



# QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT INTERVIEWS WITH OFFICERS



May 2024

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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

This study focused on conducting an in-depth evaluation between key community segments and internal representatives of PRPB to validate the conclusions of the quantitative phase of 2022, through interviews with 39 participants from 7 levels of command.

This study focused on different internal representatives of the Puerto Rico Police, seeking to corroborate the results of the quantitative phase executed during 2022.

## **2. METHODOLOGY AND SAMPLE OF THE STUDY**

The study was conducted between December 2023 and March 2024, using a qualitative methodology, in order to delve into the experiences and opinions of the participants. 39 in-depth virtual interviews were conducted, each lasting approximately one hour. In contrast to the group methodology adopted with the community, the approach with the members of the institution sought to give space to individual voices, aiming to avoid internal power relations (dictated by gender or participants' rank) from silencing diverse voices or controversial opinions.

The sample composition sought to delve into the differences dictated by geographical location (those in San Juan-Metro vs Voices from other areas of the Island) as well as the different ranks that make up the institution. Likewise, the participation of women was ensured within all ranks, as a particular focus on their experience with a gender differential approach was explored. Although individuals from seven different ranks were included, the analysis grouped participants into 3 groups: Agents, Middle Ranks (Sergeants and Lieutenants), and High Ranks (Inspectors,

Commanders, Lieutenant Colonels, and Colonels). Moving forward, the analysis will be structured under this grouping. Below is the detailed composition of the sample:

**Table 1 - Sampling distribution 1**

	Analysis Groups	TARGET	#PARTICI PANTS	Men	Women	SJ Metro Region	Other Regions
1	Agents	Agent	15	10	5	8	7
2	Mid-Level Supervision	Sergeant	10	7	3	5	5
3		Lieutenant	3	1	2	1	2
4	High- Level Supervision	Inspector	6	4	2	1	5
5		Commander	2	2	0	0	2
6		Lieutenant Colonel	3	3	0	2	1
7		Colonel	1	1	0	0	1
		<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>23</b>

The interview format lent itself to opening up a space for honest and trusting dialogue between the interviewer and most of the participants; while some kept their responses in a neutral and formal tone, many felt enough trust to share personal experiences and denounce internal behaviors of the institution with which they were dissatisfied.

### **3. RESULTS**

#### **3.1. Media consumption**

Due to the privileged access to information provided by the institution, the majority of interviewees report using internal reports they receive via email or through meetings to stay informed about what is happening in the country. Likewise, social media was cited as one of their main sources of information, with Instagram and Facebook standing out as the main sources of consultation. Traditional media remains relevant for several individuals, highlighting TV programs such as Wapa and Primera Hora.

### **3.2. Main concerns among the interviewees**

Regardless of their rank or place of origin, all interviewees highlight the current state of uncertainty regarding their retirement plans as their main mid-term concern. Several of them have been in the institution for more than 30 years, and know that their retirement age is approaching; however, they feel that the guarantees that were offered to them in the past will not be met. This is expressed by an agent working outside the San Juan area: 'Right now, I have been in the Police for 32 years. I am waiting to retire peacefully, hoping that this retirement will be at least 50% of my salary, because right now it is at 29% of my salary'.

There are feelings of sadness, betrayal, and mistrust towards the institution due to the lack of clarity around the conditions under which they will receive their pension. Many highlight that those years of sacrifice, even risking their own lives, are not rewarded within this scenario. This has forced some to take on additional jobs to supplement their income.

### **3.3. Motivations for joining the Police**

Interviewees remember that, at the time of joining (most refer to the 1990s), the Police had a high prestige within the citizenry. It was perceived as a revered institution, and being part of it generated a feeling of pride and respect from others. This is something that, for several of the interviewees, no longer happens: the Police is no longer considered an aspirational place to work, and its members do not receive the same respect as before. For several, the institution's role models came directly from their families, as several reported having male figures (fathers, uncles, grandfathers) who were part of the Police at some point. They also remember seeing very positive representations of the institution on television, which contributed to the intention to apply. Most did not have a history with the Army, and entered the Academy directly after completing their high school or at the beginning of their university studies.

