdered outside the building. In 2024, at least three judicial employees were attacked: vehicles belonging to a prosecutor in Jacó and a judge in Aserrí were targeted, and an OIJ officer was murdered in a contract killing in Guápiles⁸.

Attacks and assaults on the Judiciary represent a recent political development that has led the institution to strengthen security measures against potential organized crime attacks. Among other measures, offices have been asked to review and redirect unused funds to improve security infrastructure, technology, and personnel training. Additionally, the "Active Attacker" protocol and the Self-Protection Guide for Judicial Personnel were approved tools that form part of the Institutional Security Strengthening Project (Poder Judicial, 2025c).

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights held a thematic hearing with representatives of Costa Rica's judiciary in November 2024. During this hearing, they reported that "violence generated by drug trafficking and organized crime has put Costa Rica's public safety and democratic institutions at risk" (Acojud, 2024)⁹.

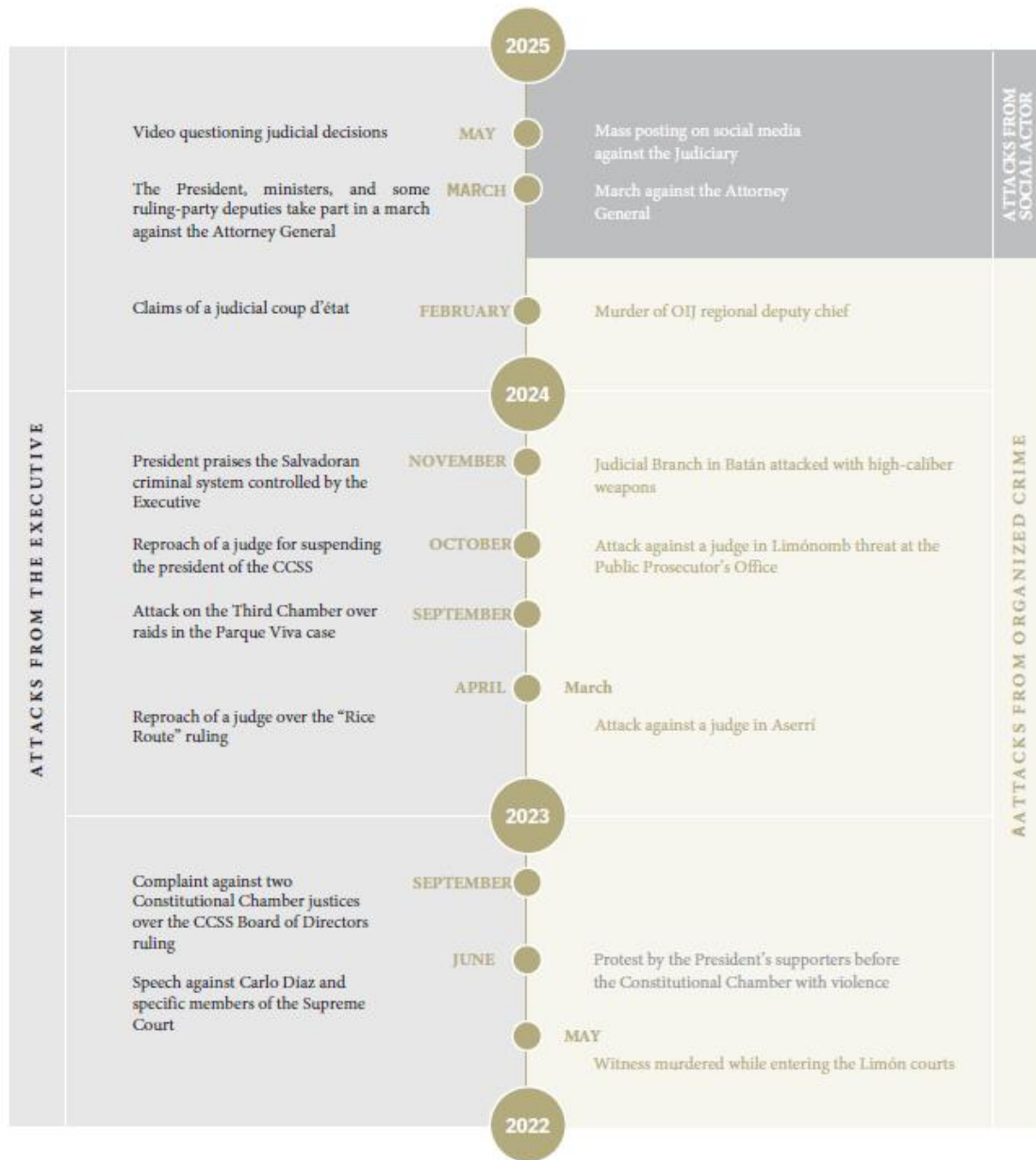
A synthesis of the main milestones in the sustained assault on the Judiciary reveals the severity of the situation (Diagram 1.1). Regarding discourse, among the numerous negative references to this branch of government through the Executive's use of the megaphone power, those identifying specific judicial officers were selected for analysis. This approach is internationally recognized as an aggressive form of intimidation and a violation of judicial independence (Friedman, 2019; Freedman, 1997).

⁸ For further information, see Hidalgo (2024), Jiménez (2024), and Arrieta (2025). For further information, see Arrieta (2023), Chacón (2023), and Bermúdez (2023).

⁹ The severity of the current situation is described as follows: "This context demands urgent strengthening of the justice system. Instead of progress, laws have been passed that undermine conditions for the Judiciary and the Public Prosecutor's Office. These measures include regressive changes to retirement and pension systems, salary reductions, budgetary restrictions, and others that limit the operational capacity and autonomy of judges and prosecutors. These reforms have triggered a high resignation rate within the Judiciary, reducing its operational capacity and making it difficult to fill positions with qualified personnel. Additionally, conscientious objection provisions have been introduced to allow judges to refuse human rights training, and Full Court agreements have been implemented that undermine judicial tenure and stability, in contravention of the judicial career law."

Diagram 1.1

Chronology of Major Attacks on the Judiciary. 2020-2025



Fuente: Elaboración propia con datos de la base de cobertura mediática del PEN y Acojud, s.f.

The extensive media coverage of symbolic attacks, citizen demonstrations, and organized crime assaults against the Judiciary has not, thus far, resulted in changes to the level or content of mass media coverage. The PEN-Conare news database on the Judiciary shows no increase in news stories in 2022 and 2024, nor in negative coverage. This suggests that media outlets are reporting without amplifying the attacks or taking sides¹⁰.

¹⁰ This Report does not include social media analysis, where high polarization and amplification of presidential attacks against the Judiciary are known to occur.

Attacks Drive Decline in International Democracy and Rule of Law Metrics

Major international assessments of democracy, freedoms, and the rule of law have documented sustained attacks on the Judiciary, the Ministerio Público (Public Prosecutor's Office), the press, and other independent institutions.

The primary finding is that all measurements show systematic declines in Costa Rica's historically strong scores. A country once considered a regional benchmark for institutional strength and respect for the rule of law now faces serious warnings from international organizations about the risk of democratic backsliding. In this context, the country joins others currently experiencing political setbacks of varying magnitudes. In Latin America, Uruguay stands out among the few countries whose positive assessment continues to improve.

Recent literature on democratic decline demonstrates that the process is gradual and sometimes highly diffuse or difficult to recognize, as it involves everyday actions by democratically elected political leaders who incrementally push—whether discreetly or openly—against the boundaries established by the legal order (Levitsky and Ziblatt, 2018).

International indexes that monitor democracy globally serve as valuable tools for identifying these risks. Costa Rica scores highly compared to the rest of the region. Nevertheless, in recent years it has lost ground, and in 2024—the most recent year for which assessments are available— it recorded its worst performance this century. Its erosion remains relatively mild when compared to neighboring countries.

The most specialized indicator for judicial systems is the *World Justice Project*, Rule of Law Index, in which Costa Rica ranks second in Latin America, surpassed only by Uruguay (0.72). The indicator ranges from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating better performance. The country has shown a downward trend since the index was first released in 2015. It improved between 2017 and 2021 but declined in 2024 to its lowest level on this measure (0.68). This is part of a global trend: 77% of countries included in this index saw deteriorating conditions that year (WJP, 2024)¹¹.

¹¹ During the pandemic, when nearly all governments worldwide imposed mobility restrictions and permitted institutional intrusion into people's lives to safeguard public health, specialized indexes such as IDEA's Judicial Independence Index and the World Bank's Rule of Law Index deteriorated. Unfortunately, no updates are available for the 2022-2024 period that would allow us to capture the situation under analysis in this section.

Indexes that measure the overall state of democracy include rule-of-law components in their calculations and have data available for recent years. The Liberal Democracy Index (LDI), calculated by the Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-DEM)¹², incorporates both the electoral component and the rule-of-law component. In 2023, Costa Rica's LDI dropped five points. In 2024, it failed to recover to pre-2022 levels (Graph 1.2). This score matches the rating obtained in 1988, nearly forty years ago. The decline in the LDI is notably greater than that observed in the index measuring electoral democracy alone.

One of the LDI indicators that deteriorated most significantly measures "executive attacks on the Judiciary." This indicator addresses the question: How often did the government publicly attack Judiciary's integrity?¹³ The index ranges from 0 to 4; scores near 0 indicate daily or weekly attacks on judicial integrity, while scores near 4 indicate no attacks on judicial integrity. The country's score fell from 1.91 in 2022 to 0.68 in 2024, reflecting persistent attacks on the Judiciary (V-Dem, 2025).

The Bertelsmann Foundation's Democracy Index has given Costa Rica its lowest rating since 2006. In its country report, it noted that "President Chaves employs populist tactics that pose a threat to the separation of powers and press freedom" (Bertelsmann, 2025).

A matter of "concern" is the deterioration in press freedom, as it is a crucial component of liberal democracy. According to the Reporters Without Borders index, the country dropped from the "good" to "satisfactory" category between 2022 and 2024, due to tensions between the Executive Branch and some media outlets, although the country's scores remain above those for the rest of Central America (PEN, 2025a; Proledi, 2024).

Costa Rica's declining scores in international assessments of the rule of law and democracy reflect the attacks on the Judiciary and the resulting inter-branch conflict, which the global community has clearly documented. The country thus joins dozens of others where, through such attacks, the Executive has sought to expand its powers while Congress and the Judiciary have resisted these attempts. One consequence of this situation is the growing

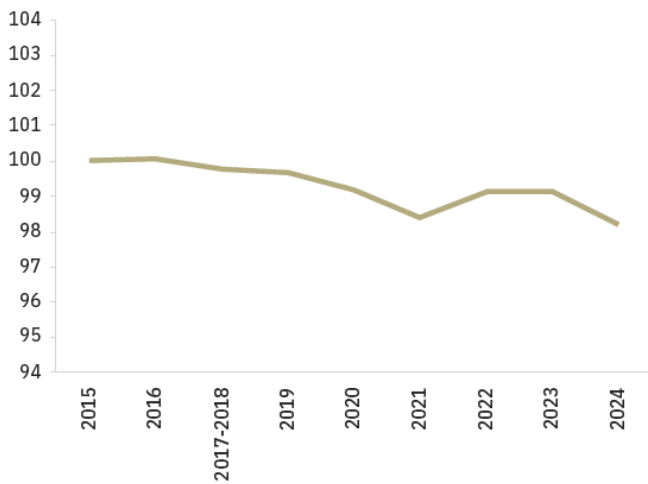
¹² The Varieties of Democracy Institute (V-DEM) is based at Lund University in Sweden and operates as a joint initiative with the University of Notre Dame in the United States. It is currently the most widely used source in comparative political science literature.

¹³ For V-Dem, attacks on judicial integrity may include claims that the Judiciary is corrupt, incompetent, or that its decisions are politically motivated. These attacks can take various forms, including but not limited to official statements disseminated through the media, press conferences, interviews, and political speeches.

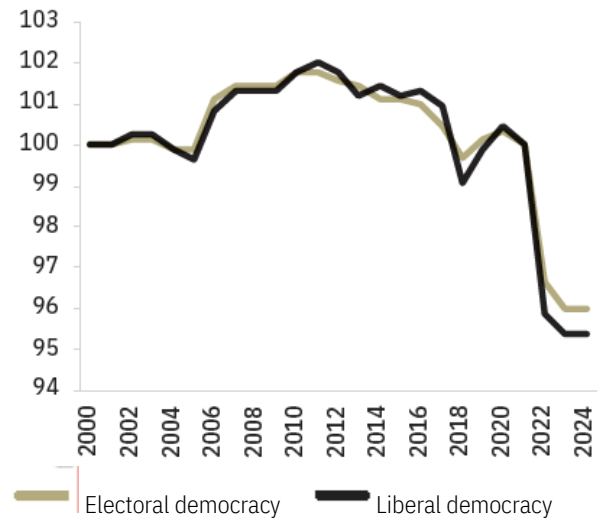
difficulty in building key agreements on social, economic, environmental, and security matters that countries need to advance human development (PEN, 2025a).

Graph 1.2
International Indexes^{a/} on the Rule of Law

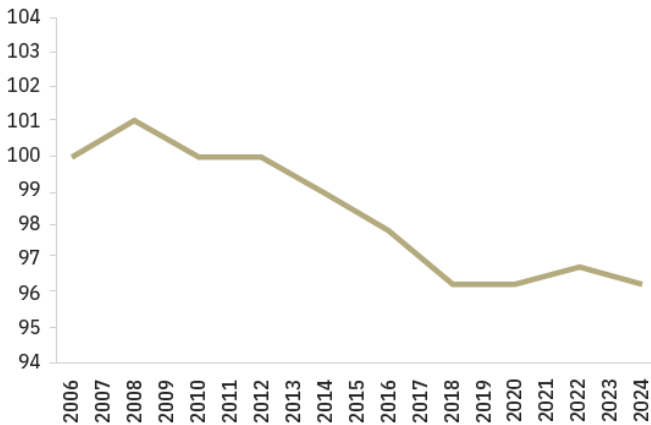
a) Rule of Law Index^{b/}
(2015=100)



c) V-Dem Index of Electoral Democracy (EDI) and Liberal Democracy (LDI)^{c/}. 2000-2024
(2000=100)



b) Democracy Index Berstelmann. 2000-2024
(2006=100)



a/ The earliest available data point serves as the base year; for V-DEM indexes, the base year is 2000. This means the first year's value equals 100, and subsequent values show how each indicator varies relative to the base year.

b/ For 2017 and 2018, the World Justice Project Rule of Law Index covers both years.

c/ EDI assesses the quality of electoral democracy. LDI includes both electoral democracy and rule of law assessment.

Sources: Bogantes, 2025, based on World Justice Project, 2024; V-DEM, 2024; Bertelsmann Foundation, 2024.

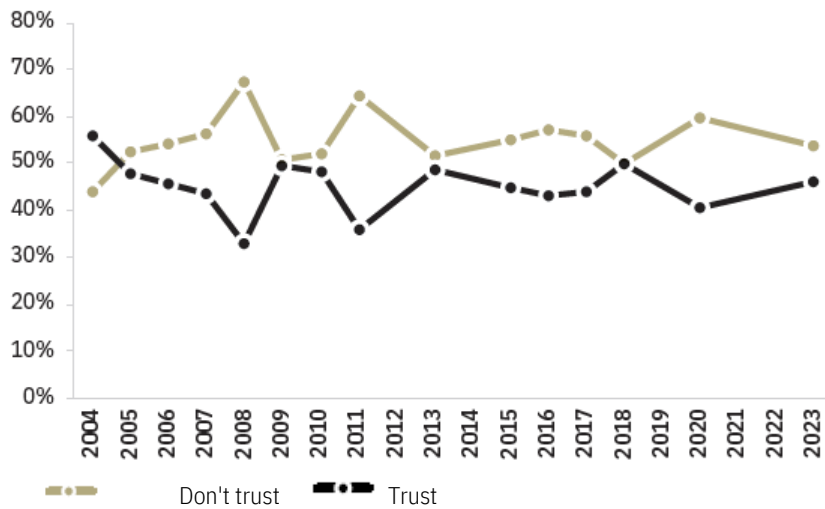
Widespread Public Criticism of Judicial Performance Creates a Challenging Environment for the Judiciary

Public perceptions of the Judiciary can either help defend a democratic rule of law or, conversely, create an environment that facilitates its erosion. When majorities accept the Judiciary's legitimacy to protect their rights, hold rulers accountable under the law, and issue rulings, rule-of-law institutions enjoy strong grounding in political culture for their independence against challenges from other political, institutional, and social actors. However, when these majorities question this legitimacy or harbor contradictory attitudes, these institutions lose one of their most important defenses against attempts to eliminate their independence and turn them into tools serving certain political actors rather than impartial and reliable arbiters of social and political conflicts. In short, if the public 'abandons' Judiciary, politicians find it much easier to subordinate it to their interests.

The Costa Rican Judiciary has faced sustained public criticism of its performance. In 2001, the Citizen Audit on the Quality of Democracy reported that more people distrusted the Judiciary's ability to deliver prompt and complete justice than trusted it, though these proportions reversed among those who had used its services (PEN, 2001)¹⁴. In only two of the twenty years between 2004 and 2023 have those who trust the Judiciary equaled or outnumbered those who distrust it (Sáenz and Ovares, 2025). The exact proportions fluctuate over time, but the long-term trend is clear. Moreover, there are no significant differences between the situation in the mid-2000s and the most recent period (Graph 1.3).

