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PREFACE

The World Bank and the European Commission (EC) partnered to conduct a series of surveys to better understand perceptions of the justice system performance in selected Europe and Central Asia (ECA) countries in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership Countries. For the countries of the Western Balkans, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia have agreed to participate. Participation in the project was voluntary.

The overall objective is to inform justice policy dialogue through the generation, analysis and dissemination of a survey data on justice system performance in Western Balkans countries. By gathering experience-based and perception-based data from a range of stakeholder groups in the justice sector, these surveys can help policy makers and policy influencers to better understand how the justice system really operates and the impact of justice reforms. Survey results provide insights on the perspectives of different players, especially by gauging the satisfaction, views, and experiences of citizens and businesses. The data generated by the surveys will offer a baseline against which the impact of future justice reform initiatives can be measured.

This country report summarizes a survey of perceptions and experiences of the Montenegro Judiciary by the general public, enterprises, lawyers, judges, prosecutors, court administrative staff, notaries and bailiffs. The survey was conducted in 2025 and it was funded by the DG ENEST through the EU2020 Trust Fund.

The report was prepared by IPSOS and edited by a World Bank Technical Team composed of Srdjan Svircev (Senior Public Sector Specialist and Task Team Leader), Klaus Decker (Senior Public Sector Specialist and Co-Task Team Leader), Zoran Skopljak (Senior Public Sector Specialist), Ermal Vila (ET Consultant), Marina Matic Boskovic (Judicial Expert), and Domagoj Ilic (Survey Expert).

The team would like to thank the individuals who participated in the preparation and the Montenegro officials consulted for this report, particularly those in the Ministry of Justice, Supreme Court, Supreme State Prosecutor Office, Judicial Council, Prosecutorial Council, judges, prosecutors, court staff, and other employees in the judiciary for their guidance, cooperation, and availability to discuss the issues raised by this survey in a frank and open manner.

The report is organized around “dimensions”^[1] of the judicial system. Each of the dimensions is thoroughly investigated and analysed, and findings from various respondent groups are compared to get the image of the judicial system from as many angles as possible. Data points presented in the report are mostly percentages with few justified examples. Statistic tests were run to determine if significant differences exist between various groups and subgroups of respondents. Detailed results of these tests were not specifically presented in the report to facilitate the reading, but they were always commented on in case significant differences were found.

In order to facilitate navigating through the large pool of collected data, the report authors followed the principle of not reporting “zero difference findings”. In other words, if certain differences were not found statistically significant this was not explicitly reported. If there is no comment or narrative about the potential difference this means that no statistical difference was found.

^[1] The dimensions are efficiency, quality, accessibility, independence, functioning of the appellate system, impact on media on the judiciary, and impact of previous reforms and reform expectations.

Disclaimer

- This report presents the 2025 wave of the Regional Justice Survey (RJS) for Montenegro, constituting the second round of the survey and conducted using the same methodology as the 2020 baseline.
- Differences compared to the 2020 baseline are mainly given through the PPA score. The PPA score can be considered equivalent to the percentage of the target population that has changed their opinion from a positive to a negative view (negative PPA) or from a negative to a positive view (positive PPA) compared to the previous wave.
- Additionally, comparisons with the baseline are presented in blue text directly below the interpretation of current results. In this way, readers are able to easily distinguish between the latest findings and changes over time.
- Apart from the populations previously surveyed in the baseline, this wave also encompasses public notaries and bailiffs (depending on the country, public, private, or court bailiffs) that are being surveyed for the first time.
- According to official data, Montenegro has appointed a total of 58 public notaries and 27 public bailiffs, which results in rather small clusters. From these figures, 15 notaries and 10 bailiffs participated in the interviews. Due to the small sample sizes, data weighting and percentage-based interpretation are not feasible. Consequently, all survey findings related to notaries and bailiffs in this report are presented and analyzed using absolute numbers (frequencies). Further data breakdowns (such as cross-tabulations) are also not possible.
- Given the diverse nature of the intended audience, summaries at multiple levels of detail have been developed. The report structure includes Key Findings summarizing the entire survey at the report level, summaries at the beginning of each section providing an overview of that section's results, and highlighted top-line findings in blue boxes at the start of each section, presenting the most critical insights at a glance. This tiered approach ensures that readers can quickly access the level of detail most relevant to their needs.

KEY FINDINGS

- 1. This report presents the 2025 wave of the Regional Justice Survey (RJS) for Montenegro.** It provides a comprehensive overview of the experiences and perceptions of various stakeholders regarding the justice system, focusing on four key values: efficiency, quality, accessibility, and independence. Additionally, the report examines opinions on the appellate system, the influence of media, and ongoing justice reforms. The survey also evaluated how the personal experiences of court users shaped their overall views of the judiciary, specifically concerning the selected core values. Furthermore, the report offers insights into the perceived impacts of previous justice sector reform efforts in Montenegro, along with feedback on potential future reforms from all target audiences.
- 2. Results are reported for eight target groups: citizens and businesses as users of court services; judges, prosecutors, court staff, notaries, and bailiffs as providers; and lawyers as intermediaries between these two groups.**
- 3. Whenever possible, the findings are compared with the 2020 baseline to illustrate changes over time.** It is important to note that 2020 marked a significant political transition in Montenegro, with a regime change occurring after more than 30 years of continuity. Additionally, the period between the two survey waves experienced considerable judicial upheaval, including the arrest of several high-ranking officials and the replacement of approximately 30% of judges and prosecutors. This broader political and institutional context may have substantially influenced public perceptions of the judiciary, which should be carefully considered when interpreting the survey results.
- 4. Notaries and bailiffs represent a new target population in the RJS Findings.** Their survey responses were modest, so the results are interpreted as trends rather than population estimates, given the small number of respondents in 2025 (notaries: n=15; bailiffs: n=10).
- 5. The report compares the perceptions and experiences of court users with the views of court service providers and intermediaries.** Its goal is to provide a comprehensive insight into the current state of Montenegro's justice sector performance. While it highlights potential areas for improvement, the report does not offer policy advice or technical recommendations. Technical findings have been discussed with justice-sector stakeholders in Montenegro, and their feedback has been incorporated into this report. Below is a summary of the key findings from the survey.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

- 6. Compared with 2020, Montenegrin users report less contact with courts and (for businesses) with non-court justice services, greater reliance on legal representation, and longer case durations.** Perceptions of efficiency and quality of courts and prosecution remain more positive than negative, but have eroded across all populations, especially among businesses and lawyers. The efficiency index, i.e., assessed percentage of hearings that contributed to case resolution, fell most sharply in the eyes of lawyers and prosecutors.
- 7. Financial accessibility is an increasingly salient concern for citizens, and awareness of free legal aid remains low.** Independence perceptions are stable to modestly positive among users but increasingly fragile among professionals as perceived external threats rise and integrity concerns broaden. Direct experience continues to matter: it improves ratings of notaries and bailiffs, depresses citizens' ratings of courts and prosecution, and boosts many businesses' ratings of courts. Citizens have become the most optimistic about recent system trends and the longer-term impact of reforms, while professionals and businesses have grown more cautious. These shifts point to, although somewhat milder than earlier, persistent gaps between users and providers, sharper divergence between citizens and businesses, and a reform environment where direction and delivery remain contested and unevenly felt across stakeholder groups.

8. Citizens' views remain structured by social, especially ethnic and geographical, and political cleavages. Residents of the North, citizens of Serbian ethnicity and those aligned politically with the ruling parties consistently report higher quality assessments across courts and prosecution than the national averages. The Central region records the highest dissatisfaction rates, and citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity and opposition supporters are more critical across all justice actors. These patterns mirror all dimensions and suggest that perceptions of service quality are shaped not only by performance but also by broader social and political dynamics. Money, education, and the sources of information we use all influence our perspectives. Lower-income individuals tend to have a more negative view regarding costs and the direction of reform. In contrast, those with higher incomes and more education are more likely to access official sources (such as websites and lawyers) and are generally more aware of free legal aid options. Meanwhile, individuals with lower educational backgrounds often rely on television and word of mouth, leading them to be more critical of certain services. Additionally, urban residents are more likely to express opinions and consider reports to be objective, whereas rural residents are more inclined to respond with "don't know". Age, gender, and experience often add another layer. Men tend to be a bit more critical than women. Older citizens (60+) are more likely to say that quality has worsened, while younger citizens (18-29) answer "don't know" more often.

Reduced Citizen and Business Experience with Courts and Judicial Services

9. Engagement with the courts has decreased compared to five years ago. The percentage of citizens with any court experience fell from 25% to 21%, while for businesses, it dropped from 31% to 19%. Interactions with other justice services have remained stable for citizens, increasing slightly from 31% in 2020 to 33%. However, business interactions with judicial services have declined significantly, falling from 64% to 40%, particularly with bailiffs (down from 31% to 10%) and court administration (down from 19% to 7%). Although notary services remain the key judicial service for businesses, the usage rate declined from 55% in 2020 to 35% in 2025.

10. Representation in court cases among users has shifted toward hiring paid legal counsel. Among citizens, 68% now retain private lawyers for that matter, up from 54% in 2020. Furthermore, self-representation has decreased to 26%, down from 36% in 2020. Among businesses, 66% seek external legal representation, up from 50%, whereas owner/director representation has fallen to 42%, down from 59%. Since these discrepancies are not driven by substantial changes in case structure, they likely indicate an actual shift in user behavior.

11. Over the past five years, the types of cases faced by citizens have evolved, particularly in criminal and civil matters. In 2020, citizens dealt with misdemeanors 35% of the time, a figure that has remained consistent (36% in 2025). However, involvement in civil cases has decreased from 46% to 38% by 2025, while experiences with criminal cases have increased from 19% to 26%.

12. For businesses, there has been a significant shift in the types of cases they encounter. Commercial disputes, which accounted for 44% of their cases in 2020, declined to 14% in 2025. In contrast, civil litigation has surged, now accounting for 57% of their cases, up from 21%.

Generational and Experience Changes Among Legal Professionals

13. Among service providers, court staff have an average tenure of 14 years. In contrast, judges and prosecutors are generally younger and less experienced compared to 2020, with judges averaging 8 years of experience and prosecutors averaging 7 years. Notaries reported an average of 9 years in practice, while bailiffs reported an average of 8 years. However, it's important to note that the last two figures are based on a small number of responses.

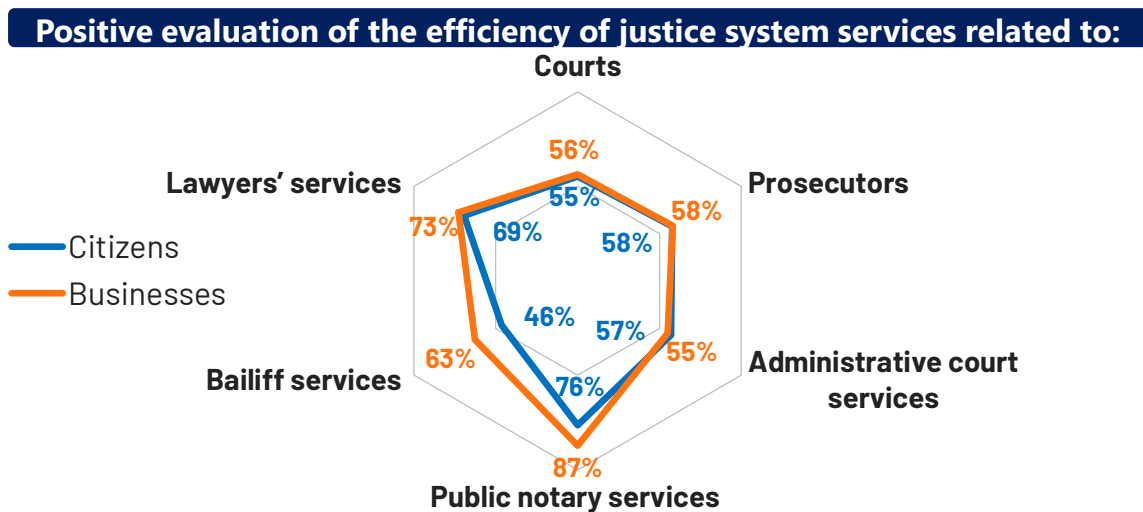
EFFICIENCY

14. Perceptions about court and prosecution efficiency remain more positive than negative, but have weakened since 2020 among users and especially lawyers. Prosecutors and judges remain the most positive about institutional efficiency. Interestingly, although current opinions of judicial efficiency have declined, more citizens now acknowledge efficiency improvements over the past three years compared to 2020. In this regard, judges are moderately positive, and prosecutors are the most likely to report improvement. By contrast, businesses' optimism has cooled, and lawyers are evenly divided between improvement and deterioration (37% each).

Positive Views of Institutional Efficiency Persist, With Sharpest Decline Among Businesses Since 2020

15. Perceptions of institutional efficiency are still generally more positive than negative, but they have declined since 2020, particularly among businesses. A slight majority of citizens (56%) and businesses (56%) consider the courts to be efficient, which is a decline from 61% and 71%, respectively. Additionally, 58% of both groups rate the prosecution as efficient; this figure remains stable for citizens compared to 2020 but has decreased for businesses. Court administrative services are viewed similarly to the courts. In contrast, notaries and lawyers, who provide direct professional services, receive significantly higher satisfaction ratings than institutional actors such as courts and prosecutors, with 70% of citizens and 73% of businesses viewing them positively. Bailiffs are also seen more positively, but this perception is stronger among companies (62%) compared to citizens (47%).

Figure 1 - Positive evaluation of the efficiency of justice system services



16. Regarding changes in judicial efficiency over time, citizens are the only population that has improved their perception over the past three-year period. They are more frequently asserting that efficiency has improved, with 46% holding this view in 2025, compared to just 24% in 2020. Among businesses, the share reporting that efficiency has worsened increased from 8% in 2020 to 15% in 2025. Similarly, the perception of 'no changes' rose from 30% in 2020 to 43% in 2025.

Direct Experience Improves Perceptions of Efficiency, Except Regarding Courts and Prosecution

17. Direct experience continues to shape views. Generally, experience tends to create a more positive perception of legal services in all areas except for courts and prosecution. Citizens with recent court or prosecutorial experience are slightly less positive about institutional efficiency than citizens

generally (52% vs. 56%, 48% vs. 58%, respectively), while business users with recent court experience are more positive than businesses overall (67% vs. 56%). Notaries and bailiffs are perceived as the most efficient judicial providers by those who have used their services; notably, bailiffs' efficiency ratings even improved among experienced users compared to 2020. Perceptions of court administration and lawyers among experienced users are better than those of the general populations of citizens and businesses. For notaries, both citizens and businesses maintain very high satisfaction in specific cases (citizens 91%; businesses 95%), with modest softening among users compared with 2020.

18. The five-year comparison of experience impact shows that experienced users' ratings of all judicial services, especially courts and prosecution, declined, whereas only their ratings of bailiffs improved.

Justice System Professionals View Courts and Prosecution as Efficient

19. In contrast to users, the notable majority of judges and prosecutors perceive the courts and prosecution as efficient, particularly within their own organizations. Specifically, 91% of judges and 93% of prosecutors rate their respective courts and offices as efficient. Court staff share opinions about the courts, whereas the third are indecisive about the prosecution and consequently express a less favorable view of its efficiency. Meanwhile, lawyers' opinions have aligned more closely with those of users than with the providers; 49% believe the courts are efficient, and 57% feel the same about the prosecution.

20. Judges, prosecutors, and court staff face heavier caseloads and longer proceedings than in 2020, which might affect their perceptions of efficiency. Judges report handling, on average, about 795 cases per year against an optimal 318 (roughly 150% above perceived optimal), and prosecutors handle around 214 cases against an optimal 128 (about 67% above reported optimal). These discrepancies are higher than in 2020 (83% above optimum for judges, and 35% for prosecutors). Average working hours exceed the legal workweek (40 hours): judges work an average of 48 hours per week, while prosecutors work 47 hours. Additionally, the time required to obtain a first-instance judgment has increased. Citizens now report an average wait of 13.1 months, up from 10.2 months in 2020, while businesses report an average wait of 13.2 months compared to 7.7 months previously. The difference in medians (less sensitive to extreme values) for citizen cases (11.2 months in 2025 vs. 6 months in 2020) corroborates what the averages suggest - court proceedings generally require more time than they did five years ago. Conversely, the median values for business cases remain constant at 6 months across both survey waves, indicating that variations in their average values result from a few outlying cases rather than a systemic shift.

21. Civil cases are now the slowest, taking an average of 16.3 months, followed by criminal cases at 15.5 months and misdemeanors at 8.8 months. Moreover, a significant number of users feel their cases took longer than necessary, with 59% of citizens and 57% of businesses expressing this concern, an increase compared to 2020 (53% among citizens, 39% among businesses).

22. To address work overload, judges most often suggest more assistants and administrative staff (64%), more judges (54%), and better infrastructure (49%), with a third also calling for procedural simplification. Prosecutors most often propose more prosecutors and investigators (80%), better working conditions (42%), and improved infrastructure (28%), alongside better internal organization (19%).

23. The case-weighting system in courts and prosecutors' offices has become more common since 2020 (courts without weighting down from 20% to 5%; prosecution offices without weighting down from 46% to 24%). Random case allocation is widely used in courts and less so in prosecutors' offices; most judges (80%) and a majority of prosecutors (58%) support it to prevent manipulation in case assignments.

24. Court staff process approximately 33 administrative tasks daily, compared with an optimal of 19 (74% above optimal), while in 2020 they reported doing on average 46 tasks per day and estimated the optimal number was 39 (discrepancy in 2020 was 18%). Additionally, a higher share of tasks is completed after deadlines than in 2020, which can indicate higher complexity of tasks, as well.

25. Assessing changes in efficiency over time, prosecutors express the most optimistic opinion among professionals on whether efficiency has worsened or improved over the past three years, with two-thirds believing it has improved. Additionally, half of the judges are enthusiastic in this regard. However, compared to 2020, more judges and prosecutors show an unfavorable view about the changes (7% vs. 0% in 2020 among prosecutors, and 16% vs. 2% among judges), or the opinion that efficiency hasn't changed in the last three years (22% vs. 11% among prosecutors and 26% vs. 19% among judges).

26. Lawyers are the most critical of all populations regarding this question, with 37% reporting a decline in efficiency, and also more negative compared to 2020 (37% compared to 15% in 2020).

The Efficiency Index Reflects the Reduced Effectiveness of Hearings

27. Based on respondents' answers, the efficiency index, i.e., the reported share of scheduled hearings that contribute to case resolution, has deteriorated across all populations compared with the 2020 findings. The highest efficiency index is reported by users, both citizens and business representatives, and judges (61% and 60%), while the lawyers report the lowest efficiency index (36%). However, compared to 2020, the efficiency index has declined the most according to lawyers (36%, down from 58%) and prosecutors (44%, down from 65%). Across professions, the primary reasons hearings are ineffective or cancelled remain parties' obstructive behavior, issues with witnesses and experts, and staffing gaps; many judges and lawyers also cite omissions or complexity in procedural rules. The rate of hearings not held is highest among prosecutors and citizens (36% and 33%, respectively), with notable increases from 2020 (from 15% to 36% among prosecutors and from 19% to 33% among citizens).

Figure 2 - Efficiency Index



Court Administrative Services are Perceived as Efficient, but User Satisfaction Declined

28. Court administrative services are still viewed by providers as efficient overall, though user satisfaction has declined since 2020. Court staff continue to report high satisfaction with their units' efficiency (86%), but more demanding operating conditions: current workloads are roughly three-quarters above optimal (33 tasks vs. 19 as optimal), with more tasks completed after deadlines (12% vs. 5% in 2020) and fewer within deadlines (37% vs. 50% in 2020). The share of staff reporting an increase in workload over the prior year rose to 77% (from 57% in 2020). Additionally, the time needed for task completion increased from 25 minutes to 45 minutes. To improve unit efficiency, staff prioritize higher salaries, improved working conditions, greater motivation, and more equitable job distribution.

Digitalization Process as a Key Driver of Productivity and Quality

29. Digitalization continues to be viewed as a lever for productivity and service quality. About four in five judges and prosecutors believe further use of digital tools would increase unit productivity; most judges (73%) and a majority of prosecutors (60%) report that digitalization has already raised productivity. Courts appear better trained and equipped than prosecutors' offices. Around a third of the judges and prosecutors, and nearly half of court administration employees (46%), view digitalization as a threat to job security.

30. However, 65% of judges and slightly more than half of prosecutors and court staff reported that digital technologies have already improved their efficiency within judicial institutions.

Positive Impact of Notaries and Bailiffs on the Efficiency of the Justice System

31. A vast majority of justice system professionals (around 85%), judges, prosecutors, and lawyers believe that notaries positively affect the efficiency of the judicial system. Similarly, the impact of private bailiffs is mainly recognized as positive, with lawyers being the most positive, nine out of ten recognizing this positive influence.

THE QUALITY OF WORK

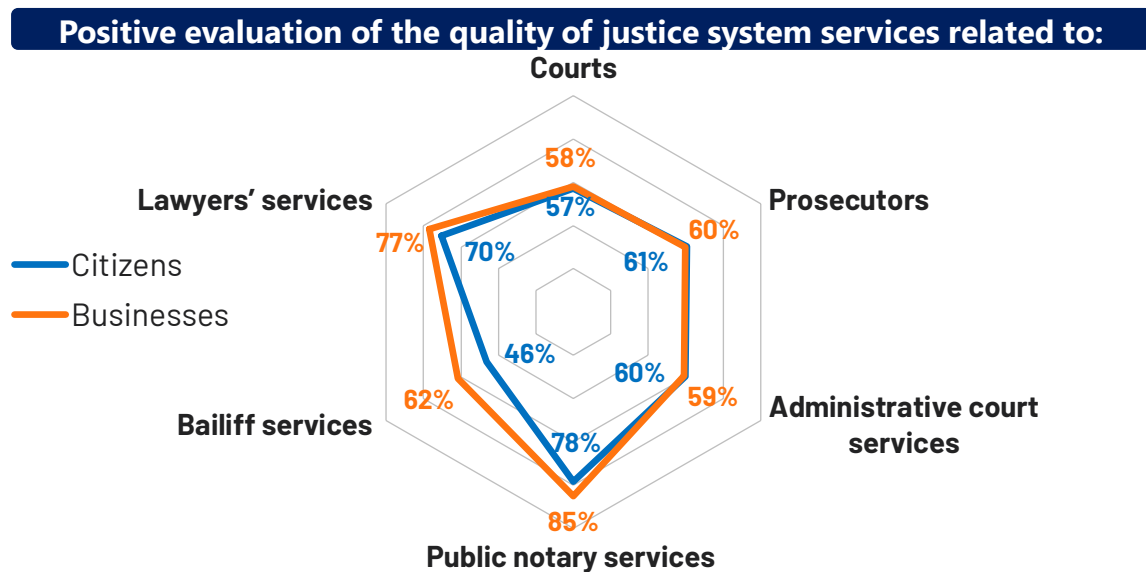
32. Similar to perceptions of efficiency, quality assessments generally remain moderately positive but have softened since 2020 for institutions, with sharper declines among businesses and lawyers.

Sustained Positive Assessments of the Quality of Work Amid Reduced Business Satisfaction

33. A majority of citizens (57%) and businesses (58%) assess court work quality positively (businesses down from 71%). Prosecution quality is viewed positively by 61% of citizens and 60% of businesses (stable for citizens, with similar proportions of positive and negative feedback across both survey waves; mixed for businesses, where the overall share of favorable views remains relatively consistent, but unfavorable opinions have increased significantly, from 22% in 2020 to 35% in 2025).

34. Quality assessments for non-institutional professional service providers remain strong. Notaries again earn the highest ratings – 78% of citizens and 85% of businesses are satisfied with their quality of work, with citizens being slightly more positive than in 2020 (78% vs. 72% in 2020) and businesses somewhat more critical (14% vs. 5% in 2020 shared a negative opinion). Private bailiffs continue to sit lower in citizens' quality rankings (46% positive; 34% negative), although "don't know" responses remain high for this group (20%), indicating more limited direct exposure. Businesses are more favorable toward bailiffs' quality (62% positive), though their negative views have risen since 2020 (27%, compared to 17% in 2020).

Figure 3 - Positive evaluation of the quality of justice system services



Direct Experience Boosts Quality Perceptions, with Hesitation About Courts and Particularly Prosecution

35. Direct user experience continues to matter, though its effects vary by actor. For most professional services, experience improves ratings. Citizens who have used notaries' and lawyers' services report very high satisfaction (89%, 84% respectively), and satisfaction rises still further when assessing a specific matter handled (94% in the case of notaries). Experience with bailiffs also lifts quality ratings among citizens (66% positive among users versus 45% in general) and businesses, as well (74% among users versus 60% in general), and, compared with 2020, experienced users' quality ratings of bailiffs have strengthened slightly.

36. The pattern reverses for institutional actors. Citizens who have had recent contact with the prosecution report lower quality ratings for prosecution (49%) than citizens overall (61%), suggesting that direct exposure to prosecutorial processes, often criminal or enforcement in nature, may generate less positive user experiences even when the underlying legal work is adequate. For courts, differences between citizens with recent experience and general population as whole are small at the general level (54% vs. 57% positive), but when recent users are asked to rate the handling of their own case they are more positive than in their general assessment (66% "somewhat or very satisfied" with the quality in their specific case. judge's performance; but 75% satisfied with court staff).

37. Businesses show a slightly different pattern: those with recent cases rate courts more positively than companies in general, but they are less positive when asked to rate the handling of their specific case (57% express a positive opinion).

38. Compared with 2020, the quality ratings attached to users' own cases have weakened among businesses (PPΔ:-24) and among citizens with recent court experience (PPΔ:-12), even though they remain predominantly positive. When citizens are dissatisfied with the quality of their specific case, half now attribute the problem to inadequate laws (up from one-third in 2020), while only a small share primarily blame the judge or their legal representative. Businesses, on the other hand, increasingly cite poor legal frameworks (30% vs. 20% in 2020), but unlike citizens, they also cite poor judicial performance, and to a greater extent than in 2020 (28% vs. 18%).

Judges and Prosecutors Highly Positive About Quality; Lawyers More Moderate and User-Aligned

39. Even though all justice system professionals have a generally positive opinion about the quality of work of the justice system, there is a difference between judges and prosecutors on the one hand, and lawyers on the other. The vast majority of judges (88%) and prosecutors (83%) evaluate the courts' quality of work as high, and the same opinion about the prosecution is shared by 94% of prosecutors and 73% of judges. Additionally, 90% of judges and 96% of prosecutors rate their own institutions' quality as high.

40. On the other hand, lawyers' assessments are now closer to users'— 53% of lawyers believe that the work of the courts in Montenegro is of good quality, and 59% think the same for the prosecution. Lawyers' positive assessment of court quality fell from 73% to 52%, while their view of the prosecution (59%) is broadly unchanged. At the same time, dissatisfaction among lawyers with court quality has risen from 26% to 45% since 2020.

Favorable Impact of Notaries and Bailiffs on the Quality of the Justice System

41. As for efficiency, all professionals within the judicial system hold a favorable view of the impact notaries have on the quality of the judicial system.

Quality of Laws High, but Interpretation Lags Behind

42. Professionals broadly consider laws to be clear and precise, but inconsistent interpretation remains common across the board. As in 2020, a large majority of lawyers, and to a lesser degree judges and prosecutors, point to selective enforcement of laws and, increasingly, selective execution of court decisions as recurring problems. Among users, two-thirds of citizens (67 %) and half of businesses (51 %) believe laws are not enforced in practice; this perception among businesses is less acute than in 2020, but citizens' concerns have grown.

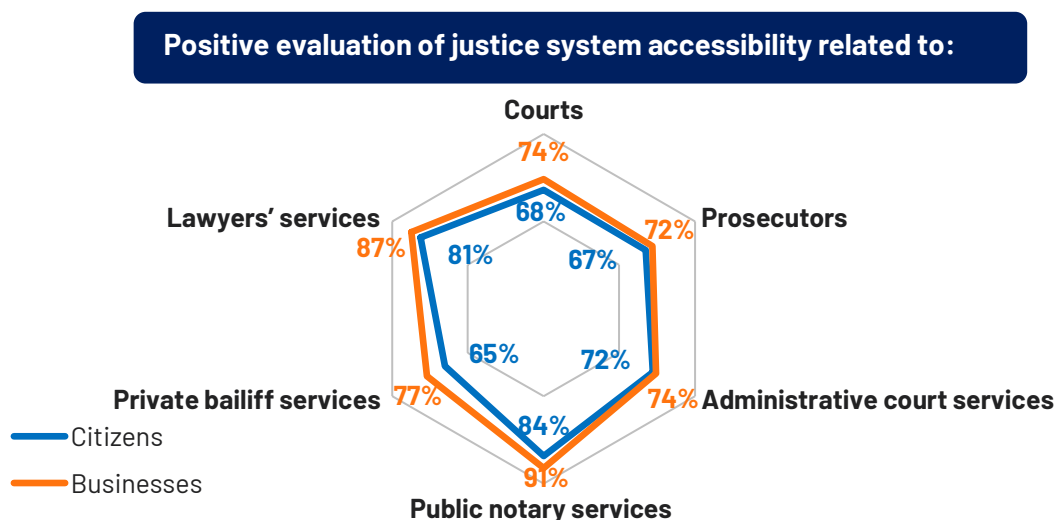
ACCESSIBILITY

Justice System Generally Accessible, Though Business Perception Declined

43. Most institutions are viewed as accessible by citizens and businesses, though businesses have become notably less positive since 2020. Courts are perceived as accessible by 68% of citizens and 74% of businesses; however, the share of businesses viewing courts as inaccessible has nearly doubled compared to 2020, while citizens' perceptions remained relatively stable. Prosecution accessibility follows a similar pattern—67% of citizens and 72% of businesses find it accessible, with both groups showing consistency over the five-year period.

44. Notaries and lawyers remain the most accessible services among all institutions. Notaries are perceived as accessible by 84% of citizens and 91% of businesses, making them the highest-rated institution for service users. Lawyers follow closely at 81% and 87% respectively, though businesses report somewhat higher inaccessibility than in 2020. Private bailiffs are viewed as accessible by 65% of citizens and 77% of businesses, with perceptions remaining stable since 2020. Administrative court services, while generally accessible (72% of citizens, 74% of businesses), show a concerning trend among businesses, where perceptions of inaccessibility have more than doubled compared to the previous wave.

Figure 4 - Positive evaluation of justice system accessibility



Justice System Professionals View Sector as Highly Accessible

45. Justice professionals report very high accessibility across all institutions. Court accessibility is rated positively by 95% of both judges and prosecutors, and 84% of lawyers. Prosecution accessibility receives similarly high marks—nearly all prosecutors, 88% of judges, and 81% of lawyers view it as accessible, with all three groups showing slight improvements since 2020. Notaries, lawyers' services, private bailiffs, and administrative court services are all viewed as highly accessible across professional groups.

Users: Accessibility Varies by Dimension, with Financial Barriers Most Pronounced

46. Across the three dimensions of access, physical accessibility emerges as the strongest. Approximately seven in ten citizens (72%) and businesses (68%) view the system as physically accessible. Information accessibility is moderate—63% of citizens and 68% of businesses rate it positively. Financial accessibility remains the weakest dimension and has deteriorated since 2020. Less than half of citizens (46%) now view the system as financially accessible, representing a notable decline from the previous wave, while 60% of businesses maintain positive perceptions. Among justice professionals, judges and prosecutors provide the most favorable evaluations across all three dimensions, with over nine in ten rating the system positively for both information and physical access. Lawyers and businesses offer more moderate assessments, particularly regarding financial accessibility.

47. Direct experience significantly improves information accessibility perceptions. While 63% of citizens view information access as generally adequate, this rises to 80% among those with recent court experience. Similarly, businesses with direct experience report higher accessibility (76%) compared to general perceptions (68%). However, both groups show notable declines compared to 2020, when experienced users found information considerably more accessible. Users continue to rely primarily on lawyers for information—approximately two-thirds of both citizens and businesses consult lawyers first. Court staff usage has declined significantly among citizens since 2020, while businesses have increasingly favored lawyers as their most convenient information source.

Cost of Court Proceedings Remains Key Concern

48. Costs represent a significant concern for service users. Among citizens and businesses with recent court experience, 45% and 50%, respectively, found total costs higher than expected. Approximately one-third of each group considered costs to be appropriate. The composition of costs has shifted since 2020—for citizens, lawyer fees now constitute the largest share at approximately half of total costs, surpassing court fees, which account for about 45%. For businesses, court fees (29%) and lawyer fees (27%) are most prominent, with travel costs weighing considerably more heavily than for citizens (21% vs. 6%). Cost distribution varies by case type: in misdemeanor cases, court costs dominate at two-thirds of total expenses, a substantial increase from 2020. In criminal and civil cases, lawyer fees have grown to represent the largest component, now accounting for more than half and nearly three-quarters of costs, respectively.

Critically Low Awareness of Free Legal Aid

49. Only 15% of citizens claim to know the details of free legal aid, while approximately half have heard of it without specifics and more than one-quarter are unaware whether it exists—though this last figure has improved since 2020. Judges appear overly optimistic about public awareness, with nearly three-quarters believing citizens are informed. Prosecutors have become considerably more realistic since 2020, with a substantially higher share now acknowledging low public awareness. Lawyers, who interact directly with service users, offer the most accurate assessment—approximately half believe citizens are not informed. Lawyers evaluate free legal aid favorably, with approximately four-fifths rating both its efficiency and quality positively.

Moderate Awareness of Alternative Mechanisms

50. Familiarity with mediation is moderate—just over half of citizens and two-thirds of businesses claim awareness of the process. Most justice professionals support alternative dispute resolution mechanisms: deferred prosecution receives strong endorsement, particularly from prosecutors (more than four-fifths), while guilty plea agreements receive broad support across all professional groups.

Notary Services are Fairly Accessible

51. Notary services receive favorable accessibility assessments. More than half of citizens and nearly seven in ten businesses find notary costs appropriate. Geographic accessibility and working hours are rated very highly—more than nine in ten citizens and virtually all businesses express satisfaction with both.

INDEPENDENCE, TRUST, FAIRNESS, AND INTEGRITY

Divergent Views on the Justice System Independence

52. Perceptions of independence present a mixed picture with notable stakeholder differences. Just over half of citizens (52%) and three-fifths of businesses (58%) rate the independence of courts and judges positively, while views of prosecutorial independence are slightly more favorable (54% of citizens, 60% of businesses). Citizens' perceptions have remained stable since 2020, while businesses have become notably more critical—negative views of court independence nearly doubled from 27% to 40%. Those with positive views cite adequate judicial status and absence of interference; those with negative views overwhelmingly blame governmental, political, and economic interference. Justice professionals express strong confidence in judicial system independence—87% of judges and 83% of prosecutors view the system as independent, while lawyers hold more moderate views at 58%, with two-fifths questioning independence.

53. Trust in the judicial system stands at 55% among citizens, placing it in the middle tier of institutions—below religious institutions and the education system (both 73%) and the army (72%), but above NGOs (48%). Trust has declined moderately since 2020, with distrust rising from 37% to 43%.

Sharp Increase in Perceived Threats to Independence

54. Perceived threats to independence have intensified markedly among all professional groups since 2020. Lawyers most frequently cite politicians (71%), media (67%), and powerful individuals (63%)—with politicians surging from 42% to become the primary threat and media nearly doubling from 33%. Judges now identify media (67%) and politicians (61%) as primary concerns, both more than doubling since 2020, while central government emerged as a major new threat, rising from 15% to 44%. Prosecutors similarly point to media (50%) and politicians (48%), with religious institutions showing the most dramatic transformation—surging from 3% to 25%.

55. Reports of negative phenomena affecting integrity have increased substantially across all groups since 2020. Citizens show significant increases across ten areas, most notably extended court duration, different decisions in similar cases, and selective investigative procedures. Businesses deteriorated particularly regarding political influence and corruption perceptions. Judges demonstrated the most extensive changes, with corruption and political influence perceptions more than doubling; prosecutors showed similar patterns. The strongest disagreement between stakeholders concerns corruption—reported by two-thirds of citizens but only one-quarter of judges. A broader consensus exists on sensationalist media reports and inconsistent court decisions. Among those recognizing negative phenomena, large majorities confirm they undermine public trust in the judicial system.

56. Overall perceptions of judicial institutions' influence on the integrity of the judiciary have weakened or remained the same across professional groups since 2020, with lawyers showing the most pronounced negative shifts. When assessing the impact of their respective professional associations on the integrity of their profession, lawyers, judges, and prosecutors largely hold positive opinions. Nevertheless, while judges' views on this matter have remained fairly stable compared to 2020, lawyers and especially prosecutors have become more skeptical.

Widespread Perception of Informal Influence Coupled with Limited Direct Experience

57. Perceptions of informal practices remain complex. A large majority of citizens (87%) and lawyers (83%) believe "pulling strings" occurs in the judiciary, with perceptions intensifying considerably since 2020. Fewer perceive pecuniary compensation or gifts as frequent practices. Yet direct exposure remains rare: 83% of citizens and 94% of businesses with recent cases report that no one suggested using informal means—an improvement among citizens compared to 2020. Court staff overwhelmingly report no corruption in their units (88%) and minimal direct exposure to informal approaches. Among lawyers who perceive corruption, the majority characterize it as based on individual cases rather than systemic patterns.

Fairness Perceptions Moderately Positive, Improving with Direct Experience

58. Perceptions of fairness are moderately positive and, among citizens, improve with direct experience. A majority of citizens (56%) and businesses (60%) view the system as generally fair. Notably, this figure rises to 75% among citizens when evaluating their own personal cases. However, businesses have become considerably more critical since 2020, with negative assessments of both general fairness and case-specific fairness increasing substantially. Among justice professionals, judges (57%) and prosecutors (45%) report no lack of fairness, while lawyers are more critical, with more than half (57%) perceiving fairness issues.

Negative Perceptions of Discrimination Surge Since 2020 Across Users

59. Discrimination concerns differ markedly by stakeholder group. Citizens most frequently identify party membership and economic status (both 56%) as problematic, while businesses cite ownership structure, company size, and political connections. It is noteworthy that negative perceptions have increased significantly since 2020 among both groups of users, regardless of the reason for discrimination. Justice professionals maintain distinctly different perspectives – judges and prosecutors report minimal discrimination across all characteristics, while lawyers fall between service users and other professionals. Among those identifying unequal treatment, lawyers cite politicization and corruption as primary drivers, while judges point to work overload and poor organization. Gender equality perceptions reveal notable gaps among female professionals—female lawyers and prosecutors are more likely than their male counterparts to perceive men as advantaged in income and promotion.

MODERATE AND STABLE CONFIDENCE IN THE APPELLATE SYSTEM

60. Just over half of citizens with recent cases (55%) and nearly two-thirds of businesses (62%) say they trust the appellate process.

61. Appeals are filed more often by businesses (36%) than by citizens (20%). Misdemeanor cases are rarely appealed (93% are not appealed, compared to 78% of civil cases and 70% of criminal cases). When appeals occur, higher courts most often uphold judgments (about 60%) and overturn or change them in roughly one-quarter of cases. Following appellate proceedings, users report that about two-thirds of judgments are fully enforced and about one-third partially enforced.

PERCEPTION OF MEDIA INFLUENCE ON THE JUDICIARY - GROWING GAP BETWEEN JUDICIAL PROFESSIONALS AND CITIZENS IN PERCEPTIONS

62. Judicial professionals are increasingly perceiving media coverage of the courts as more negative than the reality. In contrast, citizens tend to have a more balanced view. Currently, nine out of ten judges believe that media portrayals of the courts are worse than they actually are, marking a significant increase from 79% in 2020. Additionally, seven out of ten prosecutors share this perspective, along with 62% of lawyers.

63. Citizens are generally more likely than professionals to view media reporting as objective or even more favorable than reality. However, the percentage of people who believe media coverage is objective has decreased since 2020, dropping from 48% to 42%. At the same time, the number of individuals who perceive media reporting as better than reality has increased, rising from 30% in 2020 to 35%. A similar pattern can be observed in media portrayals of the prosecution: judges and lawyers tend to see media coverage as more negative than it actually is, with 60% of judges and 54% of lawyers expressing this view. However, this tendency is not as pronounced as it is for perceptions of the courts. Prosecutors recognize a similar negative media treatment for both courts and prosecution, with around 70% reporting so. Citizens' perceptions of media coverage of prosecution remained almost the same as in 2020, with 43% believing that media reporting is objective, and 36% that it is better than reality.

THE JUDICIARY REFORMS

User Perceptions of Past Judicial Reforms: Improving Citizen Opinion, Declining Business Confidence Compared to 2020

64. Among users, around two-fifths think favorably about the reform's impact in the last decade, but notable changes are observed. Citizens' positive views have risen (to 42 % from 26 % in 2020), alongside a decline in "no impact" responses. In contrast, businesses' positive views have fallen sharply (to 40% from 66%), with more now seeing either no impact or a negative impact. A slightly higher percentage of users share a positive perception of the future direction of the judicial reforms (51% of citizens and 54% businesses). Among the positive impacts of the reforms, citizens highlight corruption reduction and businesses point to fairness and independence.

Justice Professionals' Views on Past and Current Judicial Reforms: Prosecutors Most Supportive, Lawyers Increasingly Skeptical

65. Professionals' assessments of the impact of reforms over the past decade have deteriorated significantly. Although prosecutors remain the most positive group, their favorable views have declined from 93% in 2020 to 73% in 2025. Judges show a similar trend, with positive assessments dropping from 82% to 57%. Comparable declines are evident among lawyers (from 59% to 38%) and court staff (from 67% to 45%). Regarding the nature of perceived improvements, judges, prosecutors, and court staff primarily cite enhancements in quality, while lawyers most frequently point to improvements in fairness and independence of the judicial system.

66. Looking ahead, prosecutors are most confident that current reforms are moving in the right direction (about three-quarters say so). Judges and court staff are more cautious, with around half positive and many uncertain. Lawyers are the only group with a net-negative view of the direction of reform.

Information Channels on Judicial Reforms: Citizens and Businesses Underuse Official Sources

67. Citizens most often learn about reforms from television and their personal networks, with increasing use of digital sources; official websites remain underused. Businesses rely more on informal networks than on television and engage far more with official institutional sources than with citizens. Professionals, especially judges and prosecutors, primarily use official channels (websites, formal communications, professional associations, and events), while lawyers combine public media and informal networks.

1. PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF USERS AND JUSTICE SYSTEM PROFESSIONALS' WORK EXPERIENCE OVERVIEW

- Over the past five years, citizen involvement in court cases has declined from 25% to 21%, with a more significant reduction seen among businesses, dropping from 31% to 19%. During the last three years, around 10% of both citizens and businesses have participated in court proceedings, of which 5% of citizens and 4% of businesses obtained first-instance judgments.
- Citizens maintain stable engagement with other judicial services, such as notaries, court administration, and bailiffs (33% vs 31% in 2020), with notary services leading at 28%. Business engagement with judicial services dropped significantly from 64% to 40%, which is particularly noticeable in bailiff services (31% to 10%) and court administration (19% to 7%).
- Both groups increasingly prefer paid legal representation: citizens rose from 54% to 68%, businesses from 50% to 66% using external lawyers. Self-representation declined correspondingly for both citizens (36% to 26%) and business owners (59% to 42%).
- Citizens primarily face civil (38%) and misdemeanor (36%) cases, focusing on labor disputes, property issues, and traffic violations. Businesses experienced a dramatic shift from commercial cases (44% to 14%) to civil cases (21% to 57%), mainly involving payment collection and property disputes.
- Justice system professionals vary in experience: lawyers average 13 years (most experienced), judges 8 years, prosecutors 7 years, and court staff 14 years.
- Support professionals include 58 notaries (averaging 9 years' experience) and 27 bailiffs (averaging 8 years' experience).

68. Personal Experience of Citizens and Businesses' Representatives with the Courts and Other Justice System Services

69. The survey reveals a decline in direct citizen engagement with court proceedings. Between 2020 and 2025, the proportion of citizens with any court case experience (either recent or prior personal or indirect through family members) decreased from 25% to 21%. Among businesses, this decline was more pronounced, with total court experience falling from 31% to 19%.

70. Half of the citizens who were involved in court cases in the past three years received a first-instance judgment (5%). Similarly, out of 10% of businesses with recent court experience, 4% report that a first-instance judgement has been rendered from the beginning of 2022 until the moment they were interviewed.

71. In contrast to court case involvement, the data indicate that citizens' interactions with other judicial services are fairly stable - a third have utilized the services provided by notaries, bailiffs, or court administration (33% vs. 31% in 2020). Specifically, in the past year, 28% of citizens engaged with notary services (compared to 25% in 2020), indicating consistent use and suggesting that these professionals are primary access points for routine legal needs. Meanwhile, 10% of citizens have interacted with court administration, reflecting ongoing administrative requirements (9% in 2020), and 6% have used bailiff services (7% in 2020).

72. Businesses demonstrate higher overall engagement with judicial services compared to citizens, with 40% using them, although this represents a significant decline from 64% in 2020. Notary services remain the key judicial service for businesses, with 35% utilizing them compared to

55% in 2020. Despite the decline, notaries obviously continue serving essential business functions. Bailiff services demonstrate business engagement at 10%, which is a notable decrease from 31% in 2020. Court administration services are accessed by 7% of businesses, declining from 19% in 2020.

73. A significant trend emerges in legal representation preferences. Citizens increasingly opt for paid private lawyers, rising from 54% in 2020 to 68% in 2025, while self-representation declined from 36% to 26%. Businesses show a parallel pattern, with external lawyer engagement increasing from 50% to 66%, while owner/director self-representation dropped from 59% to 42%. This suggests growing recognition of legal complexity requiring professional expertise.

74. Considering the nature of legal disputes, citizens primarily encounter civil and misdemeanor cases (38% and 36% respectively), with criminal cases representing 26%. Within case subjects, labor disputes dominate civil cases (42%), followed by property-related disputes (28%) and personal/family relations (18%). Traffic violations overwhelmingly lead misdemeanor cases (83%), while property crimes are most common in criminal proceedings (52%), followed by offenses against marriage and family (15%) and illegal construction (10%).

75. For businesses, civil cases increased significantly, from 21% to 57%, while commercial cases decreased from 44% to 14%. Additionally, disputes most frequently involve failure to collect due payments (47%), property rights violations (35% in disputes with individuals), and financial labor issues (35% in disputes with individuals).

How Experienced are Professionals in Montenegro?

76. Survey data reveal that the average age of lawyers in Montenegro is 48, mirroring judges who average 47 years, and are slightly older than prosecutors who average 45 years. However, lawyers in Montenegro are more seasoned, typically possessing 13 years of professional experience. This experience exceeds that of judges and prosecutors, who average 8 and 7 years, respectively. Court staff average 47 years of age with 14 years of experience, indicating substantial institutional knowledge.

77. The survey achieved limited but meaningful responses from support professionals. Among 58 public notaries in Montenegro, 15 participated (26% response rate), averaging 52 years of age with 9 years in notarial practice. Bailiffs represent the smallest professional group with 27 total practitioners, of whom 10 participated (37% response rate). Interviewed bailiffs average 45 years of age with 8 years of experience.

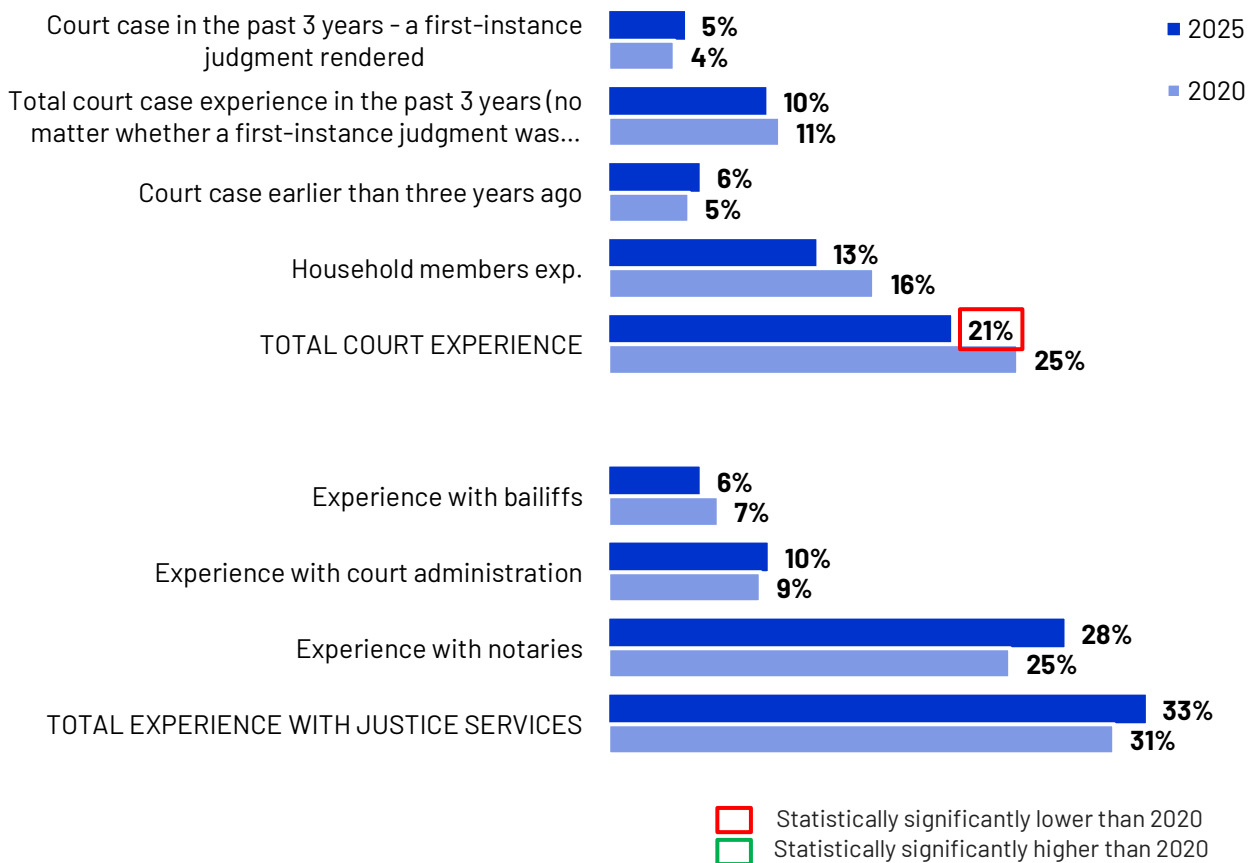
1.1. Citizens' experience with court cases and judicial services

78. A fifth of the citizens have experience with court cases in some form (21%). Among them, 13% gained this exposure indirectly through family members, and 6% had personal experiences more than three years ago. Furthermore, in the past three years, 10% have been involved in court proceedings without necessarily receiving a first-instance judgment, while 5% had such a judgment rendered within this period. (Figure 5).

79. Additionally, a third (33%) have interacted with other judicial services, such as notaries, bailiffs, and court administration. More precisely, over the previous 12 months, slightly more than a quarter of citizens have visited notaries (28%), while every tenth has engaged with court staff. Bailiff services have been used by 6% of the population within the last three years. (Figure 5).

80. Compared to 2020, there is a decrease in the number of people with experience in court cases in one or another way (21% vs. 25%). (Figure 5).

Figure 5. - CITIZENS: CITIZENS EXPERIENCE WITH COURT CASES AND JUDICIAL SERVICES



(Did you have experience with...?) Base: Main population (2025, n=1003; 2020, n=1008)

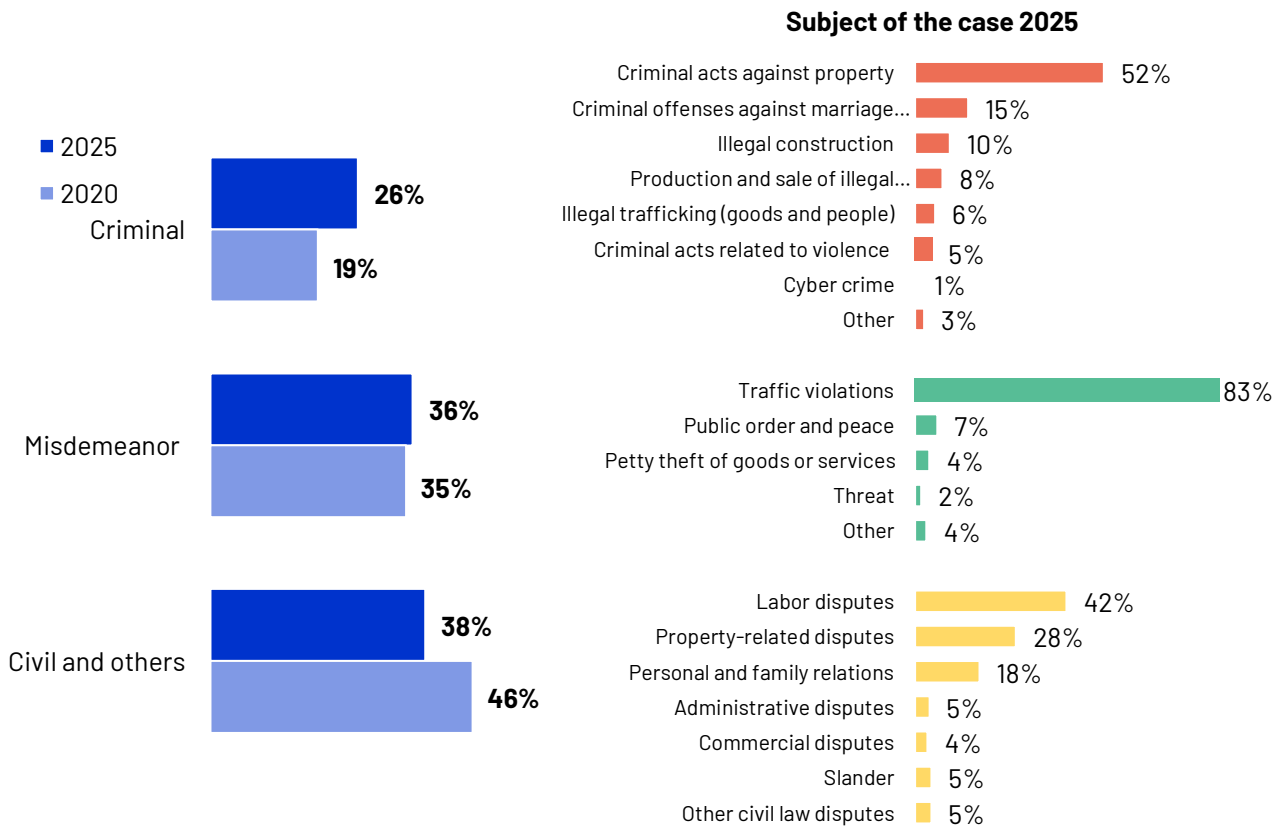
81. During the past three years, citizens primarily gained experience in civil and misdemeanor cases (38%, 36%, respectively), while a quarter were involved in criminal cases (26%). (Figure 6).

82. Among civil cases, labor disputes were the most common, cited by 42% of people. Civil cases were convincingly most often concerned with traffic violations (83%). In criminal cases, offenses against property were most prevalent, accounting for 52% of reported incidents. (Figure 6).

83. Compared to 2020, the distribution of case types seems more balanced because of a decrease in civil cases and an increase in criminal cases. (Figure 6).

¹ Did you PERSONALLY take part in a court proceeding in the past three years, from the beginning of 2022 till now?/ Did you take part in a court proceeding before the autumn of 2016?/ Did anyone from your household take part in a court from the beginning of 2022?/ Did anyone from your household take part in a court proceeding before 2022?/ Did you have any interaction with bailiffs during the past 3 years, from the beginning of 2022 till now?/ Did you have any interaction with court staff in the past 12 months?/ Did you do visit a public notary during the past 12 months to finish some task?

Figure 6. - CITIZENS: TYPES AND SUBJECT OF THE CASES CITIZENS HAD EXPERIENCE WITH

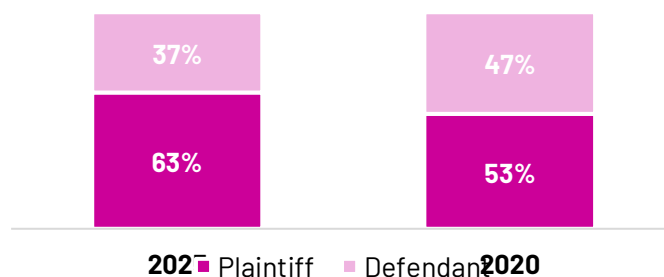


(What type of case was it? / Please take a look at the list and specify what the subject of the case was.) Base: Those who had experience with a court case in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (2025, n=343; 2020, n=357)

84. Citizens generally found themselves more frequently in the role of plaintiff (63%) than defendant (37%). However, this ratio is reversed in civil cases, where 34% were plaintiffs and 66% were defendants. In contrast, in misdemeanor cases, plaintiffs outnumbered defendants nearly six times (85% vs. 15%). This confirms that the role in a case proceeding largely depends on the case type. (Figure 7.).

85. Compared to 2020 - There was a more even plaintiff-defendant ratio five years ago. (Figure 6).

Figure 7. - CITIZENS: CITIZENS' STATUS IN THE PROCEEDINGS



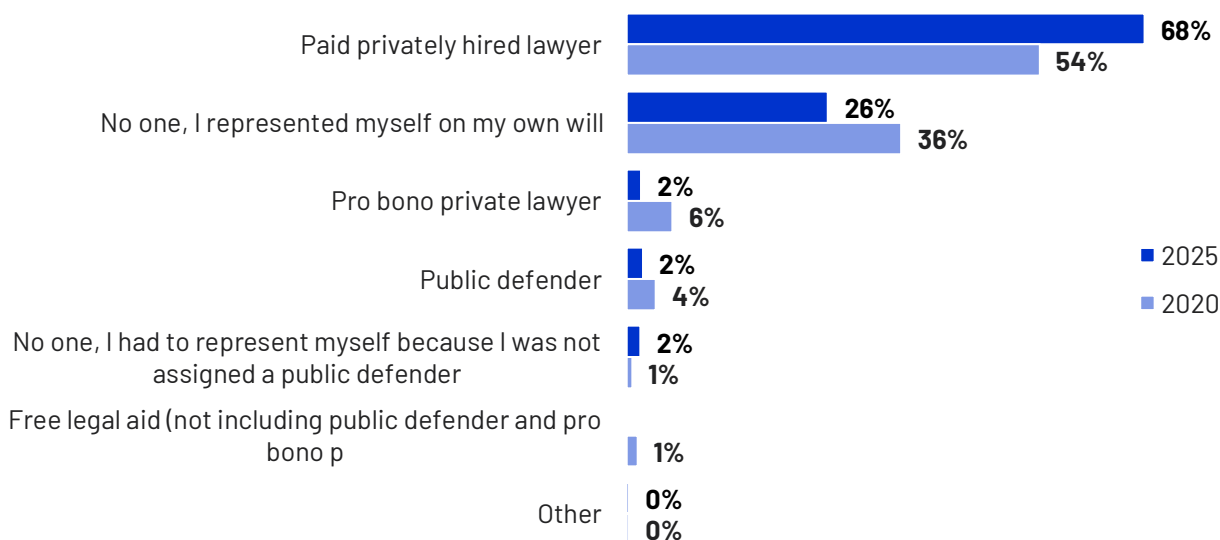
(What was your status in a proceeding?) Base: Those who had experience with a court case in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (2025, n=343; 2020, n=357)

86. In the past three years, citizens most often chose to be represented in a court by a paid, privately hired lawyer (68%). Self-representation comes in second (26%), while all other options fall into the single-digit percentage range. (Figure 8.).

87. Type of case plays a role once again, so participants in misdemeanor cases appear before the court independently (55%) more often than those engaging in criminal (7%) and civil (9%) cases.

88. Compared to 2020 – Between the two survey waves, some changes in preferences for legal representation have occurred. Specifically, people seem more willing to pay for professional legal assistance than they were (68% vs. 54%). Subsequently, there are fewer of those who are convinced that they can adequately represent themselves (26% vs. 36%). (Figure 8).

Figure 8. - CITIZENS: REPRESENTATION BEFORE THE COURT



first instance judgement rendered; (2025, n=343; 2020, n=357) Base: Those who had experience with a court case in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (2025, n=343; 2020, n=357)

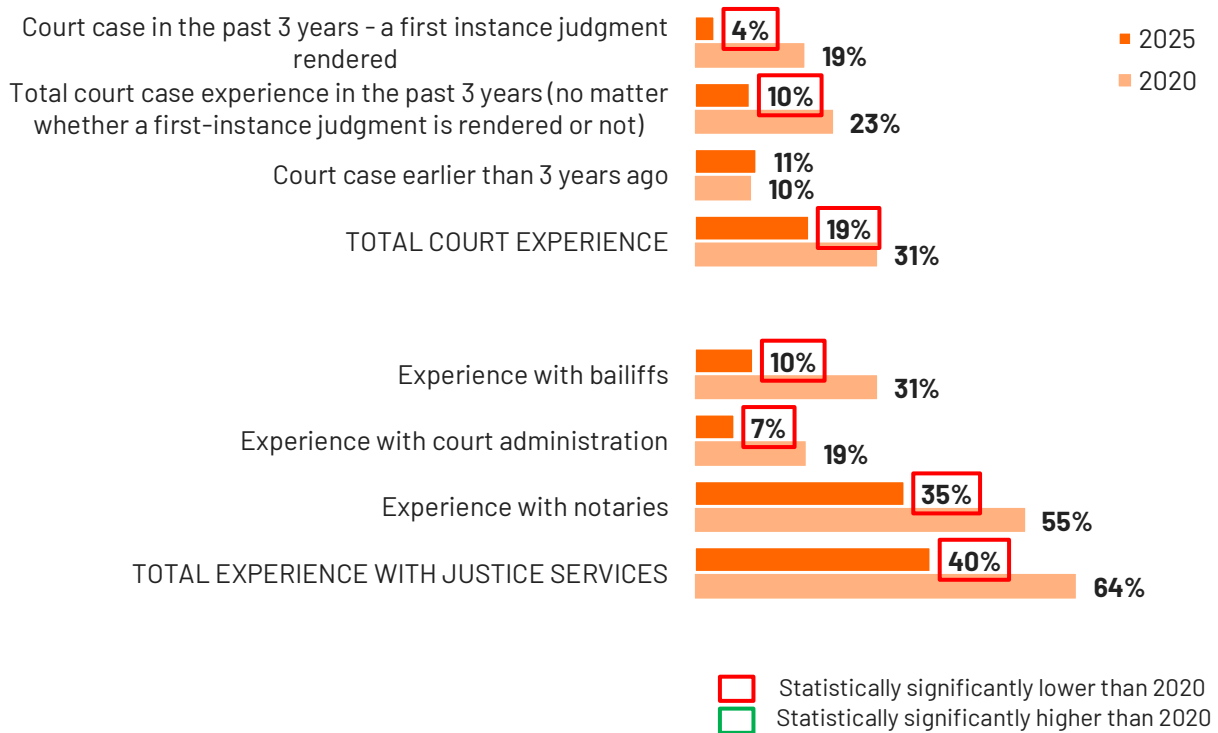
1.2. Businesses' experience with court cases and judicial services

89. Approximately a fifth of businesses in Montenegro have participated in court cases at some point (19%). Specifically, 11% encountered such experiences more than three years ago, and 10% engaged in court proceedings within the last three years. Additionally, 4% got a first-instance judgment during this period (Figure 9).

90. Experience with judicial services is more widespread, with 40% of businesses using them. Notary services are the most frequently used, with 35% of businesses availing them. Meanwhile, 10% have interacted with bailiffs, and 7% have accessed services from court administrative units (Figure 9).

91. Compared to 2020 – The incidence of court case participation and overall use of judicial services has significantly declined over the past five years. (Figure 9).

Figure 9. - BUSINESSES: BUSINESSES' EXPERIENCE WITH COURT CASES AND JUDICIAL SERVICES



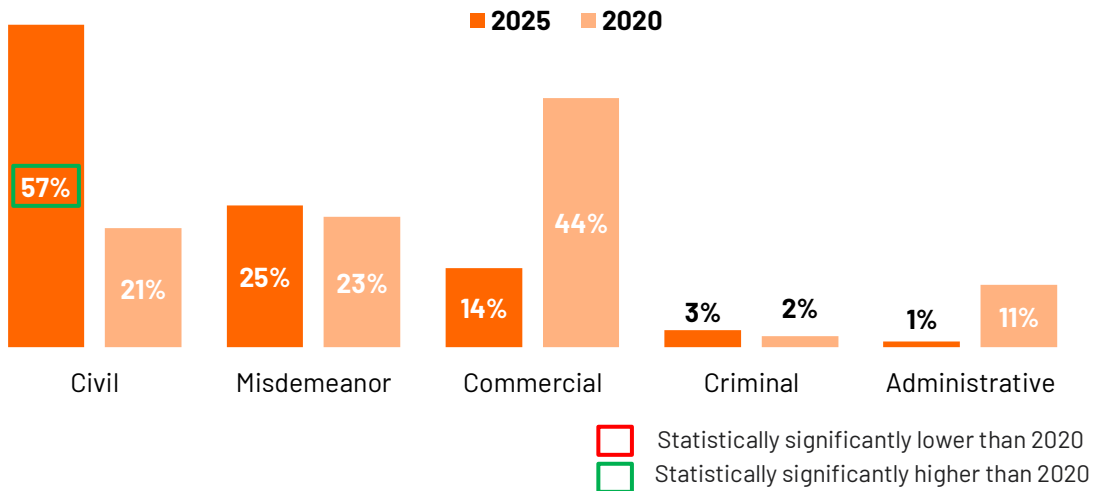
(Did your company have experience with...?) Base: Main population (2025, n=202; 2020, n=207)

92. In the last three years, among businesses with court case experience, nearly 60% were involved in civil litigation. A quarter of these businesses participated in misdemeanor disputes, 14% were engaged in commercial cases, and 3% were involved in criminal cases (Figure 10).

93. Compared to 2020, there has been a noticeable increase in civil cases among businesses (57% vs. 21%), likely at the expense of commercial cases, which have become less frequently reported (14% vs. 44%)(Figure 10).

² Was your company involved in a court proceeding over the past three years, from the autumn of 2016 up till now?/ Was your company involved in a court proceeding before the autumn of 2016?/ Was a first-instance judgment in any of the cases rendered in the period from the autumn of 2016

Figure 10. - BUSINESSES: BUSINESSES' COURT CASES - TYPE OF CASE

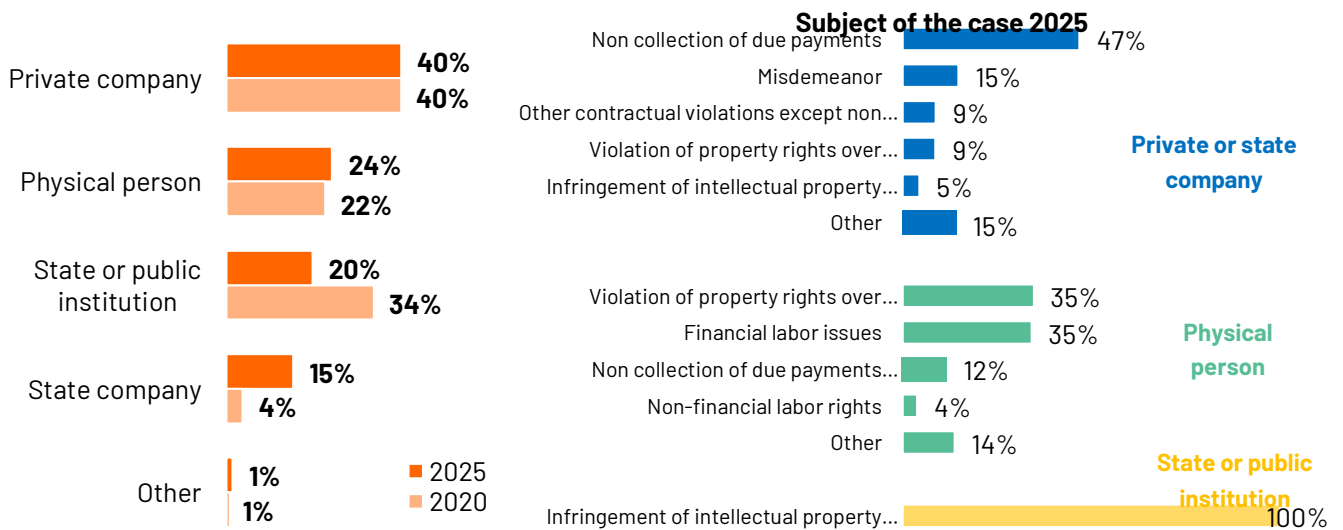


(What type of case was it?) Base: Those who have had experience with a court case in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (2025, n=79; 2020, n=109)

94. The other party in the proceeding was usually another company (40%), with disputes most frequently revolving around the failure to collect due payments (47%). A quarter of businesses have engaged in disputes with a physical person (24%), commonly due to violations related to property rights over movable or immovable assets or financial labor issues (both 35%). In 20% of cases, a state or public institute was the opposing party, all of which stemmed from infringements of intellectual property (Figure 11).

95. Compared to 2020 – In the last three years, businesses were less likely to enter disputes with public or state institutions (34% vs. 20%) (Figure 11).

Figure 11. - BUSINESSES: BUSINESSES' COURT CASES - SUBJECT OF THE CASE

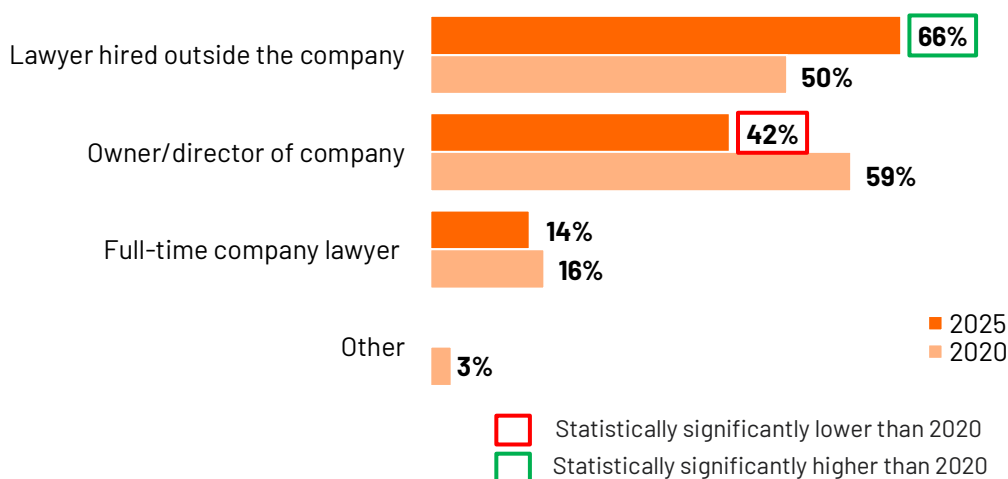


(Who was the other party in the proceedings? / Please have a look at this list and specify the subject of THAT LAST CASE where the first-instance judgement was rendered?) Base: Those who have had experience with a court case in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (2025, n=79; 2020, n=109)

96. Over the past three years, businesses have predominantly chosen to hire an external lawyer for court representation (66%). Conversely, business owners or directors took on this role in 42% of cases, while in-house lawyers were involved in 14% of disputes (Figure 12).

97. Compared to 2020, there has been a noticeable increase in the preference for professional legal representation, as evidenced by the higher engagement of external lawyers (66% versus 50% previously). At the same time, the occurrence of owners or directors representing their companies in court has significantly declined (42% compared to 59%)(Figure 12).

Figure 12 - BUSINESSES: REPRESENTATION BEFORE THE COURT



*(Who represented your company in the last case where the first-instance judgement was rendered from the beginning of 2022?)
 Base: Those who had experience with a court case in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (2025, n=79; 2020, n=109)*

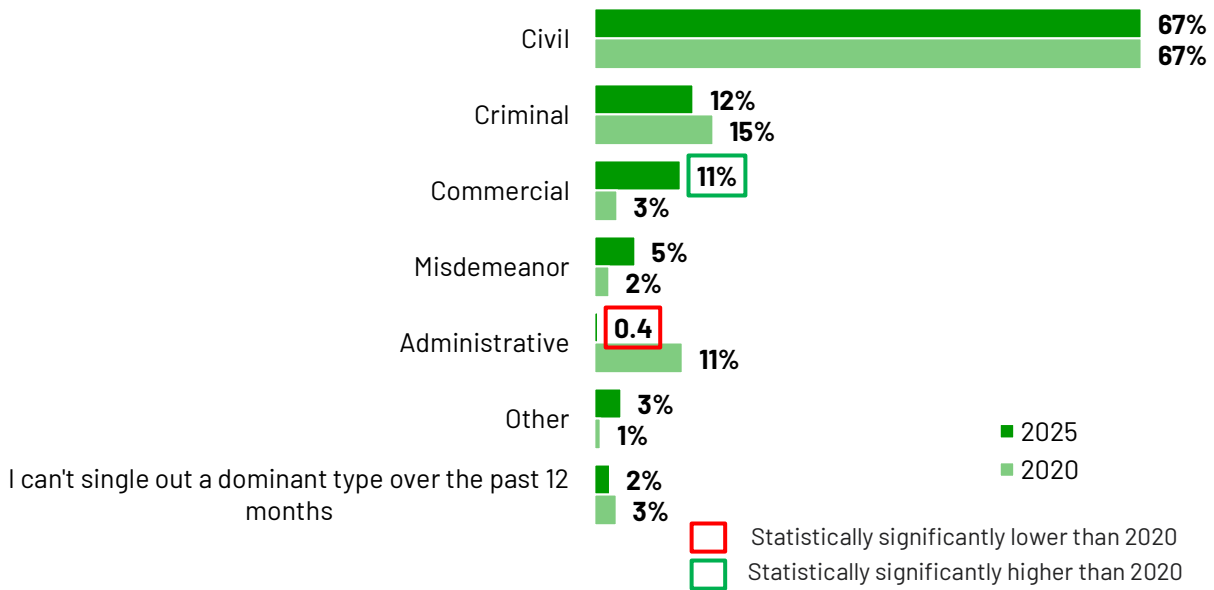
1.3. Lawyers' overview

98. Based on survey data, the average age of lawyers in Montenegro is 48 years, with an average work experience of 13 years. When compared to other professionals in the judicial system, lawyers are of similar age to judges (47 years old on average) and slightly older than prosecutors (with an average age of 45 years). However, lawyers possess significantly more experience in lawyering than judges and prosecutors, who have an average of 8 and 7 years of experience in their current roles, respectively.

99. The predominant type of cases handled by lawyers is civil cases (67%). Additionally, 12% of lawyers specialize in criminal cases, and 11% primarily deal with commercial disputes. Other case types are less frequently the main focus for lawyers: 5% handle mostly misdemeanor cases, 3% focus on other various case types, and 2% of lawyers report having no dominant case type (Figure 13).

100. Compared to 2020, there has been a notable shift in focus towards commercial cases, reported by 11% of lawyers, up from 3%. Conversely, there has been a major drop in lawyers focusing on administrative cases, which has fallen to less than 1%, down from 11% in 2020.

Figure 13 - LAWYERS: DOMINANT TYPE OF CASES LAWYERS WORK ON



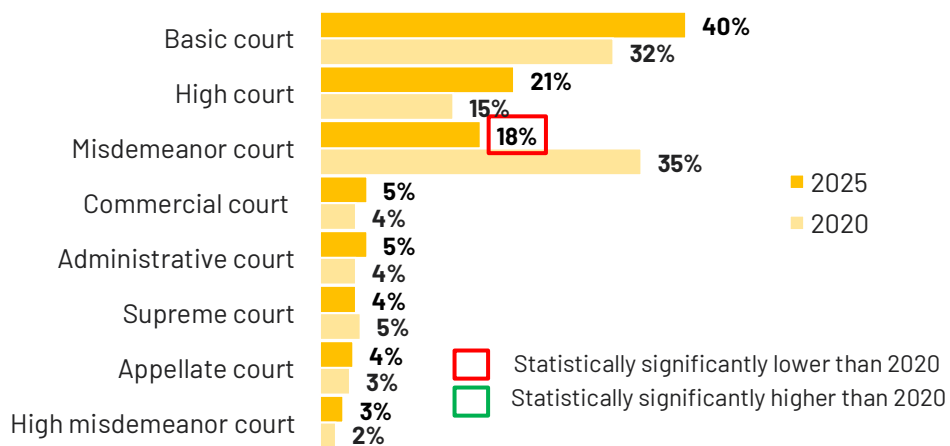
(Which type of cases have you mostly worked on during the past 12 months?) Base: Total target population; (2025, n=150; 2020, n= 151)

1.4. Judges' overview

101. According to survey data, judges in Montenegro are, on average, 47 years old and possess 8 years of professional experience as a judge. The majority of the interviewed judges are employed in basic courts, accounting for 40%; a fifth work in high courts, and a slightly smaller number in misdemeanor courts (18%)(see Figure 14).

102. Compared to 2020, this time the response rate was lower in the misdemeanor court (18% vs. 35%). Considering demographics, judges interviewed in the current wave of the survey appear to be somewhat younger (47 years old vs. 51 years old) and have less accumulated experience, averaging 8 years compared to the 12 years reported previously (Figure 14).

Figure 14 - JUDGES: THE INSTITUTION JUDGES WORK IN

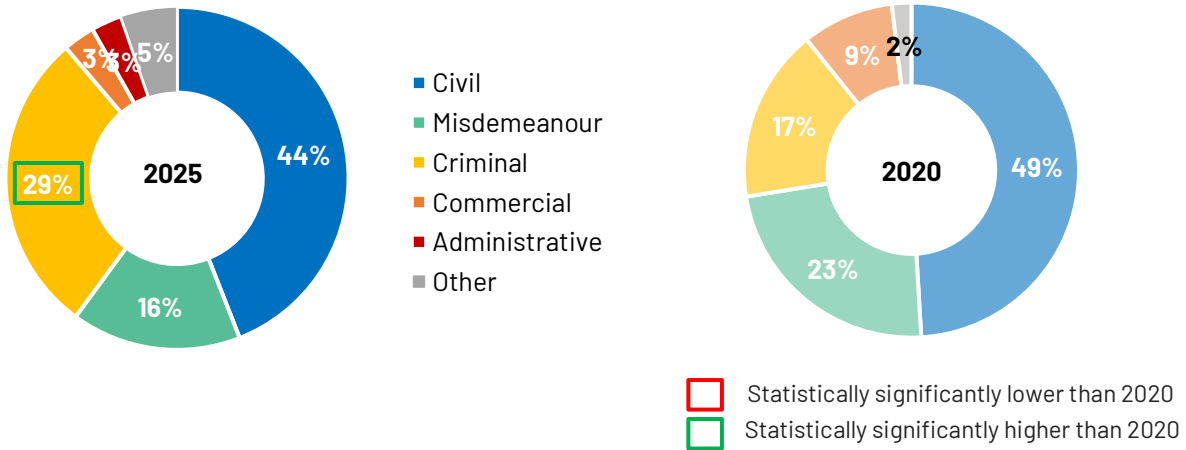


(In which institution do you work?) Base: Total target population; (2025, n=155; 2020, n= 192)

103. In courts of general jurisdiction, judges are allocated as follows: 44% serve in the civil department, 29% in the criminal department, and 16% in the misdemeanor sector. Other departments employ a smaller number of judges (Figure 15).

104. Compared to 2020 – Based on survey data, there has been an increase in the number of judges working in the criminal department within courts of general jurisdiction (Figure 15).

Figure 15 - JUDGES: DEPARTMENT OF THE COURT OF GENERAL JURISDICTION JUDGES WORK IN



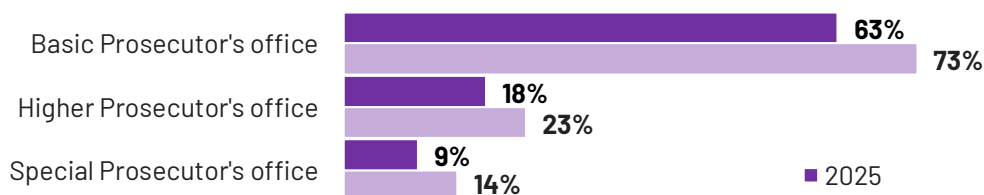
(If you work in a court of general jurisdiction, please indicate the department in which you work.) Base: Total target population (recalculated to show only valid responses); (2025, n=129; 2020, n=153)

1.5. Prosecutors' overview

105. Survey results indicate that the average age of prosecutors stands at 45 years, with an average of 7 years of professional experience in their current position. Most prosecutors are based in basic prosecutor's offices (63%), close to one-fifth serve in high prosecutor's offices (18%), and 9% are part of the Special Prosecutor's office. (Figure 16).

106. Compared to 2020, prosecutors appear younger, with an average age of 45 rather than 48, and they bring slightly less experience, averaging 7 years compared to the previous 10 years reported (Figure 16).

Figure 16 - PROSECUTORS: THE INSTITUTION PROSECUTORS WORK IN



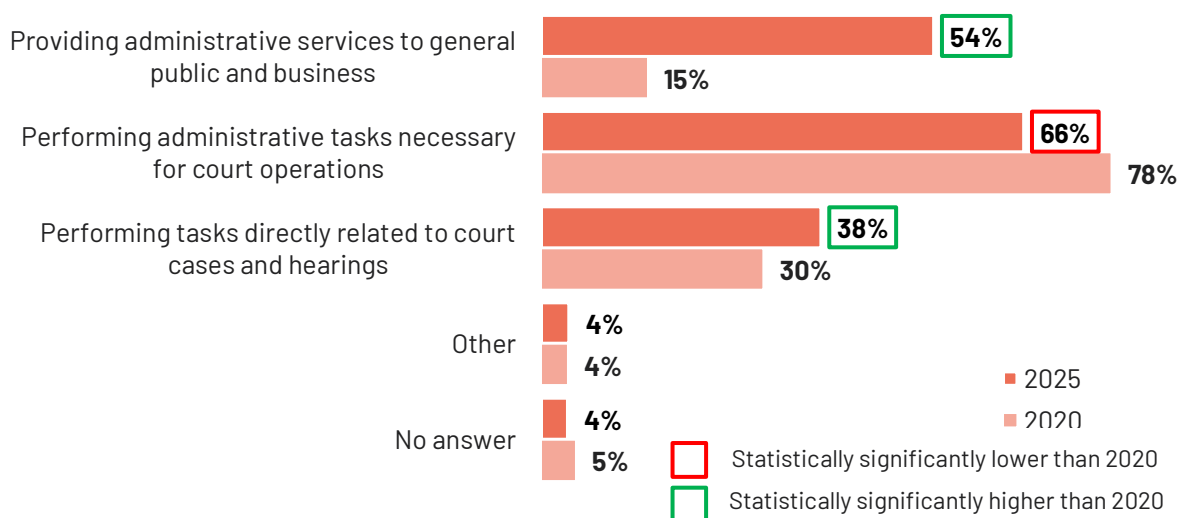
(In which institution do you work?) Base: Total target population; (2025, n=71; 2020, n= 83)

1.6. Court staff overview

107. Based on survey data, the average age of court staff is 47 years, with a career duration of 14 years. The majority are employed in basic courts (50%), followed by 18% in misdemeanor courts, and 14% in high courts, with fewer working in other jurisdictions. In terms of roles, two-thirds of court administrative workers focus on essential court operational tasks, while more than half are engaged in providing services to citizens and businesses (54%). Additionally, 38% manage tasks related directly to court hearings and cases. Younger staff, those under 35 years, tend to take on more responsibilities related to direct client communications (70% compared to 29% among their colleagues above 50 years).

108. Compared to 2020, a noticeable increase is evident in staff serving citizens and businesses (54% vs. 15%) and handling court-related tasks (38% vs. 30%). Conversely, there's a decline in those involved in administrative duties important for operations of the court itself (66% vs. 78%).