Some participants, on the other hand, joined the Police in recent years due to a restricted job market: some lost their previous jobs and saw stability in the Police, others came from security jobs and saw more stability in the institution. Others, on the other hand, entered motivated by the desire to work closely with the community. These individuals entered when the institution's reputation had suffered some blows, unlike those who entered at a very young age.

Two main motivations are highlighted by the interviewees: on the one hand, salary and pension conditions; on the other hand, the opportunity to work directly with the community. Referring to the former, the interviewees mention that many were attracted by the salaries available at the time and the promise of a guaranteed pension at a relatively young age. At the time, they recount, being a police officer was perceived as an alternative to having a guaranteed stable job at a young age, with a decent income and good pension conditions. This explains the widespread dissatisfaction that many currently feel about their current retirement conditions, as it feels like an unfulfilled promise. Likewise, the participants emphasize their interest in working with the community, expressed by members of all ranks. It is a job that has brought them personal satisfaction and a sense of pride:

*I can say that it is a profession that gives a lot of satisfaction, sometimes the good things are not taught in the media and there is nothing more beautiful than receiving that feedback from the community. Sometimes advising, guiding the new talents that are emerging. It is something that generates satisfaction (Commander, F, Rest of the Island)*

### **3.4. Entry process to the Police**

Most of the interviewees joined the Police Force when they were quite young, just over 18 years old, and have been in the Institution for over 20 years. In it, they have reached full adulthood, formed families, and structured their lives and their life projects. Several recognize that they did not have enough emotional preparation to face many of the demands of the position, because their preparation and induction process, at that time, left many issues to be learned on the street,

without real background preparation. However, they remember their time at the Academy fondly, even if they had to face challenging conditions due to tough physical training, a system that many describe as quasi-military.

The preparation was composed of demanding physical training, something that several highlights has significantly decreased in the current preparation process. In these trainings, participants recall arduous days of physical preparation, often in the early hours of the morning. These were complemented by practical learning in shooting techniques and weapon handling. Most consider that this rigor should be reinstated in current training processes. As a Commander (Rest of the Island) recounts: “At the time of entry, it was a quasi-military body, very different now. At that time, it was merely one or another kind of psychology. But basically, it was a lot of physical training, use of firearms, and laws”.

Regarding theoretical preparation, the interviewees remember receiving general preparation on topics of political science, criminal justice, the use of force, and crisis intervention. However, they acknowledge that knowledge of laws is limited and restricted to some specific topics. This is how an Agent from the San Juan-Metro area recalls it: “The Police provide knowledge of the Law, but it is not a comprehensive knowledge. They do not directly immerse you in the Penal Code, they paraphrase what you will use”. For many of the interviewees, especially those with more than 25 years in the Police, the current preparation offered by the Academy has shifted mainly towards the theoretical element, something they do not view favorably.

### **3.5. Benefits and drawbacks of belonging to the Police**

Even if there is some discomfort about the current working conditions at the institution (mainly affected by uncompetitive salaries, long unpaid overtime hours, and few guarantees regarding their pension), there is a widespread feeling of gratitude and affection towards the Police. For many, their life projects have materialized thanks to the institution, which has allowed them to provide well-being and stability to their families. This is expressed by a Second Lieutenant (Rest

of the Island): “I honestly feel grateful to the Police. Everything I have, I owe it to the Police. It has been my only job. Now the salary has improved a lot, I appreciate that. The Police has made me a woman, I have grown, I have matured”.

However, the Police has also meant to the interviewees sacrificing quality time with their families, changing schedules that restrict their ability to make future plans with their loved ones, high exposure to violent situations, and unpaid overtime. This situation is exacerbated by the widespread shortage of personnel within the institution, something that for most is unlikely to be resolved unless salary and pension offers improve. Some interviewees, mainly among the higher ranks, highlight that respect from the citizens has decreased significantly: they no longer feel the admiration that they used to receive from the community.

### **3.6. To be a Police officer and a woman**

Although Police Reform has made conscious efforts to reduce gender-based discrimination, the lived experience of the interviewed women differs from their male counterparts. Progress has been recognized, and discriminations no longer occur openly as they used to in previous years, but this does not mean that it has disappeared: it has only transformed into more discreet and covert forms.