¹⁴ User satisfaction studies conducted by the Judiciary in different years indeed reflect that positive evaluations of its services are substantially higher than those of the public.

Graph 1.3
Trend in Public Trust in Costa Rica's Judiciary. 2004-2023



Source: Sáenz and Ovares, 2025; based on Corporación Latinobarómetro data, 2023.

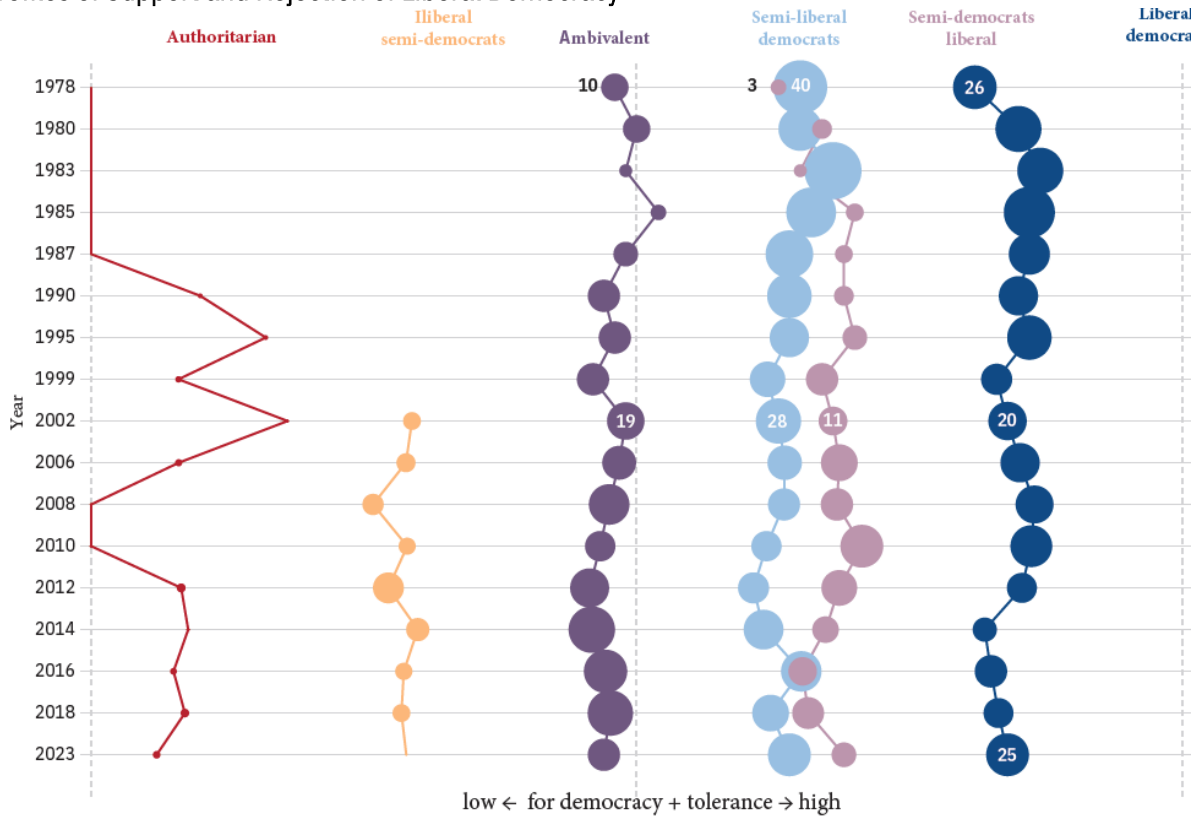
Currently, the problem is that this relatively stable long-term level of public (dis)trust in the Judiciary converges with a significant deterioration in public support for democracy—a relative loss of political system legitimacy. Specific criticism of the Judiciary is framed within an environment of broader questioning of the political system. In recent years, according to Latinobarómetro, Costa Rica has "entered the list of democracies in trouble." Compared to 2020, the 2023 survey revealed a significant decrease in citizen support for democracy, accompanied by a marked increase in indifference toward regime type and explicit approval of authoritarianism (Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2023).

In other reports, PEN-Conare has analyzed in detail the evolution and complexity of citizen support for democracy. It has identified clearly differentiated profiles of support for or rejection of liberal democracy since the late 20th century. An ideal scenario for democracy would be one in which democrats outnumber non-democrats or ambivalent individuals, and support for the system is broad enough to withstand extreme shocks or challenges. In contrast, radical shifts in the composition of citizen support profiles and in support-rejection intensities have the potential to destabilize democratic coexistence (PEN, 2020).

The liberal democracy support profile was most widespread twenty-five years ago, with few ambivalent individuals and even fewer openly authoritarian ones. Ambivalent individuals combine, in similar proportions, democratic attitudes with more authoritarian ones. In the face of a system shock, they can tip the balance either way (Alfaro et al., 2023). The

problem is that over time, the weight of these ambivalent individuals has increased steadily (Graph 1.4).

Graph 1.4
Profiles of Support and Rejection of Liberal Democracy



a/ The types of democrats are constructed from two indicators: the level of support for democracy and the degree of political tolerance. The very high end is called “liberal democrats” and the very low end is “authoritarian.” The remaining categories fluctuate according to high, medium, or low levels of support for democracy and political tolerance.

Source: Cortés, 2025, based on PEN, 2019, with data from Corporación Latinobarómetro.

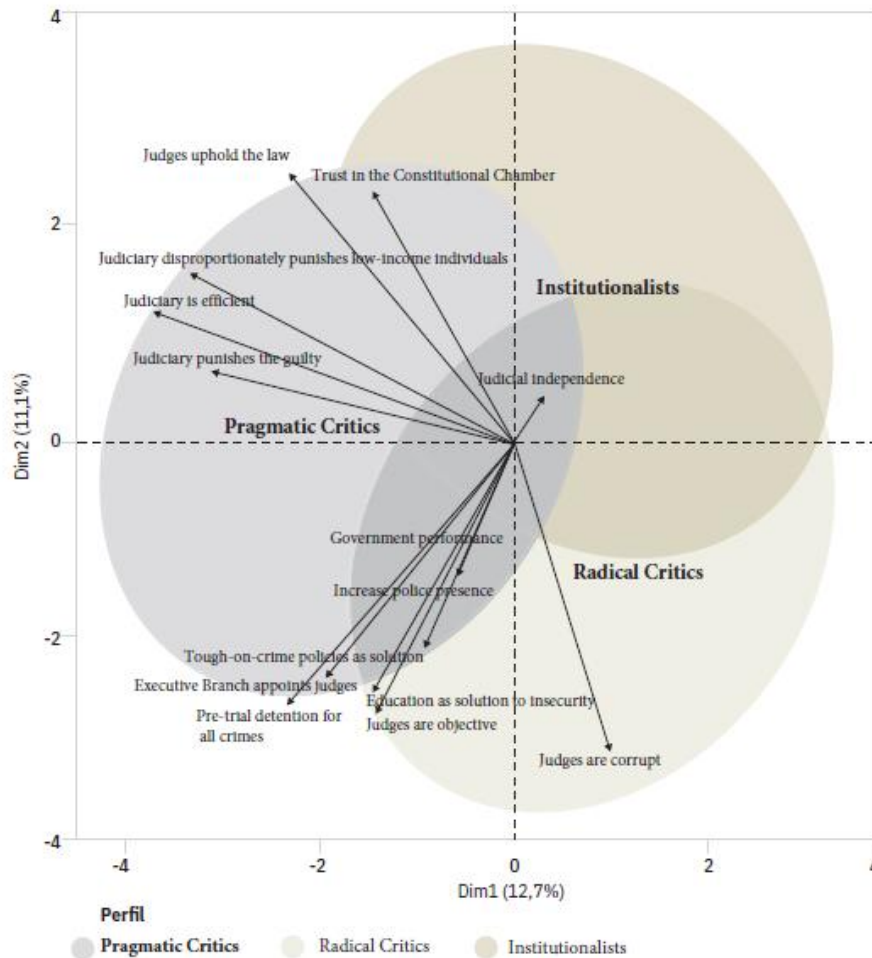
For Judiciary, this means public criticism of its performance occurs within a political climate of diminished support for democracy. Several indicators point to this new political environment that may reframe this public criticism. One is to increase public support for a strong leader. Currently, such support stands at nearly one in five people (18%) (Corporación Latinobarómetro, 2021). While still among the lowest in Central America, it is higher than two decades ago. Another indicator is support for a president to take actions that restrict opposition parties. In Costa Rica, nearly half the population thinks this way (47%)—an abrupt 13 percentage point increase in the latest measurement, coinciding with President Chaves's strong anti-institutional rhetoric (PEN, 2025c).

For this *Report*, an in-depth study of public attitudes toward Judiciary was conducted using a different source: CIEP-UCR surveys. Multivariate analysis identified three attitudinal profiles regarding the Judiciary: "radical critics," "pragmatic critics," and "institutionalists." Specifically:

- Radical critics: Hold a highly unfavorable view of the Judiciary. They strongly support punitive policies and consider judges corrupt. Moreover, they do not trust Constitutional Court decisions or believe the system punishes those responsible for committing crimes.
- Pragmatic critics: Are ambivalent—they may favor the Judiciary on certain issues and oppose it on others. Generally, they hold a critical view of justice system performance but take more pragmatic positions on citizen security matters. This group believes the Judiciary acts more harshly against lower income individuals yet also believes it is swift in punishing the guilty.
- Institutionalists: Hold a positive perception of judicial performance, express greater trust in the Constitutional Court, believe judges uphold the law, and think the justice system punishes those who commit crimes regardless of who they are. Their most distinctive characteristic is their belief in judicial independence (Graph 1.5).

Overall, pragmatic critics share with institutionalists their trust in the Constitutional Court and in judges' compliance with the law. Yet, they align with radical positions in supporting the current government's management, building more prisons, and on issues such as Executive authority to appoint judges or applying pretrial detention in all cases. This group, which displays contradictory attitudes, has the potential to move closer to "camp" depending on circumstances.

Graph 1.5
Profiles and Variables Associated with Public Trust in the Judiciary



a/ The institutionalist profile corresponds to those who have a positive assessment of the Judiciary but are more critical of government management and reject more punitive measures. The pragmatic critic profile corresponds to those who are critical but more moderate regarding punitive exercise. Finally, radical critics have a negative assessment of the Judiciary and strong support for punitive policies.

b/ This biplot from principal component analysis (PCA) shows each variable as an arrow; arrows at narrower angles indicate positive correlation, arrows at 90-degree angles indicate no correlation, and 180-degree angles indicate negative correlation. The quadrant placement of the arrows indicates their relationship to one or more of the groups. For example, all groups converge on the variable labeled judicial independence.

Source: Sáenz and Ovares, 2025; based on CIEP-UCR data, 2024.

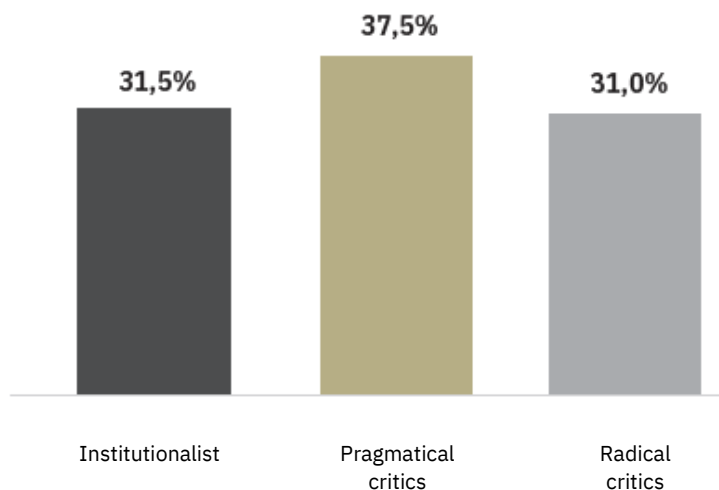
The only common characteristic across all three groups is support for judicial independence. This suggests that the expectation of judicial autonomy exists within public perception and represents a basic democratic standard. A total of 64.4% of survey respondents agree with the statement that "Judicial decisions should be independent of the Executive and Legislative branches." This underscores the significance of "trash-talking" as a political strategy to erode a pillar of Costa Rican culture. In the Mexican case, Stokes et al.

examined the impact of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's press conferences on regular viewers, who expressed lower trust in the Judiciary (Stokes et al., 2025). By the time judicial reforms threatening judicial independence were introduced, trust levels had deteriorated and there was no strong public opposition beyond judicial personnel, academics, and some civil society organizations focused on the issue.

The ideal scenario would be for the "institutionalist" group to include most people or, at least, to be the largest group. Likewise, one would expect radical critics to constitute a small minority. Under these conditions, institutionalism would exert a stronger pull-on pragmatic critic (the ambivalent) than on the radical group.

Unfortunately, this is not the current reality. "Institutionalists" and "radicals" are nearly equal in size. The largest group consists of "pragmatic critics"—the ambivalent—precisely the group that can decisively tip the scales for or against the Judiciary. In 2024, the proportions were 37.5% "pragmatic critics," 31.0% "institutionalists," and 31.5% "radical critics" (Graph 1.6).

Graph 1.6
Public Profiles Regarding Perceptions of the Judiciary. 2024



a/ The institutionalist profile corresponds to those who have a positive assessment of judicial performance but are more critical of government management and reject more punitive measures. The pragmatic critic profile corresponds to those who are critical of judicial performance but more moderate in their punitive views. Finally, radical critics have a negative assessment of the Judiciary and strong support for punitive policies.

Source: Sáenz and Ovares, 2025; based on CIEP-UCR data, 2024.

Shortcomings in Effective and Timely Justice Reduce the Judiciary's Capacity to Meet New Obligations and Pressures from Rising Social Conflict

The second main idea in this Synopsis focuses on the Judiciary's capacity to meet the high demand for its services in Costa Rica. Nonetheless, successive editions of the *State of Justice Report* have documented the Judiciary's difficulties in fulfilling the principle of timely, effective, and equal justice for all. They have highlighted minimal progress in institutional efficiency indicators over this century and stark asymmetries across circuits and instances in the timeliness of judicial responses. Institutional response capacity has evolved more slowly than demand, accumulating longstanding backlogs that worsen with incoming new cases. This situation has given rise to widespread public criticism of judicial performance, analyzed in the previous section.

This part of the chapter synthesizes the historical delays in achieving timely, effective, and equal justice for all. It argues that the persistence of these delays weakens the Judiciary's position against political attacks on its independence. Yet, the problem runs deeper: not only can institutional inertia have graver political consequences than a decade ago, but the Judiciary also faces pressure that will increase demand for its services in the short term. Without significant changes in processes and efficiency levels, current deficits will likely widen, along with the Judiciary's inability to meet public demands and its political vulnerability.

Two external factors beyond judicial governance control are driving up demand for judicial services. The first is Legislative Assembly approval of new legislation that assigns increasingly more functions to the Judiciary through the creation of new crimes, reforms to procedural codes, international conventions, and new jurisdictions. The legislature adds new competencies over matters that were not previously judicialized and now fall under judicial authority. Most are approved without specific budgetary provisions (PEN, 2024).

The second factor influencing demand for judicial services is the rising social conflict in Costa Rica. This has increased in various ways: from crime in the criminal sphere to disputes and victims from traffic accidents, child support, domestic violence, and debt collection. This escalation affects—and will continue to affect—the volume of cases entering the Judiciary. Additionally, foreseeable events such as economic crises generate greater

demand in labor matters. Likewise, limited use of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms and of restorative justice contributes to the low number of settlements reached before initiating judicial proceedings (Chapters 4 and 5).

This section is organized into four subsections. The first analyzes the increase in volume and complexity of social conflict and how it impacts demand for judicial services. The second subsection focuses on the political system's response to this conflict, primarily through the assignment of new legal competencies to the Judiciary. The third subsection examines the Judiciary's capacity to respond to these demand pressures. Based on institutional indicators, it demonstrates the persistent drag of substantial delays in achieving timely and effective justice. The fourth and final subsection presents a novel modeling exercise to determine probable scenarios of future demand for criminal justice services under varying levels of increased criminal conflict. It concludes that current delays reduce the Judiciary's future capacity to respond to these pressures.

Increased Volume and Complexity of Conflict Impacts Demand for Judicial Services

The wide range of matters that can be brought before the courts, along with the public's willingness to litigate, results in high litigiousness. In 2023, a total of 718,257 new cases entered the Judiciary, though peak demand for judicial services occurred in 2021, with over 826,000 new first-instance cases. Compared to the country's population, this means that in 2023 a new case was filed in court for every 7.1 people; two years earlier, this ratio was 6.1.

Judiciary statistics (through 2023) allow for disaggregation of demand for judicial services by subject matter or jurisdiction. In 2023, criminal matters recorded the highest litigation rate during the 2018-2023 period, reaching 3,613 cases per 100,000 inhabitants, totaling 190,124 cases. Debt collection followed with 2,382 cases, driven by societal indebtedness, which increases legal disputes related to loan collection and various financial obligations. Traffic matters, with a rate of 1,240 cases per 100,000 inhabitants annually, ranks third in volume. While less significant than in previous years, it remains a relevant area due to the volume of traffic incidents and their judicial management (Chapter 2).

In criminal justice, classifying information by crime categories is essential. Not all categories show growth: those related to organized crime activities show significant increases, while other criminal types have decreased. Crimes against property remain most frequent, though they show a slight decline in 2023. Again, disaggregation matters because vehicle theft is growing, while simple theft and residential burglary have decreased. The specific reasons for these patterns vary in each case, making it impossible to generalize about criminal matters.