Figure 17 - COURT STAFF: WORK DESCRIPTION OF COURT STAFF MEMBERS IN THE INSTITUTION THEY WORK IN



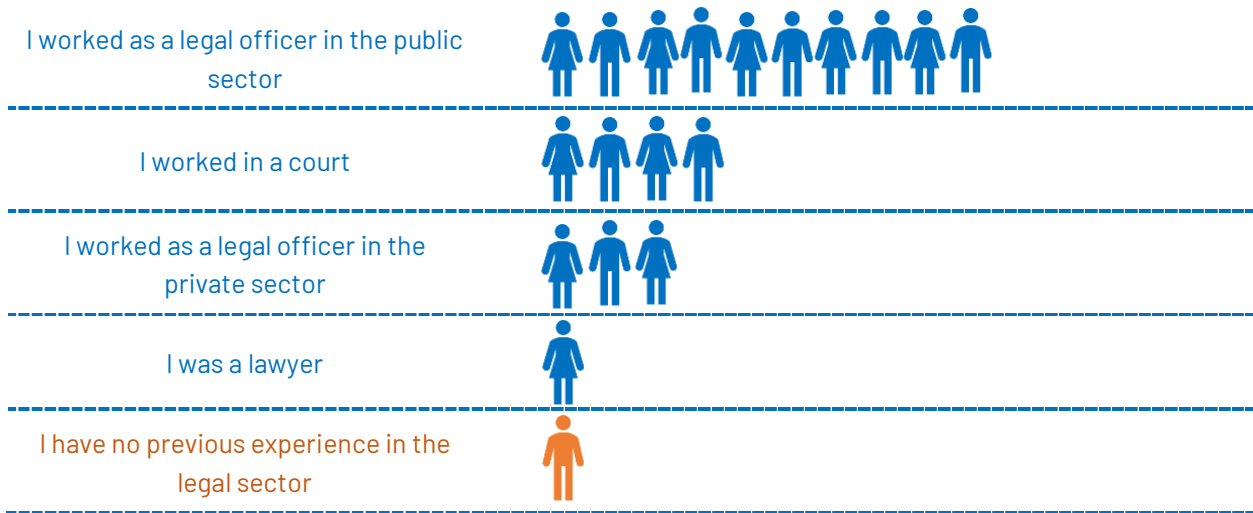
(Please tick all the statements that would fit the description of your work activities.) Base: Total target population; (2025, n=687; 2020, n=662)

1.7. Notaries' overview

109. According to recent official figures, there are 58 public notaries in Montenegro. However, only 15 of them responded to this survey, representing 26% of the entire notary population. As a result, the findings should not be generalized or regarded as reliably indicative of all notaries in Montenegro, but rather as tendencies based on the responses of those who participated.

110. Surveyed notaries in Montenegro have an average age of 52 years and have held the notary position for the past 9 years. Almost all of them have prior legal experience (14 out of 15), and some have held multiple legal roles throughout their careers. The largest number have worked as legal officers in the public sector (Figure 18).

Figure 18 - NOTARIES: PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE



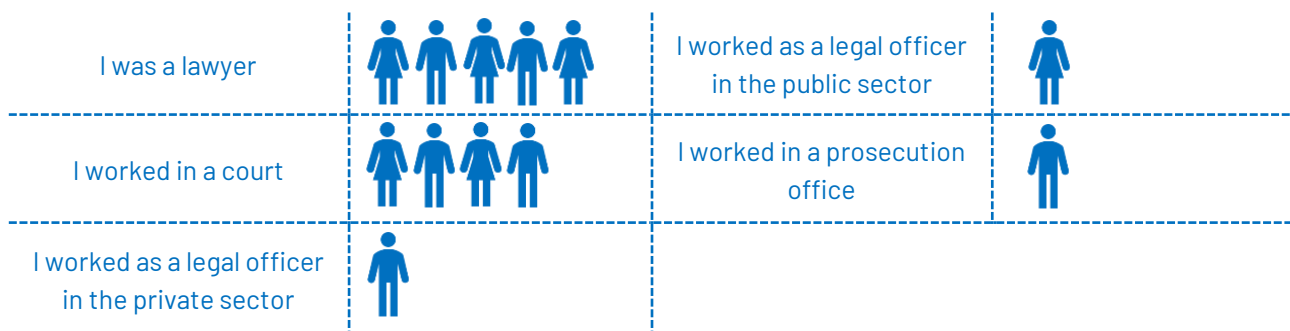
(What is your previous work experience in the legal sector, before working in a notary practice?) Base: Total target population; (2025, n=15)

1.8. Bailiffs' overview

111. The total number of bailiffs in Montenegro is 27, of which 10 (i.e., 37% of the population) took part in the survey. Therefore, all the findings related to bailiffs in this report provide general inclinations rather than definitive conclusions regarding the entire population of bailiffs in Montenegro.

112. Interviewed bailiffs in Montenegro are on average 45 years old and have performed their job for 8 years. All of them have had legal experience prior to their current position. Most of them worked as lawyers or in courts. (Figure 19).

Figure 19 - BAILIFFS: PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE



(What is your previous work experience in the legal sector, before working in a notary practice?) Base: Total target population; (2025, n=10)

2. EFFICIENCY

- Overall perception of efficiency among all target groups is generally positive but declining. Satisfaction has significantly decreased since 2020 across all groups, with the most dramatic decline among lawyers and prosecutors.
- Key stakeholder perspectives show that citizens and businesses hold predominantly positive views of judicial efficiency, with around 56-58% viewing courts and prosecution favourably. Among professionals, lawyers are more critical and closer to service users than to providers, with courts rated 49% positive. At the same time, judges and prosecutors show institutional loyalty and confidence (83% of judges express satisfaction with courts, and 91% are satisfied with their own court's efficiency; prosecutors show 93% self-satisfaction, and 95% are positive about their own prosecutor's office). Court staff share a similar opinion.
- Although showing satisfaction with their own court and office, judges, prosecutors, and members of administrative staff draw attention to significant workload and capacity issues. Judges handle 150% more cases than the optimal level annually, prosecutors 67%, while court staff deal with 74% more cases daily than optimal.
- Efficiency index implies that 36-61% of hearings significantly contribute to case resolution, with lawyers being most pessimistic (36%) and citizens, businesses, and judges being most positive (estimating that 60% of hearings are effective). According to judges and prosecutors, case length is most usually extended because of obstructive behaviour by parties, inadequate witnesses and experts, and staffing shortages in courts and prosecutors' offices.
- Regarding the changes in efficiency over the past 3 years, mixed perceptions are observed. Improvements are most noticeable among prosecutors, with 68% reporting positive changes. Judges follow, with 51% sharing a similar view, while 45% of citizens also see improvements. In contrast, lawyers hold a more divided perspective on the justice system's trends, with only 37% recognizing positive changes and an equal percentage reporting negative trends. Businesses, on the other hand, view the situation slightly more favourably, with 39% observing positive changes

Citizens' and Business Representatives' Perceptions About the Efficiency of the Justice System

113. Citizens' and businesses' opinions about all judicial actors, i.e., service providers and lawyers, are predominantly positive. Thus, almost 60% of these populations share a favourable view towards courts and prosecution efficiency (56% within both populations towards courts, and 58% towards prosecution), compared to somewhat more than one-third of citizens with a negative opinion (32% towards courts and 37% towards prosecution among citizens; 42% towards courts and 36% towards prosecution among companies). Interestingly, court administrative services are perceived similarly to courts. In this regard, more than half of citizens and businesses share a positive opinion (55% of citizens, and 57% of businesses) compared to 37% of citizens and 43% of companies with negative views. Compared to others, notaries and lawyers, who provide direct professional services, receive significantly higher satisfaction ratings than institutional actors like courts and prosecutors. Thus, 70% of citizens and 73% of businesses view lawyers favourably, while notaries receive even higher approval ratings, at 76% among citizens and 87% among businesses. Bailiffs are also perceived predominantly positively, but to a greater extent from companies than from citizens (62% vs. 47%). However, opinions about bailiffs have a notable share of indifference (20% among citizens and 13% among companies marked "don't know" answer), who probably do not have information about bailiffs' work in general.

114. The data on citizens reveals splits along ethnic, regional, and political lines, with Montenegrin ethnicity citizens and opposition supporters consistently more critical across all judicial actors, while citizens of Serbian ethnicity, who mainly live in the northern part of the country, and the ruling party supporters are more positive. This suggests that perceptions of judicial efficiency are influenced not just by actual performance, but also by broader societal and political divisions in Montenegro.

115. Although users' opinions of the judiciary service providers are positive, overall satisfaction with court efficiency has decreased across all groups since 2020, with businesses becoming slightly more critical over time. The most significant decrease comes from companies towards courts (-18 in PPA points). The only exception is notary services from the perspective of citizens (with a PPA of +2 between the two waves).

Impact of Personal Experience on the Perception of the Courts' Efficiency

116. Direct service providers – notaries, court staff, and especially bailiffs, as well as lawyers as intermediaries – benefit from users' experience, which is not the case with institutional actors, courts, and prosecution. Personal experiences of the general population and business representatives often lead to a more favorable view of the efficiency of direct providers. In contrast, this positive trend does not apply to courts and prosecutors, as individuals with experience in these areas tend to be more sceptical about their efficiency. Thus, direct service interactions (notaries, bailiffs, lawyers) tend to humanize and improve perceptions, while institutional processes (courts, prosecution) may expose systemic inefficiencies. Furthermore, businesses with court experience rate institutional actors more positively than citizens do.

117. Among citizens who have used bailiff services, 67% consider bailiffs to be efficient, compared to a population average of 47%. A similar trend is observed with notaries, where 87% of citizen users rate their efficiency positively, in contrast to an average of 76%. For lawyers, 84% of citizen users view them as efficient, compared to an average of 70%. Although the difference is smaller, court administration follows this pattern as well; 63% of experienced citizens rate its efficiency positively, compared to 57% across the overall population.

118. The 2020-2025 comparison shows that experienced citizen users have become more critical of courts' and the prosecution's efficiency (PPA: -16 for courts and -18 for the prosecution), suggesting that changes may not be meeting their expectations. Thus, citizens with court experience are more critical than the overall population on average (56% vs. 52% show positive views). On the other hand, businesses show the opposite trend (67% businesses with court experience vs. 56% of the overall companies show positive views). Private bailiffs are the only actor to show improved ratings among experienced users since 2020 (PPA: +13 among citizens and +16 among businesses), indicating successful improvements in service delivery.

Perceptions of the Efficiency of the Justice System Professionals

119. Among professionals, lawyers are the most critical group, being closer to the service users than to providers. They consistently rate courts (49% positive) and prosecution (57% positive) lower compared to other professional groups. Judges show strong institutional loyalty, expressing the highest satisfaction with courts (83%), then toward prosecution (73%). As judges, prosecutors are also more confident in themselves than in judges – 93% self-satisfaction, but 71% positive toward judges. The overwhelming majority of judges, lawyers, and prosecutors express positive opinions about the efficiency of administrative court staff – 78% of lawyers, 76% of judges, and 73% of prosecutors show a favorable view.

120. Judges and prosecutors assess the efficiency of their own institutions equally favorably as the efficiency in general, but a majority of them feel overburdened with their caseload. This is especially true for judges who find that the actual caseload exceeds the optimal by 150% on average.

According to prosecutors, the actual caseload exceeded the optimal one by 67% on average. Two out of three judges believe an increase in the number of court staff would positively influence this gap (64%), while prosecutors themselves strongly believe that a larger number of prosecutors and investigators would contribute to the efficiency of their institution. Lawyers share a similar opinion that a larger number of judges and prosecutors would benefit the efficiency of courts and prosecution.

121. Prosecutors are more enthusiastic than judges on whether efficiency has worsened or improved over the past three years, with the majority believing it has improved (68% vs. 53%). Lawyers, on the other hand, are more critical in their estimation of the judicial system's efficiency over time, with nearly 40% having the impression that it has improved (38%).

The Efficiency Index

122. The efficiency index was calculated by deducting from the total number of hearings those that were scheduled but not held, as well as those that took place but did not help resolve the case. Montenegro's justice system presents a complex picture of operational efficiency, with different actors experiencing varying levels of success in court proceedings.

123. Citizens and businesses generally have a positive experience with court hearings, estimating that on average, 61% of hearings were efficient for case resolution. Judges share a similar view, assessing that 60% of hearings contribute to the case. However, lawyers and prosecutors hold a different perspective. Lawyers are the most critical, believing that only 36% of hearings effectively contribute to case resolution, while prosecutors feel the same about 44% of hearings.

124. More than half of citizens (59%) and businesses (57%) with experience with a court case report that their case lasted longer than it should have.

125. Justice system professionals predominantly attribute the length of court proceedings to the obstructive behavior of parties involved in the case. Specifically, 77% of lawyers, 71% of judges, and 94% of prosecutors identify this as a reason for extended delays. Additionally, a notable number of these professionals believe that witnesses and experts also contribute to the prolonged duration of cases, with 74% of lawyers, 73% of judges, and 84% of prosecutors agreeing. Lawyers also point out that errors made by court staff have an impact on case length, with 64% recognizing this issue, while judges express concern about the failure of other state authorities to act on court requests (68%).

126. The efficiency index, i.e., perception of operational efficiency, has dropped in all target populations compared to 2020. This drop is the most dramatic among lawyers (from 58% of hearings perceived as effective in 2020 to 36% in 2025), followed by prosecutors (from 65% in 2020 to 44% in 2025).

The Efficiency of the Court Administrative Services

127. The perception of the efficiency of court administrative services among professionals is very positive, with over 70% of all groups expressing a favourable view. Moreover, administrative staff are largely positive in perceptions of their unit's efficiency, with 86% rating it as satisfactory or very satisfactory. However, according to their opinion, higher salaries, commitment, and motivation of court staff members would increase their efficiency.

128. Over the past year, court employees have handled an average of 33 administrative tasks per day, which is 74% above their perceived optimal workload of 19 tasks. Interestingly, between the two waves, staff expectations for perceived optimal workload decreased from 39 tasks on a daily average in 2020 to 19 tasks in 2025. Moreover, the current workload is 76% above what staff consider optimal in 2025, which is a significant increase from the 18% above optimal levels estimated in 2020. However, most tasks are completed on time or ahead of schedule, with 37% finished within prescribed deadlines and 36% completed even earlier. In 2025, a significantly greater percentage of court staff (77%)

reported an increase in their workload in the previous year, compared to 2020 (57%). Conversely, the proportion of staff who report that their workload remained the same has significantly decreased, from 34% in 2020 to 17% in 2025.

Impact of Notaries and Bailiffs on the Efficiency of the Justice System

129. All professionals agree that notaries play a significant role in enhancing the efficiency of the judicial system in Montenegro. Lawyers are the most convinced of this, with 89% affirming their positive view. Judges and prosecutors closely follow, with 86% and 84% respectively, reporting similar sentiments. Additionally, the court administrative staff's perception of notaries is mainly positive, with 60% expressing this view (although 33% have not provided an answer; only 7% believe that the impact is negative).

130. Similar to the perception of notaries, legal professionals widely acknowledge the positive impact of bailiffs on the efficiency of the judicial system. A significant majority hold this favorable view: 90% of lawyers, 80% of judges, nearly 70% of prosecutors, and over 50% of court administrative staff.

2.1. General perception of the justice system's efficiency

2.1.1. General perception of court efficiency

131. Court service users, service providers, and lawyers, who act as intermediaries between the two, generally hold positive views about the efficiency of Montenegrin courts (Figure 20). However, the level of satisfaction varies among different populations.

132. Thus, citizens, businesses, and lawyers are divided on the issue of court efficiency. On the other hand, judges express the highest levels of satisfaction, while prosecutors, compared to them, show somewhat lower levels of satisfaction. The group of 'very satisfied' individuals is the largest among judges, while lawyers are the most critical in their assessments.

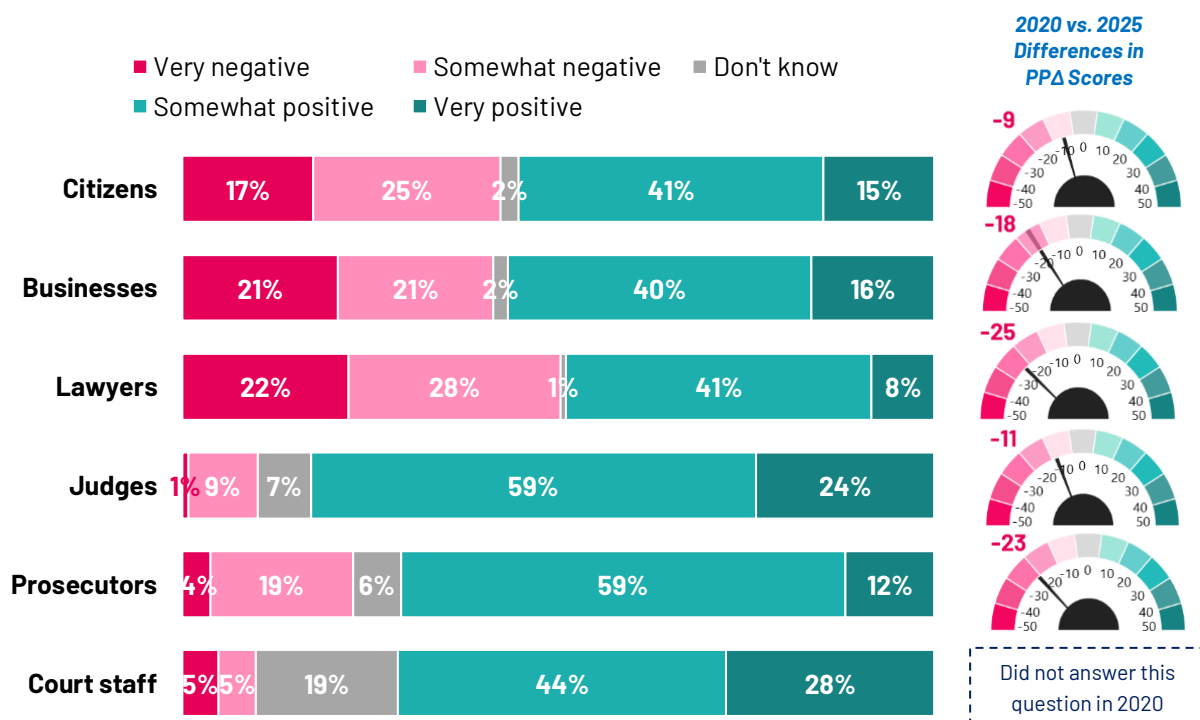
133. Among citizens, notable differences exist based on ethnicity, region, political affiliation, and even gender. Citizens of Serbian ethnicity express a significantly more positive attitude about the efficiency of courts (72%), as well as those closer to the ruling party (71%), compared to other ethnicities and citizens with different political views. Dissatisfaction in recent years is widespread among Montenegrin ethnic individuals (53%) and among individuals of other ethnicities (44%), similar to those aligned with opposition parties (63%) and politically neutral (41%).

134. Furthermore, citizens from the central and south regions are more likely to rate the court's efficiency as negative (47% , 44% respectively). In contrast, citizens in the northern region view courts' efficiency more positively compared to other regions (64% of estimates are favorable). In terms of gender, men are more critical than women (46% vs. 39%).

135. Interestingly, experience with certain legal services positively influences perceptions of court efficiency. Those who have interacted with court administration or notary services, more positively evaluate this aspect of courts (65% vs. 54% of users of administrative services, and 62% vs. 53% of users of notary services).

136. Among business users, geographical aspects give a similar picture. Thus, companies in the north and central region (55%,47%, respectively) share a more negative view about court efficiency than those in the south (30%).

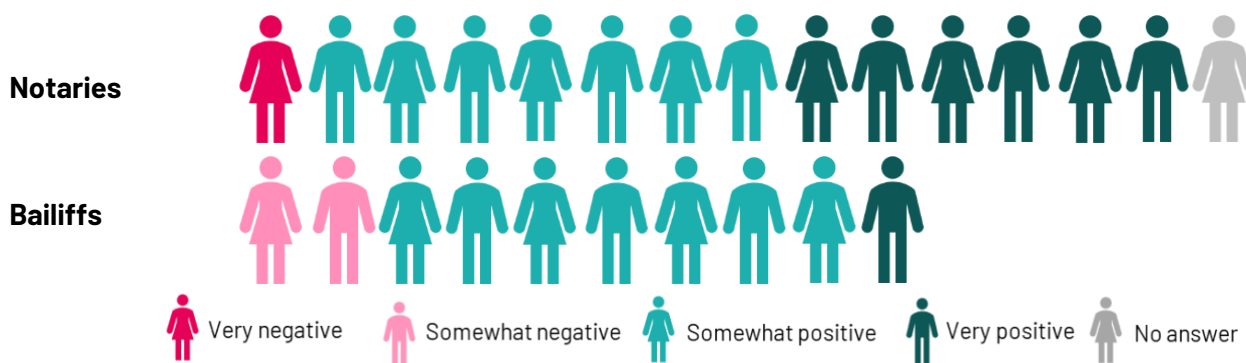
Figure 20- CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF COURT EFFICIENCY



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of courts in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff n=687)

137. Due to the limited number of notaries and bailiffs who responded to the questionnaire, we cannot draw any definitive conclusion; we can only identify tendencies among them. However, these insights are still valuable, especially when working with small target populations. Notaries and bailiffs in Montenegro predominantly hold a positive view of the courts' efficiency. Specifically, thirteen out of fifteen notaries and eight out of ten bailiffs rate court efficiency more or less favorably.

Figure 21 - NOTARIES' AND BAILIFFS' PERCEPTION OF COURTS' EFFICIENCY



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of courts in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

138. Compared to 2020 – The overall perception of courts' efficiency has worsened among all groups compared to the previous wave of evaluations. The most significant shift has been observed among prosecutors: while none expressed a negative view of the courts five years ago, by 2025 nearly one in four (23%) holds such a sentiment. Citizens have also grown increasingly critical regarding the efficiency of the courts, with negative opinions rising from 31% in 2020 to 42% in 2025. Similarly, businesses and lawyers have seen a doubling in the percentage of those with negative views, with businesses increasing from 20% in 2020 to 41% in 2025, and lawyers rising from 26% to 50%. Even judges themselves think that courts were more efficient back in 2020. In 2020, only 1% expressed a negative opinion about the efficiency of the courts; this figure has now increased to 10%. PPA score between the two waves shows the most significant decrease among lawyers and prosecutors.

139. Judges, additionally, were asked to assess the efficiency of the courts in which they work. The feedback was highly positive, with 91% of judges expressing satisfaction regarding their court's work efficiency. Those who were not entirely satisfied provided answers on what would improve the efficiency of their courts. In this regard, 60% of judges in this group believe that increasing the number of judges would be the most effective way to improve. Moreover, 47% indicated that hiring more court staff would also help enhance efficiency. Lawyers concurred on the three most significant factors that could boost court efficiency, identifying an increased number of judges (78%), improved infrastructure (40%), and better cooperation and coordination with other institutions (25%) as the most impactful.

2.1.2. General perception of efficiency of public prosecutors

140. The impression of prosecution efficiency is largely positive, with all populations providing more favorable evaluations than negative ones. Most favorable opinions come from prosecutors themselves, leaving little room for improvement in their work efficiency, with 93% expressing a positive opinion and only 2% offering a negative view. The opinions of other professionals in the justice system and service users are also predominantly positive, although to a lesser extent (see Figure 22).

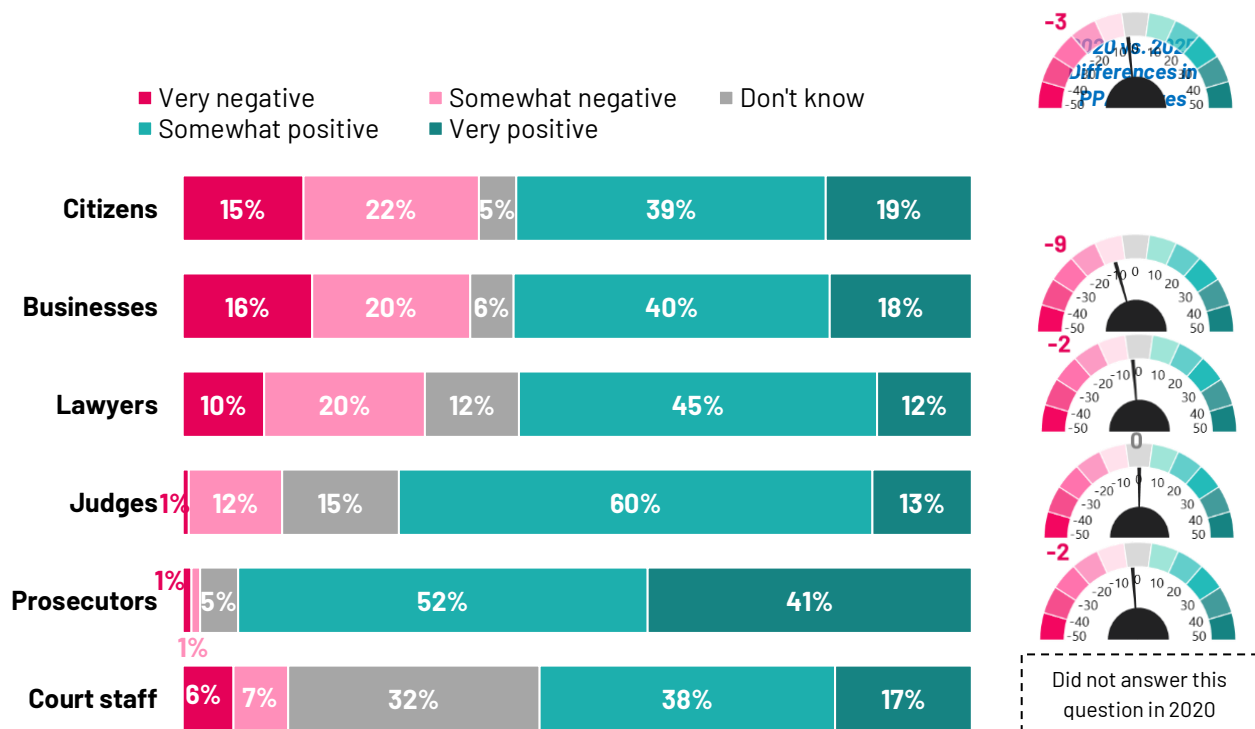
141. Judges generally view the prosecution's efficiency favourably, with 73% reporting a positive opinion. Nearly 60% of businesses, citizens, and lawyers share a similar view. However, negative opinions are most prevalent among citizens (37%) and businesses (36%), followed by lawyers (30%). Interestingly, 15% of judges do not provide an opinion on this matter.

142. Similar to perceptions of court efficiency, among citizens, men are more likely to express a negative attitude toward prosecutors' efficiency than women (41% vs. 34%). Additionally, 43% of residents in the central region of Montenegro and 39% of those living in the south perceive the efficiency of prosecutors as very or somewhat negative, whereas citizens in the northern region are significantly less critical (25% express a negative attitude, while 65% show a positive view).

143. Also in line with satisfaction regarding court efficiency, a positive opinion on prosecutors' efficiency is more common among citizens of Serbian ethnicity (73%) and those aligned with the ruling parties (77%). Conversely, negative opinions are more prevalent among citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity (49%) and other ethnicities (38%), as well as those who identify with opposition parties (57%) or are politically neutral (39%).

144. Younger lawyers (those aged 49 and under) tend to have more favorable views compared to their older colleagues, with 66% of younger lawyers expressing positive opinions versus 40% of older lawyers. Furthermore, although the number of lawyers working on different types of cases is too small for firm conclusions, there appears to be a tendency: those who handle criminal cases and work closely with prosecution generally tend to have a more positive perception of prosecution compared to those with more experience in civil or misdemeanor cases.

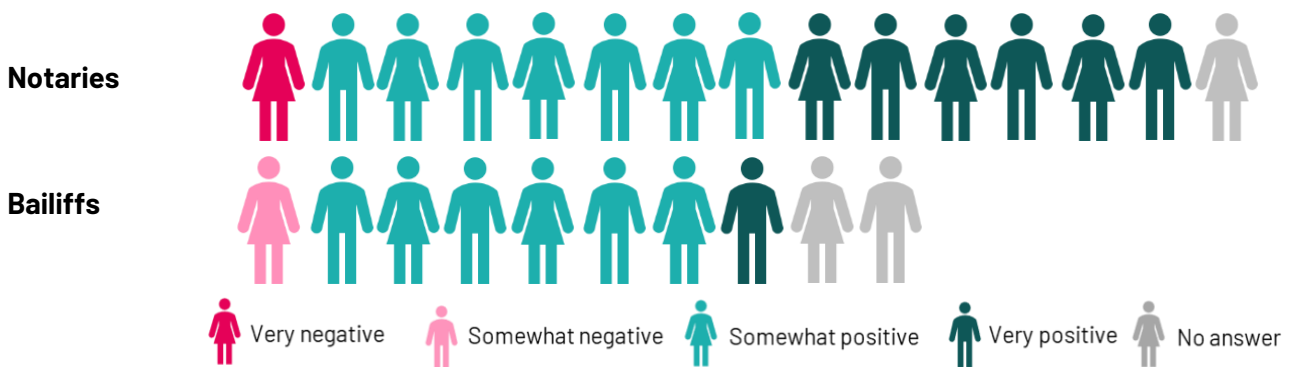
Figure 22 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONALS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF PROSECUTION EFFICIENCY



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of prosecution in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff n=687)

145. Similar to the efficiency of the courts, there is a notable tendency for positive opinion among notaries and bailiffs about prosecution in Montenegro. Specifically, thirteen out of fifteen notaries and seven out of ten bailiffs rate the efficiency of the prosecutors' offices favorably.

Figure 23 - NOTARIES' AND BAILIFFS' PERCEPTION OF PROSECUTORS' EFFICIENCY



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of prosecution in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

146. Compared to 2020 - Although prosecutors' efficiency is perceived dominantly favourably by all populations in 2025, negative perceptions have increased compared to five years ago. Users display more pronounced negative attitudes than professionals. Businesses now show significantly

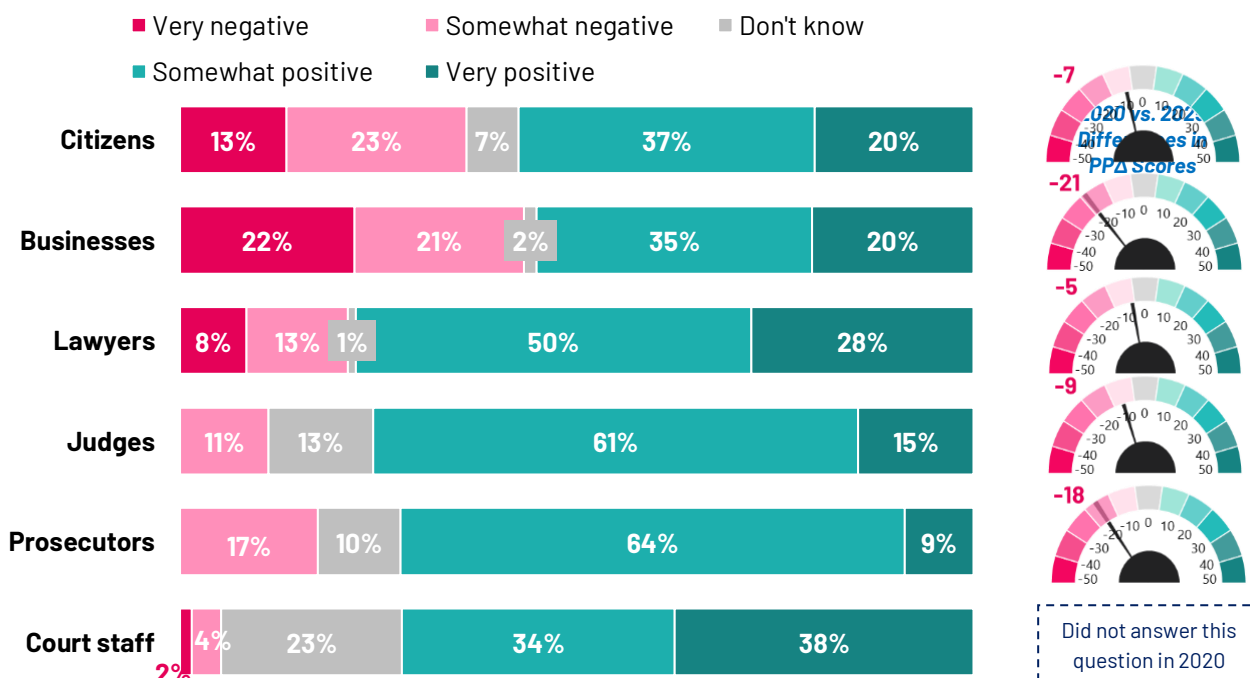
stronger negative sentiment than five years ago (36% of negative perception in 2025 vs. 23% in 2020). A similar situation is recorded among citizens, where negative views have risen from 32% in 2020 to 38% in 2025. In contrast, lawyers, judges, and prosecutors have not shown a significant change in their opinions.

147. Prosecutors’ assessment of the efficiency of the prosecution offices where they work is highly positive (95% of prosecutors show satisfaction). Lacking staff is the most substantial barrier to efficiency - around 70% of prosecutors strongly believe that increasing the number of prosecutors and administrative staff would enhance the efficiency of their institution. Lawyers also agree on the necessity for more prosecutors and emphasize that improving infrastructure is the most important factor in boosting efficiency.

2.1.3. General perception of efficiency of administrative services in courts

148. Regarding the efficiency of administrative services in courts over the past few years, citizens and businesses, as users of court services, share a similar opinion, with businesses being slightly more critical (24). Negative views are more prevalent among citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity compared to other groups, with 43% expressing dissatisfaction. Additionally, those who lean towards opposition parties show a higher critique at 58%, and 46% of those who belong to vulnerable groups³ also share negative opinions. All providers have more positive attitudes towards court administration than citizens and companies, with three out of four estimating its efficiency positively. It is noteworthy that all judicial professionals tend to view the efficiency of court administrations more favorably than the court staff does.

Figure 24- CITIZENS, BUSINESSES AND PROFESSIONALS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF COURT ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES’ EFFICIENCY

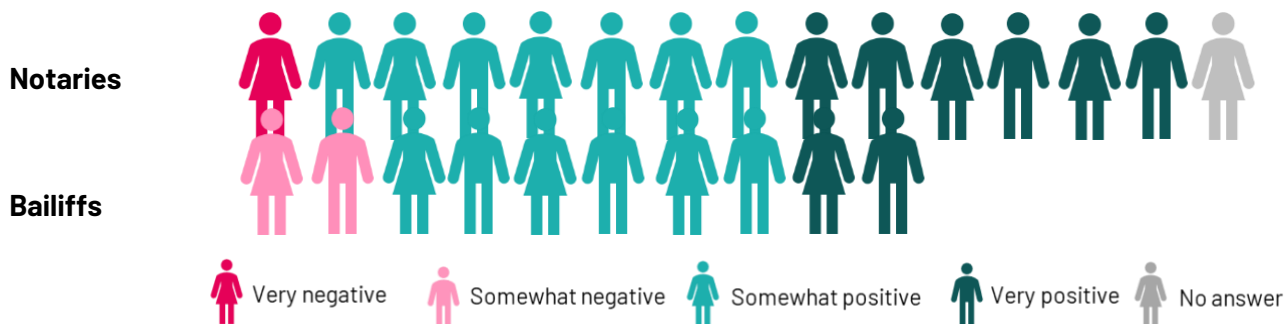


(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of administrative services in courts in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff n=687)

³ Vulnerable groups present those who positively answered the question: Do any of the following statements apply to you? 1. I belong to an ethnic, national, or religious minority, 2. My family is in a very poor financial situation, 3. One of my family members is a person with disability/ mental illness, 4. I belong to the group of refugees/internally displaced persons.

149. Administrative services in courts, similar to those of the courts and prosecution, show tendencies to be valued positively by notaries and bailiffs. Specifically, thirteen out of fifteen notaries and eight out of ten bailiffs rate the efficiency of the courts' administration favorably.

Figure 25 - NOTARIES' AND BAILIFFS' PERCEPTION OF COURT STAFF EFFICIENCY



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of court administration in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

150. Compared to 2020 – Overall satisfaction with the efficiency of court administrative staff has declined across all populations since 2020, with prosecutors showing the most significant change in opinion. Negative sentiment among businesses has increased significantly over the past five years, rising from 21% in 2020 to 43% in 2025. A similar trend can be observed among citizens, whose negative sentiment grew from 27% in 2020 to 36% in 2025. However, the most notable change occurred among prosecutors. In 2020, only 1% held negative views, but this figure has now risen to 17%.

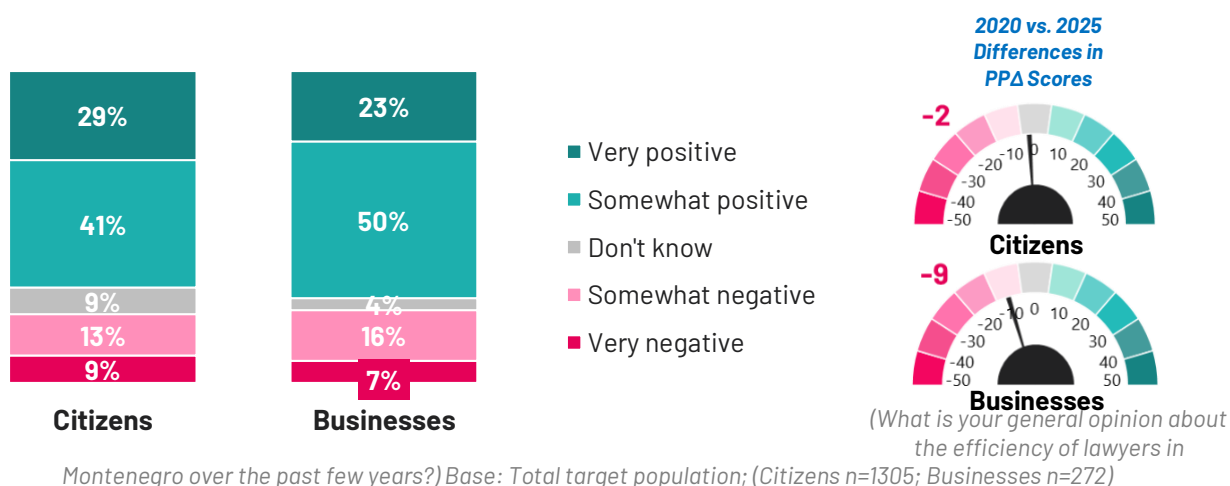
2.1.4. General perception of the efficiency of lawyers

151. As with most professional services, citizens and businesses share a similar view regarding lawyers as well. Namely, 70% of citizens and 73% of companies consider lawyers in Montenegro to be efficient, while 22% of the general population and 23% of businesses hold a contrary view. (Figure 26).

152. Within the general public, citizens in the northern part of the country, as well as those of Serbian ethnicity, are once again the most positive regarding efficiency of lawyers (77% living in the north, compared to 65% living in the central region; 81% of ethnic Serbs, compared to 63% of ethnic Montenegrins, and 64% of other ethnicities share positive view). More positive in their estimation of lawyers' efficiency are citizens who are politically aligned with the ruling party (81%, compared to 62% of opposition supporters and 65% of politically neutral citizens). Conversely, those who support the opposition and individuals from vulnerable groups are significantly more critical of lawyers' performance (32% of opposition supporters, 25% of politically neutral, 11% of those politically closer to ruling parties share a negative attitude). Among businesses, small-sized companies (10-49 employees) are more likely to rate lawyers' efficiency positively, with only 7% voicing a negative opinion.

153. Compared to 2020 – While the perception of lawyers' efficiency among the general population has remained relatively stable since 2020, businesses are now showing a significantly more critical stance (from 9% in 2020 to 23% of those with a negative attitude), with the PPA score of -9 between the two survey waves.

Figure 26 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF LAWYERS' EFFICIENCY



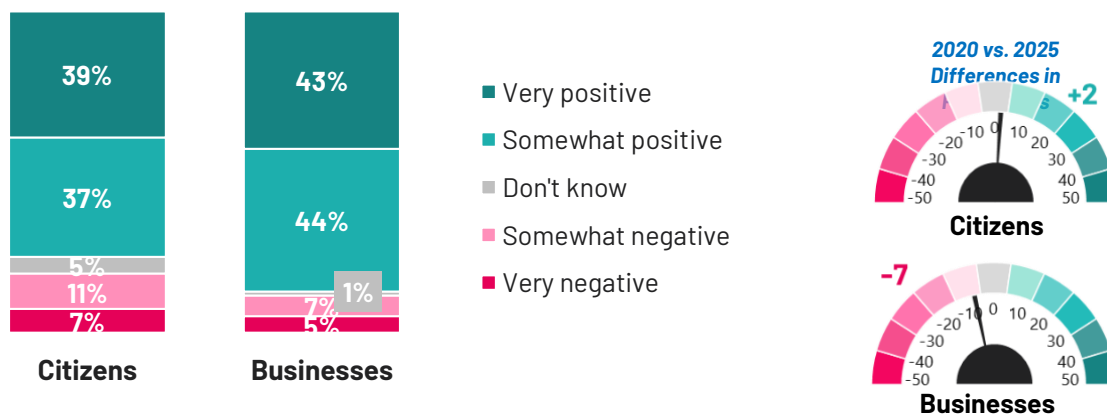
2.1.5. General perception of efficiency of notaries

154. The service provided by notaries is the most positively regarded judicial service in terms of efficiency. Specifically, three out of four citizens and nearly 90% of businesses in Montenegro believe that notaries are efficient. In contrast, 18% of citizens and 12% of companies have a negative opinion about the efficiency of notaries (see Figure 27). Negative perceptions are more prevalent among citizens with lower incomes (31%), those in vulnerable groups (33%), Montenegrins by ethnicity (23%), and individuals who align politically with opposition parties. Conversely, nine out of ten Serbians and those who support the ruling political parties view the efficiency of notaries positively.

155. Notaries also estimate their own efficiency with high rates, with 14 out of 15 saying that notaries are efficient.

156. Compared to 2020 – Overall positive perceptions of users about notaries' work efficiency remain consistent, though a slight decline was observed among companies (from 5% to 12% of those with a negative opinion), while positive perceptions slightly rose within the general population.

Figure 27 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF EFFICIENCY OF NOTARIES



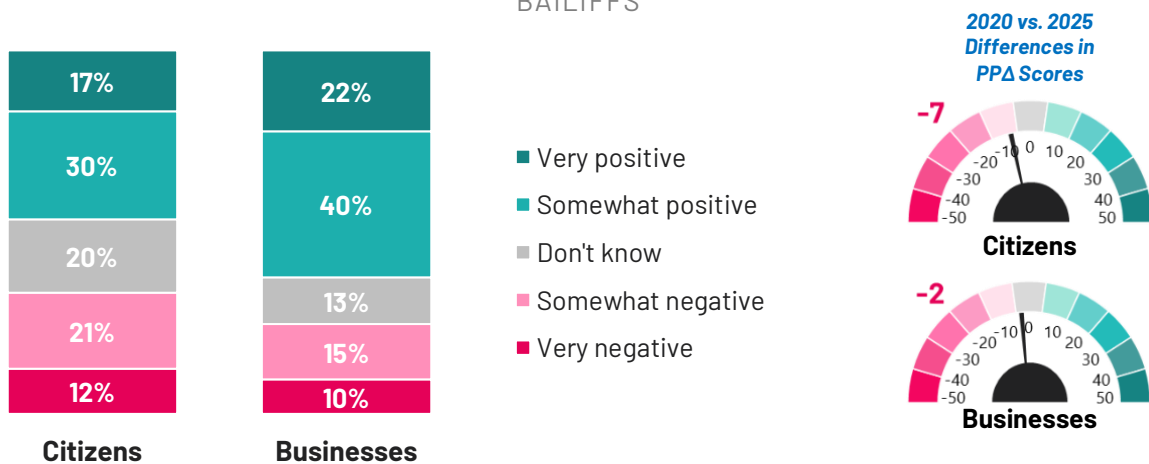
2.1.6. General perception of efficiency of bailiffs

157. Unlike notaries and lawyers, who tend to receive very favorable efficiency evaluations from the justice system users, about one-third of citizens and one-fourth of companies criticize the work efficiency of bailiffs. Nonetheless, a majority of companies hold a positive view of their efficiency (52%), and this sentiment is shared by 47% of citizens. It's important to note that 21% of citizens and 13% of companies did not provide a response, which is a higher non-response rate compared to other judicial services. (Figure 28). Like notaries, all ten bailiffs view their own efficiency in a highly positive light.

158. According to the opinions of citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity (39%) and those closer to the opposition (46%), bailiffs are perceived as less efficient. The share of non-response is the highest among citizens who live in rural areas (27%). Among companies, the most critical are those located in the northern part of Montenegro, where 42% estimate bailiffs' efficiency as negative.

159. Compared to 2020 – Positive perceptions of bailiffs' work efficiency among citizens have significantly decreased since 2020 (from 53% to 46%), and the negative views have strengthened (from 27% in 2020 to 33% in 2025). Businesses are less critical and show no significant change in their views, compared to 2020.

Figure 28 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF EFFICIENCY OF PRIVATE BAILIFFS



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of private bailiffs in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

2.2. Influence of experience on general perception of efficiency of court and justice services

160. Personal experience tends to improve perceptions of the efficiency of notaries, lawyers, court staff, and particularly private bailiffs. Conversely, this trend cannot be extended to courts and prosecution, since those experienced with them are more skeptical towards their efficiency compared to the general population. (Figure 29).

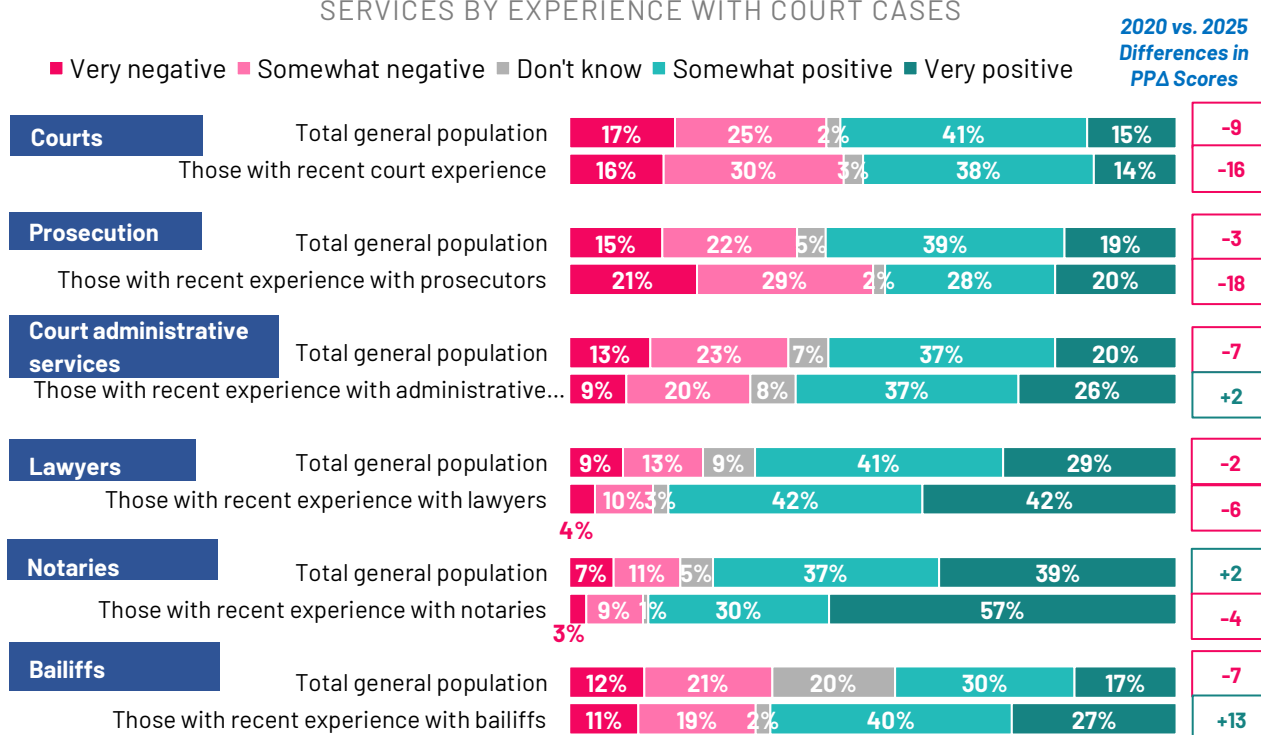
161. The most striking difference between citizens with experience and the total population lies in their perception of the efficiency of bailiffs. Among bailiff service users, 67% view bailiffs as efficient, compared to 47% on average. A similar trend is noticed regarding the efficiency of notaries (87% vs. 76% of positive evaluation) and lawyers (84% vs. 70%). Although the discrepancy is smaller,

the court administration also follows this pattern, with 63% of experienced citizens rating their efficiency positively versus 57% across the overall population. (Figure 29).

162. On the other hand, the experience with courts and especially the prosecution colors citizens' perception negatively. While nearly 60% of the general public finds prosecution efficient, the opinion of those who have had contact with it is quite divided (48% efficient, and 50% inefficient). The view of the courts' efficiency doesn't seem significantly affected by personal experience, but still, those who participated in court cases express somewhat more unfavorable attitudes than others (52% of experienced citizens and 56% of the general population provide positive evaluations, while 46% and 42% rate court efficiency negatively). (Figure 29).

163. Compared to 2020 - The PPA score indicates a decline in the positively perceived efficiency of all justice system actors among the general public to varying degrees. This drop is especially pronounced concerning the courts(-9) and their administrative services(-7), as well as bailiffs(-7). Even more discouraging is the significant decline in positive opinions about the efficiency of the courts and prosecution from the perspective of people with recent experiences with them, showing decreases of -32 and -18, respectively. The only positive change that has occurred between the two survey waves is the improved efficiency perception of private bailiffs among those who have collaborated with them over the past three years, with a PPA score of +13 points. (Figure 29).

Figure 29. - CITIZENS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF EFFICIENCY OF COURT AND JUSTICE SERVICES BY EXPERIENCE WITH COURT CASES



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of ... in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: Total target population/ Those who had court case or other justice system experience in the past three years; (Citizens total n=1305, Citizens with court case experience in the past three years, n=350, Citizens experienced with criminal court cases n=100, Citizens experienced with court administrative services n=235, Citizens experienced with lawyers n=239, Citizens experienced with notaries n=436, Citizens experienced with private bailiffs n=153)

164. Most businesses perceive all judicial services as efficient, despite their experience. Those with direct experience, however, tend to hold even more favorable views, except in the case of lawyers. Namely, while the general negative perception of lawyers' efficiency is at 23%, it rises to 31% among those who have recently interacted with them. (Figure 30).

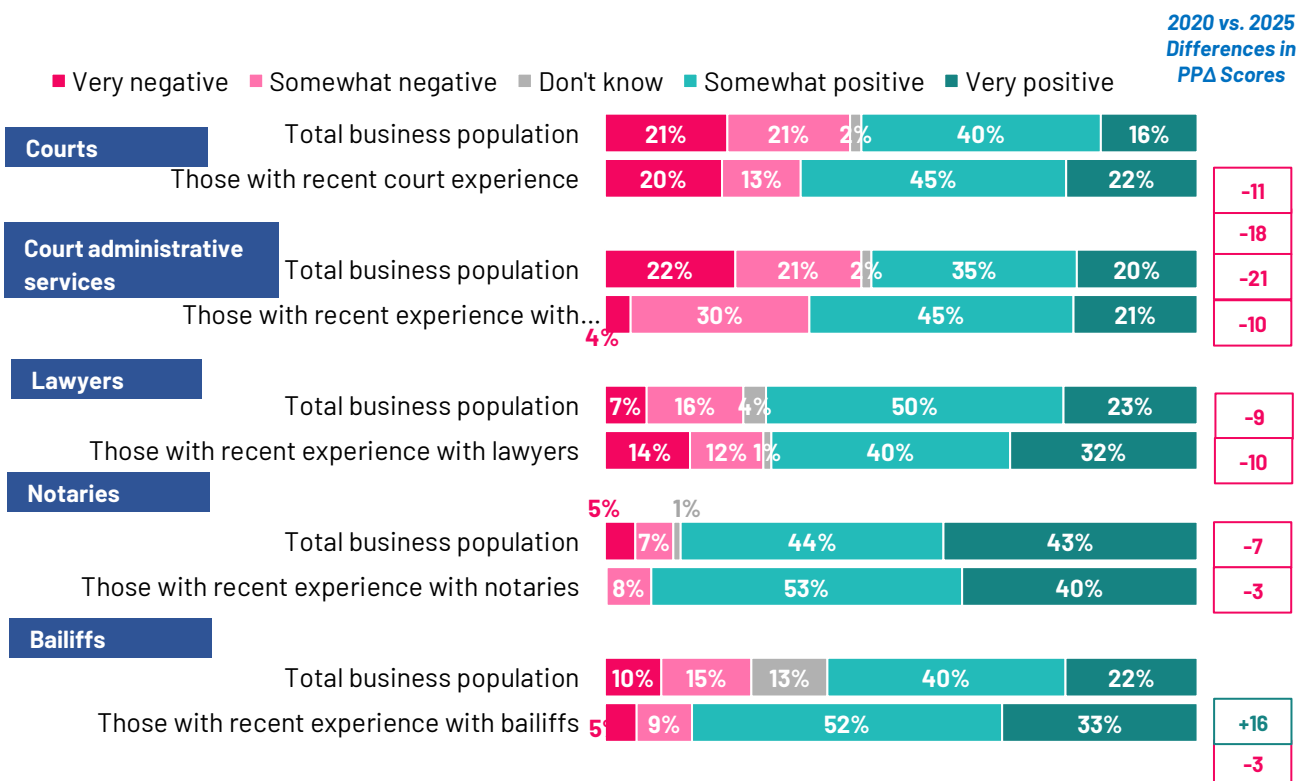
165. As with citizens, private bailiffs stand at the other end of the spectrum, showing the most positive influence of experience, which increases from an average of 62% to 85% among users of their services.

166. Unlike citizens, companies that have been involved in court proceedings demonstrate greater confidence in court efficiency, with a 67% positive evaluation compared to 56% generally. This trend is mirrored in the assessment of administrative services within courts (66% vs. 55%). (Figure 30).

167. Notaries lead in perceived efficiency, with 87% of businesses rating them as efficient, and this perception rises to 93% among companies that have used notary services over the past year. (Figure 30).

168. Compared to 2020 - What citizens have hinted at, companies confirm - users' opinion about the efficiency of justice system services is far less favorable than five years ago. Considering the total business population, the biggest drop is registered in terms of courts' and court administrative services' efficiency (PPΔ: -18, -11, respectively). Those who were in touch with the judicial system's actors also seem to be less satisfied with the efficiency of courts and their administrative staff along with lawyers (PPΔ: -11, -10, respectively). Once again, private bailiffs stand out as the only exception, with users reporting a positive change in their efficiency (PPΔ: +16). (Figure 30.).

Figure 30. - BUSINESSES: GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE EFFICIENCY OF COURTS WORK BY EXPERIENCE



(What is your general impression of the quality of work of ... in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: (Total target population/ Those who had court case or other justice system experience in the past three years; (Businesses total n=272; Businesses experienced with court cases n=93; Businesses experienced with court administrative services n=40, Businesses experienced with lawyers n=50, Businesses experienced with notaries n=124, Businesses experienced with private bailiffs n=67)

2.3. General perception of efficiency of court and justice services versus efficiency in specific cases

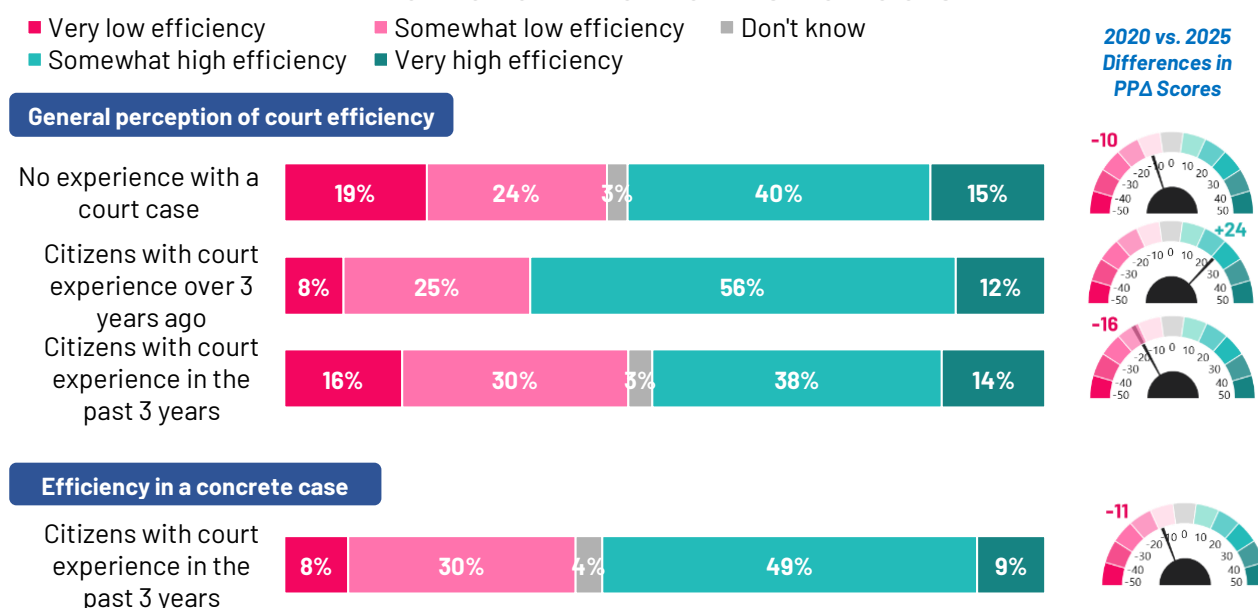
2.3.1. General perception of court efficiency versus efficiency in specific cases

169. People who participated in the court proceedings before 2022 show the highest level of satisfaction with the court's efficiency (68%). They are followed by those who have never been engaged with courts (55%), while citizens involved in court cases in the past three years are most skeptical and quite polarized about their efficiency (52% positive and 46% negative evaluations). Still, when thinking about the concrete case, they are more decisive that the competent court was efficient (58% positive and 38% negative evaluations). (Figure 31).

170. The case outcome and type do not impact perceptions of court efficiency, as there are no differences in perceived efficiency between favorable and unfavorable judgments or different types of cases.

171. Compared to 2020 - Compared to the previous wave, the efficiency perception of the inexperienced and those recently involved in court cases has declined, particularly in terms of overall courts' efficiency from the perspective of recent court users (PPΔ: -16). On the other hand, citizens with earlier court experience are much more satisfied than they used to be (PPΔ: +24). (Figure 31).

Figure 31 - CITIZENS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF EFFICIENCY OF COURTS COMPARED TO EVALUATION OF EFFICIENCY IN SPECIFIC CASE



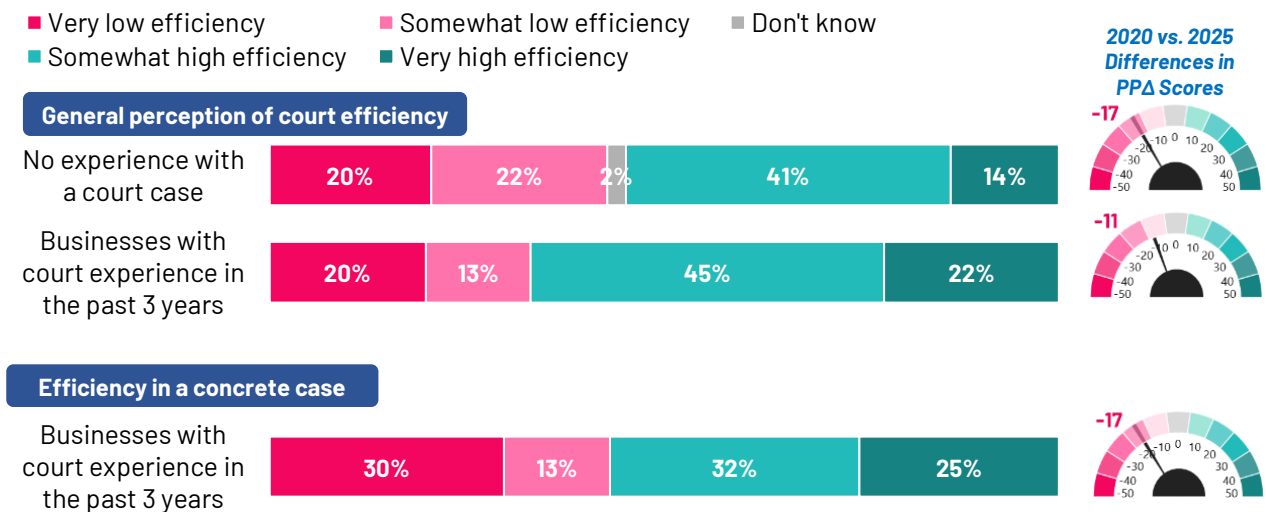
(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of courts in Montenegro over the past few years?/ All things considered, how would you evaluate the efficiency of the court in this concrete case?); Base: Total target population; Those with court experience in the past three years; Those with court experience over 3 years ago; Those without court experience; (Citizens total n=1305; Citizens experienced with court cases n=350, Citizens with prior experience in court cases n=51, Citizens without experience in court cases n=806)

172. Unlike citizens, businesses with recent court experience show higher satisfaction with the general efficiency of the courts compared to specific case handling. More precisely, 67% of these businesses view court efficiency positively in general, while 57% express similar satisfaction regarding their own cases, demonstrating a 10% discrepancy. Among businesses without direct court

experience, opinions are more mixed, but positive assessments still prevail, with 55% viewing court efficiency favorably against 43% negatively (Figure 32).

173. Compared to 2020 - Despite the generally positive feedback, satisfaction with the courts' efficiency has significantly decreased compared to the previous wave, regardless of court engagement status. The 17-point drop in the perception of efficiency in the concrete case is likely to be especially concerning (Figure 32).

Figure 32. - BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF EFFICIENCY OF COURTS COMPARED TO EVALUATION OF EFFICIENCY IN SPECIFIC CASE



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of courts in Montenegro over the past few years?/ All things considered, how would you evaluate the efficiency of the court in this concrete case?); Base: Total target population; Those with court experience in the past three years; Those without court experience; (Businesses total n=272; Businesses experienced with court cases n=93, Businesses without experience in court cases n=161)⁴

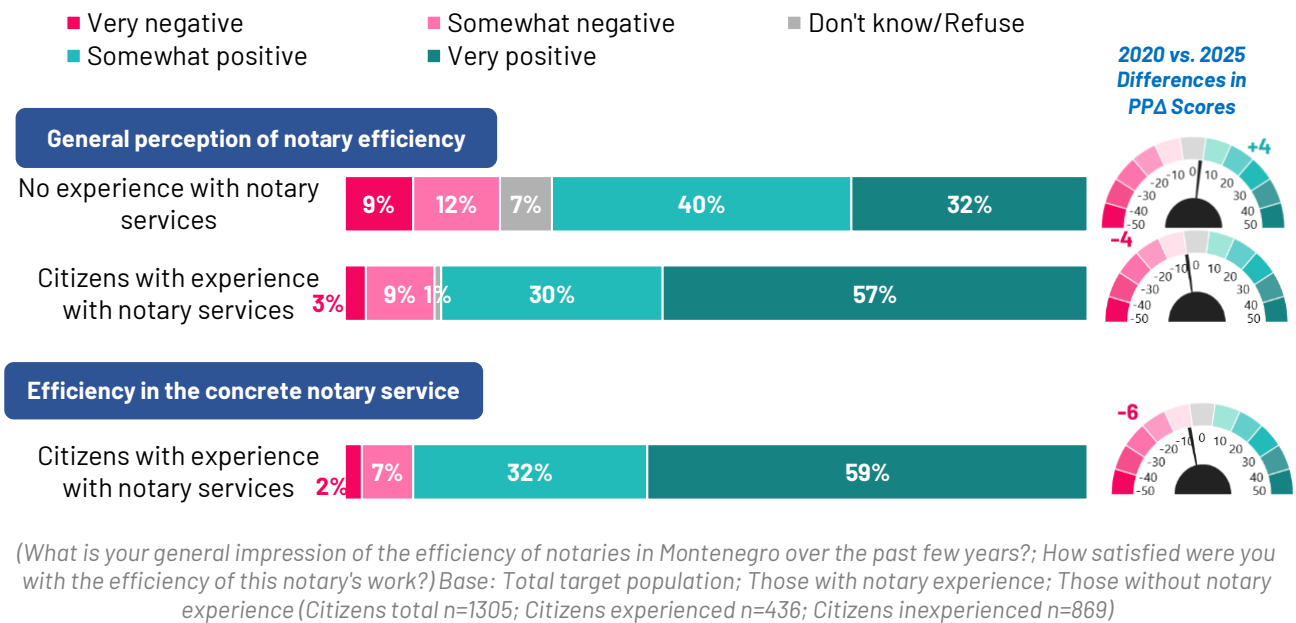
2.3.2. General perception of notary services' efficiency versus efficiency in specific cases

174. The efficiency of notaries' work is highly appreciated not only by citizens who have interacted with them over the previous year (87%), but also by those who have not used their services (72%). Regarding efficiency in the concrete cases, it is considered at least somewhat favorable by as many as 91% of notary users. (Figure 33).

175. Compared to 2020 - Although the perception of the notaries' efficiency is very positive among both groups of citizens, minor changes have occurred between the two survey waves. Notary users have become slightly more critical, with a decrease of 6 points for general efficiency and 6 points for case-specific efficiency, while non-users hold a slightly more positive view, with an increase of 4 points. (Figure 33).

⁴ The base of businesses with court case experience over three years ago is too small for valid conclusion

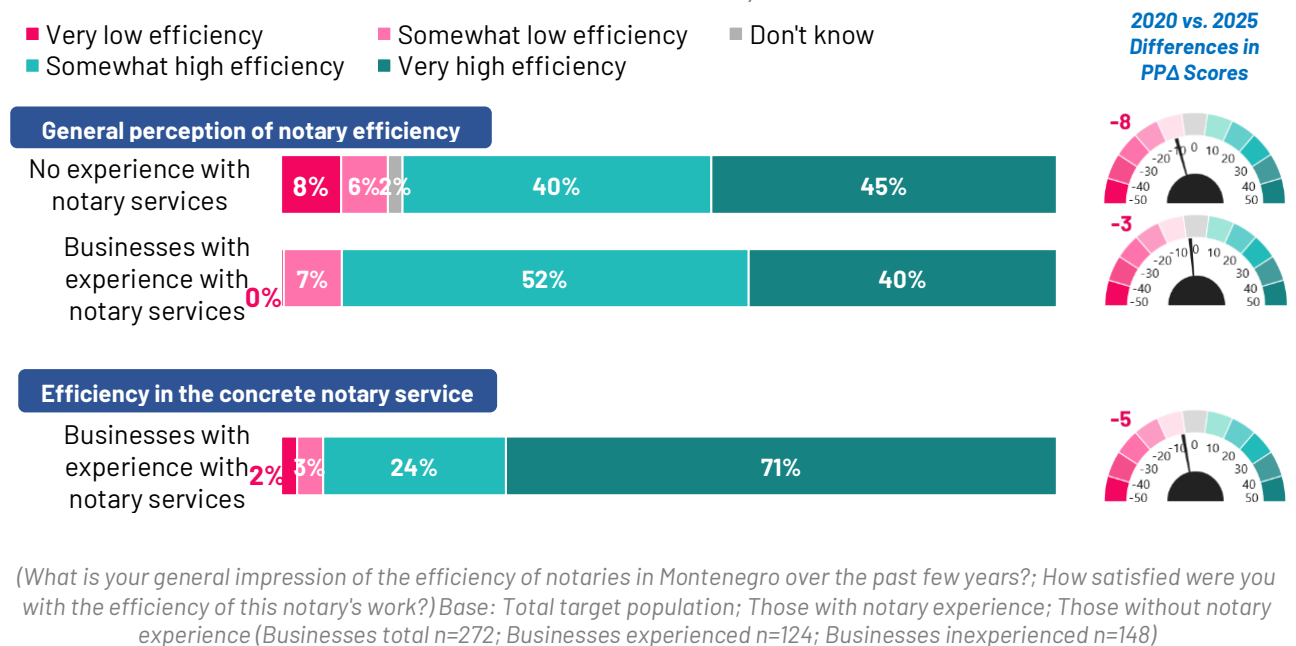
Figure 33- CITIZENS: PERCEPTION OF THE NOTARY SERVICES' EFFICIENCY IN A SPECIFIC CASE



176. Compared to citizens, businesses are even more satisfied with the efficiency of notaries' work. This satisfaction is particularly pronounced among those with recent experience with notaries, with 92% expressing approval, and even more so when considering a specific task, where satisfaction rises to 95%. Companies that have not interacted with notaries recently also report a high satisfaction level of 82% (Figure 34).

177. Compared to 2020 - However, in comparison to 2020, the perception of notaries' efficiency has declined to some extent. This drop is more significant among non-users of notary services, amounting to -8 in the PPA score. Although users are more critical than before, their assessments remain more favorable, with a 3-point decrease in perception of general efficiency and a 5-point reduction when considering efficiency in specific cases. (Figure 34).

Figure 34. - BUSINESSES: PERCEPTION OF THE NOTARY SERVICES' EFFICIENCY IN A SPECIFIC CASE)

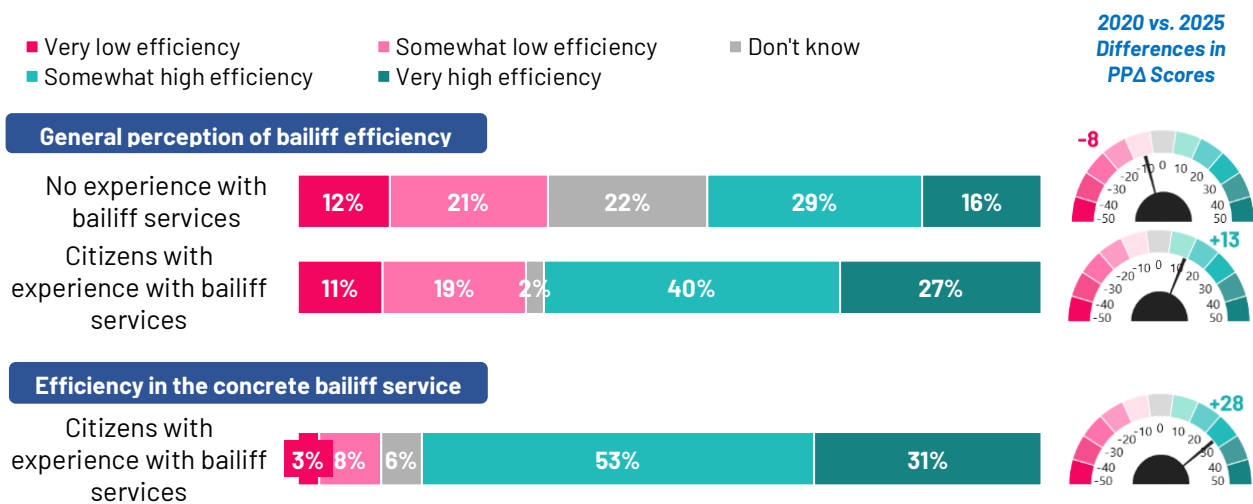


2.3.3. General perception of private bailiff services' efficiency versus efficiency in specific cases

178. No matter whether they have had direct experience with bailiffs, citizens predominantly express a positive opinion on the efficiency of bailiffs' work. As might be anticipated, users of their services are more inclined to view their efficiency as good (67%) compared to citizens inexperienced with them (45%). Besides, over 80% of users commend the efficiency in the specific case they have had with bailiffs (84%). (Figure 35).

179. Compared to 2020 - As stated before, bailiffs are the only actors of the judicial system for whose efficiency citizens, at least those who have interacted with them, have a much better opinion than five years ago, reflected in a difference of +13 in PPA scores between survey waves. The discrepancy is even more striking when discussing the efficiency in the concrete bailiff case, reaching a PPA score of +28. On the other hand, people without direct interaction tend to view the efficiency less favorably, with a PPA score of -8. (Figure 35).

Figure 35. - CITIZENS: EVALUATION OF THE BAILIFF'S SERVICES' EFFICIENCY IN A SPECIFIC CASE



(What is your general impression of the quality of work of public bailiffs in Montenegro over the past few years?; What is your opinion about the following, related to the bailiff who was in charge of that concrete case? Base: Total target population; Those who had experience with bailiffs in the past 3 years; (Citizens total n=1305; Citizens experienced n=153; Citizens inexperienced n=1152)

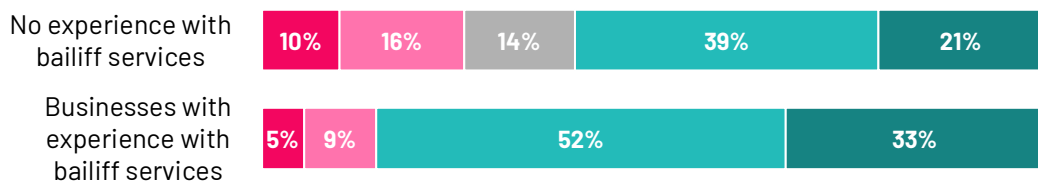
180. Companies show a high level of satisfaction with the efficiency of bailiffs' work, regardless of experience with their services. Specifically, 60% of businesses without prior engagement see bailiffs as efficient, while this perception increases to 85% among those who have used their services. Likewise, 81% of companies report satisfaction with the efficiency in specific services provided by bailiffs. (Figure 36).

181. Compared to 2020 - Over recent years, the perception of bailiffs' overall efficiency among business representatives who had direct contact with bailiff offices has improved, reflected in a +16-point increase in the PPA score. Considering non-users and the efficiency on the specific task, the opinion has slightly deteriorated (-5, -3 points, respectively)(Figure 36).

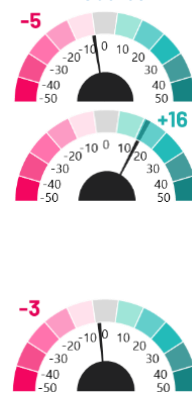
Figure 36- . BUSINESSES: EVALUATION OF THE BAILIFF'S SERVICES' EFFICIENCY IN A SPECIFIC CASE

■ Very low efficiency ■ Somewhat low efficiency ■ Don't know ■ Somewhat high efficiency ■ Very high efficiency

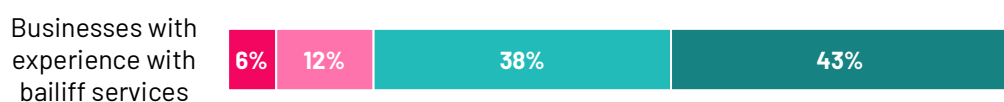
General perception of bailiff efficiency



2020 vs. 2025 Differences in PPA Scores



Efficiency in the concrete bailiff service



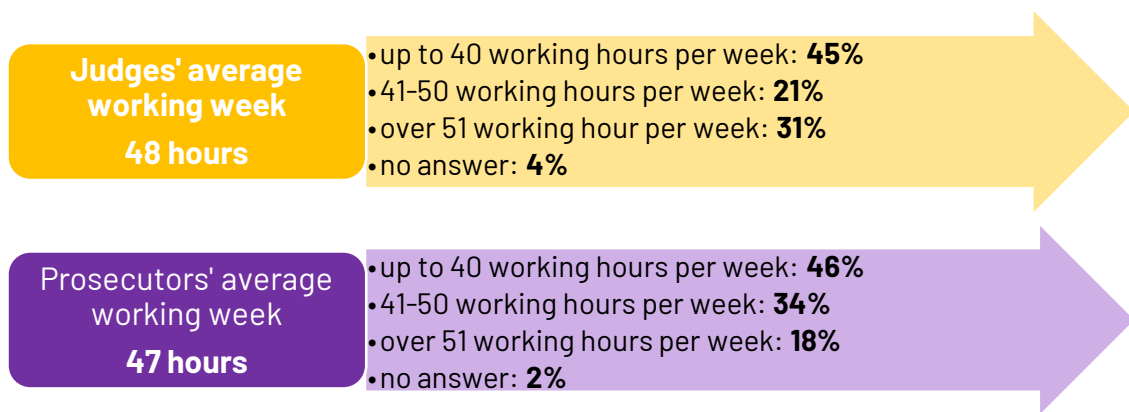
(What is your general impression of the efficiency of work of public bailiffs in Montenegro over the past few years?; What is your opinion about the following, related to the bailiff who was in charge of that concrete case?) Base: Total target population; Those who had experience with bailiffs in the past 3 years; (Businesses total n=272; Businesses experienced n=67; Businesses inexperienced n=205)

2.4. Judges' and prosecutors' perception of their workload

2.4.1. Working hours and tasks

182. Fewer than half of judges and prosecutors are able to complete all their tasks within an average workweek of 40 hours. Specifically, 45% of judges and 46% of prosecutors report finishing their work in this time frame. However, over half of them report working beyond the average workweek, which could be concerning. On average, judges work 48 hours per week, while prosecutors work slightly less, averaging 47 hours per week. (Figure 37)

Figure 37- JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: WORKING HOURS



(What is the actual number of hours you work in an average week?) Base: Total target population; (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

183. On average, judges and prosecutors spend the most time on substantive legal tasks: judges approximately 28 hours per week, and prosecutors 27 hours per week.

Figure 38 - JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: DISTRIBUTION OF WORKING HOURS ON DIFFERENT TASKS



(What is the actual number of hours you work in an average week?) Base: Total target population; (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

2.4.2. Workload and number of cases

184. Judges and prosecutors believe they face a considerably higher number of cases each year than they think is optimal. Judges report handling an average of 795 cases annually, which is 150% above their perceived optimal workload of 318 cases. Prosecutors manage an average of 214 cases per year, exceeding their optimal number of 128 cases by 67%. These figures indicate that while both judges and prosecutors feel their workloads are excessive, judges perceive their workload as more overwhelming than prosecutors do. (Figure 39).

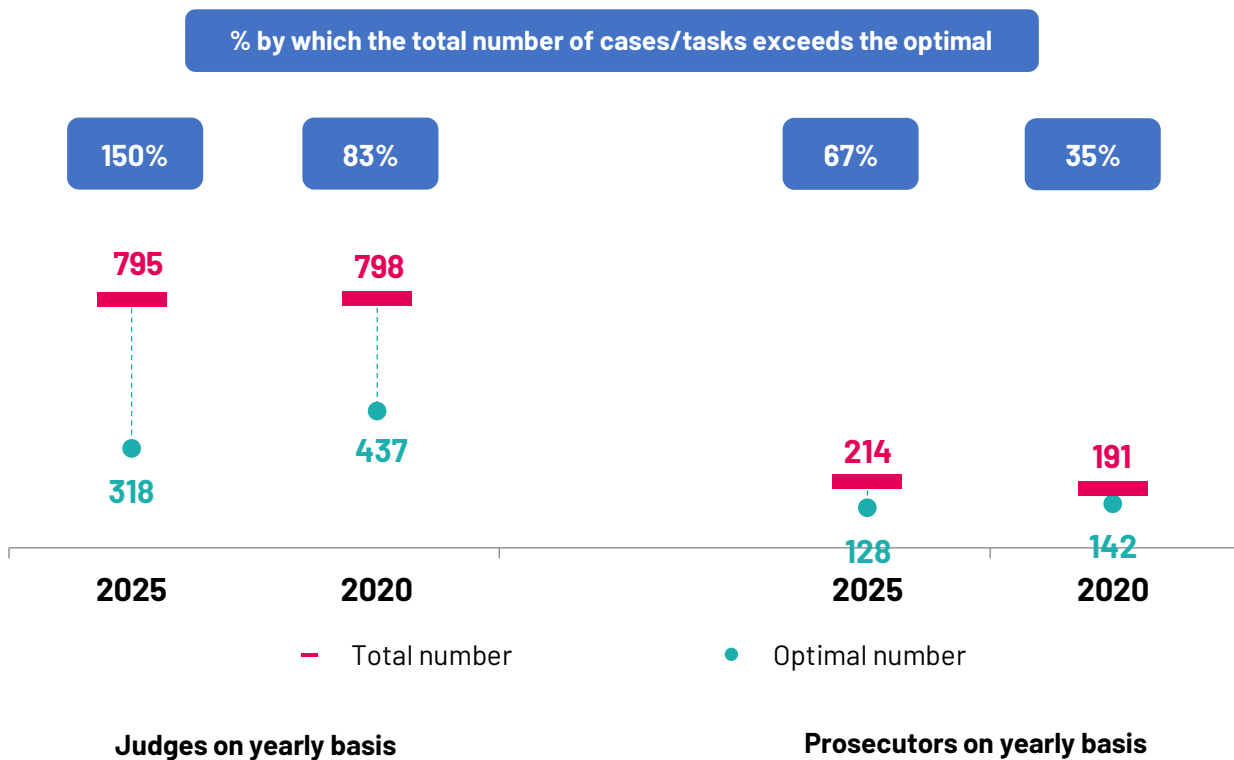
185. The median comparison between actual (483) and optimal number of cases among the judge population (200) also indicate work overload, that an “average” (by median) judge handle 141% more cases than optimal (or 283 additional cases). According to their report, the 'typical' judge processes 2.4 times their perceived optimal workload, indicating this isn't merely a problem affecting a few overburdened courts but the majority of the judiciary. The median gap of 283 cases confirms that workload excess is the norm rather than the exception. The relatively similar proportional gaps between the mean and median (150% vs 141%) suggest that the workload is consistent across judges, with fewer extreme outliers than might be expected.

186. The same applies to prosecutors. Median comparison (150 for actual and 100 for perceived optimal workload) shows that “average” (by median) prosecutors handle 50% more cases than optimal (50 additional cases). This median gap of 50 cases indicates that workload pressure isn't just affecting a few extreme cases; it's a widespread pattern affecting prosecutors. The belief that even the 'middle' prosecutor experiences a 50-case surplus suggests the workload problem is pervasive throughout the population. Prosecutors experience a larger disparity between means and medians compared to judges, with averages of 86 and 50, respectively. This suggests that some prosecutors face extremely heavy caseloads, which pulls the average up.

187. There are significant variations in the number of cases reported by judges and prosecutors, depending on the type of court and the specific cases they handle. For instance, judges working in misdemeanor courts report handling as many as 1,579 cases annually, while judges in general courts

manage an average of 473 cases. Also, prosecutors in basic offices handle, on average, 266 cases, significantly more than the population average.

Figure 39- JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: TOTAL NUMBER / OPTIMAL CASELOAD



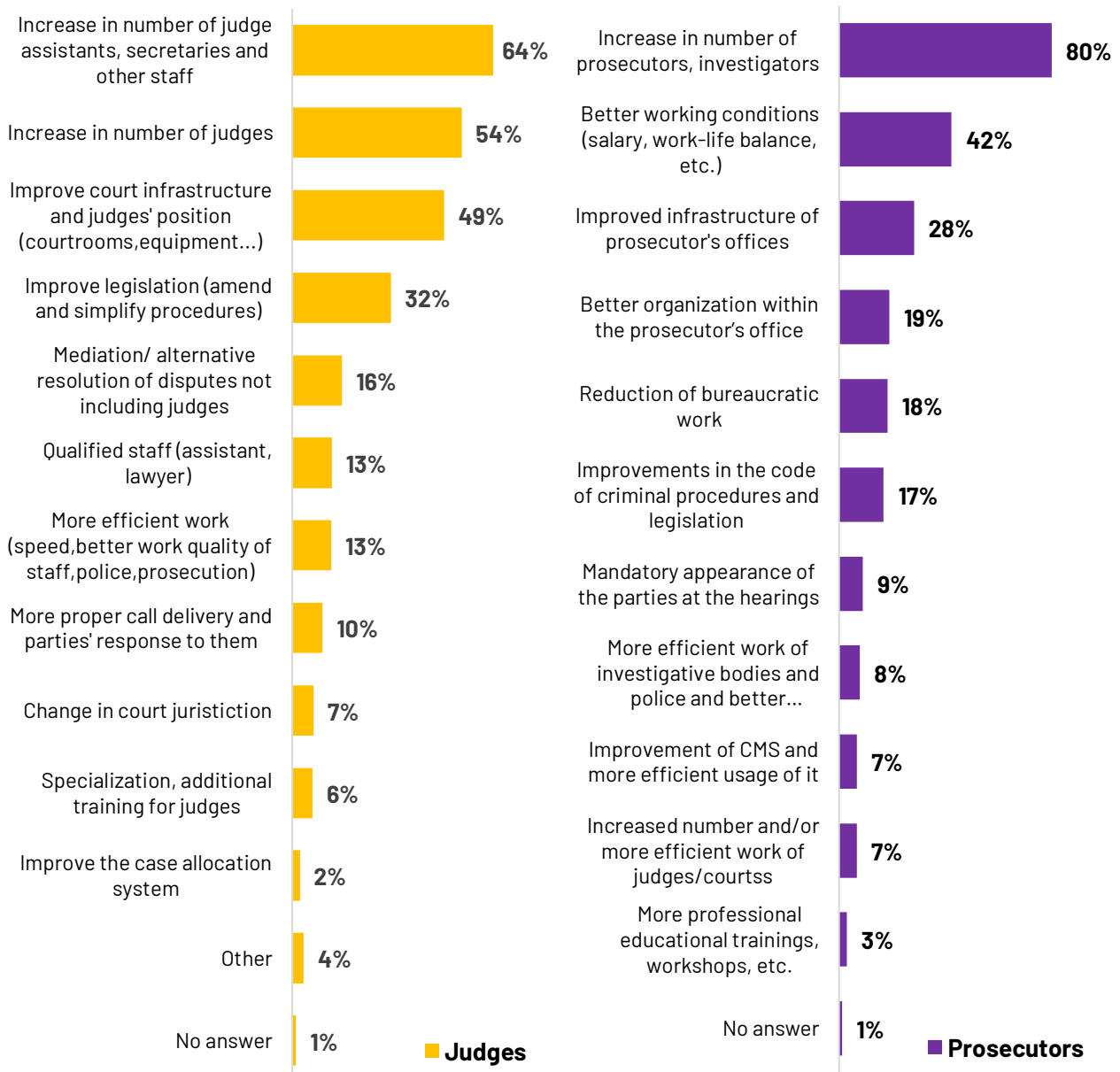
⁵ Base: Total target population (Judges: 2025, n=155; 2020, n=192; Prosecutors: 2025, n=71; 2020=83)

188. Many judges believe that the gap between the actual and optimal number of cases could be addressed through increased personnel, additional judges, and improved court infrastructure. Specifically, two out of three judges (64%) advocate for more judge assistants, secretaries, and other staff. Additionally, more than half (54%) express a need for more judges, while 49% believe that enhancing court infrastructure would help ease the work overload. About one in three judges think that legislative improvements could also play a role in reducing the case backlog. (Figure 40).