When investigating the subject, the perception between men and women differs significantly: from the male experience, most of the irregular situations have been corrected, and both sexes work on equal terms; from the female perspective, there is a much more critical view of the discriminations that they still face. Some are considered trivialities, as expressed by one of the Agents interviewed (San Juan-Metro): “The Police is sexist. In every way, sometimes even in the way one is dressed. If there is a Sergeant or Lieutenant, they want to override the instructions she gives”. Others are more structural. Some of the women in the middle and high ranks report having difficulty with some of their male subordinates in gaining their respect and getting them to obey orders, something that their male colleagues do not face.



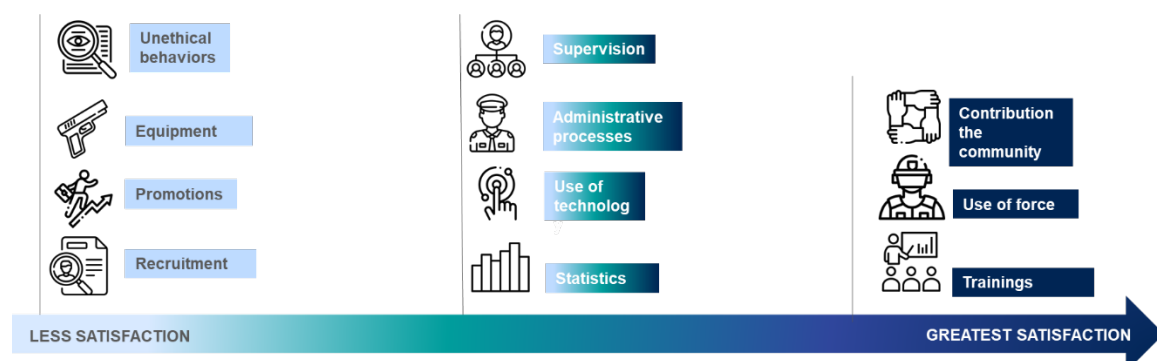
Due to their minority status within the institution, women faced more structural challenges through their entry process into the Police. Several of them report that the shared spaces in the Academy did not provide them with the privacy they would have wanted, within a highly masculinized environment and without infrastructure for them. Likewise, many remember having to face questioning from their own family and institution members when they expressed interest in joining they had to constantly justify their decisions and their presence. The institution's dynamics also led them to sacrifice some of their roles as mothers, especially when their children were still young and had to be cared for by other relatives. Discrimination can be exacerbated for those women who are also part of the LGBTIQ+ community.

In general, the interviewed women agree that differential treatment has not disappeared, but transformed into forms of indirect and hidden aggression, as expressed by a Commander (Rest of the Island):

*Now they do it in a covert way. Now it's not like before: 'because you are a woman' No! You're not going to hear that; you feel it in the treatment. If you want to climb the corporate ladder, for example, and you submit a folder with all your accomplishments, your merits and you expect a clean and fair competition, that's not the case. If you are pleasing the boss, you get promoted. And these are things you can't appeal. Many decisions fall on authority, and you have no way. You are always relegated. It's a covert discrimination.*

### 3.7. Evaluation of the elements of the Puerto Rico Police

Illustration 1 - Summary of assessment of elements of the Puerto Rico Police 1



Talking about the elements of the Police, a good assessment of the training processes and Use of Force Protocol is observed, because of the Reform implementation. Likewise, although with certain restrictions due to staff shortage, good initiatives around community work are highlighted. Improvements are recognized in the management of statistics, access and use of technology, administrative processes, and supervision structures, although with uneven progress between regions (greater efficiency/availability in San Juan). The main opportunities for improvement are still seen in the investigation of unethical behaviors and promotion processes (internal power dynamics persist), as well as in recruitment and quality of equipment (structural limitations and budget constraints). Below is a detail of each explored element:

#### 3.7.1. Recruitment program

The interviewees acknowledge that there have been many improvements in recruitment, expressed from the content of the training provided to new members and the flexibility in physical training. As mentioned before, some regret that physical training has been reduced, as it has lowered the standards regarding the physical fitness of new recruits.