The increase in homicides linked to organized crime is undoubtedly one of the Judiciary's main challenges. Over the current decade, the country has "jumped" to a new threshold of homicidal violence, exceeding the level the World Health Organization uses to define violence as an epidemic and, therefore, a public health problem (10 homicides per 100,000 inhabitants). In recent years (2022 to 2024), the homicide rate rose from 12.66 to 16.6 per 100,000 inhabitants (PEN, 2024). In 2023 alone, 16,817 complaints were filed with the Public Prosecutor's Office for crimes against life, representing an average of 46 daily complaints, mostly related to culpable injuries, armed assault, and attempted simple homicide. This reflects growing pressure on the criminal system due to increased volume but especially the complexity of demand.

This pressure is not uniform and concentrates on specific areas of the country, affecting certain judicial circuits more than others. The rise in homicidal violence has focused on coastal zones and the capital. The cantons with the highest prevalence were Limón, San José, Puntarenas, Matina, and Alajuela. Several of their districts rank in the top ten for homicide victims. Since 2020, Limón Province (28%) nearly equals the proportion of intentional homicides occurring in San José (29%) (Infosegura, 2024). In contrast, areas like Hojanca and San Vito maintain low crime rates and virtually zero homicide rates (Graph 1.7).

Graph 1.7

Distribution of Homicides by District, by Victim Count Ranges^{a/}. 2023

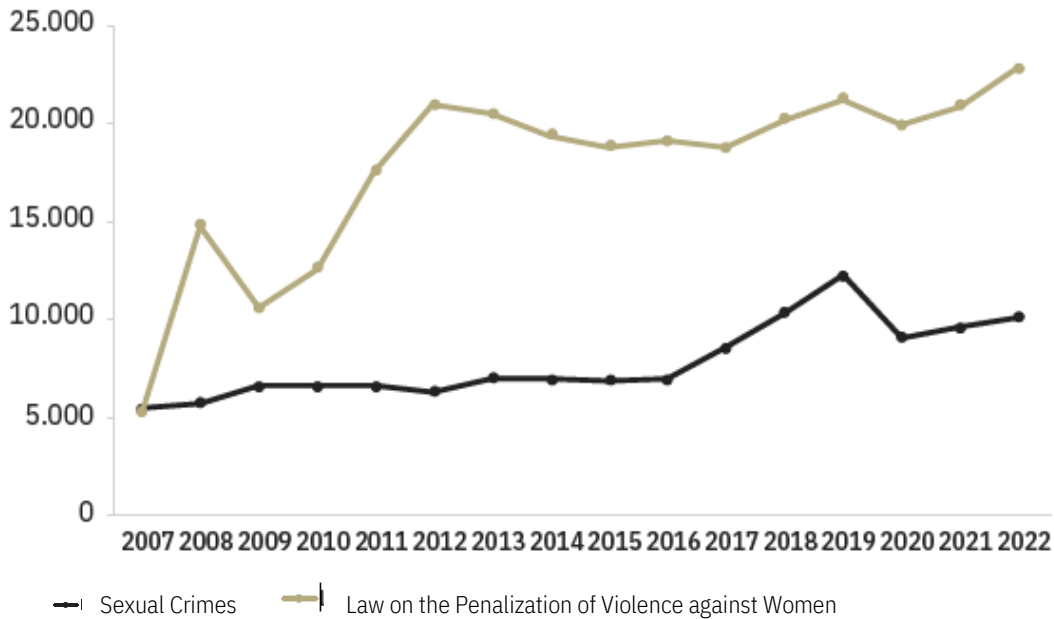


a/ Does not include 266 districts that reported no homicides in 2023.

Source: Villarreal, 2024, with data from OIJ.

The Judiciary has also seen an increase in violence against women cases—a problem that potentially affects half the population throughout their lives. The incidence of these crimes is high and has grown since 2006 (Graph 1.8). In 2022, the figure reached 34,648 complaints for sexual offenses and violations of the Ley de Penalización de la Violencia Contra las Mujeres (Law on Penalization of Violence Against Women, LPVAW) at the Public Prosecutor's Office. Adding the domestic violence jurisdiction to this statistic, the volume of cases regarding violence against women exceeds 80,000 annually. Chapter 5 of this Report shows that significant underreporting may exist among victims who do not file complaints.

Graph 1.8
Net Entry of Cases for Sexual Crimes and LPVAW at the Public Prosecutor's Office. 2007-2023^{a/}



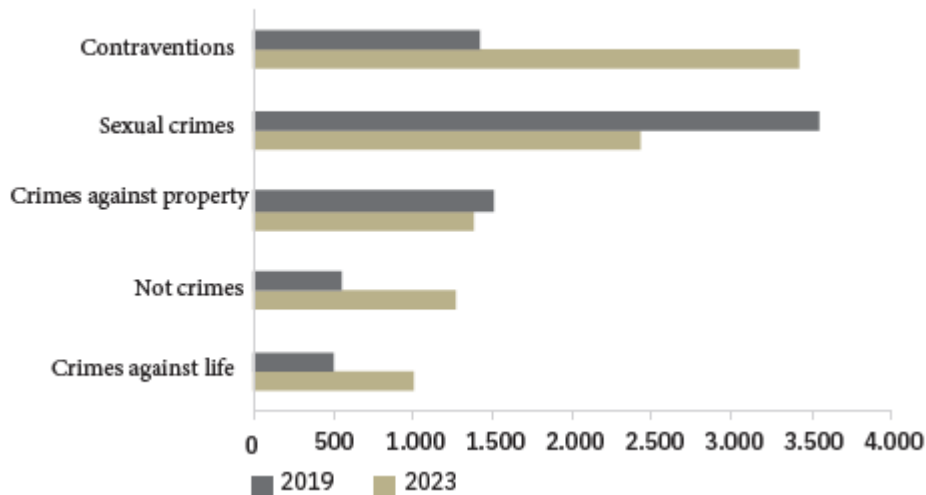
a/ LPVAW data available from 2007 through 2022.

Source: Author's elaboration with data from Poder Judicial, 2025a.

A significant increase in new cases has been observed at the Juvenile Criminal Prosecutor's Office. This unit experienced significant growth between 2021 and 2023, with a 132% increase, primarily in crimes against life (Graph 1.9). Specifically, crimes against life more than doubled from 496 cases in 2019 to 1,004 in 2023. This figure reflects the homicide crisis and the growing involvement of young people in these acts of violence, constituting a serious warning for social coexistence (Chapter 3).

Graph 1.9

Net Entry of Cases for Sexual Crimes and LPVAW at the Public Prosecutor's Office. 2019 and 2023



a/ Includes the five crime families exceeding 5% of cases entered in each instance for at least one year. Together, the other 28 crime families represent 13.9% and 17.8% of cases entered in Juvenile Criminal Prosecutor's Offices.

b/ The non-crime category corresponds to reported incidents involving missing person investigations, death investigations, suicide, attempted suicide, atypical incidents, drug consumption, drug discovery, accidental injuries, accidental death, or unknown.

c/ For Criminal Prosecutor's Offices, 2019 and 2022 are compared due to data availability.

Source: Bogantes, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2025a 2025f.

In total, nine jurisdictions increased their case intake between 2021 and 2024, though not all to the same degree. The Constitutional Court had 37% more cases in 2024, the highest intake year in Constitutional Court history. *Recursos de amparo* (writs of protection) represented 94.7% of total case intake, of which 42.9% were health-related (Poder Judicial, 2025b). This pattern signals vulnerability in access to basic services, deficiencies, or lack of coverage in the public health system, forcing people to turn to the judicial system to defend their rights (Chapter 3).

In a specific issue examined in this Report, the Constitutional Court resolved three times as many cases related to the migrant population between 2023 and 2024 as in previous years. This growth is associated with new flows of migrant and refugee populations (or asylum seekers) in the country due to deteriorating political conditions in population-expelling countries such as Nicaragua and Venezuela in recent years. Between August 2021 and March 2022, the number of Nicaraguan refugees and asylum seekers in Costa Rica doubled, "totaling more than 150,000 displaced persons, a figure representing 3% of Costa Rica's total population" (UN, 2022) (Chapter 6).

The situations described in the State of Justice research generate greater demand for judicial services, not only in quantity but in complexity. The intensification of social conflicts or political developments in third countries can trigger an avalanche of cases in some issues or locations, ultimately straining demand for judicial services.

In summary, overall demand for the Judiciary has not increased globally in recent years. However, new pressures exist; most involve matters related to vulnerable populations demands from women and migrants or refugees, requiring greater specialization and prioritization.

The reality is that the fastest-growing crimes (such as those against life) are not as numerous as property crimes but are more complex to process. Other types of crime, such as cybercrime, involve professional networks with high resource availability and internationalization, contrasting with the judicial system's financial and technological limitations.

Greater Demand for Judicial Services Generates Assignment of New Responsibilities to the Judiciary

Justice administration is a mechanism that Costa Ricans use extensively to resolve all types of disputes. The country's litigation rate ranks among the highest in Latin America; for example, Brazil is recognized for having an enormous volume of court cases—more than eighty million per year—meaning that on average, 143 out of every 1,000 Brazilians initiated legal action in 2023 (CNJ, 2024); Spain had a rate of 35.6, among one of the European Union's highest rates (Spanish Judiciary, 2024); Costa Rica, meanwhile, had a litigation rate of 116 cases per 1,000 inhabitants in 2022.

One response by the political system to high litigiousness and the emergence of new demands on judicial services has been expanding the legal competencies assigned to the Judiciary. The *State of Justice Report (2020)* documented 114 laws passed by the Legislative Assembly between 1990 and 2018 that modified judicial competencies. Of these, nearly one-third had a high impact on the institution's operations (PEN, 2020). Between 2016 and 2024, the Supreme Court ruled on 408 bills sent by the Legislative Assembly for consultation, with 104 submitted in 2023-2024 alone—reflecting growing

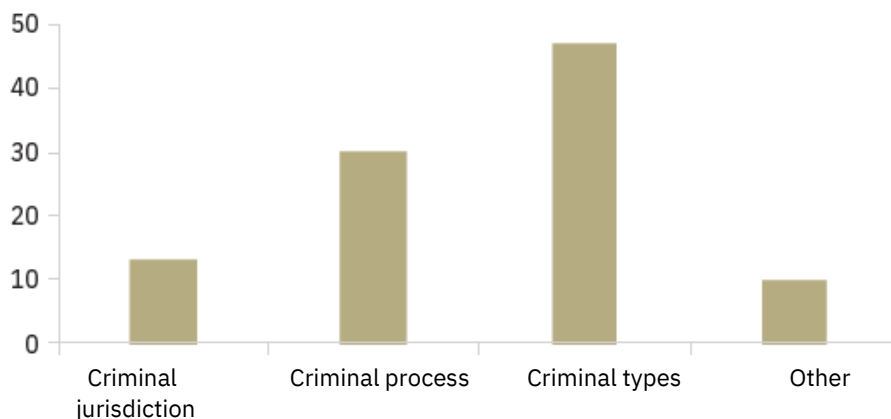
interest in assigning new responsibilities to this branch of government. Of all bills reviewed, the Court determined that 58.6% affect the Judiciary. This implies a more active role for justices in developing or deliberating on regulatory proposals and monitoring legislative political activity to prevent approval of initiatives that would alter judicial functioning. It is important to note that if the Court finds a bill impacting the institution, it must be approved by a qualified majority in the Legislative Assembly (Chapter 2).

The Judiciary has not been a purely reactive actor in the modification of competencies and processes. Total or partial reform of the various procedural codes governing each subject has become constant throughout this century, all promoted by the Supreme Court; examples include the Family Code (2022), the Agrarian Procedural Code (2025), the Civil Procedural Code (2022), and the Organized Crime Jurisdiction (JEDO) (2024). Additionally, this dynamic has been incorporated into the legal framework issues such as access to justice for indigenous populations, animal abuse, street harassment, and many others (next section and Chapters 5 and 6 of this *Report*).

Citizen security is a highly sensitive area for the Judiciary. According to the Legislative Assembly's database of laws, 46 security-related laws were enacted between May 2019 and April 2024. Of these, 30 relate to the criminal justice system and modify its competencies, procedures, or criminal offenses (Graph 1.10).

Graph 1.10

Distribution of Laws Passed Related to the Criminal Justice System. 2019-2024
(percent)



Source: Araya, 2025, based on PEN's database of security laws passed (2019-2024).

Much of this legislative output relates to the Special Organized Crime Jurisdiction (JEDO), which has required four laws for implementation (Diagram 1.2).

The JEDO has been the primary judicial policy response by the Costa Rican political system to the growing activity and violence of organized crime actors (PEN, 2024). This represents a prototypical example of the expanded responsibilities, material organization, processes, and criminal types that the Judiciary must address.

Diagram 1.2

Evolution of regulations related to the Specialized Jurisdiction for Organized Crime



Source: Source: Araya, 2025, based on PEN database of laws passed on security matters (2019-2024).

Analysis of recently passed security legislation that modifies criminal justice (30 of the 46 laws) identifies significant challenges for the Judiciary in implementing it. Overall, a recurring problem in Costa Rican criminal policy persists: the creation and modification of regulations without corresponding budget allocations:

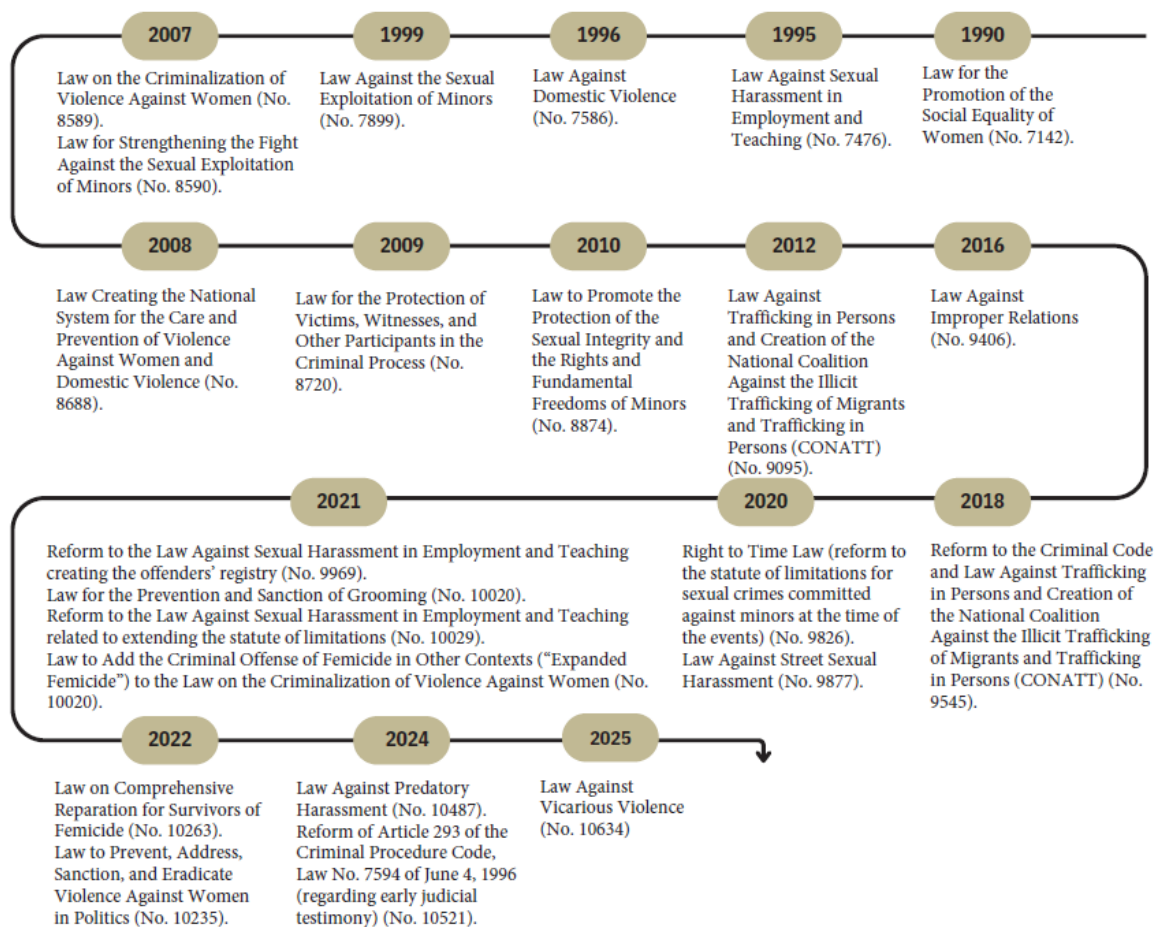
- 6 have been allocated specific financial resources; 26.7% are documented as creating new regulations, while 73.3% modify previous rules.
- 24 have been objectively substantiated.
- 7 comply with conventional control.
- 90% designate an entity responsible for implementation (CL-2 Consultores, 2024).

Another source of new competencies is the adoption of international human rights instruments, which, in Costa Rica's case, become binding regulations once approved by the

Legislative Assembly. The country has made numerous international commitments regarding women's rights and the rights of migrant and refugee populations. It has produced extensive regulations that directly involve the Judiciary's management and enforcement responsibilities (see section below). Regarding gender legislation, 15 laws have been approved since 1990, in addition to the Belém do Pará Convention and the Brasilia Rules (Diagram 1.3).