189. Prosecutors share a similar perspective; a notable majority - 80% believe that increasing the number of prosecutors and investigators would effectively reduce the number of cases handled by each prosecutor. Furthermore, 42% of prosecutors feel that improving working conditions, such as salary and work-life balance, would positively impact their workload, while 28% think that better infrastructure could lead to reduced workloads. (Figure 40).

⁵ Please indicate the total number of cases you worked on during the past 12 months. Please give us your closest possible estimate and take into consideration all cases - ones which you opened, worked on or completed during the past 12 months and which had at least one scheduled hearing./ Please indicate the TOTAL NUMBER of cases/ proceedings you worked on during the past 12 months? Please give us your closest possible estimate and take into consideration all cases/proceedings - ones which you opened, worked on or completed during the past 12 months. / In your opinion, what would be the optimal annual caseload (of cases with at least one hearing) given THE CONDITIONS YOU WORKED IN during the past 12 months and taking into account the AVERAGE variation in complexity of the cases that you had on average in the past 2-3 years

Figure 40- IMPROVEMENTS TO REACH OPTIMAL NUMBER OF CASES



(In your opinion, which working conditions should be changed in order to increase the number of cases/proceedings which you specified as optimal? (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

190. According to 72% of judges and 70% of prosecutors, a case weighting system is in place within their institutions. Additionally, most judges and prosecutors believe that the caseload is distributed fairly among their colleagues. Eight out of ten prosecutors feel that the caseload in their institution is equally assigned, and this viewpoint is shared by three-quarters of judges (see Figure 41)

191. A majority of both judges and prosecutors support random case allocation. Specifically, 80% of judges and 58% of prosecutors agree that this system helps prevent manipulation in case assignments. It is important to note that random case allocation is much more prevalent in courts than in prosecutors' offices; 5% of judges and 24% of prosecutors report that such a system does not exist in their respective institutions.

Figure 41- JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: EQUALLY ASSIGNED CASELOAD



(Do you think that the caseload in your institution is equally assigned?) Base: Total target population; (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

192. Compared to 2020 – The workload of judges and prosecutors has increased in the last five years. Interestingly, the estimated optimal number of cases for both judges and prosecutors has decreased since 2020; it seems that both groups of professionals were more willing to handle a larger number of cases on an annual basis five years ago. Regarding the case allocation practice, judges show somewhat less satisfaction, while prosecutors are more satisfied now than in 2020.

193. Results from 2025 indicate a significant increase in the number of judges and prosecutors who express the need for more personnel in courts and prosecutors' offices compared to five years ago. The percentage of judges with that opinion has risen from 26% to 64%, while the rate of prosecutors has increased from 20% to 70%.

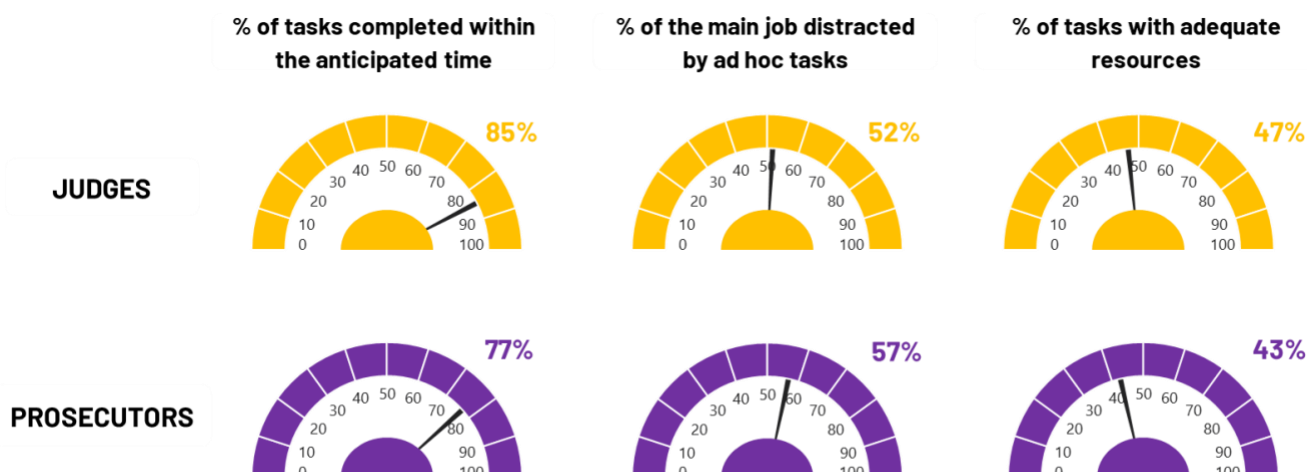
194. Additionally, the case weighting system has become more widely adopted since 2020. Back then, 20% of judges and 46% of prosecutors reported that such a system was not in place in their respective courts or offices. By 2025, these figures have dropped significantly, with only 5% of courts and 24% of prosecution offices lacking this system.

2.4.3. Resources, distractions, and completion of tasks

195. The efficiency of work is generally affected by the successful completion of individual tasks, as well as the presence of distractions and resources. Judges report completing an average of 85% of their responsibilities within the expected timeframe. On the other hand, they are considerably more critical regarding factors beyond their direct control. Specifically, they believe tasks outside of their main scope of work create distractions in approximately 52% of cases. Furthermore, they perceive having adequate resources for 47% of their assignments on average.

196. Compared to judges, prosecutors appear to be more modest in assessing their capacity to complete tasks within designated deadlines, estimating that this applies to approximately 77% of their total workload. Regarding disruptions to their core responsibilities, prosecutors report that ad hoc tasks interfere with their primary duties in roughly 57% of instances. Additionally, they indicate having adequate resources for only 43% of their assignments on average.

Figure 42 - JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS, EFFICIENCY IN LEGAL TASKS COMPLETION



(In what percentage of the substantially legal tasks would you say the following are true? (answers between 0 and 100%))⁶ Base: Total target population (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

2.5. Motivation, career advancement, and training opportunities among professionals in courts and prosecutors' offices

2.5.1. Digitalization processes in courts and prosecutors' offices

197. Digital tools can greatly facilitate the work of professionals in the judiciary and significantly enhance the efficiency and speed of their processes. The perception of digitalization among judges, prosecutors, and court staff can be viewed in two aspects: personal perceptions and the current state of digitalization in their respective units and offices.

198. Approximately 80% of judges and prosecutors believe that increased use of digital technologies would improve the productivity of their units or offices. This improvement has already been noted by 75% of judges and 60% of prosecutors. Additionally, judges are more positive about the impact of digitalization on the quality of services provided to the public, with 71% expressing this belief compared to 55% of prosecutors. (Figure 43.)

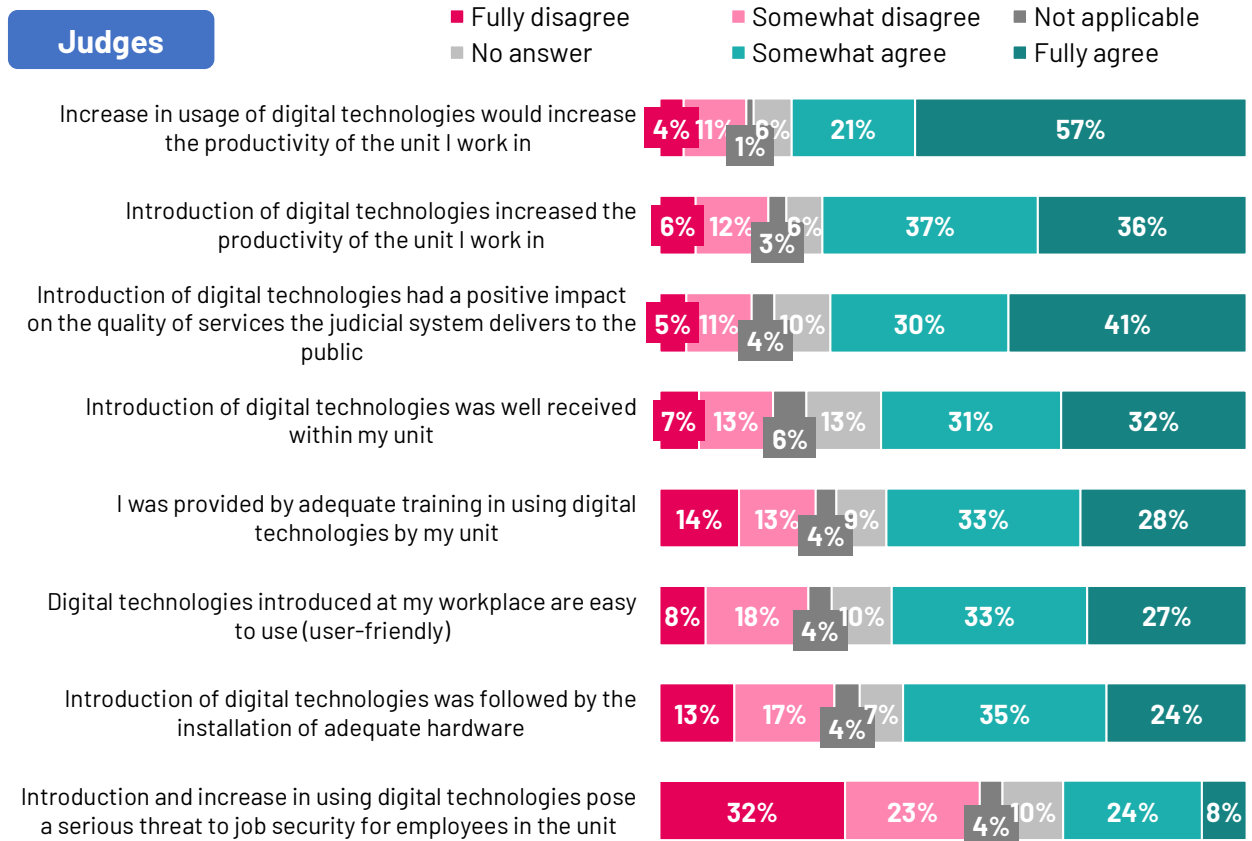
199. When it comes to the conditions following the introduction of digital tools, judges and prosecutors report that the situation in courts is generally better than in prosecution offices. Six out of ten judges indicate they received adequate training for using the new digital tools. In contrast, only 42% of prosecutors reported receiving similar training, while 44% stated they did not receive adequate training in their offices. A comparable trend is seen regarding the necessary hardware for new digital tools. Sixty percent of judges report that courts are sufficiently equipped to support the performance of digital tools, whereas prosecutors' offices are at a disadvantage: 46% of prosecutors report adequate computer equipment, and 44% report that their hardware does not meet digital tool requirements. (Figure 43)

200. Court administration employees are less positive, although predominantly favorable, about the digitalization processes in their units, with at least 62% viewing them favorably.

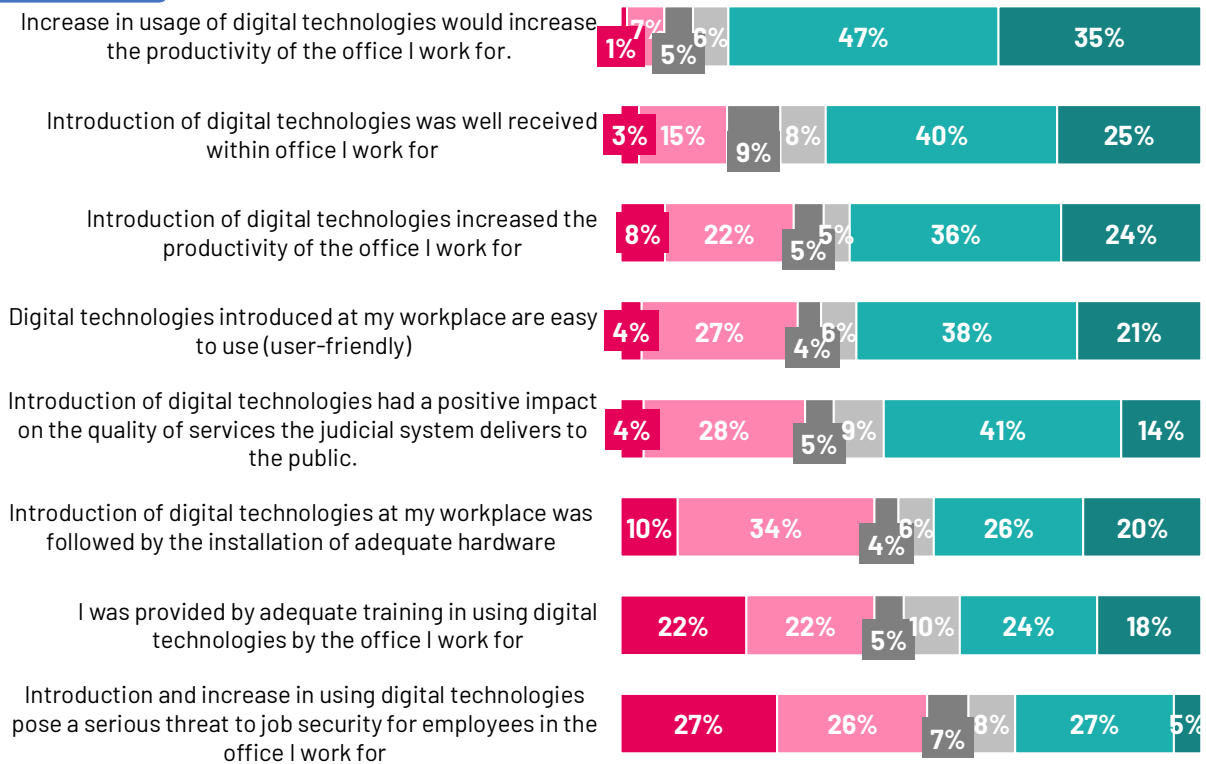
⁶ For ease of interpretation and clarity, the findings are presented and discussed using average values.

201. Despite the majority of judges (63%), and prosecutors (65%) reporting that digital technologies are well received among employees, nearly a third of both groups (32%) believe that digitalization poses a serious threat to job security for employees in their units and offices. Additionally, 46% of court staff also believe that digitalization poses a threat to job security.

Figure 43 - DIGITALIZATION PROCESSES IN COURTS AND PROSECUTOR'S OFFICES

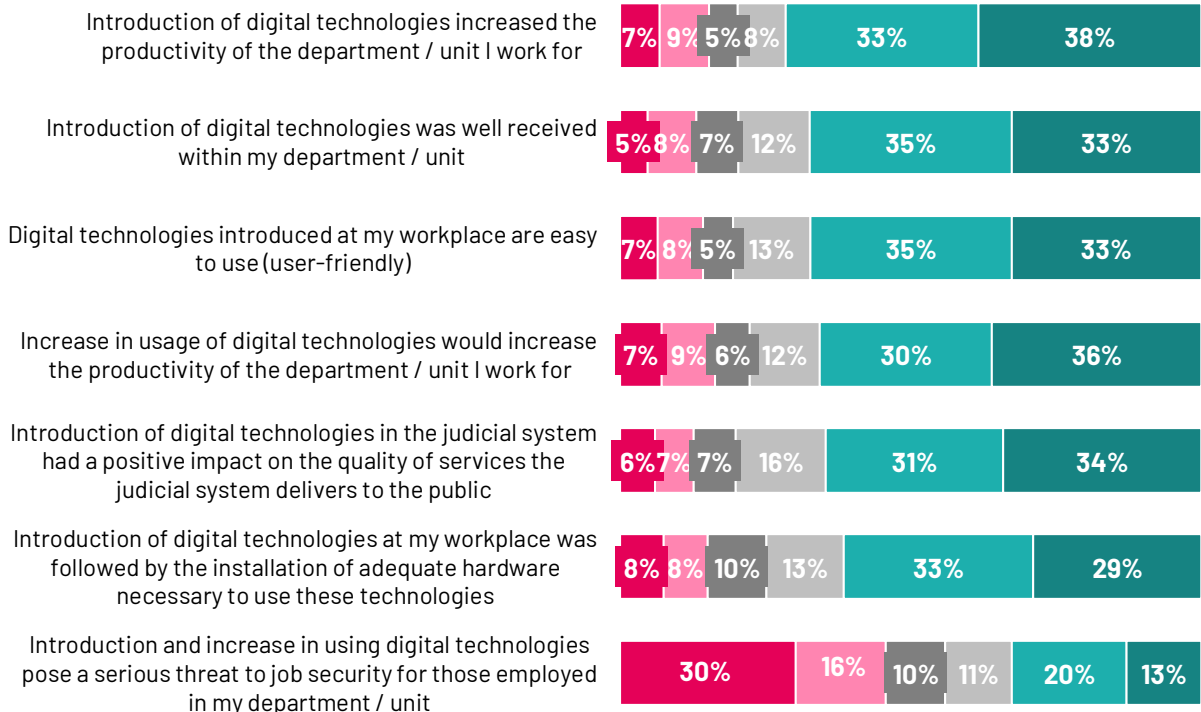


Prosecution



Court staff

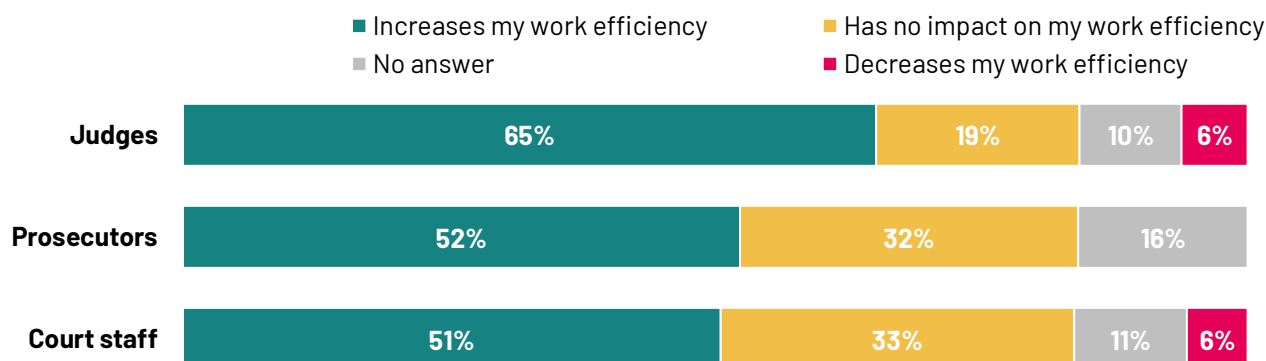
■ Fully disagree ■ Somewhat disagree
■ Don't know/prefer not to respond ■ No answer
■ Somewhat agree ■ Fully agree



(Digital workplace is a set of various digital tools (usage of informational technology) designed to simplify the work of those employed in the judicial system, as well as to increase the quality, efficiency and transparency of work. In that regard, to what extent do you agree with the following statements?) Base: Total target population (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff, n=687)

202. This largely positive perception of introducing digital technologies into work processes is supported by evidence that digital tools have generally improved efficiency in courts, offices, and units.

Figure 44- IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION PROCESSES ON EFFICIENCY



How would you estimate the impact of using digital technologies on your work efficiency? Would you say that it...) Base: Total target population (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff, n=687)

2.5.2. Motivation for the work in the legal sector

203. Motivation insights comprise two aspects: factors that attracted legal professionals to pursue a career in the legal sector and, secondly, factors that remain relevant to their professional engagement at present.

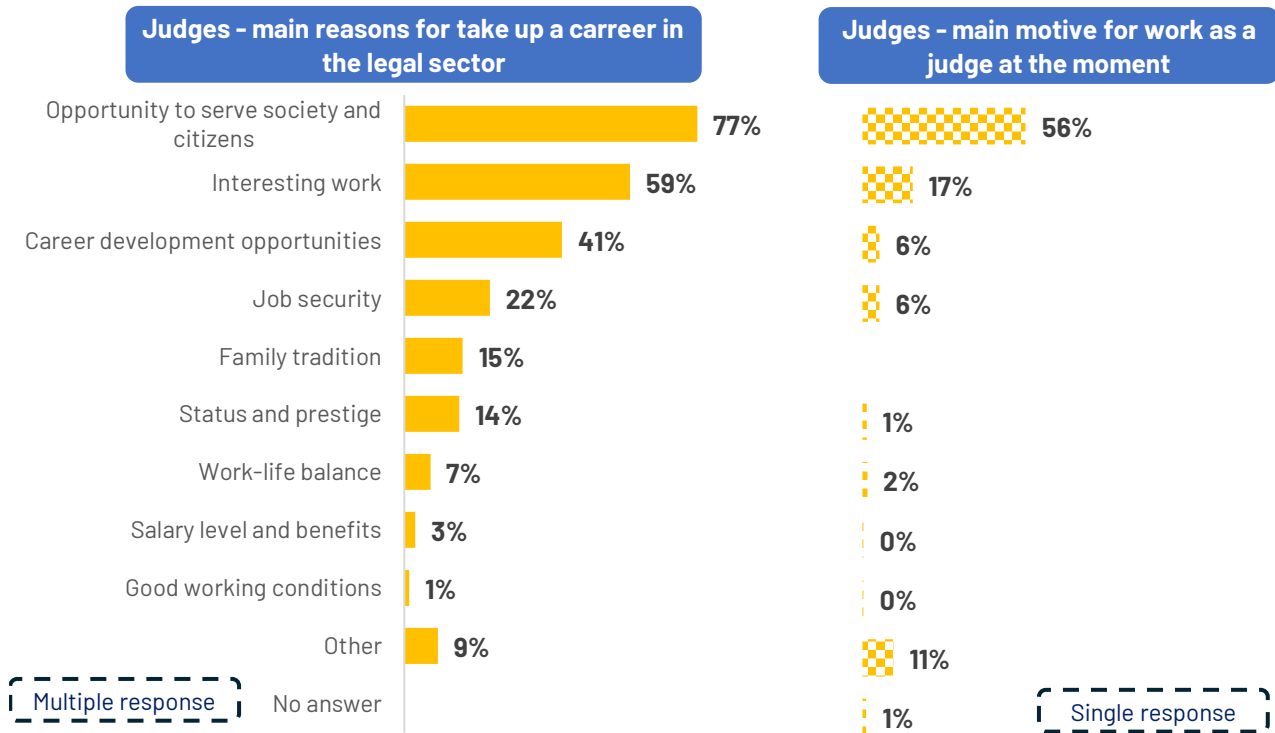
204. Three out of four judges perceive their work as an opportunity to serve society, and this was one of the main factors that led them to pursue a career in the legal sector. This reason remains relevant for more than half of the cases, particularly among higher-level courts (such as high, appellate, and supreme courts), where it is cited 69% of the time. In contrast, it is cited less frequently in first-instance courts, at 48%. The second most important reason is that six in ten find the profession of judges interesting. The fewest judges chose their careers due to working conditions and salary (only 1%), but many recognize the potential for career development (41%).

205. There are a few significant differences among judges regarding the motives to start professional development in the legal sector. Thus, professionally younger judges were more frequently motivated by the opportunity to serve society and citizens (84% of those holding judge positions for up to 5 years and 66% with longer careers cited this as a motive). Judges of a younger age (up to 49 years old) were more attracted to the possibility of professional growth (51% of younger judges and 27% of judges aged 50 or more cite career development opportunities). Status and prestige are more motivational for men than for women (21% vs. 8%).

206. Judges also cited several other motivations for their career choice (under the response 'other, what'). Most of them emphasized their passion for the work and their dedication to upholding justice and fairness, as well as the importance of independence. Few judges even report that they are currently experiencing a decline in their motivation for the job.

207. Judges also identified several additional motivations for their career choice through the open-ended response option ('Other, what?'), such as a passion for work and a commitment to upholding justice and fairness. Conversely, several judges used the open-ended response opportunity to express that they are currently experiencing a decline in motivation for their job.

Figure 45 - THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR WORKING AS A JUDGE



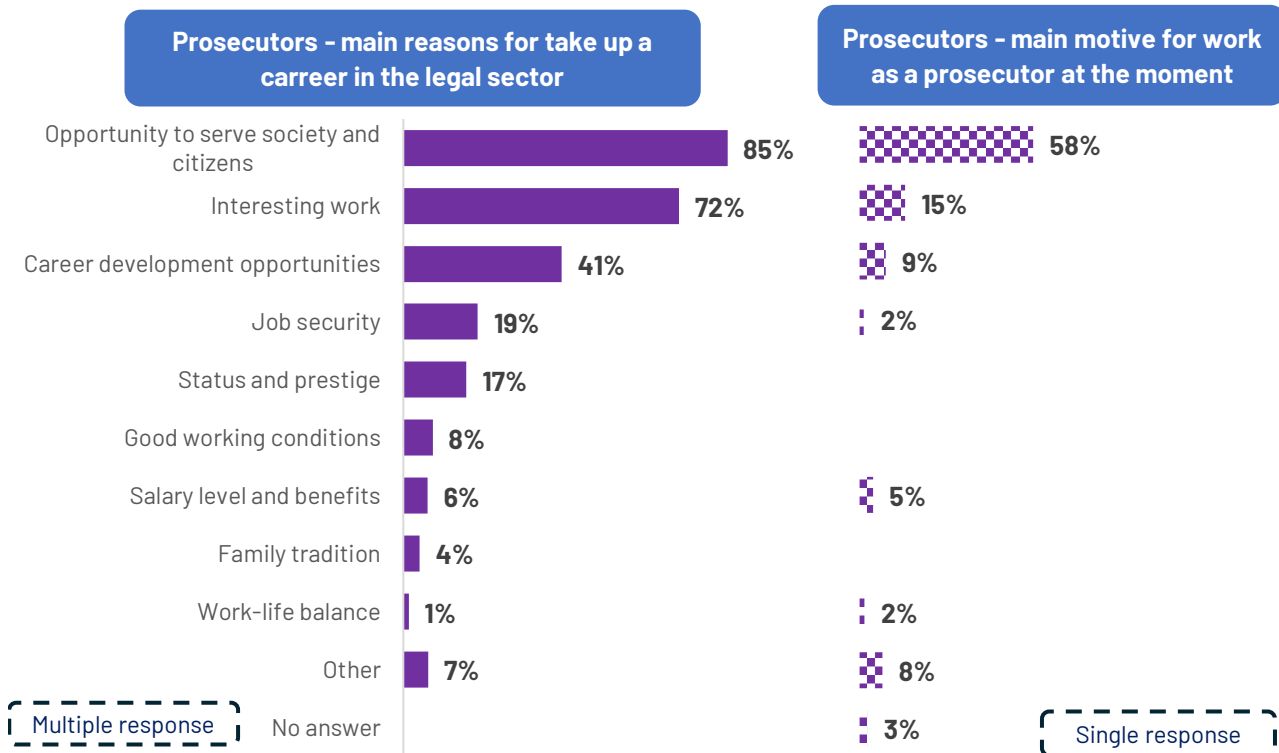
(Which factor most attracted you to take up a career in the legal sector? What would be the second most important factor? And third?; And which factor motivates you the most at the moment?) Base: Total target population (Judges, n=155)

208. As their colleagues in the courts, prosecutors were also inspired by the opportunity to serve the public to start a career in the legal sector – 85% of prosecutors state this reason. Additionally, the second most important factor that attracted prosecutors to the legal sector is interesting work (seven out of ten cited this as a motive). Also, similar to judges, prosecutors as well were attracted to the legal sector by career development opportunities (44%) and job security (20%). Serving society and citizens, and the interestingness of the work remain, even now, the main reasons for a legal career (58% of prosecutors stress the opportunity to serve, and 15% cite interesting work as the main reason at the moment).

209. The fewest prosecutors expected to achieve a work-life balance in the legal sector when they started their careers (only 1%). Family tradition as a factor for career direction among prosecutors is cited far less often as a motive than among judges (4% vs. 15%).

210. Very few additional motivational factors for pursuing a career as a prosecutor were mentioned, such as passion, dynamic work, belief in justice, or chance circumstances.

Figure 46 - THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR WORKING AS A PROSECUTOR



(Which factor most attracted you to take up a career in the legal sector? What would be the second most important factor? And third?; And which factor motivates you the most at the moment?) Base: Total target population (Prosecutors, n=71)

211. Unlike judges and prosecutors, court staff cite job security as the primary reason for employment in the legal sector (64%), and this remains the most important factor in their careers, even now (43% put this as the main motive at the moment). Every third emphasizes that the work in court seemed interesting (36%) and that it also supports work-life balance (34%). The least percentage of court administration employees was attracted by salary level and due to family tradition (4% in both cases). The first three reasons for entering the legal field and starting a career in courts are still valid for almost 60% of court staff members.

212. Job security, interestingness of the work, and work-life balance are significantly more prevalent reasons for starting a career in the legal sector among women than among men (67% of women and 56% of men cite job security; 40% of women and 27% of men cite interesting work; 37% of women and 28% of men cite work-life balance). Status and prestige are the factors that are cited more frequently by men (8% vs. 4%).

213. The age of court administration employees and experience also influence the decision to work in courts. Thus, older generations (36+) more commonly cite job security as a factor, compared to younger colleagues (65% among those 36-49; 68% among those 50+, and 47% among those up to 35 years old). On the other hand, for younger generations, interesting work, career development opportunities, and family tradition play a more significant role in career choice than among older fellow workers (52% of those up to 35 years old, 37% of those 36-49, and 30% of those 50+, cite interesting work; 50% of those up to 35 years old, 22% of those 36-49, and only 6% of those 50+, cite career development opportunity; 10% of those up to 35 years old, 4% of those 36-49, and 2% of those 50+, cite family tradition). Moreover, professional experience also has a significant impact on career choice - those who work up to 5 years in court administrative services, also emphasize interesting work, career development possibilities, and status and prestige more commonly than those with more experience

(49% vs. 32% for interesting work, 39% vs. 10% for career development opportunities, and 9% vs. 4% for status and prestige).

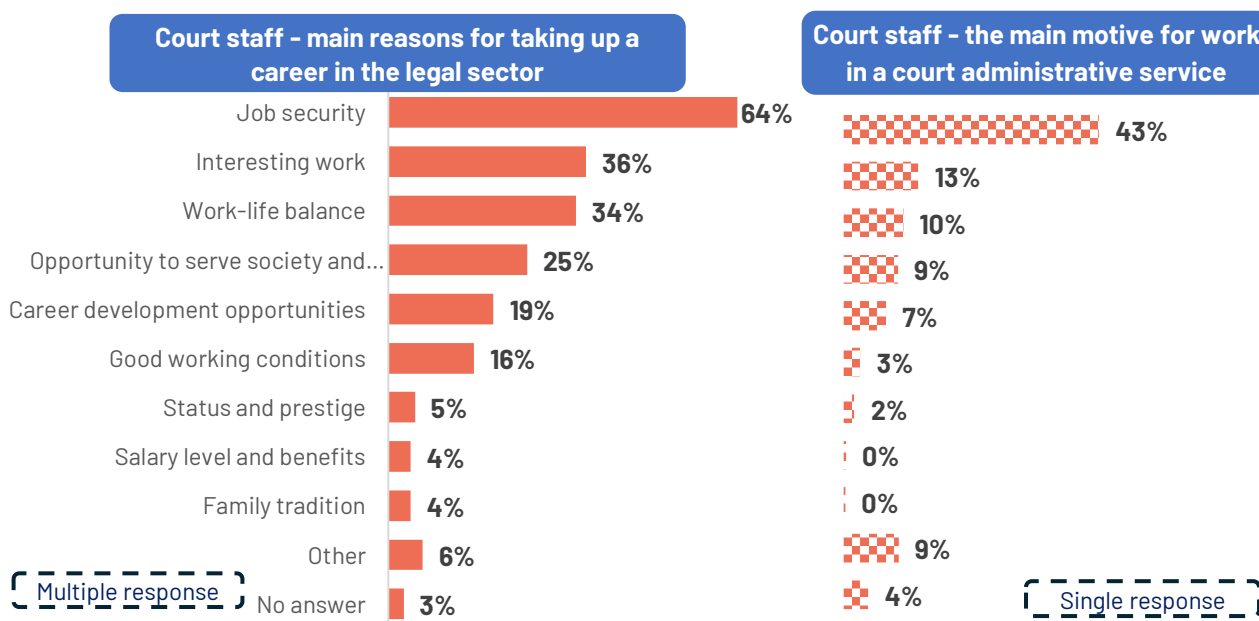
214. Furthermore, the nature of professional activities plays a role in career choice. For those who perform tasks directly related to court cases and hearings are more attracted by interesting work activities and career development than those who work with users or perform administrative tasks (46% of the case-related employees, 36% of administrative tasks workers and 34% of those who work with users cite interesting work as a factor; 33% of the case-related employees, 13% of administrative tasks workers and 14% of those who work with users cite career development opportunities as a factor).

215. Finally, the type of court also affects career direction. Those working in high or appellate courts, or in the Supreme Court, cite interesting work as a primary reason for entering the legal sector more frequently than those in first-instance courts (46% vs. 33%). In contrast, those active in first-instance courts more commonly cite job security, compared to those in higher-level courts (69% vs. 48%).

216. Interestingly, staff members in the courts in the northern part of the country more often emphasize good working conditions than those who work in the central region courts (22% vs. 12%). The same is valid for the singling out status and prestige as one of the motives (9% vs. 4%).

217. Reflecting on their current work motives, they follow the order of general reasons for pursuing a career in the legal sector.

Figure 47- THE PRIMARY MOTIVATION FOR WORKING IN A COURT ADMINISTRATION



(Which factor most attracted you to take up a career in the legal sector? What would be the second most important factor? And third?; And which factor motivates you the most at the moment?) Base: Total target population (Court staff, n=687)

2.5.3. Factors for advancement to better positions within the judicial sector

218. Judges, prosecutors, and court staff members agree that the most important factors for career advancement are the duration and quality of professional engagement, as well as educational background. In contrast, factors related to informal connections or social attributes are considered less significant. (Figure 48)

219. The most important factor in advancing within the judicial system for all three groups is professional experience, followed closely by job performance, with the exception of administrative workers, for whom education is slightly more important than performance. Gender is regarded as the least significant factor. However, although personal connections are not high on the list of factors, it seems that they notably influence career advancement, with approximately one-third of court and prosecution professionals and court staff members reporting that this factor is somewhat or very important to career progression. Additionally, one in four or five professionals and court administration employees emphasize the importance of political connections in their advancement as well.

220. Some significant differences are observed among judges and court staff. Interestingly, according to the judges' opinion, job performance is much less represented in professionals' promotions in misdemeanor courts than in other courts – 66% of misdemeanor judges emphasize the importance of this factor, and in contrast, 29% stress that it is not important, compared to 95% judges in general, or 96% in other courts who state positively about its significance. Additionally, younger judges (aged 49 or younger) more frequently emphasize the importance of job performance for career progression than their older colleagues (96% vs. 74%), as well as of educational background (82% vs. 67%).

221. The importance of informal connections is more pronounced among judges who work in misdemeanor and first-instance courts compared to those in higher courts. For instance, two-thirds of judges in general and other courts believe that personal connections are not significant, while only 35% of misdemeanor judges share this belief. Additionally, 70% of judges in high-level courts feel that personal social circles do not play a role in promotions, whereas 52% of first-instance judges hold a similar view.

222. Regarding political connections, female judges place much more emphasis on their importance and impact on career advancement than male judges do; 60% of women and 76% of men state that political connections are not important. Judges working in misdemeanor court are polarized regarding the influence of politics (44% believe politics doesn't matter, and 45% it does). Compared to them, judges in general courts are much more confident that promotions are not notably impacted by politics (75% state that political connections don't matter). Moreover, judges in high courts, appellate courts or the Supreme Court are far more convinced that political connections do not play a significant role in career advancement than first-instance court judges (87% vs. 56%). Similarly, judges in higher courts, to a greater extent than their colleagues in the first-instance courts, believe that gender and ethnicity do not affect decisions about promotions (91% vs. 78% for gender not influencing, and 91% vs. 70% for ethnicity).

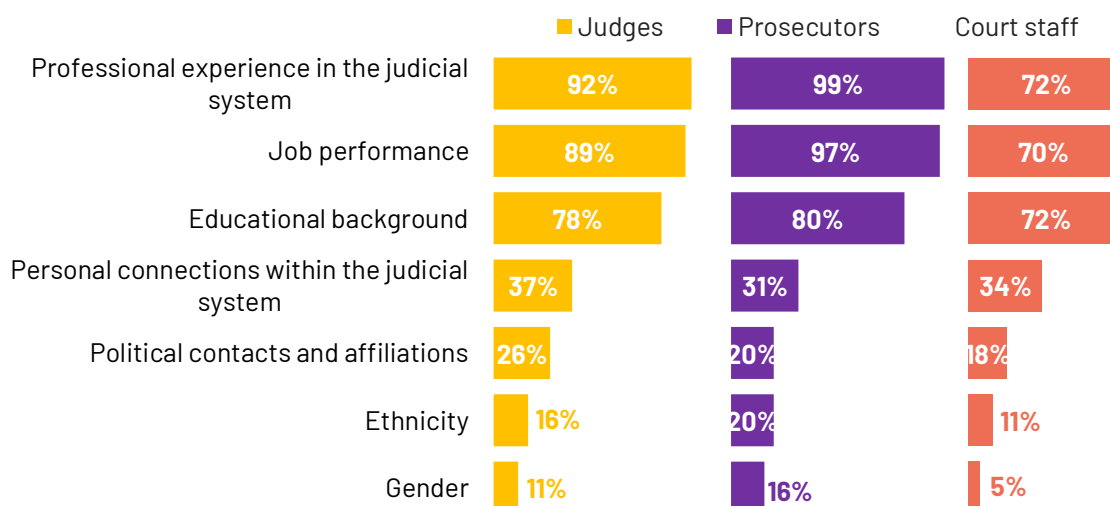
223. Among court staff, younger generations more commonly emphasize the importance of professional experience, job performance, and educational background for career advancement in the judicial system (89% of those up to 35 years, 76% of those 36-49, and 63% of those 50+ years old cite the importance of professional experience; 85% of those up to 35 years, 76% of those 36-49, and 63% of those 50+ years old cite the importance of job performance; 86% of those up to 35 years, 79% of those 36-49, and 60% of those 50+ years old cite the importance of education). Conversely, younger employees more frequently state that political connections, ethnicity, and gender do not have an impact on job promotions than the elderly (78% of those up to 35 years, 69% of those 36-49, and 52% of those 50+ years old cite that political connections have no influence; 85% of those up to 35 years, 74% of those 36-49, and 59% of those 50+ years old cite the same about ethnicity; 87% of those up to 35 years, 80% of those 36-49, and 66% of those 50+ years think the same about gender impact).

224. In a similar way to age, years of experience influence career advancement perception – those with less experience emphasize the importance of professional experience, job performance, and education more than highly experienced colleagues (professional experience: 86% vs 67%; job performance: 84% vs. 64%; educational background: 86% vs. 66%). The less experienced are more optimistic regarding the impact of informal or political connections, or demographic attributes, than their more experienced colleagues (61% vs. 42% believe that personal connections do not play a

significant role in career enhancements; 79% of the less experienced and 57% of those with above five years of experience think the same about political strings; 84% vs. 63% believe that job promotions are not impacted by ethnicity and 88% vs. 70% believe that for gender).

225. Additionally, women are more likely than their male colleagues to perceive professional experience as a factor affecting career advancement (75% vs. 65%). Personal connections as a factor that influences career climb are more pronounced among those who work in the central part of the country (39%) than among court administration employees in the north (24%), as well as among those employed in higher-level courts in the judicial system than in first-instance courts (40% vs. 32%).

Figure 48. - INFLUENCE OF DIFFERENT FACTORS ON CAREER ADVANCEMENT

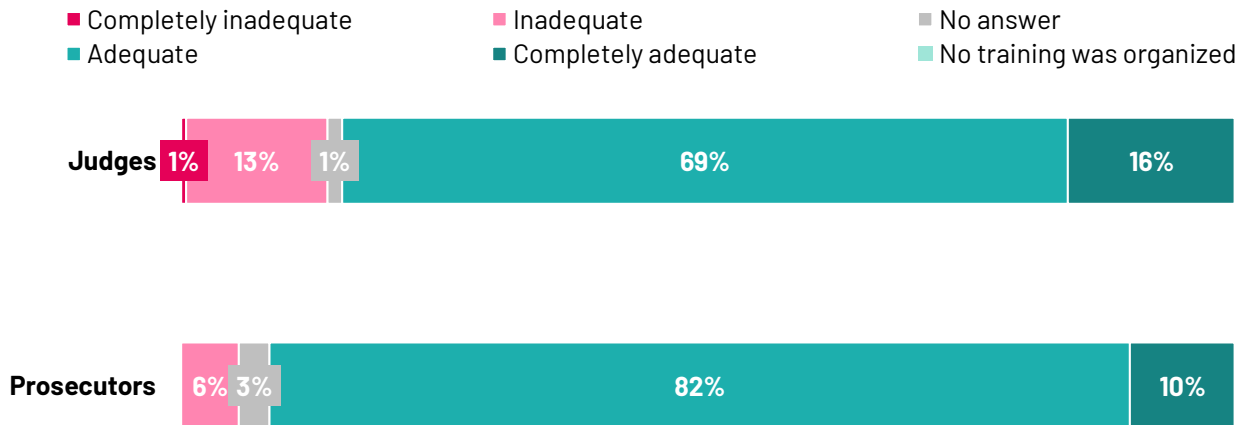


(Thinking about people employed in the judicial system, how important do you think the following factors are for advancement to better positions within the judicial sector?) Base: Total target population (Judges, n=155; Prosecutors, n=71; Court staff, n=687)

2.5.4. Training opportunities within the judicial sector

226. According to the responses, judges and prosecutors in Montenegro have high opportunities for professional development. None of the judges or prosecutors reported lacking training, i.e., that they did not have access to training programs. Overall, the training possibilities were considered adequate by all participants. No prosecutors felt that the training opportunities were completely inadequate, with nine out of ten finding it beneficial. Additionally, 85% of judges have a positive perception of the training opportunities, while only 14% believe that it is insufficient. Judges in general courts express the highest satisfaction regarding opportunities for training (91% find it adequate, compared with 81% of misdemeanor judges and 66% of judges in courts other than misdemeanor courts).

Figure 49 - TRAINING POSSIBILITIES



(How would you assess training opportunities that you and other employees of your unit are provided with?) Base: Total target population (Judges, n=155; Prosecutors, n=71)

2.6. Efficiency of hearings

2.6.1. Number of scheduled hearings

227. On average, citizens with court case experience had approximately three hearings scheduled altogether in the first-instance court, including those that were scheduled but not held. Specifically, 12% of citizens reported having one hearing, 22% had two hearings, and 41% experienced more than two hearings during their case. Notably, a judgment in the first instance was very rarely rendered without any scheduled hearings, occurring in only 6% of cases. Additionally, nearly half of the citizens (46%) reported that at least one hearing was canceled.

228. When examining the type of case, citizens involved in misdemeanor cases reported fewer hearings (an average of 2.1) compared to those involved in criminal cases (4.1) or civil cases (3.6).

229. Similarly, businesses reported an average of three to four hearings (3.5). Most companies (41%) had one or two hearings, around 21% had three or four, and 18% experienced more than four hearings. In contrast to citizens, first-instance judgments were more frequently issued without scheduled hearings, occurring in 9% of cases. One in three companies experienced cancelled hearings.

2.6.2. Efficiency index

230. In the context of hearings that aid in the resolution of cases, lawyers and prosecutors tend to be more critical than justice service users and judges. Specifically, lawyers believe that only one-third of hearings contribute to case resolution, while prosecutors feel that this applies to 44% of hearings. (Figure 50).

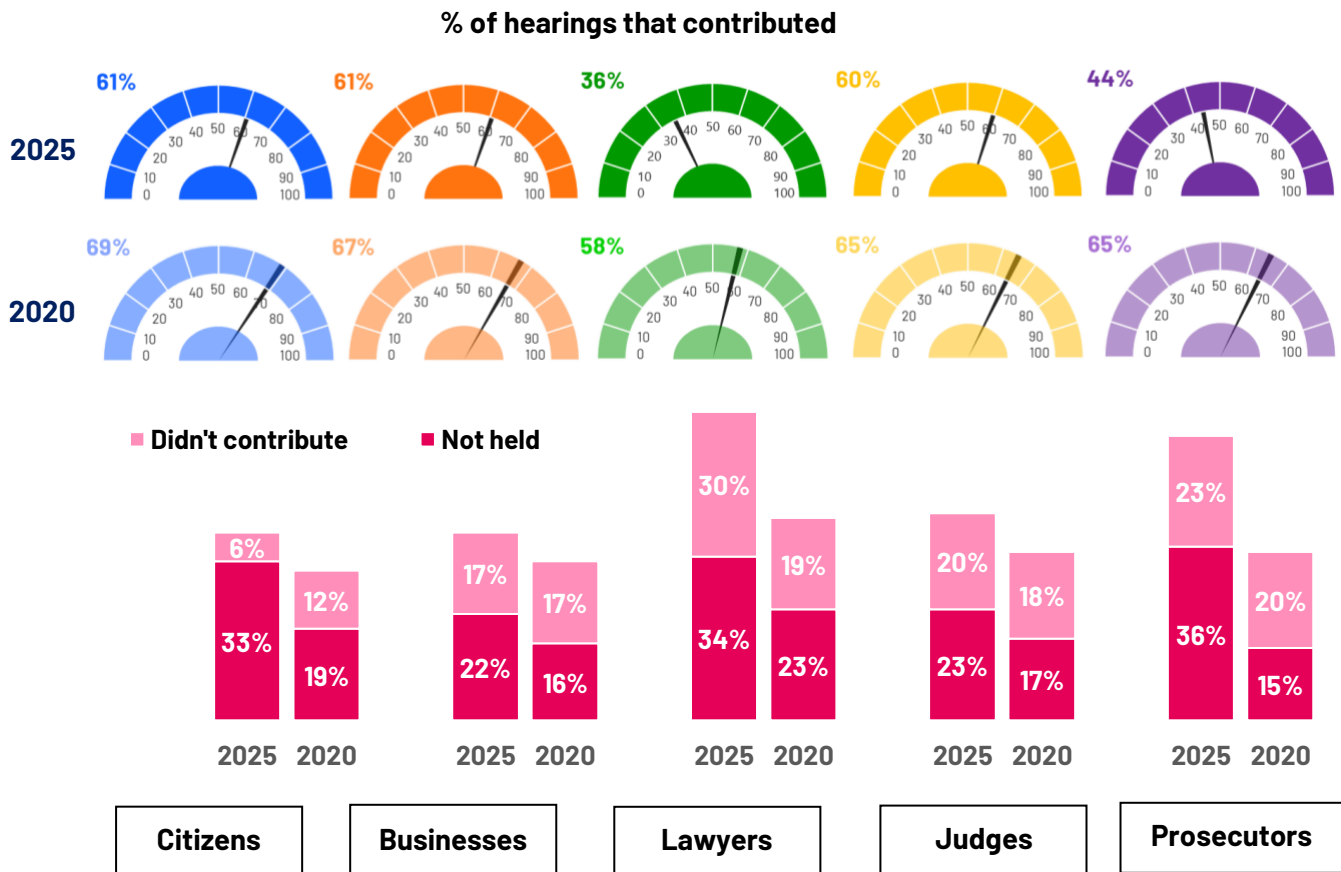
231. From their personal experiences with court cases over the past three years, citizens and businesses assessed that, on average, 61% of scheduled hearings contributed to resolving their cases. Judges share a similar viewpoint, stressing that 60% of hearings were beneficial and contributed to case resolution.

232. According to citizens, lawyers and prosecutors, around a third of hearings were not held, while this scenario was less common for companies (22%), and judges (23%).

233. Judges with over five years of experience report a higher rate of cancelled or ineffective hearings compared to their 'younger' colleagues (28% vs. 20%).

234. Compared to 2020 – Both service users and providers have reported a decline in the efficiency of hearings compared to five years ago. This decrease is particularly noticeable among lawyers and prosecutors, with the efficiency index falling by more than 20 points. (Figure 50).

Figure 50- CITIZENS, BUSINESS, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: EFFICIENCY INDEX



(How many hearings were SCHEDULED ALTOGETHER in the first-instance, including those that were scheduled but not held?/ How many of the scheduled hearings were not held, that is, cancelled?/ Beside hearings that were not held, how many hearings would you assess as NOT HAVING SIGNIFICANTLY contributed to progress in the resolution of the case?/ Out of total number of hearings that you worked on over the past 12 months, what were the shares of scheduled hearings that were not held, held, but didn't contribute much to resolving of the case and held and contributed considerably to resolving of the case) Base: Those who took part in a court proceeding in the past three years who were given the first instance judgement as a physical person or defendant, or plaintiff, or party in litigation (Citizens 2025, n=343;2020, n=357; Businesses: 2025,n=79; 2020, n=109); Total target population (Lawyers 2025, n=150;2020, n=151; Judges: 2025, n=155; 2020, n=192; Prosecutors 2025, n=71; 2020:n=83)

2.6.3. Perceptions of reasons for cancelled and inefficient hearings

235. Given that the databases for businesses and the general population are generally too small for valid conclusions, we can only discuss tendencies in how the main reasons for the cancellation of ineffective hearings are perceived.

236. It appears that, in most cases, citizens believe that the other party involved in the proceedings is responsible for the hearings not taking place (48%) or for the proceedings being

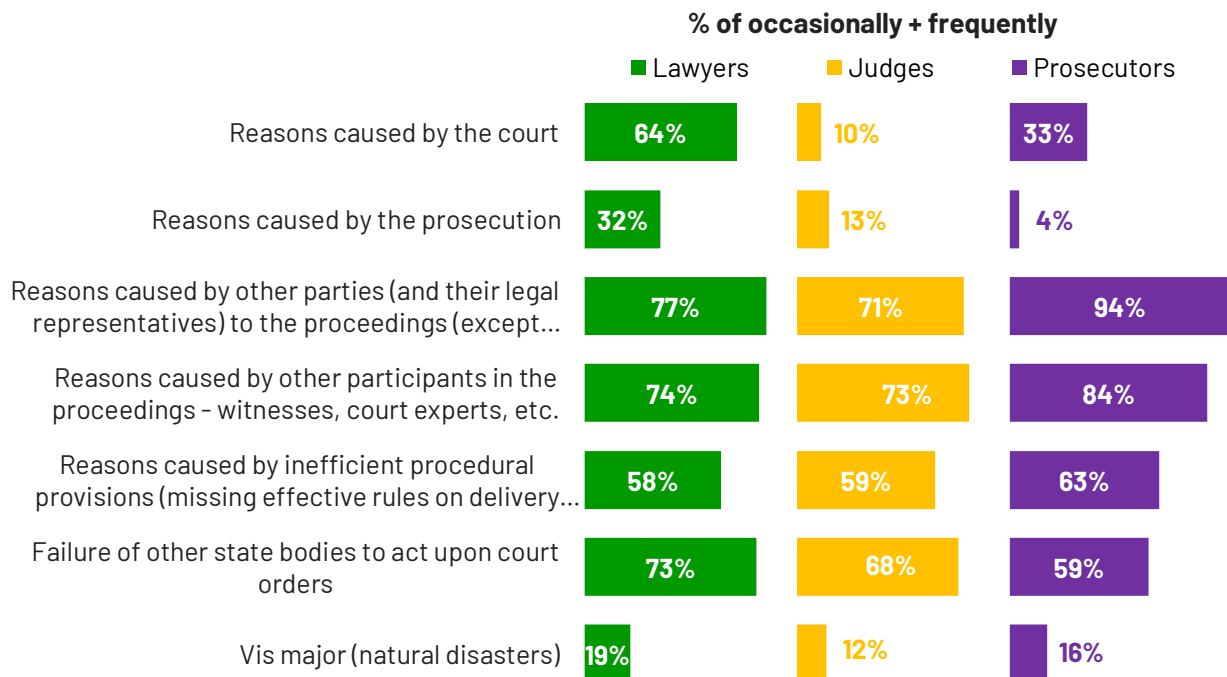
ineffective in resolving the case (47%). Businesses, on the other hand, tend to think that the most responsible party for cancelled hearings is the court (31%). When it comes to hearings that did not contribute to resolving the case, businesses incline that inadequate witnesses, court experts, and other participants in the process are the most responsible ones (34%), followed by the courts (31%).

237. For justice system professionals, there are several important reasons for hearings not being held or not contributing to case resolution (Figure 51).

238. The primary factors contributing to the rescheduling or ineffectiveness of court hearings for prosecutors, lawyers, and judges are largely related to the actions of other parties involved, as well as witnesses, court experts, and other participants in the cases. Specifically, 94% of prosecutors, 77% of lawyers, and 71% of judges attribute these issues to the actions of the opposing party. Additionally, 84% of prosecutors, along with nearly three-quarters of both lawyers and judges, cite factors related to witnesses, court experts, and other participants as significant contributors to these problems.

239. A majority of legal professionals believe that non-compliance with court orders by state bodies contributes to unsuccessful hearings. Specifically, 73% of lawyers, 68% of judges, and 58% of prosecutors hold this view. Furthermore, two-thirds of lawyers and one-third of prosecutors agree that the courts themselves can cause hearings to be cancelled or ineffective. Notably, lawyers tend to be more critical than judges and prosecutors regarding the roles that courts and prosecutors play in the failure of hearings.

Figure 51 - LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: REASONS WHY HEARINGS WERE NOT HELD / WERE HELD BUT DIDN'T CONTRIBUTE



(Thinking about the hearings that either have not been held or didn't contribute much to resolving the case, what, in your opinion, were mainly the reasons why they were not held or didn't contribute significantly?); Base: Those who had hearings that were not held / were held, but didn't contribute; (Lawyers n=150; Judges=155; Prosecutors n=69)

2.6.4. Duration of court proceedings

240. In Montenegro, the duration of cases is shorter than what is considered reasonable⁷. On average, court proceedings last around 13 months for both citizens and businesses. Citizens experience an average wait of 4.3 months for their initial court hearing, with at least one party present. Businesses, however, undergo this phase slightly faster, with a 3.1-month average wait. Despite these variations, the time leading from the first hearing to a first-instance judgment is longer for businesses, averaging 10.1 months compared to 8.8 months for citizens, thus resulting in similar total case durations (Figure 52).

241. However, median values, which are less influenced by aberrated cases, indicate shorter overall case durations for both groups of court service users. This finding is particularly significant for business cases, where the average is more than twice the median (13.2 months versus 6.1 months). This disparity suggests that the average duration for business cases is skewed by a limited number of outlier cases and, therefore, should not be regarded as representative of the general trend (Figure 52).

242. The type of case influences the overall duration of citizens' cases. Misdemeanor cases are resolved most quickly, averaging 8.8 months. In contrast, criminal cases typically take 15.5 months, and civil cases extend to 16.3 months on average. Maximum durations reported are 34 months for misdemeanor, 39 months for criminal, and 48 months for civil cases. Notably, businesses have reported some cases lasting up to 96 months. (Figure 52).

243. Filing to first-court-appearance waiting periods are generally longer for civil cases, with an average waiting period of 5.5 months for citizens. For criminal and misdemeanor cases, the average wait is 3.8 months. (Figure 52).

Figure 52. - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: DURATION OF COURT PROCEEDINGS

		Case filed to the first scheduled hearing	First scheduled hearing to judgment rendered	Case filed to judgment rendered
CITIZENS' cases	Average number of months (mean)	4.3	8.8	13.1
	Average number of months (median) ⁸	3.1	7.1	11.2
	Maximum number of months	31	36	48
Criminal cases	Average number of months (mean)	3.8	11.7	15.5
	Average number of months (median)	3	9.7	16.2
	Maximum number of months	30	35	39
Misdemeanor cases	Average number of months (mean)	3.8	5	8.8
	Average number of months (median)	3	3.1	6.6
	Maximum number of months	16	23	34
Civil cases	Average number of months (mean)	5.5	10.7	16.3

⁷ In its report 'Length of Court Proceedings in the Member States of the Council of Europe based on the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights', the European Commission for Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) analyzed a large number of decisions that had come before the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) to provide insights into what the ECHR considered as unreasonable time. According to the findings, two years was considered as reasonable duration of a normal (non-complex) case. In priority cases, the court may depart from the general approach, and find violation even if the case lasted less than two years. In complex cases, the Court may allow longer time, but pays special attention to periods of inactivity which are clearly excessive. The longer time allowed is however rarely more than five years and almost never more than eight years of total duration. The only cases in which the Court did not find violation in spite of manifestly excessive duration of proceedings were the cases in which the applicant's behaviour had contributed to the delay. European Commission for Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ). Length of Court Proceedings in the Member States of the Council of Europe based on the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. (2006). Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680747c36>

⁸ The median is less sensitive to extreme values, and due to that, the difference compared to the average can be registered.

	Average number of months (median)	4.1	9.1	13.7
	Maximum number of months	31	35	48
BUSINESS cases	Average number of months (mean)	3.1	10.1	13.2
	Average number of months (median)	2	4	6.1
	Maximum number of months	17	95	96

(When was the case filed?; When was the first hearing scheduled, when at least one of the parties appeared?; When was the first-instance judgment rendered?); Base: Those with court case experience in the past three years who have a first instance judgement rendered (Citizens n=335; Businesses n=79);

244. Compared to 2020 - In comparison to five years ago, all types of cases now experience extended durations on average. In general, citizens need three months more on average to get their proceedings resolved. Among businesses, the situation is more challenging – what they were completing in 8 months on average now requires more than 13 months. Nevertheless, median values warrant further examination. For citizens, the median confirms that court proceedings generally take longer than five years ago (11.2 months in 2025 versus 6 months in 2020). In contrast, for businesses, the median remains virtually unchanged across both waves (6.1 months in 2025 versus 6 months in 2020), indicating that variations in the average values stem from a limited number of outlier cases rather than representing a systemic shift (Figure 53).

245. A breakdown by case type confirms similar trends - criminal and misdemeanor cases have extended by approximately two months on average, while civil proceedings have lengthened by nearly five months. (Figure 53).

Figure 53. - . CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: DURATION OF COURT PROCEEDINGS, 2025 vs. 2020

Total case duration (from case filed to judgment rendered)		2025	2020
CITIZENS' cases	Average number of months (mean)	13.1	10.2
	Average number of months (median) ⁹	11.2	6
	Maximum number of months	48	78
Criminal cases	Average number of months (mean)	15.5	13.3
	Average number of months (median)	16.2	8.8
	Maximum number of months	39	57
Misdemeanor cases	Average number of months (mean)	8.8	6.9
	Average number of months (median)	6.6	3
	Maximum number of months	34	28
Civil cases	Average number of months (mean)	16.3	11.4
	Average number of months (median)	13.7	6
	Maximum number of months	48	78
BUSINESS cases	Average number of months (mean)	13.2	7.7
	Average number of months (median)	6.1	6
	Maximum number of months	96	55

(When was the case filed?; When was the first hearing scheduled, when at least one of the parties appeared?; When was the first-instance judgment rendered?); Base: Those with court case experience in the past three years who have a first instance judgment rendered (2025 Citizens n=335; Businesses n=79; 2020 Citizens n=357; Businesses n=109);

⁹ The median is less sensitive to extreme values due to what the difference compared to the average can be registered.

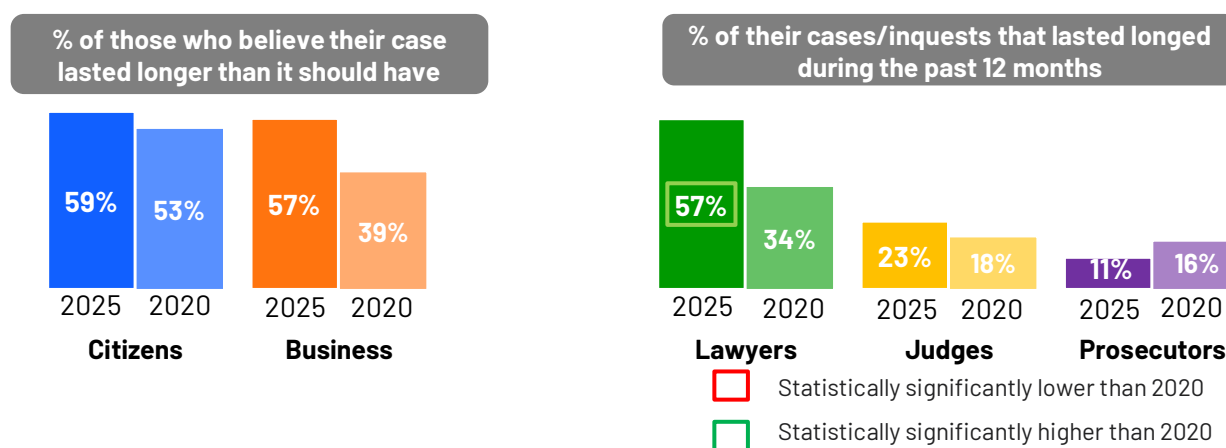
2.6.5. Court cases / inquests assessed as longer than necessary

246. A notable number of court users feel that their cases took longer than necessary. Specifically, 59% of citizens and 57% of businesses believe their cases lasted longer than they should have. In contrast, one-third of citizens and 37% of businesses believe that their cases were resolved in a timely manner (Figure 54).

247. Among the judicial professionals, lawyers believe that many cases could be resolved in a shorter timeframe. On average, they estimate that more than half of their cases (57%) take longer than necessary. In contrast, judges and prosecutors see this issue differently; judges report that only 23% of cases exceed the optimal duration, while prosecutors believe the figure is even lower, at 11%.

248. Judges in basic courts are more likely to report cases that have a longer duration, with 26% of cases taking longer than they should (population average is 23%). Similarly, prosecutors in basic prosecutors' offices also report a higher percentage of cases that lasted longer than the population average (14%, compared to the population average of 11%).

Figure 54. - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES; LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS



(How would you evaluate the length of this case in its first-instance phase? Taking into account all circumstances, do you think that the case lasted.../ Please estimate the percentage of the cases/inquests that you worked on during the past 12 months (where at least the first-instance judgement was rendered in the past 12 months), that lasted longer than they should have for any reason?); Base: Those who had court case experience in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered (Citizens 2025, n=343;2020, n=357; Businesses: 2025,n=79; 2020, n=109); Total target population (Lawyers 2025, n=150;2020, n=151; Judges: 2025, n=155; 2020, n=192; Prosecutors 2025, n=71; 2020:n=83)

249. Compared to 2020 – In 2025, lawyers report a significant increase in cases that lasted longer than necessary. Similar discrepancy is recorded among businesses as well, but not so notable as among lawyers.

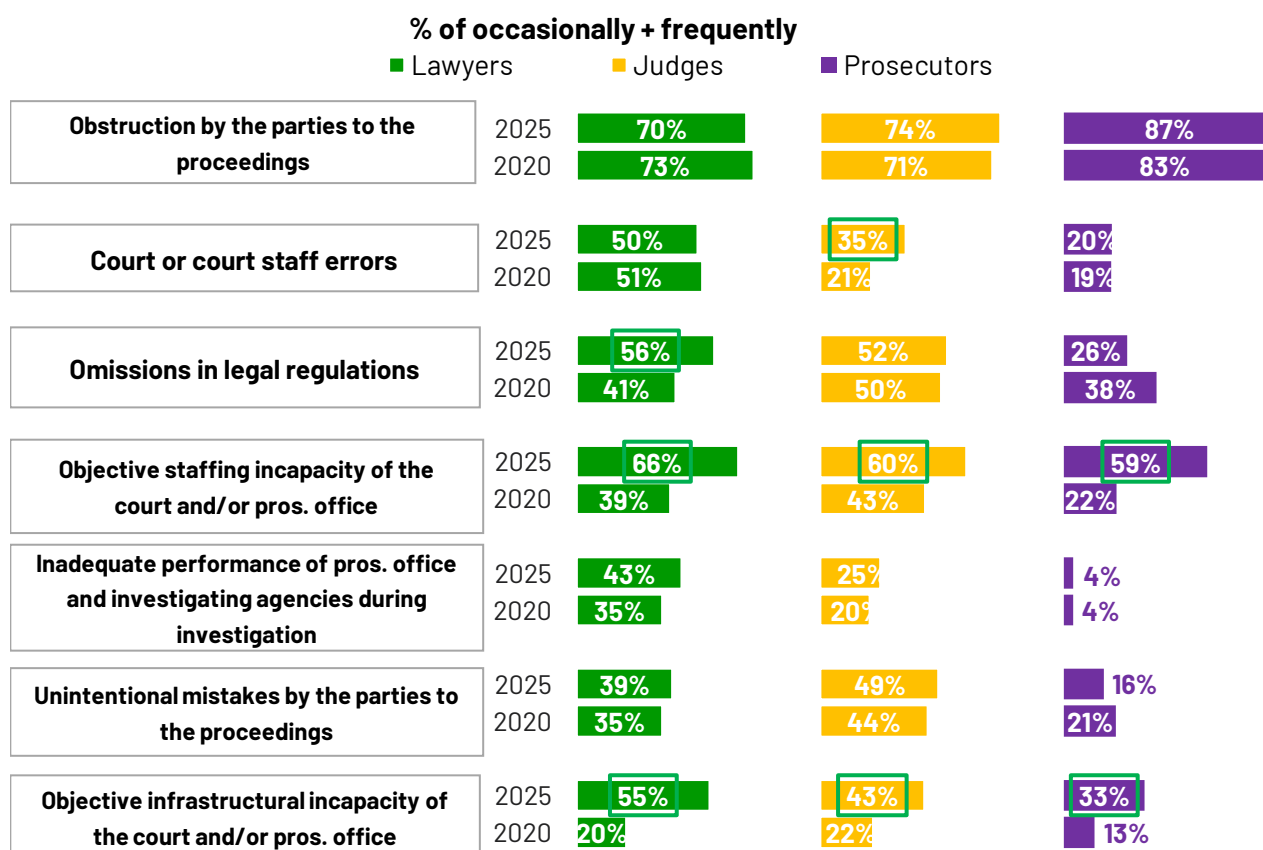
2.6.6. The perception of the reasons for the extended duration of cases

250. Justice system professionals believe that the primary cause for the prolonged duration of cases is the obstructions caused by the parties involved in the proceedings. Specifically, 74% of judges, 70% of lawyers, and 87% of prosecutors hold the parties responsible for cases that take longer than necessary.

251. A significant portion of legal professionals believe that staffing shortages within the court system, including courts and the prosecutor's offices, contribute to the lengthening of cases. Specifically, two-thirds of lawyers, along with 60% of judges and prosecutors, hold this view.

Furthermore, a notable percentage of lawyers (56%) and judges (52%) indicate that gaps in legal regulations either occasionally or frequently lead to longer case durations. In contrast, only 25% of prosecutors share this belief. Interestingly, lawyers are more likely to assert that errors made by the court and its staff impact case duration, with 50% expressing this concern, compared to 35% of judges and 20% of prosecutors.

Figure 55 - LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: THE PERCEPTION OF THE REASONS FOR EXTENDED DURATION OF CASES



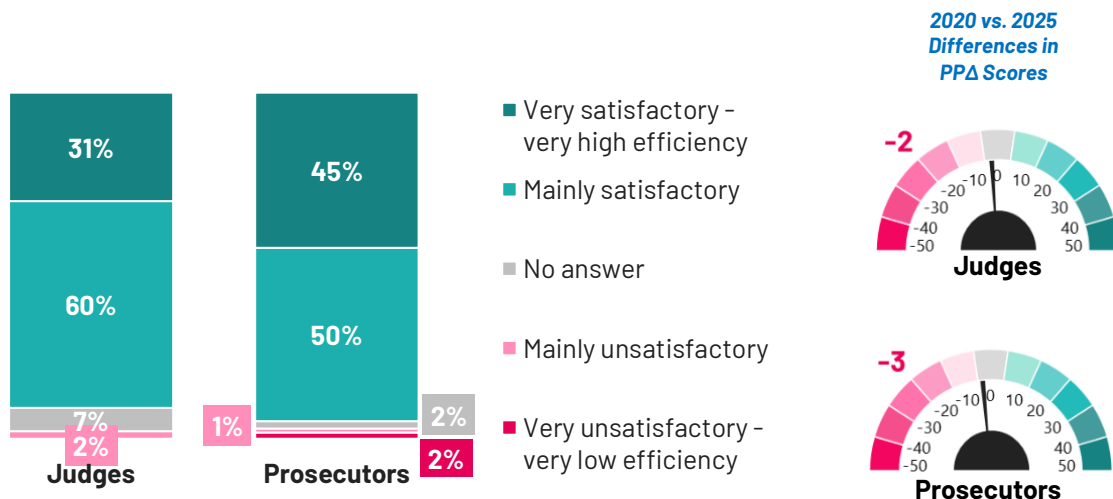
(Thinking about the cases which lasted longer than they should have, what would you say were the reasons for their longer duration?); Base: Those who had cases that lasted longer than they should have; (Lawyers: 2025, n=143; 2020: n=117; Judges: 2025, n=145; 2020, 171; Prosecutors: 2025, n=71; 2020 n=60).

2.7. Efficiency assessment of respective justice delivery institutions

252. Judges and prosecutors appear highly satisfied with the efficiency of their respective institutions. An impressive nine out of ten judges (91%) and nearly every prosecutor (95%) rate the efficiency of their institution positively (Figure 56). Over half of the judges (60%) describe their institution's efficiency as mainly satisfactory, with nearly one-third (31%) indicating it as very satisfactory. Additionally, half of the prosecutors (50%) regard their institution's efficiency as mainly satisfactory, while a considerable number (45%) consider it very satisfactory.

253. Compared to 2020 – Judges and prosecutors are consistent in their views towards the efficiency of the court and office in which they work, compared to 2020. More than 90% in both survey waves evaluate this aspect of the work as satisfactory.

Figure 56 - JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF RESPECTIVE INSTITUTIONS' EFFICIENCY



(Considering the past 12 months, how would you assess overall efficiency of the court/prosecutor's office in which you work?); Base: Total target population; (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

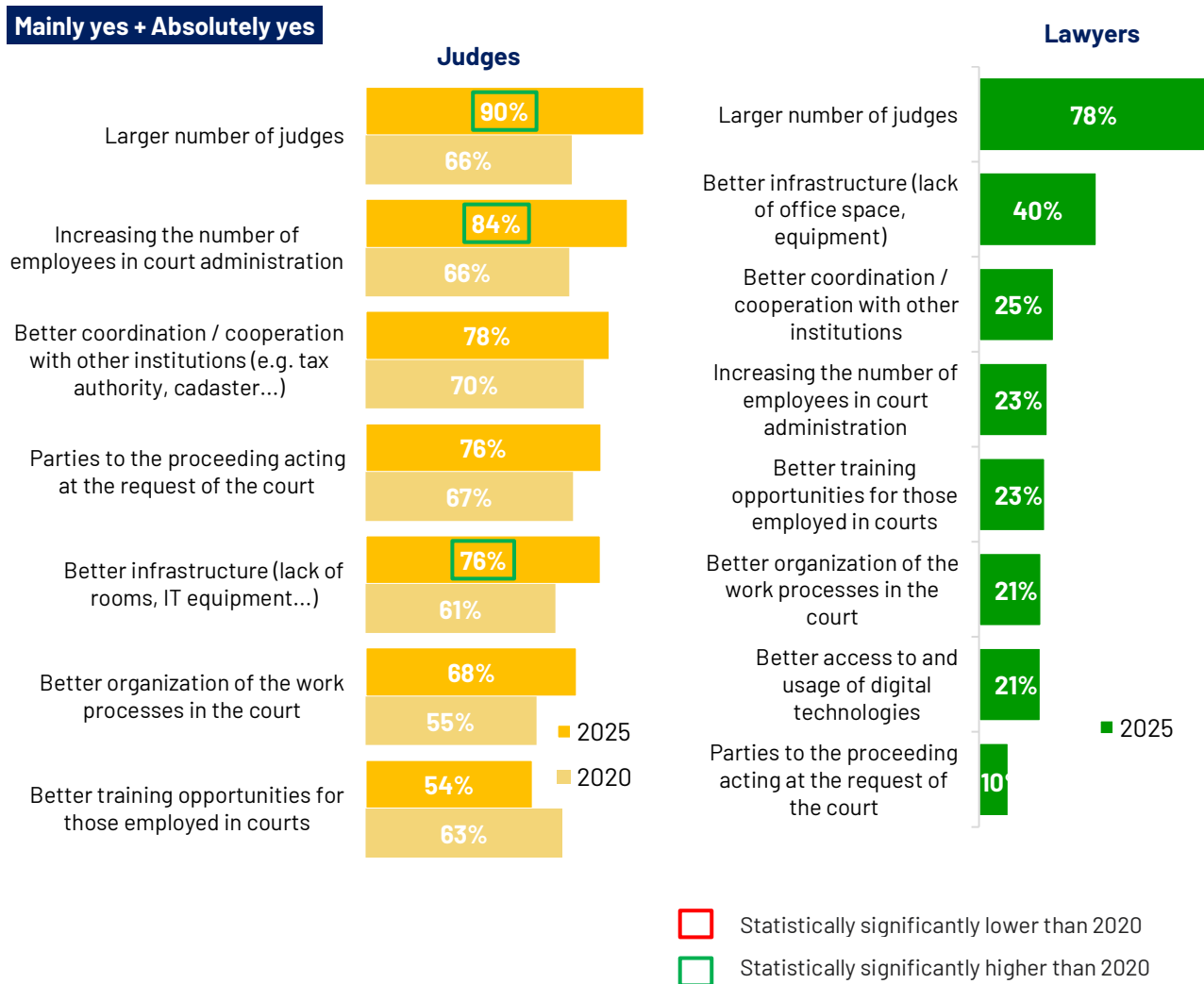
2.7.1. Measures to improve the efficiency of courts and prosecutors' offices

254. In addressing ways to improve court efficiency, an overwhelming 90% of judges suggest that increasing the number of judges would be beneficial. Additionally, 84% believe that expanding the staff within court administration would lead to improvements. The third most agreed-upon strategy is enhancing coordination and cooperation with other institutions, such as tax authorities and cadasters, with 78% of judges in agreement. (Figure 57).

255. When ranking factors to enhance court efficiency, 78% of lawyers, similar to judges, prioritize increasing the number of judges as the most important factor. The second most important factor, as identified by 40% of lawyers, is improving infrastructure, which includes addressing issues such as a lack of office space and equipment. The third-ranked factor is improving coordination and cooperation with other institutions, such as tax authorities and cadasters, with 25% of lawyers in agreement. (Figure 57).

256. Compared to 2020 - Compared to 2020, a significantly higher percentage of judges now believe that increasing the number of judges would enhance the efficiency of the court they work in, with 90% expressing this view in 2025 compared to 66% in 2020. The same upward trend is observed regarding the increase in court administration staff, with 84% in favor in 2025 compared to 66% in 2020. Additionally, 76% of judges in 2025 see better infrastructure—such as the availability of rooms and IT equipment—as a key factor for improvement, up from 61% in 2020. Conversely, there is a growing skepticism about the value of better training opportunities, with 28% disagreeing with their effectiveness in 2025, up from 14% in 2020.

Figure 57- JUDGES AND LAWYERS: WAYS OF IMPROVING EFFICIENCY OF COURTS



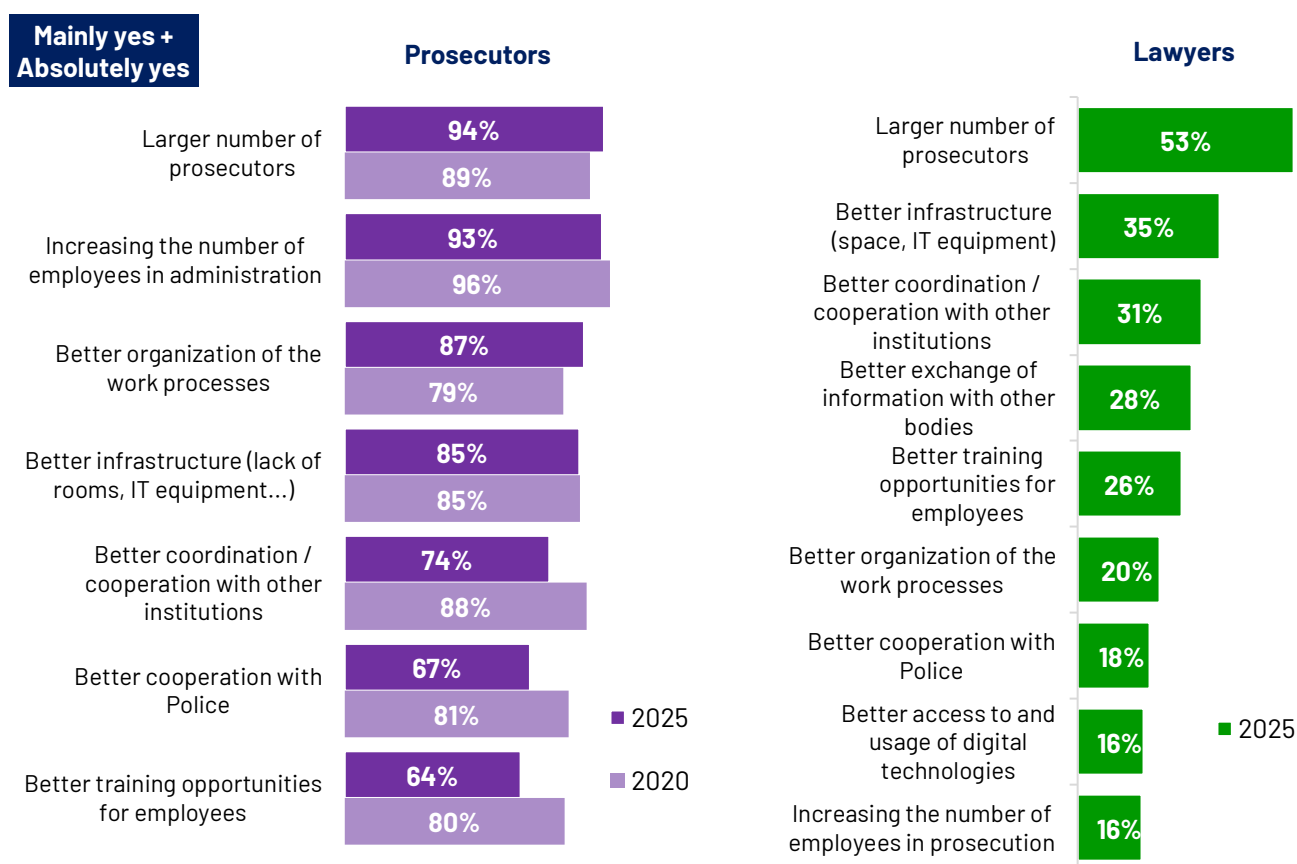
(Judges: In your opinion, to what extent would each of the following improve the efficiency of the court you work in?; Lawyers: In your opinion, what are the three main factors that would improve the efficiency of the courts, starting with the most important one? - RANK 1 + RANK 2 + RANK 3; Base: Those who are not satisfied with overall efficiency of the courts in the past few years (Judges: 2025, n=107; 2020, n=92; Lawyers n=137 in 2025)

257. In seeking to enhance the efficiency of the Prosecutor’s office, an overwhelming 94% of prosecutors advocate for an increase in the number of prosecutors as a beneficial move. Additionally, 93% of prosecutors agree that expanding the staff within the prosecutor’s office administration is crucial. The third-most agreed-upon strategy is improving the organization of work processes within the Prosecutor’s office, supported by 87% of prosecutors (Figure 58).

258. In ranking the most crucial factors for boosting the efficiency of the Prosecutor’s office, 53% of lawyers prioritize increasing the number of prosecutors as the most important factor. The second-ranked factor, supported by 35%, is improving infrastructure, which includes addressing challenges such as insufficient office space and IT equipment. Better coordination and cooperation with other institutions, like tax authorities and cadasters, is ranked third by 31% of lawyers (Figure 58).

259. Compared to 2020 – Compared to 2020, there is a notable increase in the percentage of prosecutors who do not see that better coordination and cooperation with other institutions, such as the tax authority and cadaster, will enhance the efficiency of the prosecutor’s office (rising to 19% in 2025 from just 1% in 2020). A similar trend is observed with better training opportunities for employees in prosecutors’ offices: 24% now express disagreement, up from 5% in 2020.

Figure 58 - PROSECUTORS AND LAWYERS: WAYS OF IMPROVING EFFICIENCY AND WORK QUALITY OF PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE



(Prosecutors: In your opinion, to what extent would each of the following improve the efficiency of the work of the Prosecutor's office you work in?; Lawyers: In your opinion, what are the three main factors that would improve the efficiency of the prosecution, starting with the most important one? - RANK 1 + RANK 2 + RANK 3); Base: Those who are not very satisfied with overall efficiency of the Prosecutor's office in the past few years (Prosecutors: 2025, n=39, 2020, n=34; Lawyers n=116)

2.8. Perception of administrative court services' efficiency

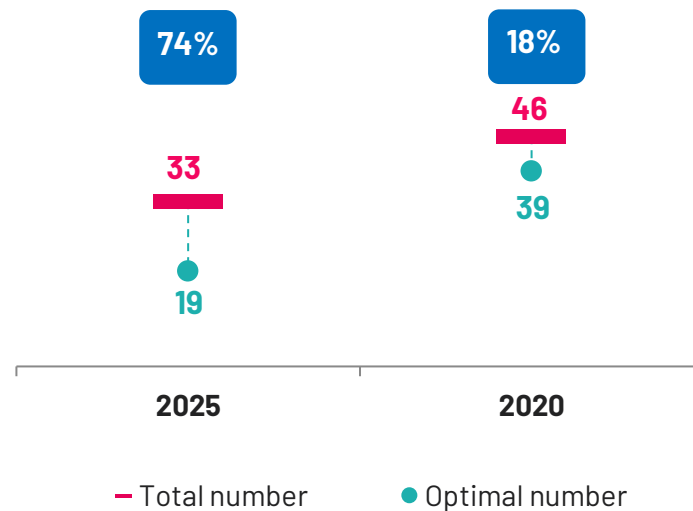
2.8.1. Court employees' perception of administrative court services' efficiency

260. Court staff members appear to be handling a notably higher workload on a daily basis than they consider optimal. Court staff who provide administrative services to the public and businesses manage about 33 tasks daily, which is 74% more than their perceived optimal caseload (Figure 59). The median comparison (20 for actual, and 10 for optimal tasks) shows that "average" (by median) court officer handle exactly twice their optimal daily caseload, meaning they are managing 100% more cases than ideal. On average, each staff member processes 10 additional tasks daily beyond what they consider optimal. This median gap indicates that workload pressure is widespread rather than isolated, affecting most court support staff. The fact that the typical staff member experiences a complete doubling of their perceived optimal workload might indicate systemic understaffing within court administration. The notable difference between means and medians (15 vs 10 tasks) indicates that some staff experience considerably heavier daily workloads, raising the average.

261. Compared to 2020 - In 2025, the average number of tasks that administrative staff perceive as optimal has notably decreased to 19, from 39 in 2020. Moreover, the current workload is 74% above

what court staff members consider optimal, a significant increase from the 18% above optimal levels recorded in 2020.