There is no consensus on the ideal minimum age: while some believe that the Police should set the minimum age at 18 years (expressed mostly by those who work outside of San Juan-Metro), others agree that raising it to 21 years is appropriate, because the job requires a level of emotional maturity that is difficult to have at such a young age. Something similar happens with the use of the polygraph: for several, it is an unnecessary requirement that closes many doors to those who want to join the Police. Referring to the minimum age, a Sergeant from the San Juan area comments: “Of the requirements, I would change the age. Because we have the Police Athletic League, with young people up to 18 years old involved in the Police. Having to wait 4 years to be able to join the Police, these young people start studying, and they leave the Police field”.

In the face of this issue, many highlight that it is of little use for the quality of the training to be good if the salary and pension conditions are not attractive enough to attract new members: for

them, this is the main barrier that the institution must face to improve the recruitment process and overcome the current staff shortage.

### 3.7.2. Training programs

The improvements in the content of the training received by new members stand out: it is much more professional and systematized compared to what they received at the time, and for most it has meant improvements in the professionalism of the institution. The implementation of the Reform has brought constant training sessions, delivered in person and virtually, which keeps knowledge current and allows members to have a more technical use of weapons and other tools. This, in addition to protecting the public, provides Agents and middle ranks with greater security in the execution of their work, as priority is given to dialogue rather than escalating to responses with the use of weapons.

However, the shortage of personnel makes it difficult for the Police to have sufficient presence on the streets on training days, especially mentioned by those who work in the San Juan-Metro area. For some, especially those in middle and high ranks, these processes can be repetitive and reduce their ability to act on a daily basis. Overall, although efforts to professionalize the police force are appreciated, structural weaknesses in terms of insufficient personnel make training days an additional challenge to fulfill daily tasks.

### 3.7.3. Equipment

The increase in the use of more professional equipment (mainly tasers and Bodycams) is one of the main improvements as a result of Police Reform. The use of this equipment provides greater security to the Agents and allows interventions with less use of lethal force. However, these effects have not been evenly distributed throughout the territory: the use of these equipment is more widespread in the San Juan-Metro area, where the stations have been better equipped, while access in other areas of the Island is still limited.

On the other hand, the interviewees highlight the limited funds for maintaining the patrols, or they have access to old vehicles that are poorly adapted to the terrain, especially in areas outside San Juan. This has caused many of them to be stuck in the stations, sometimes without even having enough resources for daily fuel. A similar situation has been expressed around the stations: they do not have the required infrastructure for proper functioning, and some do not even have expendable material for daily activities. This is reported both for San Juan and for other areas of the country. In general, there seems to be a deficiency in the distribution of resources. This is expressed by a Sergeant in the San Juan area:

*Right now, in this Division I have tools and resources. In other Departments, no, they are not there. I can assure you that I was working with life jackets that were not adequate. There was no fuel to go out. The equipment was not the required one.*

#### 3.7.4. Promotions processes

Participants recognize the advances in the promotion process since exams are implemented as a selection criterion. This is highlighted especially by Agents and Middle Rank Supervisors, who consider that the process has been much standardized and provides more opportunities for promotion, without requiring personal connections within the Institution. As an improvement observation, it is pointed out that the frequency of these exams is low and inconsistent, limiting promotion opportunities for Agents mainly. Likewise, some comments of favoritism persist in the exam grading process and result delivery, mainly expressed by interviewees from other areas of the Island.

The main criticism expressed in this element is the favoritism that persists among the upper echelons. Once a person becomes a Captain and wishes to continue climbing, the evaluation criteria become subjective again (determined by the upper echelons of power). This detracts credibility from the system, as interviewees believe that it still depends heavily on the candidate's

personal connections, detracting objectivity from the process. This is expressed by an Inspector who works outside of San Juan:

*From Sergeant to Captain, it's by examination. As for that, it's fine But from Inspector to Colonel, unfortunately there is a lot of favoritism. You can stay your whole life as a Captain, and from there you don't move up anymore. They do some interviews, which are subjective. Because you think one way, I think another, and there is no objective answer. Exams are objective.*

Finally, it is also important to highlight that, although the rise of women to high-level supervisory positions has improved, visible gender differences in proportions persist, and as mentioned, not all members respond positively to having female figures as direct supervisors.