Diagram 1.3

Legislation addressing prevention, protection, prosecution, and redress for violence against women enacted by the Legislative Assembly of Costa Rica, by year of enactment. 1990-2025



Source: Segura, 2025; with data from Sistema Costarricense de Información Jurídica (SCIJ) and Achoy, 2025.

It is worth noting that, while the judicialization of social life increases, one area that has not been sufficiently developed is restorative justice and alternative dispute resolution, particularly mechanisms to effectively divert cases from the courts that can be resolved extrajudicially. Criminal investigations conducted for this *Report* reveal that restorative justice is applied in only a very small percentage of cases.

Among alternative measures in 2023, 37,593 cases (90%) were resolved through conciliation, and 4,045 cases (10%) were resolved through the suspension of proceedings on probation. When considering all alternative measures issued by the courts (across all jurisdictions), estimates indicate that during the 2018-2022 period, the conciliation rate ranged between 4.5 and 6.8, meaning that between 4 and 7 out of every 100 cases resolved in the country were settled through conciliation (Chapter 2).

The Judiciary Continues to Struggle with Significant Delays in Delivering Timely and Effective Justice

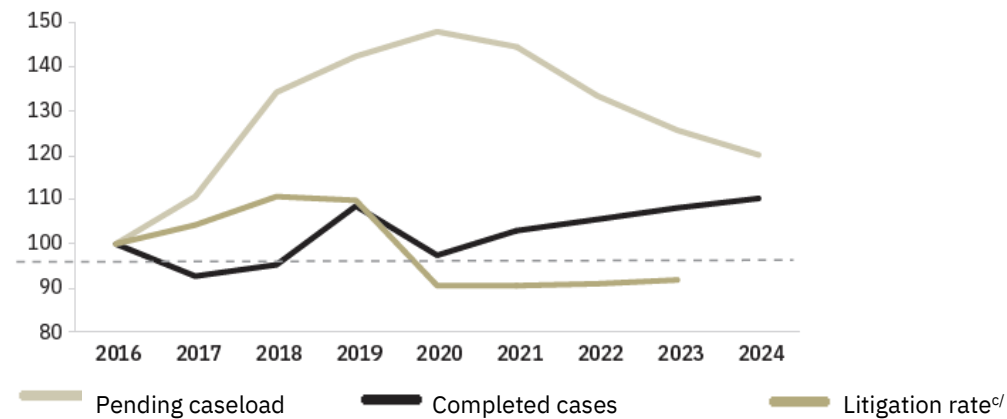
Growing demands on judicial services due to heightened social conflict and the continuous assignment of new functions have not been matched by significant efficiency improvements in this branch of government. Judicial statistics published by the institution show improvements in specific areas, but aggregate indicators, while fluctuating in the short term, show no medium-term improvements.

Aggregate institutional efficiency can be understood as the average capacity to fulfill legal mandates using the least possible time and resources. When comparing the 2024 situation with that of eight years earlier (2016), the litigation rate is approximately 90% of the level at that time, which corresponds to a slight increase of about 10% in completed cases.

However, active caseload exceeds 2016 levels by more than 20%. While there has been improvement in completed cases (productivity) and a decrease in active caseload (pending cases), in summary, there is no medium-term improvement. Nevertheless, a short-term recovery is observed between 2021 and 2024 relative to the 2018-2020 period. During those years, an increased litigation rate combined with the pandemic's impact significantly affected judicial backlogs (Graph 1.11).

Graph 1.11

Evolution of aggregate performance indicators for the Judiciary^{a/b/}
(index, 2016=100)



a/ 2016 is taken as the base year for indexing the data and providing a common metric.

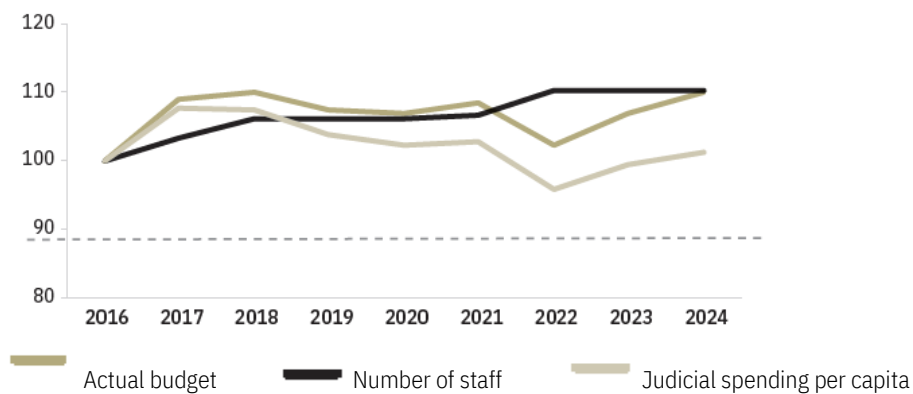
b/ In 2020, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic influenced data trends, based on Corte Plena (Full Court) provisions in response to the declared national emergency.

c/ The litigation rate is calculated by dividing the total net cases filed by the total population. Cases filed correspond to complaints or lawsuits filed each year with first-instance courts, including non-criminal matters, constitutional matters, cases from Costa Rica's *Ministerio Público* (Public Prosecutor's Office), and private-action crimes. It is calculated by subtracting jurisdictional conflicts to avoid duplicate case registrations across multiple offices.

Source: Bogantes, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2024g, and INEC, n.d.

The short-term recovery in aggregate institutional efficiency or productivity indicators has coincided with a period of some restoration of the Judiciary's financial and human resources (Graph 1.12). Between 2018 and 2021, the real budget and judicial personnel remained slightly above the base year (2016). The year 2022 was critical due to a budget decline, but levels quickly returned to previous figures. Overall, per capita judicial spending in 2024 is nearly the same as in 2016. In the context of growing pressure on judicial services, whether actual or potential, the limited improvement in budgetary and human resources creates a pressing situation that the Judiciary must address with significant operational improvements.

Graph 1.12
Evolution of budget indicators for the Judiciary^{a/b/}
(index, 2016=100)



a/ 2016 is taken as the base year for indexing the data and providing a standard metric.

b/ Corresponds to the total approved budget of the Judiciary, deflated by the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Source: Bogantes, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2024g, and INEC, n.d.

Overall performance indicators provide a general overview of the judicial system and enable temporal comparisons. Nevertheless, they must be supplemented with more disaggregated data to account for performance variability across jurisdictions, areas, and instances.

The increase in institutional productivity during the 2021-2024 period signals that the judicial system is, on average, managing a growing caseload more effectively. In fact, variations in performance across different offices suggest room for further optimization. Between 2021 and 2024, pending cases in administrative and constitutional litigation rose by more than 30% —clear evidence of mounting congestion despite improvements in overall metrics (Chapter 2).

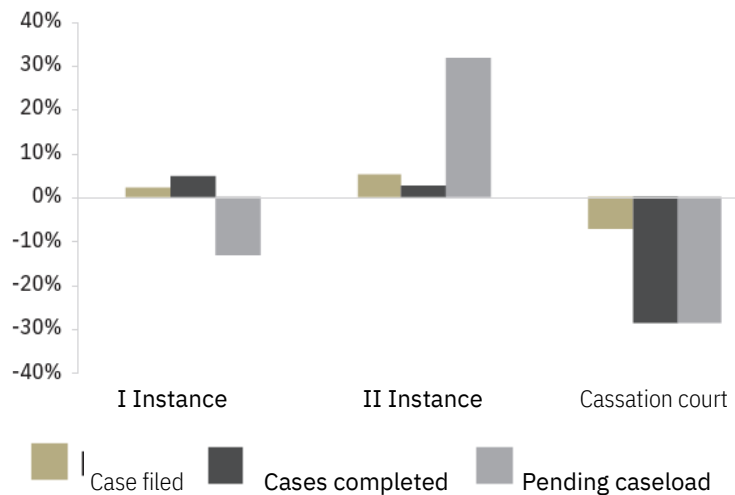
The most common criticism leveled at the Judiciary concerns the length of proceedings. Comparing 2019 (the year before the pandemic) with 2023, the most recent year with detailed data available at publication, eight jurisdictional areas saw their average proceeding times increase. The few areas that bucked this trend showed only marginal decreases (Chapter 2).

The criminal justice analysis in this *Report* shows mixed results from 2019 to 2023 (Chapter 5). First-instance criminal courts reduced their backlog despite receiving more cases. Second-instance courts, however, saw their pending caseload climb nearly 30% during this period (Graph 1.13). While available statistics don't allow tracking individual cases through

the entire process, the data suggest that improved first-instance productivity creates pressure on the appellate level, which, if underprepared, can lead to a larger backlog.

Graph 1.13

Growth rate of cases filed^{a/}, completed, and pending^{b/} between 2021 and 2023, by instance^{c/}



a/ A case reaching the second instance means a party has appealed a lower court's decision for review by a higher court. This enables reexamination of the original ruling, which may be upheld, modified, or overturned. When a case reaches the cassation court, an appeal has been filed against an appellate court decision, requesting review by the highest judicial authority. The cassation court does not reassess the facts but examines whether serious legal errors occurred in interpreting or applying the law to ensure proper legal application.

b/ Cases awaiting resolution by the Judiciary.

c/ First-instance courts represent the initial level where cases are processed and resolved. Evidence is examined, parties present their arguments, and a decision is rendered. Parties who disagree with the outcome may generally appeal to a higher court.

Source: Bogantes, 2025, based on Poder Judicial data, 2025a.

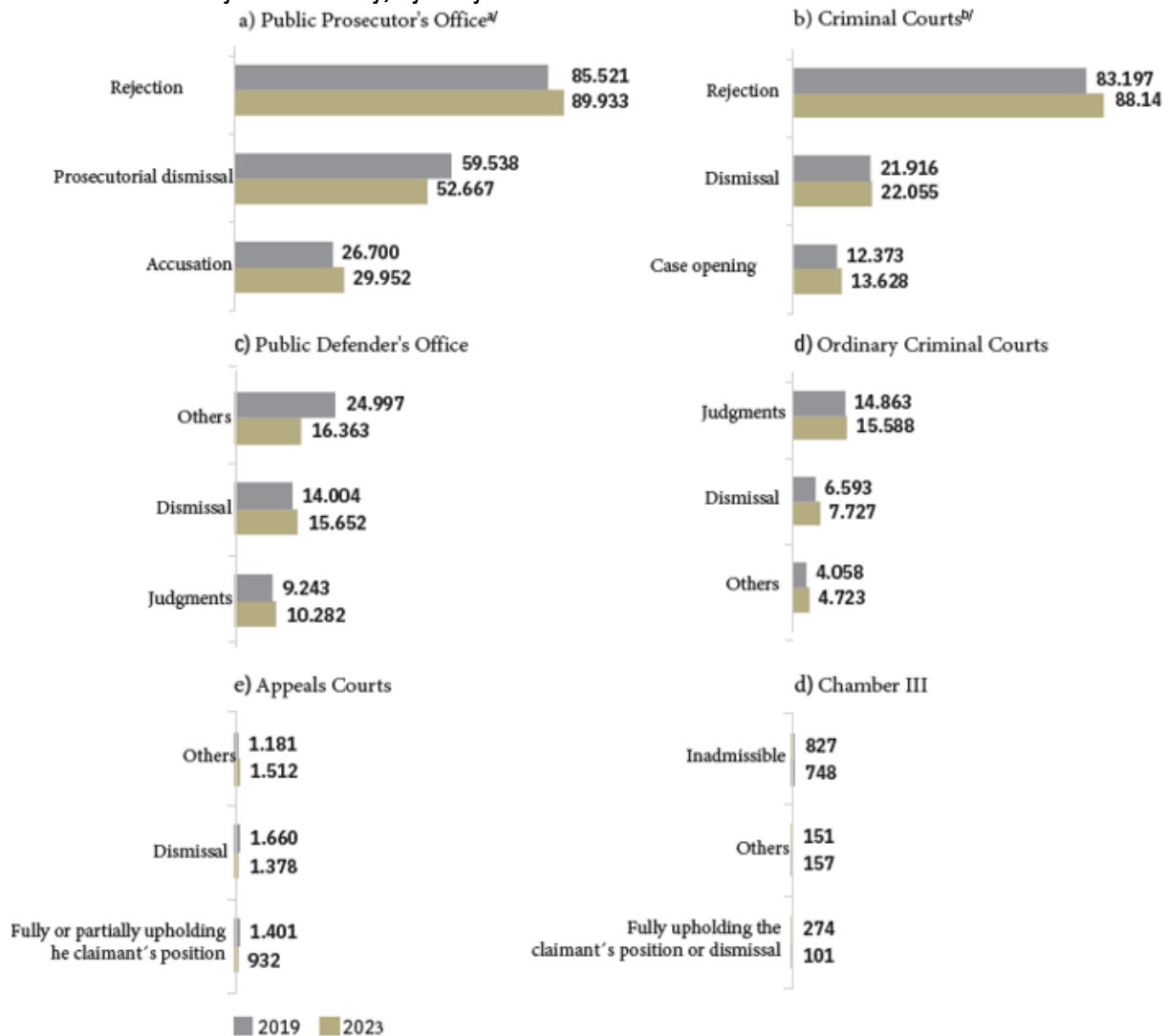
Cases can conclude different pathways: courts may dismiss them (the most common outcome) or send them to trial. This distinction matters considerably when assessing productivity, since case resolution numbers may rise while dismissals also increase (Graph 1.14).

How a case concludes significantly impacts overall processing time, making averages somewhat misleading as they combine fundamentally different case types. For instance, the Prosecutor's Office might need only days to archive a case after confirming no identifiable defendant exists, whereas requesting a trial requires conducting investigations, gathering evidence, building the case, and notifying parties—a far more time-intensive process.

Before reaching a criminal court, complaints are first filed with the Public Prosecutor's Office. This entry and exit points in the justice system—entry through the Public Prosecutor's Office and exit through criminal court rulings—present the most serious problems in terms of processing time and pending caseload. In these offices, as well as in criminal courts and the Public Defender's Office, 2023 indicators reveal a negative trend. One sign of increasing complexity may be the progressively slower performance of criminal courts and the decline in cases completed at that stage. In contrast, processing times for appeals and cassation have improved. In no instance, however, does the 2023 situation differ markedly from conditions before the pandemic, suggesting inertial behavior throughout the criminal justice system (Graph 1.14).

Graph 1.14

Cases concluded by the Judiciary, by body and basis for conclusion. 2019 and 2023



a/ In 2019, 45,831 cases were closed for other reasons in the Public Prosecutor's Offices: in 2023, 59,879 cases.

b/ In 2019, 12,603 cases were closed for other reasons in the Public Prosecutor's Offices: in 2023, 88,145 cases.

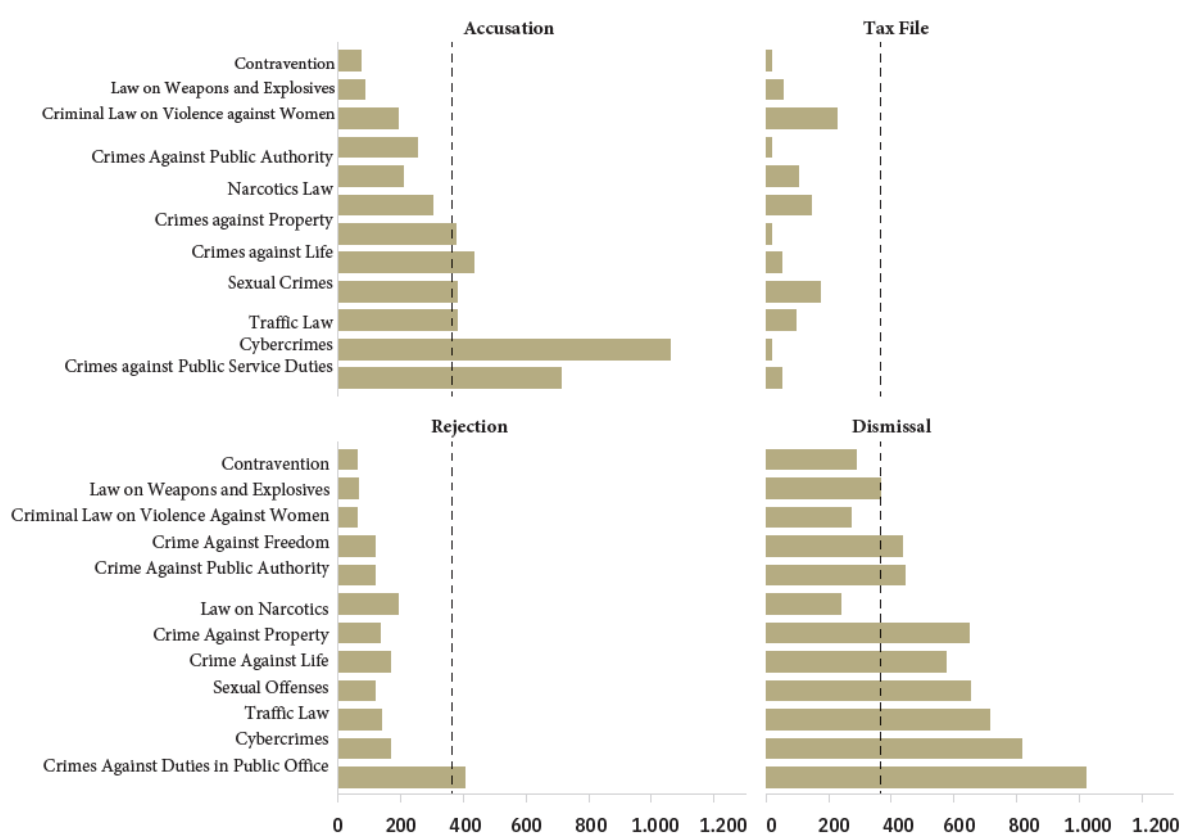
Source: Bogantes, 2025; with data from Poder Judicial, 2025a 2025c.