Figure 59- COURT STAFF: TOTAL / OPTIMAL CASELOAD (DAILY)



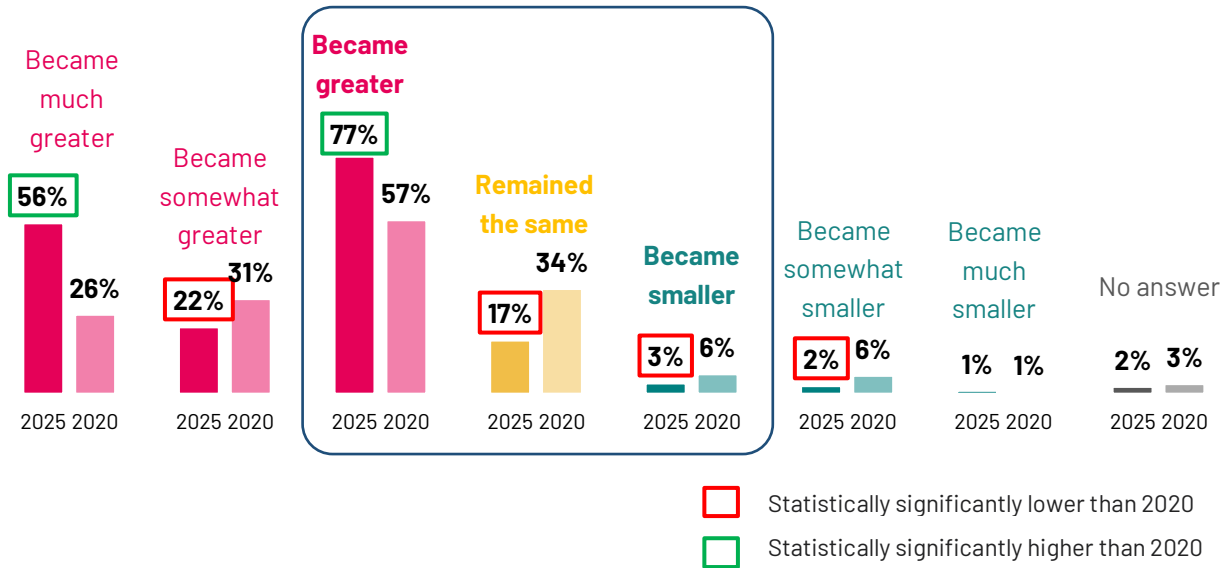
(How many administrative tasks have you handled on average on a daily basis during the last 12 months? / In your opinion, what would have been the optimal daily caseload, given THE CONDITIONS YOU WORKED IN during the past 12 months and taking into account average variations in complexity of the administrative tasks that you had on average in the last 12 months?); Base: Court staff who are providing administrative services to general public and businesses; (2025, n=371; 2020, n=93)

262. A majority of court staff have experienced an increased workload compared to the previous year (Figure 60). Over the past 12 months, 77% of court staff report a rise in workload, while 17% say it has remained unchanged. Conversely, only 3% of court personnel noted a reduction in their workload.

263. It is more common for male court staff to report that their workload has remained the same, with 24% indicating no change; by contrast, women are more likely than their male colleagues to report an increase in workload (81% vs. 67%). Conversely, court staff aged 50 and older are more likely to report a decrease in their workload, at 6%. On the other hand, staff working in Misdemeanor and Appellate courts are more likely than average to report an increase in workload, with 85% and 94% experiencing an increase, compared to their colleagues in general courts (74%).

264. Compared to 2020 – In 2025, a significantly greater percentage of court staff, 77%, claim an increase in their workload in comparison to 2020, where 57% reported such an increase. Conversely, the proportion of staff who report that their workload remained the same has significantly decreased, from 34% in 2020 to 17% in 2025.

Figure 60- . COURT STAFF: WORKLOAD COMPARED TO THE PREVIOUS YEAR



(If you compare your workload in the past 12 months to the preceding year, would you say that the workload...); Base: Total target population; (2025, n=687; 2020, n=640)

265. Court staff members report that, on average, performing one administrative task now takes more than half an hour, specifically 45 minutes.

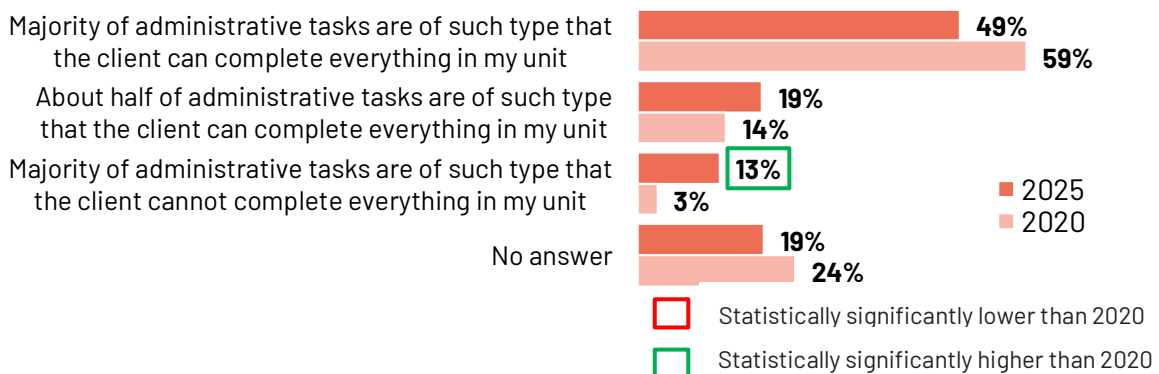
266. Compared to 2020 – This marks a significant increase in the time required for such tasks compared to 2020, when the average time spent was 25 minutes.

267. Additionally, it's important to note that each administrative task typically requires a client to contact the same court staff member one to two times, averaging 1.6 contacts per task.

268. Nearly half of court staff (49%) report that they work on tasks typically completed entirely within their administrative unit (Figure 61). Meanwhile, 19% indicate that approximately half of the tasks can be completed within their unit, and 13% state that most tasks require procedures beyond their unit for completion. Notably, nearly one in five court staff members (19%) did not provide an answer.

269. Compared to 2020 – In 2025, there is a notable increase in the percentage of tasks that require clients to deal with multiple administrative units, rising from 3% in 2020 to 13%.

Figure 61- COURT STAFF: COMPLETING TASKS WITHIN ONE ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT

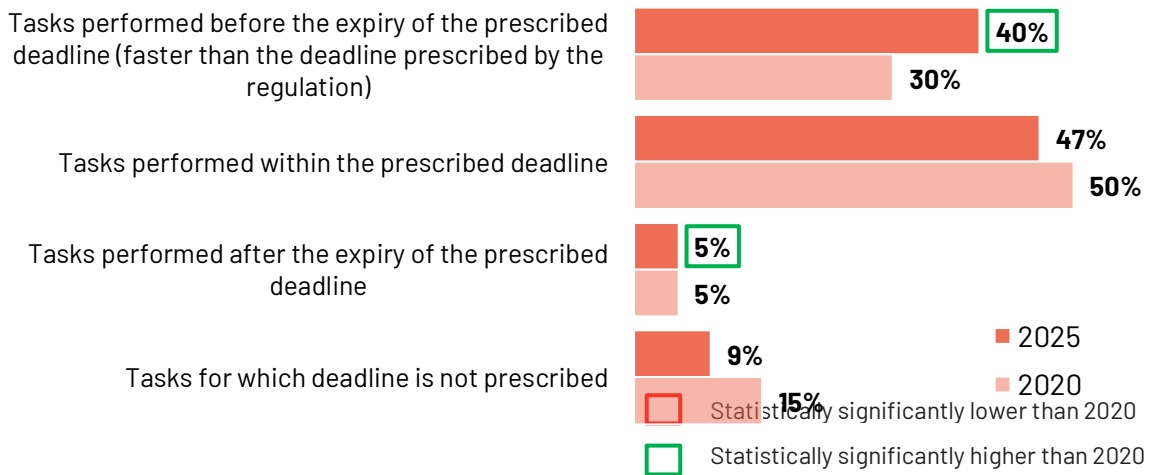


(Roughly, what share of administrative services that you provide can be completed only using your administrative unit and not going anywhere else?); Base: Those who had direct contact with clients; (2025, n=326;2020, n=89)

270. Based on reports from court staff members, most tasks are completed within or before the prescribed deadlines (62). On average, staff responsible for administrative services to the general public and businesses indicate that 87% of tasks in the past year were completed within the set deadline or were finished ahead of time. Conversely, approximately 5% of tasks were completed after the deadline, and 9% did not have a specified deadline.

271. Compared to 2020 – The average percentage of cases completed after the prescribed deadline has notably increased from 5% in 2020 to 12% in 2025. Conversely, there is a noticeable decrease in the proportion of tasks completed within the prescribed deadline, from 50% in 2020 to 37% in 2025.

Figure 62 - COURT STAFF: PERFORMING TASKS WITHIN THE PRESCRIBED DEADLINE



(Keeping in mind all administrative tasks which you performed during the past 12 months, please try to estimate what % of these tasks belonged to each of the following groups); Base: Those who did not have direct contact with clients; (2025, n=189 in; 2020, n=58)

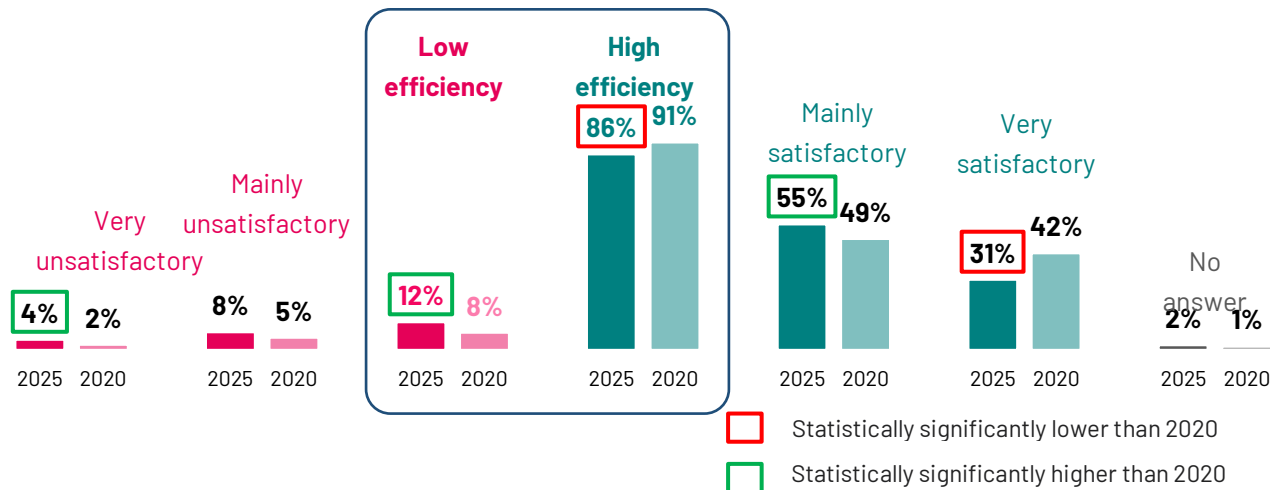
2.8.2. Perception of the efficiency of the administrative unit within the institution by court staff

272. Administrative staff members hold a highly positive view of their unit’s efficiency. Over half of these staff members rate the efficiency as mainly satisfactory (55%), while slightly less than one-third (31%) consider it very satisfactory, amounting to 86% of administrative staff who perceive their departments as efficient (Figure 63).

273. Additionally, court staff from the northern region of the country rate their unit's efficiency higher, with an average rating of 3.3 on a scale from one to four, compared to the overall average of 3.1.

274. Compared to 2020 – Compared to 2020, there is a notable decrease in the average efficiency rating, dropping from 3.3 to 3.1. Additionally, the percentage of administrative staff who describe themselves as very satisfied has significantly decreased, with 31% expressing this view now compared to 42% in 2020.

Figure 63 - COURT STAFF: PERCEPTION OF THE EFFICIENCY OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT THEY WORK IN BY COURT STAFF



(Considering the past 12 months, how would you assess overall efficiency of administrative unit in institution in which you work?); Base: Total target population (2025, n=687; 2020, n=640)

2.8.3. Measures to improve the efficiency of courts according to court staff

275. According to court staff, improving their unit's efficiency is primarily linked to enhancements in salary and working conditions, alongside employee-driven initiatives like heightened commitment and improved job distribution (Figure 64). A notable majority of court staff, 88%, identify salary increases as the foremost measure to enhance efficiency in court administrative units. The second most important factor for improving efficiency is increasing employee commitment and motivation, with 76% of respondents agreeing. Additionally, three out of four staff members emphasize the importance of better working conditions and a more equitable distribution of jobs. Thus, these three factors may be related; raising salaries and better work organization probably could positively influence employees' motivation. Interestingly, despite the expressed workload faced by court administration, hiring more employees ranks lowest among the proposed measures, with 54% support.

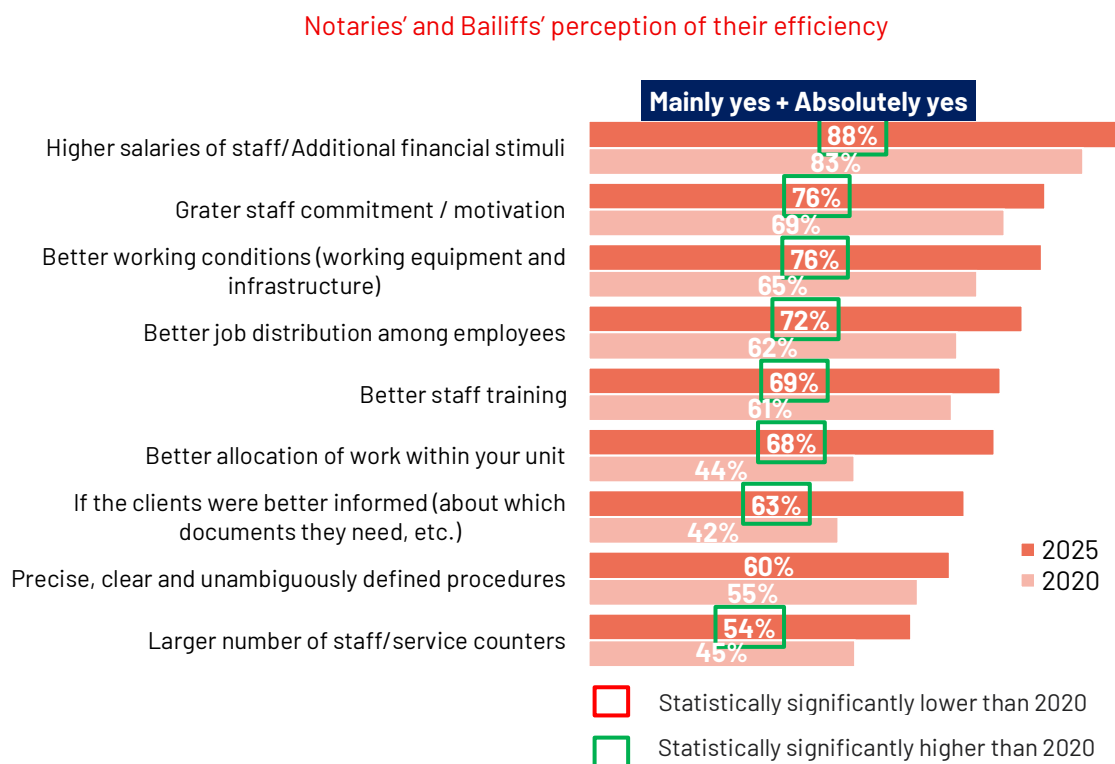
276. Court staff's opinions on measures to improve efficiency vary based on demographics and work context. Those working in the North are more likely to disagree with the need for a larger number of staff/service counters, with 44% expressing this view compared to the 29% average. This sentiment is shared by staff in General courts at 36%, whereas staff in Misdemeanor courts are less likely to disagree, at just 11%.

277. Regarding better job distribution, male staff members are more likely to disagree with its necessity, with 19% in opposition, compared to 7% of women. When evaluating the necessity for precise, clear, and unambiguous procedures, it appears that younger employees (under 35 years old) are more likely to challenge this requirement. Specifically, 38% of employees in this age group disagree with the need for such procedures, compared to 19% of individuals in their late thirties and forties who share the same opinion, and only 12% of those aged 50 and older. It's important to note that the oldest group shows a significant level of uncertainty about these procedures, as nearly one-third did not provide an answer. Moreover, employees aged 50 and above are more inclined to refrain from responding to any of the measures presented.

278. Furthermore, those with less than five years of experience are more prone to question the belief that better-informed clients would enhance efficiency, with 30% disagreeing compared to 14% of those with longer working experience.

279. Compared to 2020 – In reviewing changes from 2020, all measures to enhance efficiency have received greater support from court staff, though with notable variations. The most pronounced change is in positive views on better allocation of work (44% in 2020; 68% in 2025) and the need for better-informed clients (42% in 2020; 63% in 2025). In 2025, higher salaries are viewed as the most effective way to improve the efficiency of court administration, with even stronger support from court staff, rising to 88% from 83% in 2020. Staff feedback also highlights greater employee motivation as an important factor. The only significant change since 2020 is that support for improving laws has decreased, causing this measure to drop to the second-to-last position in terms of priority.

Figure 64 - COURT STAFF: MEASURES TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF COURTS ACCORDING TO COURT



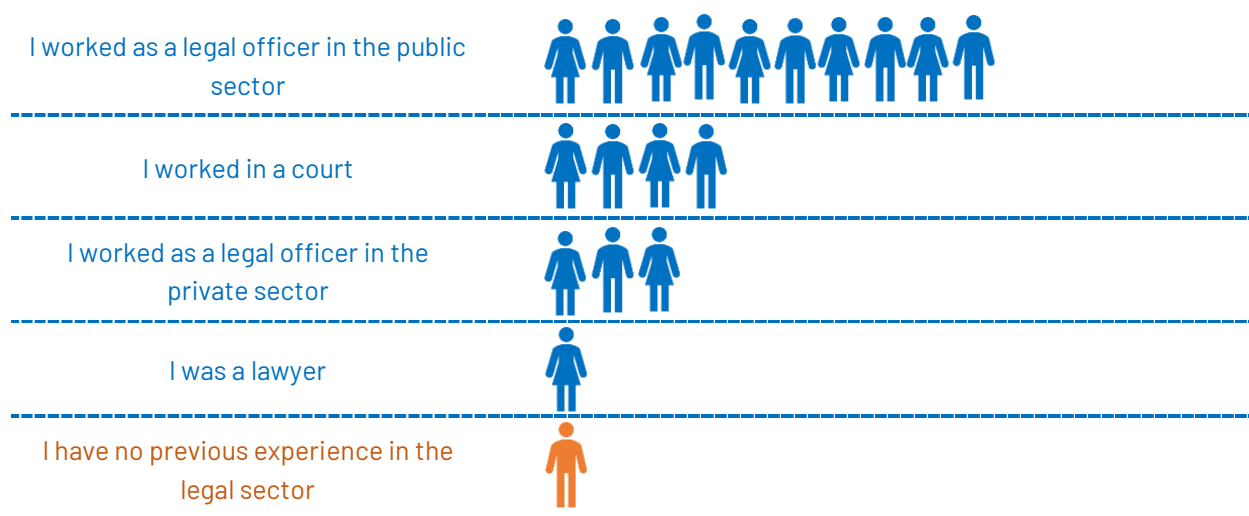
STAFF (In your opinion, to what extent would each of the following improve the efficiency of your unit?); Base: Those who are not very satisfied with overall efficiency of the unit in which they work; (2025, n=462; 2020, n=362)

2.9.1. Notaries' perception of their profession's efficiency

280. Fifteen notaries participated in the survey to provide a snapshot of notary offices' efficiency, offer a notably positive image of their performance. The basis of notaries is insufficient for drawing conclusions (n=15, i.e., 27% of the population), but their opinions can reveal some tendencies in the profession's tasks and efficiency.

281. Notary offices that participated in the survey have, on average, four employees, but the self-perception of efficiency is highly positive (14 out of 15 think that efficiency is high, and among them, 12 perceive notary offices as 'completely efficient'). Almost all surveyed notaries have prior legal experience (14 out of 15), and some have held multiple legal roles throughout their careers. The largest number have worked as legal officers in the public sector.

Figure 65 - .PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF NOTARIES:



(What is your previous work experience in the legal sector (before working in a notary practice)?; Base: Total target population (n=15)

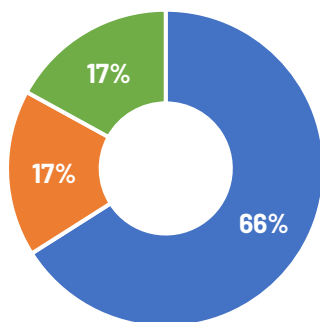
282. Notary office representatives report that they handle an average of 180 cases each month, with 23% of services on average related to inheritance matters. Nonetheless, the median of 100 cases per month significantly differs from the mean of 180 cases. This substantial 80% difference indicates that a notable number of notaries are processing significantly higher volumes of tasks than their colleagues. The median of 100 cases per month may represent the typical notary workload, while the elevated mean suggests the presence of systematic differences in notary practice characteristics.

283. The majority of notaries' clients are individuals, while businesses and public sector clients make up an equal share of cases and tasks.

Figure 66 - NOTARIES' CLIENTS AND TYPE OF SERVICES THEY USUALLY PROVIDE:

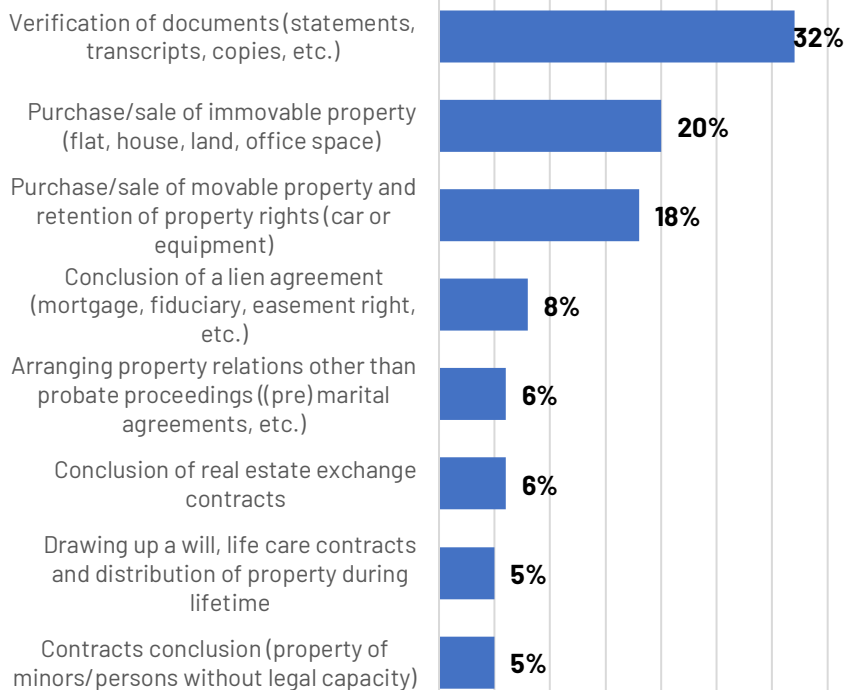


Type of clients



- Individuals
- Business sector
- Public sector

Type of services



(How many cases/ services does your office handle on average per month?; What percentage of all services provided in the last 12 months did you perform for individuals, the business sector, and the public sector? What percentage of certain services are included in your activities on average?) Base: Total target population (n=15)

284. Twelve out of fifteen notaries fully agree with the statement that notaries are part of the judicial system. At the same time, thirteen believe that the current number of notary offices is sufficient for Montenegro. The impact of notaries on all suggested aspects of the judicial system in Montenegro, its efficiency, quality, and availability, is generally perceived as positive by 14 notaries, while one believes that notaries have no impact on the pillars of the judiciary.

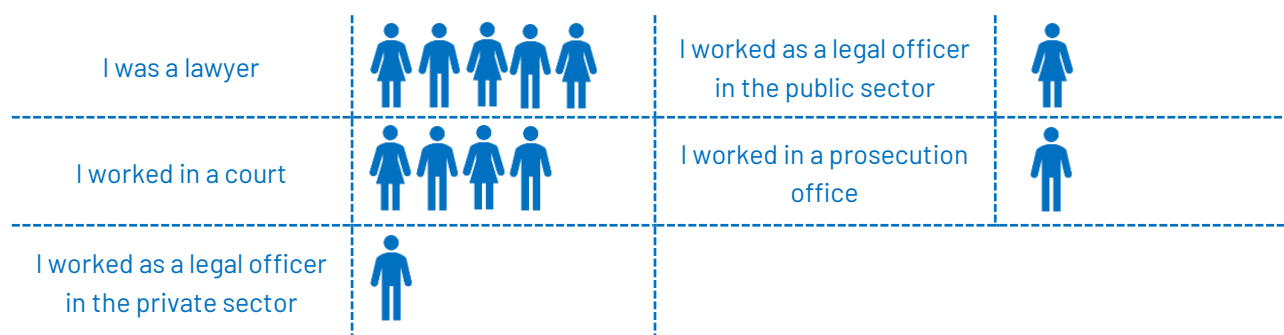
2.9.2. Bailiffs' perception of their profession's efficiency

285. Like notaries, a database for bailiffs also leads to insufficient conclusions (n=10, i.e., 37% of the population). The findings can only highlight certain aspects of their work efficiency.

286. All ten bailiffs express satisfaction with the efficiency of their offices in Montenegro. Moreover, eight of them perceive Montenegrin bailiffs as 'completely efficient'. Surveyed bailiff offices representatives have, on average, 3 employees.

287. All bailiffs who participated in the survey have had legal experience prior to their current position. Most of them worked as lawyers or in courts.

Figure 67 - PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE OF BAILIFFS:



(What is your previous work experience in the legal sector (before working in a bailiff practice)?) Base: Total target population (n=10) (How many cases/ services does your office handle on average per month?; What percentage of all services provided in the last 12 months did you perform for individuals, the business sector, and the public sector? What percentage of certain services are included in your activities on average?) Base: Total target population (n=15)

288. Bailiff office representatives report that they handle, on average, 71 utility debt enforcement actions and 85 other enforcement actions per month. Enforced payments based on utility debts last approximately 27 days, while other enforcement actions last, on average, a day shorter. Two-thirds of all enforcement actions are taken upon credible documents, while the rest are based on court decisions.

Figure 68- BAILIFFS' ACTIONS IN PRACTICE

Average number and duration of enforcement actions			
Number of enforced payments of utility debts per month	71	Average duration of enforced payments of utility debts in days	27
Number of all other enforcement actions per month	85	Average duration of other enforcement actions in days	26

Legal basis of enforcement actions



■ Enforcement actions based on court decisions ■ Enforcement actions based on credible documents

(How many enforcement actions does your office handle on average per month?; What is the average duration of enforcement procedures for these actions (in days)?; What percentage of all enforcement actions provided in the last 12 months did you perform based on the following? Based on your experience, what percentage of enforcement actions in MONTENEGRO belong to each of the following groups?) Base: total target population (n=10)

289. Regarding the efficiency of bailiff offices in general, respondents believe that most of the enforcement actions are completed within the deadline required in the prerequisite legal document.

Figure 69- BAILIFFS' EFICINECY IN GENERAL :

Completion of enforcement actions



- Enforcement actions completed within the deadline defined in the court decision or credible document
- Enforcement actions not completed within the deadline defined in the court decision or credible document due to unrealistic deadlines
- Enforcement actions not completed within the deadline defined in the court decision or credible document due to reasons other than unrealistic deadlines

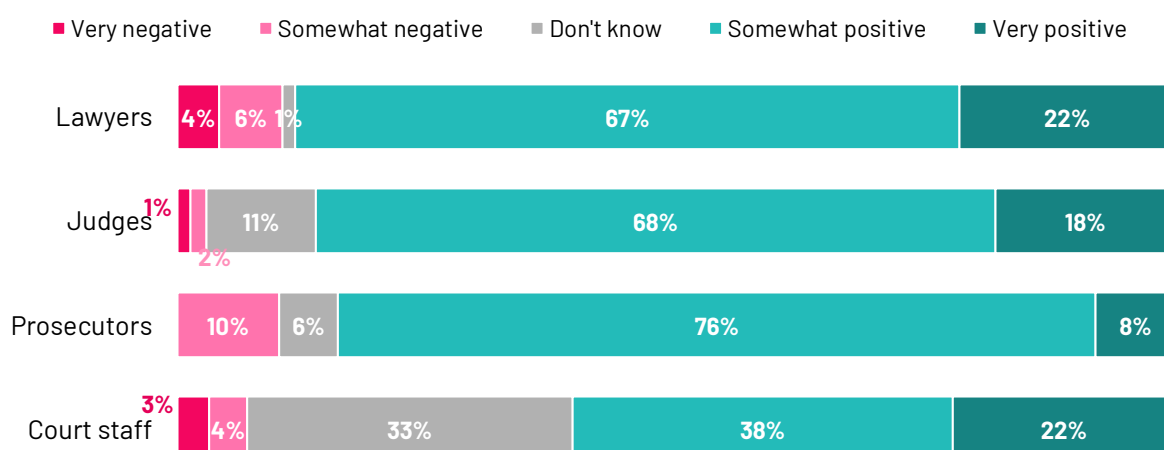
(Based on your experience, what percentage of enforcement actions in MONTENEGRO belong to each of the following groups?)
Base: Total target population (n=10)

290. All surveyed bailiffs believe that their professional community has a positive impact on efficiency, quality, fairness, and availability as the main pillars of the judicial system. Moreover, eight of ten believe that the number of bailiffs in Montenegro is sufficient and meets the needs, while two consider the current number of bailiffs to be too large.

2.9. Impact of notaries and bailiffs on the judicial system's efficiency

291. All professionals believe that notaries contribute to the efficiency of the judicial system in Montenegro. The lawyers seem the most convinced of this, with 89% of them confirming so. Judges and prosecutors closely follow, with 86%, i.e., 84% reporting the same. Court administrative staff who are able to assess notaries' impact also view it as mostly positive (60%) (Figure 70).

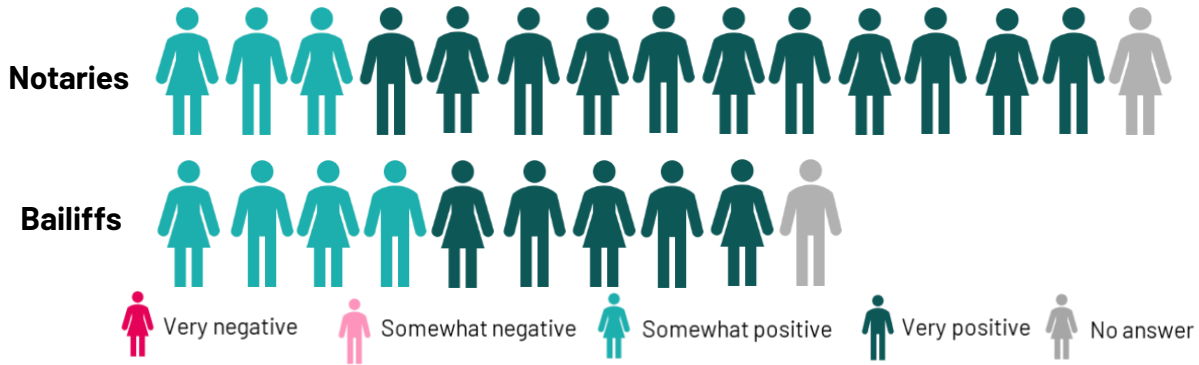
Figure 70 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS, COURT STAFF: PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT NOTARIES HAVE ON THE EFFICIENCY OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM



(What kind of impact do notaries have on the efficiency of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff n=687);

292. According to 14 out of 15 interviewed notaries and 9 out of 10 surveyed bailiffs, there is a strong tendency among both to consider notaries' impact on the overall efficiency of the judicial system as positive. (Figure 71).

Figure 71 - NOTARIES, BAILIFFS: PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT NOTARIES HAVE ON THE EFFICIENCY OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM

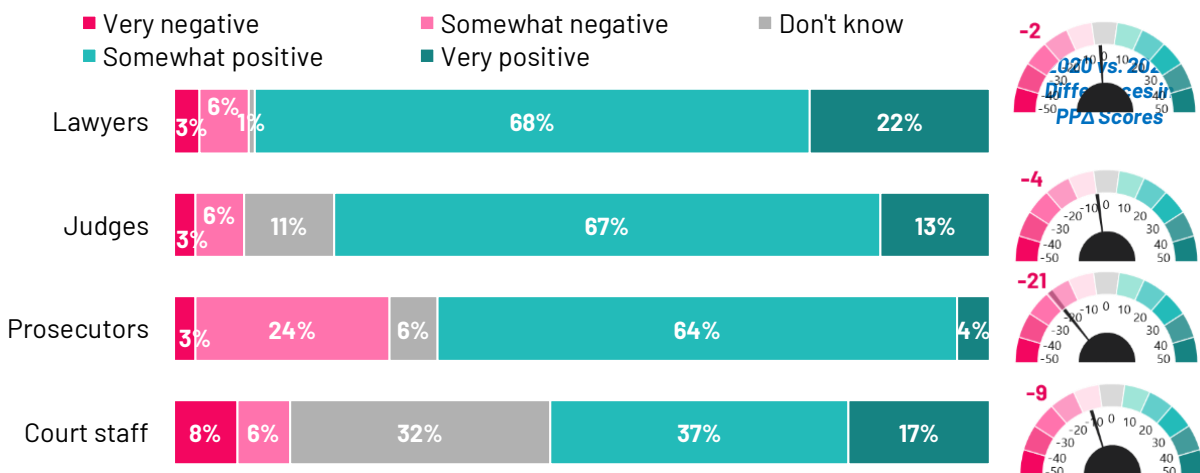


(What kind of impact do notaries have on the efficiency of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

293. As well as for notaries, professionals across the legal field recognize the positive impact of private bailiffs on the efficiency of the judicial system. This favorable opinion is held by an overwhelming majority - 90% of lawyers, 80% of judges, nearly 70% of prosecutors, and over 50% of court administrative staff. Interestingly, one-third of administrative staff have no opinion on bailiffs' impact on the judiciary's efficiency. (Figure 72).

294. Compared to 2020 - Compared to five years ago, lawyers and judges mainly keep a similar perception of bailiffs' impact on the judicial system's efficiency. Unlike them, court staff and especially prosecutors express more critical views than they previously held. (Figure 72).

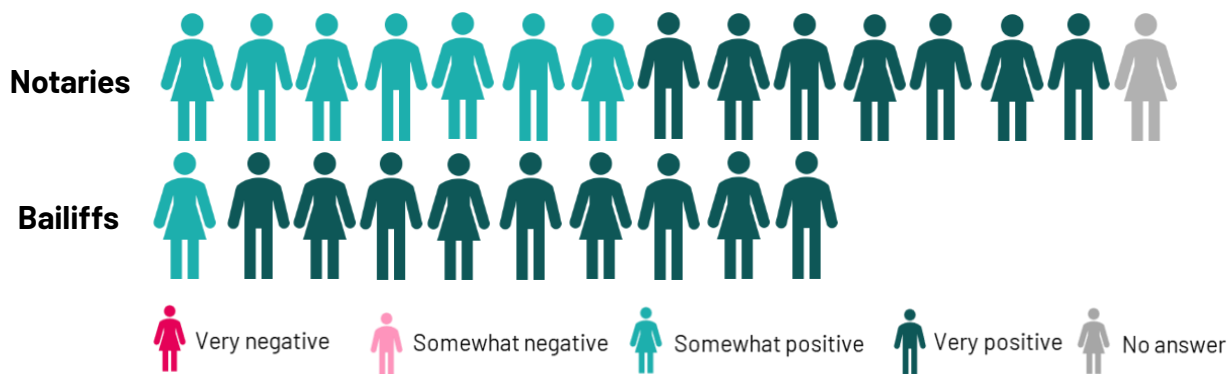
Figure 72 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS, COURT STAFF: PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT BAILIFFS HAVE ON THE EFFICIENCY OF JUDICIAL SYSTEM



(What kind of impact do private bailiffs have on the efficiency of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff n=687); Data for 2020 are recalculated without "no impact", as this answer was removed in the current wave

295. Both bailiffs themselves and notaries do not have any doubt that private bailiffs positively affect the efficiency of the judicial system. Moreover, nine in ten interviewed bailiffs would describe that impact as very positive (Figure 73).

Figure 73 - NOTARIES, BAILIFFS: PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT BAILIFFS HAVE ON THE EFFICIENCY OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM



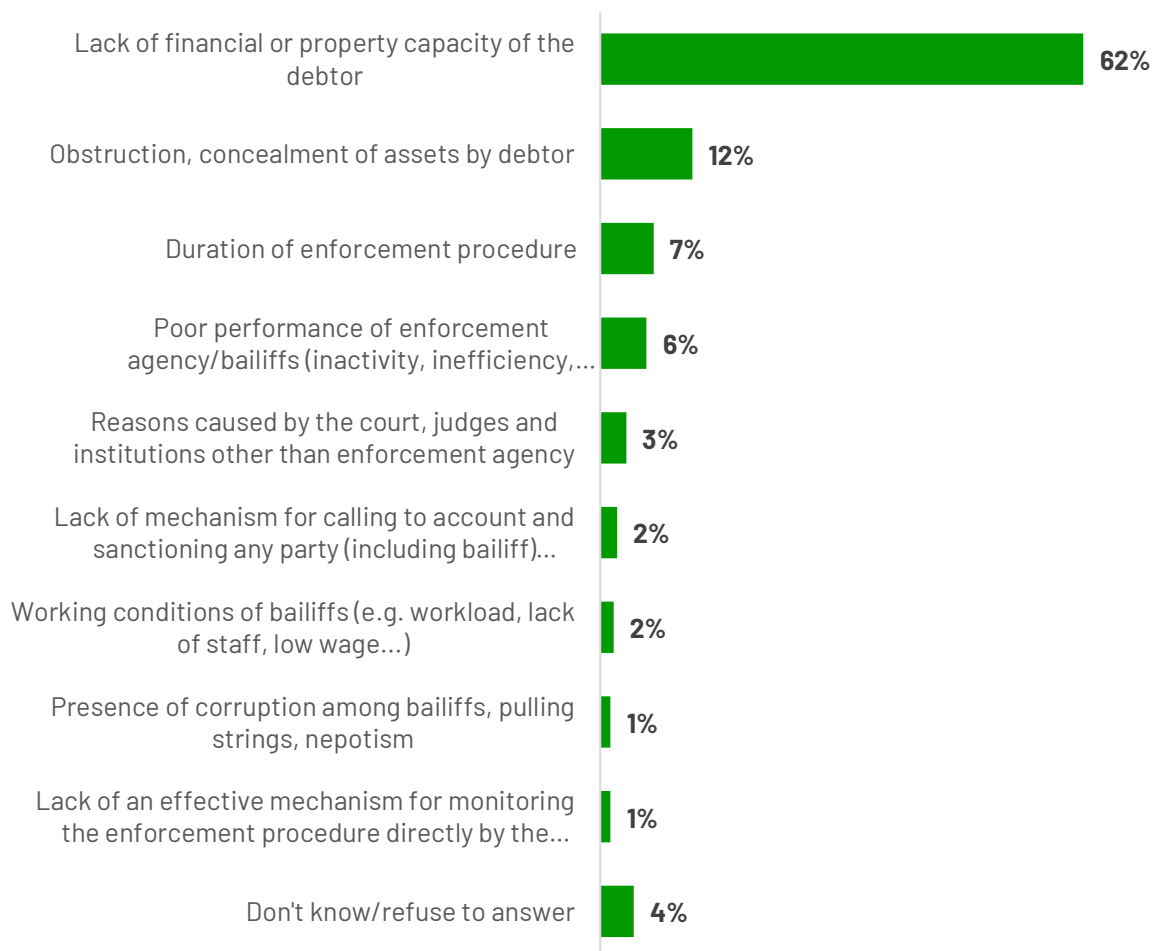
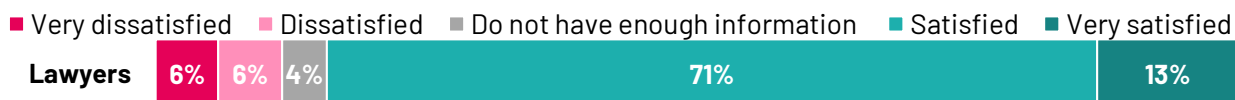
(What kind of impact do notaries have on the efficiency of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

2.10. The perception of enforcement efficiency

296. Concerning the enforcement procedure of court judgments, 84% of lawyers are satisfied with the enforcement process, while only 12% express dissatisfaction.

297. Lawyers indicate that the primary reason most court decisions go unenforced is the debtor's lack of financial resources or assets. Other reasons for non-enforcement are considerably less common.

Figure 74- LAWYERS: THE LEVEL OF SATISFACTION WITH THE PROCESS OF ENFORCING COURT JUDGMENT AND REASONS FOR JUDGEMENT NOT BEING ENFORCED



(How satisfied are you with the procedure for enforcing the court judgments in the cases you worked on over the past 12 months?) Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150)

2.11. Efficiency over time

298. Overall, the justice system appears more efficient compared to three years ago, although perceptions vary (Figure 75).

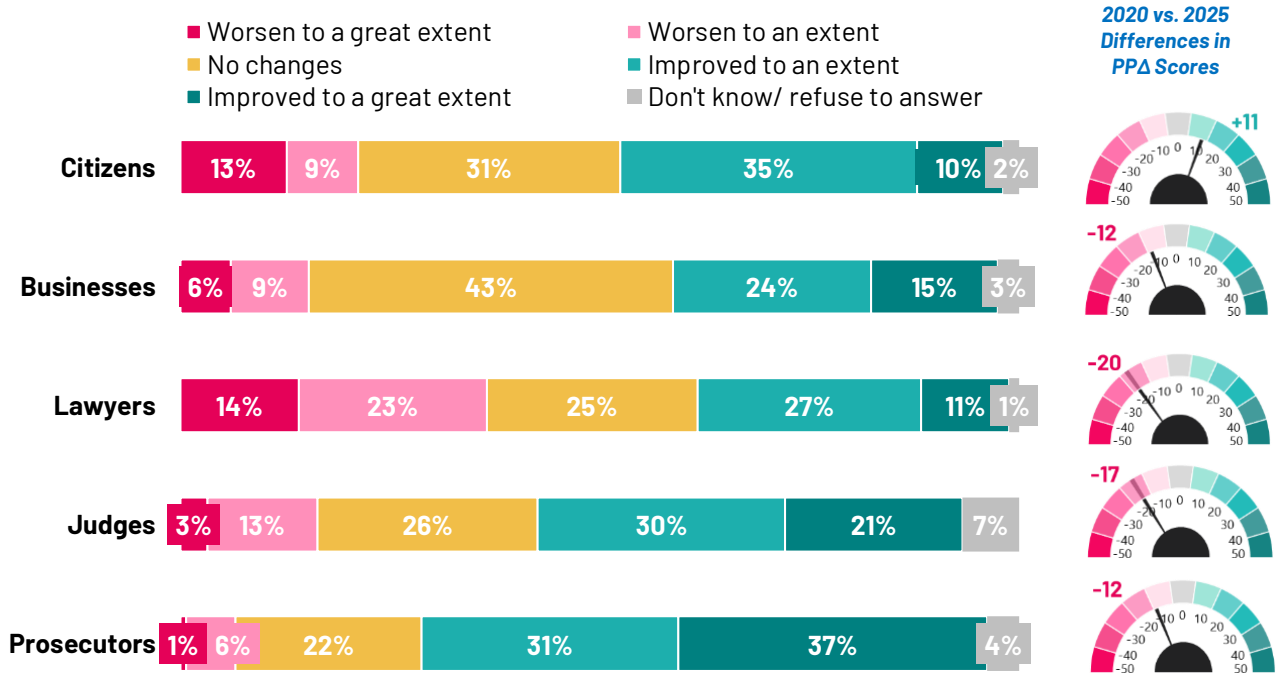
299. Notably, improvements are more pronounced among prosecutors, judges, and citizens. In contrast, lawyers are evenly divided, with equal proportions perceiving both improvements and declines in efficiency. Meanwhile, businesses predominantly believe there have been no significant changes in the judicial system's efficiency.

300. Prosecutors see the greatest improvement in efficiency, with 68% recognizing progress over the past three years.

301. Judges form the next group of moderately positive evaluations, with slightly over half (51%) recognizing improvements. However, slightly more than a quarter (26%) see no changes compared to three years ago.

- 302. Among citizens, nearly half (46%) believe there has been an improvement in efficiency, while almost one-third (31%) think there have been no changes.**
- 303. In the business sector, two out of five (39%) perceive improved efficiency, yet a larger portion (43%) sees no change.**
- 304. Lawyers are the least optimistic about the justice system's trends.** A quarter of them (25%) see no changes, and the proportion of those observing improvements (37%) equals those who feel the system is now less efficient than three years ago (37%).
- 305. Differences among subpopulations reveal that certain groups of judges and citizens tend to have more polarized opinions regarding the changes in judicial efficiency.** Citizens from Montenegro's central region are more likely to hold negative views about these changes, with 28% expressing dissatisfaction compared to the national average of 21%. In contrast, only 10% of the northern region expresses this negative sentiment, while significantly more people perceive positive change (54%) compared to the central (43%) and the southern region (44%). In the southern region, a slightly higher proportion than the average believes there have been no changes - 38%, compared to the 31% average. Similarly, 36% of male respondents feel there have been no changes compared to 27% of women. Furthermore, 44% of those with average incomes see no difference in efficiency over the past three years while the population average is 31%.
- 306. Regarding judges, those serving in High, Appellate, and Supreme courts are more inclined to say that the judicial system's efficiency has deteriorated, at 27% against the 16% average.** Judges in First Instance courts are more likely to state that efficiency remains unchanged compared to the average, with 39% reporting no change versus the 26% average.
- 307. Compared to 2020 - Citizens are the only population that has shifted positively regarding the past three-year changes in judicial system efficiency.** They are more frequently asserting that efficiency has improved, with 46% holding this view in 2025, compared to just 24% in 2020. Bearing in mind that the share of citizens with a negative perception has remained constant (22% in 2020 vs. 21% in 2025), this can be explained as the result of a decline in the number of those who see 'no changes' (31% holding this view in 2025, down from 47% in 2020).
- 308. For businesses, there has been an increase in those who feel that efficiency has worsened, with 15% stating this in 2025 compared to 8% in 2020.** Similarly, the perception of 'no changes' rose from 30% in 2020 to 43% in 2025. Conversely, there is a decrease in those perceiving improvements, from 54% in 2020 to 39% in 2025.
- 309. Among lawyers, there is a significant increase in those believing the situation has worsened, rising from 15% in 2020 to 37% in 2025.** Inevitably, there has been a decrease in those perceiving improvements, dropping from 55% in 2020 to 37% in 2025.
- 310. Judges show a similar pattern to lawyers, with a notable decrease in those who believe efficiency has improved, from 71% in 2020 to 51% in 2025.** Conversely, the number believing efficiency has worsened increased from 2% in 2020 to 16% in 2025.
- 311. Prosecutors, though currently the most positive regarding improvements in efficiency, have seen a decrease in those who believe improvements have been made, from 85% in 2020 to 68% in 2025.**

Figure 75 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: EFFICIENCY OVER TIME



(Compared to the time three years ago, how would you evaluate the efficiency of the judicial system now?) Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

3. QUALITY OF WORK

- Overall perception of the work quality in the judiciary shows moderate public confidence but faces concerning deterioration trends. Citizens and businesses report satisfaction rates of 57-58% with court services and 59-61% with prosecution services, representing majority support but substantial dissatisfaction levels, as well. Additionally, these figures demonstrate a decline since 2020, when confidence levels were markedly higher across all target groups. Namely, satisfaction rates have significantly decreased since 2020 across all groups, with the most dramatic decline among lawyers and prosecutors.
- The temporal analysis of the judicial quality reveals particularly troubling deterioration among business users and professional stakeholders. Lawyer confidence in court quality has experienced a 21-percentage-point decline from 73% to 52%, while business satisfaction has fallen from 71% to 57%. These trends indicate that those with the most extensive system interaction have experienced tangible service quality degradation over the five-year period.
- A significant discrepancy exists between internal professional assessments of the work quality and external actor evaluations. Judges maintain high confidence in their institutional performance at 88% satisfaction, while prosecutors report even higher self-assessment quality rates at 83%. This professional confidence contrasts sharply with external stakeholder assessments, particularly among lawyers who report only 53% satisfaction with court services and 59% with prosecution work.
- Notary services achieve the highest user quality satisfaction rates at 78% among citizens and 85% among businesses, representing the only legal service category showing improvement since 2020.
- The analysis of citizens' findings reveals social divisions that significantly influence judicial service quality perceptions. Serbian ethnic citizens and ruling party supporters consistently rate the quality of the judicial services higher than Montenegrin citizens and opposition supporters. Geographic patterns reinforce further divisions: northern Montenegro residents report consistently more positive assessments, while central region residents report higher dissatisfaction rates. This geographic variation may reflect differential resource allocation, reform implementation priorities, differences in population ethnic and political structure in various regions, or broader regional development patterns affecting service delivery capacity.
- Legal professionals acknowledge systemic law implementation challenges, with reporting inconsistent law interpretation as a major problem affecting judicial system quality. Additionally, 76% of lawyers observe selective law enforcement as occurring occasionally or frequently.
- Regarding the changes in the judiciary in the past three years, the data reveal a clear hierarchy, with professional actors within the system expressing notably more positive views than external users. Prosecutors lead this optimism, with 70% believing the judicial system has improved compared to three years ago, followed by judges with 51% seeing a positive impact of reforms. Citizens present a unique pattern, having shifted from predominantly perceiving "no changes" to expressing more optimistic views of system development (47% perceive improvement of the judicial system in 2025, compared to 32% in 2020). However, this citizen optimism contrasts with a deteriorating picture of improvement among professional stakeholders, suggesting that different aspects of judicial functioning may be improving at varying rates.

Citizens' and Business Representatives' Perceptions on the Quality of Work

312. Citizens and business representatives provide nearly identical assessments of court performance quality, both expressing favorable opinions at similar rates—57% among citizens and 58% among businesses. However, a significant portion of these positive assessments is accompanied by negative sentiments, with about two-fifths of respondents indicating dissatisfaction with court quality. This represents a decline from the 2020 baseline measurements, where public confidence in the quality of court performance was notably higher, especially among business representatives. Similarly, the quality of court administrative services received positive feedback in this year's survey, with 60% of citizens and 59% of businesses rating them favorably. However, compared to 2020, perceptions have worsened, particularly among businesses. Prosecution services receive somewhat more favorable evaluations than courts and show more consistency in quality evaluations compared to the previous survey wave. Citizens report a 61% favorable opinion of prosecution work quality, while businesses express satisfaction at a rate of 59%. One in three respondents in both groups indicated negative opinions, reflecting considerable dissatisfaction with the quality of work despite the overall positive sentiment and stable comparisons to the previous wave. Notaries have the highest user satisfaction rates regarding the work quality, with 78% of citizens and 85% of businesses holding positive views. In contrast, bailiffs received the lowest quality satisfaction ratings from citizens, with only 46% rating their work quality as favorable. This low assessment may indicate a significant knowledge gap among citizens, as 20% opted for the "don't know" response when asked about bailiffs. Users generally have a positive perception of the quality of lawyers' work. Businesses view lawyers slightly more favorably than citizens, with ratings of 77% and 70%, respectively. However, concerning trends in business confidence have emerged. While citizen satisfaction has remained stable since 2020, the percentage of businesses expressing negative opinions has doubled from 8% to 22%. This increase suggests potential challenges in commercial legal service delivery, including complexities, cost structures, or service delivery models that may not align with business interests. Overall, compared to 2020, the quality of work of all judiciary actors are assessed slightly more negatively by businesses, while citizens rate only notaries slightly more positively.

313. The survey data shows significant variations in citizens' perceptions of judicial services based on geographic, ethnic, and political factors. These differences raise concerns about equitable service delivery. Residents of Northern Montenegro consistently express more positive views of judicial services quality, likely reflecting differences in local administration and infrastructure. Ethnic identity is also a key predictor; Serbian citizens report higher satisfaction levels, with 72% satisfied with the quality of courts and 78% with prosecution, compared to national averages of 57% and 61%, respectively. Political affiliation further influences perceptions. Supporters of ruling parties report 70% satisfaction with courts and 78% with prosecution, significantly higher than the general population averages. In contrast, opposition party supporters show higher dissatisfaction, with rates of 64% for courts and 54% for prosecution. This trend is apparent across all assessed judicial services.

Impact of Personal Experience on the Perception of the Court's Quality of Work

314. As with previous findings on efficiency, direct experience generally improves perceptions for all judicial services. Notaries emerge as the clear leaders in service quality perceptions, achieving the highest satisfaction rates among all judicial services examined. The correlation between experience and satisfaction reaches its peak among citizens for notary services. Citizens who have utilized notary services report quality satisfaction rates of 89%, significantly higher than the overall satisfaction of 75%. This positive experience effect becomes even more pronounced when examining the last service encounters, where satisfaction reaches 94% among citizens and an exceptional 98% among businesses. Bailiffs' services are the only ones rated more positively regarding quality in 2025 than in 2020 by users who have used them in the past period. The consistent finding that direct experience generally improves perceptions across all three service categories suggests that negative opinions may often stem from incomplete information or preconceived notions rather than actual service quality issues. This is particularly evident in the bailiff category, where knowledge gaps appear most significant. A particularly intriguing finding emerges regarding the relationship between direct

experience and perceptions of prosecutors' and courts' service quality. While direct interaction with most judicial services tends to improve public quality assessments, as seen with notary services and bailiff services, court and prosecution services demonstrate the opposite pattern. Citizens who have recent experience with prosecution services report significantly lower quality satisfaction rates at 49% compared to 61% among the overall population. This reversal suggests that actual interaction with prosecution services may reveal quality deficiencies not apparent to the general population, or that the nature of prosecution work, often involving criminal proceedings or enforcement actions, inherently generates less positive user experiences regardless of service quality. Considering the quality of court performance and experience impact, although the difference is not notable, the general public has a slightly more positive opinion of the quality of performance than those with direct contact (57% vs. 54%).

Perceptions of Justice System Professionals About the Quality of Work

315. Even though all justice system professionals have a generally positive opinion about the quality of work of the justice system, there is a difference between judges and prosecutors on the one hand, and lawyers on the other. More than four-fifths of judges and prosecutors (88% of judges and 83% of prosecutors) rate the courts' quality of work as high, and the same opinion is shared by 84% of prosecutors and 73% of judges. Moreover, judges demonstrate remarkably high self-assessment of their institutional performance, with 90% rating the overall quality of work at their respective courts as high. The same sentiment of their offices is shared by 96% of prosecutors, among whom 63% describe it as 'very high'. On the other hand, lawyers' opinions about the quality of court work are closer to those of service users – just over half of lawyers (53%) believe that the courts in Montenegro are of sufficient quality, and 59% think the same of the prosecution. While opinion about prosecution remains stable compared to five years ago, satisfaction of lawyers with the quality of courts dropped from 73% in 2020 to 52% in 2025. In line with that, dissatisfaction rates have risen from 26% to 45%. Most lawyers believe that a larger number of judges, prosecutors, their assistants, and other staff in the institutions would improve the quality of their services. Judges, also, mainly cite a larger number of judges as a tool for quality improvement, but besides that, they advocate better working conditions, enhanced preparedness and professionalism among lawyers, and clearer laws. Judges, prosecutors, and lawyers assess the work quality of notaries and bailiffs highly positively. At least eight out of ten members of these groups of professionals share a favorable view of the work quality of their non-institutional colleagues.

Perception of changes in the judicial system over the past three years

316. The data reveal a clear hierarchy of positive opinions about judicial system quality improvements over the past three years, with professional actors within the system expressing notably more positive views on this aspect than external users. Prosecutors lead this favorable opinion with 70% believing the quality of the judicial system has improved compared to three years ago, representing the strongest confidence in system evolution among all surveyed groups. Judges occupy a middle position regarding the quality of the judicial system, with 51% perceiving improvements, though this moderate positivity conceals significant internal variations. The population of judges demonstrates a pronounced generational divide, with younger judges under 50 expressing substantially higher confidence in quality improvements over the past three years (60%) than their older colleagues, among whom 40% view changes positively and 18% express negative assessments. Furthermore, judges in higher courts (high, appellate, and supreme courts) are more likely to recognize quality changes in the judiciary than their counterparts in basic courts. Thus, 67% of higher court judges perceive quality changes as positive, while this view is shared by 42% of basic court judges. Basic court judges dominantly see no changes in the quality of judicial work (43%), while this is what only 9% of higher judges think. However, the negative sentiment about the quality over the past three-year period is more pronounced among higher-positioned judges (21%) compared to 5% of basic court judges. Compared to three years ago, positive attitude regarding changes of the work quality in the judiciary has weakened in all populations, except the general population, who predominantly see

improvements (47%), and to a greater extent than in 2020, when positive changes were perceived by 32% of citizens.

Justice Service Professionals' Perceptions About the Legislation

317. The great majority of judges, prosecutors, and lawyers think that laws in Montenegro are precise, clear, and unambiguous (69% of judges, 75% of prosecutors and 79% of lawyers agree upon this question). However, the perception of law enforcement distinguishes between lawyers on one side and judges and prosecutors on the other. All professionals agree that the inconsistent interpretation of laws is the primary issue affecting enforcement. Regarding the rest of the problems with law enforcement, lawyers are much more critical than judges and prosecutors. Thus, the second biggest issue, according to lawyers, is the selective enforcement of laws, which 76% believe occurs occasionally or frequently. On the other hand, judges and prosecutors are milder in their criticism. Approximately 30% of judges and prosecutors report that this is a more or less common practice in the judiciary. Most concerning for the legal system's credibility is the opinion of judicial system users. Two-thirds of citizens (67%) and half of businesses (51%) believe laws are not enforced in practice. This perception of widespread non-enforcement represents a challenge to the legal system and effectiveness, indicating that substantial portions of the population view legal frameworks as ineffective regardless of their theoretical quality.

Impact of Notaries and Bailiffs on the Quality of the Judicial System

318. At least 80% of judicial system professionals, judges, prosecutors, and lawyers believe that notaries positively affect the quality of judicial work.

3.1. General perception of the judiciary's quality of work

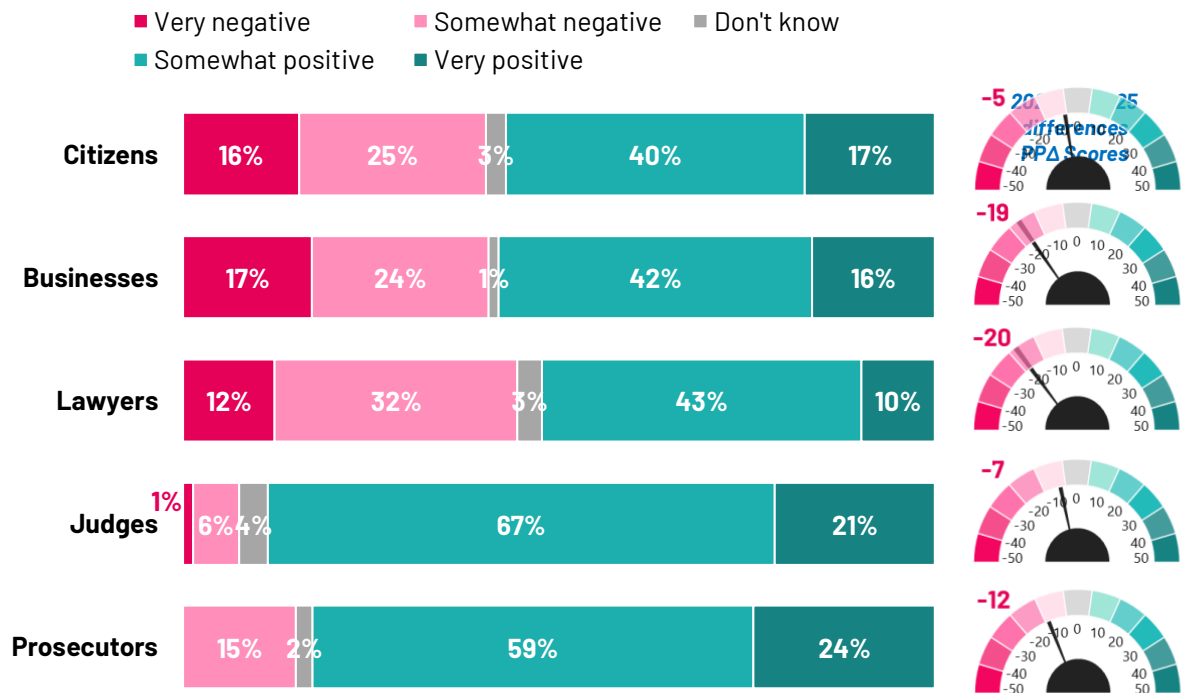
3.1.1. General perception of the quality of work of courts

319. Similar to efficiency evaluations, the quality of the courts' work is generally viewed positively by all groups surveyed (Figure 76). However, satisfaction levels vary among different populations. Lawyers tend to be most critical and have opinions about the quality of court work that align more closely with users than with providers.

Judges and prosecutors report high levels of satisfaction, with 88% of judges and 83% of prosecutors expressing a favorable opinion about the quality of court work. In contrast, just over half of lawyers (53%) share this positive view, while 44% have a negative opinion. Interestingly, both citizens and businesses have the same assessments of the quality of the courts' work, with 57% of citizens and 58% of businesses rating it favorably, while 41% of both groups express a negative opinion.

320. Subpopulation analysis indicates that citizens in the northern part of the country have a more positive outlook on the courts' work quality, with 66% expressing satisfaction, compared to the population average of 57%. In contrast, citizens in the central and southern regions report more negative sentiments, with 46% of the population in the central part and 41% in the south indicating dissatisfaction, compared to an average of 40%, and especially compared with their compatriots in the north among whom 28% express negative opinion. Additionally, citizens of Serbian ethnicity (72%) and those who align more closely with the ruling party in their political views (70%) demonstrate significantly stronger positive sentiment than the population average of 57%. On the other hand, citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity and individuals with opposing political opinions express more negative attitudes, with dissatisfaction rates of 52% and 64% respectively.

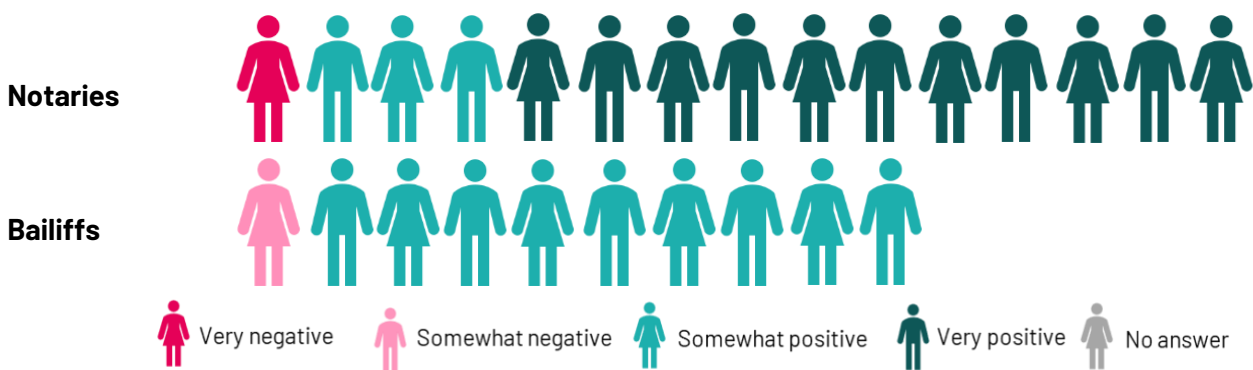
Figure 76 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF QUALITY OF WORK OF COURTS



(What is your general opinion about the quality of work of courts in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: Total target population (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

321. Notaries' and bailiffs' tendencies to positively evaluate the efficiency of courts are now complemented with a favorable view of the work quality, as well. Specifically, almost all notaries and bailiffs rate the quality of court work positively.

Figure 77 - . NOTARIES' AND BAILIFFS' PERCEPTION OF COURTS' QUALITY OF WORK



(What is your general impression of the quality of work of courts in Montenegro in the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

322. Compared to 2020 – Although the perception of courts' work quality is prevalently positive, it has decreased among all populations compared to the previous wave of evaluations. The most pronounced decrease has been observed among lawyers (with a PPA score of -20) and business users

(PPΔ: -19). Satisfaction of lawyers dropped from 73% in 2020 to 52% in 2025. In line with that, dissatisfaction rates have risen from 26% to 45%. Similarly, negative opinions among companies have doubled (from 20% to 41% in 2025), and consequently, the percentage of those satisfied dropped from 71% to 57%. Negative sentiment has also strengthened among prosecutors. Thus, dissatisfaction has increased fivefold, from 3% in 2020 to 15% in 2025. Citizens' positive opinions have remained at similar levels (60% and 57%, respectively). Still, the rate of dissatisfaction has worsened, though not as much as among lawyers and companies, rising from 33% to 40%.

323. When it comes to the quality of the courts where judges work, satisfaction is very high, with nine out of ten judges expressing a favorable opinion. However, 87% of judges who are not entirely satisfied believe that improvements could be made by increasing the number of judges and enhancing working conditions, including better remuneration. Judges also provide critical feedback on lawyers' performance and the existing laws. Specifically, 86% of judges who have any qualms with the work quality emphasize that greater professionalism and better preparedness among legal representatives can enhance the quality of court proceedings. They believe that clearer laws and improved drafting (including bylaws) would help avoid differing interpretations and further strengthen the quality of their court's work. Additionally, 84% of judges feel that creating a practical, applicable, and comprehensive judicial database could enhance the overall quality of court practices.

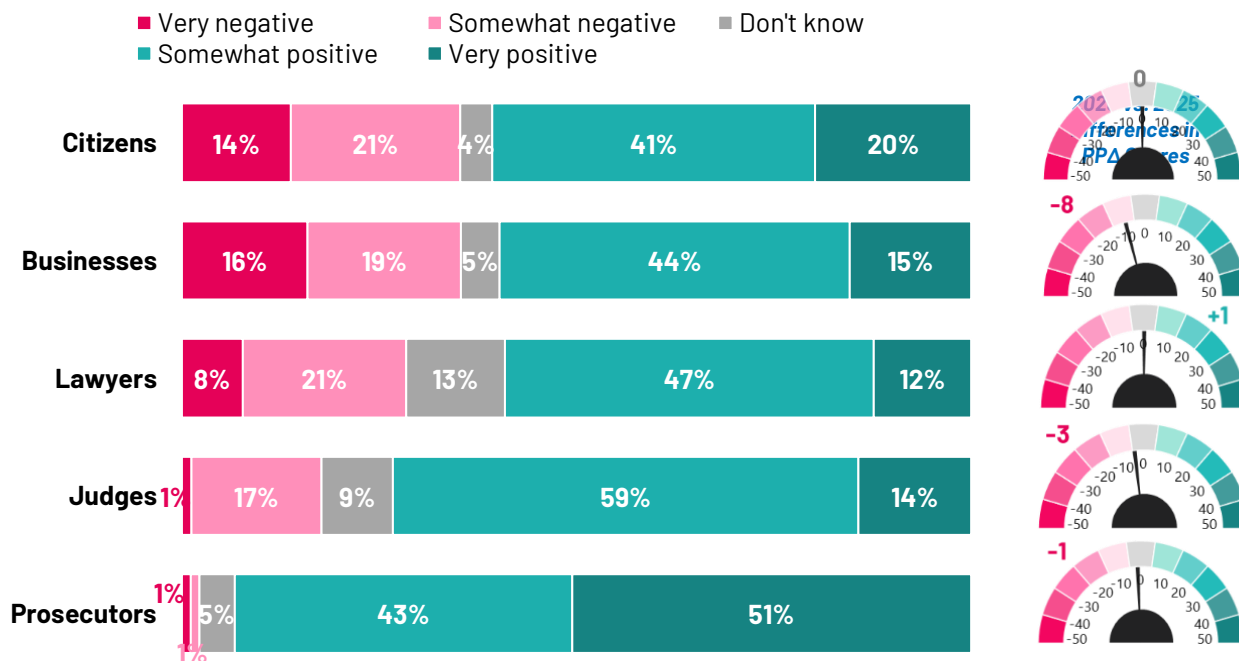
324. From the lawyers' perspective, a larger number of judges is the most significant factor for improving the quality of court work (47%), followed by actions for better working conditions (25%) and the specialization of judges (23%).

3.1.2. General perception of the quality of work of public prosecution

325. User populations predominantly view prosecution positively, with around 60% favorably inclined. Among professionals, as expected, prosecutors themselves hold the most positive view, with 84% favorable and only 2% negative. Judges are somewhat more critical of prosecutors than prosecutors of judges, with 73% positive and 18% negative attitudes. Among lawyers, 59% express a favorable opinion, but this population shows the largest share of "don't know" responses (13%), which may indicate a lack of experience with prosecution (Figure 78).

326. Once again, similar to evaluations of efficiency and assessments of court work quality, public opinion varies based on factors such as ethnicity, political affiliation, and geographic region. Citizens in the central region demonstrate a higher level of dissatisfaction, with 40% expressing discontent compared to the population average of 35%. Among those of Montenegrin ethnicity and citizens who align with opposition parties, dissatisfaction is even higher (47% and 54%, respectively). In contrast, only 24% of citizens in northern Montenegro express dissatisfaction. Additionally, individuals of Serbian ethnicity and those who support the ruling party generally have significantly more positive views of the quality of prosecution work, with 78% expressing satisfaction, compared to the population average of 61%.

Figure 78 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF QUALITY OF WORK OF PUBLIC PROSECUTION



(What is your general opinion about the quality of prosecution in Montenegro over the past few years?); Total target population (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

327. Notaries and bailiffs tend to believe that prosecutors' offices demonstrate high-quality practice. Thus, thirteen out of fifteen notaries and seven out of ten bailiffs favourably rate the prosecution's work quality.

Figure 79 - NOTARIES' AND BAILIFFS' PERCEPTION OF PROSECUTORS' EFFICIENCY



(What is your general opinion about the efficiency of prosecution in Montenegro over the past few years?) Base: Total target population (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

328. Compared to 2020 – The perception of the prosecution's work quality has remained relatively stable compared to five years ago. However, companies have become significantly more critical, with negative opinions rising from 22% in 2020 to 35% in 2025. Despite this increase in negativity, the percentage of those holding a positive view remained similar at 63%, compared to 60% in 2020. Other populations have not shown significant changes in their opinions.

329. Regarding the work quality of the prosecution office they work in, prosecutors are highly favorable – 96% believe that prosecution practice demonstrates high standards. Although the

number of individuals who believe there is room for improvement is small (n=26), we can still identify trends and potential directions for enhancing the quality of work. Almost all prosecutors who feel quality can be enhanced (94%) state that more prosecutors and better opportunities for additional training could improve quality. Additionally, 90% of these prosecutors believe that increasing the number of support staff in the office and improving working conditions would also be beneficial. Furthermore, 87% of prosecutors who are not entirely satisfied with the quality of their office work believe that a functional, practical, and comprehensive judicial database could improve it.

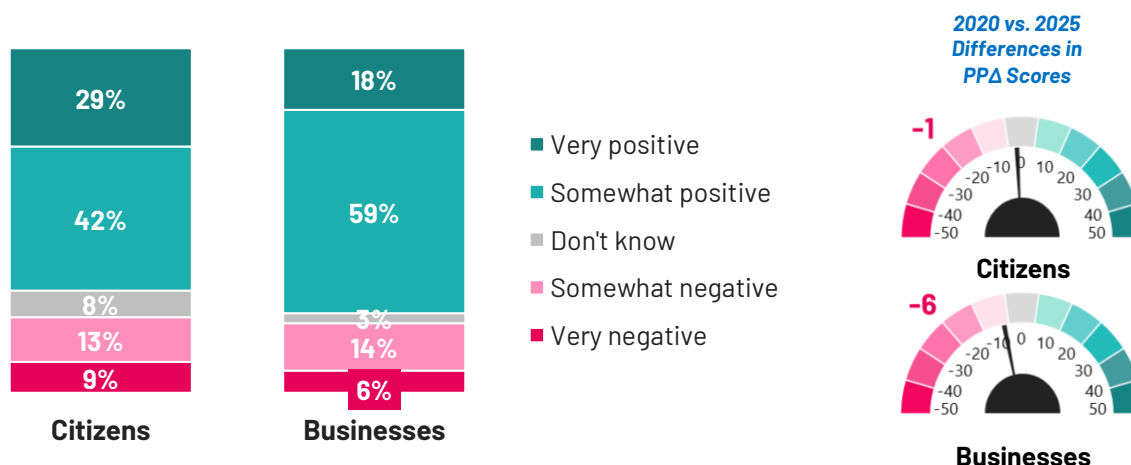
330. Lawyers in the highest percentage (33%) also believe that a larger number of prosecutors is most beneficial for improving the quality of work in prosecutors’ offices, followed by better working conditions (25%). The third most frequently cited factor among lawyers for improving prosecutors’ work quality is better coordination among judicial bodies. The opinion about better coordination with different bodies is shared, as well, by 77% of prosecutors who are not completely satisfied with the quality of prosecutors’ work, i.e., 28% of all prosecutors.

3.1.3. General perception of the quality of work of lawyers

331. Judicial service users share similar views about lawyers. The quality of lawyers’ work is positively evaluated by seven out of ten citizens and 77% of companies (Figure 80). Approximately, two out of ten share negative opinions in both populations.

332. The findings indicate a few significant differences across groups within the citizen population. Thus, in line with a more positive overall opinion about the efficiency and quality of the judicial system, people from the Montenegrin north are less likely to rate lawyers’ work quality negatively (14% give a negative opinion, compared to the population average of 22%). Furthermore, citizens of Serbian ethnicity show a more positive attitude towards the quality of lawyers’ work than the other groups (82%, compared to 65% among Montenegrins, 63% among citizens of other ethnicities, and an average of 70%). Interestingly, individuals from ethnic backgrounds other than Serbian or Montenegrin report the most negative perceptions of lawyers’ work, with 33% expressing dissatisfaction, compared to the overall average of 22%. Political affiliations also play a significant role in shaping opinions; those aligned with the ruling party are the most supportive, with 82% rating lawyers’ work quality positively, above the general population average of 70%. Also, vulnerable groups (other than financially deprived) show more negative views than others (35%). Lastly, the youngest demographic (ages 18–29) appears to be less informed about lawyers, as indicated by a higher percentage of “don’t know” responses (13%, compared to the overall average of 8%).

Figure 80. - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF WORK OF LAWYERS



(What is your general impression of the quality of work of lawyers in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

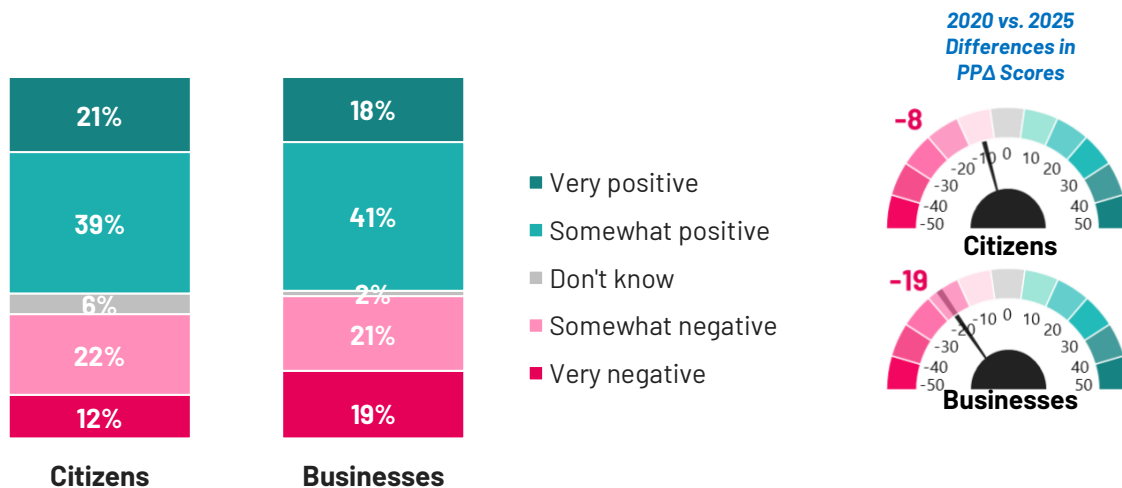
333. Compared to 2020 – The general perception of lawyers' efficiency among the public has remained largely unchanged since 2020. However, businesses have become more critical, showing a PPA score of -6. This shift is largely due to a significant rise in negative opinions, which increased from 8% in 2020 to 22% in 2025.

3.1.4. General perception of the quality of work of administrative court services

334. Six out of ten citizens and companies express a favorable opinion towards the quality of work of administrative services in courts. Businesses are somewhat more critical than citizens, with 40% of companies expressing dissatisfaction. One-third of citizens share this sentiment. (Figure 81).

335. Similar to evaluation on court work quality, attitudes toward court administration vary across groups of citizens by region, ethnicity, and political views. Thus, citizens in the north show significantly less dissatisfaction than those in other regions (24%, compared to the population average 34%). Moreover, citizens of Serbian ethnicity are the most supportive of the courts' administration (75% express a positive opinion, while the population average is 60%; 19% express a negative opinion, compared to an average of 34%). In contrast, other ethnicities show higher rates of dissatisfaction (Montenegrin ethnicity citizens: 41%; other ethnicities: 45%). Furthermore, three out of four individuals with views similar to those of the ruling party are satisfied with the court administration's work quality. On the other hand, 39% of citizens closer to opposition parties share the same opinion, while 57% think there is room for improvement in those services.

Figure 81- CITIZENS, BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF WORK OF COURT ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES



(What is your general impression of the quality of work of administrative court services in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

336. Compared to 2020 – Findings indicate a decline in user satisfaction with court administration. This trend is notably pronounced among companies, where dissatisfaction rates have risen from 18% to 39%. Meanwhile, satisfaction levels have dropped from 76% to 59% since 2025. Citizens have also reported a decrease in satisfaction; the percentage of satisfied individuals fell from 66% to 60%, while those expressing dissatisfaction increased from 24% to 34%.

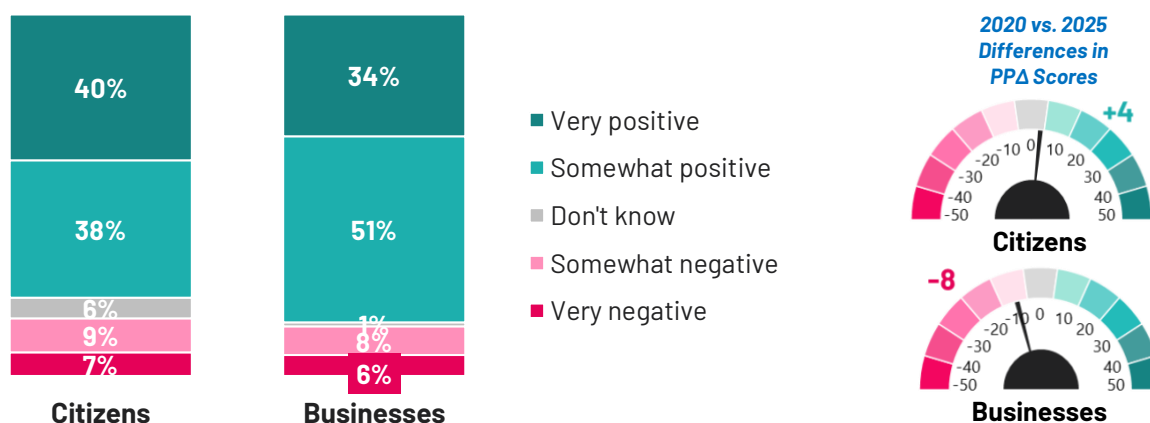
3.1.5. General perception of the quality of work of notaries

337. The quality of notaries' work is highly valued by users of the justice system (see Figure 82). Overall, businesses tend to be more satisfied than citizens. While 85% of businesses express a positive opinion about the quality of notaries' work, this sentiment is shared by only 78% of citizens.

338. Negative opinions are more common among certain groups of citizens, particularly those with lower education levels (26% give a negative opinion compared to a population average of 16%), individuals of Montenegrin and other ethnic backgrounds (20% and 25%, respectively), and those who lean towards opposition parties (23% negative opinion). In contrast, support for notaries' work is strong among Serbian citizens, with nine out of ten expressing a favorable view.

339. It's also noteworthy to emphasize that higher satisfaction with the notary services corresponds with experience. Individuals who have utilized notary services are highly satisfied; 89% reported positive experiences, while only 10% indicated dissatisfaction.

Figure 82- CITIZENS, BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF WORK OF NOTARIES



(What is your general opinion about the quality of notaries in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

340. Compared to 2020 - Notaries are the only providers who gain such positive feedback from citizens, especially because it is a result of increased favorable evaluations. Namely, the satisfaction rate has increased from 72% to 78%. Companies have shifted their opinions negatively, with a rise in those expressing a negative opinion from 5% in 2020 to 14% in 2025.

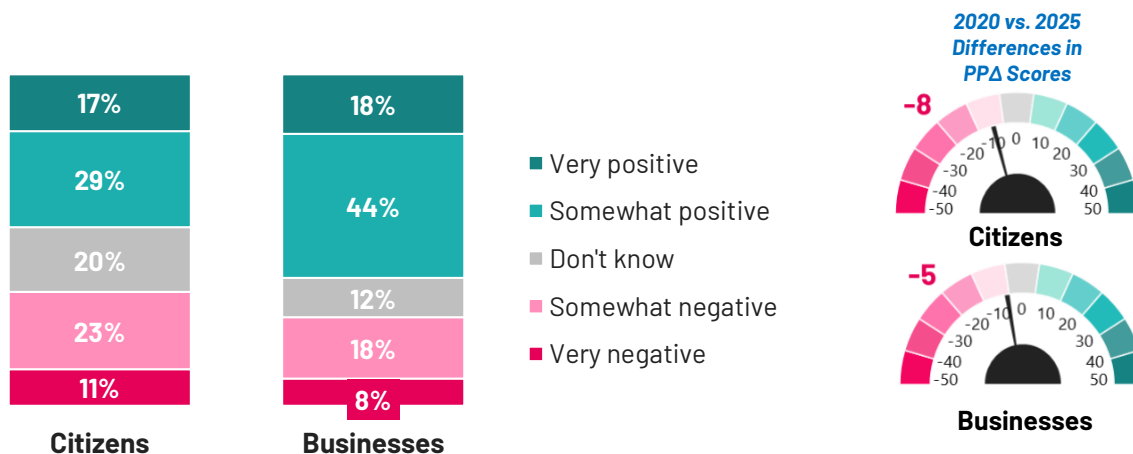
3.1.6. General perception of the quality of work of private bailiffs

341. Compared to other services, the quality of bailiffs' work is evaluated less positively by citizens. Although most citizens have a favorable opinion, the positive rate is below half (46%), while one-third express a negative sentiment. Among companies, positive reactions are more common. Thus, six out of ten businesses emphasize satisfaction (62%), while one in four show an unfavorable opinion (26%) regarding the bailiffs' quality of work (Figure 83).

342. Among citizens, a negative opinion is less common among those of Serbian ethnicity (27%), but it is prevalent among vulnerable groups (43%) and among citizens who have political affiliations closer to opposition parties (49%).

343. Experience has a positive impact on citizens' perceptions of the quality of service provided by bailiffs. Among citizens who have interacted with bailiffs, two out of three (66%) express a positive view of their work quality. In contrast, only 45% of those without experience share this sentiment.

Figure 83 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF WORK OF PRIVATE BAILIFFS



(What is your general opinion about the quality of private bailiffs in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

344. Compared to 2020 - The PPA score indicates that bailiffs experience slightly more criticism of their work in 2025, compared to 2020. Among citizens, the percentage of those with a negative opinion has increased (from 27% to 34%), while the rate of those with positive responses has decreased (from 54% to 46%). When it comes to businesses, their level of positive evaluations remains stable compared to five years ago (62% of companies are satisfied). Still, now more companies express a negative opinion about the quality of bailiffs' services than in 2020 (27%, compared to 17% in 2020).

3.2. Influence of experience on the general perception of court and justice services' quality of work

345. Citizens in Montenegro who have recently used judicial services tend to have a more favorable view of the quality of most providers of these services, compared to the general population's opinions. However, prosecutors are an exception. In the case of institutional actors, courts are evaluated relatively the same by those with court case experience and broader population (54% of those with experience and 57% in overall population have evaluated their work quality favorably), while citizens with experience in cases involving prosecutor's office evaluate prosecution more negatively than population in general (61% vs 49%). Furthermore, administrative services in courts are viewed more positively by those who have had direct contact with them (69% provide a positive evaluation, compared to 60% at population average)(Figure 84).