#### 3.7.5. Administrative processes

The interviewees acknowledge that the digitization of many processes has streamlined administrative procedures, as well as making them more reliable and systematized. This is more prominent in San Juan, where access to better internet service is more common. In addition, the Reform has reduced response times in administrative processes, something that participants of all ranks applaud. These advances are limited by the shortage of personnel, which limits the available time for members to close processes and avoid being penalized. Likewise, the platform used to complete complaints is not available for a period of time, which generates reprocessing and delays in the processes. This is how a Sergeant, working outside the San Juan area, describes it:

*The Reform establishes set hours (to make the reports). But if I don't have a system, then I do it by hand: they also don't accept it. So, what's the deal? There is no system, I write it down, and they still don't accept it. And I am responsible for all of that, so that I don't receive an administrative complaint. And that is happening in all districts.*

There remains some distrust towards the impartiality in the processing of certain administrative procedures, expressed mostly by those residing outside of San Juan. They believe that the processes often take longer than necessary, and sometimes they do not yield satisfactory results. This is expressed mostly by High-Ranking Supervisors.

#### 3.7.6. Supervision

In general, advances in supervision processes are recognized after the implementation of the Reform; in many stations, there is sufficient staff ensuring constant presence of supervisors and with a reasonable workload for them. Many of these supervisors are receptive to improvements and have a good willingness to work as a team, generating a positive work environment.

In opposition, there are other stations (more common in areas outside of San Juan) where the shortage of staff does not allow for a complete supervision structure, or with a high workload. Also, some interviewees (more mentioned in the Rest of the Island) highlight that there are supervisors who are very uncompromising and authoritarian, having difficulty delegating to middle ranks and Agents. The middle ranks of supervision find themselves trapped in a dynamic where they do not receive enough autonomy from the higher ranks, nor are they fully respected by the Agents. This is how an Agent working in the San Juan area describes it:

*There are bosses with enough knowledge and flexibility. But there are others who lack both the knowledge and humanity. This Agency is supposed to be based on humanistic philosophy. They emphasize this a lot at the Academy. But in truth, some understand, and others are stuck in the old school.*

#### 3.7.7. Research on unethical behavior

This element is one of the most criticized by the interviewees: the majority, both in San Juan and the rest of the Island and in all ranges, considers it biased and untrustworthy. Despite the Reform designating a structure intended to foster confidential and efficient reporting, several anecdotes

reveal that those who have resorted to it describe the process as unresponsive and causing much frustration, as they did not find answers to their requests. Some even report having been punished by the institution (through transfers or suspensions, for example).

The main shortcoming, for most people, is that the system continues to be managed by individuals internal to the institution; this reduces its credibility and objectivity, as well as rarely respecting the confidentiality of complaints. In the best cases, the complaint is not addressed. In the worst cases, the complainant is stigmatized by the institution's senior management and punished, creating an atmosphere of fear and helplessness in the face of this type of abuse of power. This is how an Agent from the San Juan-Metro area, who was involved in one of these complaint processes, describes it:

*We had a director, he was creating oppression among Agents and Supervisors. And no one realized it. We informed supervisors about the treatment, the workplace harassment we were suffering. Nothing was done by talking to supervisors. We talked to Captains, they said they were going to investigate nothing was done. I decided to write a letter, since no one will dare and possibly they will send me to Vieques [...] they moved me to a working-class neighborhood [...]. Then they completely blamed me. Today, that Director is no longer there, but they also kicked me out. That director is still working elsewhere [...]. The Police showed me that I cannot help any colleague who has any problem.*

#### 3.7.8. Use of technology

The main advantage that the interviewees highlight about the use of technology is a widespread use of laptops throughout the stations, although with greater availability of equipment in San Juan. These provide greater agility and interconnectivity between regions, facilitated by the digitalization of administrative processes. In addition, complaints are more precise, and their proper registration is more guaranteed. However, as already mentioned, the platform is not available at all hours, generating reprocessing and delays. This is reported by a Lieutenant in the

Rest of the Island: “Right now the system failure is part of the complaints platform. From 12 to 3am you cannot make reports, because the system crashes. It's a system failure”.