This *Report* adopted a 365-day threshold (one calendar year) to identify situations where failure to complete a stage becomes concerning. In six of the eleven crime types examined, the average time to file a formal accusation during the three years from 2022 to 2024 exceeded this threshold. Particularly notable are cybercrimes and crimes against the civil service, both averaging over two years, with crimes against life ranking third (Graph 1.15). Case archiving and dismissals are generally characterized, in nearly all types analyzed, by rapid completion. In contrast, acquittals tend to be more protracted: in eight of the eleven types studied, the average duration exceeded one year.

This *Report* conducted an in-depth analysis of criminal justice related to women's rights. The situation in this area is especially concerning, as judicial proceedings in sexual offense cases average more than 4,000 days. Attempted rape takes the longest to process through criminal courts and tribunals, averaging 4,383 days across both instances. In other words, from the moment charges are filed with the court until final resolution by a criminal tribunal, approximately 12 years elapse (Chapter 4).

Graph 1.15

Average case processing time by case type and outcome. 2022-2024^{a/b/}
(days)



a/ Data cutoff date is September 2024.

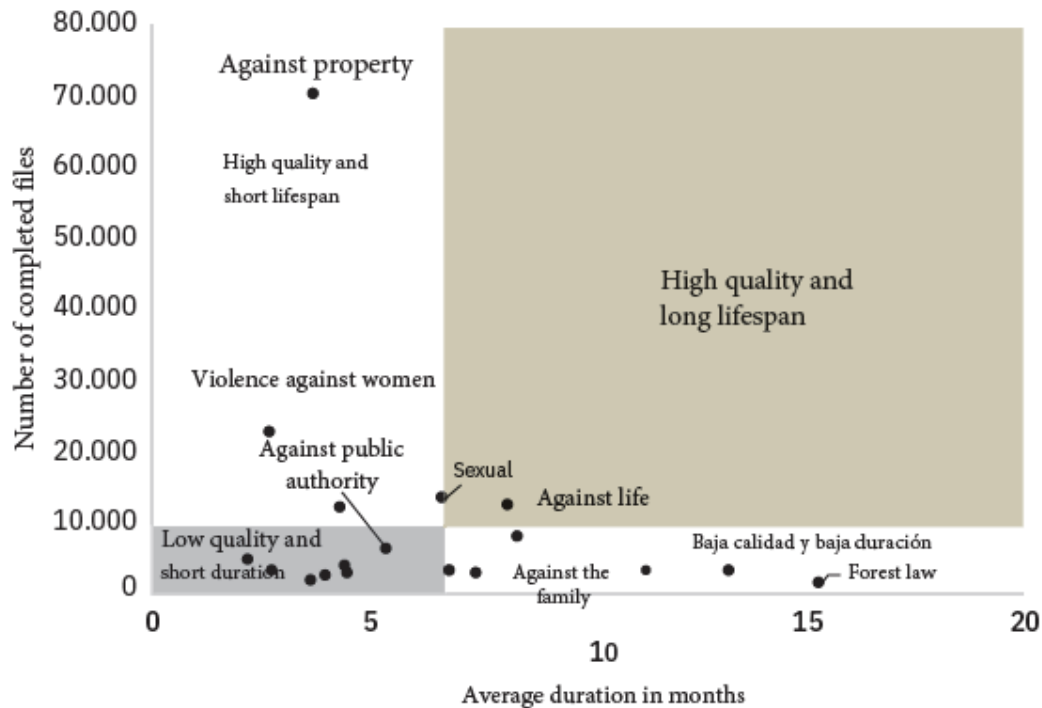
b/ The dashed vertical line marks one calendar year (365 days).

Source: Abarca and Ramírez, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2023b, 2023c, 2024a, 2024c, 2024e.

The Public Prosecutor's Office reveals concerning areas regarding timely justice. Several crime categories combine few completed cases with high average processing times. This holds true, among others, for crimes against forestry law and crimes against the family (Graph 1.16). By contrast, property crimes and violence against women combine high volumes of completed cases with the shortest processing times.

Graph 1.16

Ministerio Público (Public Prosecutor's Office): Average case duration and number of completed cases, by crime category



a/ Corresponds to the average number of completed cases and average duration in 2022 and 2024.

Source: Bogantes, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2023b, 2023c, 2024a, 2024c, 2024e.

Judiciary Faces Critical Capacity Constraints in Meeting Growing Demands

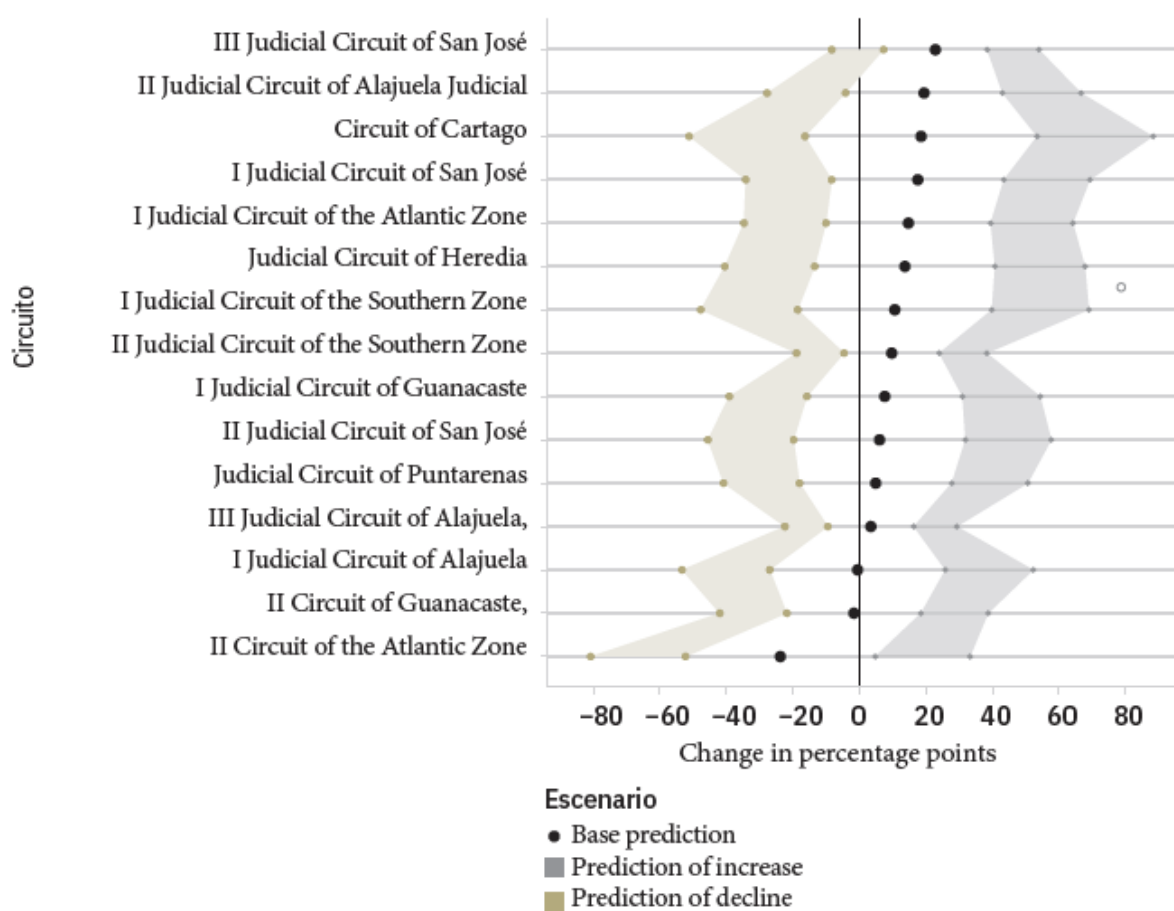
This *Report* conducted an unprecedented prospective exercise in Costa Rica to assess the additional pressures the criminal justice system will face due to increased social conflict (Chapter 5). This exercise developed a statistical model to estimate changes in workload across circuits in this jurisdiction at different crime levels, based on the spatial distribution of crimes. A baseline scenario of natural crime growth was defined, from which scenarios of greater and lesser crime increases were developed.

The main results point to anticipated new and substantial pressures on demand for criminal justice services (Graph 1.17). In the baseline or natural growth scenario, all circuits are affected except Circuit II in Guanacaste, Circuit II in the Atlantic Zone, and Circuit I in Alajuela. In the remaining circuits, increases range from 5% to 20% of current levels. When higher crime increases are modeled, the impact on demand is very strong. In a crime growth scenario of around 4% (from October 2024 to June 2025, demand increases by approximately 50% or more in eleven of the fifteen circuits. These findings reveal no clear territorial pattern.

Demand for criminal justice services will also be highly sensitive if crime decreases in coming years. In scenarios with 3% or 4% reductions, several circuits would experience sharp drops in workload. This finding underscores the urgency for the Costa Rican State to develop crime prevention policies to prevent the criminal justice system's technical and operational capacities from being overwhelmed.

Graph 1.17

Percentage change in cases filed with the Public Prosecutor's Office by circuit and prospective scenario, weekly data^{a/b/c/}



a/ The shaded area on the right indicates the range of variation in workload increase between a minimum scenario of 2% crime growth and a maximum scenario of 4% growth. The shaded area on the left indicates the range of variation in workload decrease between a minimum scenario of -2% crime reduction and a maximum scenario of -4% reduction.

b/ Calculations based on weekly data from January 2022 to September 2024.

c/ Scenarios span from October 2024 to June 2025.

Source: Abarca and Ramírez, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2023b, 2023c, 2024a, 2024c, 2024e.

Implementation of Innovative Initiatives to Expand Access to Justice for Vulnerable Populations Is Hindered by Inadequate Judicial Governance

The third main idea examines why significant improvements in timely, effective, and equitable justice for all have not materialized. This section documents that this lack of improvement does not stem from the Judiciary's lack of interest in promoting initiatives that expand access to justice and improve services, particularly for the most vulnerable populations. Contrary to widespread public perception, in recent years the Judiciary has maintained a process of continuous innovation in its policies and services. This finding confirms the assessment made in the *First State of Justice Report* in 2015, which found that of all branches of government, the Judiciary has pursued the most reforms to its regulatory framework and operations (PEN, 2015).

The Judiciary's limited capacity to reduce historical deficits through its service innovation initiatives stems from the fact that substantial improvement does not depend exclusively on judicial administration measures. Achieving substantial improvement requires working in tandem with a wide range of public institutions and civil society organizations.

This *Report* identifies judicial governance as the main obstacle preventing the institution from translating intensive innovation into meaningful advances in timely and effective justice. According to ECLAC, governance refers to the relationships among actors involved in decision-making, execution, and evaluation of matters of public interest (Naser, 2021; Whittingham, 2010). For the Judiciary, this includes not only the Supreme Court of Justice—which wields the highest governmental, jurisdictional, and administrative authority—but also other entities that shape, approve, and carry out institutional management decisions.

This section is divided into three subsections. The first subsection provides an overview of initiatives to expand access to justice for vulnerable populations, describing the scope of policies, legal instruments, international commitments, and operational actions the Judiciary has undertaken to address historical gaps in provision of judicial services. The second subsection examines the limited influence of institutional innovation on timely and effective justice indicators, noting that desired improvements do not depend entirely on judicial administration. The third subsection, the longest of the three, documents how the lack of reforms on key judicial governance issues prevents the improvements sought through policy innovation from materializing effectively.

The main conclusion is that policy innovation is a necessary but insufficient condition for resolving historical shortcomings in timely and effective justice delivery, particularly in a context marked by medium-term budgetary stagnation and a hostile political climate.

The Judiciary Actively Pursues Expanded Access to Justice

Thematic judicial policies serve as the mechanism through which the Supreme Court of Justice advances priority issues across the judicial system. Once a policy on a particular issue is approved, annual and specific goals can be established within institutional planning, along with resource allocation for implementation.

Overall, the Judiciary is characterized by extensive policies, legal instruments, and commitments designed to guarantee access for vulnerable populations, such as women, migrants, or refugees. This policy portfolio ranges from the pioneering Gender Equality policy approved in 2005, which addresses different vulnerable populations, to the most recent policy on restorative juvenile justice (2024) (Diagram 1.4).

Another set of judicial policies comprises initiatives to improve judicial administration transparency, accountability, and openness in this branch. Pioneering approval of this instrument type places the Judiciary in the international spotlight. As a notable example, Costa Rica's Judiciary is the only worldwide to have an open justice policy. In total, it maintained 14 thematic policies in force in 2024.

Diagram 1.4**Judicial policies in force by thematic area****Policies on access to justice for vulnerable populations**

2005	Gender equality
2008	Equality for people with disabilities Access to justice for the elderly
2010	Access to justice for migrants and refugees Access to justice for children and adolescents
2011	Access to justice for vulnerable minors subject to juvenile criminal proceedings
2015	Access to justice for people of African descent
2024	Restorative juvenile justice

Institutional openness policies

2015	Citizen participation Simplification and speeding up of judicial procedures
2018	Open justice
2024	Anti-corruption in the Judiciary

Other thematic areas

2015	Against sexual harassment
2011	Axiological

Source: Authors' elaboration based on Poder Judicial data, 2024g.

Until recently, the institution lacked a methodology for approving thematic policies. As the *State of Justice Report (2021)* documented, despite the Court's approval of thematic policies, their inclusion in this body's agenda and subsequent implementation, once approved, depended on the leadership of the magistrates who promoted them. The *Report* noted that this operational mode responded to the "Court-centric" model of judicial administration (PEN, 2022). In 2020, however, Costa Rica's Dirección de Planificación (Planning Directorate) developed a proposal for an "Institutional Policy Management Model," which the Court approved, aiming to standardize these policies' design and implementation and ensure greater integration of their objectives and action plans with strategic planning.

Institutional policies translate into concrete initiatives and actions. Nonetheless, information on their operation and results is not systematized. For this reason, in studies conducted for this report (Chapters 4 and 6), gathering information scattered across multiple administrative record sources and creating a repository on these efforts became necessary, both regarding violence against women and the migrant and refugee population. This involved reviewing hundreds of official documents from Costa Rica's Corte Plena (Full

Court), the Superior Council, the Access to Justice Commission, Conamaj, and the Gender Secretariat, enabling comprehensive recording of actions focused on these groups (Graph. 1.8).

Measures adopted under institutional policies regarding access to justice for migrants and refugees comprise 264 agreements or decisions between 2010 and 2023. On average, the Judiciary approves 16.5 measures annually, demonstrating institutional effort to implement approved policies. The vast majority relate to training, awareness-raising, and campaigns. These efforts have been led by the Subcommittee on Access to Justice for Migrants and Refugees, whose technical secretariat is CONAMAJ. Actions on violence against women totaled 221 between 2017 and 2022. Training (35.3%), user assistance (21.3%), and campaigns and informational materials (13.1%) constitute predominant measures for creating greater capacity to respond to violence against women cases.

Various auxiliary bodies and offices bear primary responsibility for implementing policies. However, specialized institutional spaces have also been created. The principal ones are: the Gender Commission, the Subcommittee for Monitoring the Ley de Penalización de la Violencia Contra las Mujeres (Law on Penalizing Violence Against Women), the Technical Secretariat for Gender and Access to Justice (which houses the Observatory on Gender Violence against Women and Access to Justice), the Section Specializing in Gender Violence, Human Trafficking, and Smuggling of Migrants of the Judicial Investigation Agency, and the Deputy Prosecutor's Office for Gender and Sexual Crimes.

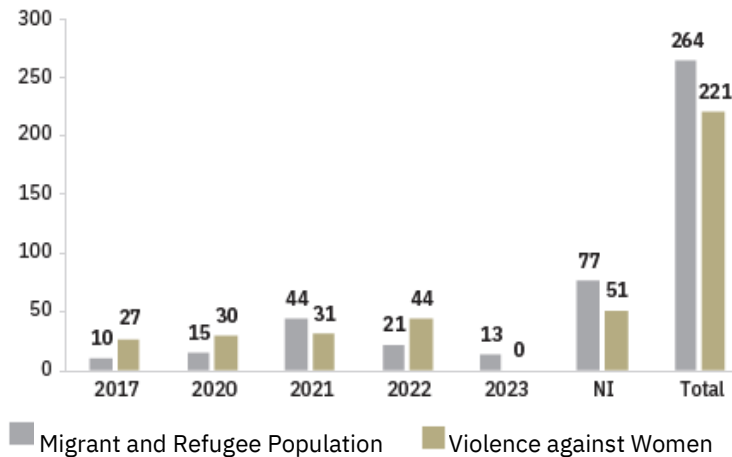
Among these spaces for institutional care and response to violence against women victims, the Integrated Platform for Victim Care Services (Pisav), present in six locations, the Office of Civil Defense for Victims (ODCV), and the Office for the Care and Protection of Crime Victims (OAPVD) stand out, as well as participation in local committees for immediate care and follow-up of high-risk violence against women cases (CLAIS) that operate in some cantons.