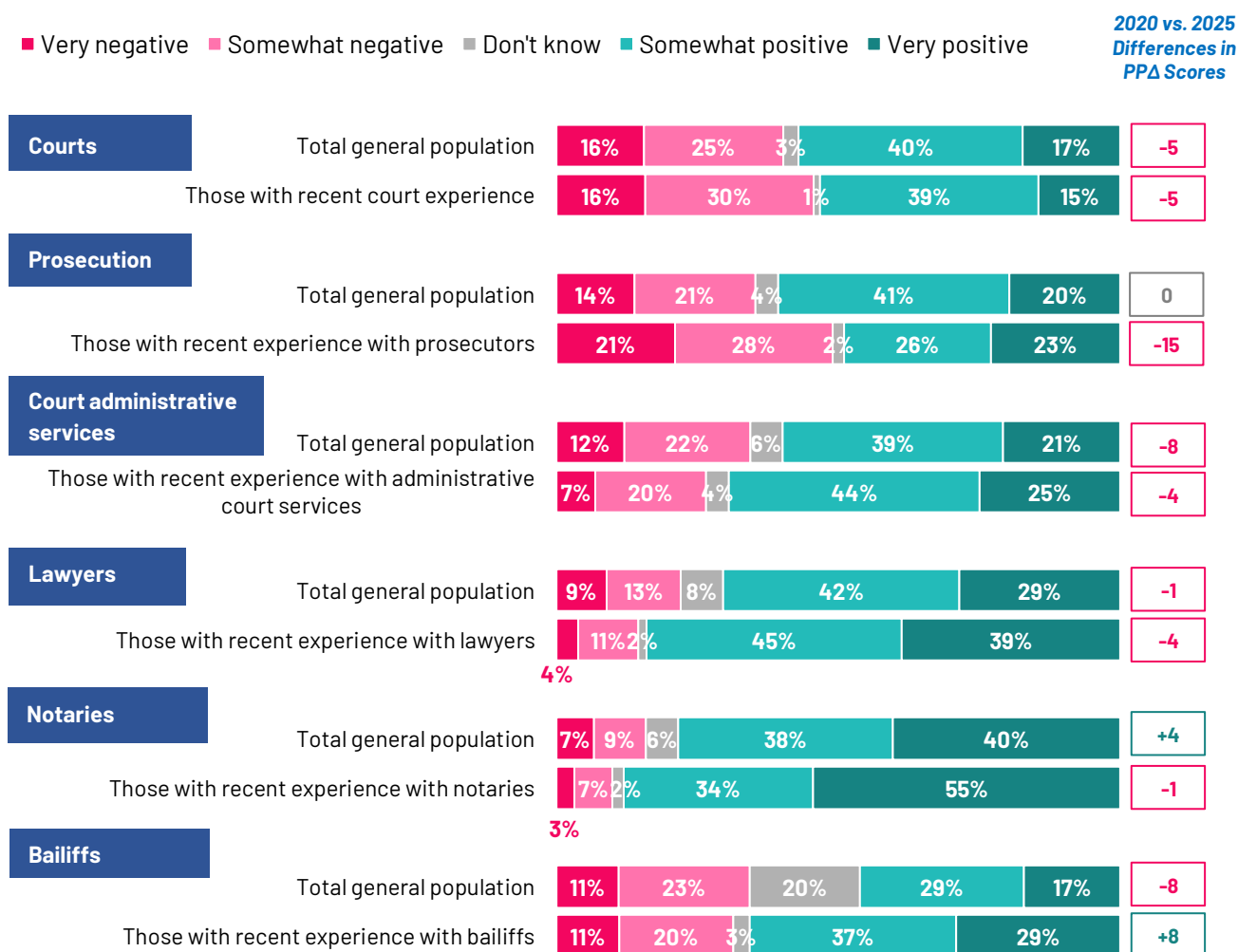
346. The positive impact of experience is most evident in services that are generally regarded as providing the highest quality of work. In Montenegro, seven out of ten citizens have a favorable opinion about the work quality of lawyers (71%), and even more have a positive view of notaries (78%). This sentiment is even stronger among individuals who have had recent experiences with these professionals, with 89% expressing satisfaction with notaries' work quality and 85% with lawyers' performance.

347. Interestingly, bailiffs are viewed more positively by citizens who use their services, while it seems that overall population to an extent have a prejudiced perception of their work quality. Thus,

two-thirds of those with experience show a favorable opinion about bailiffs' work quality. On the other hand, the same view is shared by 46% of the general population. Additionally, every fifth citizen cannot express an opinion on the quality of bailiffs' work and opt for the 'don't know' answer.

348. Compared to 2020 - The PPA score between 2020 and 2025 indicates that citizens' experiences with judicial services and professionals have led to increased criticism of all actors over the last five years, with the exception of bailiffs' work quality. Satisfaction among experienced citizens has notably declined regarding prosecutors, with a PPA score of -15. Perceptions of all other groups among those who had contact with various judicial services have worsened as well, but to a lesser extent. Unlike the experienced citizens, the general population's perception of prosecutors' work quality has remained unchanged.

Figure 84- CITIZENS: GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE QUALITY OF COURTS WORK BY EXPERIENCE



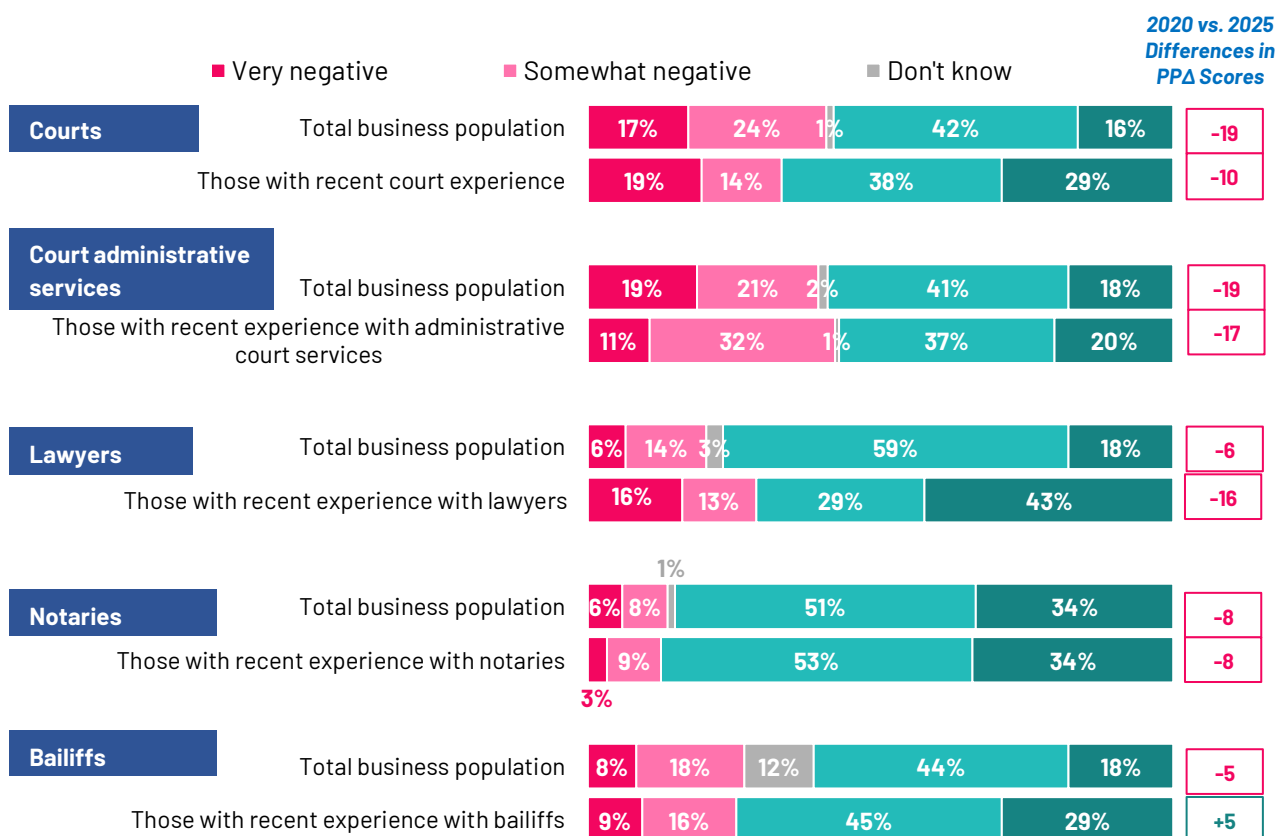
(What is your general impression of the quality of work of... in Montenegro over the past few years?); (Citizens total n=1305, Citizens with court case experience in the past three years, n=350, Citizens experienced with criminal court cases n=100, Citizens experienced with court administrative services n=235, Citizens experienced with lawyers n=239, Citizens experienced with notaries n=436, Citizens experienced with private bailiffs n=153)

349. Experience with various judicial services notably influence business users' perception of work quality. Positive impact is most visible in the bailiffs' work, as well as in court activity. Thus, nearly three-quarters of businesses that had direct contact with bailiff services rate them positively, compared to 62% among business population in general. Similarly, two-thirds of those who went

through the court process rate the quality of the courts' work positively, while 58% in general share this view. Interestingly, this is not the case for court administrative services, where direct contact does not influence business representatives' opinions (57% vs. 59% favorable ratings). A positive perception of notaries' work does not depend on experience either (87% vs. 85%). Lawyers are the only population where experience has a slightly unfavorable influence: 72% of positive ratings among experienced business representatives and 77% in overall business population. (Figure 85).

350. Compared to 2020 - Experience has significantly influenced businesses' perceptions of work quality within the judiciary, leading to an increase in negative views since 2020. Those with direct communication with various professionals have become more critical. The PPA score shows that experienced companies are particularly more dissatisfied with court administration (PPA: -17) and lawyers (PPA: -16). In contrast, bailiffs are the only group that has experienced a slight improvement in their perceived work quality after collaborating with businesses (PPA: +5). However, among the overall business population, negative sentiment has risen from 17% to 27% regarding unfavorable views.

Figure 85 - BUSINESSES: GENERAL IMPRESSION OF THE QUALITY OF COURTS WORK BY EXPERIENCE



(What is your general impression of the quality of work of ... in Montenegro over the past few years?); Base: Total target population / Those who had a court case or other justice system experience in the past three years.; (Businesses total n=272; Businesses experienced with court cases n=93; Businesses experienced with court administrative services n=40, Businesses experienced with lawyers n=58, Businesses experienced with notaries n=124, Businesses experienced with private bailiffs n=67)

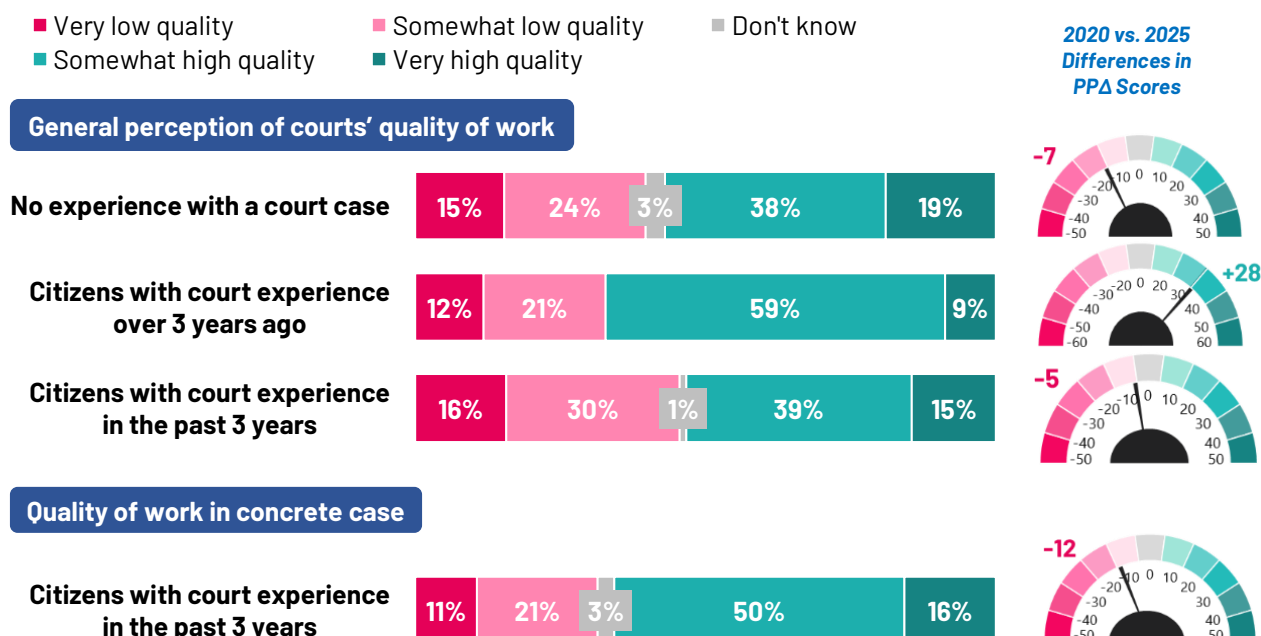
3.3. General perception of quality of court and justice services versus quality in specific cases

3.3.1. General perception of court quality of work versus quality in specific cases

351. Citizens who have recently participated in court proceedings are significantly less satisfied with the quality of the court's work compared to those who were involved in a court case before 2022. Additionally, their perception of the court's work quality is slightly worse than that of individuals who have never been involved in court cases (see Figure 86).

352. Interestingly, citizens who have recently been involved in court proceedings tend to be more critical of the overall quality of court work than they are of their specific cases. When assessing the general quality of the court system, 46% of them provide negative ratings. In contrast, only 38% rate their individual court case proceedings unfavorably.

Figure 86 - CITIZENS: PERCEPTION OF THE COURT SERVICES' QUALITY OF WORK IN THE SPECIFIC CASE



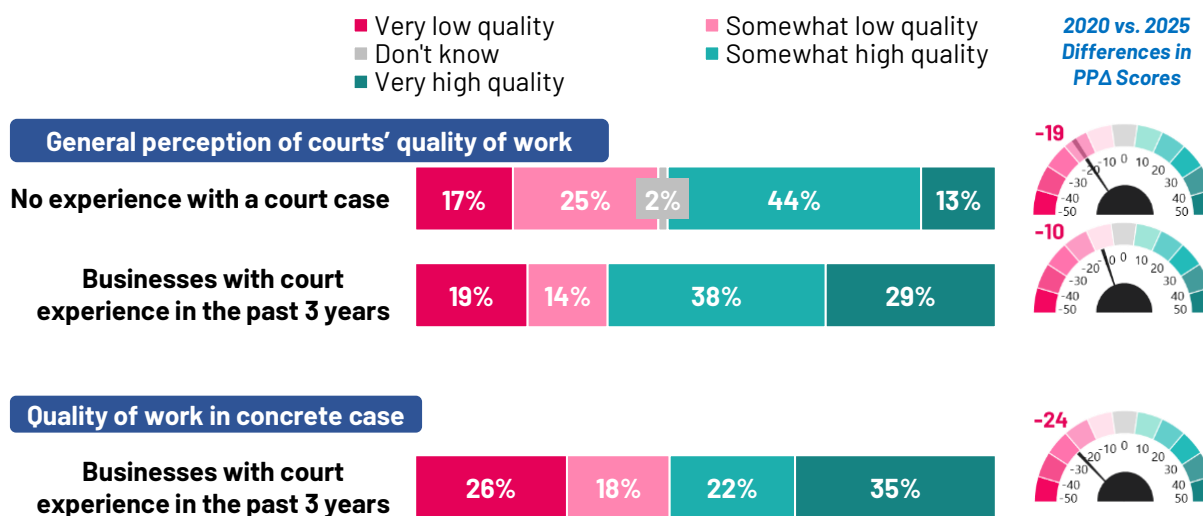
(What is your general impression of the quality of work of courts in Montenegro over the past few years?; In your opinion what was the quality of judicial work in that specific case?) Base: Total target population; Those with court experience in the past three years; Those with court experience over 3 years ago; Those without court experience; (Citizens total n=1305; Citizens experienced with court cases n=350, Citizens with prior experience in court cases n=51, Citizens without experience in court cases n=806)

353. Compared to 2020 - The perception of court work quality has deteriorated among inexperienced individuals and those recently involved in court cases, particularly regarding their evaluations of the quality of court work in their specific situations (PPA: -12). In contrast, citizens with prior court experience report significantly higher satisfaction levels than before (PPA: +28).

354. Businesses that have recently gone through court proceedings are more favorable in evaluating the quality of court work compared to those that have not had such experience. However, they tend to view the quality of court work during their specific cases less favorably (Figure 87). While

67% of businesses that were involved in a court case within the past three years have a positive opinion of the overall quality of court work, only 57% feel the same about the quality of work in their own cases.

Figure 87- BUSINESS: PERCEPTION OF THE COURT SERVICES' QUALITY OF WORK IN THE SPECIFIC CASE



(What is your general opinion about the work quality of courts in Montenegro over the past few years?; In your opinion what was the quality of judicial work in that specific case?)(Businesses total n=272; Businesses experienced with court cases n=93, Businesses without experience in court cases n=161)¹⁰

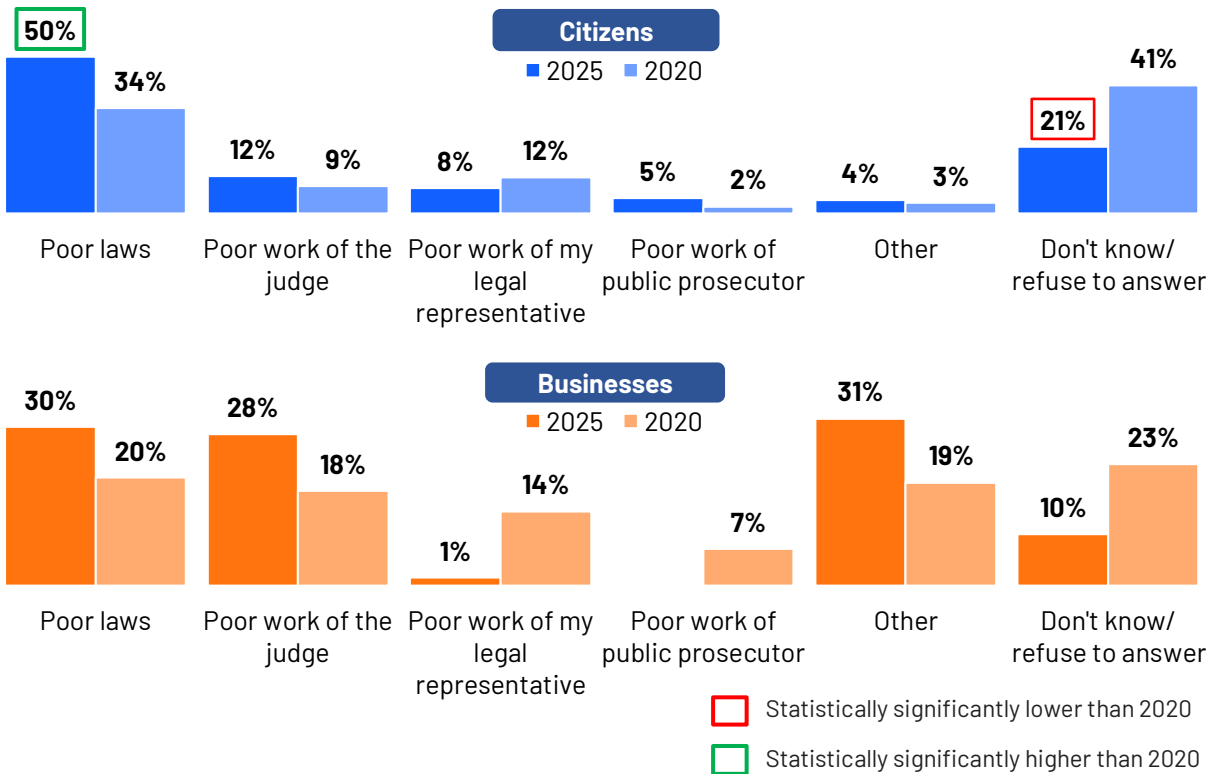
355. Compared to 2020 – Although they gave generally positive feedback, businesses' satisfaction with the courts' work quality has significantly worsened regardless of their experience compared to the previous wave. The 24-point drop in the PPA score makes perception of work quality in the concrete case particularly concerning, especially given that the efficiency level on the same question has also dropped significantly between the two waves (PPA: -18; Figure 88).

3.3.2. Perceived reasons why the quality of court performance in the specific case was not higher

356. Court users who are dissatisfied with the quality of judicial work in their specific cases primarily attribute this lack of quality to inadequate laws, with 50% of citizens and 30% of businesses holding this view. In contrast, fewer citizens blame judges' performance or their legal representatives, with only 12% and 9%, respectively, attributing low quality to these factors. Businesses show a more varied opinion; 28% of them believe that the poor performance of judges is the main reason for the insufficient quality of court work in their cases. Only 2% blame their legal representatives for inadequate quality during proceedings (Figure 88). A significant number of businesses opt for answering 'other', stating a few more reasons for the poor quality of their case proceedings: slowness and delay of hearings as efficiency problems that influenced quality, corruption and prejudice of judges, inadequate witnesses and court experts, and/or untimely expert reports.

¹⁰ The base of businesses with court case experience over three years ago is too small for valid conclusion

Figure 88- CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: reasons due to which quality of court performance in the specific case wasn't higher.



(What is the main reason why you did not rate the quality of judicial work more highly?); Base: Those who had experience with court cases in the past three years, and are not very satisfied with courts' quality of work in their specific case; (Citizens: 2025, n=277; 2020, n=300; Businesses: 2025, n=51; 2020, n=57)

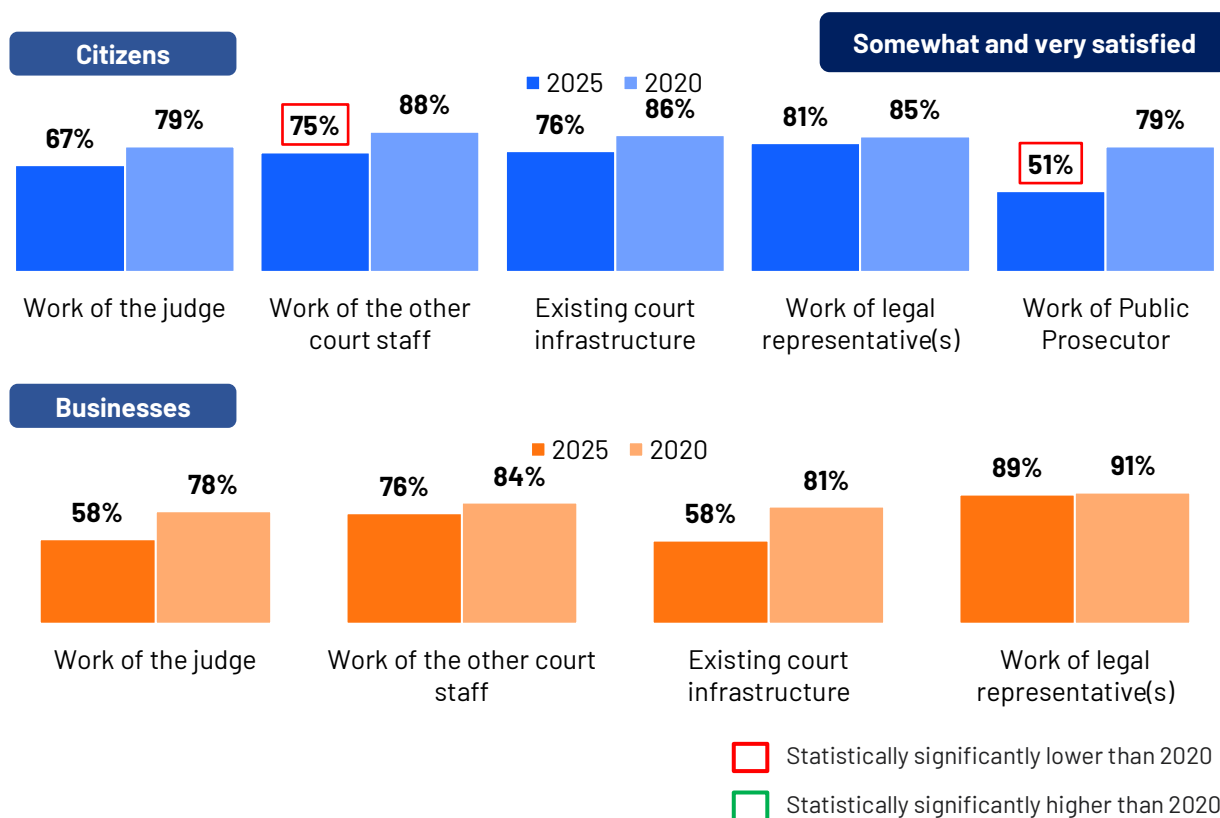
357. Compared to 2020 - In 2025, the reasons for the lower quality of case proceedings have become more pronounced compared to 2020, with one exception: the role of legal representatives. Dissatisfaction with the laws affecting trial quality has significantly increased among both groups of users. By 2025, half of all citizens attribute the lower quality of trials to legal regulations, while nearly one-third of businesses share the same sentiment. In 2020, only one-third of citizens and one-fifth of companies felt this way. Businesses remain resolute in their belief that the judges' poor performance has contributed to the decline in trial quality, with 28% expressing this opinion in 2025, up from 18% in 2020. Interestingly, the performance of legal representatives is the only aspect that has received somewhat lower ratings in terms of its negative impact on the quality of trials among both groups of users.

3.3.3. Users' satisfaction with the performance of justice system professionals and court staff in the specific case

358. While some citizens and businesses express objections to the actions of judges, prosecutors, and their legal representatives in specific cases, the majority remain satisfied (see Figure 89). When evaluating various aspects of the court proceedings, a significant percentage of citizens and businesses are pleased with the performance of the administrative court staff, with 75% of citizens and 76% of businesses expressing satisfaction. In terms of the judges' performance, citizens tend to be more satisfied than businesses. Specifically, two-thirds of citizens hold a favorable opinion of the judge who handled their case, while only 58% of companies share this sentiment. Additionally, businesses report lower satisfaction with court infrastructure—58% of businesses are satisfied compared to 76% of citizens. When it comes to the work of prosecutors, half of the citizens report being satisfied, although businesses were not surveyed about their views on prosecutors. Most users

convey the most positive attitude toward their legal representatives, with over 80% of both citizens and businesses expressing favorable opinions about their lawyers in the specific case.

Figure 89 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: LEVEL OF USERS' SATISFACTION WITH VARIOUS ASPECTS IN THE SPECIFIC CASE



(How satisfied were you with the work of the judge (in the first-instance court)?; How satisfied were you with the work of the other court staff?; How satisfied were you with the existing court infrastructure?; How satisfied were you with the work of your legal representative(s)?; How satisfied were you with the work of Public Prosecutor?); Base: Those who had experience with court cases in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (Citizens: 2025, n=343; 2020, n=357; Businesses: 2025, n=79; 2020, n=109); For opinion about prosecutors' and legal representatives' work responses indicating 'I did not have a legal representative' and 'Not applicable/(no Prosecutor involved in the case)' are excluded.

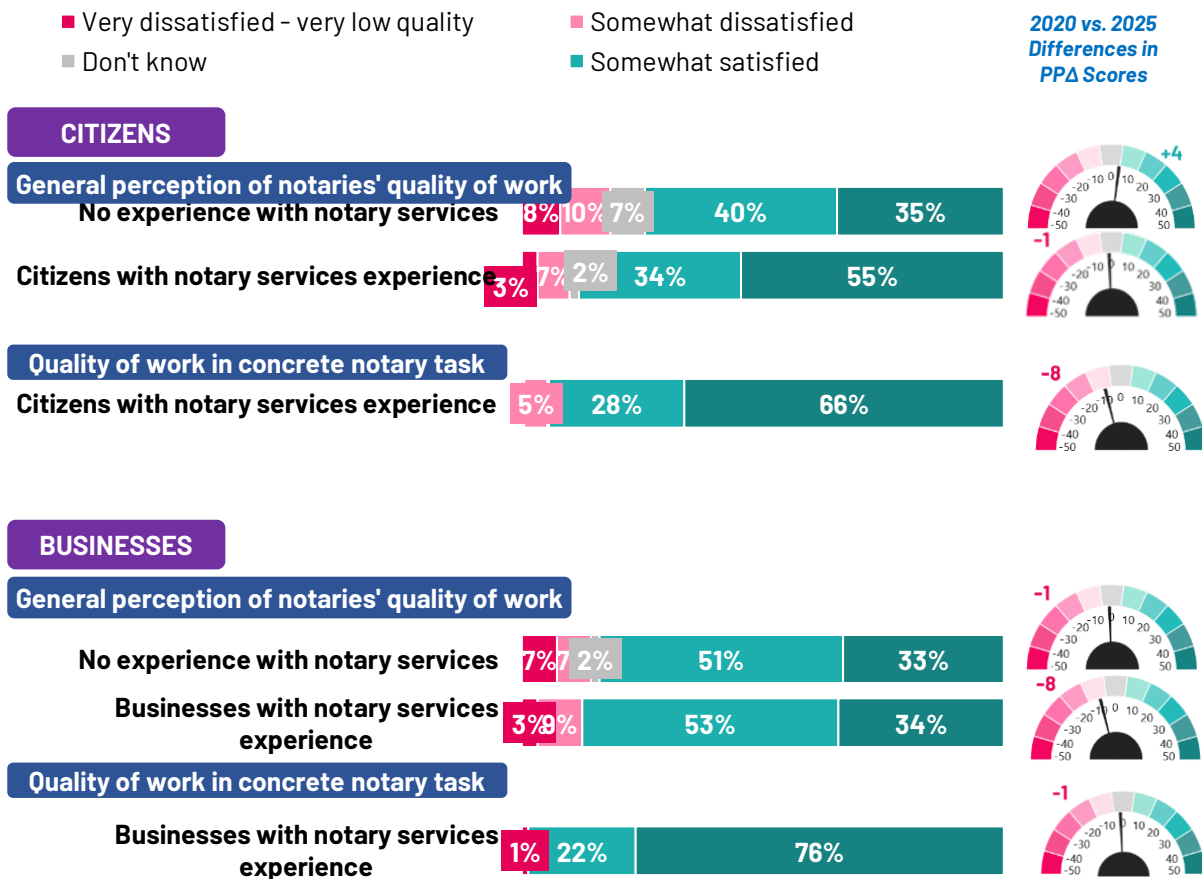
359. Compared to 2020 - In 2025, overall satisfaction with various aspects of court proceedings has decreased for all features, although perceptions remain predominantly positive. Among citizens, there has been a significant decline in satisfaction with court staff and public prosecutors compared to 2020; however, the decline in other areas is not as notable. Businesses were more satisfied with judges' performance and the court infrastructure five years ago. Satisfaction with legal representatives has remained stable in both groups of users, with eight or nine out of ten satisfied clients.

3.3.4. General perception of notary services' quality of work versus quality of work in specific cases

360. The general perception of notaries' work quality in Montenegro is quite positive, regardless of whether individuals have personal experience with their services. However, citizens and businesses that have interacted with notaries more frequently emphasize the high quality of the services they provide. Three-quarters of citizens with no experience with notary services (75%) have a favorable view of their work quality, while almost nine out of ten (89%) with experience share the same opinion. The level of satisfaction is even higher when assessing notary's work in the concrete case - 94% of citizens are satisfied, out of whom 66% could be considered 'very satisfied'.

361. Representatives of the business community show similar trends regarding the quality of notaries' work. Satisfaction with the quality of notaries' work for specific tasks is higher than the overall perception of their services. Notably, 86% of businesses that have not interacted with notaries in the past 12 months believe their work is of high quality. This figure rises to 87% among businesses that have utilized notary services. Furthermore, the positive assessment increases among businesses with personal experience: an impressive 98% express satisfaction with the quality of notaries' work in their specific cases. (Figure 90).

Figure 90 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: THE PERCEPTION OF NOTARY SERVICES' QUALITY OF WORK IN SPECIFIC CASES



(What is your general impression of the quality of work of notaries in Montenegro over the past few years?; How satisfied were you with the quality of this notary's work?) Base: Total target population; Those who have had experience with notaries in the past 12 months; (Citizens total n=1305; Citizens experienced n=436; Citizens who used notary services in the past 12 months n=265; Businesses total n=272; Businesses experienced n=124; Businesses who used notary services in the past 12 months n=69)

362. Compared to 2020 – Citizens' satisfaction with notaries' work has not significantly changed over the years. Even more, the satisfaction of the citizens without experience with notary services has just slightly increased (PPA:+4). Businesses, on the other hand, have become somewhat more critical (PPA:-8), regardless of experience, but predominantly are positive in their views (84% of those without experience and 87% who have had contact with a notary's office express a favorable opinion). Similar in their attitudes, citizens and business show that contact with notaries improves their opinions about the quality of notary's work on the specific task, with no substantial difference compared to the previous wave.

3.3.5. General perception of bailiff services' quality of work versus quality of work in specific cases

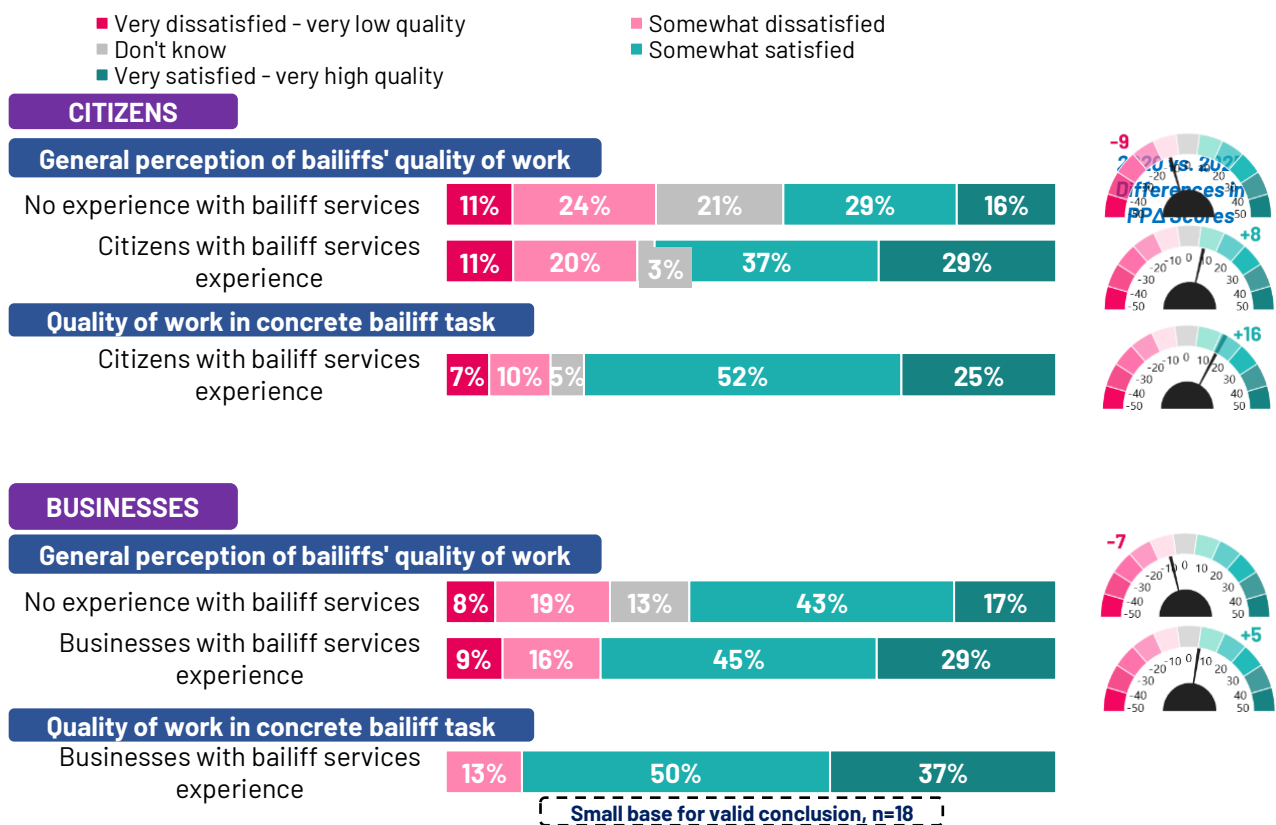
363. Among both populations of service users, a positive opinion of bailiffs' work quality prevails.

However, a significant portion of citizens do not have an opinion, probably due to a lack of experience with that kind of service. Those citizens who emphasize their attitude are somewhat polarized, with 35% of negative and 45% of positive perception of bailiffs' work quality. On the other hand, the perception of those who were in direct contact with bailiffs is much more positive, and satisfied with their work quality (66%). When assessing bailiff's quality in a concrete case, ratings are even more positive (77%)(Figure 91).

364. As in the case of notaries, businesses share a somewhat better perception of bailiffs' work quality than citizens.

Personal experience contributes to better evaluation again – there are 74% of satisfied among those who used bailiffs' services compared to 60% among companies that have not had contact with them.

Figure 91 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: THE PERCEPTION OF BAILIFF SERVICES QUALITY OF WORK IN SPECIFIC CASES



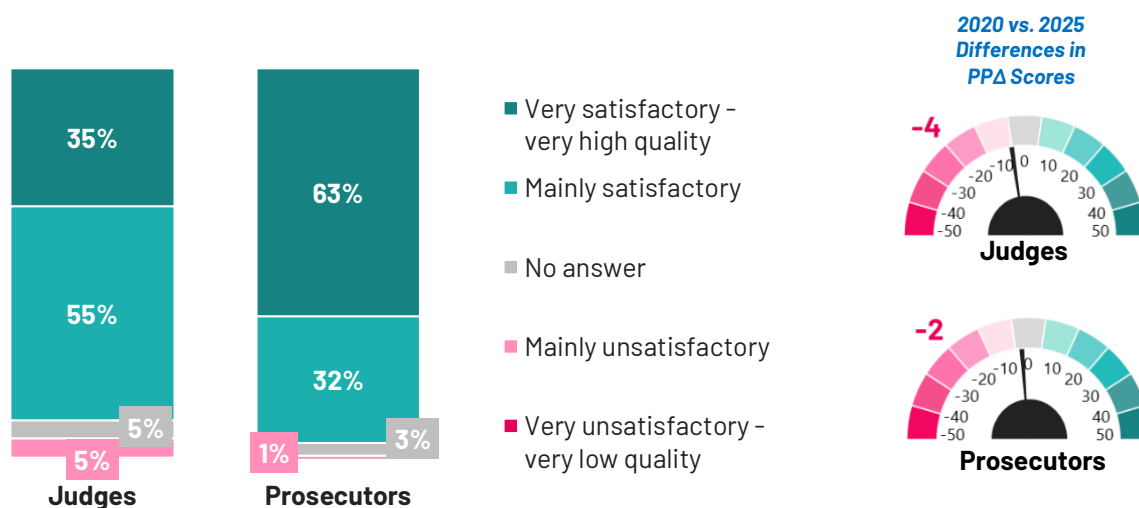
(What is your general impression of the quality of work of private bailiffs in Montenegro over the past few years?; What is your opinion about the following related to bailiff who was in charge of that concrete case? – quality of work) Base: Total target population; Those who had experience with a bailiff in the past 3 years; (Citizens total n=1305; Citizens experienced n=153; Businesses total n=272; Businesses experienced n=67)

365. Compared to 2020 – Among both user populations, the impact of experience has grown stronger over time. Over the past five years, the positive perception of individuals who have had interactions with bailiffs has slightly improved, with a PPA score of +8 among citizens and +5 among businesses. Additionally, in specific cases, the quality of work in 2025 is rated even more positively by citizens than in 2020 (PPA:+16).

3.4. Quality of work assessment of respective justice delivery institutions

366. Nine out of ten judges (90%) and an even higher percentage of prosecutors (96%) rated the overall quality of work at their respective institutions as high (see Figure 92). Moreover, nearly two-thirds of prosecutors (63%) described the quality of work in their workplace as ‘very high’. On the other hand, 5% of judges and 1% of prosecutors rated the quality of their respective institutions as unsatisfactory.

Figure 92 - JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: PERCEPTION OF RESPECTIVE INSTITUTIONS’ QUALITY OF WORK



(Considering the past 12 months, how would you assess overall quality of work of the court in which you work? / Considering the past 12 months, how would you assess the overall quality of work of the prosecutors’ office in which you work?); Base: Total target population; (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

367. Compared to 2020 – Prosecutors have not notably changed their views on the quality of work between the two survey periods. However, judges, while still maintaining a generally positive outlook, have adopted a more critical perspective regarding the quality of work in their courts. Specifically, the percentage of judges who reported being “very satisfied” dropped significantly from 58% in 2020 to 35% in 2025. Conversely, the percentage of those who are “somewhat satisfied” increased from 38% to 55% between the two survey periods.

3.4.1. Measures to improve the quality of work of courts and prosecutors’ offices

368. Even though almost all judges and prosecutors are satisfied with the quality of work in their institutions, those who are not completely satisfied generally support many suggestions for improvement (Figure 93).

369. Judges have identified several key areas for improving the courts in which they work. Most notably, they advocate for a larger number of judges, better working conditions, enhanced preparedness and professionalism among lawyers, and clearer laws to minimize differing interpretations. Specifically, almost nine out of ten judges who are not completely satisfied with their current court environment support measures aimed at hiring more judges and improving working conditions (87%). Similarly, a nearly equal percentage (86%) emphasizes the necessity for legal representatives to be well-prepared for their cases. Data indicates that the quality of court processes depends on improved regulations; not only are clearer laws needed (86%), but better-drafted bylaws are also essential (85%).

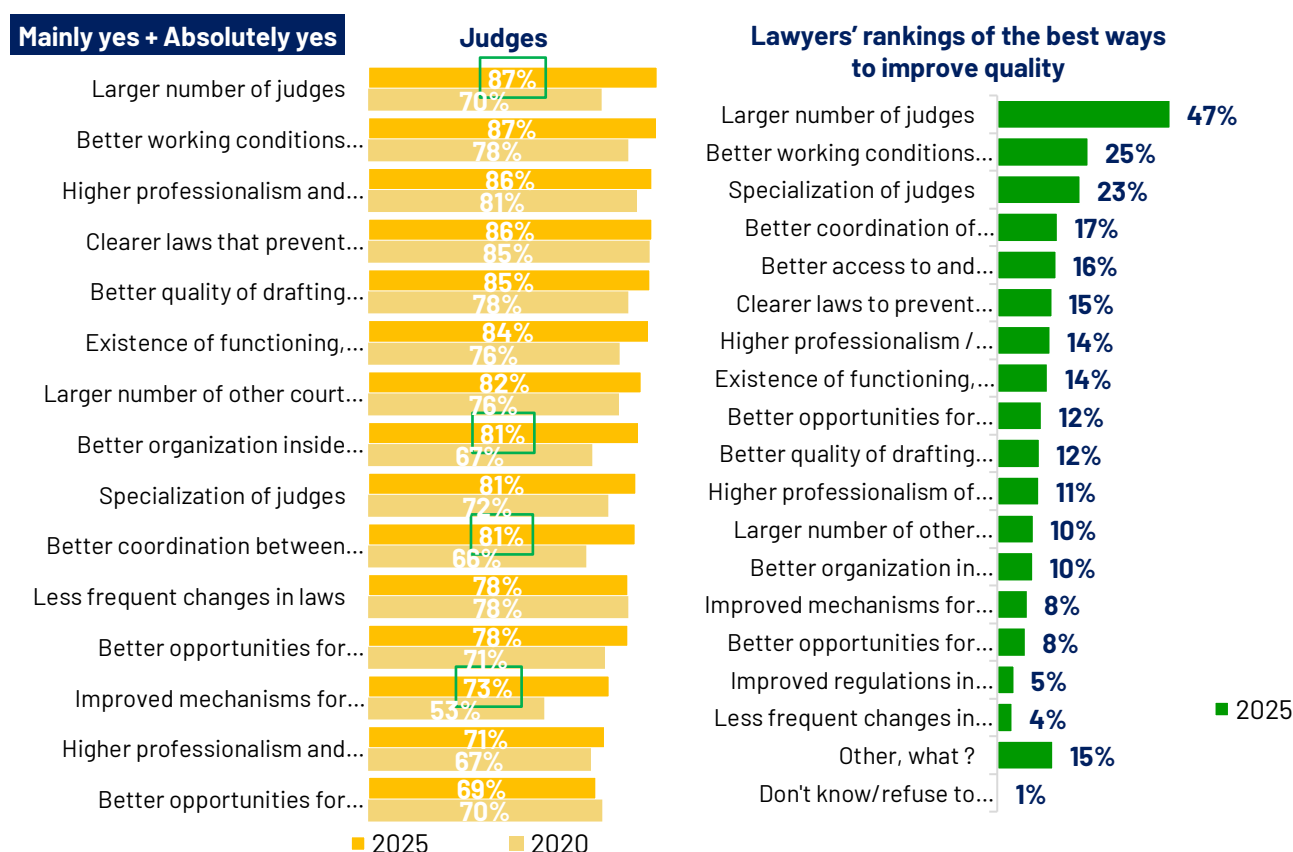
370. Lawyers agree that important factors for improving the quality of court operations include having more judges and providing better working conditions. Nearly half of the lawyers who are not completely satisfied with court quality support the idea of increasing the number of judges in the judicial system (47%). Additionally, 25% believe that enhancing the working environment is crucial. Interestingly, 23% of lawyers advocate for judges to specialize in different types of cases.

371. In comparison to 2020, judges' expression of priorities in the Montenegrin judiciary remains consistent, albeit with stronger support.

372. Despite a limited basis for firm conclusions due to a high level of satisfaction with the quality of their working environment, prosecutors who are not completely satisfied show indications that they face the same issue as judges, with an insufficient number of prosecutors, at least in some offices. Interestingly, they tend to believe that additional training can lead to a higher quality of their professional activities.

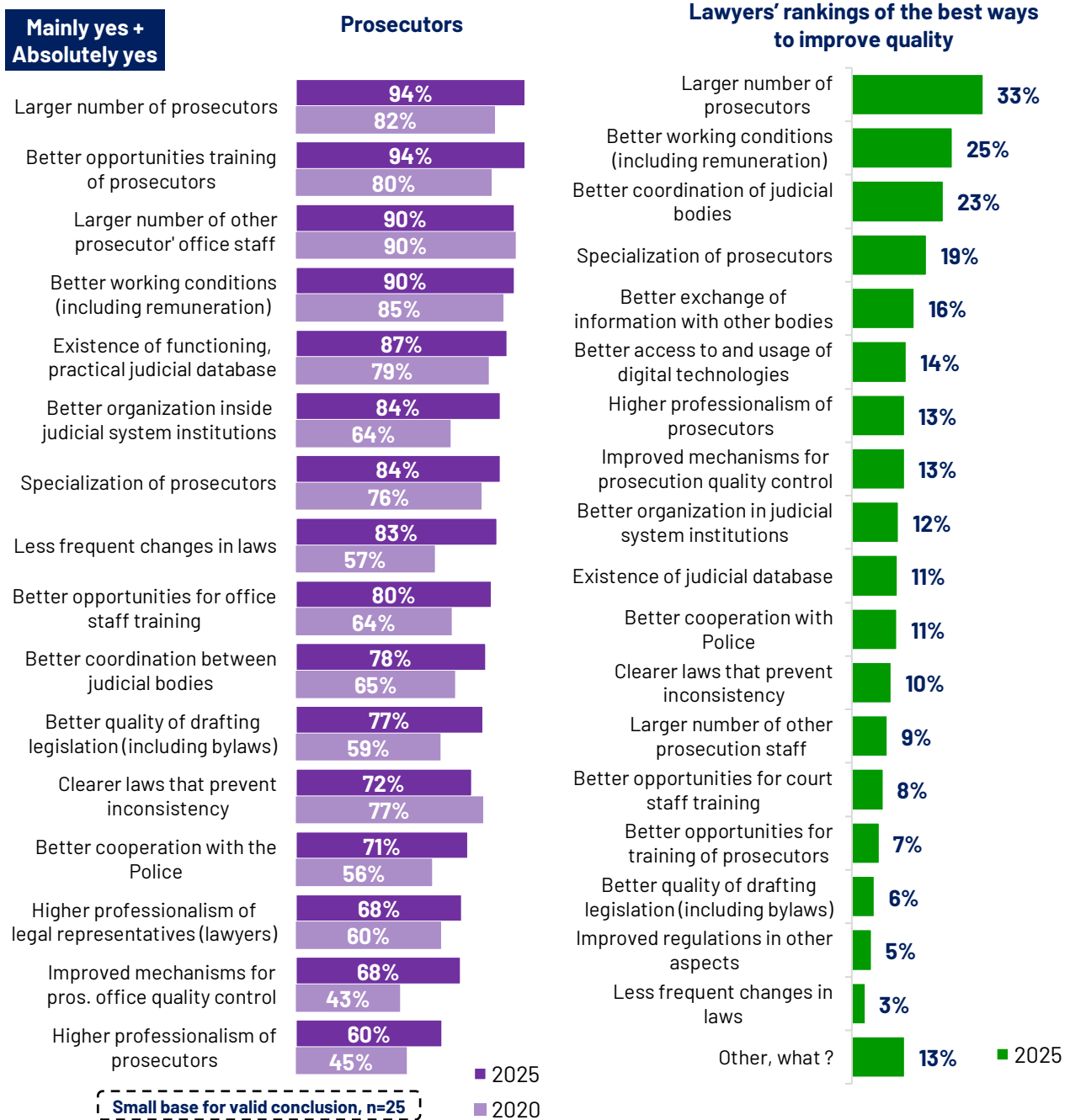
373. Lawyers once again agree that the prosecution in Montenegro needs more prosecutors (33%) and improved working conditions (25%). They also highlight the importance of better information sharing with other judicial bodies as the third most crucial factor for quality improvements in the prosecution (23%). Additionally, lawyers advocate for the specialization of prosecutors as a necessary step for enhancing the legal system (19%).

Figure 93- JUDGES AND LAWYERS: MEASURES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF WORK OF COURTS AND PROSECUTOR'S OFFICES)



(Judge: In your opinion, to what extent would each of the following improve the quality of work of the court you work in?; Lawyers: In your opinion, what are the three main factors that would improve the quality of the courts, starting with the most important one?); Base: Those who are not very satisfied with the overall efficiency of the courts in the past few years (judges and lawyers who are not 'very satisfied' with court quality: Judges, 2025, n=100; 2020, n=81; Lawyers, 2025, n=132

Figure 94 - PROSECUTORS AND LAWYERS: MEASURES TO IMPROVE QUALITY OF WORK OF PROSECUTORS' OFFICES



(Prosecutors: In your opinion, to what extent would each of the following improve the efficiency of the Prosecutor's office you work in?; Lawyers: In your opinion, what are the three main factors that would improve the quality of the prosecution, starting with the most important one?); Base: Those who are not very satisfied with the overall efficiency of the courts in the past few years (prosecutors and lawyers who are not 'very satisfied' with prosecution quality: Prosecutors, 2025, n=25; 2020, n=29; Lawyers n=114)

3.4.2. Satisfaction with various aspects of work in their respective institution

374. Judges and prosecutors generally express high satisfaction with the work climate in their workplaces. Court administration staff particularly value their collaboration with judges, superiors, and other units. However, dissatisfaction among court employees largely stems from salary issues, while prosecutors are most dissatisfied with the equipment and office conditions. Judges who work in

basic courts (81%) and those from the Central region (82%) are significantly more dissatisfied with their salaries, compared to others.

375. Specifically, at least eight out of ten judges and prosecutors report being satisfied with the working environment, with 85% of judges and 81% of prosecutors expressing contentment. Similarly, 86% of court administration staff appreciate their cooperation with judges, 83% with superiors, and 81% with colleagues in other units.

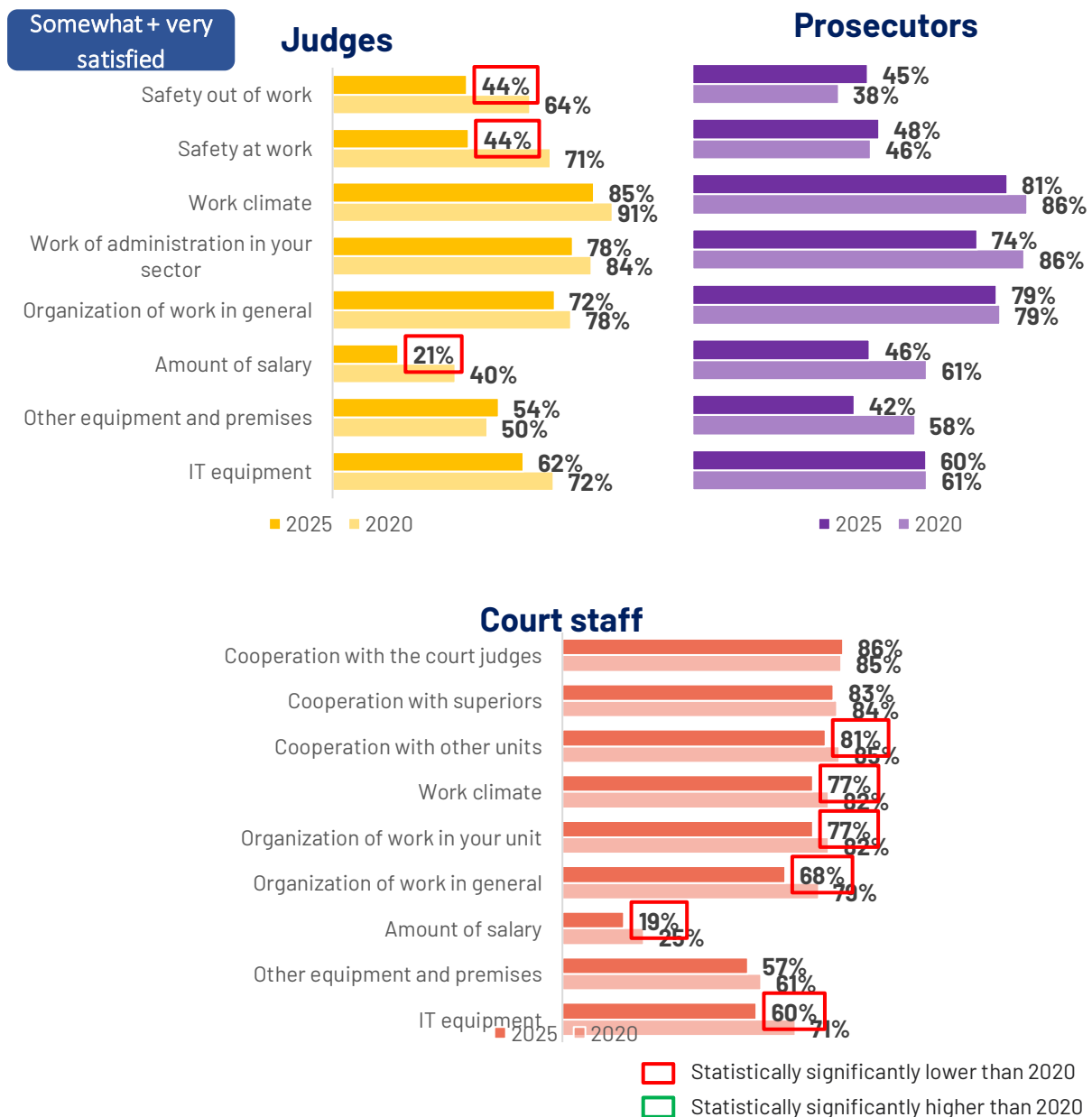
376. Only about one in five employees in the courts is satisfied with their salary, with 21% of judges and 19% of court staff reporting satisfaction. Prosecutors assess salaries somewhat better, with 46% expressing satisfaction in this area. In addition to concerns about equipment, safety outside of work is also an important issue, as 52% of prosecutors find their safety conditions unsatisfactory when leaving the office. Moreover, half of the judges also share concerns about their safety outside of work. This reflects a broader issue, as well, as around half of judges and prosecutors feel unsatisfied with safety at their workplace (52% of judges and 49% prosecutors). Among judges, those working in basic courts feel more unsafe at work (60%) than those in higher courts (37%).

377. The administrative sector is largely viewed positively, with around three-quarters of judges (78%) and prosecutors (74%) reporting satisfaction with the administration in their courts and offices. Higher rates of dissatisfaction with the work of their administration are observed among judges in higher courts (High Court, Appellate, and Supreme Court) compared to those in first-instance courts (26% vs. 13%).

378. A similar percentage of the two groups of professionals, prosecutors (79%) and judges (72%), feel satisfied with their work organization. Court staff also express contentment with the organization of work in their units, with 77% satisfied.

379. Compared to 2020 – In 2025, there has been a significant increase in dissatisfaction among employees in the courts regarding their salaries. The level of satisfaction has decreased from 40% in the previous wave to just 21% among judges, and from 25% to 19% among court administration staff. Beyond salary concerns, safety issues have become significantly more prominent among judges compared to 2020. The percentage of dissatisfied judges regarding workplace safety has more than doubled, rising from 22% in 2020 to 52% in 2025. Additionally, dissatisfaction concerning safety outside of the workplace has also increased significantly, from 27% to 50%. Interestingly, prosecutors' feelings about their safety have remained relatively unchanged since 2020, with just under half expressing dissatisfaction. The percentage of court staff and judges who are dissatisfied with the IT equipment at their workplace indicates that the courts are not adequately following the digitization processes. Thus, data shows increased dissatisfaction among judges and, particularly, among court staff regarding the IT equipment used in their work, from 22% to 34% among judges and from 19% to 30% among court administration employees.

Figure 95 - JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND COURT STAFF: SATISFACTION WITH VARIOUS ASPECTS OF WORK IN THEIR RESPECTIVE INSTITUTION

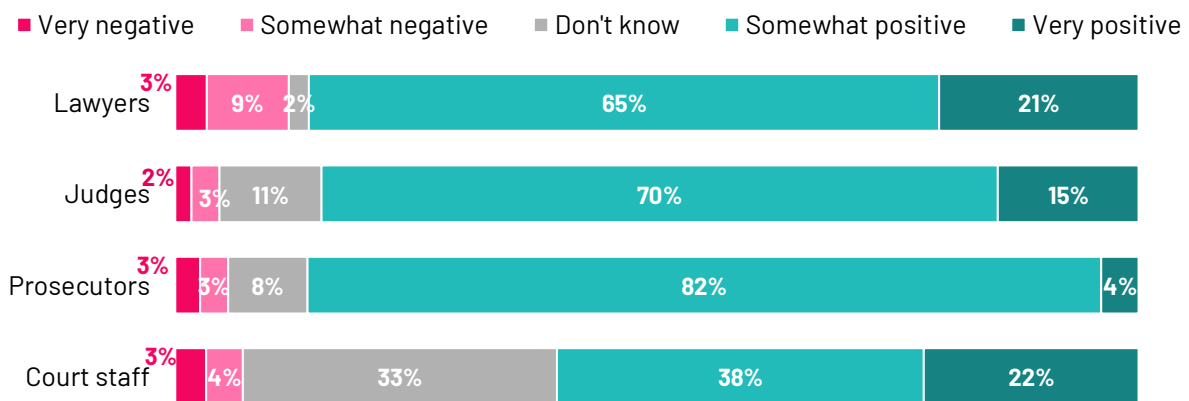


(How satisfied are you with the following aspects of your job in the institution you work in over the past 12 months?); Base: Total target population; (Judges, 2025, n=155; 2020, n=192); Prosecutors, 2025, n=71; 2020, n=83; Court staff, 2025, n=687; 2020, n=643)

3.5. Impact of notaries and bailiffs on the judicial system's quality of work

380. All professionals within the judicial system hold a favorable view of the impact notaries have on the quality of the judicial system (see Figure 96). Approximately 85% of respondents across most groups believe that notaries have a positive influence on the quality of the system. Negative opinions are relatively rare, with only 2% of judges and 3% of prosecutors expressing concern. However, 12% of lawyers believe that notaries have a somewhat or very negative impact, which is most pronounced among lawyers aged 50 and older (20%, compared to the younger group, 7%). Court staff makes an exception, bearing in mind that one-third is indecisive or nonfamiliar with notaries' impact. However, when express an opinion, court officers are notably more positive (60%) than negative (7%).

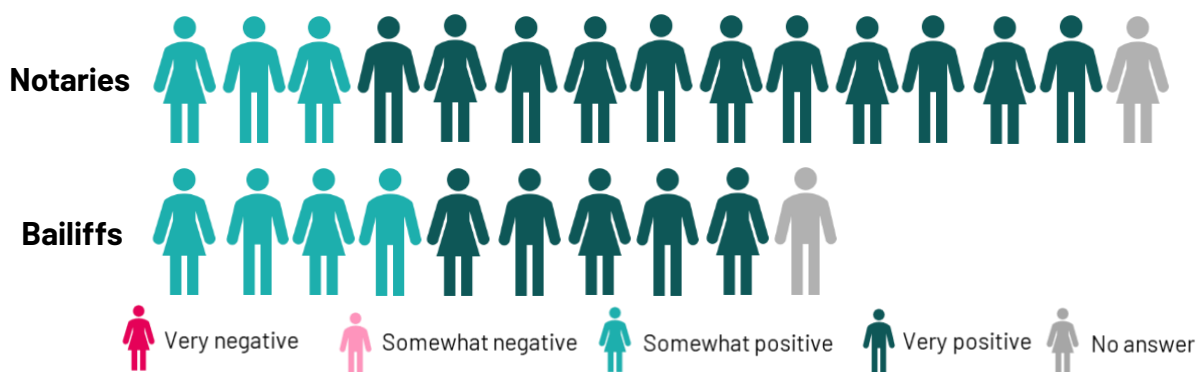
Figure 96 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS, COURT STAFF: IMPACT OF NOTARIES ON THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM'S QUALITY OF WORK



(What kind of impact do the following legal actors have on the quality of the judicial system in Montenegro?) Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71);

381. Among the 15 notaries interviewed, 14 expressed a tendency to believe that notaries have positive impact on the overall quality of the judicial system. Similarly, 9 out of 10 surveyed bailiffs held the same view (Figure 97).

Figure 97 - NOTARIES, BAILIFFS: PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT NOTARIES HAVE ON THE QUALITY OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM



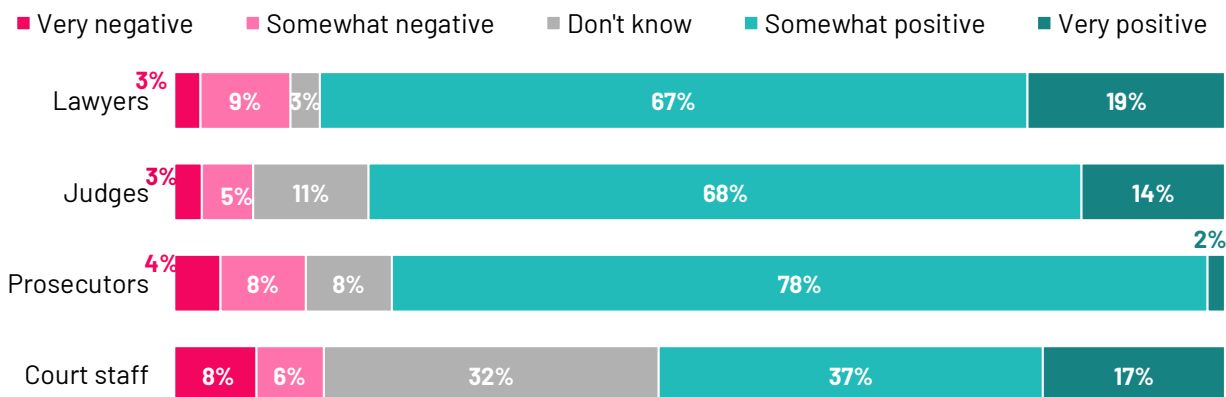
(What kind of impact do notaries have on the quality of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

382. The impact of private bailiffs on the quality of the judicial system work quality is also predominantly evaluated positively (Figure 98). The most favorable perspective comes from lawyers, with 86% providing positive evaluations of the role of bailiffs in enhancing overall quality. Interestingly, the majority of negative ratings stem from older lawyers over 49 years with over 10 years of experience (22% of older lawyers and 18% of those with over a decade of practice rate the impact of bailiffs negatively). In contrast, only 6% of younger lawyers, under the age of 50, and 5% of those who have less than 10 years of practice share this view. Among younger lawyers with less experience, 95% recognize the benefits of bailiffs in the Montenegrin judicial system, which is significantly higher than the 71% of lawyers above the age of 49 and 76% of more experienced lawyers who share this view.

383. Positive assessments are also very high among judges and prosecutors, at 83% and 80%, respectively. Male judges tend to view the impact of bailiffs more favorably than their female counterparts, with 90% of men expressing a positive opinion compared to 73% of women. Conversely,

among prosecutors, women hold a more favorable view of bailiffs' influence on the judiciary, with 98% of female prosecutors appreciating their impact, while only 50% of male prosecutors feel the same way.

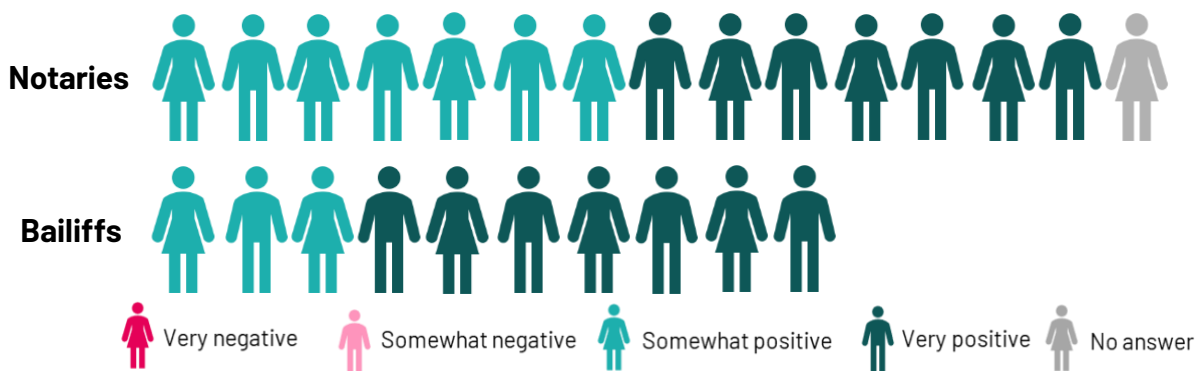
Figure 98 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS, COURT STAFF: IMPACT OF BAILIFFS ON THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM'S QUALITY OF WORK



(What kind of impact do private bailiffs have on the quality of work of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Data for 2020 are recalculated without "no impact", as this answer was removed in the current wave.

384. All bailiffs rate their own impact on the Montenegrin judiciary positively. Among the 15 notaries interviewed, 14 share this opinion with bailiffs (Figure 99).

Figure 99 - NOTARIES, BAILIFFS: PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT BAILIFFS HAVE ON THE QUALITY OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM



(What kind of impact do notaries have on the quality of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

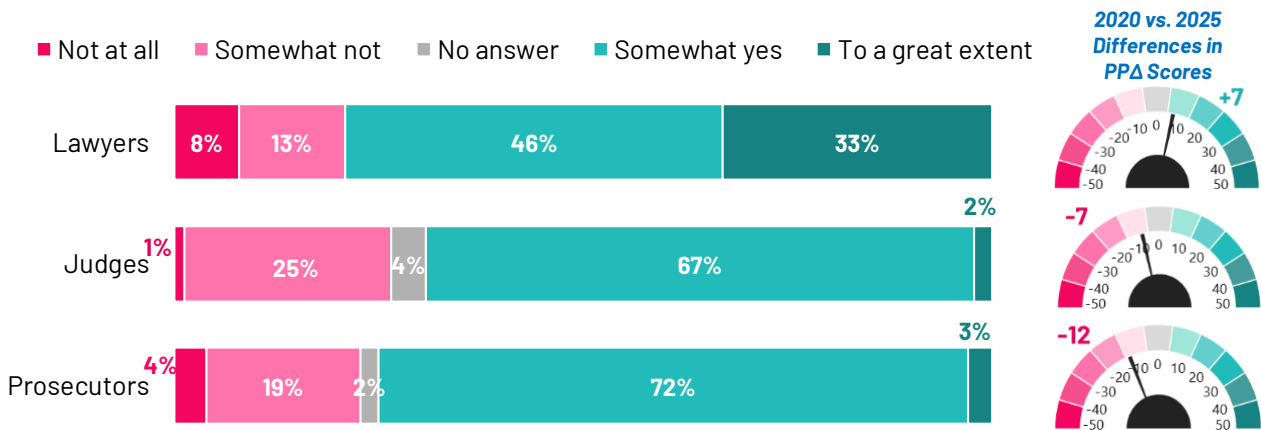
385. Compared to 2020 – Judges generally maintain a consistent view regarding the influence of notaries and bailiffs on the judicial system. In contrast, prosecutors' opinions have become more critical in 2025 compared to five years ago, showing a decrease of 6 PPA points for notaries and 11 PPA points for bailiffs. Meanwhile, lawyers' perceptions have improved concerning the impact of notaries on the judiciary, although they have a slightly less favorable view of bailiffs. Despite these changes, the overall positive perception of non-institutional actors' influence on the judicial system remains unaffected.

3.6. Relevant laws and their implementation

3.6.1. General perception of laws

386. The great majority of judges, prosecutors, and lawyers think that laws in Montenegro are precise, clear, and unambiguous (Figure 100). At least three out of four lawyers and prosecutors share this opinion (79% of lawyers and 75% of prosecutors), while judges are somewhat more skeptical (69% evaluate laws as solid). One in four judges believes that there is room for improvement and clarification in laws. This opinion is shared by 23% of prosecutors and 21% of lawyers.

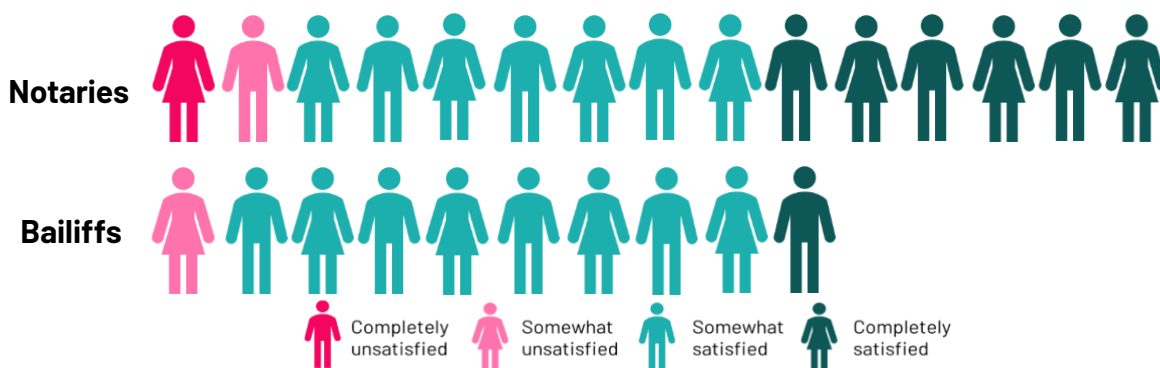
Figure 100 - JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND LAWYERS: PERCEPTION OF PRECISION AND CLARITY OF LAWS



(In your opinion, to what extent are laws in Montenegro precise, clear, and unambiguous?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

387. Notaries and bailiffs were surveyed regarding the precision, clarity, and unambiguity of the laws and regulations governing their professions. Although sample sizes do not allow us to draw any firm conclusion, both groups tend to be highly satisfied with their profession’s legal framework. Specifically, 13 out of 15 notaries and 9 out of 10 bailiffs indicate that they are satisfied with the existing laws that regulate their professional activities. Additionally, they strongly believe that these laws are precise, clear, and unambiguous (with the same proportions of positive and negative views as for satisfaction with relevant).

Figure 101- NOTARIES AND BAILIFFS: PERCEPTION OF PRECISION AND CLARITY OF LAWS THAT REGULATES THEIR PROFESSION



(How satisfied are you with the existing legal framework governing notary/bailiff work?; To what extent is the regulation concerning the work of notaries/bailiffs precise, clear and unambiguous?); Base: Total target population; (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

3.6.2. Professionals' perception of law enforcement

388. The perception of justice sector professionals regarding law enforcement distinguishes between lawyers on one side and judges and prosecutors on the other. All professionals agree that the inconsistent interpretation of laws is the primary issue affecting enforcement. Specifically, eight out of ten lawyers, seven out of ten judges, and prosecutors identify inconsistencies in legal interpretation, which happen sometimes or often, as a major obstacle to enforcement.

389. Regarding the rest of the problems with law enforcement, lawyers are much more critical than judges and prosecutors. Thus, the second biggest issue, according to lawyers, is the selective enforcement of laws, regarding which 76% believe that happens occasionally or frequently. On the other hand, judges and prosecutors are milder in their criticism. Approximately 30% of judges and prosecutors report that this is a more or less common practice in the judiciary.

390. As a more significant problem than selective enforcement, judges perceive the selective execution of court decisions (37% believe this happens occasionally or frequently). This attitude is shared by 32% of prosecutors and 54% of lawyers.

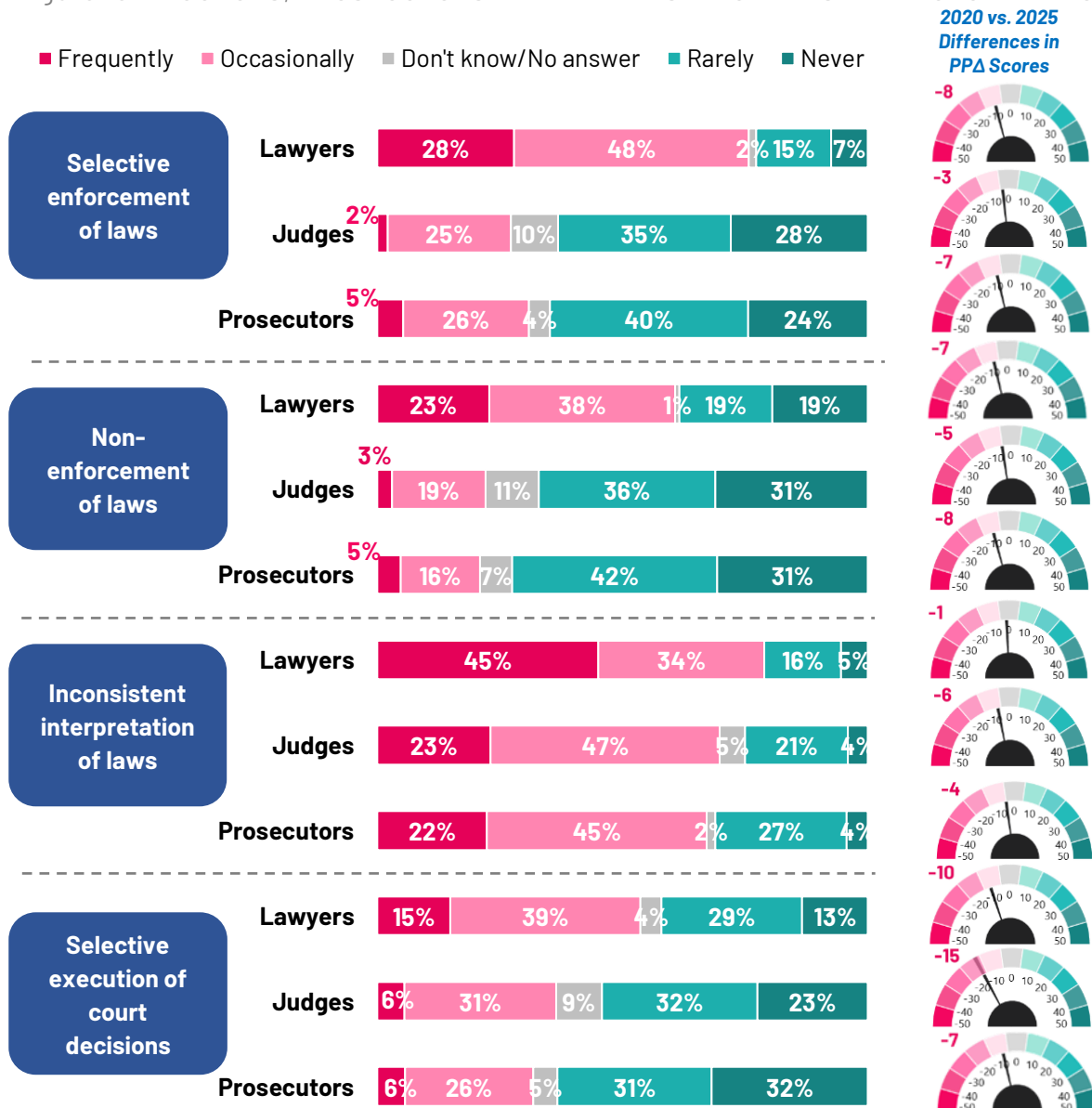
391. Judges and prosecutors indicate that the non-enforcement of laws is not a widespread issue, with just over 20% acknowledging that it occurs more or less regularly. In contrast, a significant majority of lawyers (61%) report that this occurs frequently or occasionally.

392. Compared to 2020 - The overall perception of various issues in law enforcement has slightly declined since 2020. The most notable change comes from lawyers concerning the selective enforcement of court decisions. The percentage of lawyers who believe this occurs occasionally or frequently has risen from 42% in 2020 to 54% in 2025 (a decline of 12%). Additionally, lawyers have shown significant changes in their views on inconsistencies in legal interpretations. The percentage of lawyers who believe such inconsistencies never happen has dropped substantially from 12% in the previous survey to just 5% in 2025. There is a similar trend regarding the belief that selective enforcement of laws never occurs, with this figure falling from 16% in 2020 to 7% in 2025.

393. The most notable changes among judges relate to the selective enforcement of court decisions. There has been a significant decrease in the percentage of judges who responded with "never," falling from 39% to 23% between the two survey waves. As a result, the proportion of judges who believe that selective execution is an occasional or frequent occurrence has nearly doubled, increasing from 19% to 37%.

394. Among prosecutors, a significant change has been observed in attitudes toward the non-enforcement of laws and the selective application of the law. Between the two survey waves, the percentage of prosecutors who believe that non-enforcement is not occurring has decreased from 56% to 31%. Similarly, those who think there is no selective approach to law enforcement has dropped from 42% to 24%.

Figure 102. - JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND LAWYERS: PROBLEMS IN ENFORCEMENT OF LAWS



(How often did the following problems occur in the enforcement of laws?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

3.6.3. Users' perception of laws

395. Citizens' and business representatives' opinions about the quality, applicability, and enforcement of laws in Montenegro are examined through three statements (Figure 103). Among the group of users, citizens are more critical of law enforcement and its efficiency, while businesses tend to give more negative assessments of equal law application to everyone.

396. Almost two-thirds of businesses (64%) and more than half of citizens (57%) agree on the statement that the laws are good enough. This statement is more strongly supported by citizens in the northern region of Montenegro (68%), those of Serbian ethnicity (76%), and those who are closer to parties in power (72%). On the other hand, the statement is significantly less supported by citizens of Montenegrin (49%) and other ethnicities (45%), those who share values with opposition parties (40%).

397. Every second citizen in Montenegro (51%) and 41% of businesses believe that laws do apply equally to everyone. This statement is more supported by citizens with average household income (61%), citizens of Serbian ethnicity (66%), and those closer to parties in power (64%), while less

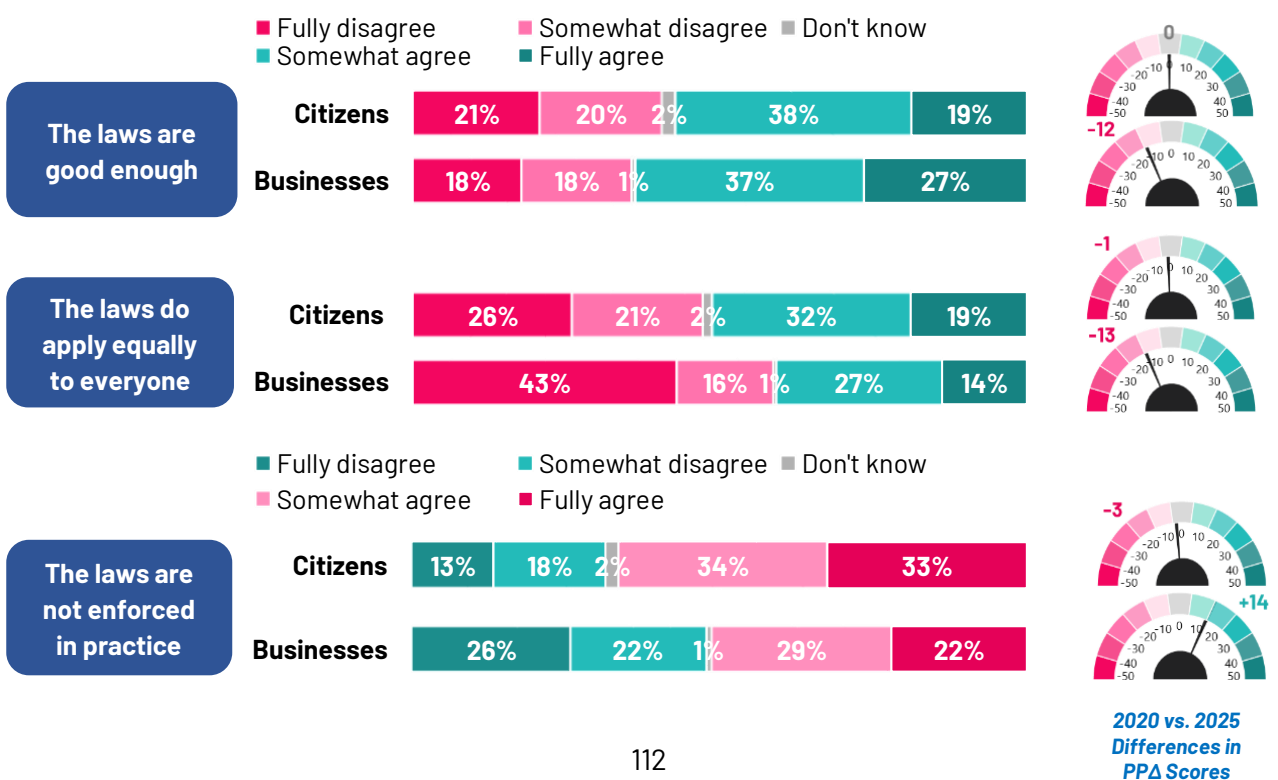
supported by citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity (43%), citizens closer to parties in opposition (34%), and vulnerable groups other than financially deprived (41%). Among businesses, this negative opinion regarding the equal application of laws to everyone is most pronounced among companies operating in the North (93% disagree with the statement, compared to other parts of Montenegro, where the Center and South express disagreement at rates of 57% and 50%, respectively).

398. Two-thirds of citizens (67%) and half of businesses (51%) agree that laws are not enforced in practice. The main opponents of this view are citizens who work in the state sector, with 41% disagreeing as opposed to 28% from the private sector. Additionally, 36% of those living in the central region disagree with the statement, as do 39% of individuals aligned with the ruling party's political views. On the other hand, those who believe that laws are not enforced predominantly include citizens from the northern region, with 72% agreeing and only 24% disagreeing, and those with an average household income (75% agree with the statement, while 22% oppose it). Interestingly, there are no significant differences between major ethnicities, like in the other two statements; however, ethnicities other than Montenegrin and Serbian show stronger criticism of law enforcement, with 73% agreeing with this statement, compared to 65% of Montenegrins and 64% of Serbians.

399. Compared to 2020 – Citizens have maintained consistent views regarding the quality of laws and their enforcement over the past five years. The only notable difference is an increase in agreement with the statement about non-enforcement of laws, rising from 61% to 66%.

400. In contrast, businesses have expressed more critical opinions regarding the sufficiency of laws and their equitable application. There has been a notable decrease in the percentage of business representatives who agree with these statements: agreement about the quality of laws fell from 75% to 64%, and agreement regarding equality dropped from 52% to 41%. Additionally, the percentage of those opposing these views rose, with opponents increasing from 22% to 36% for the quality of laws and from 45% to 59% for equality. Interestingly, despite these criticisms, business representatives have become more positive about the enforcement processes. The data demonstrate an increase in the percentage of businesses that disagree with the statement that laws are not enforced in practice, rising from 32% in 2020 to 48% in 2025. Simultaneously, the share of those who agree with this statement has declined from 63% to 51%.

Figure 103 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: PERCEPTION OF LAWS AND THEIR ENFORCEMENT BY SERVICE USERS



(I will now read out a number of statements on the judicial system. Please rate your agreement with each statement); Base: Total target population.; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

3.7. Quality of work over time

401. Compared to three years ago, the quality of the judicial system appears to have improved, particularly as perceived by prosecutors and judges (see Figure 104). Seven out of ten prosecutors (70%) and half of the judges (51%) believe that the current state of the judicial system is better than it was three years ago. However, this perception is much less common among citizens (47%), businesses (41%), and especially among lawyers (38%).