Regarding patrols, they have been modernized: some have been replacing laptops with an internal computerized system, but most consider laptops much more convenient. These patrols have been implemented mainly in San Juan, once again leaving other regions lagging behind.

#### 3.7.9. Use of Force Protocol

One of the main victories of Police Reform, for most interviewees, is the implementation of a clear protocol for the Use of Force. This provides protection to the community and to the Police Officer themselves, as previously their response to situations involving certain violence or danger was entirely at their discretion: this exposed the Police member not only to a higher possibility of using violence, but also to allegations of misconduct. In this sense, the Reform has managed to provide a greater standardization of action plans according to the situations that arise, leaving the use of weapons and violence as a last resort. Contrary to what many in the public believe, the Police have welcomed these guidelines with open arms.

Those who express a certain dissatisfaction with this protocol, which are a minority, consider that the citizenry has lost a certain respect and fear towards the institution, enabling them to take violent attitudes towards the Police under the excuse that they cannot act in retaliation for the protocol. The fear of being reported and sanctioned has also created a certain reluctance to use force, even when the situation warrants it. For some interviewees, this straitjacket has made some members prefer to avoid using force under any circumstances and thus save themselves the possibility of being penalized. This is observed by an Agent in the San Juan area: “The Police are completely ceasing to use force to avoid paperwork. They prefer to receive a hit, risk not using anything for fear of being fired, being suspended, or losing my salary”.



This testimony accounts for another major critique towards the Use of Force Protocol, and it is the bureaucratic work that most find excessive. The institution, already constrained by a shortage of personnel and exhausted staff, must add additional work to its members whenever an incident involving Use of Force occurs, adding hours of work to the Police Officer, especially because many tasks generate duplication. This is mainly mentioned by middle management ranks.

#### 3.7.10. Working with the community

The Reform introduced structures that have visibly benefited the institution's engagement with the community, as is the case of the SARA model (Community Police). This approach seeks to create bonds of trust and collaboration between Officers and citizens, which also serves as a preventive action against crimes in the area. The model works positively when implemented, but the shortage of personnel in the institution limits its effectiveness. These processes can also be negatively affected by some supervisors, who do not give the program the necessary relevance and leave it in the background.

Another structure that is highly valued is the Police Athletic League, which helps engage younger individuals within the institution. Some of the interviewees, in fact, started their police career through this model. These are initiatives that, for the interviewees, contribute a lot to fostering good relationships with communities and contribute to a more positive perception of police presence in certain areas, especially those that are more vulnerable and with high crime rates.

#### 3.7.11. Statistics and access to information

Thanks to the digitization of many processes, the reliability and access to statistics have improved in a widespread manner. While some still consider that the reported information is not entirely transparent, all the interviewees acknowledge that the information is available to the public and is up to date. The main mistrust is seen in cases of underreporting of some crimes, especially when they are of a violent nature or with a differential focus (such as femicide or hate

crime). This is how a Lieutenant (Rest of the Island) describes it: “If we shoot at a house and there are 10 people, it is assumed that there are 10 assaults. But the reality is that as a district Commander, I do not report 10 assaults, I report one. Because that increases the crimes in my district”. Cases of underreporting are mentioned more by interviewees who work in areas outside of San Juan-Metro.

### **3.8. Knowledge and Assessment of Police Reform**

All the interviewees showed knowledge of the context in the face of the emergence of the Reform, as well as its content and objectives. In general, most opinions regarding the implementation of the Reform were very positive: the majority considered it as support for the work of the Police, providing them with a more solid and clear infrastructure in the implementation of their tasks. This is how an Agent from the San Juan area describes it:

*Before the Police used to act spontaneously. The old colleagues always comment, 'before we would have worked it in a different way' And what was that way? Well, you already know with punches and slaps. Not anymore, now we have the use of force.*