In summary, the Costa Rican Judiciary has approved an extensive portfolio of legal and conventional mechanisms and continues demonstrating strong momentum in creating public policies and initiatives that guarantee access to justice for vulnerable sectors. This finding appears contradictory in principle, given minimal improvement in timely and

comprehensive justice indicators examined in the previous section—the problem judicial policies specifically sought to resolve. The following two sections analyze structural obstacles hindering effective implementation of adopted policies and measures.

Graph 1. 18

Number of measures adopted by the Judiciary by type of population^{a/b/}



a/ NI: for measures that do not indicate the exact documented date.

b/ Data collected for violence against women measures are available until 2022.

Source: Author's elaboration based on inventories of measures for each topic prepared by PEN.

Judicial Policies Fail to Achieve Better Outcomes for Vulnerable Populations: The Case of Women and Migrants

The explicit purpose of judicial policies aimed at vulnerable populations is to improve access to timely and effective justice. These policies should influence how judicial offices, in practice, handle and regulate their claims. This change goes beyond anecdotal and specific experiences of good and efficient issue treatment in certain judicial offices. This should be reflected in overall positive results, such as case duration involving people from these populations and higher success rates in resolution types.

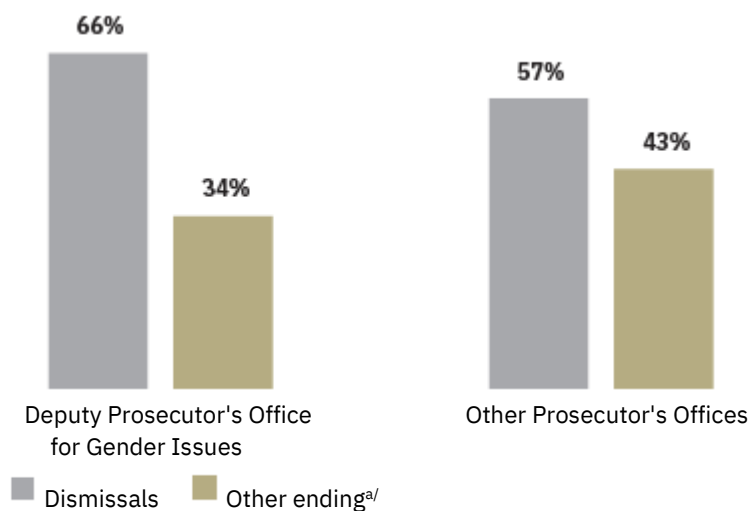
The specific response can only be determined if statistics on termination types and duration are disaggregated by population groups, in accordance with the vulnerable populations established by the Judiciary in its policies. Yet this proves impossible given the current state of publicly available statistical platforms. For the chapter on migrants and refugees, obtaining statistics on the types of proceedings they most frequently request was impossible because their immigration status is not recorded. This persists despite the PIMR establishing a guideline specifically in this regard.

Sampling conducted in violence against women cases demonstrated that judiciary recognition for its numerous measures and offices specializing in gender issues is not reflected in statistics on responses to women.

Faced with massive demand from this population, the response to these cases primarily involves dismissing their claims. Between 2019 and 2022, prosecutors concluded 23,587 cases involving crimes selected as priorities for this study. Of these, only 13% were brought to trial. Most cases do not advance past the preliminary stage, with 80% resulting in dismissals and definitive closures. This response is no better in the Fiscalía Adjunta de Género (Deputy Prosecutor's Office for Gender Issues), which requested more dismissals than other non-specialized prosecutors' offices (Graph 1.19). Several reasons explain this finding. For example, the specialized prosecutor's office tends to handle more complex cases than territorial ones. Regardless, difficulties exist in criminal prosecution of violence against women (Chapter 4).

Graph 1.19

Cases concluded by the Deputy Prosecutor's Office for Gender Issues and the Public Prosecutor's Office in Criminal Matters, by reason for closure. 2022



a/ Other closures include referred to another office, referred to Restorative Justice, prosecutorial dismissal, indictment, consolidated, and other unspecified.

Source: Bogantes, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2025a.

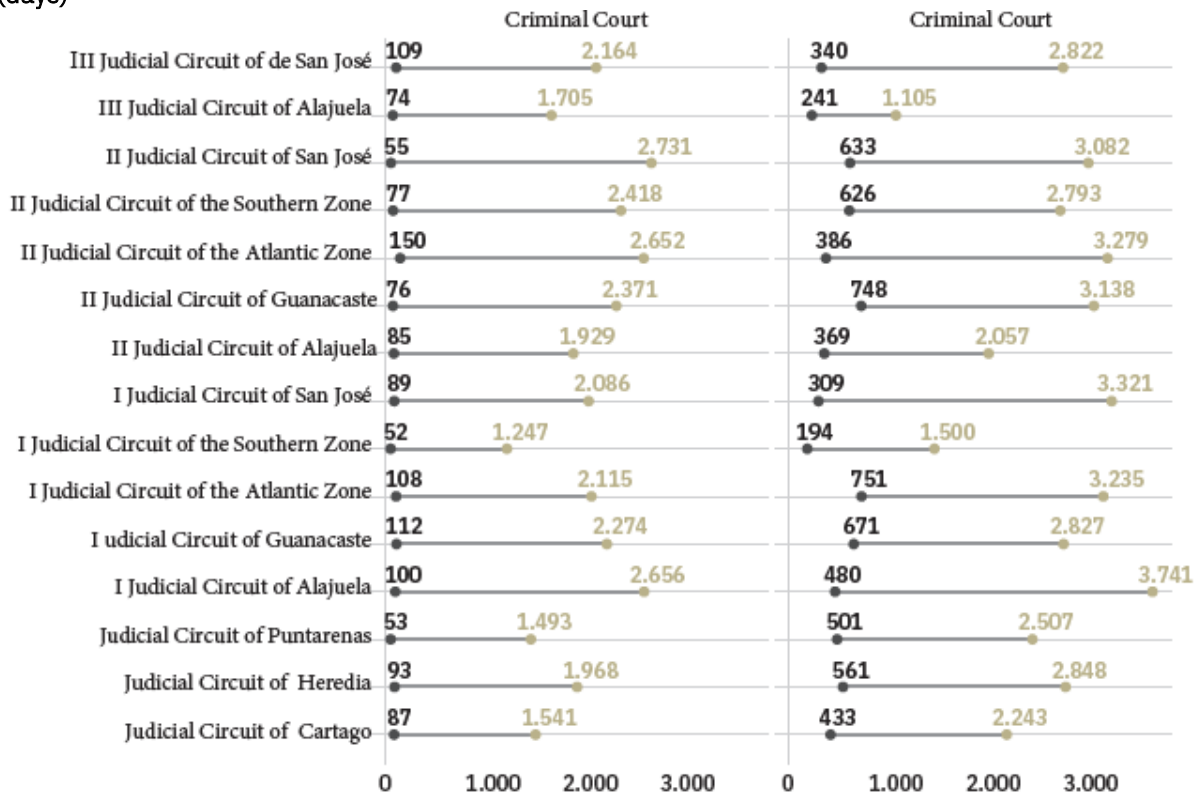
Violence against women cases that reach trial receive delayed responses. Attempted rape takes the longest to process through criminal courts and tribunals, averaging 4,383 days between both instances, making it one of the longest crime types.

Differences exist between judicial circuits that could produce different responses depending on case file location. If a violence against women case is channeled through the I Circuito Judicial (First Judicial Circuit) of the Southern Region, between court and criminal court phases, it could take a total of 246 days; whereas, if a case is processed in the First Judicial Circuit of the Atlantic Region, the average time increases to 859 days. Beyond averages, the maximum duration of such cases was also investigated. Maximum timeframes in the trial stage are approximately 11 years in most circuits, except for the First Circuit of the Southern Region and the three Alajuela circuits. As in sexual offense duration cases, this aspect reflects differentiated criminal justice system responses depending on territory (Graph 1.20) (Chapter 4).

This creates a vicious cycle that threatens effective protection of rights, leading to revictimization and expiration of legal claims. In cases analyzed from 2019 and 2022, no significant changes occurred in these statistical patterns during that period.

Graph 1.20

Ley de Penalización de la Violencia Contra las Mujeres (Law on Penalizing Violence Against Women): average and maximum duration^{a/} of completed cases^{b/c/} involving violence against women, by judicial circuit and office. 2019 and 2022 (days)



a/ The blue bars correspond to average duration, while red figures refer to maximum values.

b/ Data excludes cases from the Tribunal Penal de Flagrancia (Criminal Court of Flagrante Delicto) and cases with negative durations.

c/ The total number of cases corresponding to the LPVAW family included in the visualization is 28,920. The total number of cases included in the database is 56,421 and includes the 12 regulatory provisions specified in the methodology.

Source: Achoy, 2025, with data from PEN's judicial statistics database on violence against women, 2023a.

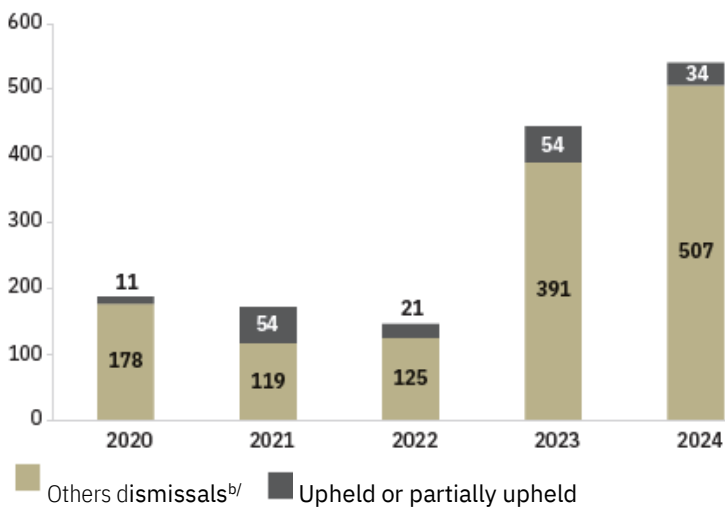
The increase in migrant and refugee population has coincided with notable case increases and responses that, for the most part, reject their claims. To address responses to the migrant population, cases brought before the Constitutional Chamber on immigration matters were taken as an approximate indicator, since in other areas no data is available on parties' immigration status.

Between 2023 and 2024, three times as many cases were resolved in the Constitutional Chamber as in previous years. This growth is associated with peaks in migrant and refugee (or asylum seeker) numbers into the country between August 2021 and March 2022, which doubled "to a total of more than 150,000 displaced persons, a figure representing 3% of Costa Rica's total population" (UN, 2022).

Case law shows that constitutional proceedings seldom provide relief to migration issues. Since 2020 -the year for which detailed records are available- the proportion of the resolutions *fully or partially upholding the claimant's position* (“A favor”) has remained low, ranging from 3% in 2020 to a peak of 28% in 2021. In the last five years, the average ruling in favor of plaintiffs is 11% (Graph 1.21). This does not necessarily indicate that the rights of this population have been violated. It should be remembered that, in the general population, *recursos de amparo* (writs of protection) that are upheld or partially upheld are not in the majority either.

Graph 1.21

Number of guarantee cases^{a/} resolved by the Constitutional Chamber in the migration category by year and form of termination. 2020-2024



a/ *Recursos de amparo* (writs of protection) and habeas corpus.

b/ Other terminations include rejection on the merits and dismissed.

Source: Achoy, 2024, with data from the Judiciary, 2025d.

Among the main historical demands of the migrant and refugee population to constitutional jurisdiction is the complaint about prolonged waiting for administrative procedures at the Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería (DGME, General Directorate of Migration and Foreigners). According to cases identified in constitutional jurisprudence, individuals have filed *recursos de amparo* (writs of protection) and habeas corpus because they waited more than five years for resolution of their refugee application. Previously, delay cases were resolved through access to constitutional justice. Currently, the Chamber refers them to ordinary courts, except in cases of people in vulnerable circumstances, as these are matters of legality. This means migrants and refugees must appear before the Administrative Court, where they face considerably lengthy proceedings (Chapter 6).

Removing Obstacles to Access to Justice Requires Interinstitutional Coordination and Cooperation with Civil Society

Obstacles to effective implementation of thematic judicial policies can be grouped into two categories. Some obstacles fall outside the judiciary's jurisdiction, and their elimination depends on other public institutions and civil society organizations intervening. Others, however, are the Judiciary's responsibility. This section focuses on those not under judicial control, especially in cases covered in depth by this Report, including efforts to expand access to justice for vulnerable groups such as women, migrants, and refugees (Chapters 4 and 6).

Investigations in offices responsible for implementing these policies emphasized that obstacles for individuals begin before they even reach the court office. These difficulties include discriminatory practices, long distances, economic factors, lack of information, and lack of free legal advice, among others (Diagram 1.5) Consequently, examining whether, in serving these populations, the judicial system is accompanied by other social institutions with expertise in the area—which would enable a more comprehensive approach that is not solely legal—became of great interest.

Of inventoried measures targeting the migrant and refugee population, only 72 (27.3%) are interinstitutional; that is, they were approved in coordination with other state, international, and private agencies, institutions, or offices (Chapter 6). In contrast, the inventory related to violence against women highlights that 75% of identified measures are interinstitutional in nature. This means the Judiciary has approved them in conjunction with other institutions involved in this issue. Joint approval resolves a general coordination problem, but not necessarily practical implementation problems. This is perhaps because part of intervention management depends on the willingness and commitment of other government entities to advance and continue them (Chapter 4).

Specialized judicial policies for the two populations under analysis indicate the need to coordinate actions with entities outside the Judiciary. However, visits to judicial offices revealed that, in practice, much of this coordination occurs in response to specific needs in certain territories but not in others, resulting from the non-systematic application of judicial policy guidelines and the absence of coordination with other institutions in some offices.

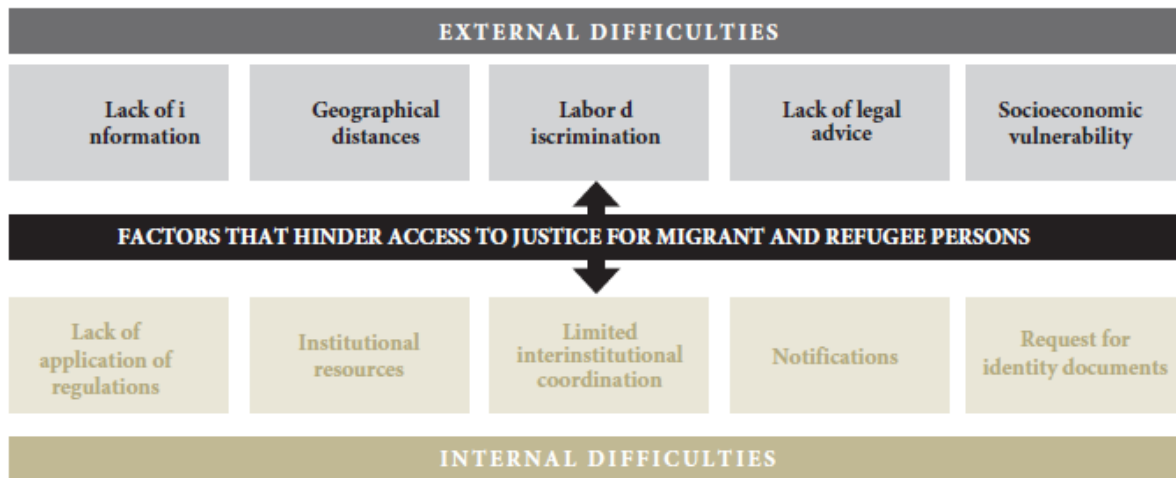
Lack of coordination at the local level occurs not only because courts fail to activate links with external actors, but also because these judicial offices are unaware of the scope of these policies (Chapter 6).

Conversely, Judiciary interacts with a group of national and international actors regarding assistance to the migrant and refugee population. It also participates in various interinstitutional bodies, such as the Foro de la Población Migrante de la Defensoría de los Habitantes de la República (Migrant Population Forum of the Office of the Ombudsman of the Republic). The Subcommittee on Access to Justice for this population is one of the few institutional commissions with broad and active participation by individuals outside the Judiciary, such as the Defensoría de los Habitantes (Office of the Ombudsman), the Dirección de Migración y Extranjería (Directorate of Migration and Foreigners), and social organizations. Regardless, the main problem is that these bodies lack power to compel or monitor policy compliance by judicial officials (Chapter 6).

Strengthening coordinated work with other public institutions and civil society organizations is one of the tasks recommended by this *Report*. Costa Rica's Patronato Nacional de la Infancia (National Child Welfare Institute), Instituto Nacional de la Mujer (National Women's Institute), Caja Costarricense del Seguro Social (Costa Rican Social Security Fund), and Dirección General de Migración y Extranjería (Directorate General of Migration and Foreigners) are some entities directly involved, but local government and educational centers can also participate in these actions to protect migrant populations.

Diagram 1.5

External and internal obstacles to access to justice for migrant and refugee populations, according to interviews



Source: Authors' elaboration based on interviews with judicial personnel in offices with high migrant populations.

Judicial Administration Does Not Create the Conditions for Expansion of Access to Timely and Effective Justice

This section analyzes obstacles to the effective implementation of thematic judicial policy that fall within the judicial system's scope and that hinder expected structural improvements in timely and effective justice. It encompasses a wide range of factors of varying scale and importance, from judicial personnel attitudes and mindsets, office organizational and operational styles, to general conditions such as the court-centric matrix of judicial administration (PEN, 2022), operational planning, and the institution's budgetary resources.