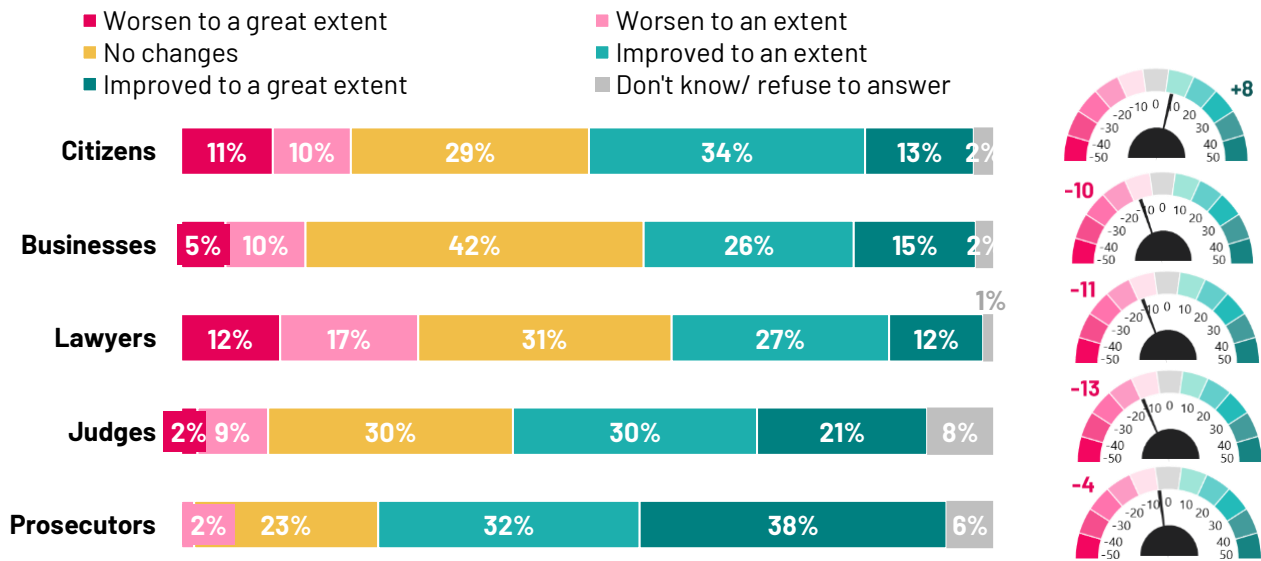
402. Most business representatives believe there have been no changes in the quality of the judicial system, with 42% sharing this sentiment. This perspective is also held by about 30% of lawyers, judges, and members of the general population. Furthermore, nearly one in four prosecutors (23%) agree with this view.

403. Subpopulation findings in some populations reveal significant differences among various groups. Within the general population, perception of worsened judicial system is more common among older citizens aged 60 years and older (26%), those with lower household income (30%), population living in central part of the country (27%), citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity (32%), as well as among those who share political views with the opposition parties (44%) or refuse or did not give the answer on their political stance (30%). Conversely, citizens who perceive improvement are more likely to come from the North region (56%), the Serbian ethnic group (66%), and those who are closer to the ruling party (68%).

404. Younger judges, i.e., those under 50 years of age, tend to have a more positive outlook on changes in the quality of the judiciary over the past three years, with 60% expressing this view. In contrast, older judges show a more negative perspective, with only 40% viewing the changes positively and 18% reporting a negative stance compared to just 7% of younger judges. Furthermore, judges of high, appellate and supreme court are more positive about the changes of work quality compared to their colleagues in first-instance courts. Thus, two-thirds (67%) of higher court judges perceive changes as positive, compared to 42% of judges working in first-instance courts. At the same time, 21% of higher court judges see them as negative, while this opinion is shared by only 5% of basic court judges.

405. Compared to 2020 - The belief that the quality of the judiciary has deteriorated is more evident in 2025 among most populations, with one notable exception: the general public. In fact, a notable number of citizens have shifted from feeling that there have been "no changes" to having a more positive perception of the changes in the quality of judicial system over the past five years (increase from 32% to 47% in positive views between two survey waves, and decline from 41% to 29% in 'no changes' responses). In contrast, other groups have developed less favorable views in 2025, moving towards a more negative stance or the "no changes" perspective. Of particular concern are businesses, lawyers, and judges, who have at least doubled their negative views. Specifically, business community has increase their negative opinions from 7% to 15%, lawyers from 15% to 29%, and judges from 4% to 11% between two survey waves.

Figure 104 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND LAWYERS: QUALITY OVER TIME ASSESSMENT

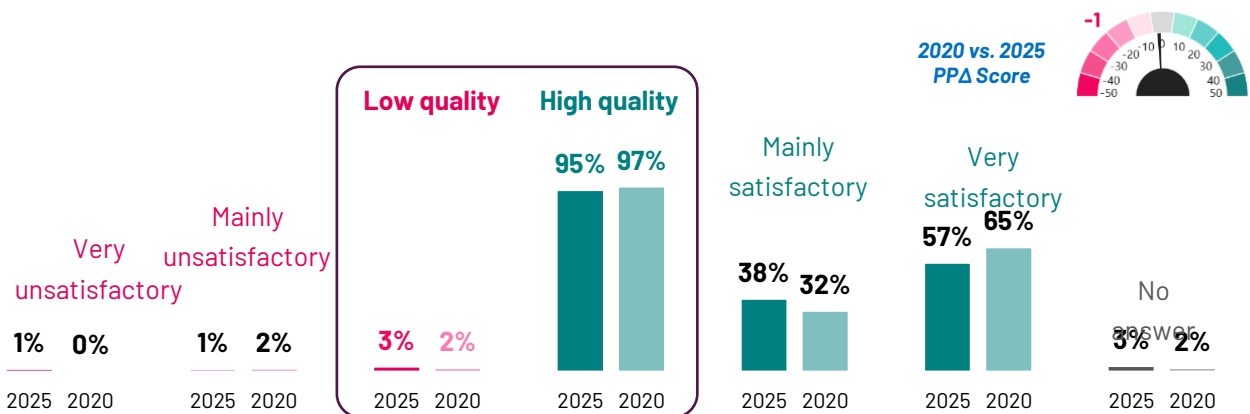


(Compared to the time three years ago, how would you evaluate quality of the judicial system now?); Base: Total target population.; (Citizens, 2025, n=1305; 2020=1333; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

3.8. Quality of court administrative work

406. In evaluating the quality of work within their units, members of court administration are largely positive (95%), with 57% indicating that their service quality is 'very high.'

Figure 105 - COURT STAFF: PERCEPTION OF THE QUALITY OF WORK OF ADMINISTRATIVE UNIT THEY WORK IN BY COURT STAFF



(Considering the past 12 months, how would you assess the quality of work of administrative unit in institution in which you work?); Base: Total target population (2025, n=687; 2020, n=640)

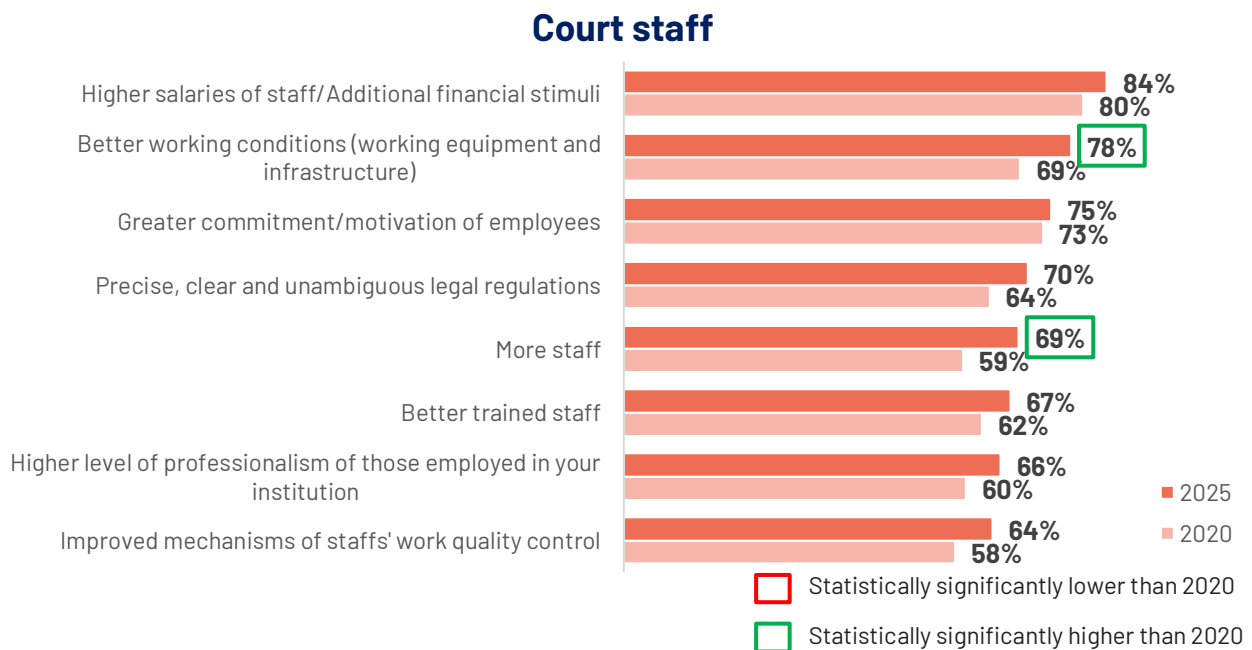
407. Compared to 2020 - Court administration service employees have not significantly changed their opinion about the work quality since 2020. They still stress high-quality levels.

408. However, those who are not entirely satisfied believe that higher salaries (84%) and better working conditions (78%) would have the most significant impact on quality, which would be even

more pronounced. Additionally, three out of four think that a greater work commitment from their colleagues might influence work quality, while the lowest percentage (although still high) believe that the control mechanisms may improve this aspect of their work.

409. Compared to 2020 – All factors influencing the work of court administration have strengthened compared to 2020. The most notable increase is in the need for a higher number of employees in units, rising from 59% in 2020 to 69% in 2025. In addition to staff expansion, significant changes are observed in working conditions, where the need is more pronounced (from 69% in 2020 to 78% in 2025). This suggests a necessity for improvements in the working infrastructure and equipment, as well.

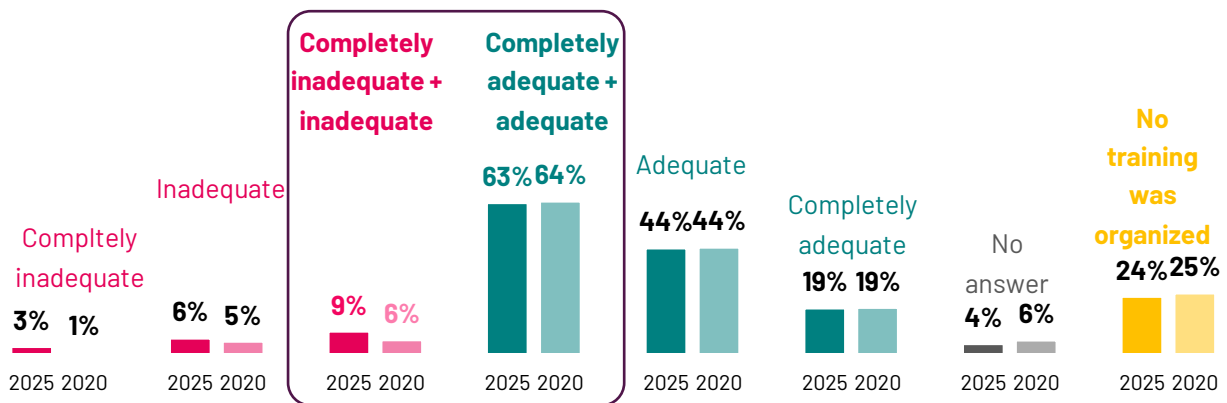
Figure 106 - COURT STAFF: MEASURES TO IMPROVE WORK QUALITY OF COURT ADMINISTRATION ACCORDING TO COURT STAFF



(In your opinion, to what extent would each of the following improve the efficiency of your unit?); Base: Those who are not very satisfied with the work quality of the unit in which they work (n=288)

410. Professional training is an important aspect of the working environment. While one in four court staff members has not received any kind of training (24%), those who received some type of training are mostly satisfied (44% think the training was adequate and 19% think it was 'completely adequate'). In other words, only 9% of court staff members reported that the training they received was inadequate (Figure 107).

Figure 107- COURT STAFF: ASSESSMENT OF RECEIVED TRAINING



(How would you assess the training that you and other employees of your administrative unit were provided with?); Base: Total target population; (n=687)

411. The training was attended more frequently by men, with 88% gaining additional knowledge compared to 72% of women who participated in some training course. Men also reported higher satisfaction levels regarding the training, with 26% indicating that the training was completely adequate, compared to 16% of women who felt the same way. Additionally, employees in first-instance courts expressed greater satisfaction with the training programs compared to those working in high, appellate courts or the Supreme Court, with 66% of first-instance court staff stating that the training offer is adequate, compared to only 52% from the higher courts.

412. Furthermore, among those who participated in organized training, one-third (34%) reported ongoing training in computer programs within their units with higher percentage of men showing familiarity with it (41% of men and 30% of women are informed about the program). Interestingly, nine out of ten employees in court administration believe they are well-trained in using computer programs. However, a significantly higher percentage of men feel their computer skills are lacking, with 16% expressing this concern compared to only 5% of their female colleagues.

413. According to half of court staff members (49%), internal control within the unit was performed in the past 12 months, while one third (33%) cites the opposite (Figure 108). In addition, 13% of court staff members do not know whether their work was inspected and 5% refuse to answer.

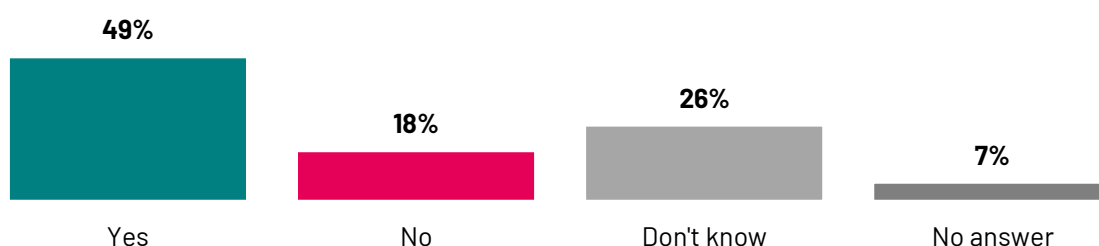
414. A significantly higher percentage of men report having control over their work (61%) compared to women (44%). Additionally, younger staff members (ages up to 35) and those with less work experience (up to 5 years) more commonly report that internal control over their work was not performed in the past year. Specifically, 46% of younger staff stress 'no control' period, compared to 33% of those aged 36-49 and 29% of those aged 50 and older. Among those with less experience, 38% say that there was no internal work control, in contrast to 54% of more experienced staff (over 5 years of experience). Furthermore, 21% of less experienced staff are unfamiliar with the actions of work control, compared to 15% of those aged 36-49 and 8% of older staff. Court staff members working in misdemeanor courts more frequently report having control over their work (60%), compared to those employed in high, appellate, or supreme court (35%). Additionally, staff who provide administrative services to the general public and businesses, or perform essential administrative tasks for court operations report, in higher percentages, work control activities (57% and 53%, respectively) compared to those involved directly with court cases and hearings, where only 38% report control over their work

in the last 12 months. It's important to note that those working directly on court cases and hearings are the least familiar with internal control over their work, with 21% opting for the 'don't know' answer.

415. In the case when control was conducted, it was most commonly performed as a control of the register/review of cases (19%), then frequent internal controls and work assessment by superiors (18%), and regular annual control of judicial inspection of the Ministry (18%). Nevertheless, in most cases, there is also an external form of control. More precisely, according to 60% of court staff members, clients are able to file personal complaints about the work of court staff.

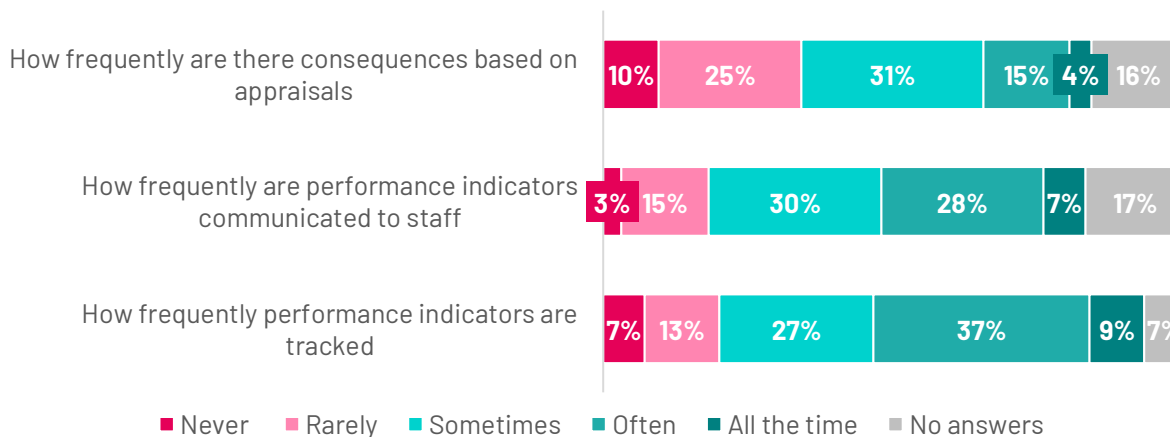
416. Although only every other court staff member reported that there was some form of internal control within the unit in the past 12 months, 86% report that the work of employees in their administrative unit is being appraised through performance indicators that are more or less regularly tracked. Additionally, 74% believe that these appraisals have practical consequences.

Figure 108- COURT STAFF: INTERNAL CONTROL WITHIN THE UNIT



(Was there any form of internal control within the unit you worked in the past 12 months?); Base: Total target population; (n=687)

Figure 109 - COURT STAFF: PERFORMANCE INDICATORS WITHIN THE UNIT



(How frequently are the performance indicators for your department/ unit and its personnel tracked?; How frequently are the performance indicators for your department/ unit and its personnel communicated to staff?; How frequently are there consequences based on these appraisals?); Base: Total target population (n=687); Those in whose departments/units performance indicators are tracked (n=636)

3.9. Quality of notaries' work

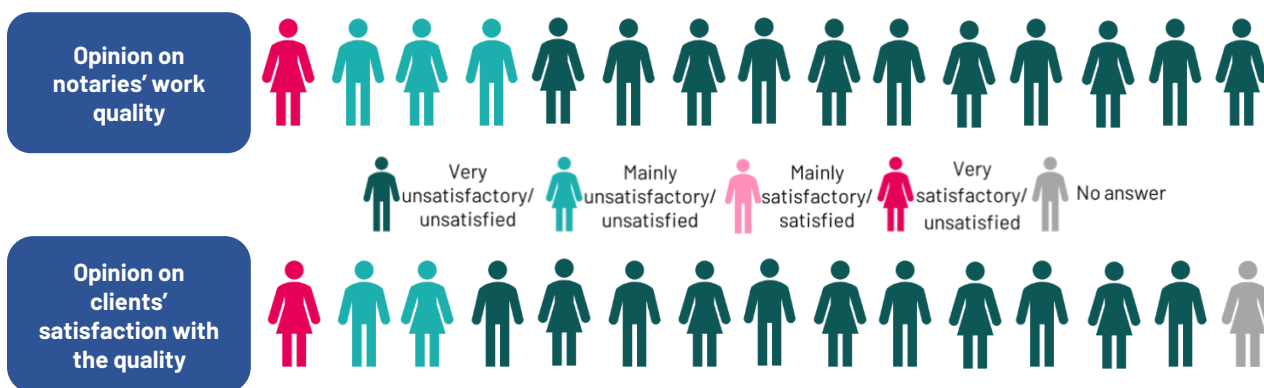
417. Although the basis of the notary is too small for firm conclusions (n=15), their opinion could provide some indications of the quality of notary services in Montenegro.

418. Only one notary expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of work at notary offices in their country. Eleven out of fifteen notaries rated the quality of work as "very high." Those who were not entirely satisfied could not identify any specific factors that could enhance work quality. All suggested methods for improving quality were considered equally important, including having a larger number of

assistants and staff, providing training opportunities, increasing employee motivation, fostering cooperation with other entities, raising tariffs, and improving procedures. Moreover, thirteen out of fifteen notaries tend to believe that their staff are well-educated for the tasks they perform, and there is no need for additional educational programs.

419. Not only do notaries believe that the quality of their work is high, but they also think that their clients share this opinion. Twelve out of fifteen notaries agreed that users are satisfied, while only one indicated that they are 'very unsatisfied.' In support of this, only two notaries report that a client has complained about their work in the last 12 months. Complaints were made through the media and the notary's office. As the most common reason for complaints in general, notaries often emphasize tariffs for their work, followed by mutual misunderstandings about the services.

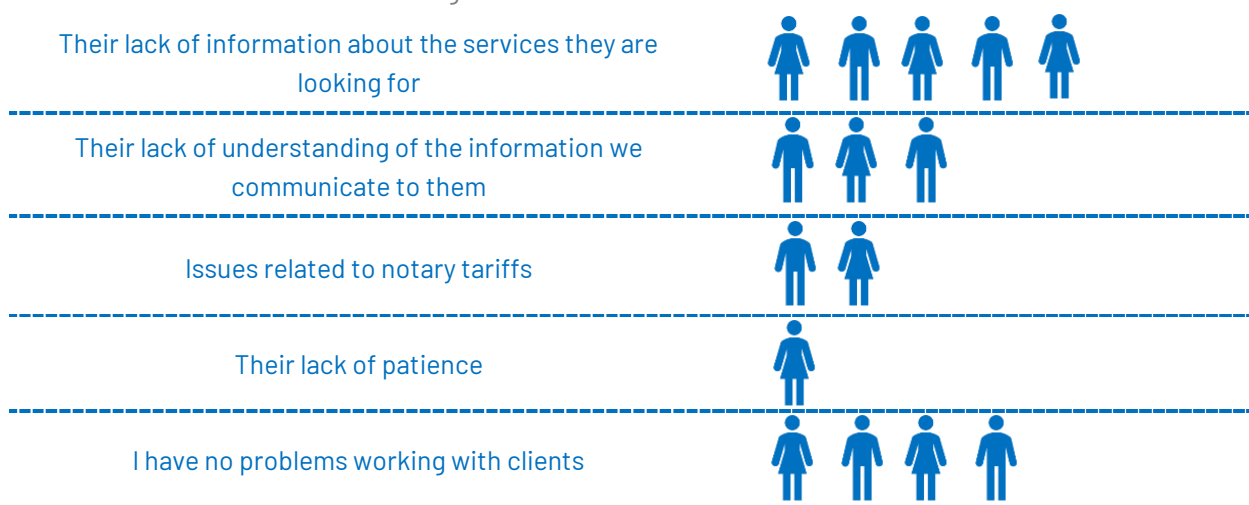
Figure 110- NOTARY WORK QUALITY:



(How would you assess the quality of work of notary offices in Montenegro?; In your opinion, to what extent are clients satisfied with the quality of work of notary offices in Montenegro?); Base: Total target population (n=15)

420. As the most significant issue in working with clients, notaries indicate that clients' lack of information about the services they are seeking could be the problem. Almost half of them emphasize this as the biggest issue, while four notaries have no problem with clients.

Figure 111- ISSUES WITH CLIENTS:



(What is the biggest issue for you in working with clients?); Base: Total target population (n=15)

421. Notaries indicate that they have usually been inspected by the Ministry of Justice within the last three years, with 8 out of 15 respondents reporting this. Additionally, 6 out of 15 have been inspected by their professional chamber or a competent court. Notably, one-third of the respondents

did not undergo any inspection during this three-year period. Among those who were inspected, the majority reported no irregularities found during the inspection; specifically, 7 out of 10 confirmed this, while 3 mentioned that the inspector identified major irregularities. However, all notaries who have been inspected are satisfied with all aspects of the inspection. Only one notary reports that the inspector was impartial. All other aspects, such as duration, comprehensiveness, and quality, were rated as mainly or very good.

422. Most of the notaries who responded to the questionnaire reported that their collaboration with other organizations, government authorities, and agencies is quite effective. Specifically, at least 12 out of 15 notaries confirmed solid cooperation with various entities, including the Ministry of Justice, courts, prosecution services, the cadaster, tax administration, the business registry agency, police, and bailiffs. The same positive sentiment applies to their relationship with their professional association, the Chamber of Notaries, which is regarded as satisfactory by nearly all respondents (14 out of 15).

3.9. Quality of bailiffs' work

423. Similar to notaries, a database for bailiffs is also insufficient for valid conclusions. Findings can only indicate some points of their work.

424. All bailiffs who participated in the survey express satisfaction with the quality of work of bailiffs in Montenegro. As notaries, those who are not completely satisfied could not identify a specific factor that might improve their quality either. They believe that all listed factors would enhance the quality of work (such as a larger number of assistants and staff, providing training opportunities, greater employee motivation, cooperation with other entities, raising tariffs and bailiffs' authority and power, improving procedures and uniformity of justice practice). Regarding staff training, as an aspect that could improve bailiffs' activities, seven out of ten bailiffs believe that their staff are well-educated for the tasks they perform, while three think that the training programs are welcomed.

425. Bailiffs' responses indicate that the biggest challenge in working with creditors and claimants may be their unrealistic expectations, as indicated by 4 out of 10 respondents. Meanwhile, three bailiffs state they do not encounter issues when collaborating with them. Additionally, two bailiffs stress that a lack of patience could be the source of problematic cooperation with creditors/claimants.

426. As their notary colleagues, bailiffs have also been prevalently inspected by the Ministry of Justice (9 out of 10 in the last three years have undergone Ministry of Justice inspections) and their professional association (the Chamber of Public Bailiffs of Montenegro inspected 6 out of 10).

4. ACCESSIBILITY

- Overall perception of justice system accessibility is generally positive but shows concerning trends. While most respondents view institutions as accessible, businesses demonstrate declining confidence across multiple institutions since 2020, with significant drops in administrative courts (PPΔ -11), courts (PPΔ -8), and notary services (PPΔ -6).
- Key stakeholder perspectives reveal a clear divide between service users and professionals. Citizens and businesses show moderate satisfaction levels (65-84% depending on institution), with notaries rated highest and bailiffs lowest. Justice professionals maintain overwhelmingly positive views (85-98% across institutions), with judges and prosecutors showing near-universal confidence in system accessibility, while lawyers align more closely with users' perspectives.
- Three dimensions of accessibility show varying performance levels. Physical accessibility receives the strongest ratings (72% citizens, 68% businesses positive), followed by information access (63% citizens, 68% businesses). Financial accessibility emerges as the weakest dimension, with only 46% of citizens viewing the system as financially accessible, without changes in positive views compared to 2020. However, at the same time share of citizens who find judicial system financially inaccessible increased from 39% in 2020 to 47% in 2025.
- Cost burden analysis reveals significant financial concerns, with 45% of citizens and 50% of businesses who had court experience perceiving court costs as higher than expected. Citizens with court experience report lawyer fees comprise 50% of total expenses, while businesses face more balanced distribution between court costs (29%) and lawyer fees (27%), with travel costs disproportionately affecting businesses (21% vs 6% for citizens).
- Free legal aid awareness remains critically low, although higher than in 2020. Thus, only 15% of citizens demonstrating detailed knowledge of available services (11% in 2020), while 27% are unaware such aid exists (43% in 2020). Justice professionals show unrealistic assessments of public knowledge, particularly judges (72% believe citizens are well-informed), while prosecutors and lawyers are somewhat more realistic (49% of prosecutors and 44% of lawyers think that citizens are familiar with this possibility)
- Information accessibility in actual court cases shows marked improvement, with 80% of citizens and 76% of businesses with court experience reporting accessible information, substantially higher than general population perceptions. However, reliance on lawyers as primary information source (66% citizens, 62% businesses) indicates limited direct institutional communication effectiveness.

Citizens' and Business Representatives' Perceptions about the Accessibility of Justice System

427. Citizens and businesses demonstrate generally positive perceptions of justice system accessibility, though with notable variations across institutions. Notaries receive the highest accessibility ratings, with 84% of citizens and 91% of businesses viewing their services as accessible. Lawyer services follow closely with strong accessibility perceptions (81% of citizens and 87% of businesses). Administrative courts receive positive ratings from 72% of citizens and 74% of businesses, while courts garner support from 68% of citizens and 74% of businesses. Prosecution receive similar support from 67% of citizens and 72% of businesses. Bailiffs are viewed as accessible by 65% of citizens and 77% of businesses.

428. 2020 Comparison: The most significant change occurs in business perceptions, which show increased concern about inaccessibility across multiple institutions. Administrative courts

experienced the largest decline in business confidence with a PPA score of -11, followed by courts (PPA -8), notary services (PPA -6), and lawyer services (PPA -5). This pattern indicates a broad-based erosion of business confidence in justice system accessibility across nearly all institutional categories.

Perceptions of Justice System Professionals about the Accessibility of Justice System

429. Legal professionals maintain highly favorable views of system accessibility across all institutions. Judges and prosecutors show near-universal agreement on court accessibility at 95% each, with lawyers at 84%. Similar patterns emerge for other institutions, with lawyers rating their own services at 98% accessible, while judges and prosecutors provide 84% and 93% positive ratings respectively. Prosecution accessibility receives strong professional support, with 88% of judges and 81% of lawyers viewing it positively. Professional ratings for notaries, bailiffs, and administrative courts consistently exceed 85% across all groups.

430. 2020 Comparison: Justice professionals show remarkable stability in their perceptions, with most PPA scores remaining low. The most positive developments occurred in prosecution accessibility perceptions, with judges showing improvement (PPA +6), lawyers (PPA +5), and prosecutors (PPA +3). Lawyers demonstrated increased confidence in their own services (PPA +6) and slight improvement in bailiff accessibility views (PPA +3). Administrative courts saw modest improvement among judges (PPA +4), while other institutional ratings remained largely unchanged, indicating consistent professional confidence in system accessibility.

Three Dimensions of Accessibility

431. System accessibility evaluation across information, physical, and financial dimensions reveals distinct patterns. Information accessibility receives positive ratings from 63% of citizens and 68% of businesses, while justice professionals rate it much higher at 93% for both judges and prosecutors. Physical accessibility shows similar trends, with 72% of citizens and 68% of businesses rating it positively, compared to over 90% of justice professionals. Financial accessibility emerges as the most challenging dimension, with only 46% of citizens perceiving the system as financially accessible, while businesses (60%) and lawyers (64%) show somewhat higher but still concerning satisfaction levels.

432. 2020 Comparison: Financial accessibility concerns have intensified, with citizen perceptions of inaccessibility rising from 39% to 47%. Business perceptions of physical accessibility declined from 80% to 68%, while lawyer perceptions of information accessibility worsened, with inaccessibility rising from 19% to 29%.

Perception of Information Accessibility of Judiciary in Own Court Case

433. Among citizens and businesses with actual court experience, information accessibility perceptions improve significantly. Approximately 80% of citizens and 76% of businesses with court case experience report that information was accessible in their specific cases, substantially higher than general population perceptions. Both groups primarily rely on lawyers as their information source (66% of citizens, 62% of businesses), with citizens also consulting friends and relatives (24%) and phone information services (15%). Businesses additionally utilize court staff and registry services (17% each).

434. 2020 Comparison: There has been a notable decrease in citizens relying on court staff for information (from 25% to 14%), while preference for court websites as a convenient source declined from 16% to 4%. Conversely, businesses increasingly favor lawyers as the most convenient information source, rising from 23% to 44%.

Perception of financial accessibility (cost-effectiveness)

435. Cost perceptions among system users reveal significant concerns about justice system expenses. Among citizens with court experience, 45% perceived costs as higher than expected, while 50% of businesses shared this view. Citizens report that lawyer fees comprise 50% of their total expenses, with court costs accounting for 45%. For businesses, court costs represent 29% of total expenses, followed by lawyer fees at 27%. Travel costs disproportionately affect businesses at 21% versus only 6% for citizens. Cost allocation among citizens varies by case type, with lawyer fees dominating in criminal (58%) and civil cases (71%), while court costs represent the largest portion in misdemeanor cases (67%). More than half of citizens (55%) and businesses (68%) find notary service costs appropriate, though approximately one-quarter of each group considers them excessive.

436. 2020 Comparison: Lawyer fees have become the dominant expense category for citizens, while court costs have grown more prominent for businesses. Significantly, court costs in citizens' misdemeanor cases increased from 47% in 2020 to 67% of total expenses in 2025.

Knowledge About and Access to Free Legal Aid

437. Public knowledge of free legal aid remains severely limited, with only 15% of citizens claiming detailed familiarity with available services. A substantial 27% are unaware whether such aid exists, while 49% have heard of it without understanding specifics. This knowledge gap represents a significant barrier to justice system accessibility.

438. Justice professionals demonstrate varying assessments of public awareness. Lawyers show the most realistic understanding, with 52% believing citizens are uninformed about free legal aid. Judges appear overly optimistic, with 72% believing citizens are well-informed, while prosecutors show more balanced expectations. Among professionals who recognize its availability, 75-81% affirm that free legal aid is accessible to those in need, with lawyers providing generally positive evaluations of its efficiency (83%) and quality (80%).

439. 2020 Comparison: Public uncertainty about free legal aid availability decreased from 43% to 27%, with increases across all other response categories. Justice professionals have developed more realistic assessments, particularly prosecutors who showed the largest shift toward recognizing citizen unfamiliarity (PPΔ -25).

Alternative Dispute Resolution

440. Familiarity with mediation processes varies between user groups, with 52% of citizens and 67% of businesses reporting knowledge of mediation procedures. Justice professionals demonstrate strong support for alternative dispute resolution mechanisms. Deferred prosecution receives backing from 84% of prosecutors, 63% of lawyers, and 61% of judges. Plea agreements enjoy even broader professional support, with 85% of lawyers, 80% of prosecutors, and 77% of judges viewing them as beneficial to the justice system.

4.1. Perception of general accessibility of judiciary

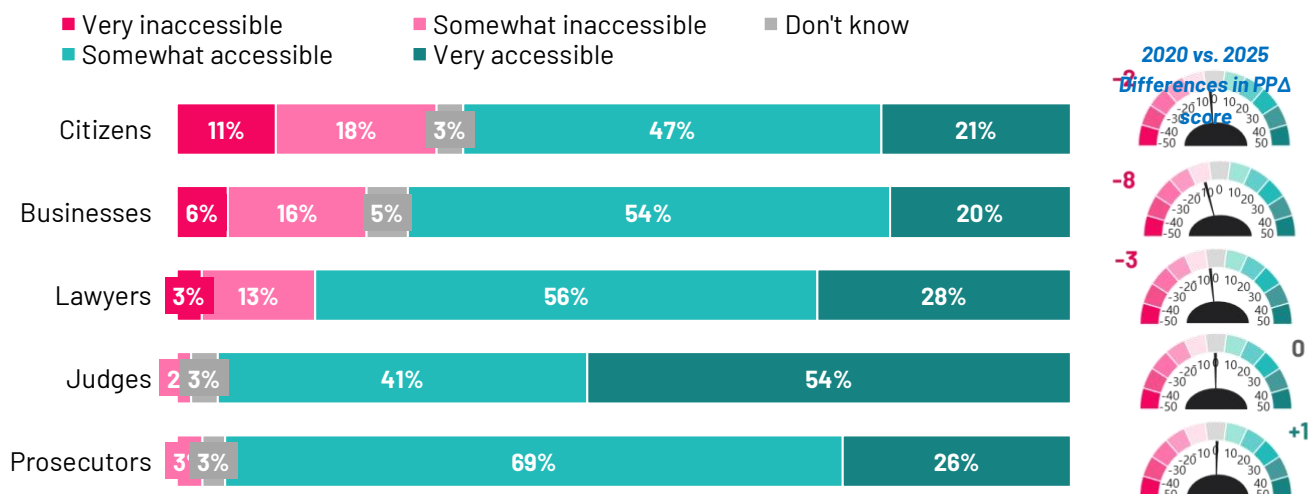
4.1.1. General perception of accessibility of courts

441. A large majority of respondents agree that Montenegrin courts are accessible for both citizens and legal entities (Figure 112). Positive perceptions of court accessibility are especially pronounced among judges *and* prosecutors, both at 95%. Lawyers and businesses also largely hold favorable views, with 84% of lawyers and 74% of businesses in agreement. Furthermore, nearly seven out of ten citizens (68%) share this positive sentiment. Contrastingly, 29% of citizens believe the courts are not accessible, a view supported by 21% of businesses and 16% of lawyers. Only a minimal number of judges (2%) and prosecutors (3%) concur with this less favorable perspective.

442. Perceptions of court inaccessibility are notably higher among certain demographics, with 35% of citizens from the Central region, 37% of Montenegrin ethnic background, 47% who are aligned with opposition parties, and 49% from financially vulnerable groups expressing this view. Conversely, citizens of Serbian ethnicity and those aligned with ruling parties perceive courts as more accessible, at rates of 79% and 78% respectively.

443. Compared to 2020 – In contrast to 2020, there is an increase in the proportion of businesses that perceive court accessibility as inadequate, rising from 12% to 22% in 2025, reflected in a PPA score of -8 for businesses. For other groups, perceptions remained relatively stable with minimal changes: citizens (PPA -2), lawyers (PPA -3), judges (PPA 0), and prosecutors (PPA +1), suggesting general consistency in accessibility perceptions among these groups.

Figure 112 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF COURT ACCESSIBILITY



(To what extent are the FOLLOWING institutions accessible to all citizens/ legal entities? - Courts); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

4.1.2. General perception of accessibility of prosecution

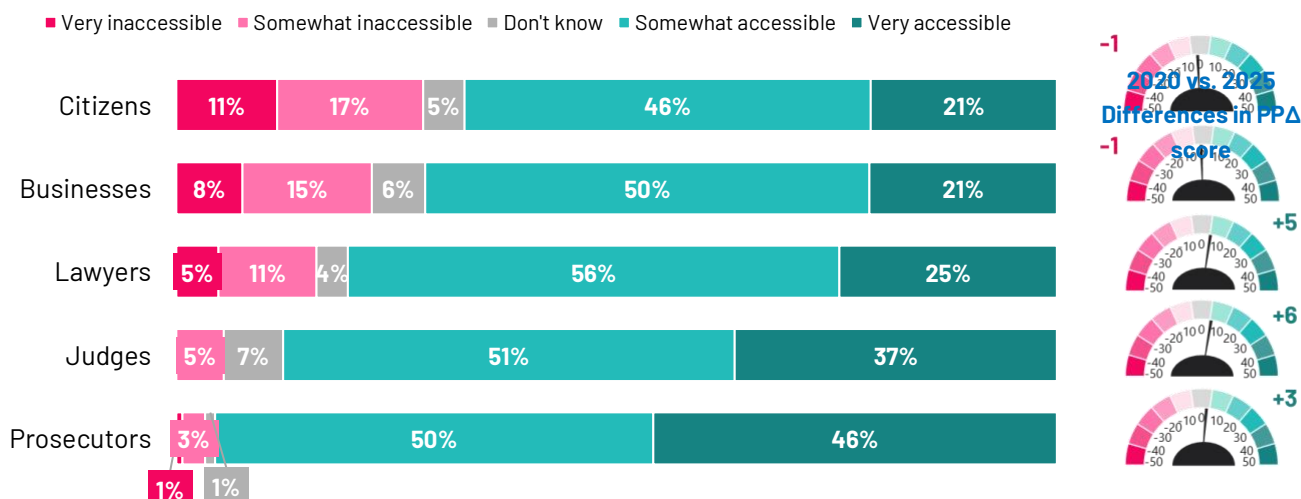
444. Regarding the accessibility of the prosecution, it is generally rated positively by both service users and justice system professionals, though slightly less favorably than the courts (Figure 113). Almost no prosecutors perceive the prosecution as inaccessible, nine out of ten judges (88%) and four-fifths of lawyers (81%) believe it is accessible.

445. Compared to the opinions of justice system professionals, system users are also mostly content with the accessibility of the prosecution, albeit to a slightly lesser degree. About two-thirds of citizens (67%) and seventy percent of businesses (72%) find the prosecution accessible. On the contrary, the strongest negative views are observed among citizens and businesses. Specifically, 28% of citizens feel the prosecution is not accessible, as does 22% of businesses.

446. Perceptions of prosecution inaccessibility are significantly higher among specific demographics: 33% of citizens from the Central region, 37% of those of Montenegrin ethnicity, and 51% of individuals aligned with opposition parties hold these views. Conversely, prosecution is perceived as more accessible by citizens of Serbian ethnicity and those aligned with ruling parties, at rates of 81% and 79% respectively.

447. Compared to 2020 – Overall, the perception among citizens and businesses regarding the prosecution's accessibility has remained generally stable since 2020, reflected in a PPA score of -1. Among justice professionals, there has been a slight improvement in the perception of the prosecution's accessibility, with a PPA score of +5 for lawyers, +6 for judges, and +3 for prosecutors.

Figure 113- CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF PROSECUTION ACCESSIBILITY



(To what extent are the FOLLOWING institutions accessible to all citizens/ legal entities? - Prosecutors); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

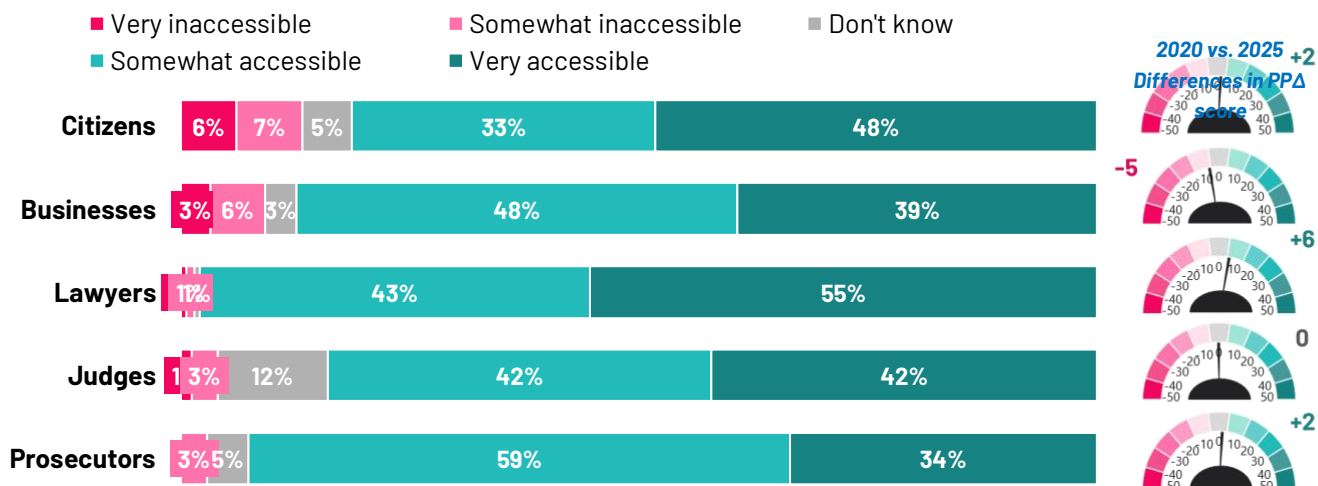
4.1.3. General perception of accessibility of lawyers' services

448. The accessibility of lawyers' services is highly regarded by both service users and justice system professionals. Almost all lawyers (98%), the vast majority of prosecutors (93%), and businesses (87%) perceive lawyers as accessible. This sentiment is similarly shared by over eight out of ten judges (84%) and citizens (81%). However, lawyers are viewed as inaccessible by only a small fraction of both service users and justice professionals, with citizens being the most dissatisfied group at 13%.

449. Perceptions of lawyers' inaccessibility are more frequently reported among citizens over 60 years old (18%), those with low education levels (21%), individuals with below-average household incomes (19%), residents from the central region (16%), those of Montenegrin ethnicity (17%), and individuals aligned with opposition parties (19%). Conversely, lawyers are perceived as more accessible by citizens of Serbian ethnicity (91%).

450. Compared to 2020 – From 2020 to 2025, both citizens and prosecutors show a generally stable perception of the accessibility of lawyers' services, with a PPA score of +2 for each. Among businesses, the perception of lawyers' services as inaccessible increased from 2% to 9%, resulting in a PPA score of -5. Meanwhile, the proportion of lawyers who view their services as accessible rose from 92% in 2020 to 98%, reflected in a PPA score of +6.

Figure 114 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF LAWYERS' ACCESSIBILITY



(To what extent are the FOLLOWING institutions accessible to all citizens/ legal entities?– Lawyers); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

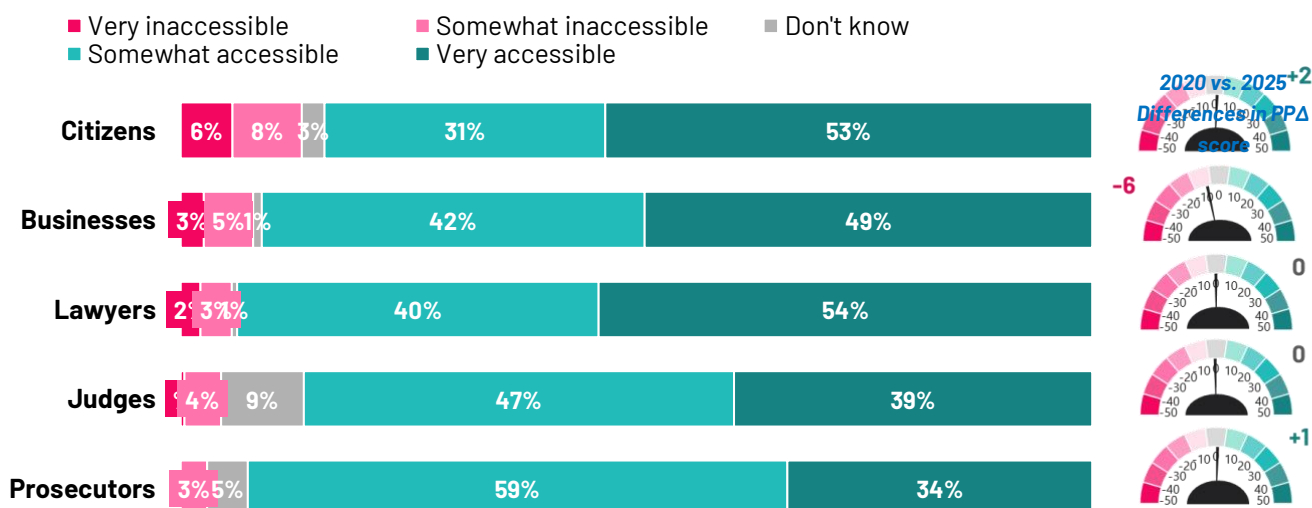
4.1.4. General perception of accessibility of notaries' services

451. Notaries are perceived as the most accessible institution within Montenegro's justice system by both citizens and businesses. Specifically, more than eight out of ten citizens (84%) and nine out of ten businesses (91%) regard notary services as accessible. Similarly, among justice system professionals, 94% of lawyers, 87% of judges, and 92% of prosecutors view notaries as accessible, highlighting their pivotal role in ensuring easy access within the system (Figure 115).

452. When it comes to negative perceptions of notaries' accessibility within the general population, only a minority of 13% consider notaries to be inaccessible. This view is particularly prevalent among citizens with lower education levels (26%), residents from the Central region (17%), and those aligned with opposition parties (21%). Interestingly, citizens of Serbian ethnicity (5%), those aligned with ruling parties (7%), and individuals with previous experience with notary services (8%) are less likely than average to view notaries' services as inaccessible.

453. Compared to 2020 – Between 2020 and 2025, citizens have shown relative stability in their perception of the accessibility of public notary services, which is reflected in a PPA score of +2. Similarly, prosecutors exhibit a stable outlook with a PPA score of +1. Among businesses, there is a noticeable shift, with the view of notaries' services as inaccessible rising from 1% to 8%. This is reflected in a PPA score of -6, indicating that 6% of businesses have shifted their opinion negatively compared to the previous wave.

Figure 115 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF NOTARIES' ACCESSIBILITY



(To what extent are the FOLLOWING institutions accessible to all citizens/ legal entities? - Notaries); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

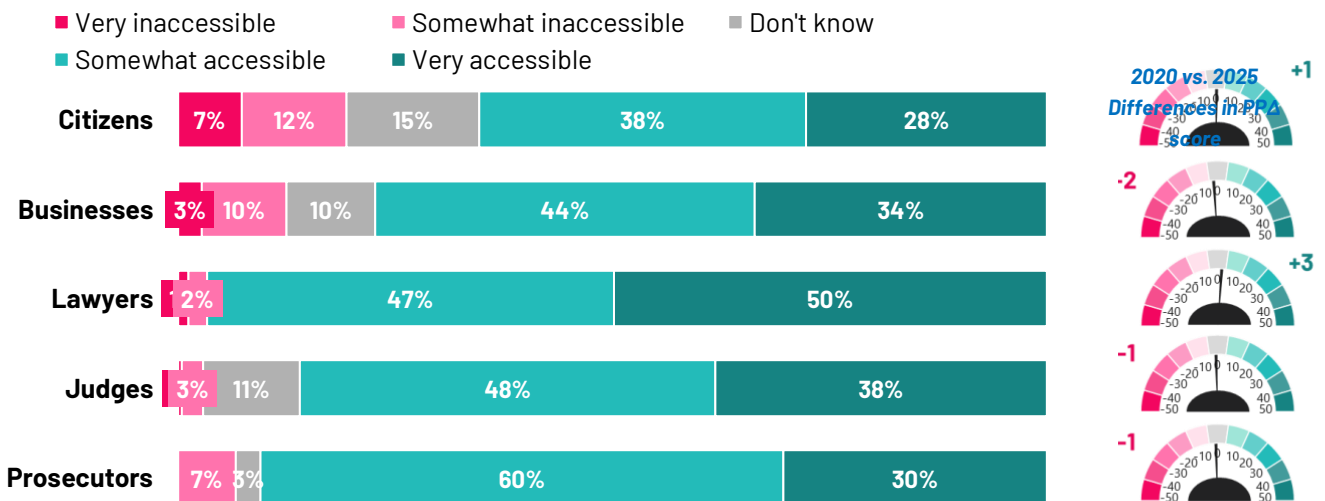
4.1.5. General perception of accessibility of private bailiff's services

454. Private bailiffs are generally perceived as accessible, with almost every lawyer (97%), nine out of ten prosecutors (91%), and a significant majority of judges (86%) supporting this view. Additionally, three-quarters of businesses (77%) and two-thirds of citizens (65%) agree that bailiffs are accessible. Conversely, one in five citizens (19%) believe that bailiffs are not accessible (Figure 116).

455. Inaccessibility of bailiffs is more frequently reported by citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity (23%) compared to those of Serbian ethnicity (12%). Similarly, individuals aligned with opposition parties (33%) report higher inaccessibility than those aligned with ruling parties (13%).

456. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of private bailiff accessibility remained generally stable across all groups from 2020 to 2025, with minimal changes reflected in low PPA scores: citizens (+1), lawyers (+3), businesses (-2), judges (-1), and prosecutors (-1). These modest variations indicate consistent views of bailiff accessibility over the five-year period.

Figure 116- CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF BAILIFFS' ACCESSIBILITY



(To what extent are the FOLLOWING institutions accessible to all citizens/ legal entities? - Private bailiffs); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

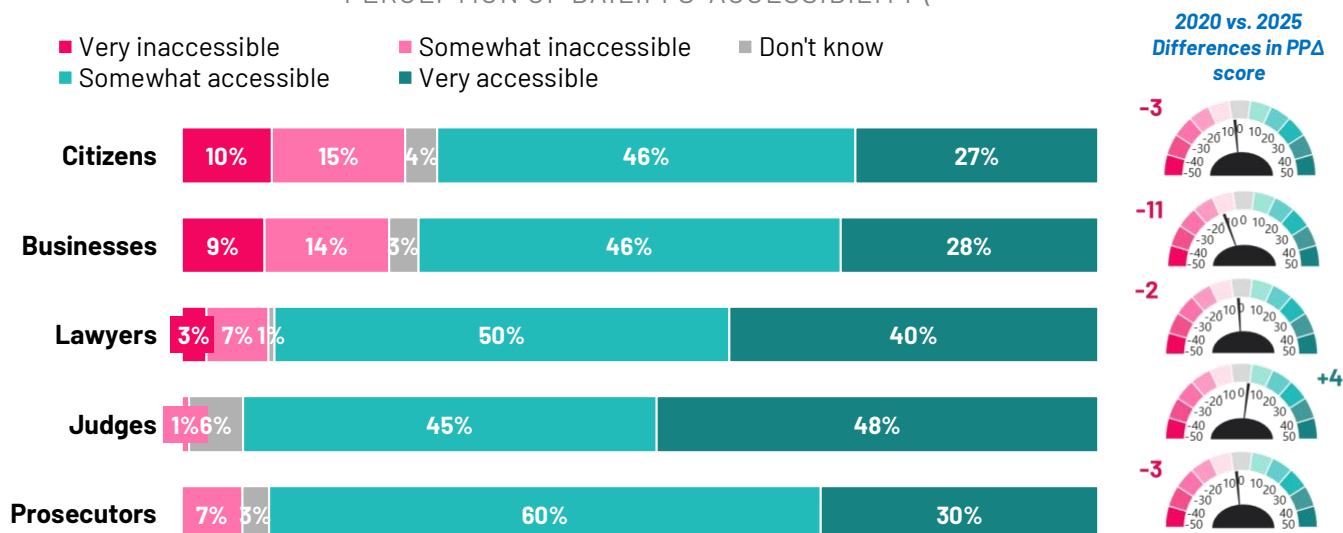
4.1.6. General perception of accessibility of administrative court services

457. In Montenegro, Administrative Court services are widely perceived as accessible. Nearly three-quarters of citizens (72%) and businesses (74%) attest to their accessibility. Furthermore, the services receive high praise from justice system professionals, with nine out of ten lawyers (90%) and prosecutors (90%), alongside more than nine out of ten judges (93%), acknowledging their accessibility (Figure 117).

458. Citizens residing in the Central region report higher levels of inaccessibility to Administrative Court services (30%) compared to those in the Northern region (17%). Likewise, individuals supporting opposition parties perceive greater inaccessibility (43%) compared to those backing ruling parties (17%). Moreover, citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity (32%) report more accessibility issues than their Serbian counterparts (15%).

459. Compared to 2020 – Administrative court accessibility perceptions show mixed trends from 2020 to 2025. Businesses demonstrated the most significant negative change, with accessibility concerns rising from 9% to 23% (PPΔ -11), indicating that 11% of businesses shifted their opinion in a negative direction. Citizens experienced a slight decline (PPΔ -3), while lawyers (PPΔ -2) and prosecutors (PPΔ -3) also showed modest decreases. Judges provided the only positive development with improved perceptions (PPΔ +4).

Figure 117- CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF BAILIFFS' ACCESSIBILITY (



To what extent are the FOLLOWING institutions accessible to all citizens/ legal entities? – Administrative court services; Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

4.2. Accessibility of information, geographic accessibility of the court, navigation in court building and financial accessibility

460. The accessibility of Montenegro's judicial system is assessed across three dimensions: financial, physical, and informational. Generally, most service users and justice system professionals provide positive evaluations for all three dimensions, although financial accessibility receives a somewhat lower score. Nonetheless, three distinct groups can be identified within these assessments (Figure 118).

461. Prosecutors and judges provide the most favorable evaluations across all three accessibility dimensions. Over nine out of ten among them view the judicial system as accessible both in terms of access to information (93% of both judges and prosecutors) and physical accessibility (93% of judges, 90% of prosecutors). Regarding financial accessibility, a similar proportion of judges (92%) and eight out of ten prosecutors (79%) report positive views.

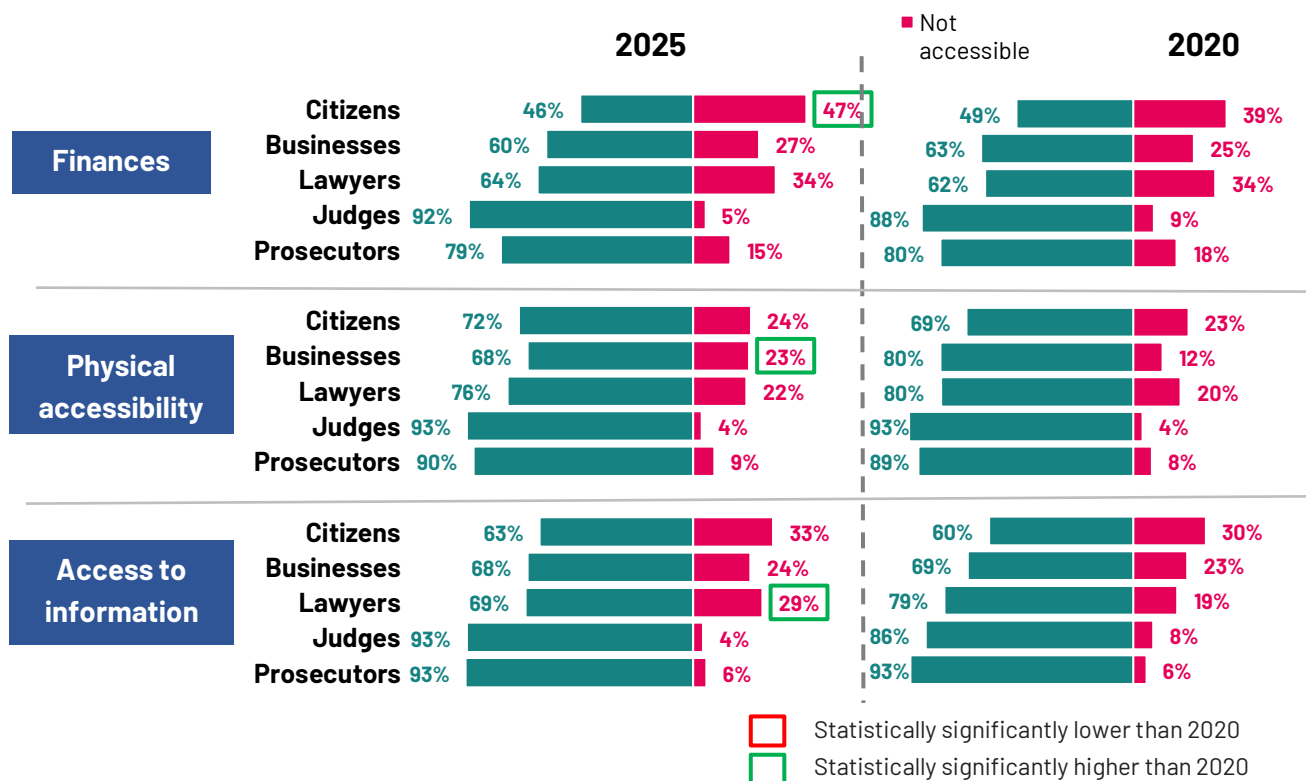
462. Next, a moderately positive evaluation is given by lawyers and businesses. Seven out of ten businesses (68%) and lawyers (69%) believe the justice system is accessible in terms of information. Similarly, the same percentage of businesses and a slightly higher percentage of lawyers (76%) find it accessible in physical terms. Regarding financial accessibility, around six out of ten perceive the justice system as accessible, with 60% of businesses and 64% of lawyers sharing this view.

463. Finally, citizens give the lowest ratings across the three accessibility dimensions of the justice system. Approximately seven out of ten rate the system as physically accessible (72%), while six out of ten view it as accessible in informational terms (63%). Financially, only 46% of citizens perceive the system as accessible.

464. With respect to physical accessibility, a vast majority of citizens with court experience found navigating the court building to be easy (88%). Similarly, the majority of businesses reported that orienting themselves within the court was either somewhat easy or very easy (86%).

465. Compared to 2020 – Between 2020 and 2025, there has been an increase in the percentage of citizens who perceive the judicial system as financially inaccessible, growing from 39% to 47%. Regarding physical accessibility, the proportion of businesses finding it accessible has decreased from 80% to 68%. Meanwhile, in terms of access to information, lawyers now view the judicial system as slightly more inaccessible, with perceptions rising from 19% to 29%.

Figure 118 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF THREE SPECIFIC ASPECTS OF ACCESSIBILITY



(How accessible is the judicial system to citizens of Montenegro in terms of...?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

4.3. Perception of information accessibility of judiciary in own court case

4.3.1. Sources of information regarding the cases used by citizen and businesses

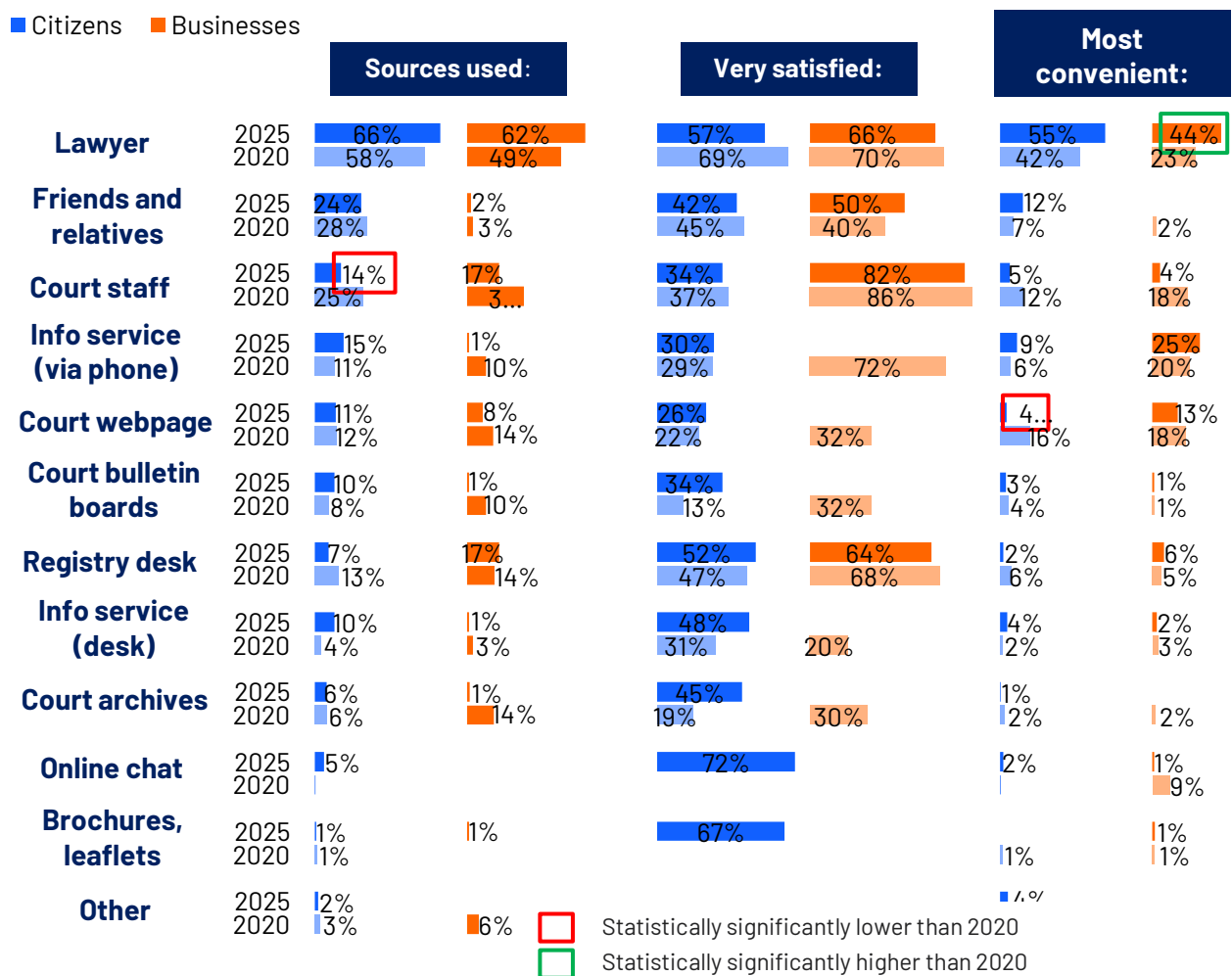
466. Citizens and businesses share a common preference when seeking information about their specific court cases, with both groups most frequently consulting lawyers (66% of citizens and 62% of businesses). Additionally, citizens often rely on friends and relatives (24%) as well as info services available via phone (15%). Conversely, businesses tend to turn more to court staff and the registry desk, with each being referenced by 17% (Figure 119).

467. In terms of satisfaction, the majority of citizens rate online chat as their most satisfying source of information, with 72% indicating they are very satisfied. This is followed by brochures and leaflets at 67%, and lawyers at third with 57% very satisfied. For businesses, court staff is the most satisfying source, with 82% saying they are very satisfied, and lawyers are the second choice at 66% very satisfied. (Figure 119).

468. Lawyers, being the most frequently utilized source of information, are also regarded as the most convenient by citizens (55%) and businesses (44%). Meanwhile, a quarter of businesses prioritize the phone-based info service (25%) and the court webpage (13%) as the most effective ways to obtain information. Among citizens, friends and relatives are preferred by 12%, and the phone-based info service is chosen by 9%.

469. Compared to 2020 – There has been a notable decrease in the percentage of citizens relying on court staff as a source of information, dropping from 25% in 2020 to 14% in 2025. Concerning the most convenient sources, the preference for the court webpage has also diminished significantly, going from 16% to 4% over the same period. On the other hand, businesses have increasingly favored lawyers as the most convenient source of information, with preferences rising from 23% to 44% between 2020 and 2025.

Figure 119 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR SPECIFIC CASES



(Which sources of information did you use to find out what you needed to do in this specific case?; How satisfied are you with those sources of information?; In your opinion, which source of information about such proceedings would be the most convenient for people like you?); Base: Those who had experience with court cases in the past three years; (Citizens n=357 in 2020, n=343 in 2025; Businesses n=109 in 2020, n=79 in 2025)

4.3.2. Ease of obtaining information in concrete case

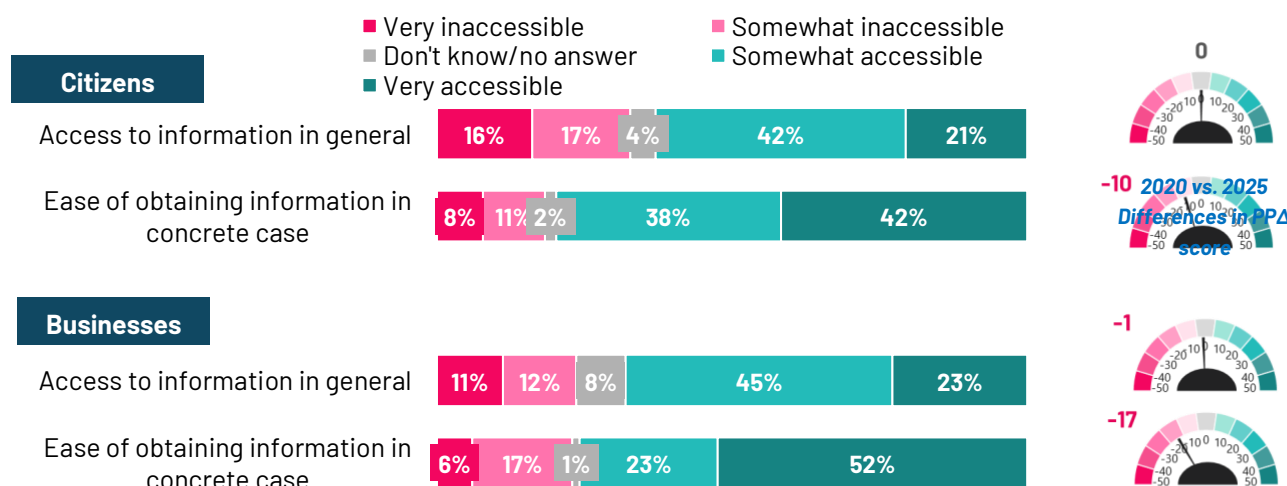
470. Overall, more than six out of ten citizens (63%) and approximately two-thirds of businesses (68%) feel that information is accessible. Notably, individuals with court case experience hold a much more favorable view regarding access to information. Specifically, about eight out of ten citizens (80%) and 76% of businesses report that the information in their specific cases was accessible. (Figure 120).

471. Both citizens and businesses have had varying experiences when acquiring documents necessary for their court cases from other organizations. Specifically, 43% of citizens reported no issues encountered, similar to 46% of businesses. Meanwhile, 20% of citizens and 13% of businesses experienced only minor challenges. In contrast, a smaller portion faced significant problems that obstructed their participation in the court process, with 12% of citizens and 10% of businesses reporting such difficulties.

472. Compared to 2020 – Compared to 2020, there has been a noticeable shift in perceptions of information accessibility among citizens and businesses. Although the overall PPA score for citizens remains unchanged, there is a decline in accessibility in specific situations. The proportion of citizens who found general process information inaccessible rose from 8% to 18%, while those who found it accessible decreased from 89% to 80%, resulting in a PPA score of -10.

473. Similarly, for businesses, although the general PPA score is only slightly negative at -1, specific cases reveal more significant changes. The proportion of businesses reporting information as inaccessible rose from 6% to 23%, and those finding it accessible decreased from 93% to 77%, reflecting a PPA score of -17.

Figure 120 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: ACCESS TO INFORMATION IN GENERAL VS. EASE OF OBTAINING INFORMATION IN CONCRETE CASE



(How accessible is the judicial system to citizens of Montenegro in terms of...? / To what extent was the general information about the course and requirements of the process (time of hearing, place, etc.) accessible to you or your legal representative?);
 Base: Total target population; Those who had experience with a court case in the past three years; (Total citizens n=1305, Experienced citizens=343; Total businesses n=272, Experienced businesses n=79)

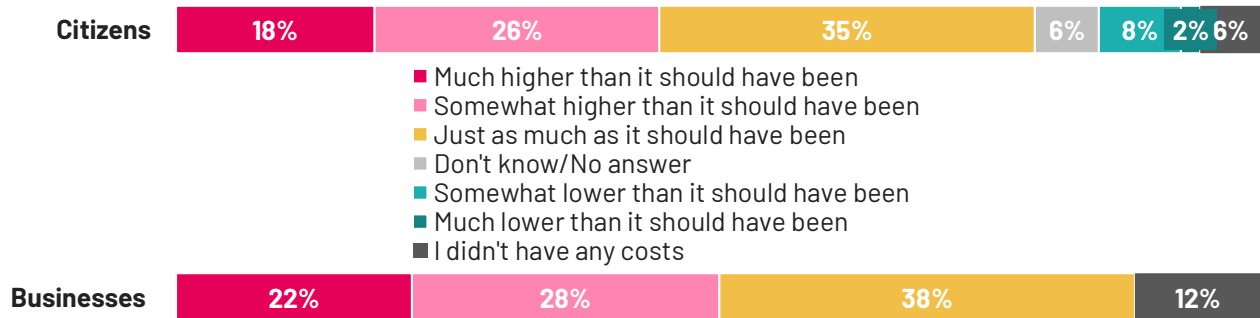
4.4. Perception of financial accessibility (cost-effectiveness)

474. In evaluating the costs associated with their experiences, citizens and businesses have reported varying levels of satisfaction. Among citizens, 18% felt the costs were much higher than they should have been, with a further 26% rating them as somewhat higher, totaling 45% who perceived costs as higher than expected. Meanwhile, 35% of citizens considered costs to be just right, whereas a

minority felt costs were somewhat lower (8%) or much lower (2%) than they should be. Additionally, 6% of citizens reported having incurred no costs at all, while another 6% were uncertain or declined to provide an answer.

475. For businesses, cost perceptions were somewhat similar, with 22% stating costs were much higher than expected and 28% noting they were somewhat higher, resulting in a combined 50% who perceived costs as higher than anticipated. Conversely, 38% of businesses found the expenses to align with expectations, and 12% indicated they did not incur any costs.

Figure 121 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: TOTAL COSTS OF FIRST INSTANCE PROCEEDINGS EVALUATION



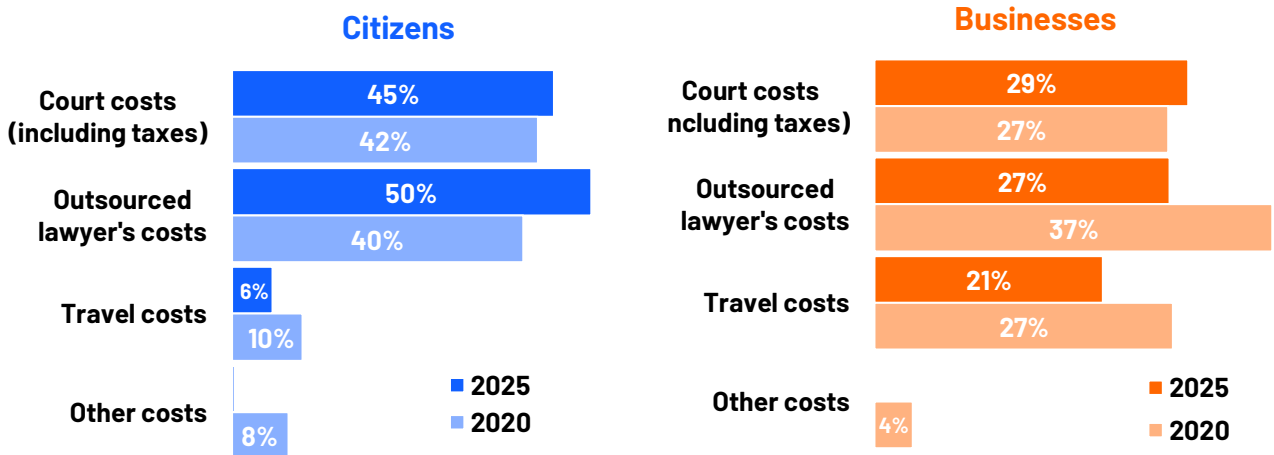
(How would you evaluate your (company's) total cost of the first instance proceedings? This cost includes all court costs and taxes, the lawyer's fee and travel costs which you possibly had (but does not include fines)); Base: those who took part in a court proceeding over the past three years; (Citizens n=343; Businesses n=79)

476. Citizens report that half of their total expenses (50%) were attributed to outsourced lawyer fees, with court costs, including taxes, comprising 45% of the total. Meanwhile, businesses indicate that the largest portion of their expenses are court-related costs, including taxes (29%), closely followed by outsourced lawyer fees at 27% (Figure 122).

477. The biggest difference is the share of travel costs. They seem noticeably more important to businesses, as 21% of all their costs go went to travel ones, while citizens reported only 6% in this purpose.

478. Compared to 2020 – Since 2020, there has been a notable decrease in the percentage of other costs reported by citizens, reducing from 8% to almost negligible in 2025. Additionally, lawyer fees now constitute the largest portion of citizens' total expenses, whereas in 2020, the shares of court and lawyer costs were comparable. In contrast, businesses now experience the opposite pattern, where court costs have become more prominent compared to lawyer fees.

Figure 122. - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: TYPES OF COSTS OF FIRST INSTANCE PROCEEDINGS

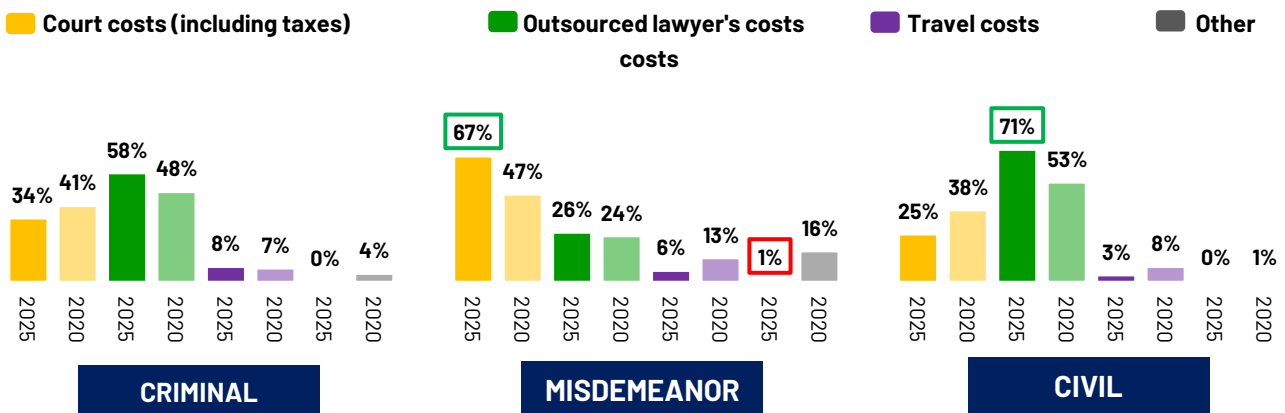


(Of the total cost that you had in this case in the first instance proceedings, which percentage of total cost can be attributed to:); Average values; Base: Those who had experience with court case in the past three years and were able to answer; (Citizens n=114 in 2020, n=273 in 2025; Businesses n=104 in 2020, n=70 in 2025)

479. Cost allocation appears to be similar between civil and criminal cases, though the distribution for misdemeanor cases differs slightly. Unsurprisingly, lawyers' fees represent the largest portion of total costs in criminal cases (58%) and civil cases (71%), whereas they account for only 25% in misdemeanor cases. Conversely, court costs dominate in misdemeanor cases, making up two-thirds of the total costs (67%), compared to one-third for criminal cases (34%) and just one-quarter (25%) for civil cases (Figure 123).

480. Compared to 2020 – There has been a significant increase in the proportion of court costs, including taxes, reported by citizens with experience in misdemeanor cases, rising from 47% to 67% by 2025. Conversely, for criminal and civil cases, lawyer fees have become more prominent. Specifically, for criminal cases, lawyer fees have increased from 48% in 2020 to 58% in 2025, while for civil cases, they have risen from 53% in 2020 to 71% in 2025.

Figure 123 - CITIZENS: TYPES OF COSTS OF FIRST INSTANCE PROCEEDINGS BY TYPE OF COURT CASE AND OUTCOME OF THE PROCEEDINGS



(Of the total cost that you had in this case in the first instance proceedings, which percentage of total cost can be attributed to:); Base: Those who had experience with court case in the past three years and were able to answer (Citizens n=114 in 2020, n=273 in 2025)

67% Statistically significantly lower than 2020
71% Statistically significantly higher than 2020

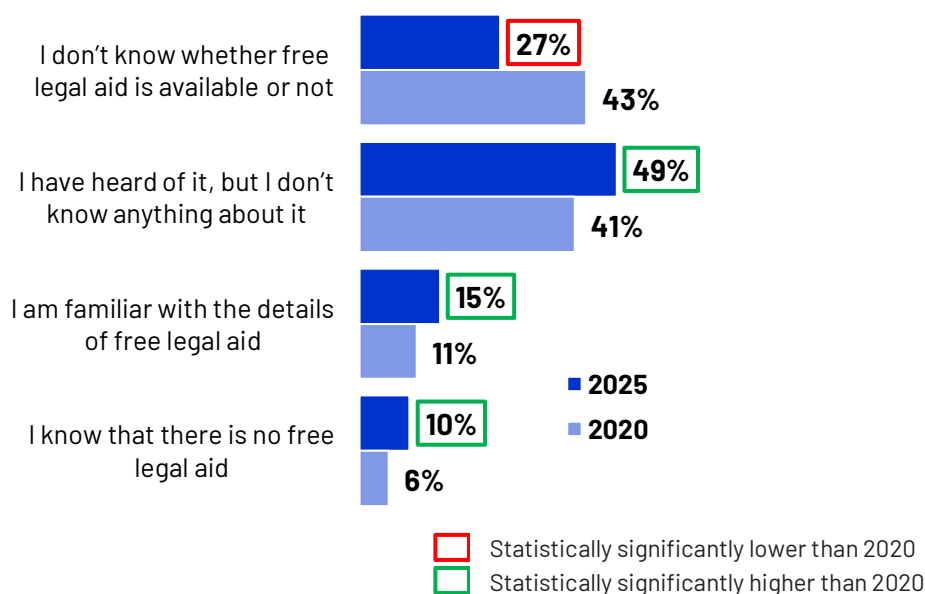
4.5. Perception of free legal assistance

481. More than one-quarter of citizens (27%) are unaware of whether free legal aid is available, while an additional half (49%) have only heard of such aid without knowing the specifics. Moreover, considering that 10% incorrectly assert that free legal aid is not available in Montenegro, it implies that only 15% of the general population confidently state they are familiar with the details of free legal aid (Figure 124).

482. Familiarity with free legal aid appears to be linked to factors such as education, income, type of settlement, and region. Highly educated citizens are more likely to be familiar with legal aid, with 22% stating they know the details. Citizens with above-average income and those from the southern region show greater awareness of free legal aid, with 58% and 63% respectively having heard about it. Conversely, individuals residing in rural areas are more inclined to be uncertain about the availability of free legal aid, with 35% expressing this uncertainty, compared to 24% in urban areas and 27% on average.

483. Compared to 2020– Compared to 2020, there has been a notable decline in the proportion of individuals who are unsure about the availability of free legal aid, dropping from 43% to 27% in 2025. Simultaneously, each of the three alternative responses has shown a statistically significant increase since the 2020 survey.

Figure 124 - CITIZENS: KNOWLEDGE ABOUT FREE LEGAL AID



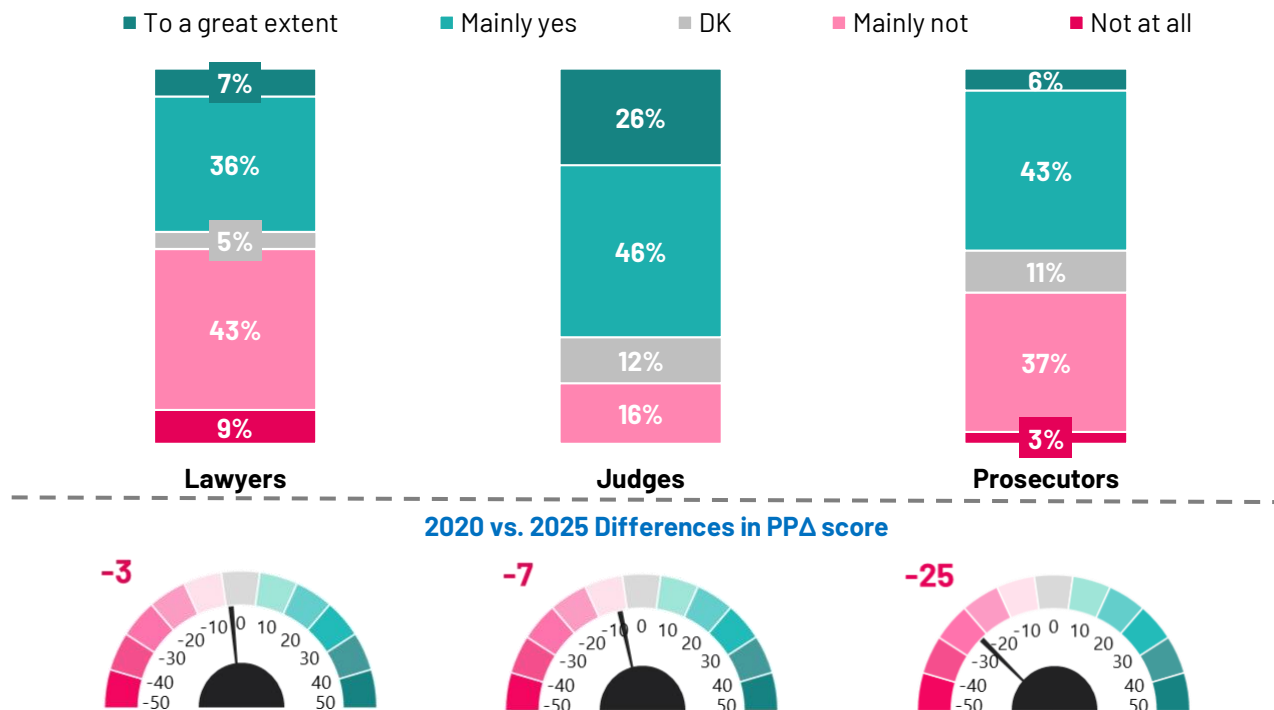
(Which of the following describes your knowledge about free legal aid (not including public defender and pro bono private lawyer) in Montenegro best?); Base: Total target population; (n=1305 in 2025, n=1333 in 2020)

484. Considering that only 15% of citizens claim to be familiar with the details of free legal aid, judges appear overly optimistic in their assessment of public awareness, as 72% believe that citizens are mainly or greatly informed about it. Prosecutors exhibit a more realistic view, yet half (49%) still think citizens are well-informed. Lawyers, who directly interact with justice system users, seem to have the most accurate perception: 44% believe citizens are somewhat informed, while 52% assert that citizens are not informed (Figure 125).

485. Compared to 2020 – In comparison to 2020, prosecutors appear significantly more realistic now, with 40% currently believing that citizens are not informed about the availability of free legal

aid, up from 15% in 2020. This shift is clearly reflected in the PPA score, which stands at -25 for prosecutors. Judges also show a more realistic outlook with a PPA score of -7, and lawyers have a score of -3, indicating that all groups have become somewhat more realistic.