They recognize that, prior to the Reform, abuses of power were more frequent, especially towards minority and vulnerable populations (mainly migrants and the LGBTQ+ community). In summary, it is acknowledged that the Reform was necessary and has brought positive effects to the institution It has meant:

- For citizens: The Reform has brought a greater respect for their human rights, avoiding violent incidents whenever possible, and opting for strategies with less impact It has also contributed to providing a more efficient and transparent service to the citizenry, with fewer biases towards vulnerable populations and minority groups.
- For the Police Officer: The Reform has given an additional protection network to the Police officer, both through more professional tools and better training to use them, as well as

legal structures for the execution of their tasks within a delimited and more objective framework (increased supervision, use of digitized reports, constant training to stay up-to-date in knowledge, guidelines for implementing protocols, and safe spaces to report irregular situations).

#### 3.8.1. The positive aspects of the Reform

The highlight of the Reform is in the professionalization of the institution. This translates into tools that protect the individual and provide more range of action, as well as a clear regulation that stipulates how and when to use them. It has also brought greater management of technical knowledge in laws, management of complex situations, and use of specialized equipment. In general, the Reform has corrected instances where the personal judgment of each Agent or supervisor did not allow the institution to provide a comprehensive and equal service.







#### 3.8.2. The criticized Reform

The main drawback of the Reform, for several interviewees, is the increase in bureaucratic processes in their daily work. This sometimes discourages the use of certain procedures, such as the Use of Force, and adds even more work to people who are already exhausted and somewhat demotivated. Some also believe that the Reform has caused the public to lose a certain respect for the institution, leading to greater violent incidents against police officers. There are some cases of supervisors resisting fully implementing the Reform guidelines and maintaining the old school style, which still leads to abuses of power.

#### 3.8.3. Map of emotions

Contrary to the public's belief that the Police view the Reform with distrust and suspicion, the majority of the feelings expressed by the interviewees are quite positive. Here is a breakdown of the most mentioned feelings:

**Table 2 - Compilation of most mentioned feelings 2**

FEELING	JUSTIFICATION
 Thankful	It is the most mentioned feeling by the interviewees, as they feel that the Reform provides them with protection and has facilitated their work.
 Neutral / At peace	Although some do not express strong feelings, but rather neutral ones, they do not perceive the Reform as a source of threat, but as something that brings stability and general well-being.
 At ease	It refers to the support provided by the Reform around the protocols and measures to carry out the work; there is more clarity on how to do their job.
 Curious / Interested	Some people show interest in seeing how the Reform will continue to be implemented in the medium and long term; they wonder if they will be lasting structural changes or if they only respond to a conjuncture.
 Tired / Exhausted	The high proportion of bureaucratic work, which has brought about an overload of work, generates in some a feeling of tiredness.
 Confident	Similar to the feeling of ease, the interviewees express confidence in the processes that have come with the Reform and feel supported in case of facing an irregular situation.

#### 3.8.4. Treatment towards minority groups

Most interviewees consider that, with the implementation of the Reform, the treatment towards vulnerable and minority populations has significantly improved. They acknowledge that in the

past this had been a problem, mainly with the LGBTIQ+ community, but the majority express that these biases have been disappearing and that guidelines on professional and objective treatment have been implemented. This is expressed by a Sergeant (remainder of the Island):

*Right now the treatment has been more professional. When dealing with transgender people there is a protocol, they deserve respect. I have an experience, in Arroyo. A transgender person calls me on the phone, for a situation of a complaint. I always address the person as You, for me You are either a man or a woman.*

The guidelines of impartiality and respect are expressed in a variety of examples: use of pronoun chosen by the person being addressed, differential treatment of the trans community, respectful language towards migrants of Dominican origin, training for the differential approach to populations with physical and mental disabilities, among others. They acknowledge that there is still a certain bias when interacting with communities with scarce resources or with large proportions of migrant populations, because these are often the spaces with the highest crime rates.