This *Report* focuses on obstacles to judicial policy implementation stemming from judicial governance, as these are structural factors the Judiciary can and should address to remove barriers. Each section in this chapter analyzes a specific obstacle. The first section documents that the highest judicial bodies are increasingly focused on managing purely administrative matters, reducing their capacity to monitor and ensure accountability for implementation progress. The second part demonstrates that, in this context, the Supreme Court of Justice opposed decentralizing Judicial Branch functions, despite approving most of the urgent reform program committed to after the *Cementazo* scandal in 2017. This creates a structural disadvantage for the Judicial Branch to focus on monitoring the policies it approves. The third part demonstrates that the Judicial Branch's budget recovery in the

previous three-year period was absorbed by real cost growth due to the need to invest in a new jurisdiction. The fourth and final segment highlights persistent problems with judicial personnel qualifications, a factor hindering implementation of innovative judicial policies approved by the Supreme Court of Justice in this century.

Judicial Administration Increasingly Focused on Bureaucratic Matters Has Limited Capacity to Oversee Policy Compliance

The higher echelons of judicial administration are responsible for overseeing and ensuring accountability for effective judicial policy implementation. To fulfill these functions, a basic prerequisite is having necessary time. However, time for oversight is limited in judicial administration. The *State of Justice Report* has repeatedly documented that the two highest Judicial Branch bodies are overwhelmed by strict administrative functions (PEN, 2015, 2017, 2020, 2022). These are collegiate governance bodies that have assumed tasks that, in private corporations, would be performed by vice presidents and, in cabinet ministries, would be like those performed by ministerial or deputy ministerial hierarchies.

In the 2021-2023 period, this situation worsened. Higher body administrative tasks increased considerably. In the Court's case, the number of cases heard or resolved rose from 665 in 2020 to 1,112 in 2023, almost doubling in a short period (Graph 1.22). For its part, the Superior Council went from 4,493 administrative matters processed in 2020 to 6,855 in 2023, an increase of nearly 50% (Chapter 2).

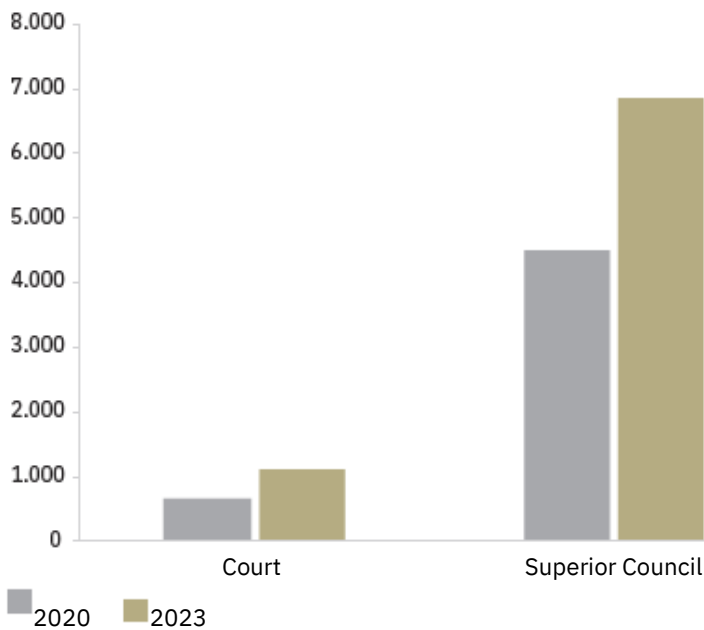
An important task of the Supreme Court of Justice is issuing opinions on legislative consultations regarding bills related to the justice system. During the period analyzed, 204 bills were reviewed. Many relate to the criminal sphere, as part of the political system's response to the homicidal violence crisis facing the country, some promoted by the Judiciary, either individually or as part of the meeting of the presidents of the Supreme Powers until 2024. Given that Court sessions are held only on Mondays, the average number of bills reviewed in 2023 was 4.5 per session. Additionally, the Court conducted 129 performance evaluations and 96 hirings (Chapter 2).

Another indicator of the Court's administrative work growth is the consistent approval of new working committees, chaired by and composed of magistrates, together with judicial and administrative staff and, in some cases, public representatives. Between 2020 and 2023, the number of committees increased from 97 to 107, respectively.

In 2017, as part of urgent reforms, eliminating, merging, or adapting some commissions, ensuring a more equitable distribution among magistrates, and having the Court Archive maintain an updated list of active commissions, among other recommendations, were proposed. Despite this, most of these suggestions have not been implemented, as they require political decisions and magistrate resignation from specific issues.

Graph 1.22

Administrative decisions of the higher bodies. 2020 and 2023



Source: Bogantes, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2024i.

Given this gridlock in the Judiciary's highest bodies, their limited capacity to follow up on judicial policies they approve is unsurprising. A clear indication of this situation is that the policy monitoring mechanism does not report results but rather selected process indicators, without providing a clear methodological justification for their relevance. Based on indicators, the Planning Department's evaluation model indicates that most policies meet their annual targets in full or exceed them by more than 90% (Poder Judicial, 2024g).

The *First State of Justice Report* (published in 2015) noted that the concentration of administrative functions within the Court represents an obstacle to efficient Judiciary management. This situation leads to inappropriate merging of tasks in a collegiate body that, by its nature, is not configured to assume executive functions. On one hand, it operates as a jurisdictional body and, on the other, it assumes managerial and governance roles, taking charge of ordinary Judiciary administrative affairs, as well as approval and evaluation of policies that govern it.

Administrative function concentration in the Full Court is problematic, as it distracts from its primary function: to issue jurisdictional decisions in each of its chambers, which continue to experience significant case volumes and durations. Several magistrates complain that work in commissions, councils, and the Court represents an excessive burden¹⁵.

In the next five years, a potentially unfavorable condition for judicial administration will emerge. The terms of offices of almost two-thirds of magistrates will expire¹⁶. Therefore, the Court faces significant reconfiguration in its composition, either due to current magistrates' retirement, lack of interest in continuing in office, or failure to be re-elected by the Legislative Assembly. The extent of this reconfiguration will be decisive.

The Refusal of Judicial Leadership to Decentralize Judicial Administration Reduces Its Ability to Follow Up on Policies Despite Progress in the Urgent Reform Program

During the political crisis the Judiciary faced in 2017 (the *Cementazo* case), the Full Court appointed 10 urgent commissions to draft reforms to judicial administration. The third and fourth editions of the State of Justice report followed up on this reformist momentum. By early 2025, most objectives proposed by these commissions had been presented and approved by the Court (Table 1.1).

¹⁵ See the discussion that arose in Plenary Court Session No. 42 on September 23, 2024, when a magistrate resigned from 11 committees of which he was a member, on the grounds that he needed to concentrate on his jurisdictional work, although he acknowledged he would remain on others where he was coordinator. In his speech, he complained about the delay in approving new regulations (on commissions) and the Court's lack of decision to organize this multiplicity of commissions and the excessive workload it represents for each magistrate. This complaint was echoed by other magistrates who spoke along similar lines.

¹⁶ In chronological order: Jorge Araya García, October 31, 2026; Julia Varela Araya, September 16, 2026; Patricia Solano Castro, November 6, 2026; Jorge Enrique Olaso Álvarez, November 14, 2026; Roxana Chacón Artavia, November 20, 2026; Paul Rueda Leal, June 26, 2027; Gerardo Rubén Alfaro Vargas, December 10, 2027; Damaris Vargas Vázquez, January 15, 2028; Sandra Zúñiga Morales, January 15, 2028; Anamari Garro Vargas, February 12, 2028; Fernando Cruz Castro, October 18, 2028; Orlando Aguirre Gómez, January 12, 2029; Luis Fernando Salazar Alvarado, December 3, 2029.

Two clarifications are important regarding the manuals, strategies, regulations, and other measures approved by the Court under its public commitment to carry out urgent reforms to judicial administration. First, this *Report* does not evaluate the quality and relevance of reforms. Significant differences existed between the products presented and those ultimately approved by judicial leadership, with a comparative analysis pending. Additionally, it would be necessary to consider whether the work presented to the Court is consistent with institutional and user needs. This section documents only quantitative compliance with the commitment, not qualitative assessment. This broad descriptive approach, however, reveals a significant finding discussed below. Second, monitoring the practical application of measures approved as part of the urgent reforms is difficult. Therefore, compliance indicated in Table 1.1 refers to whether the Court has approved proposed measures. It does not indicate implementation level.¹⁷

In the 2021-2024 period, two of the few objectives that remained pending after the pandemic were achieved: approval of the *Reglamento del Sistema de Carrera de la Defensa Pública* (Regulations of the Public Defense Career System), circular 199-2023, and presentation of the bill to reform the Judiciary's disciplinary regime in December 2024 (Table 1.2).

As of the completion of this report, five objectives remain unapproved or have been rejected by the Court. In one case, the Court rejected the proposal; the others have not been voted on, even though the final documents have been finalized. These include:

- Group 1: Methodology for magistrate appointment. Regarding the group's proposal for a Legislative Assembly appointment methodology or protocol, only three suggestions were voted to be sent to the Legislative Assembly as improvement proposals rather than as a draft bill (details in Chapter 3).
- Disciplinary Regime Group: Reform of Article 199, Ley Orgánica del Poder Judicial (LOPJ, Organic Law of the Judiciary), was not approved by the Court.
- Group 8: Corporate model. The Full Court has not voted on the proposal.

¹⁷ The pending items refer to some of the group's objectives; that is, to a portion of them. However, almost all commissions managed to approve some proposals submitted to the Court. Formally, these ten commissions are active according to Supreme Court Secretariat records.

- Group 9: Criminal law, new criminal offenses, and revision of existing ones related to corruption. The discussion was transferred to a commission composed of the Republic's powers, which was to develop a comprehensive proposal on criminal matters.
- Group 10: Public Defense. Regulations are still under magistrate review.

The only working commission that, eight years later, has not been approved by the Court is the one dedicated to judicial administration. The proposal for a Corporate Model for the Judiciary has not been voted on. The *Third State of Justice Report* analyzed "reserved domains" associated with judicial administration. These are areas in which demands for more democratic reforms face resistance, preventing any change. The practical application of this resistance to changing corporate governance affects oversight of judicial policies, since an overburdened Court lacks the capacity to adequately supervise implementation progress and make necessary adjustments to optimize execution.

This *Report* does not record any improvement in the mechanism for appointing magistrates in the Legislative Assembly, nor in administrative power concentration in the Full Court. These two aspects present resistance to hindering necessary reforms; in the first case, to strengthen the Judiciary's independence and credibility; and in the second, to improve administrative management of the institutional conglomerate, which is so necessary given the Court function saturation, as documented in the previous section.

Table 1.1

Summary of results^{a/} from the "PR1-PC-17 Program for Defining and Implementing Urgent and Necessary Reform Measures in Costa Rica's Judiciary". 2025

Group	Expected Products ^{b/}	Products Approved by the Court	Current Status
Group 1. Selection of justices with guarantees of independence and technical and ethical suitability	2	1 ^{b/}	Official letter sent to the Legislative Assembly with 3 recommendations
Group 2. Disciplinary regime	7	6	Internal regulations in force. Reform to Article 199 of the Organic Law of the Judiciary (LOPJ) not approved by the Court. Legislative changes sent to the Legislative Assembly. New product approved by the Court: <i>Law on the Sanctioning Regime for Public Servants and Members of Substitute, Eligible, and Merit Lists of the Judiciary</i> (Bill 24860).
Group 3. Codes of conduct for judicial personnel	2	2	Regulations in force.
Group 4. Initiation and procedure for permanent dialogue with civil society	2	2	Strategies in force.
Group 5. Establishment of the prosecutorial career system and requirements for the submission of the annual report of the Attorney General	2	1 ^{b/}	Draft bill sent to the Legislative Assembly.
Group 6. Judicial career	3	1 ^{b/}	Reforms to the Judicial Career Regulations in force. Legal changes sent to the Legislative Assembly.
Group 7. Performance evaluation	3	1 ^{b/}	Regulation in force. Amendment to Article 28 of the LOPJ was not approved by the Court.
Group 8. Plan to focus the Full Court on macro-level governance and definition of general policies	1	0	Proposal document filed without approval. Group has been resumed by Justice Damaris Vargas;

Group	Expected Products ^{b/}	Products Approved by the Court	Current Status
			products are under development.
Group 9. Comprehensive and Structural Reform Plan for the Criminal Process and the Fight Against Corruption	4	3	One law approved. Amendments to corruption-related criminal offenses have not been approved by the Court. Other changes sent to the Legislative Assembly.
Group 10. Public Defense Regulations	1	0	Draft document under consultation. Regulations under review by Justices Olaso and Sánchez.

a/ The original names of products were summarized in this table. They were taken from each working group's minutes.

b/ The original products were consolidated into a single final document.

Source: Author's elaboration, with data from Poder Judicial, n.d.

Rising Judicial Service Costs Hinder Expansion of Access to Justice

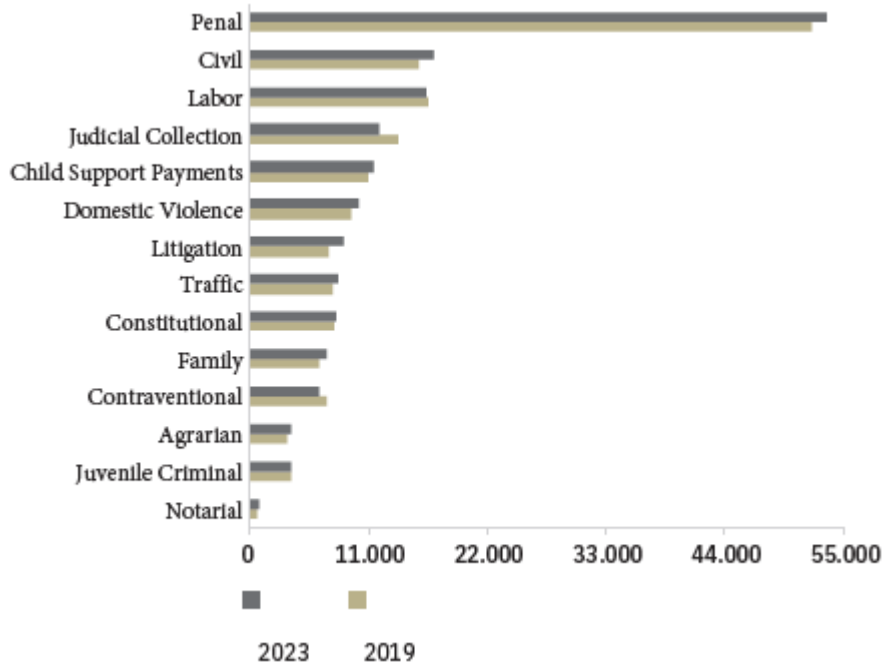
In 2023, the Judiciary experienced budgetary recovery following a decline the previous year. This recovery was modest, enabling a return to pre-pandemic levels. Despite its modesty, it represents, in principle, a favorable condition for implementing judicial policies aimed at expanding access to timely and effective justice, which require investment of new financial and human resources.

The budgetary improvement, however, was at least in part absorbed by rising costs to cover ordinary judicial operations and the implementation of a new jurisdiction. This cost increase occurred in ten of fourteen subject areas when comparing 2019 with 2023 (Graph 1.23) and was particularly significant in the two highest-volume areas: criminal and civil justice.

Criminal justice costs are by far the highest in the Judiciary and, as noted, continue rising. This creates pressure on other areas, some working directly with vulnerable populations, such as domestic violence and juvenile justice, which operate with lower costs. Cost per case filed varies significantly by judicial district. In the First Circuit of San José, the average cost for 2023 was 689,410 colones (almost two hundred thousand colones above average), while in the Third Circuit of San José, the figure was 226,663 colones (Chapter 2).

Graph 1.23

Judicial cost by subject matter of the Jurisdictional Program. 2019 and 2023
(millions of colones)



Source: Bogantes, 2025, with data from Poder Judicial, 2020a, 2024f.

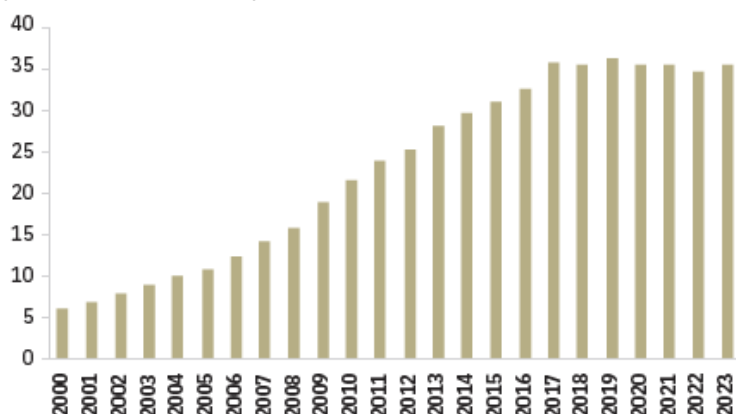
Average cost per employee also increased between 2022 and 2023, alongside the budget recovery: it rose from 34.5 million to 35.5 million colones over these two years, becoming the second-highest value for the 2000-2023 period, surpassed only by 35.7 million recorded in 2017 (Graph 1.24). According to Poder Judicial (2024d), in 2023, 81.2% of the total budget was allocated to personnel expenses.