Figure 125 - LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: EVALUATION OF CITIZENS' FAMILIARITY ABOUT FREE LEGAL AID



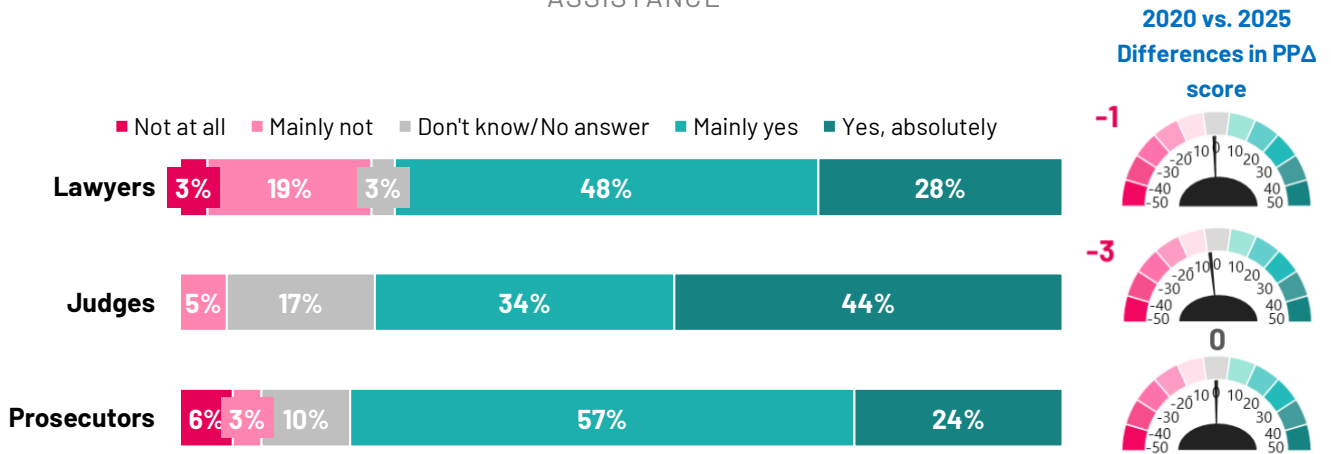
(In your opinion, how informed are the citizens about availability of free legal aid (not including public defender and pro bono private lawyer)?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150)(Those who said that free legal aid is available to those who need it); (Judges n=130; Prosecutors n=61)

4.5.1. Availability and evaluation of free legal assistance by justice system professionals

486. A majority of justice system professionals believe that free legal aid is accessible to those in need (Figure 126). Specifically, 78% of judges, 81% of prosecutors, and 75% of lawyers affirm its availability in Montenegro. Disagreement is minimal among judges (5%) and prosecutors (9%), but it is notably higher among lawyers, with approximately one in five (22%) asserting that free legal aid is not accessible to those who require it.

487. Compared to 2020 - In comparison to the previous wave in 2020, there have been no significant differences regarding the views of justice system professionals on the availability of free legal aid to those in need. This stability is reflected in the PPA scores, with lawyers at -1 and prosecutors at 0. However, judges registered a PPA score of -3, likely influenced by the increase in 'don't know' responses and non-responses, which rose from 7% in 2020 to 17% in the current evaluation.

Figure 126 - JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND LAWYERS: AVAILABILITY OF FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE

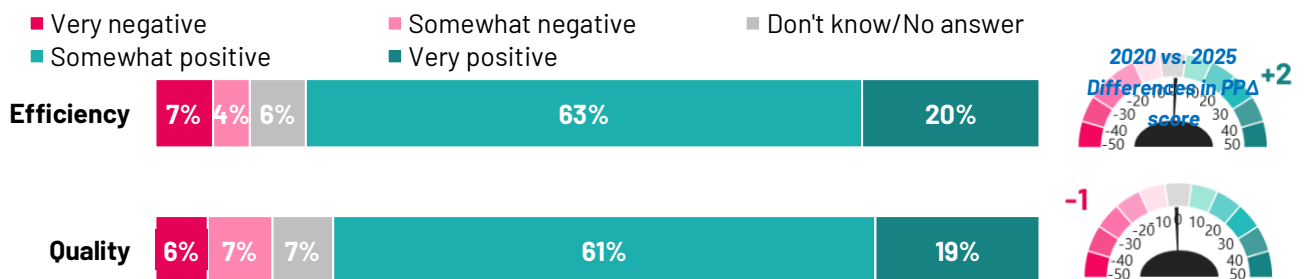


(In your opinion, to what extent is free legal aid (not including public defender and pro bono private lawyer) available to those who need it in this country?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

488. Lawyers generally evaluate the efficiency and quality of free legal aid favorably. Specifically, 83% rate its efficiency positively, and 80% express a positive assessment of its quality (Figure 127).

489. Compared to 2020 – Lawyers' assessments of free legal aid efficiency and quality remained generally stable, with PPA scores of +2 for efficiency and -1 for quality, indicating minimal change in overall perceptions between 2020 and 2025.

Figure 127 - LAWYERS: EVALUATION OF FREE LEGAL ASSISTANCE



(What is your general impression of the efficiency and quality of free legal aid (not including public defender and pro bono private lawyer) in Montenegro in the past few years?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150)

4.6. Mediation, plea agreement and deferred prosecution

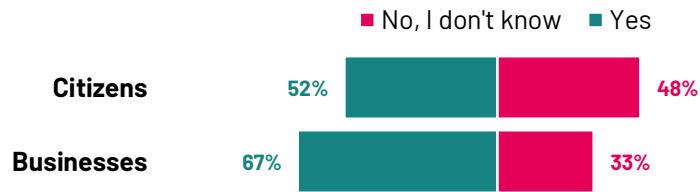
4.6.1. Mediation process (mediation)

490. Over half of the citizens (52%) assert that they are familiar with the mediation process, whereas two-thirds of businesses (67%) make the same claim (Figure 128).

491. Citizens who are more likely to claim familiarity with mediation include those with higher education (67%), individuals employed in the state sector (64%), those with above-average income (60%), those leaning towards opposition parties (61%), and those with recent personal court experience (64%).

4.6.2. Plea agreement and deferred prosecution

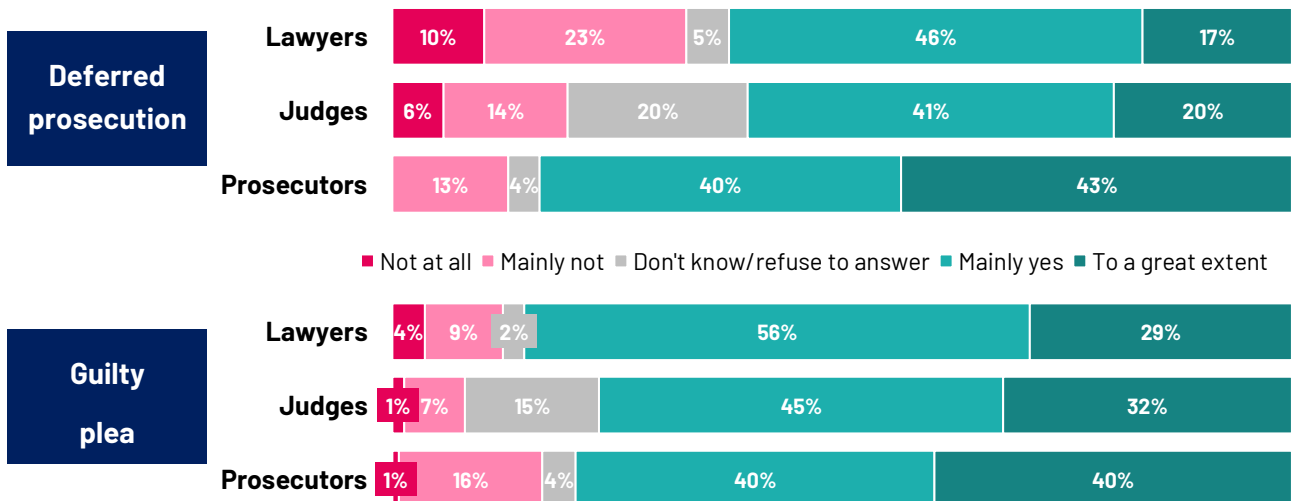
Figure 128 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: FAMILIARITY WITH MEDIATION PROCESS



(Do you know what a mediation process in resolving the disputes is (that is, the process of mediation)?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

492. Most justice professionals believe that deferred prosecution and guilty pleas benefit the judicial system. Specifically, regarding deferred prosecution, the largest share of support comes from prosecutors, with 84% affirming its contribution, followed by 63% of lawyers and 61% of judges. In terms of guilty pleas, an overwhelming majority of lawyers (85%) think it contributes positively, as do eight out of ten prosecutors (80%) and 77% of judges (Figure 129).

Figure 129- JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND LAWYERS: CONTRIBUTION OF DISPUTE SETTLEMENTS MECHANISMS TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



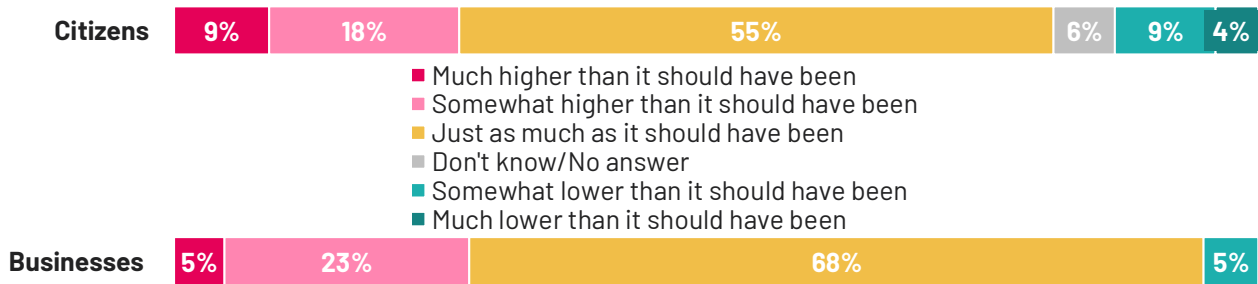
(To what extent, in your opinion, do the following instruments contribute to judicial system?); Base: Total target population; (Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71, Lawyers N=150)

4.7. Accessibility of notary services in a specific case

4.7.1. Cost of notary services

493. More than half of citizens (55%) and nearly seven out of ten businesses (68%) believe that the cost of notary services is in line with their expectations. Slightly over a quarter of both citizens (26%) and businesses (27%) find the costs to be higher than they should be, while a small percentage of citizens (13%) and businesses (5%) perceive the costs as lower than expected (Figure 130).

Figure 130 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: COST OF NOTARY SERVICES EVALUATION



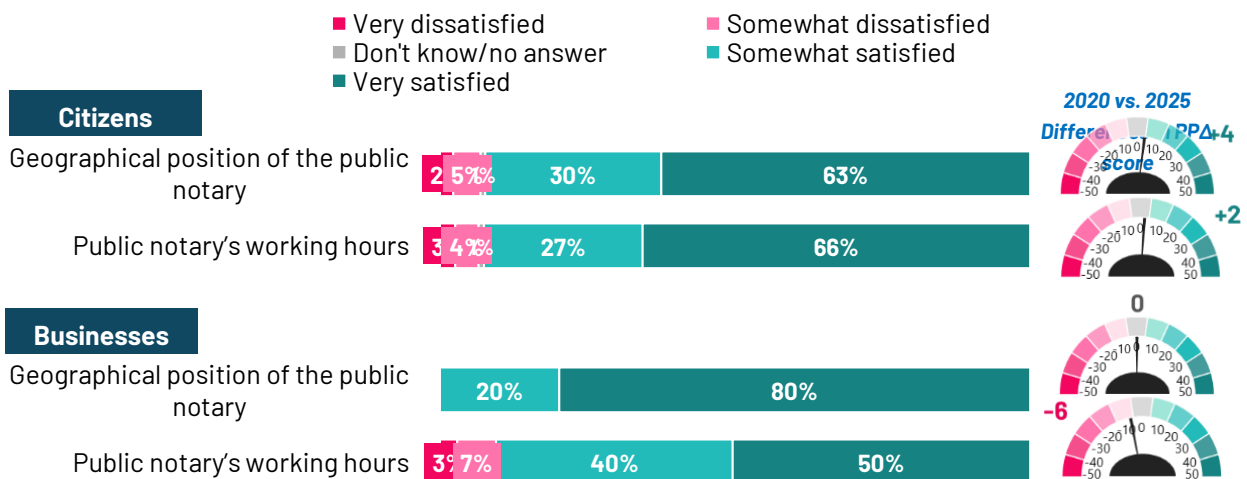
(How would you evaluate your (company's) total cost of notary service in this particular case? Total costs imply all costs (administrative fees), the public notary's fee and travel costs, if any.); Base: Those who had experience with notaries in the past 12 months and were able to answer; (Citizens n=265; Businesses n=69)

4.7.2. Accessibility of notaries in terms of geographic position/ the working hours

494. Satisfaction with both the geographical location and working hours of public notaries is reflected positively in the feedback. A significant majority of citizens (92%) and all businesses express satisfaction with the notaries' locations. Specifically, 63% of citizens and eight out of ten businesses (80%) are very satisfied, while nearly one-third of citizens (30%) and one-fifth of businesses (20%) report being mainly satisfied. Regarding working hours, an overwhelming majority are satisfied, with 93% of citizens and 91% of businesses indicating contentment. Among citizens, 66% are very satisfied and 27% are somewhat satisfied, while among businesses, half are very satisfied (50%) and 40% are somewhat satisfied (Figure 131).

495. Compared to 2020 - Citizens showed modest improvement in satisfaction with notary services across both geographic location (PPΔ +4) and working hours (PPΔ +2). For businesses, geographic satisfaction remained stable, but working hours satisfaction declined (PPΔ -6), meaning 6% of businesses became less satisfied with notary working hours.

Figure 131 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: ACCESSIBILITY OF NOTARIES IN TERMS OF GEOGRAPHIC POSITION/ THE WORKING HOURS



(How satisfied were you with the geographical position of this notary - how far did you have to travel to reach him? / How satisfied were you with the notary's working hours?); Base: Those who had experience with notaries in the past 12 months; (Citizens n=265; Businesses n=69)

5. INDEPENDENCE

- Overall perception of judicial independence shows a mixed picture with notable stakeholder divergence. Over half of citizens (52%) and businesses (58%) view courts and judges as independent, while justice professionals express stronger confidence (87% judges, 83% prosecutors, 58% lawyers). However, businesses show significant decline since 2020 (PPΔ -11), with negative views rising from 27% to 40%.
- Trust in the judicial system ranks in the middle tier of institutions at 55%, below religious institutions and education (73% each) and the Army (72%), but above NGOs (48%). The judicial system experienced moderate decline (PPΔ -5) since 2020.
- Threat perceptions have intensified dramatically among justice professionals. Lawyers cite politicians (71%), media (67%), and powerful individuals (63%) as primary threats, while judges identify media (67%) and politicians (61%). All threat categories showed substantial increases since 2020, with politicians surging among lawyers from 42% to 71%.
- Perceptions of negative phenomena reveal stark divisions between stakeholders. Citizens, businesses, and lawyers report significant presence of corruption (50-68%), selective procedures (53-61%), and political influence (68-74%), while judges and prosecutors maintain notably less critical views (19-47%). Broader consensus exists only on media sensationalism (58-78%) and inconsistent court decisions (58-75%).
- Corruption perceptions have deteriorated significantly since 2020. Judges' acknowledgment doubled from 13% to 26% (PPΔ -10), prosecutors rose from 14% to 31% (PPΔ -8), and businesses increased from 49% to 59% (PPΔ -11). Despite these perceptions, 83% of citizens and 94% of businesses report never being suggested to use informal means.
- Fairness and discrimination concerns differ markedly by stakeholder group. More than half of lawyers (57%) perceive lack of fairness versus 28% of judges, while citizens identify party membership and economic status (both 56%) as primary discrimination concerns. Prosecutors show the most substantial fairness decline since 2020 (PPΔ -12), while citizens report higher perceived discrimination across all characteristics.

Perceptions About the Independence of Justice System

496. Citizens and businesses maintain moderately positive perceptions of judicial independence.

Over half of citizens (52%) and nearly three-fifths of businesses (58%) rate the independence of courts and judges favorably, while 43% of citizens and 40% of businesses hold negative views. Citizens with positive perceptions most commonly cite adequate judicial status guaranteeing independence (59%), absence of governmental and political interference (58%), and lack of interference from economic interests (57%), while those with negative views primarily blame governmental and political interference (92%), interference from economic interests (90%), and inadequate status guarantees (85%). Businesses follow similar patterns in their reasoning.

497. Regarding prosecutorial independence, perceptions are slightly more positive – 54% of citizens and 60% of businesses view prosecution and public prosecutors as independent, while 40% of citizens and 35% of businesses disagree. Reasons for positive and negative perceptions mirror those for courts and judges.

498. Justice system professionals express strong confidence in judicial independence – 87% of judges and 83% of prosecutors view the system as independent, while lawyers show more moderate support at 58%, with two-fifths (41%) questioning independence.

499. 2020 Comparison: Citizens show overall stability regarding courts and judges (PPΔ -2), though statistically significant increases occurred in agreement with all reasons for negative ratings, while the opposite trend was observed for reasons supporting positive ratings. Businesses experienced substantial decline with negative views rising from 27% to 40% (PPΔ -11), accompanied by significant decreases in citing absence of governmental interference (83% to 71%) and economic interference (77% to 67%) as reasons for positive ratings. Among professionals, lawyers demonstrate a negative shift (PPΔ -6), while judges and prosecutors remain relatively stable.

Trust in Institutions

500. The judicial system ranks in the middle tier of institutional trust, with 55% of citizens expressing confidence. Religious institutions and the education system share the highest trust levels (73% each), followed by the Army (72%). NGOs receive the lowest trust ratings at 48%.

501. 2020 Comparison: The most significant trust declines occurred for NGOs (PPΔ -14) and the health system (PPΔ -12). The judicial system experienced moderate decline (PPΔ -5), with trust falling from 63% to 55%. Modest improvements were observed for the President of Montenegro (PPΔ +2) and Prime Minister (PPΔ +1).

Factors Threatening the Independence of the Judiciary

502. Justice system professionals identify multiple threats to judicial independence, with lawyers maintaining the most critical perspective. Lawyers cite politicians (71%), media (67%), and powerful individuals (63%) as primary threats. Judges identify media (67%), politicians (61%), and central government (44%) as top concerns. Prosecutors demonstrate more moderate assessments, with media (50%), politicians (48%), and NGOs (33%) ranked highest.

503. 2020 Comparison: Threat perceptions intensified dramatically across all professional groups. Among lawyers, politicians surged from 42% to 71%, and media from 33% to 67%. Judges' concerns about media nearly doubled (39% to 67%), while politicians more than doubled (27% to 61%). Prosecutors showed substantial increases, with media rising from 22% to 50% and religious institutions surging from 3% to 25%.

Presence of Negative Phenomena

504. Citizens, businesses, and lawyers report significant presence of negative phenomena undermining the justice system, while judges and prosecutors maintain notably less critical perspectives. The strongest disagreements concern corruption (68% citizens, 59% businesses, 50% lawyers vs. 26% judges, 31% prosecutors), selective investigative procedures (61% citizens, 53% businesses, 58% lawyers vs. 30% judges, 24% prosecutors), and selective case initiation (60% citizens, 61% lawyers vs. 43% judges, 19% prosecutors). Broader consensus exists regarding media sensationalism (58-78% across all groups) and different decisions in similar cases (58-75% across all groups).

505. 2020 Comparison: Statistically significant increases in perceived negative phenomena occurred across all groups. Citizens showed largest increases in extended court duration (61% to 70%) and different decisions in similar cases (53% to 63%). Judges demonstrated the most extensive changes, with corruption perceptions doubling (13% to 26%) and political influence more than doubling (20% to 47%). Prosecutors showed extended court duration more than doubling (27% to 60%).

Influence of Judicial Institutions on Integrity

506. Prosecutors demonstrate the highest confidence in the institutional framework, with 73-79% positively assessing most institutions (prosecutors' management, Prosecutorial Council, Disciplinary Commission, Commission for codes of ethics). Judges hold similarly favorable but more

tempered opinions, with 54-68% positive assessments. Lawyers are markedly less optimistic, with positive assessments ranging from 40-51% and substantial shares (26-37%) reporting no influence. The Judicial Inspectorate receives the lowest positive ratings across all groups.

507. 2020 Comparison: Lawyers exhibit the most pronounced negative shifts, with the Judicial Inspectorate (PPΔ -11), Judicial Council (PPΔ -10), and Disciplinary Commission of the Judicial Council (PPΔ -9) showing the largest declines. Judges also demonstrate declining confidence, with the Commission for codes of ethics dropping from 69% to 54% (PPΔ -9). Prosecutors show the most notable change for the Judicial Inspectorate, where perceived no influence increased from 17% to 38% (PPΔ -7).

Influence of Professional Associations

508. Professional associations appear to have more modest influence on professional integrity. Lawyers express the most favorable views about the Bar Association (58% positive), while judges hold more reserved opinions about the Association of Judges (54% positive). Prosecutors show an interesting pattern – while 50% view their association positively, 39% perceive no influence. Both notaries and bailiffs express predominantly positive views about their respective chambers.

509. 2020 Comparison: Prosecutors demonstrate the most significant decline, with positive perceptions dropping from 70% to 49% (PPΔ -10). Lawyers also experienced a negative shift (PPΔ -8). Judges show stability (PPΔ -2).

Corruption in the Judiciary

510. Citizens are the most critical group regarding corruption, with more than two-thirds (68%) perceiving corruption as present in the judicial system. Businesses share this concern (59%), while lawyers are evenly split (50%). Judges and prosecutors are considerably less likely to acknowledge corruption (26% and 31% respectively). Among lawyers who perceive corruption, the majority (45%) characterize it as based on individual cases rather than systemic patterns.

511. Regarding informal practices, pulling strings appears to be the most widespread concern – 87% of citizens, 83% of lawyers, and 76% of businesses believe it occurs. Pecuniary compensation and gift-giving are perceived less frequently, particularly among lawyers. Despite these perceptions, the vast majority of citizens (83%) and businesses (94%) report they were never suggested to resort to informal means. Court staff report corruption as rare in their departments (88% report absence).

512. 2020 Comparison: Businesses demonstrate substantial negative shift with perceived corruption rising from 49% to 59% (PPΔ -11). Among justice professionals, judges' acknowledgment of corruption doubled from 13% to 26% (PPΔ -10), prosecutors rose from 14% to 31% (PPΔ -8), and lawyers also shifted negatively (PPΔ -10). Perceptions of pulling strings intensified across all groups (Citizens and Lawyers PPΔ -11, Businesses PPΔ -13).

Fairness

513. Among justice system professionals, judges (57%) and prosecutors (45%) report no lack of fairness in the judiciary, while more than half of lawyers (57%) perceive fairness issues. Service users' perceptions improve with direct experience – while 56% of citizens and 60% of businesses view the system as generally fair, these figures rise to 75% for citizens evaluating their own cases.

514. 2020 Comparison: Prosecutors show the most substantial negative shift, with perceived lack of fairness rising from 15% to 32% (PPΔ -12). Businesses experienced significant decline in fairness assessments, both generally (PPΔ -14) and in specific cases (PPΔ -21).

Discrimination

515. Citizens and lawyers identify party membership and economic status (both 56%) as the most problematic aspects of discrimination. Businesses express concerns about ownership structure (57%), company size (56%), and political connections (54%). Justice professionals maintain distinctly different perspectives, with no more than 18% perceiving discrimination. Regarding gender equality, lawyers show the most pronounced gender gaps – female lawyers are considerably more likely than males to perceive men as advantaged in income and promotion.

516. 2020 Comparison: Citizens report substantially higher perceived discrimination across all characteristics. Businesses also show significant increases. Gender equality perceptions among female prosecutors declined notably regarding promotion opportunities.

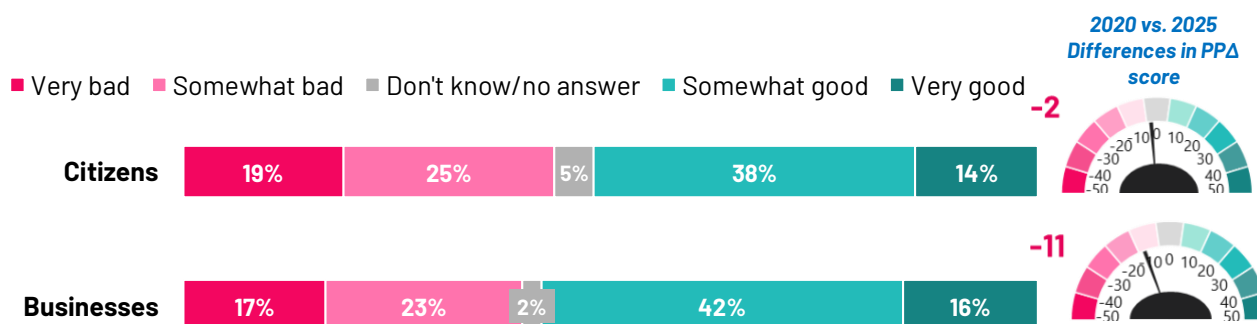
5.1. Integrity of judiciary

517. Over half of the citizens (52%) rate the independence of the courts and judges in Montenegro as good, while more than two-fifths (43%) view it negatively. Businesses express a more favorable opinion, with 58% seeing the independence of courts and judges as good, contrasted by 40% who assess it as bad (Figure 132).

518. Male citizens are more likely than females to rate the independence of courts and judges negatively (47% vs. 41%). Those with lower educational levels are also more inclined to perceive the independence as very poor compared to the average (31% vs. 19% average). Conversely, citizens of Serbian ethnicity are significantly more favorable in their ratings than the average citizen and those of Montenegrin ethnicity (68% compared to 52% average and 40% Montenegrins). Similarly, citizens aligned with parties in power are more likely to view the independence favorably compared to both the average and those aligned with opposition parties (65% compared to 52% average and 27% for opposition-aligned citizens). Businesses located in the North region are more inclined to rate the independence of courts and judges negatively, at 63%, compared to those in the Central (37%) and Southern (35%) regions.

519. Compared to 2020 – In comparison to 2020, the proportion of citizens rating the independence of courts and judges positively remains unchanged at 52%. However, there is a slight increase in the percentage of those viewing it negatively, rising from 39% in 2020 to 43% in 2025. This change accompanies a decrease in 'don't know' and no responses from 9% to 5%, resulting in a PPA score of -2. For businesses, negative attitudes towards the independence of courts and judges have increased from 27% in 2020 to 40% in 2025, while positive perceptions have decreased from 67% to 58%, resulting in a PPA score of -11.

Figure 132 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: THE PERCEPTION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF COURTS AND JUDGES

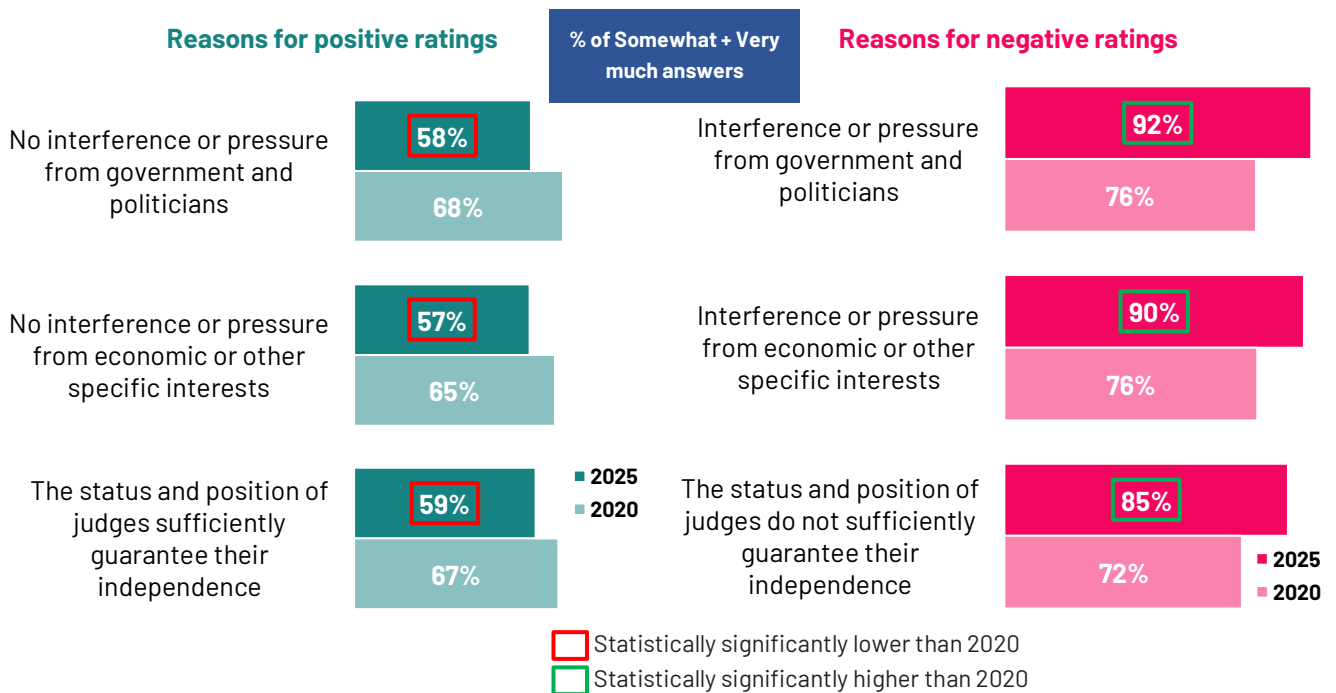


(From what you know, how would you rate the justice system in Montenegro in terms of the independence of courts and judges?)
 Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

520. Among citizens who view the independence of courts and judges positively, 59% attribute this belief to the status and position of judges being sufficient to guarantee independence, 58% say it is due to the absence of interference or pressure from the government and politicians, and 57% cite a lack of interference from economic or other interests. Conversely, citizens rating independence negatively cite interference or pressure from the government and politicians as the main reason (92%), followed by interference from economic or other interests (90%), and finally, the belief that the status and position of judges do not sufficiently guarantee their independence (80%). (Figure 133).

521. Compared to 2020 – Compared to the 2020 wave, there has been a statistically significant increase in agreement with all the reasons for negative ratings, while the opposite trend is observed for the reasons supporting positive ratings. This suggests that certain unmentioned factors may now influence the perception of the independence of courts and judges positively, or the strength of this positive opinion, and reasons for it have weakened.

Figure 133- CITIZENS: REASONS FOR THE PERCEPTION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF COURTS AND JUDGES



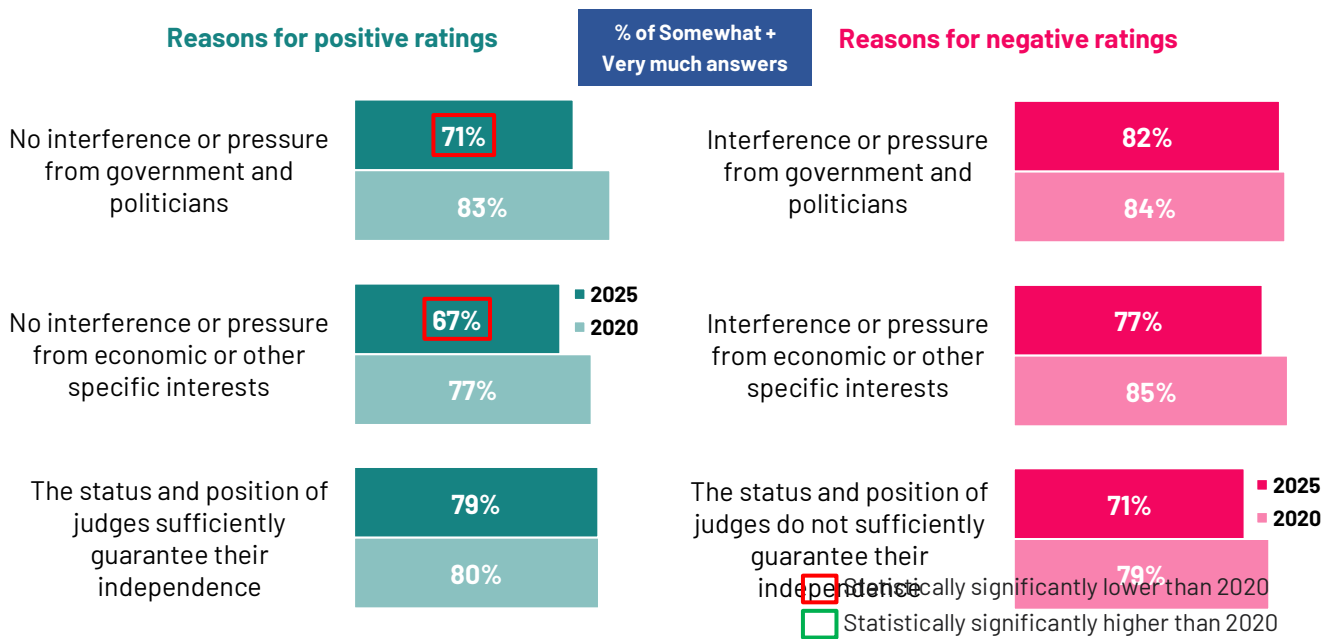
(Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the independence of the justice system in Montenegro?) Base: Those who rated the independence positively/negatively; (positive n=633 in 2025, n=731 in 2020, negative n=610 in 2025, n=500 in 2020)

522. Businesses that perceive judicial independence positively most frequently cite adequate judicial status and position as a guarantee of independence (79%), followed by the absence of governmental and political interference (71%), and lack of interference from economic or other interests (67%). In contrast, businesses with negative perceptions of independence primarily blame governmental and political interference (88%), interference from economic or other interests (82%),

and the belief that judicial status and position do not adequately guarantee independence (71%). (Figure 134).

523. Compared to 2020 – Compared to the 2020 wave, there has been a statistically significant decline in the percentage of businesses believing there is no interference or pressure from government and politicians, dropping from 83% to 71%, and similarly regarding the absence of interference from economic or other specific interests, which decreased from 77% to 67%.

Figure 134 - BUSINESSES: REASONS FOR THE PERCEPTION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF COURTS AND JUDGES

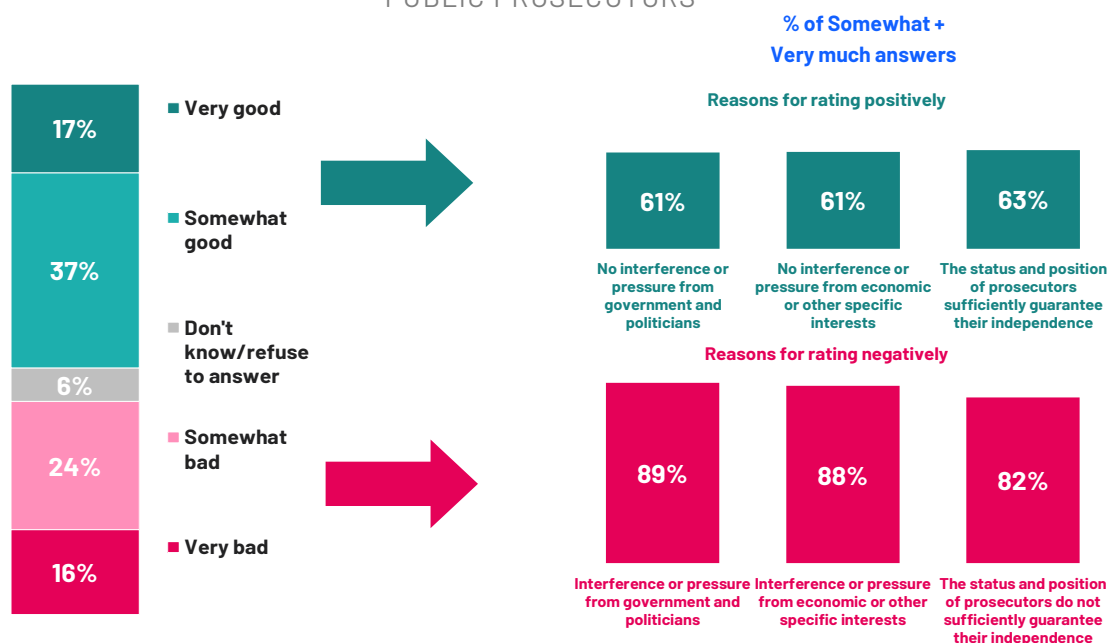


(Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the independence of the justice system in Montenegro?) Base: Those who rated the independence positively/negatively; (positive n=157 in 2025, n=188 in 2020, negative n=112 in 2025, n=77 in 2020)

524. More than half of citizens (54%) believe prosecution and public prosecutors are independent, while two-fifths (40%) hold the opposite view (Figure 135). Citizens who positively evaluate prosecutorial independence most frequently attribute this to adequate prosecutorial status and position guaranteeing independence (63%), followed equally by the absence of governmental and political interference and the lack of interference from economic or other specific interests (61% each).

525. Conversely, citizens with negative perceptions of prosecutorial independence primarily cite governmental and political interference (89%), interference from economic or other specific interests (88%), and the belief that prosecutorial status and position do not adequately guarantee independence (82%).

Figure 135 - CITIZENS: THE PERCEPTION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE PROSECUTION AND PUBLIC PROSECUTORS



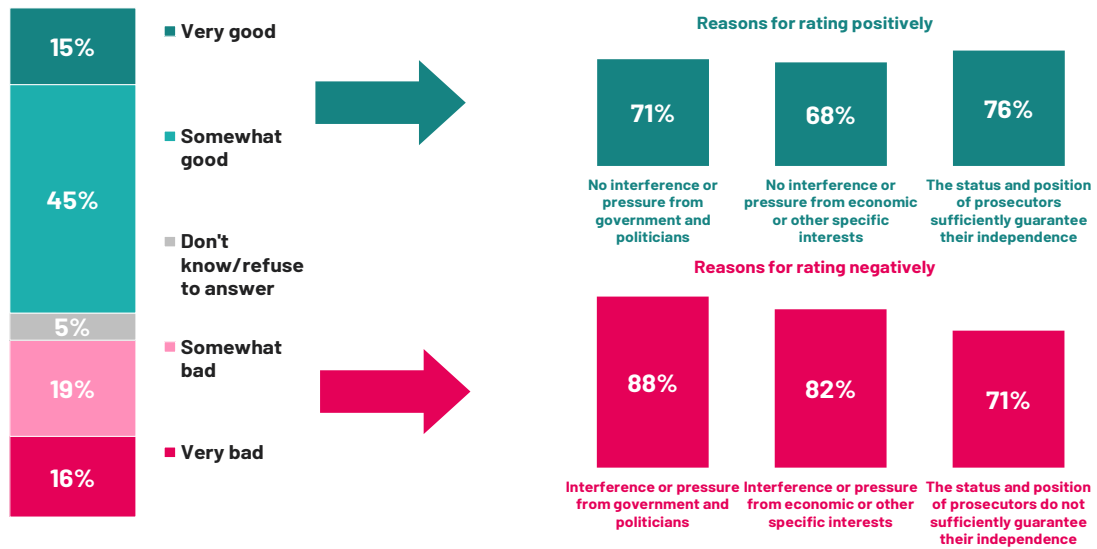
(From what you know, how would you rate the justice system in Montenegro in terms of the independence of prosecution and public prosecutors?; Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the independence of prosecution and public prosecutors in Montenegro?) Base: Total target population; Those who rated the independence positively/negatively; (total n=1305, positive n=633; negative n=610)

526. Regarding prosecutorial independence, business representatives hold somewhat more positive perceptions than citizens. Three-fifths of businesses (60%) consider prosecution and public prosecutors to be independent, while one-third (35%) disagree.

527. Businesses that view prosecutorial independence positively most frequently cite the institutional status and position of prosecutors as sufficient guarantee of independence (76%), followed by the absence of governmental and political interference (71%), and lack of interference from economic or other specific interests (68%).

528. Conversely, businesses with negative perceptions of prosecutorial independence primarily blame governmental and political interference (88%), interference from economic or other specific interests (82%), and the belief that prosecutorial status and position do not adequately guarantee independence (71%).

Figure 136 - BUSINESSES: THE PERCEPTION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE PROSECUTION AND PUBLIC PROSECUTORS % of Somewhat + Very much answers

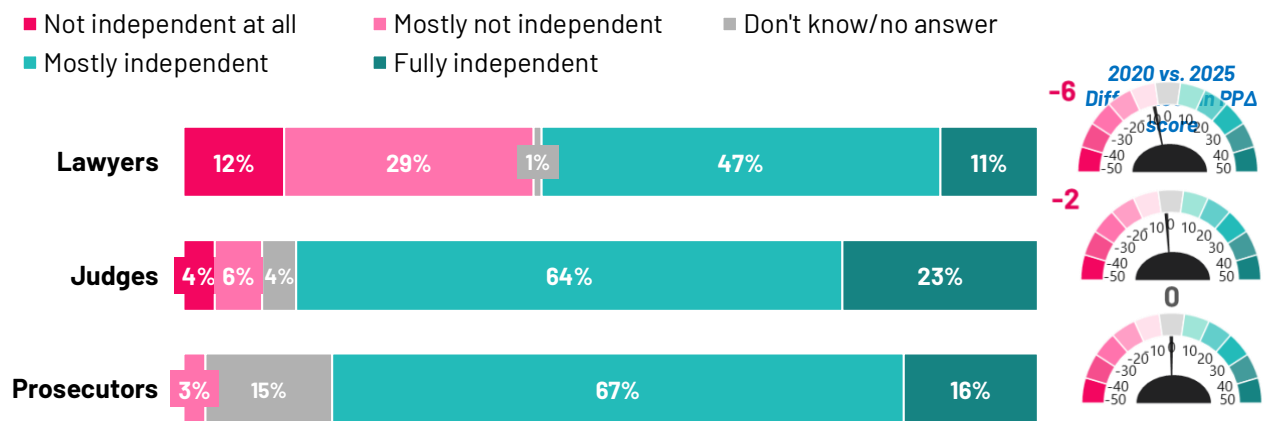


(From what you know, how would you rate the justice system in Montenegro in terms of the independence of prosecution and public prosecutors?; Could you tell me to what extent each of the following reasons explains your rating of the prosecution and public prosecutors of the justice system in Montenegro?) Base: Total target population; Those who rated the independence positively/negatively; (total n=272, positive n=158; negative n=101)

529. Justice system professionals generally maintain positive assessments of judicial system independence, though with notable variations across professional groups. A large majority of judges (87%) and prosecutors (83%) consider Montenegro's justice system to be independent, while lawyers show more moderate confidence with 58% holding positive views. Conversely, negative perceptions are minimal among judges (9%) and prosecutors (3%), but significantly higher among lawyers, with two-fifths (41%) questioning the system's independence. (Figure 137).

530. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions among justice professionals show relative stability with some notable internal shifts. Lawyers demonstrate a slightly negative trend with a PPA score of -6, while judges remain largely stable (PPA -2) but show redistribution within positive responses, with "mostly independent" increasing from 51% to 64% and "fully independent" decreasing from 39% to 23%. Prosecutors maintain overall stability (PPA 0), though this masks significant internal changes, including a notable rise in non-responses from 5% to 15% and a decline in "fully independent" perceptions from 34% to 16%.

Figure 137 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: THE PERCEPTION OF THE INDEPENDENCE OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM



(How independent is the judicial system in Montenegro?) Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150, Judges n=155, Prosecutors n=71)

5.1.1. Trust in the given institutions

531. The judicial system ranks in the middle tier of institutional trust, with 55% of citizens expressing confidence in it, while 43% report distrust. Among all institutions measured, religious institutions command the highest public trust at 73%, whereas NGOs receive the lowest trust ratings at 48% (Figure 138).

532. Religious institutions share the highest trust levels with the education system (both at 73%), followed closely by the Army (72%). At the opposite end of the trust spectrum, NGOs face the highest distrust levels with 49% of citizens expressing lack of confidence, while media ranks similarly low with 46% of citizens reporting distrust.

533. Trust in the judicial system varies significantly across demographic and political lines. Higher levels of trust are observed among citizens from the Northern region (65%), those of Serbian ethnicity (71%), and individuals aligned with ruling parties (72%). Conversely, distrust is more prevalent among citizens of Montenegrin ethnicity (55%) and those supporting opposition parties (69%).

534. Compared to 2020 – While religious institutions maintained their position as the most trusted institutions, their support declined from 78% to 73%. The most significant declines in trust levels occurred for the health system (PPΔ -12) and NGOs (PPΔ -14), indicating substantial erosion in public confidence. Modest improvements were observed for the President of Montenegro (PPΔ +2) and Prime Minister (PPΔ +1) – both institutions that had among the lowest trust levels in 2020 at 52% and 54% respectively. The judicial system experienced a moderate decline, with distrust increasing from 37% in 2020 to 43% in 2025 (PPΔ -5), reflecting that 5% fewer citizens trust the judicial system compared to five years ago.

Figure 138 - CITIZENS: THE PERCENTAGE OF CITIZENS WHO TRUST THE GIVEN INSTITUTIONS



(Please rate the degree in which you trust the following sectors and institutions on a scale of 1 to 4, where 1 means 'do not trust at all' and 4 means 'trust fully'.) Base: Total target population; (n=1305)

5.1.2. Factors jeopardizing the independence of the judicial system

535. According to justice system professionals, multiple factors are perceived as jeopardizing the independence of the judicial system, with notable differences in assessments across professional groups. Lawyers maintain the most critical perspective regarding threats to judicial independence. (Figure 139).

536. According to lawyers, politicians represent the greatest threat to judicial system independence (71%), followed by media (67%) and powerful individuals (63%). Judges share similar concerns but in different order of priority, identifying media as the primary threat (67%), followed by politicians (61%) and central government (44%). Prosecutors demonstrate a more moderate assessment, with media ranking highest (50%), followed closely by politicians (48%), and NGOs as the third most significant concern (33%).

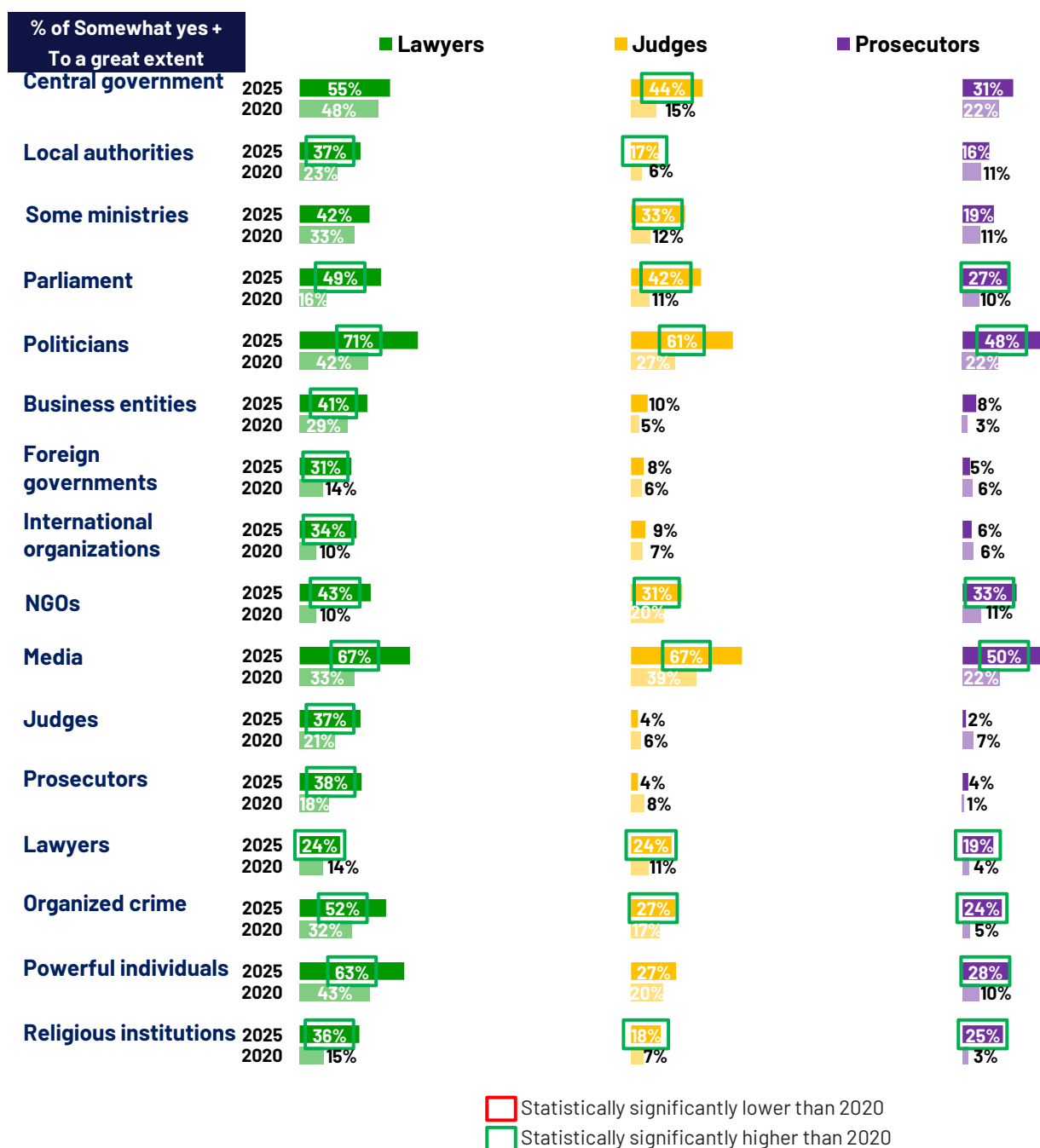
537. Compared to 2020 – The perception of threats to judicial independence has intensified dramatically across all professional groups since 2020, indicating a significant deterioration in confidence regarding external pressures on the judicial system.

538. In 2020, lawyers' top three concerns were central government (48%), powerful individuals (43%), and politicians (42%). The most dramatic shifts occurred with politicians surging from 42% to 71% to become the primary threat, while media experienced one of the largest increases from 33% to 67% to claim the second position. Parliament showed significant growth from 16% to 49%, while NGOs demonstrated a substantial rise from 10% to 43%. Organized crime concerns also increased notably from 32% to 52%, and powerful individuals, while maintaining their position among top concerns, rose from 43% to 63%.

539. Judges' primary concerns in 2020 were media (39%), politicians (27%), and NGOs (20%). The **transformation** in threat perceptions has been substantial, with media concerns nearly doubling from 39% to 67%, while politicians more than doubled from 27% to 61%. Central government emerged as a major new threat, rising dramatically from 15% to 44% to claim the third position. Parliament experienced significant growth from 11% to 42%, while NGOs, despite increasing from 20% to 31%, dropped from third to sixth place among primary concerns. Specific ministries also showed considerable increase from 12% to 33%. Notable increases were also observed for lawyers (from 11% to 24%), organized crime (from 17% to 27%), and religious institutions (from 7% to 18%).

540. Prosecutors' top three concerns in 2020 were media (22%), central government (22%), and politicians (22%). All three primary threats have intensified significantly, with media more than doubling from 22% to 50% to maintain its leading position, and politicians rising from 22% to 48% to claim second place. Central government showed more modest growth from 22% to 31%. The most dramatic transformation occurred with religious institutions, which surged from 3% to 25%, while NGOs experienced substantial growth from 11% to 33% to become the third-ranked concern. Parliament rose significantly from 10% to 27%, and powerful individuals increased from 10% to 28%. Notable increases were also recorded for organized crime (from 5% to 24%) and lawyers (from 4% to 19%).

Figure 139 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: PRESENCE OF JEOPARDIZING FACTORS



(Could you specify how much the following elements jeopardize the independence of the judicial system?) Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=151 in 2020, n=150 in 2025; Judges n=192 in 2020, n=155 in 2025; Prosecutors n=83 in 2020, n=71 in 2025)

5.1.3. Presence and impact of negative phenomena in the judicial system

541. According to the majority of justice service users and lawyers, there is a significant presence of various negative phenomena that undermine judicial system. More than half of citizens, a substantial number of businesses, and lawyers believe that most negative phenomena listed are present in Montenegro's judicial system, including corruption, influence of politics/politicians on courts and prosecutors, extended court duration, lack of fairness, conflict of interest, poor and non-transparent personnel policy, selective or non-objective investigative procedures, different court decisions in similar cases, selective initiation of cases by prosecution, judges' partiality,

sensationalist/exaggerated media reports about judiciary, and systematic failure to address violations of rules and laws.

542. In comparison to justice service users and lawyers, judges and prosecutors maintain a notably less critical perspective and report these phenomena to a considerably lesser extent. The issue generating the strongest disagreement remains *corruption*, with two-thirds of citizens (68%), approximately three-fifths of businesses (59%), and half of lawyers (50%) claiming its presence. However, only 26% of judges and 31% of prosecutors share this assessment.

543. A similar pattern emerges regarding selective or non-objective investigative procedures, where three-fifths of citizens (61%), more than half of businesses (53%) and lawyers (58%) report this issue as present, while only 30% of judges and 24% of prosecutors express the same view. The disparity is even more pronounced concerning *selective initiation of cases by prosecution*, where approximately three-fifths of citizens (60%) and lawyers (61%), alongside half of businesses (51%), perceive this as problematic, while less than half of judges (43%) and only one-fifth of prosecutors (19%) acknowledge this issue.

544. This divergent perspective between service providers and other stakeholders is also evident concerning conflict of interest, where approximately three-fifths of citizens (63%), nearly two-thirds of businesses (64%), and lawyers (62%) recognize the impact of personal interests in the judicial system, compared to only 33% of judges and prosecutors who agree. Similar disparities exist regarding *lack of fairness*, perceived by three-fifths of citizens (63%) and more than half of businesses (55%) and lawyers (57%), but acknowledged by less than one-third of judges (28%) and prosecutors (32%). *Systematic failure to address violations of rules and laws* shows comparable patterns, with three-fifths of citizens (61%), half of businesses (50%), and more than half of lawyers (54%) reporting this issue, while approximately 30% of judges and 34% of prosecutors share this concern.

545. Similarly, judges' partiality follows this divide between users and intermediaries on one hand and providers on the other. Thus, three-fifths of citizens (60%), more than half of businesses (56%), and almost half of lawyers perceive this issue, whereas approximately one-quarter of judges (24%) and prosecutors (27%) acknowledge this concern.

546. Nevertheless, several issues demonstrate broader consensus among both service users and justice system professionals. More than half of citizens (58%), two-thirds of businesses (67%), three-quarters of lawyers (78%), nearly three-quarters of judges (74%), and approximately two-thirds of prosecutors (64%) believe that *media reports about the judiciary are sensationalistic or exaggerated*.

547. Similar agreement exists regarding different court decisions in similar cases, with approximately three-fifths of citizens (63%) and businesses (58%), three-quarters of lawyers (75%), nearly two-thirds of judges (64%), and prosecutors (63%) acknowledging this problem's presence in Montenegro's judicial system. Additionally, while judges and prosecutors report these issues to a lesser extent, *extended court duration, political influence on courts and prosecution, and poor, non-transparent personnel policy* are also perceived as significant problems across all groups (Figure 140).

548. Compared to 2020 – Across all stakeholder groups, there has been a systematic increase in the perception of negative phenomena within the justice system since 2020, with numerous statistically significant changes indicating broad-based deterioration in confidence.

549. Citizens experienced statistically significant increases across ten different areas, with the most notable being extended court case duration (from 61% to 70%), different court decisions in similar cases (from 53% to 63%), and selective or non-objective investigative procedures (from 51% to 61%). Other significant increases included political influence on courts and prosecutors, conflict of interests, poor personnel policy, systematic failure to address violations, judges' partiality, and selective initiation of cases by prosecution.

550. Businesses showed statistically significant deterioration in six key areas, with political influence on courts and prosecutors demonstrating the largest increase (from 50% to 68%), followed by corruption perceptions rising from 49% to 59%. Other significant changes included conflict of interests, poor personnel policy, systematic failure to address violations, and judges' partiality.

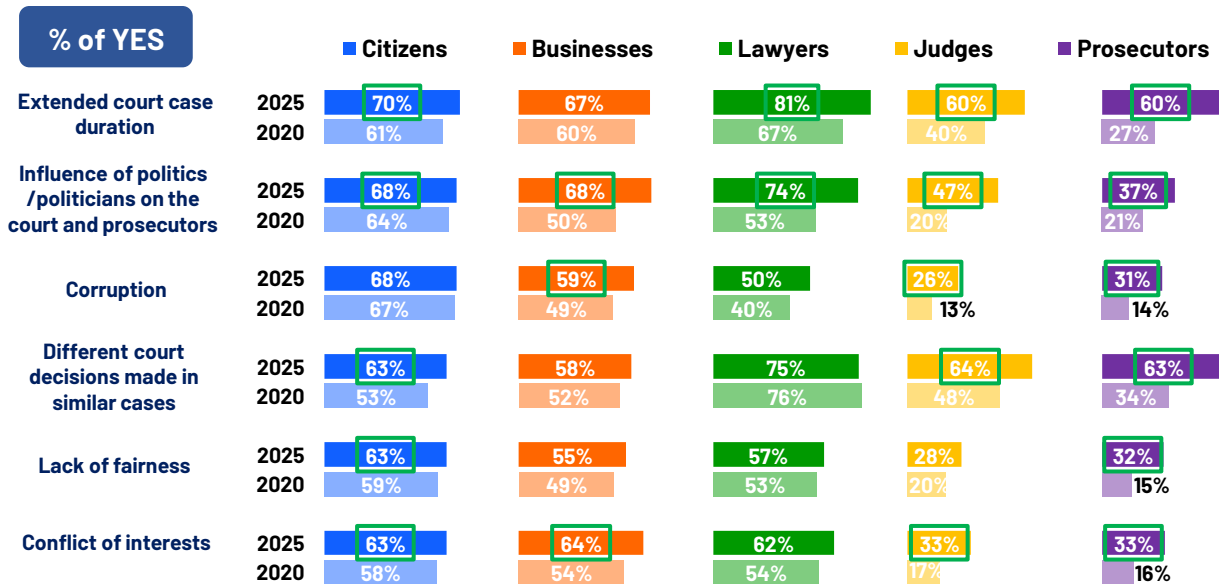
551. Lawyers recorded statistically significant increases in four areas, most notably political influence rising from 53% to 74%, extended court case duration increasing from 67% to 81%, and systematic failure to address violations jumping from 34% to 54%. Selective initiation of cases by prosecution also showed significant growth.

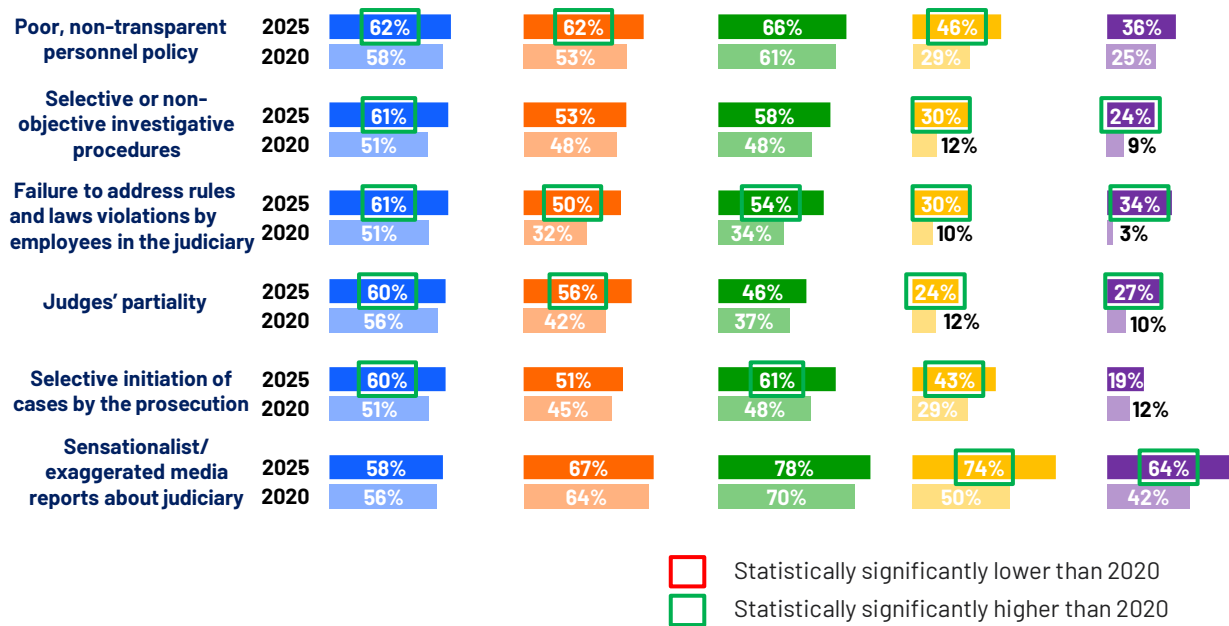
552. Judges demonstrated the most extensive pattern of statistically significant changes across eleven categories, including corruption perceptions more than doubling from 13% to 26%, political influence more than doubling from 20% to 47%, and extended court duration increasing from 40% to 60%. Media sensationalism concerns also rose significantly from 50% to 74%.

553. Prosecutors showed statistically significant increases in ten areas, with extended court case duration more than doubling from 27% to 60%, different court decisions rising from 34% to 63%, and systematic failure to address violations increasing dramatically from 3% to 34%. Media sensationalism and corruption perceptions also showed substantial significant increases.

554. This pattern of statistically significant increases across multiple dimensions suggests a comprehensive erosion of confidence in judicial system integrity and performance between 2020 and 2025.

Figure 140 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: PRESENCE OF NEGATIVE PHENOMENA





(Are the following issues present in the judicial system?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1333 in 2020, n=1305 in 2025; Businesses n=278 in 2020, n=272 in 2025, Lawyers n=151 in 2020, n=150 in 2025, Judges n=192 in 2020, n=155 in 2025, Prosecutors n=83 in 2020, n=71 in 2025)

555. When asked about the impact of these negative phenomena on public trust in the judicial system, citizens, businesses, and lawyers demonstrate overwhelming agreement that all recognized issues significantly undermine confidence. At least 86% of citizens who acknowledge the presence of these phenomena report that they impact public trust, with most issues exceeding 90%. Businesses show similar patterns, with at least 73% agreeing on the trust-undermining effects, while lawyers consistently report that over 71% of recognized phenomena damage public confidence. (Figure 141).

556. According to service users and lawyers, the highest trust-damaging impacts come from political influence on courts and prosecutors, confirmed by 93% of citizens, 92% of businesses, and 92% of lawyers. Different court decisions made in similar cases follows closely, with 93% of citizens, 89% of businesses, and 90% of lawyers acknowledging its severe impact. Corruption also ranks among the top concerns, with 93% of citizens, 85% of businesses, and 90% of lawyers viewing it as highly damaging to public confidence.

557. Justice system professionals demonstrate more moderate assessments of these phenomena's trust impact. Among judges who recognize these issues, approximately two-thirds acknowledge their negative effects on public trust. However, judges identify sensationalist media reports (76%), extended court case duration (71%), and different court decisions in similar situations (69%) as the factors most damaging to citizen trust. Prosecutors show similar patterns, with media sensationalism (85%) and extended court duration (79%) viewed as the most trust-undermining factors.

558. Extended court case duration emerges as a universally recognized trust-damaging factor across all groups. Among those who acknowledge this issue, 89% of citizens, 87% of businesses, and 88% of lawyers confirm its negative impact on judicial system trust, while 71% of judges and 79% of prosecutors also recognize its harmful effects on public confidence.

559. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of how negative phenomena impact public trust in the judicial system show divergent trends across different groups, indicating varied responses to system performance over the five-year period.

560. Citizens demonstrate increased concern about trust-damaging effects across most phenomena, with the largest increases in systematic failure to address violations (from 81% to 91%), poor personnel policy (from 82% to 91%), and judges' partiality (from 83% to 92%). Political influence concerns also intensified significantly from 86% to 93%. Statistically significant increases were also recorded for corruption, different court decisions made in similar cases, lack of fairness, conflict of interests, selective or non-objective investigative procedures, and selective initiation of cases by the prosecution, suggesting growing citizen skepticism about judicial system integrity.

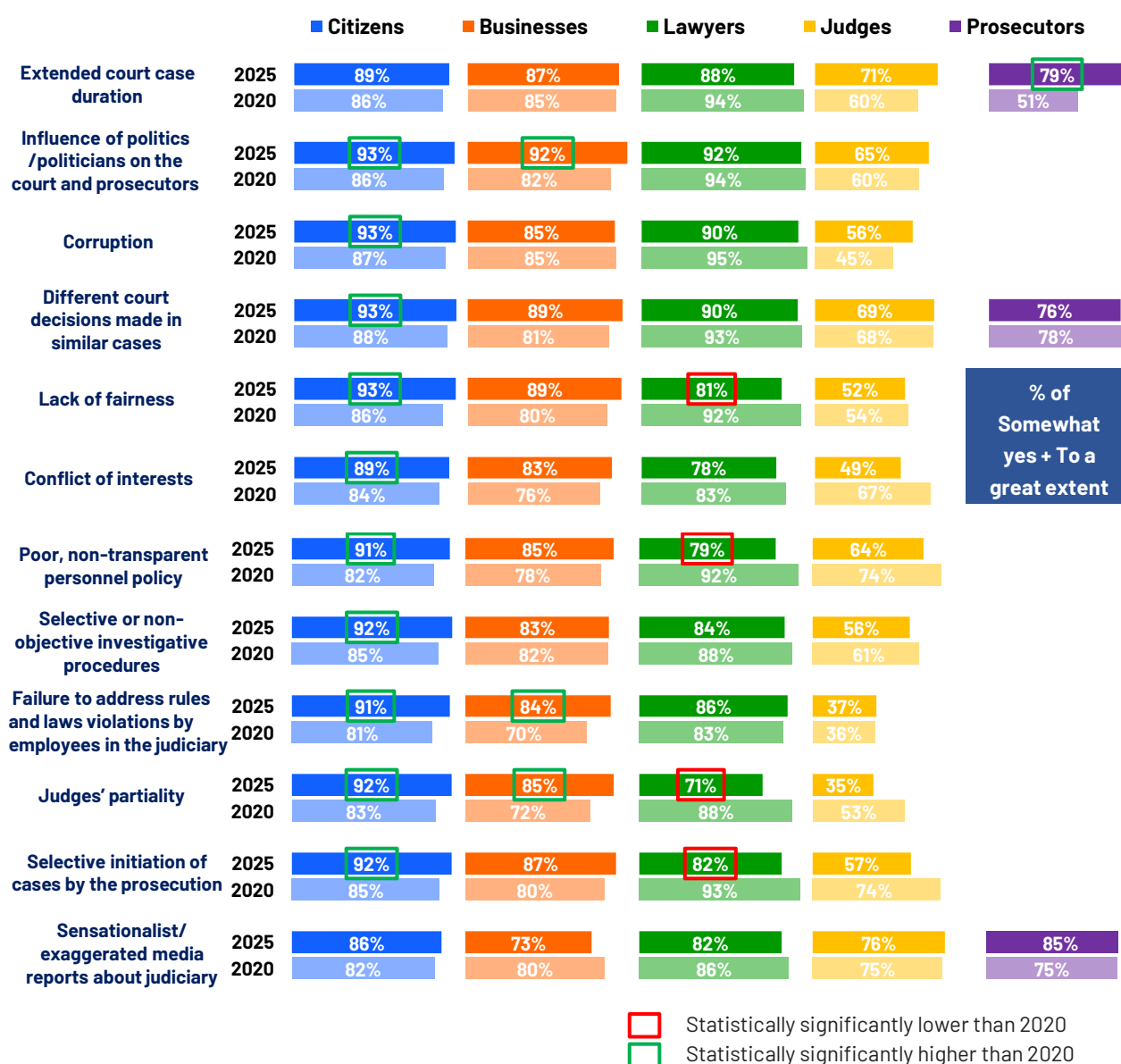
561. Businesses exhibit similar patterns of increased concern, with the most dramatic rises in systematic failure to address violations (from 70% to 84%) and judges' partiality (from 72% to 85%). Political influence perceptions rose substantially from 82% to 92%. Notably, media sensationalism was the only area where business concern decreased (from 80% to 73%), while corruption perceptions remained stable.

562. Lawyers present a contrasting pattern, showing decreased perception of trust-damaging effects across many categories. The largest declines occurred in judges' partiality (from 88% to 71%), poor personnel policy (from 92% to 79%), and selective initiation of cases (from 93% to 82%). Statistically significant decreases were also observed for lack of fairness (from 92% to 81%), suggesting lawyers may view the system's trust impact more favorably in 2025 compared to 2020.

563. Judges show mixed trends, with increases in extended court duration impact (from 60% to 71%) and corruption concerns (from 45% to 56%). They also reported decreased concern about conflict of interests (from 67% to 49%), judges' partiality (from 53% to 35%), and selective initiation of cases (from 74% to 57%), though these changes should be interpreted with caution due to sample size considerations.

564. Prosecutors demonstrated a statistically significant increase in extended court duration impact, rising dramatically from 51% to 79%. Media sensationalism concerns also grew from 75% to 85%. While data is available across all categories, only findings with sufficient response numbers for reliable analysis are highlighted here.

Figure 141 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: IMPACT OF NEGATIVE PHENOMENA



(To what extent do they undermine citizens' trust in the judicial system?) Base: Those that believe that the issue is present; Unable to add n for each population, since n differs for each item within a population. The base of prosecutors for some negative phenomena is too small for valid conclusions.

5.1.4. Influence of judicial institutions on the general integrity of judiciary

565. The majority of justice system professionals perceive the listed judicial institutions as having either a positive or no significant influence on the overall integrity of the judiciary. However, notable differences emerge when comparing the three professional groups: judges and prosecutors tend to view these institutions more favorably, whereas lawyers express considerably more reserved assessments (Figure 142).

566. Among the three groups, prosecutors demonstrate the highest level of confidence in the institutional framework. A substantial majority of prosecutors positively assess the influence of prosecutors' management (79%), the Prosecutorial Council (79%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Prosecutorial Council (74%), and the Commission for the monitoring of the application of the codes of

ethics of state prosecutors (73%). The Judicial Inspectorate represents an exception, with only about half of prosecutors (54%) viewing its influence positively.

567. Judges hold similarly favorable, albeit somewhat more tempered, opinions. Roughly two-thirds recognize the positive contribution of court management (68%) and the Judicial Council (68%), while slightly over half acknowledge the beneficial role of the Commission for the codes of ethics of judges (54%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Judicial Council (55%), and the Judicial Inspectorate (54%).

568. Lawyers, by contrast, are markedly less optimistic. Positive assessments hover around half for the Prosecutorial Council (51%), court management (50%), and prosecutor management (49%). Even lower shares of lawyers recognize positive influence from the Judicial Council (48%), the Commission for the monitoring of the application of the codes of ethics of state prosecutors (44%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Prosecutorial Council (43%), the Commission for the codes of ethics of judges (42%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Judicial Council (40%), and the Judicial Inspectorate (40%).

569. A substantial proportion of lawyers maintain that these institutions exert no meaningful influence on judicial integrity. More than one-third report no perceived influence from the Judicial Inspectorate (37%), the Commission for the codes of ethics of judges (36%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Prosecutorial Council (35%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Judicial Council (35%), and the Commission for the monitoring of the application of the codes of ethics of state prosecutors (34%). Similar shares express the same view regarding prosecutor management (34%), court management (31%), and the Prosecutorial Council (28%), while somewhat fewer hold this opinion about the Judicial Council (26%). Judges report no influence less frequently, ranging from 13% for the Judicial Council to 29% for the Judicial Inspectorate. Prosecutors are least likely to perceive an absence of influence, with figures spanning from 9% for the Prosecutorial Council to 38% for the Judicial Inspectorate.

570. Negative perceptions remain relatively uncommon, particularly among judges and prosecutors. Judges' negative assessments range from 4% for the Judicial Inspectorate to 10% for the Judicial Council, while prosecutors' negative views span from 2% for the Judicial Inspectorate to 6% for prosecutors' management and the Prosecutorial Council. Lawyers, however, voice considerably more criticism: between one-fifth and one-quarter express negative opinions regarding the Judicial Council (26%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Judicial Council (24%), the Judicial Inspectorate (23%), the Commission for the monitoring of the application of the codes of ethics of state prosecutors (22%), the Disciplinary Commission of the Prosecutorial Council (22%), the Commission for the codes of ethics of judges (22%), court management (19%), and prosecutor management (18%).

571. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of how judicial institutions influence the general integrity of the judiciary show predominantly negative trends across all three professional groups, with lawyers demonstrating the most substantial shifts in opinion.

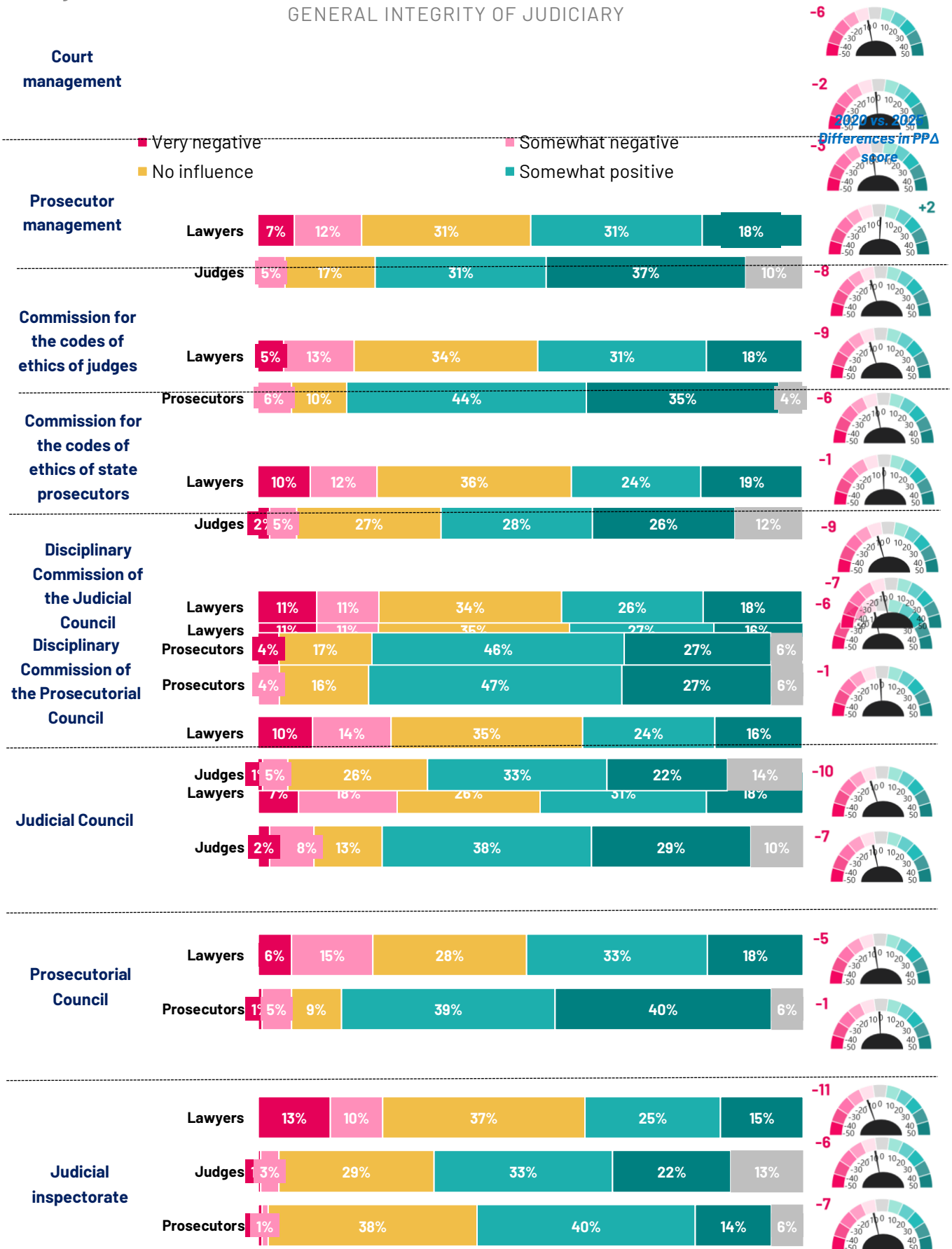
572. Lawyers exhibit the most pronounced changes, with significant declines observed across multiple institutions. The most dramatic shift occurred for the Judicial Inspectorate, where negative assessments more than doubled (from 8% to 23%), reflected in the highest PPA score of -11. Similarly substantial deterioration was observed for the Judicial Council, where negative opinions rose from 13% to 26% (PPA -10), and the Disciplinary Commission of the Judicial Council, with negative assessments increasing from 12% to 24% (PPA -9). The Commission for the codes of ethics of judges saw negative views more than double from 10% to 22% (PPA -8), while the Commission for the monitoring of the application of the codes of ethics of state prosecutors experienced a comparable increase in negative assessments from 10% to 22%, accompanied by a significant decrease in perceived no influence from 46% to 34% (PPA -6). Moderate declines were also recorded for the Disciplinary Commission of the Prosecutorial Council and court management (both PPA -6), the Prosecutorial Council (PPA -5), and

prosecutor management (PPΔ -3). Notably, the share of lawyers perceiving no influence from the Prosecutorial Council significantly decreased from 38% to 26%.

573. Judges also demonstrate declining confidence in institutional influence, though changes are somewhat less dramatic than among lawyers. The most significant decrease in positive assessments occurred for the Commission for the codes of ethics of judges, dropping from 69% to 54% (PPΔ -9). Comparable declines were observed for the Disciplinary Commission of the Judicial Council, where positive views fell from 68% to 55% (PPΔ -7), and the Judicial Council (PPΔ -7). The Judicial Inspectorate also experienced a statistically significant decrease in positive assessments from 66% to 54% (PPΔ -6). Court management showed a minor decline (PPΔ -2).

574. Prosecutors present a mixed picture with generally smaller shifts. The most notable change occurred for the Judicial Inspectorate, where the share of prosecutors perceiving no influence increased significantly from 17% to 38% (PPΔ -7). Minor positive movement was observed only for prosecutor management (PPΔ +2), while slight declines were recorded for the Commission for the monitoring of the application of the codes of ethics of state prosecutors, the Disciplinary Commission of the Prosecutorial Council, and the Prosecutorial Council (all PPΔ -1).

Figure 142 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: INFLUENCE OF INSTITUTIONS ON THE GENERAL INTEGRITY OF JUDICIARY



(In your opinion, what kind of influence do the following institutions have on general integrity of judiciary?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150, Data for 2025 is recalculated without "Don't know/refuse to answer", as this answer was not included in the previous wave, Judges n=155, Prosecutors n=71)

5.1.5. Influence of associations on the integrity of the profession they represent

575. In contrast to the above-mentioned judicial institutions, professional associations appear to have a more modest influence on the integrity of the professions they represent, based on evaluations from their respective members (Figure 143).

576. Lawyers express the most favorable views about their professional association. Nearly three-fifths of lawyers (58%) perceive the Bar Association as having a positive influence on the integrity of the legal profession, while approximately one-quarter (23%) report no influence. However, lawyers also demonstrate the highest level of criticism, with nearly one-fifth (19%) expressing negative opinions about their association's impact.

577. Judges hold somewhat more reserved opinions about the Association of Judges. Slightly more than half (54%) view its influence positively, while approximately three in ten (29%) perceive no influence. Negative assessments are rare, with only 2% of judges expressing critical views.

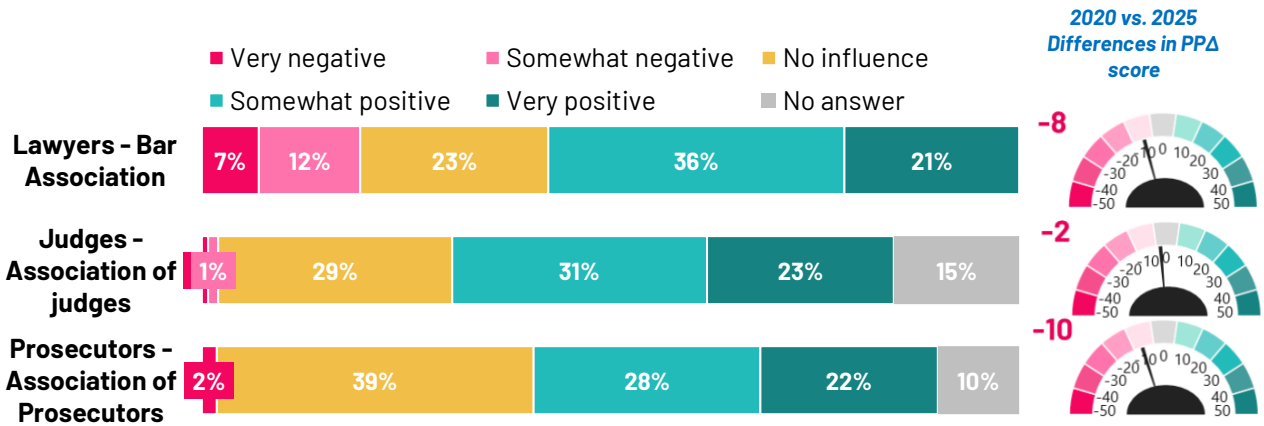
578. Prosecutors present an interesting pattern regarding the Association of State Prosecutors of Montenegro. While half (50%) hold positive opinions about the association's influence on the integrity of the prosecutorial profession, a substantial share (39%) perceives no influence whatsoever. Similar to judges, negative assessments among prosecutors remain minimal at 2%.

579. Compared to 2020 – The role of professional associations in upholding the integrity of their respective professions is perceived differently in 2025 compared to five years ago, with the most notable shift occurring among prosecutors.

580. Prosecutors demonstrate the most significant decline in positive perceptions of their professional association. The share of prosecutors viewing the Association of State Prosecutors of Montenegro positively dropped considerably from 70% to 49%, while those perceiving no influence increased substantially from 23% to 39%. This represents a PPA of -10, meaning that approximately 10% of prosecutors have shifted their opinion in a negative direction compared to 2020.

581. Lawyers also experienced a negative shift in overall sentiment (PPA -8), despite a notable decrease in the share perceiving no influence (from 37% to 23%). This suggests that while fewer lawyers now view the Bar Association as irrelevant, those who have formed an opinion have moved toward more critical assessments rather than positive ones. Judges show stability in their assessments of the Association of Judges (PPA -2).

Figure 143 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: INFLUENCE OF ASSOCIATIONS ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE PROFESSION THEY REPRESENT

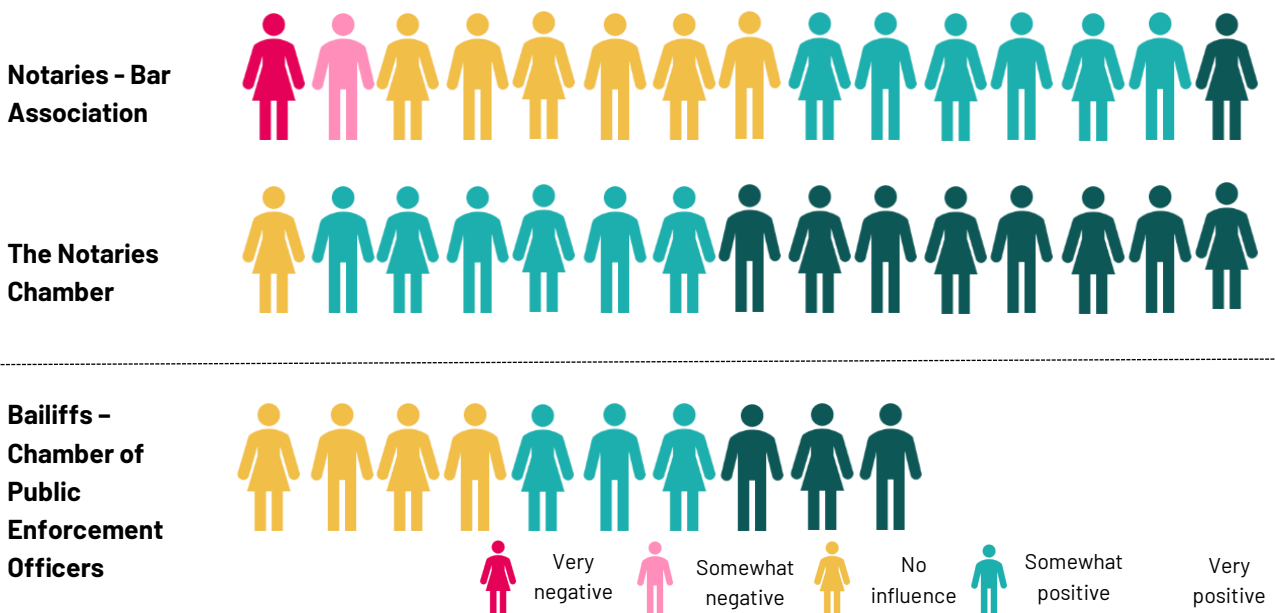


(In your opinion, what kind of influence professional associations (Bar Association, Association of Judges, Association of Prosecutors) have on the integrity of the profession they represent?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150, Judges n=155, Prosecutors n=71)

582. When it comes to the influence of professional associations on the integrity of their professions, notaries express notably positive views about the Notaries Chamber – fourteen out of fifteen perceive its influence as positive, with more than half rating it as very positive. Opinions about the Bar Association are somewhat less favorable – while seven out of fifteen notaries perceive its influence positively, six report no influence, and only two express negative views.