### **3.9. Personification of the Police of Puerto Rico**



When doing the exercise of personifying the Police of Puerto Rico, two main interpretations were identified. One version of the Police is an older maternal figure, providing care and service to her “children”. She is an empathetic, wise person with a lot of experience, but tired from the long years of serving others:

*The Police must be like the mother, they are supposed to guide all their agents, to lead them and protect them. They should find resources for them and teach them. It would be like 100 years old. A grandmother, a great-grandmother. It has to be a person empathetic with their agents, knowing how to listen to the problems that each one may have. Knowing how to talk to each agent, each person as such (Sergeant (F), Rest of the Island).*

On the other hand, there are those who see the Police as someone young and inexperienced, who wants to be more professional in their work. They still have curiosity and motivation compared to others, but are somewhat exhausted by the excessive workload and demotivated by the way they are treated by others:

*Well, he would be 44 years old right now Responsible, with his defects obviously, because not everything is perfect in the Police But I see him with the interest of change I see him with hope that everything can be different in the future I see him with the encouragement that more members will come to the Police at some point (Agent (M), Rest of the Island)*

### **3.10. The ideal Police**

The interviewees make specific demands on the institution to operate in an appropriate manner.

Many of these demands are of a structural nature:

- Better salaries, to motivate current members to carry out their duties and to attract new members to cover the shortage of personnel currently affecting full operation.
- Guarantees in pensions, consistent with what was promised years ago when many joined the Police, and that it be an incentive for new members.
- More staff, who can relieve the workload of those currently part of the Police and allow them to have more quality time with their families.
- Higher budget, which facilitates daily tasks and maintenance of infrastructure, further dignifying the profession.

On the other hand, they acknowledge that individuals also have the duty to make changes and to take proactive attitudes to be the best possible version of a Police member:

- Showing empathy towards the citizens, prioritizing the well-being of the community over personal interests or opinions.
- With vocation and passion for their work, willing to give their best and face the challenges of the profession with professionalism.
- With values that align with the Reform, guaranteeing impartial and professional treatment to everyone, regardless of their identity or origin.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

From this study, it has been possible to explore the perception of members of the Puerto Rico Police towards the institution and the implementation of Police Reform. A divergence has been found between the opinion of the public and that expressed by the interviewees: the Reform has been embraced with gratitude and enthusiasm in most cases, and not with suspicion as was expressed in the Focus Groups with community groups. The Reform provides security and greater professionalism to the members of the institution, something that is highly valued. In particular, the Use of Force Protocol and the equipment of tasers and Bodycams have been two of the most valued elements. As negative points, the excessive workload that this has brought is highlighted, mainly due to the lengthy bureaucratic processes that are impractical within the current context of the Police: limited staff, limited available time, and limited resources. These processes, in part, have generated some fear of the Use of Force, even when necessary, and this concerns some middle and high levels of supervision.

At a structural level, the main source of discomfort among the respondents lies in the pension conditions they are currently facing; this is generating mistrust and fear, especially among those who are close to retirement and have dedicated most of their adult life to this profession. Likewise, there are still internal structures of power abuse and lack of transparency, which do not

allow the creation of an environment of trust and complete transparency This further weakens credibility in the institution.

#### **4.1. Recommendations**

- **Greater impartiality:** Despite the Reform creating spaces for research and objectivity in internal processes (promotions, unethical behaviors), it would be necessary for these to be carried out by external entities. Otherwise, there will never be absolute trust in the system.
- **Application of a differential approach:** The role of women in the institution continues to face discrimination, even though it has transformed. In the middle of the training cycle, it would be appropriate to include differential and gender perspectives that allow dismantling structural prejudices to ensure a greater space of equality (beyond avoiding sexist comments).
- **Human and material resources distribution:** There is an imbalance in access to equipment and technologies throughout the territory, as well as in the availability of supervisors, where rural areas are more disadvantaged. It would be necessary to carry out a comprehensive inventory of existing materials and personnel, to ensure a more equitable distribution, as well as the creation of a consistent budget for its maintenance.
- **Bureaucracy reduction:** Considering the shortage of personnel, it is necessary to consider the unnecessary workloads generated by documentation. Some specific actions (such as ensuring that the complaints system is operational 24/7) and more structural ones (simplifying the documentation model for reporting Use of Force) could relieve police officers of several hours of work and contribute to their well-being and overall satisfaction with these new measures.