Over the long term, this average exceeds that observed at the beginning of the century. Following the 2018 fiscal reform, the Judiciary controlled the rapid growth it experienced between 2000 and 2017, so that the average cost per employee in 2023 closely resembles that of 2018.

Graph 1.24

Average cost per judiciary employee^{a/}

(millions of colones)



a/ This indicator's value is calculated by dividing accrued justice expenditure by total judiciary personnel, including both regular and extraordinary positions.

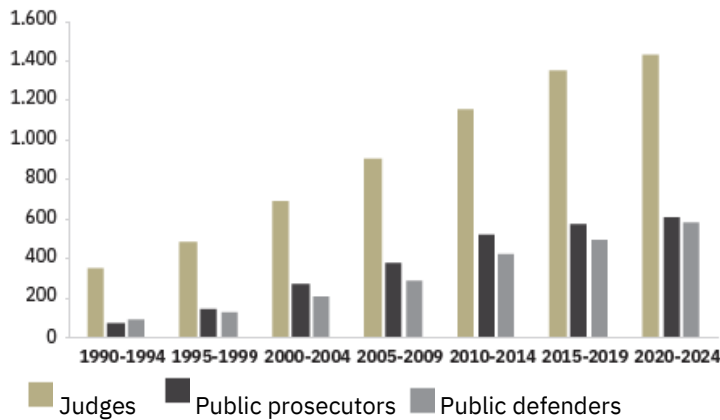
Source: Author's elaboration based on Poder Judicial data, 2024e.

The increase in cost per employee was primarily due to creation of 402 regular positions for the *Jurisdicción Especializada de Delincuencia Organizada* (JEDO, Specialized Jurisdiction on Organized Crime).¹⁸ Budgetary investment in this jurisdiction represents an unavoidable commitment for the Judiciary, given the legislative mandate, and an urgent public policy response to the threat posed by organized crime actors to Costa Rican society and democracy (PEN, 2024). However, this budget allocation reduces space for other judicial policies focused on expanding access to timely and effective justice, especially for vulnerable populations. It should be noted that the most frequent obstacles for these groups are a lack of information and legal assistance, both of which require significant resource investment per case.

The largest budget increase occurred in payroll, particularly in the number of judges (Graph 1.25). In 2023, they represented 53.8% of total positions, equivalent to an allocation of 27.2 judges per 100,000 inhabitants. Public prosecutors and public defenders accounted for 23.2% and 23% of total personnel, respectively, for a total of 11.7 prosecutors and 11.6 public defenders per 100,000 inhabitants.

¹⁸ Although this is the official name of the law, dogmatically there is only one jurisdiction (the state jurisdiction to resolve conflicts), which is subdivided into competencies. Criminal competency, in turn, can be subdivided into material sub-competencies. Referring to "jurisdiction" in this context does not contribute to legal education and technical precision and reinforces the error. Second, in comparative law, "special jurisdiction" is associated with special tribunals—that is, outside the rule of law framework Alvarado, 2001).

Graph 1.25
Personnel by position type^{a/}, by period



a/ The 1990-2002 period includes only regular positions; from 2003 onward, extraordinary positions are also included.

Source: Author's elaboration based on Poder Judicial data, 2024h.

Recent trends do not differ significantly from broader patterns observed throughout this century, which demonstrate medium-term capacity growth. While this is true, a significant shift has occurred: new resources are now allocated to specific purposes.

Personnel Qualification Deficiencies Limit Quality of Judicial Responses

Implementing judicial policies to expand access to justice requires trained and motivated personnel capable of serving populations with limited economic and cultural resources who face real or perceived safety threats. This is essential for converting policy mandates into adequate case handling and resolution.

Training and motivating staff require new financial investment to transfer knowledge and cultivate sensitivity to complex situations. The Judiciary's difficult budgetary situation has already been examined.

A second factor impedes effective policy implementation: the availability of qualified personnel with training and commitment to deliver justice under increasingly complex conditions. Several current workforce conditions undermine this objective.

Internal job mobility has been identified as a major challenge for specialization and training in particularly complex functions, as personnel tenure in positions may be short-lived, and onboarding new staff represents additional work and resources. According to a Human Resources Department study released in early 2024, 700 people had resigned from the

Judiciary (Sebiani, 2024). The *State of Justice Report (2020)* processed a database of personnel movements documenting thousands of movements annually (PEN, 2020), which also revealed certain patterns in specific positions and geographic areas.

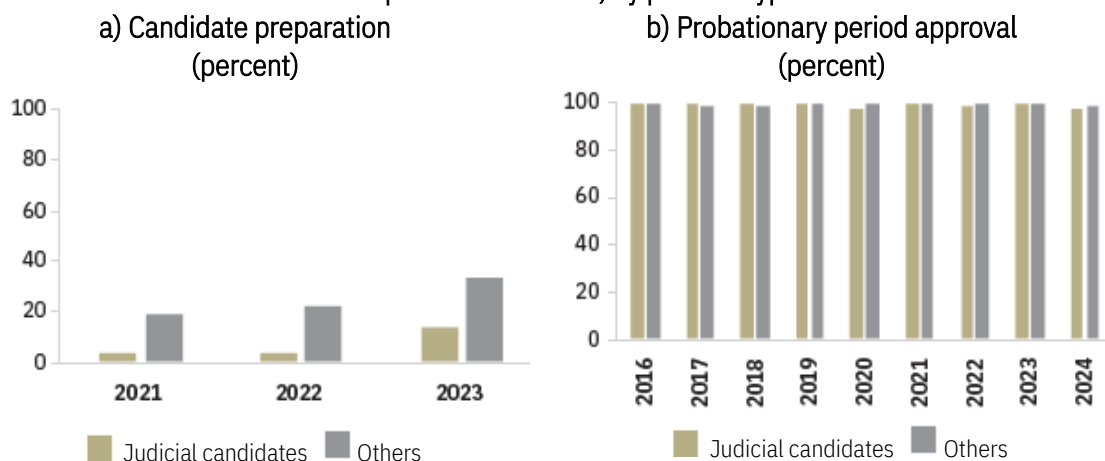
Although this study is difficult to replicate, basic human resource management indicators suggest that turnover may be increasing due to staff demotivation and deteriorating working conditions. This situation has been the subject of multiple complaints by internal judicial unions (Chacón, 2024a).

The State of Justice has monitored a series of human resource management indicators in all editions. These indicators cover distinct phases from recruitment to possible dismissal in cases of serious misconduct.

Two indicators warn of problems with the qualifications of recruited personnel. In 2023, only 13.9% of judicial candidates and 33.7% of candidates for "other positions" were qualified to assume the position—that is, they met all requirements (Graph 1.26 panel a). This lack of qualification was more pronounced in 2021 and 2022. Regardless, during the 2016-2024 period, virtually all individuals successfully completed their probationary period (Graph 1.26 panel b).

Graph 1.26

Personnel recruitment and selection process indicators, by position type. 2016-2024



Source: Author's elaboration based on Poder Judicial data, 2025f.

Finally, human resource management in the Judiciary appears to have ineffective mechanisms for correcting staff transgressions. Previous *Reports* had identified weaknesses and low sanctioning capacity. This *Report* reveals that sanctioning capacity continues

declining (7% of reported cases) and that reforms approved by the Court have not yet been fully implemented, many of which require legislative changes.

In the context of widespread organized crime and documented attempts to co-opt judiciary personnel, a disciplinary regime is crucial for protection against corruption and organized crime. The lack of sanctioning mechanisms also affects the implementation of access policies for vulnerable populations, as non-compliance with these standards carries no consequences, impacting service to these priority groups, given their vulnerability and urgent needs.

Closing Remarks

The main conclusions presented in the 2025 State of Justice Report, summarized in the three preceding findings, portray a remarkable moment in Costa Rican judicial history: a judiciary confronted with political attacks -mainly from the Executive Branch- seeking to delegitimize it; a citizenry increasingly critical of its performance; and a society facing escalating violence and threats from organized crime.

This political dynamic is not unique to Costa Rica. Across Latin America, narratives aimed at discrediting the Judiciary (trash-talking) abound as part of broader processes that erode democracy. Delegitimization efforts to undermine judicial independence diminish the guarantees that protect rights and freedoms, with the consequent risk that attacks against individuals, businesses, organizations, and academic centers become possible and may go unpunished.

The Judiciary's repeated inability to secure sustained improvements in the timeliness and quality of its service has, in this context, new political implications. These shortcomings are structural in nature: historical information indicates they have persisted since at least the early 2000s, as documented in previous editions of this Report. What is new is that the continued lack of improvements renders the Judiciary more vulnerable to attempts to weaken its legitimacy and independence.

The judicialization¹⁹ of social conflicts -manifested in high caseloads and increasing complexity and diversity of issues brought to the courts-, is likely continue in the coming years. This judicialization has also led the Legislative Assembly to assign additional responsibilities to the Judiciary. Unfortunately, this *Report* found that, at least in criminal justice, the institution's capacity to absorb this increasing demand is critically strained. Without significant organizational and managerial changes, delays in delivering timely and effective justice will continue to accumulate.

These improvements will not materialize simply through increased judicial spending, although that could be beneficial. In 2022 and 2023, the Judiciary managed to recover budgetary, human resources, and organizational capacities. However, the institution currently faces budgetary stagnation that will persist as long as fiscal policies to contain public spending remain in force.

This report documented significant efforts to innovate judicial policies to expand access to timely and effective justice for vulnerable populations. These efforts could drive improvements in service timeliness and quality, and the Judiciary should continue strengthening them. Nevertheless, their concrete impacts have clearly fallen short of expectations. This is partly due to factors outside the Judiciary's control. More fundamentally, it responds to internal obstacles created by a centralized judicial governance structure and by overwhelmed administrative management, which prevent the scaling of good practices across judicial services.

Once again, this *Report* calls for reforming the current "court-centric" structure of judicial governance²⁰. The Supreme Court of Justice should revisit the proposal for greater decentralization of corporate governance, which currently languishes. This reform is essential, alongside strengthening administrative management capable of diffusing institutional change across all areas and making strategic use of new technologies. Strengthening leadership and management does not require enormous creative effort but

¹⁹ The specialized literature terms this expansion of the Judiciary "judicialization," understood as a social phenomenon that transcends the Judicial Branch itself, referring to processes of expanding citizen rights, distributing power within the political system, and even international influences propagating certain justice reforms globally (Sieder et al., 2005; Sieder, 2020; Sotero et al., 2024; Wilson and Rodríguez, 2007).

²⁰ The defining characteristic of this design is judicial governance concentrated in the 22 magistrates comprising the Supreme Court of Justice. This body centralizes the functions of the Judiciary's highest political, jurisdictional, administrative, and oversight organ. As the *State of Justice Report (2020)* noted: it serves as the Board of Directors, the court of last resort, collective manager, and even institutional oversight body.

rather the implementation of existing judicial policies on openness and access to justice for vulnerable populations.

Promoting effective accountability and fostering two-way communication channels would generate tangible benefits for judicial management. Critical reflection about the institution and its strengthening must go hand in hand. This allows problems to be analyzed, discussed, measured, and, most importantly, resolved. A more open and strategic governance structure is better positioned to anticipate external changes that may conflict with judicial independence.

It is also essential to revisit technological innovations that yielded positive results during the pandemic. These tools have evolved considerably due to the strong emergence of artificial intelligence in support of justice administration. A user-centered approach must incorporate all possible means to bring justice closer to citizens' needs.

The upcoming Legislative Assembly could catalyze change, as it will be responsible for the appointment or re-election of at least 13 magistrates. These appointment processes must be substantially improved to meet international standards and ensure the qualifications of those elected. Additionally, they represent an opportunity for rigorous accountability and advancement of long-delayed democratic reforms to judicial governance.

We hope that the 2025 *State of Justice Report* will foster, in a climate of democratic deliberation, more informed debates that strengthen the democratic rule of law: the core mission guiding our applied research efforts.

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Annex 1.

Table 1.2
Comparison of judiciary management indicators, by three-year periods. 2002-2023

Indicator	2002	2005	2008	2011	2014	2017	2020	2023	Period average
Financial indicators									
Per capita budget (dollars)	39,8	45,6	65,5	114,7	137,3	164,4	158,4	172,1	112,2
Real cost per case completed (thousands of colones) ^{a/}	338,3	334,8	409,2	481	607,1	807,9	788	704,7	558,9
Human resources indicators									
Judicial Branch personnel per 100.000 inhabitants	167	181	216	230	238	247	246	249	221,8
Judges per 100.000 inhabitants	17	19	22	25	26	27	28	27	23,8
Prosecutors per 100.000 inhabitants	7	8	9	11	12	12	11	12	10,3
Public defenders per 100.000 inhabitants	5	6	7	8	10	10	10	12	8,5
Demand indicators									
Net incoming cases per first-instance and single-instance judge	788	677	692	659	545	554	468	496	609,9
Litigiousness	115	114	130	143	125	133	115	117	124
Outcome indicators									
Net cases completed per first-instance and single-instance judge	724	663	613	608	514	452	427	485	560,8
Active cases per first-instance and single-instance judge	786	622	629	738	847	921	1.116	1.060	839,9
Pending cases per first-instance and single-instance judge	640	467	471	570	561	584	725	632	581,3
Number of judgments per first-instance and single-instance judge	1.132	298	192	159	153	174	172	158	304,8

Source: Authors' elaboration with data from Poder Judicial, 2024e.

Annex 2.

Table 1.3

Detailed results^{a/} from the "PR1-PC-17 Program for Defining and Implementing Urgent and Necessary Reform Measures in Costa Rica's Judiciary". 2025

Expected Products ^{b/}	Products Submitted	Products Approved
Group 1. Selection of justices with guarantees of independence and technical and ethical suitability		
1.1. Appointment protocol for high court justices	✓	Δ
1.2. Proposal of constitutional and legal reforms from the Commission on Procedures and Requirements for the Selection of Justices	Merged into a single document	
Group 2. Disciplinary regime		
2.1. Integration of the Labor Relations Commission	✓	✓
2.2. General guide for the unification of the administrative disciplinary procedure	✓	✓
2.3. Proposal of "Practical Rules of the Judicial Inspection Tribunal"	✓	✓
2.4. Proposal of "Practical Rules for the exercise of disciplinary authority by the Supreme Court of Justice"	✓	✓
2.5. Proposal of reforms to the Chapter on the Disciplinary Regime and related provisions of the Organic Law of the Judiciary	✓	✓
2.6. Code of Ethics	✓	✓
2.7. Protocol for virtual oral hearings in disciplinary matters ^{c/}	✓	✓
Group 3. Conduct protocols for judicial personnel		
3.1. Regulation on the 'Prevention, Identification, and Proper Management of Conflicts of Interest in the Judiciary'	✓	✓
3.2. Bangalore Principles of Judicial Conduct	✓	✓
Group 4. Initiation and procedure for permanent dialogue with civil society		
4.1. Strategy to formalize permanent dialogue with civil society	✓	✓
4.2. Strategy to formalize permanent dialogue with professional associations/unions	✓	✓
Group 5. Establishment of the prosecutorial career system and requirements for the Attorney General's annual report		
5.1. Draft bill for the Prosecutorial Career of the Public Prosecutor's Office ^{d/}	✓	✓
5.2. Requirements for the annual report of the Attorney General	Merged into a single document	
Group 6. Judicial career		
6.1. Proposal of urgent reforms to the judicial career	✓	✓
6.2. Proposal to strengthen the Initial Training Program for aspiring judges (FIAJ)	Merged into a single document	
6.3. Proposal of urgent guidelines for the Judicial Career System	Merged into a single document	
Group 7. Performance evaluation		
7.1. Regulation of the Integrated Performance Evaluation System	✓	✓
7.2. Proposed amendment to Article 28 of the Organic Law of the Judiciary and the Judicial Service Statute	✓	×
7.3. Draft bill with partial reforms to the Organic Law of the Public Prosecutor's Office	Merged into document 7.1	
Group 8. Plan to focus the Full Court on macro-level governance and the definition of general policies		
8.1. Corporate Governance Model Plan	✓	×
Group 9. Comprehensive and Structural Reform Plan for the Criminal Process and the Fight Against Corruption		
9.1. Bill on Corporate Criminal Liability	✓	✓
9.2. Bill to improve the prosecution of members of the Supreme Powers ^{e/}	✓	✓
9.3. Bill to reform various criminal offenses related to corruption and organized crime ^{f/}	✓	×
9.4. Analysis and systematization of cybercrime applied to corruption offenses	✓	✓

Expected Products ^{b/}	Products Submitted	Products Approved
Group 10. Public Defense Regulations		
10.1. Regulations for the Career System in the Public Defense Service	√	X

a/ The original names of products were summarized in this table. They were taken from each working group's minutes.

b/ The nomenclature used to evaluate the products is as follows:

Δ means it was discussed, voted on but rejected

X means it has not been fulfilled

"..." means it was presented and withdrawn for subsequent review

√ means the proposal developed by the commission has been presented for consideration by the body that must make the formal decision to approve or reject it. In both columns, means the proposal was formally approved by the body with corresponding authority and, consequently, forms part of the regulatory framework governing judiciary operations. It should be noted that this classification does not assess the degree of policy implementation, but rather the status of the approval or rejection process of a proposal.

c/Poder Judicial, 2020b.

d/Asamblea Legislativa, 2018.

e/Asamblea Legislativa, 2020.

f/Poder Judicial, 2021.

Source: Authors' elaboration with data from Poder Judicial, n.d., and Sibaja, 2022.

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