583. Bailiffs hold more varied views about the Chamber of Public Enforcement Officers – while six out of ten rate its influence positively, four in ten perceive no influence whatsoever.

Figure 144 - NOTARIES AND BAILIFFS: INFLUENCE OF ASSOCIATIONS ON THE INTEGRITY OF THE PROFESSION THEY REPRESENT



(In your opinion, what kind of influence do relevant professional associations have on the integrity of the notary/bailiff profession?) Base: Total target population (Notaries n=15; Bailiffs n=10)

5.2. Independence over time

584. When asked to evaluate the independence of the judicial system compared to three years ago, the majority of respondents across all five groups either perceive improvement or report no significant changes, though the level of positivity varies considerably (Figure 145).

585. Justice system professionals directly involved in the judicial process express the most positive views. Prosecutors stand out as particularly optimistic, with more than two-thirds (68%) reporting improvement, followed by half of judges (50%). Notably, over one-third of prosecutors (36%) and one-quarter of judges (26%) believe independence has improved to a great extent. Negative assessments among these two groups remain minimal – only 3% of prosecutors and 9% of judges perceive any deterioration.

586. Citizens and businesses hold more moderate views. While nearly half of citizens (46%) and four in ten businesses (39%) perceive improvement, these groups also report higher levels of skepticism. Citizens demonstrate the second-highest rate of negative perceptions (21%), while businesses most commonly report no changes (44%).

587. Lawyers emerge as the most critical group, with nearly one-quarter (24%) perceiving deterioration in judicial independence – the highest share across all surveyed populations. Nevertheless, approximately two-fifths of lawyers (39%) still acknowledge improvement.

588. Regional and socio-demographic factors significantly influence citizens' perceptions of judicial independence. Citizens residing in the North region stand out with notably fewer negative assessments (11%) compared to the national average (21%) and the Central region (28%). Northern residents more commonly report no changes (38% vs. 30% average and 23% in Central), suggesting a more neutral stance toward recent developments. Ethnicity and political affiliation prove particularly influential in shaping positive perceptions. Citizens of Serbian nationality are considerably more likely to perceive improvement (61%) compared to those identifying as Montenegrin (37%). A similar divide exists along political lines – two-thirds of those closer to ruling parties (66%) report improvement, compared to only about one-fifth of opposition supporters (22%).

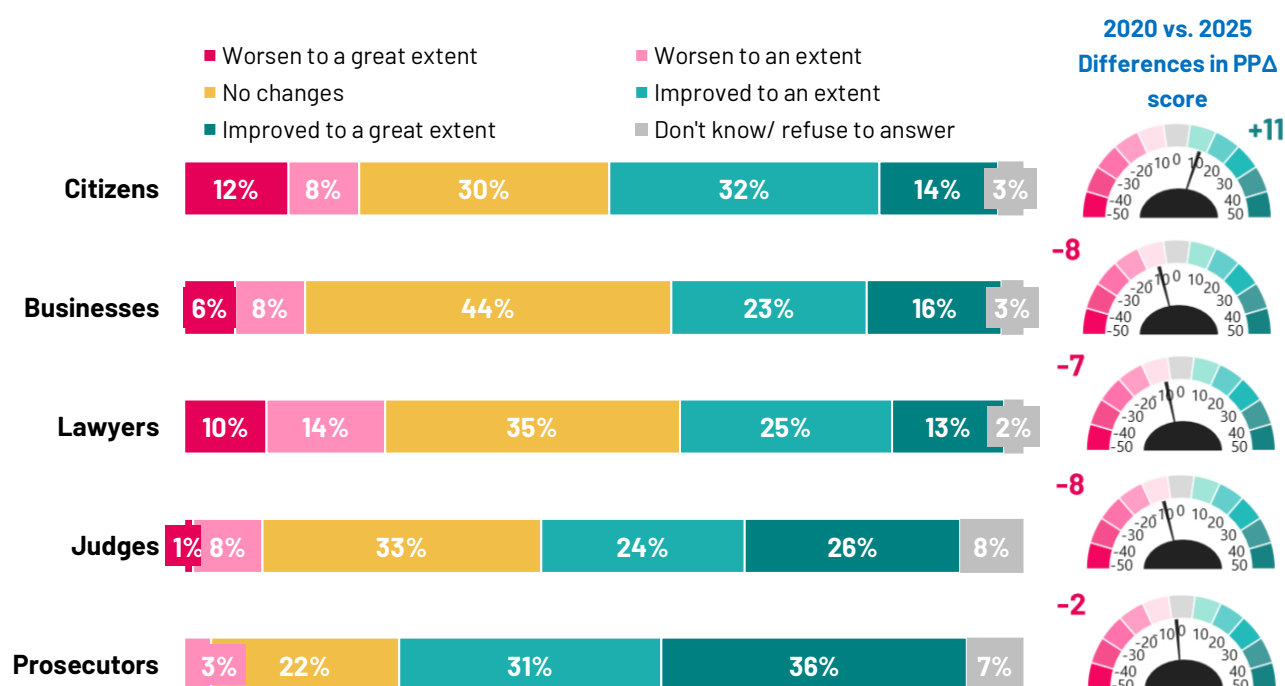
589. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of judicial independence compared to three years prior have shifted notably across most groups, with citizens being the only population demonstrating a significant positive trend.

590. Citizens show a remarkable improvement in their assessment of changes in judicial independence. The share perceiving improvement nearly doubled, rising from 26% to 46%, while those reporting no changes decreased from 45% to 30% (PPΔ +11). This means that approximately 11% of citizens have shifted their opinion in a positive direction compared to five years ago.

591. Justice system professionals, by contrast, generally exhibit negative trends. Judges show a decline in optimism with the share perceiving improvement falling from 61% to 50% (PPΔ -8), while lawyers report significantly more negative assessments, increasing from 14% to 24% (PPΔ -7). Prosecutors remain stable in their assessments (PPΔ -2), with no statistically significant differences observed.

592. Businesses also exhibit a negative trend (PPΔ -8), primarily reflected in a significant increase in those perceiving no changes – rising from 33% to 44%.

Figure 145 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: CHANGES IN INDEPENDENCE IN THE PAST THREE YEARS



(Compared to the time three years ago, how would you evaluate independence of the judicial system now?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305, Businesses n=272, Lawyers n=150, Judges n=155, Prosecutors n=71)

5.3. Corruption in the judiciary

593. The question on presence of corruption in the Montenegrin judiciary reveals a clear distinction between external stakeholders and justice system professionals, with citizens and businesses holding considerably more critical views than judges and prosecutors (Figure 146).

594. Citizens are the most critical group, with more than two-thirds (68%) perceiving corruption as present in the judicial system. Businesses share this concern to a slightly lesser but still substantial extent, with nearly three-fifths (59%) believing corruption exists in Montenegro's judiciary.

595. Justice system professionals hold notably different views. Among lawyers, opinions are evenly split – half (50%) perceive corruption as present while the other half disagree. Judges and prosecutors are considerably less likely to acknowledge corruption, with only about one-quarter of judges (26%) and nearly one-third of prosecutors (31%) reporting its presence. The majority of both groups believe corruption is not present (57% of judges and 53% of prosecutors), though it should be noted that a notable share do not express an opinion on this matter.

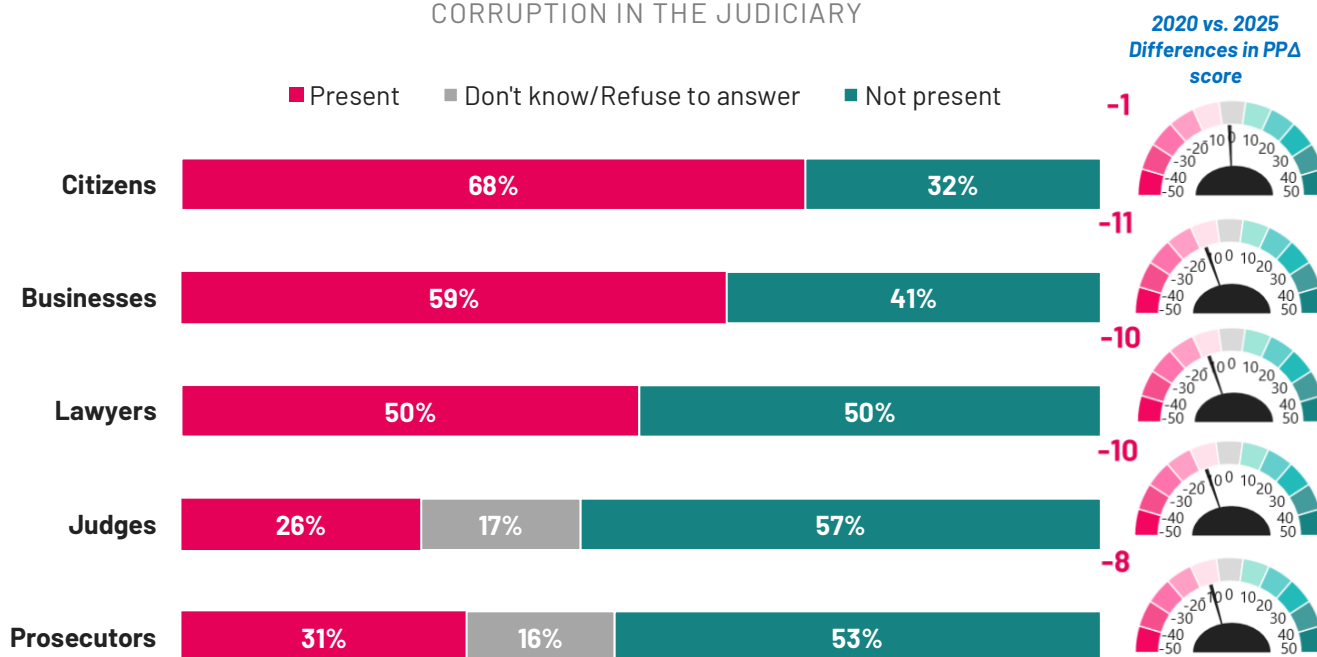
596. Ethnicity and political affiliation significantly influence citizens' perceptions. Citizens identifying as Montenegrin are considerably more likely to perceive the presence of corruption (77%) compared to those of Serbian nationality (52%). An even starker divide exists along political lines – the vast majority of opposition supporters (86%) believe corruption is present, compared to just over half (55%) of those closer to ruling parties.

597. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of corruption in the judiciary have deteriorated across most groups, with justice system professionals showing the most notable shifts.

598. Businesses demonstrate a substantial negative shift, with the share perceiving corruption rising significantly from 49% to 59%. This represents a PPAΔ of -11, meaning that approximately 11% of the business population has shifted their opinion in a negative direction compared to 2020. Citizens show relative stability (PPAΔ -1).

599. Justice system professionals exhibit particularly striking changes. Among judges, the share acknowledging corruption more than doubled, rising from 13% to 26% (PPAΔ -10). Prosecutors report a similar increase, from 14% to 31% (PPAΔ -8). Lawyers also show a significant negative shift (PPAΔ -10). These trends suggest that those working within the judicial system have become considerably more critical of corruption compared to five years ago.

Figure 146 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: PRESENCE OF CORRUPTION IN THE JUDICIARY



(Are the following issues present in the judiciary of Montenegro - Corruption?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305, Businesses n=272, Lawyers n=150, Judges n=155, Prosecutors n=71)

600. The extent to which corruption is perceived as present in the Montenegrin judiciary varies significantly by respondent group (Figure 147)

601. Citizens and lawyers express the most critical views, with nearly two-thirds perceiving corruption as present (64% and 65% respectively). However, the intensity differs – citizens more commonly report corruption as present to a great extent (31%), while lawyers predominantly select the more moderate response (56% "somewhat yes" vs. only 9% "to a great extent").

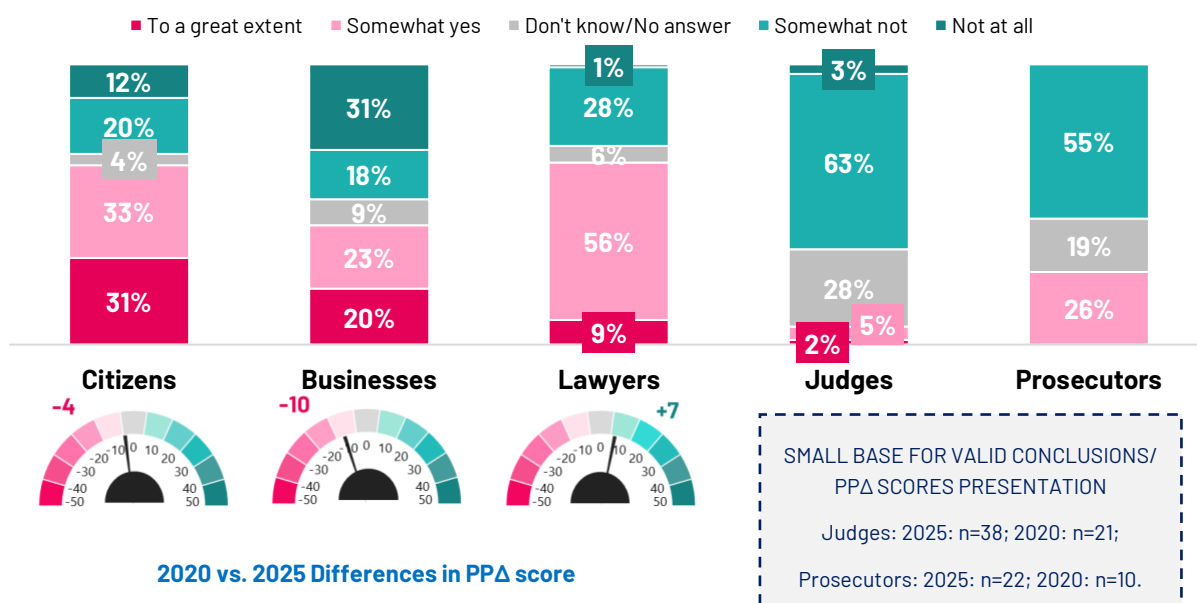
602. Businesses present a more divided picture, with opinions nearly evenly split – 43% perceive corruption as present while 48% disagree. Notably, businesses most frequently report that corruption is not present at all (31%).

603. Judges stand apart with a distinctly different perspective. Only 6% perceive corruption as present, while two-thirds (66%) believe it is not. It should be noted that more than one-quarter of judges (28%) did not express an opinion on this matter. Due to insufficient sample size, results for prosecutors should be interpreted with caution and are not suitable for drawing valid conclusions.

604. Compared to 2020 – Views on the extent of corruption in the judiciary have evolved differently across groups, with businesses exhibiting the most pronounced negative shift.

605. Businesses demonstrate the largest negative shift, with the share believing corruption is present to a great extent or somewhat rising from 31% to 43% (PPΔ -10), meaning approximately 10% of the business population now perceives a greater extent of corruption. Citizens show a similar trend, with the share perceiving corruption as present to some or a great extent increasing from 56% to 64% (PPΔ -4). Lawyers present a contrasting trend, with approximately 7% shifting their opinion in a positive direction compared to 2020 (PPΔ +7). Due to insufficient sample sizes, comparisons for judges and prosecutors are not suitable for valid conclusions

Figure 147 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: PRESENCE OF CORRUPTION IN THE JUDICIARY

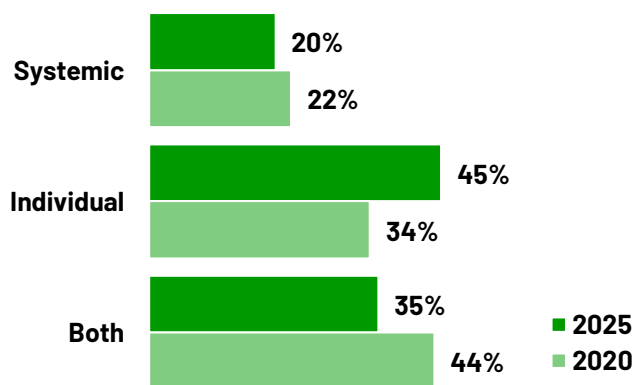


(In your opinion, to what extent is the corruption present in the judicial system/judiciary in Montenegro? / How present is corruption in judiciary of Montenegro?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305, Businesses n=272) Those who believe corruption is present in the judiciary of Montenegro (Lawyers n=76, Judges n=38, Prosecutors n=22)

606. Among lawyers, who perceive that there is corruption in the judicial system, a little less than half (45%) claim that the corruption is mainly individual, while more than half (55%) report the existence of systemic corruption. (Figure 148)..

607. Compared to 2020 – No statistically significant differences were observed compared to 2020.

Figure 148 - LAWYERS: PREVALENT TYPE OF CORRUPTION



(Is corruption systemic or individual?); Base: Those who believe corruption is mainly present or present to a great extent; (Lawyers n=45 in 2020, n=50 in 2025)¹¹

5.3.1. Perception regarding informal practices in judiciary

608. Citizens hold the most critical views regarding specific corruptive practices in the judiciary, while opinions of judges and prosecutors are not reported due to insufficient sample sizes among those who acknowledge the presence of corruption.

609. Pulling strings appears to be perceived as the most widespread corruptive practice among service users and lawyers (Figure 149). The vast majority of **citizens** (87%) believe pulling strings occurs in the judiciary – two-fifths (41%) report it happens occasionally, while nearly one-third (31%) are convinced it happens frequently.

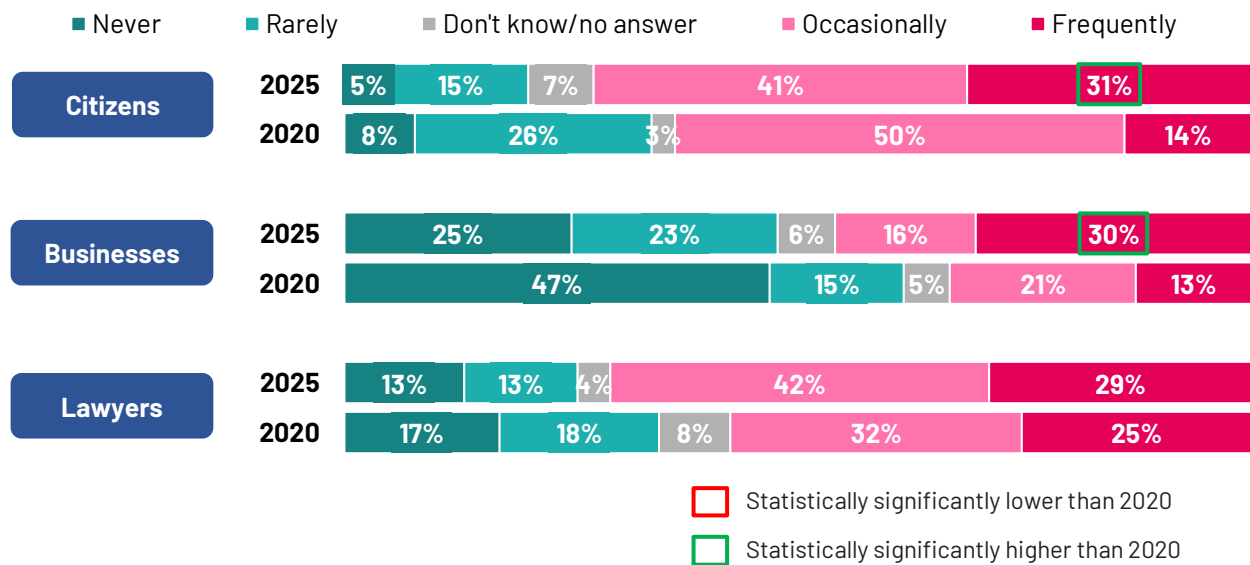
610. Lawyers share similar perceptions, with more than four-fifths (83%) believing pulling strings takes place. The distribution mirrors that of citizens – 42% perceive it as occasional and 29% as frequent practice.

611. Businesses present a somewhat different picture, though still predominantly critical. Three-quarters (76%) believe pulling strings occurs, with nearly one-third (30%) reporting it happens frequently. However, a quarter of businesses (25%) maintain that pulling strings never takes place in the judiciary.

612. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of pulling strings as a corruptive practice have intensified considerably across all three groups. Having in mind that half of businesses were benevolent towards the occurrence of pulling strings in the judiciary, they show the most substantial negative shift (from 13% to 30% of companies believing that pulling strings is common practice in judiciary and decline in share of those stating that this never happens, from 47% in 2020 to 25% in 2025), Similarly. citizens demonstrate equally significant negative trend (from 14% to 31% of those who consider that this is a regular practice), while lawyers remained relatively stable in their opinion between two waves.

¹¹ Bases of judges and prosecutors believing that corruption is mainly present or present to a great extent are too small for valid conclusions.

Figure 149 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, AND LAWYERS: PERCEPTION OF PRESENCE OF PULLING STRINGS



(In your opinion, how often do the following practices take place in judiciary? Please rate on the scale 1 to 4, where 1 means Never, and 4 Frequently. - Pulling strings) Base: Citizens, Businesses - Those who had a court experience in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; Lawyers - Total target population; (Citizens n=343; Businesses n=79; Lawyers n=150)

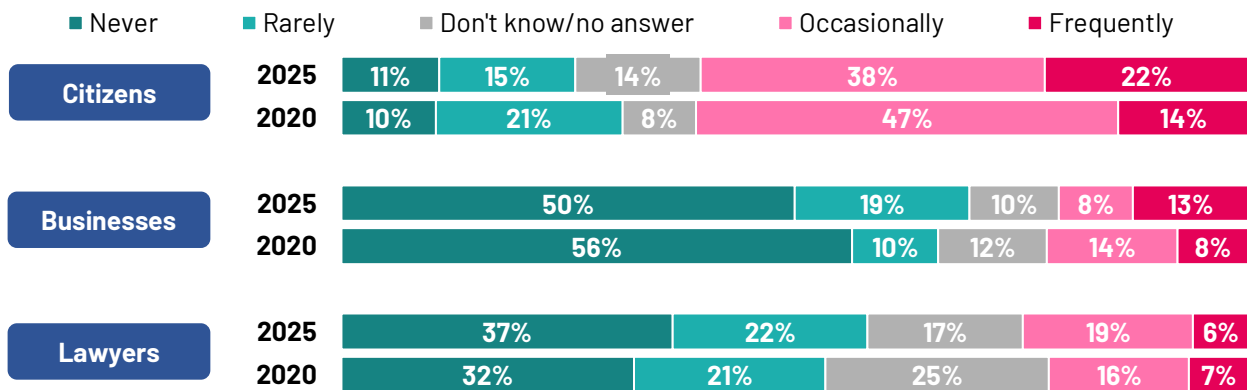
613. In comparison to pulling strings, significantly fewer respondents perceive pecuniary compensation as a practice that exists in the judicial system, particularly among lawyers and businesses (Figure 150).

614. Citizens remain the most critical, with three-quarters (75%) believing pecuniary compensation takes place in the judiciary. Six out of ten citizens (60%) report it as an occasional or frequent phenomenon, with 22% perceiving it as frequent.

615. Lawyers and businesses hold notably different views. Fewer than half of businesses (42%) believe pecuniary compensation occurs, while half (50%) maintain it never takes place. Among lawyers, only one-quarter (25%) perceive this practice as existing, with the majority (37%) reporting it never occurs. Notably, a substantial share of lawyers (17%) do not express an opinion on this matter.

616. Compared to 2020 - Perceptions of pecuniary compensation have remained stable across all groups, with minimal shifts observed.

Figure 150 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, AND LAWYERS: PERCEPTION REGARDING PRESENCE OF PECUNIARY COMPENSATION



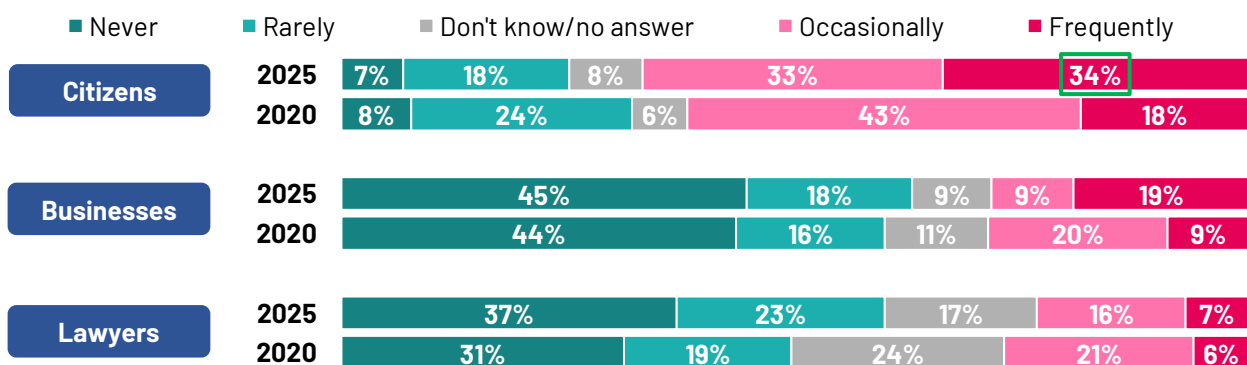
(In your opinion, how often do the following practices take place in judiciary? Please rate on the scale 1 to 4, where 1 means Never, and 4 Frequently. - Pecuniary compensation) Base: Citizens, Businesses - Those who had a court experience in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; Lawyers - Total target population; (Citizens n=343; Businesses n=79; Lawyers n=150)

617. The practice of giving gifts is perceived as present in the judiciary by a substantial majority of citizens (85%), with two-thirds reporting it as occasional (33%) or frequent (34%) practice (Figure 151).

618. Lawyers and businesses hold considerably less critical views. Fewer than half of businesses (47%) and lawyers (46%) believe gift-giving occurs, while 45% of businesses and 37% of lawyers maintain it never takes place. As with pecuniary compensation, 17% of lawyers do not provide an assessment.

619. Compared to 2020 - Citizens show a moderate negative shift in perceptions of gift-giving practices, with the increase of those who consider this as a frequent practice (from 18% to 34% between two survey waves), while businesses remain stable. Lawyers demonstrate a somewhat positive shift, suggesting fewer perceive this practice as common compared to five years ago, and more of those who believe this practice is not present at all.

Figure 151 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, AND LAWYERS: PERCEPTION REGARDING PRESENCE OF GIVING/RECEIVING GIFTS



Red box: Statistically significantly lower than 2020

Green box: Statistically significantly higher than 2020

(In your opinion, how often do the following practices take place in judiciary? Please rate on the scale 1 to 4, where 1 means Never, and 4 Frequently. - Gifts) Base: Citizens, Businesses - Those who had a court experience in the past three years; Lawyers - Total target population; (Citizens n=343; Businesses n=79; Lawyers n=150)

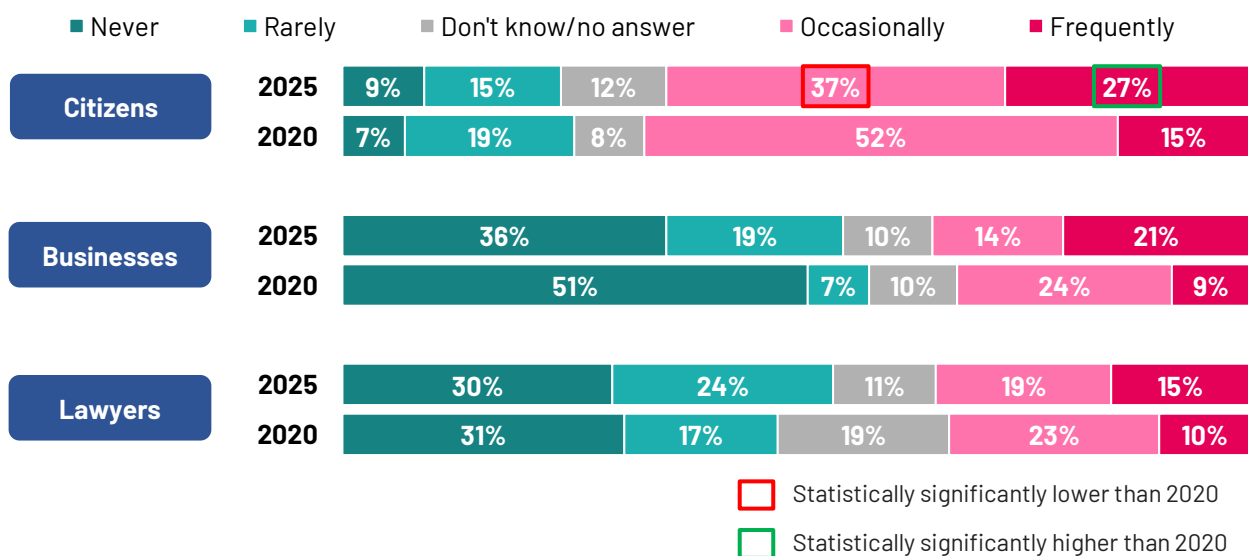
620. Opinions about the prevalence of rendering a service in return follow a similar pattern to gift-giving practices (Figure 152). Citizens remain the most critical, with the vast majority (79%) believing this practice occurs in the judiciary – 37% report it as occasional and 27% as frequent.

621. Lawyers demonstrate more divided views, with over half (59%) perceiving that rendering a service in return takes place – 19% occasionally and 15% frequently. However, nearly one-third (30%) maintain it never occurs.

622. Businesses are the least critical, with over one-third (36%) reporting that this practice never happens in the judiciary. Nevertheless, more than half (54%) believe it does occur, with one-fifth (21%) perceiving it as frequent.

623. Compared to 2020 – No substantial shifts were recorded in perceptions of rendering a service in return across any of the surveyed groups. Interestingly, although the share of citizens who believe that rendering service in return is relatively common remained stable compared to 2020, the percentage of those who see that as a frequent practice rose, while at the same time, fewer citizens believe that this occurs only occasionally.

Figure 152 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, AND LAWYERS: PERCEPTION REGARDING PRESENCE OF RENDERING A SERVICE IN RETURN

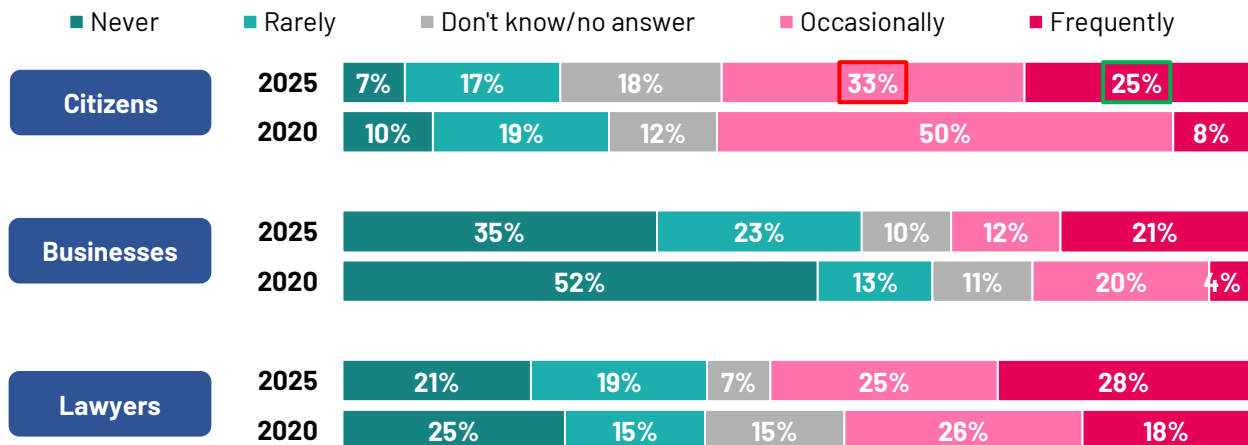


(In your opinion, how often do the following practices take place in judiciary? Please rate on the scale 1 to 4, where 1 means Never, and 4 Frequently. – Rendering a service in return) Base: Citizens, Businesses – Those who had a court experience in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; Lawyers – Total target population; (Citizens n=343; Businesses n=79; Lawyers n=150)

624. With regard to the presence of influence on a career by influential people, the vast majority of citizens (75%), more than seven out of ten lawyers (72%), and over half of businesses (55%) believe that this practice is rarely, occasionally, or frequently present in the judicial system (Figure 153). Notably, citizens report the highest frequency of this practice, with almost three-fifths (58%) perceiving it as occasional or frequent, followed by lawyers with 53% sharing the same view.

625. Compared to 2020 – All three groups show somewhat more negative shifts in perceptions of influence on career, with businesses demonstrating the most substantial change (from 4% considering this as common favor in 2020 to 21% in 2025). Lawyers and citizens show more moderate negative trends, with the increase in those who perceive the use of connections as a frequent practice.

Figure 153 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, AND LAWYERS: PERCEPTION REGARDING PRESENCE OF INFLUENCE ON A CAREER BY INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE



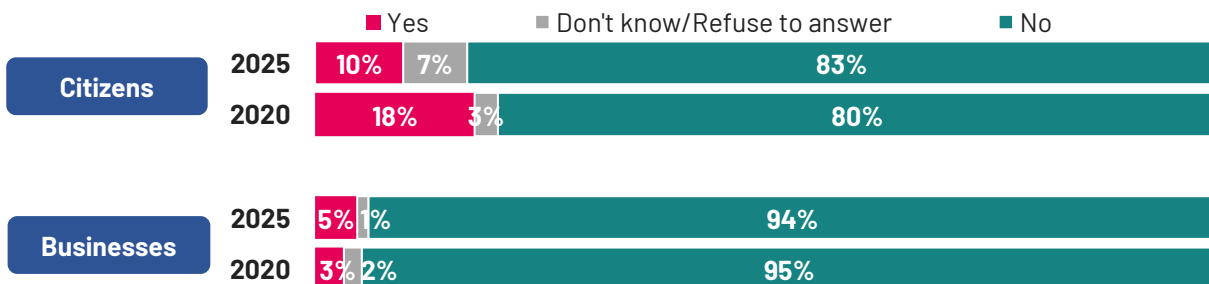
(In your opinion, how often do the following practices take place in judiciary? Please rate on the scale 1 to 4, where 1 means Never, and 4 Frequently. - Presence of influence on a career made by influential people) Base: Citizens, Businesses - Those who had a court experience in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; Lawyers - Total target population; (Citizens n=343; Businesses n=79; Lawyers n=150)

626. Hence, the overall pattern of perceptions across corruptive practices confirms that citizens consistently hold the most critical views, perceiving all practices as occurring occasionally or frequently at the highest rates. Businesses remain the least concerned across most practices, with the exception of gift-giving, where their perceptions slightly exceed those of lawyers (28% vs. 23%). Lawyers generally occupy an intermediate position, though for pulling strings and influence on career advancement, their perceptions closely approach those of citizens.

627. Even though most citizens and some business representatives believe corruptive practices are present within the judiciary, actual personal experience with informal practices tells a different story. A vast majority of citizens (83%) and businesses (94%) who had an experience in a court case in the last three years report they were never advised to resort to informal means in their court cases (Figure 154).

628. Compared to 2020 - Citizens demonstrated just a moderate positive shift between the survey waves. There was a slight increase in the number of individuals who did not experience being advised by the respective party to use informal methods to influence case resolution, while there was a decline in those who did have such an experience. Businesses remain stable in that regard.

Figure 154 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES: EXPERIENCE REGARDING INFORMAL PRACTICES



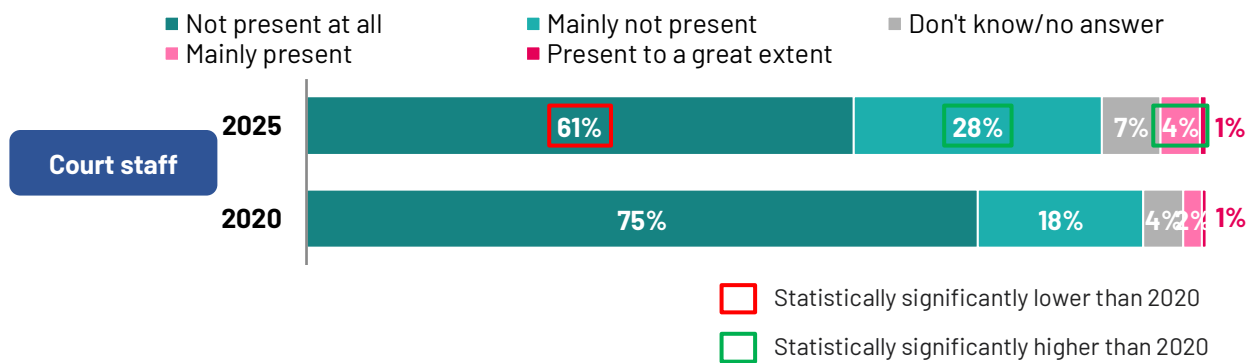
(During the proceedings, did anyone (attorney, public employee) suggest that your case would be adjudicated more efficiently if you resorted to informal means (made an additional payment, offered a gift, pulled some strings...)? Base: Those who had experience with a court case in the past three years and have a first instance judgement rendered; (Citizens n=343; Businesses n=79)

629. Court staff members report that corruptive practices are rare in their departments (Figure 95). Nearly nine out of ten (88%) indicate that corruption is not present – either not at all (61%) or mainly not present (28%). Only a small minority (5%) perceives corruption as present to any extent.

630. When asked about specific experiences, the vast majority of court staff (91%) report not knowing anyone in their unit who was approached with informal means such as additional payments, gifts, or pulling strings in the past 12 months. An even higher share (94%) states they do not know anyone who has accepted such an informal means (Figure 155).

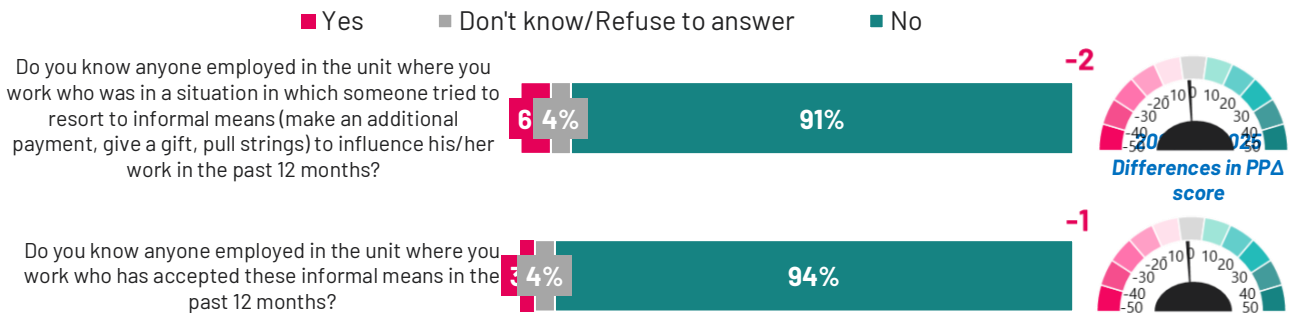
631. Compared to 2020 – Court staff perceptions have shifted slightly in a negative direction. At the general level, the share reporting absence of corruption decreased from 93% to 88% in the past five years. When it comes to concrete experiences, changes are minimal – awareness of colleagues being approached with informal means (PPΔ -2) and of colleagues accepting such means (PPΔ -1) show negligible variation.

Figure 155 - COURT STAFF: PERCEPTION OF PRESENCE OF CORRUPTION IN THE COURT ADMINISTRATION



(How present is corruption in the court administrative services?); Base: Those who are not providing administrative services to the general public and businesses; (n=687)

Figure 156 - COURT STAFF: KNOWLEDGE OF PRESENCE OF CORRUPTION IN THE COURT ADMINISTRATION



(Do you know anyone employed in the unit where you work who was in a situation in which someone tried to resort to informal means (make an additional payment, give a gift, pull strings) to influence his/her work in the past 12 months?; Do you know anyone employed in the unit where you work who has accepted these informal means in the past 12 months?); Base: Those who are not providing administrative services to general public and businesses; (n=687)

5.4. Fairness/Discrimination

632. Perceptions of fairness in the justice system vary considerably among justice system professionals, with judges and prosecutors holding more positive views than lawyers (Figure 157).

633. The majority of judges (57%) and nearly half of prosecutors (45%) report that there is no lack of fairness in the Montenegrin judiciary. In contrast, lawyers are more critical – more than half (57%) perceive a lack of fairness, while 43% disagree. It should be noted that a considerable share of prosecutors (23%) and judges (16%) do not express an opinion on this matter.

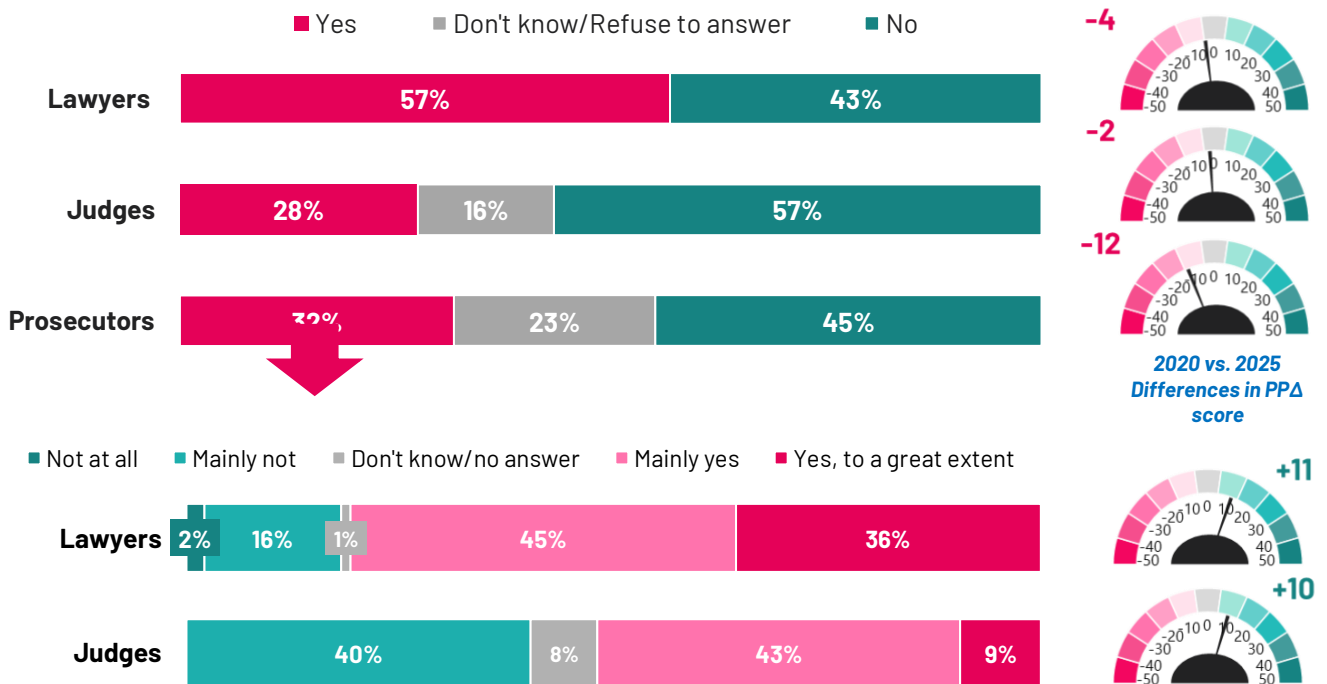
634. Among those who perceive a lack of fairness, views differ on whether this undermines citizens' trust. The vast majority of lawyers who identify fairness issues are convinced it damages public trust – 81% believe so, with more than one-third (36%) stating it does so to a great extent. Judges who perceive a lack of fairness hold more divided views – while slightly more than half (52%) believe it undermines trust, two-fifths (40%) disagree. The base of prosecutors who believe that lack of fairness is present in the judiciary of Montenegro is too small for valid conclusions.

635. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of fairness in the judiciary have shifted across all groups of justice system professionals.

636. Prosecutors show the most substantial negative shift (PPΔ -12), with the share perceiving a lack of fairness more than doubling from 15% to 32%. Lawyers demonstrate a moderate negative shift (PPΔ -4), while judges show minimal change (PPΔ -2), though notably the share of judges not expressing an opinion decreased significantly from 28% to 16%.

637. Among those who perceive a lack of fairness, views on its impact on public trust have improved. Lawyers show a positive shift (PPΔ +11), with the share believing lack of fairness undermines citizens' trust decreasing from 92% to 81%. Judges demonstrate a similar positive trend (PPΔ +10), suggesting that even among those who identify fairness issues, fewer now believe this significantly damages public confidence in the judiciary.

Figure 157 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF FAIRNESS OF THE JUDICIARY



(Are the following issues present in the judiciary of Montenegro? – Lack of fairness; To what extent does the following [Lack of fairness] undermine citizens' confidence in judiciary in Montenegro?); Base: Total target population; Those who believe that lack of fairness is present in the judiciary in Montenegro; (Lawyers total n=150, Lawyers who believe lack of fairness is present n=86, Judges total n=155, Judges who believe lack of fairness is present n=40, Prosecutors total n=71)¹²

5.4.1. Influence of experience on perception of fairness

638. Having recent experience with the judicial system appears to positively influence citizens' perceptions of fairness, though this pattern is somewhat less pronounced among businesses (Figure 158).

639. Among citizens, more than half (56%) perceive the justice system as generally fair, while two-fifths (41%) view it as unfair. However, perceptions improve considerably when citizens evaluate fairness in their own court cases – three-quarters (75%) of those with court experience in the past three years report having a fair trial, while only 22% perceive their experience as unfair.

640. Businesses show a similar overall assessment of general fairness – nearly six out of ten (60%) believe the justice system is generally fair, while approximately two-fifths (39%) consider it unfair. However, unlike citizens, businesses' perceptions of fairness in their specific cases do not show the same improvement – 60% report fair treatment, while over one-third (37%) perceive their trial as unfair.

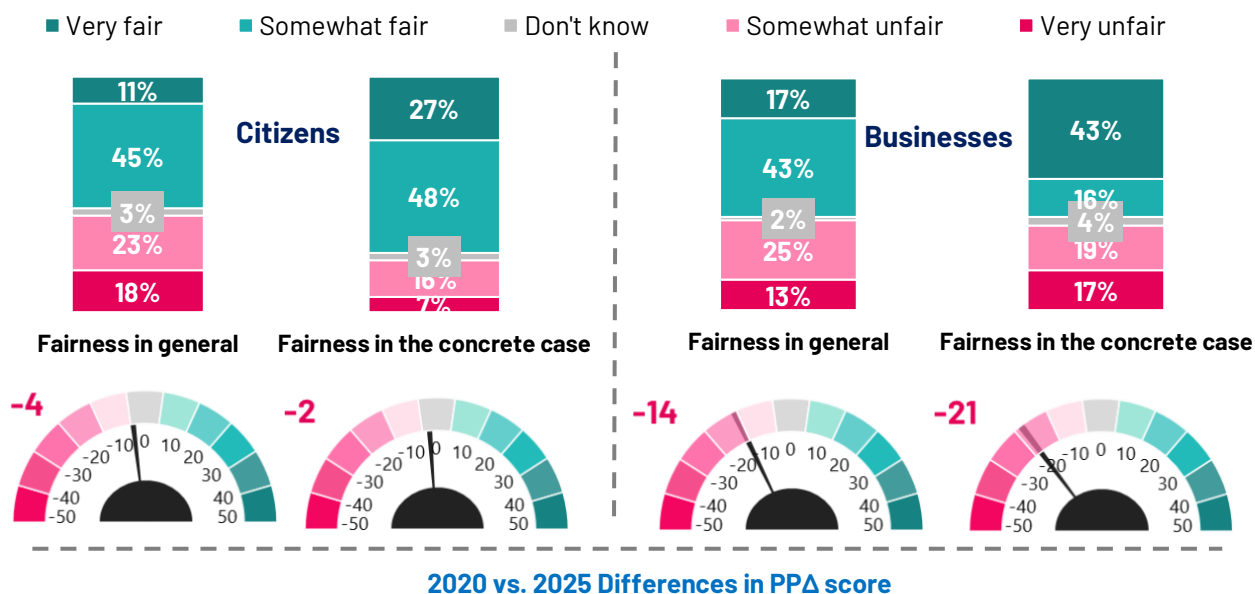
641. Compared to 2020 – Assessments of fairness have deteriorated across both groups, with businesses exhibiting more pronounced negative shifts.

¹² The base of prosecutors who believe that lack of fairness is present in the judiciary of Montenegro is too small for valid conclusions.

642. Citizens show moderate declines, with general evaluations worsening (PPΔ -4) as negative perceptions of the justice system's fairness increased from 36% to 41%, while case-specific assessments show a smaller decline (PPΔ -2).

643. Businesses demonstrate considerably larger negative shifts. General assessments of fairness worsened significantly (PPΔ -14), with negative views nearly doubling from 22% to 39%. Case-specific evaluations declined even more substantially (PPΔ -21).

Figure 158 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES: GENERAL PERCEPTION OF FAIRNESS OF THE JUDICIARY COMPARED TO FAIRNESS IN THE CONCRETE CASE

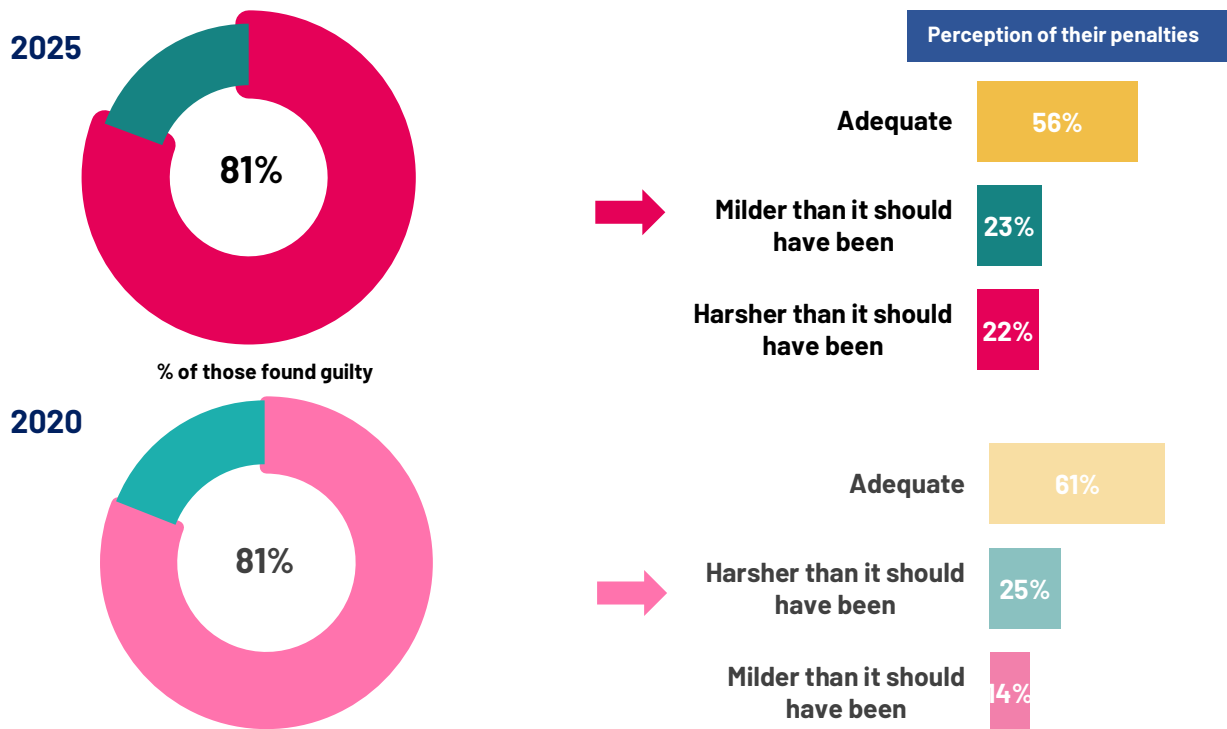


(In your opinion, how fair is the judicial system in Montenegro? Notwithstanding the outcome of the court proceedings, what do you think of the first-instance proceedings themselves? Did you have a fair trial?); Base: Total target population; Those who have had experience with a court case in the past 3 years; (Citizens total n=1305, Citizens experienced n=342; Businesses total n=272, Businesses experienced n=79)

644. Among citizens with court experience, approximately eight in ten report that the defendant received an unfavorable verdict, irrespective of their own role in the proceedings. For those cases resulting in a guilty verdict, opinions on penalty appropriateness are divided – while the majority (56%) consider the penalty adequate, roughly equal shares view it as either too lenient (23%) or too harsh (22%)(Figure 159).

645. Compared to 2020 – The share of citizens reporting unfavorable verdicts remains unchanged, while perceptions of penalty adequacy show only minor variations.

Figure 159 - CITIZENS: OUTCOME OF THE TRIAL



(Was the defendant/Were you acquitted or found guilty by a first-instance court?; Was the penalty milder than it should have been, adequate or harsher than it should have been?); Base: Those who have had experience with a court case in the past 3 years; (n=232 in 2025, n=357 in 2020)

5.4.2. Bailiffs' impact on the fairness

646. Bailiffs, as enforcement agents, can significantly influence how the fairness of the judicial system is perceived. Citizens and businesses, as users of this system, tend to be the most critical about this aspect. While 36% of citizens believe that bailiffs positively impact the fairness of the judicial system, one in five views their influence negatively. Among business representatives, 17% have an unfavorable opinion of bailiffs, although one in four recognizes their positive impact on fairness. (Figure 160)

647. In the legal profession, prosecutors generally have the most negative views regarding bailiffs, with 15% expressing concerns about their influence on fairness. In contrast, judges hold the most favorable opinions; 51% view the impact of bailiffs positively. Lawyers also tend to have a favorable perspective on the effects of bailiffs on fairness (43%). . Notaries are dominantly favorable about the impact of bailiffs on fairness. Ten out of fifteen surveyed notaries think that bailiffs' influence is positive.

648. However, a notable portion across all groups believe that bailiffs have no impact on fairness. This viewpoint is particularly prevalent among prosecutors, where 52% hold this opinion.

649. In the subpopulation analysis regarding public opinion on bailiffs, several key findings emerge. Among citizens, individuals with lower levels of education express more pronounced negative opinions about the impact of bailiffs on fairness, with 32% of low-educated respondents sharing this view, compared to only 20% of those with higher education. Similarly, 27% of individuals with below-average household incomes perceive bailiffs negatively, in contrast to 17% of those with above-average incomes. Geographically, those living in northern and central regions exhibit more critical views, with 23% and 24% respectively believing that bailiffs negatively influence fairness, while only 13% of citizens in the southern region feel the same way. Furthermore, individuals involved in criminal

cases tend to have a more negative perspective on bailiffs than those engaged in civil cases, with 40% of the former expressing dissatisfaction compared to just 13% of the latter.

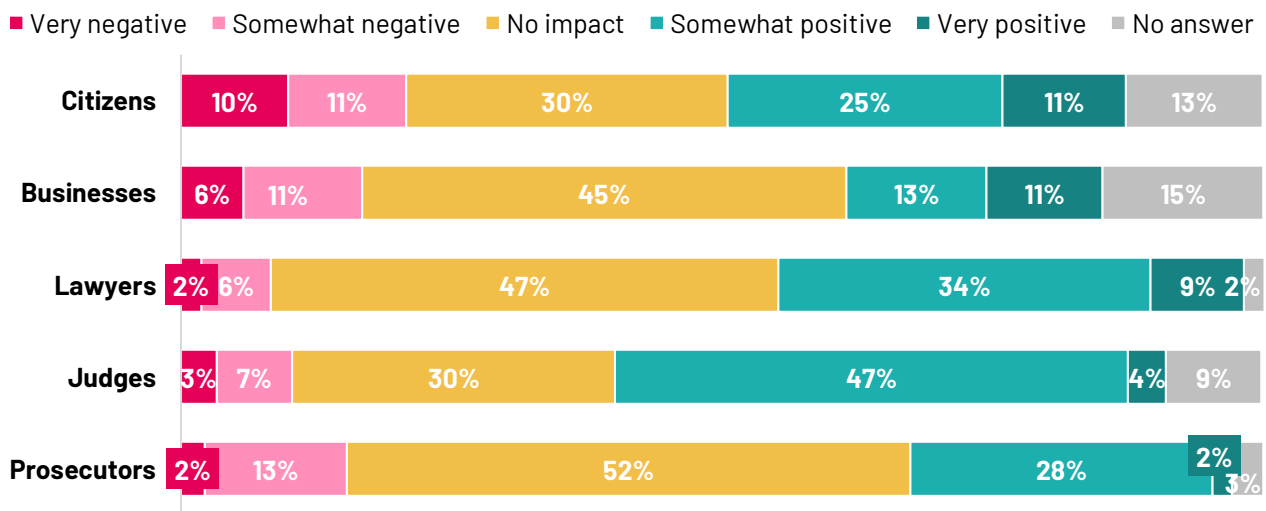
650. Once again, ethnicity and political views shape citizens' perceptions. Thus, ethnic Montenegrins and those who politically align with the opposition are more critical of this question: 27% of ethnic Montenegrins and 33% of those close to the opposition view the bailiffs' impact on judicial fairness negatively. In contrast, 48% of ethnic Serbs and 46% of those closer to the ruling party's political views perceive this impact positively, compared to 28% of ethnic Montenegrins and 21% of the opposition supporters.

651. Interestingly, personal experience with bailiff services does not affect how people perceive their impact on judicial fairness. This holds true for businesses as well. Additionally, among businesses certain attributes do not influence positive or negative opinion but rather a consensus of "no impact." The belief that bailiffs do not influence fairness is notably stronger among businesses in the central region compared to those in the north (52% versus 21%). Moreover, individuals who have had recent court experiences are more likely to share this viewpoint than those without such experiences (75% compared to 30%).

652. Among lawyers, younger (up to 49 years old) and less experienced lawyers (up to 10 years of practice) tend to view bailiffs' impact on judicial fairness more favorably than older and more experienced lawyers (49% vs. 31% considering the age; 55% vs. 30% in terms of professional experience).

653. Finally, judges who work in general or other courts (for instance, appellate, commercial, administrative, supreme) are more positive about bailiffs' influence on fairness than those in misdemeanor courts (56% and 68% vs. 22%).

Figure 160 - PERCEPTION OF BAILIFFS' IMPACT ON FAIRNESS OF THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM



(What kind of impact do bailiffs have on the fairness of the judicial system?); Base: Total target population (Citizens, n=1305; Businesses, n=272; Lawyers, n=150; Judges, n=155; Prosecutors, n=71)

5.4.3. Equal treatment of citizens and businesses

654. Service users hold considerably more negative perceptions of discrimination based on various characteristics compared to judges and prosecutors, with lawyers positioned between these two groups (Figure 161).

655. Citizens and lawyers identify party membership and economic status as the most problematic aspects of discrimination before the court. More than half of citizens perceive discrimination based on both party membership and economic status (both 56%), while approximately one-third of lawyers share these concerns (32% and 34% respectively). In contrast, only around one in ten judges and prosecutors acknowledge discrimination based on economic status, while slightly higher shares perceive discrimination based on party membership (15% of judges, 18% of prosecutors).

656. Beyond these two primary concerns, nearly half of citizens believe unequal treatment occurs based on education (48%), ethnicity (46%), religion (47%), and disability (46%), as well as sexual orientation (42%), place of residence (42%), age (40%), and gender (38%).

657. Justice system professionals maintain a distinctly different perspective. The vast majority of judges and prosecutors report that citizens are treated equally regardless of these characteristics, with no more than 18% perceiving discrimination based on any listed characteristic. Lawyers fall between service users and other justice system professionals – while their perceptions of discrimination are notably lower than citizens' across most characteristics (ranging from 17% to 34%), they remain higher than those of judges and prosecutors.

658. Businesses express significant concerns about discriminatory treatment in the justice system. More than half report discrimination based on ownership structure (57%), company size (56%), and political/personal connections of owners or managers (54%). Half perceive unequal treatment based on the municipality where their company is headquartered (50%), while nearly half (49%) notice discrimination based on company activity.

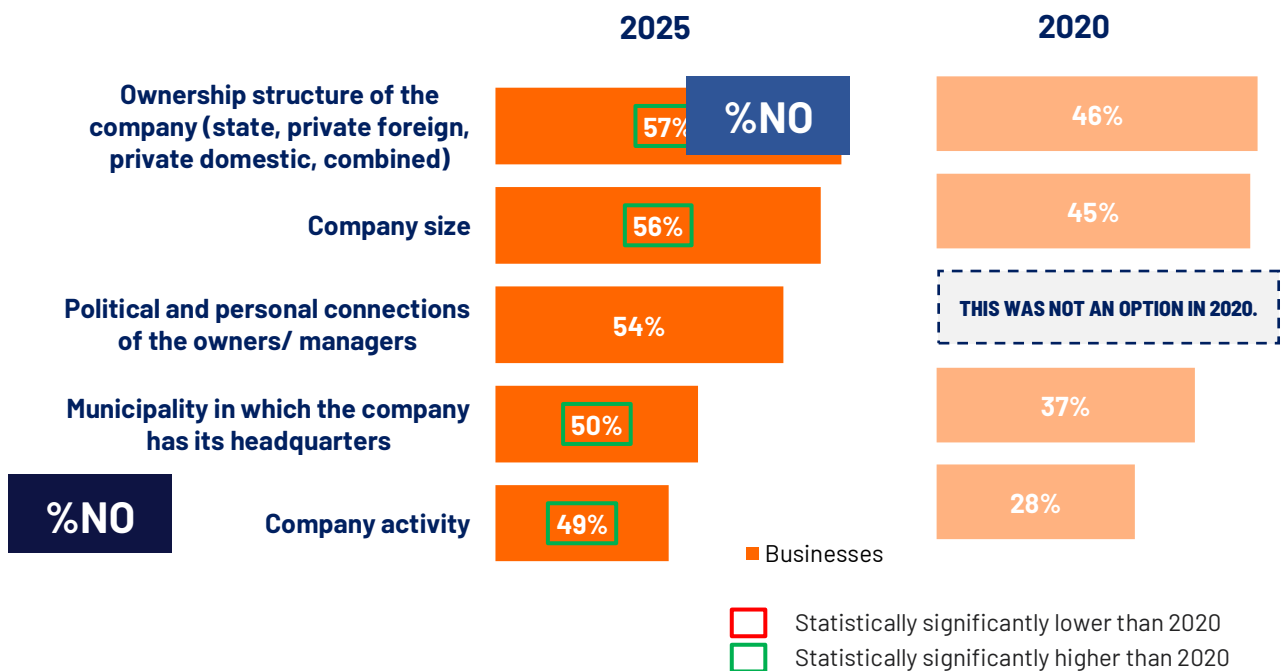
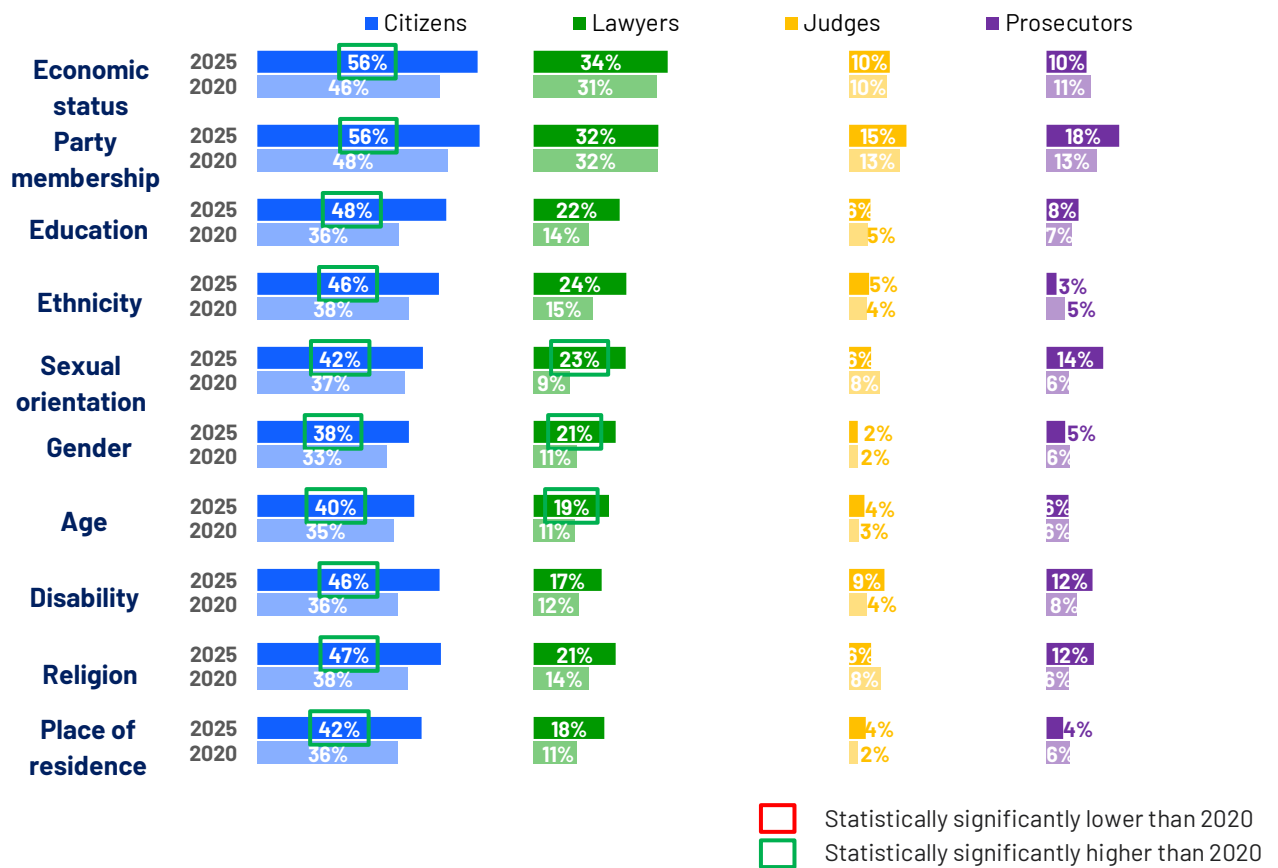
659. Compared to 2020 – Perceptions of discrimination have increased significantly among service users and to some extent among lawyers, while remaining relatively stable among judges and prosecutors.

660. Citizens report substantially higher levels of perceived discrimination across all listed characteristics compared to five years ago. The most notable increases occurred for education (from 36% to 48%), disability (from 36% to 46%), and party membership (from 48% to 56%). Perceptions of discrimination based on economic status, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, age, and place of residence also rose significantly.

661. Lawyers show significant increases in perceived discrimination based on sexual orientation (from 9% to 23%), gender (from 11% to 21%), and age (from 11% to 19%). Perceptions of other forms of discrimination remained relatively stable.

662. Businesses also report increased concerns about discriminatory treatment. The share perceiving discrimination based on ownership structure rose from 46% to 57%, company size from 45% to 56%, municipality from 37% to 50%, and company activity from 28% to 49%.

Figure 161 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: EQUAL TREATMENT OF CITIZENS/BUSINESSES



(In your view, does the judicial system in Montenegro equally treat all citizens/businesses notwithstanding their...?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1333 in 2020, n=1305 in 2025, Businesses n=278 in 2020, n=272 in 2025, n=, Lawyers n=151 in 2020, n=150 in 2025, Judges n=192 in 2020, n=155 in 2025; Prosecutors n=83 in 2020, n=71 in 2025)

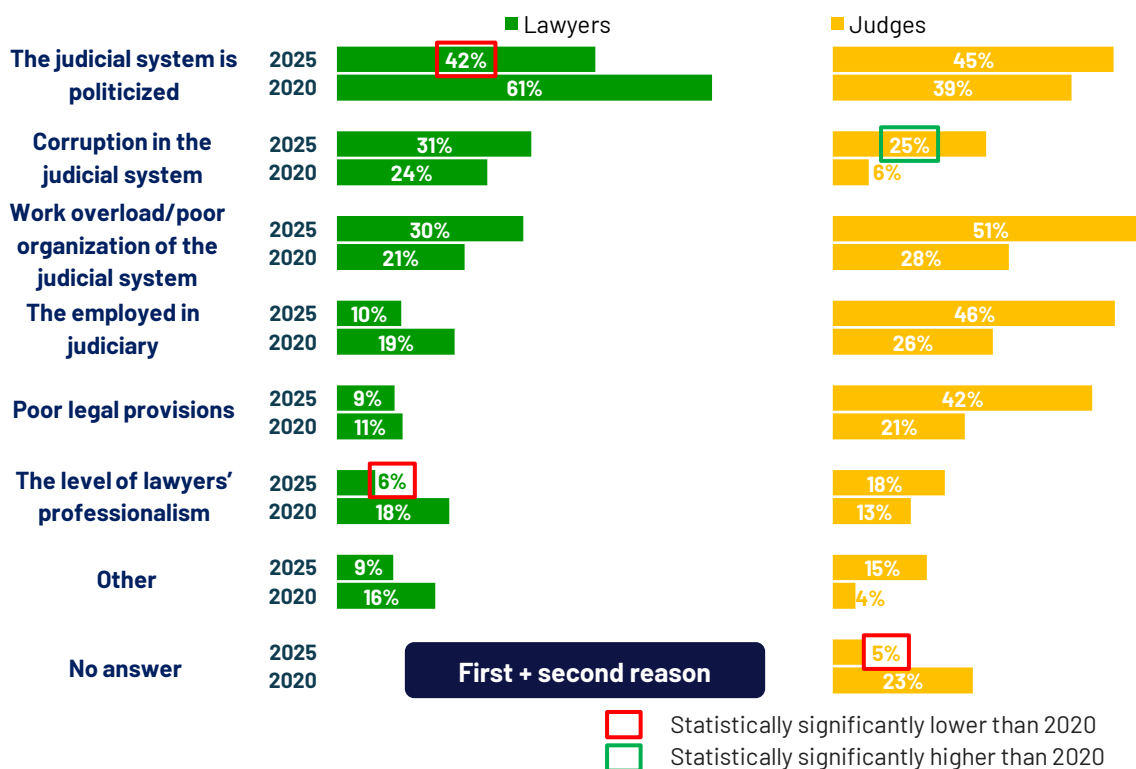
663. Lawyers most frequently identify politicization of the judicial system (42%) and corruption (31%) as the primary drivers of discrimination. Work overload and poor organization of the judicial system is cited by three in ten lawyers (30%), while approximately one in ten point to employees in the judiciary (10%), poor legal provisions (9%), or the level of lawyers' professionalism (6%).

664. Judges present a notably different perspective. Half identify work overload and poor organization (51%) as the main reason for unequal treatment, followed by politicization (45%), poor legal provisions (42%), and the employed in judiciary (46%). Approximately one-quarter of judges (25%) cite corruption, while fewer point to the level of lawyers' professionalism (18%).

665. Compared to 2020 – Lawyers continue to identify the same top two reasons – politicization of the judicial system and corruption – though with notable changes in magnitude. Statistically significant decreases were observed for politicization (from 61% to 42%) and the level of lawyers' professionalism (from 18% to 6%).

666. Judges in 2020 most commonly cited politicization (39%) followed by work overload/poor organization (28%); in 2025, these two have switched positions. A statistically significant increase was recorded for corruption (from 6% to 25%), while non-response rates fell significantly from 23% to 5%.

Figure 162 - LAWYERS AND JUDGES: REASONS FOR DISCRIMINATION



(Could you please specify the first most important reason for discrimination or unequal treatment? And the second most important reason?); Base: Those who believe the justice system does not treat all users equally; (Lawyers n=66 in 2020, n=75 in 2025; Judges n=29 in 2020, n=37 in 2025)¹³

¹³ Bases of prosecutors believing the justice system does not treat all users equally are too small for valid conclusions.

5.4.4. Gender gap

667. Among justice system professionals, perceptions of gender equality in income vary by profession and gender of the respondent (Figure 163).

668. Lawyers show the most pronounced gender gap in perceptions. While nearly three-quarters of male lawyers (72%) believe men and women are equally compensated, only 45% of their female colleagues share this view. More than half of female lawyers (55%) perceive that men are in a better financial position, compared to a quarter of male lawyers (25%) who acknowledge this disparity. Judges demonstrate higher consensus on equal treatment. The vast majority of both male (85%) and female judges (74%) believe that income is distributed equally regardless of gender. However, female judges are more likely to perceive men as better off (13%) compared to their male counterparts who rarely express this view. Prosecutors report the highest levels of perceived equality. More than nine in ten male prosecutors (92%) and three-quarters of female prosecutors (75%) believe men and women are treated equally. However, one-fifth of female prosecutors (20%) perceive that men have an income advantage. Court staff present an interesting pattern – male employees are more likely than other male professionals to believe women are better off (13%), while about two-thirds of both men (72%) and women (65%) perceive equal treatment.

669. Perceptions of gender equality in promotion prospects follow a similar pattern, with men generally more likely to perceive equal treatment than women.

670. Lawyers again exhibit the largest gender gap. While more than four-fifths of male lawyers (83%) believe promotion prospects are equal, only 63% of female lawyers agree. More than one-third of female lawyers (38%) perceive that men have better promotion opportunities. Judges show notable divergence – while nearly three-quarters of male judges (72%) perceive equal treatment, a similar share of female judges (64%) agree. However, more than one-fifth of female judges (22%) believe men have better promotion prospects, compared to virtually no male judges expressing this view. Prosecutors demonstrate the most striking gender gap on this measure. While over nine in ten male prosecutors (92%) believe promotion prospects are equal, only 62% of female prosecutors share this view. Nearly one-third of female prosecutors (33%) perceive that men have better chances for promotion. Court staff show similar views, with approximately two-thirds of men (69%) and six in ten women (60%) perceiving equal promotion opportunities.

671. When it comes to appointments, perceptions differ notably between judges and prosecutors.

672. Among judges, approximately six in ten male judges (61%) believe men and women are treated equally, while two-thirds of female judges (66%) share this view. Notably, nearly three in ten male judges (29%) perceive that women are in a better position for appointments, while 15% of female judges believe men have an advantage. Prosecutors show higher consensus – approximately four-fifths of both male (84%) and female prosecutors (79%) perceive equal treatment in appointments. However, 16% of female prosecutors believe men have better chances for appointment.

673. Regarding disciplinary evaluation, perceptions of gender equality are notably high across both professions.

674. Among judges, more than four-fifths of both male (83%) and female judges (80%) believe men and women are evaluated equally. Prosecutors report even higher levels of perceived equality – 90% of male and 81% of female prosecutors share this view. However, 12% of female prosecutors perceive that men are in a better position.

675. Finally, when it comes to treatment by judges in the courtroom, most lawyers and prosecutors perceive equal treatment regardless of gender.

676. Among lawyers, the vast majority of male lawyers (86%) believe men and women are treated equally, while three-quarters of female lawyers (75%) share this view. Approximately one-fifth of female lawyers (21%) perceive that men receive better treatment. Prosecutors of both genders hold similar views – approximately three-quarters (76%) perceive equal treatment, though 17% of female prosecutors and 10% of male prosecutors believe men receive better treatment.

677. Compared to 2020 – Overall, perceptions of gender equality among justice system professionals have shifted in different directions depending on the profession and the specific aspect evaluated.

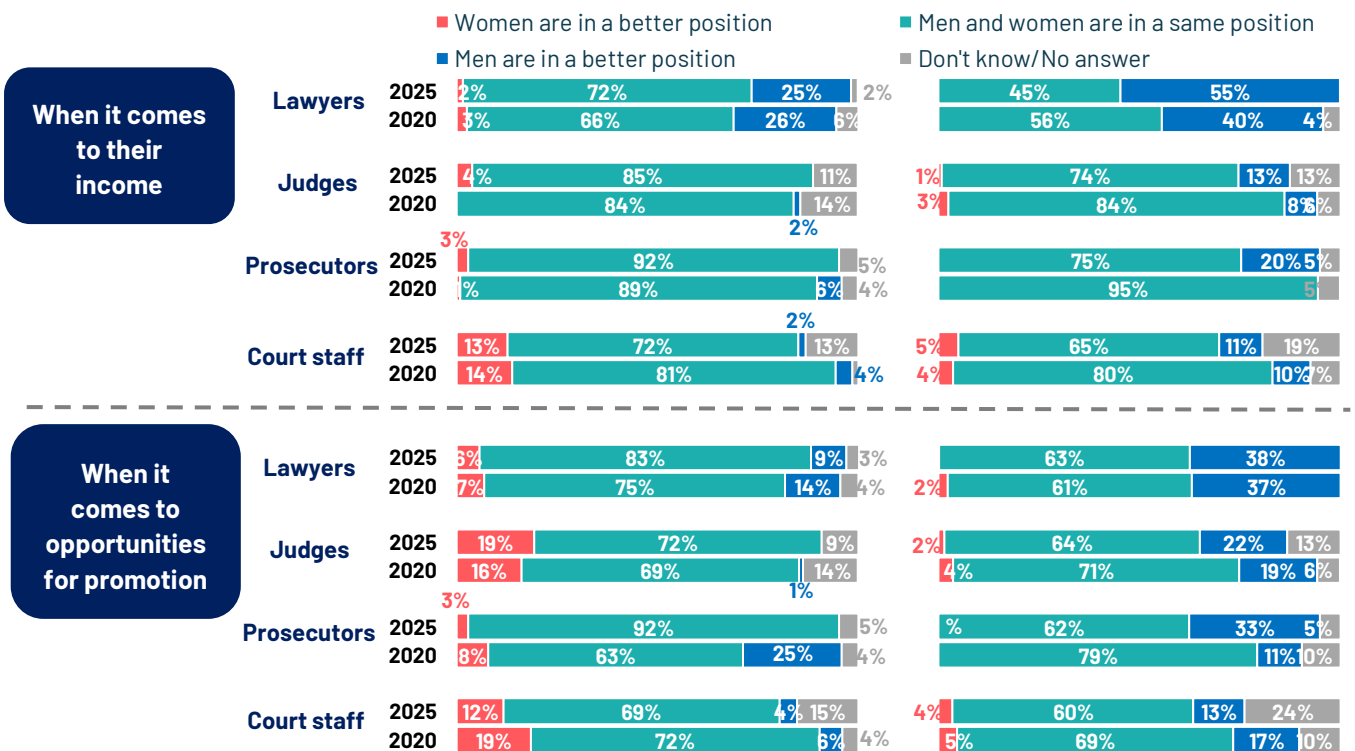
678. Lawyers show notable changes in perceptions of income equality. The share of female lawyers perceiving equal treatment decreased (from 56% to 45%), while more now believe men are better off (from 40% to 55%). Male lawyers' perceptions remained relatively stable.

679. Judges demonstrate mixed trends. Regarding appointments, male judges increasingly perceive that women have an advantage (from 21% to 29%), while perceptions of equal treatment decreased (from 69% to 61%). Female judges' perceptions of income equality also declined (from 84% to 74%).

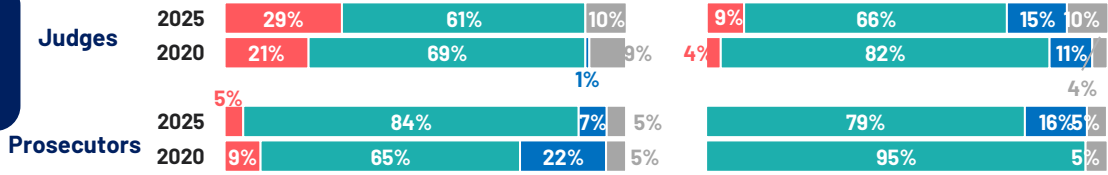
680. Prosecutors show the most notable shifts. Perceptions of equal promotion opportunities among female prosecutors dropped substantially (from 79% to 62%), with more perceiving men as advantaged (from 11% to 33%). Similarly, female prosecutors' perceptions of equal treatment in courtroom decreased (from 91% to 76%).

681. Court staff show increased uncertainty, with higher non-response rates across several measures compared to 2020.

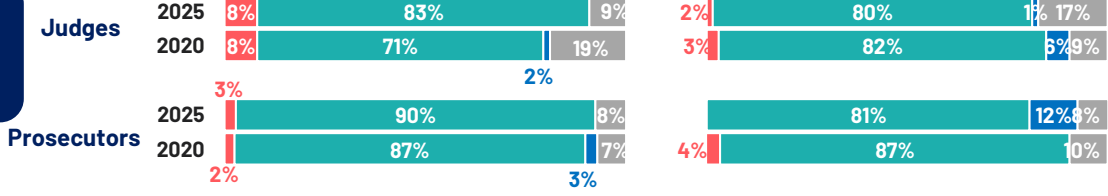
Figure 163 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS, COURT STAFF: GENDER EQUALITY BY GENDER



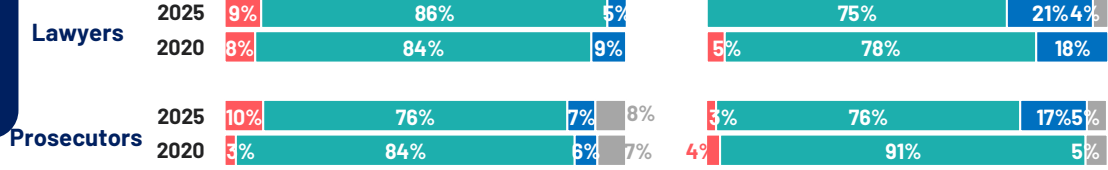
When it comes to their appointment



In case of disciplinary evaluation



When it comes to treatment by judges in the courtroom



(How would you compare the position of female and male lawyers/judges/prosecutors/staff in your court...?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=151 in 2020, n=150 in 2025, Judges n=192 in 2020, n=155 in 2025; Prosecutors n=83 in 2020, n=71 in 2025, Court staff n=640 in 2020, n=687)

6. APPELLATE SYSTEM

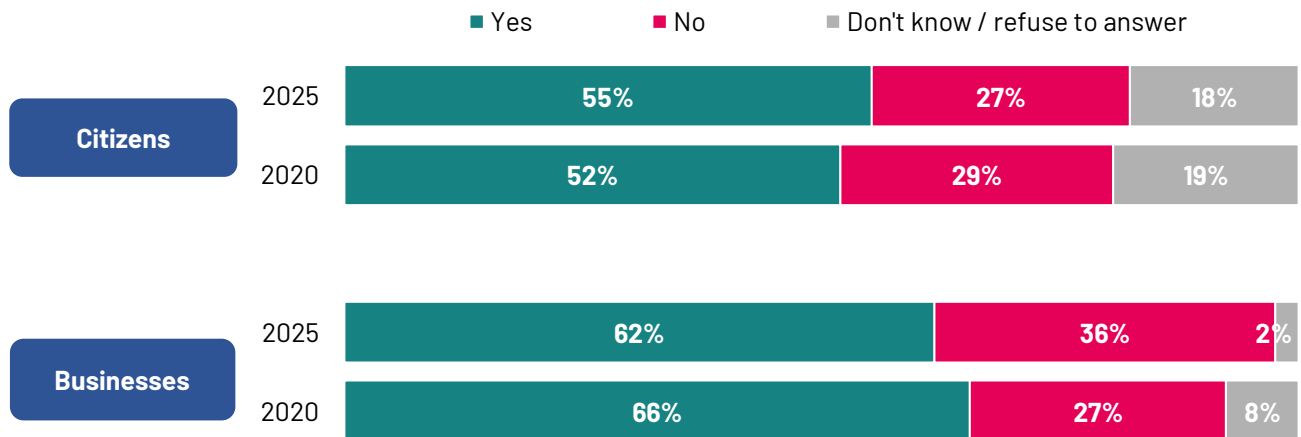
- Overall trust is moderate, with 52% of citizens and 66% of businesses express confidence in the appellate system. However, businesses show higher trust than individual citizens, but also a higher level of distrust.
- Compared to 2020, the level of trust in the appellation system remains stable, with no significant changes between the 2020 and 2025 survey waves.
- Among the general population, criminal case participants show the highest distrust: 46% of those involved in criminal cases distrust the system, while only 10% in civil cases share this view, compared to population average of 27%.
- Men appeal more frequently than women (14% vs. 4%)
- Political alignment also matters, with 74% of ruling party supporters trusting the system, compared to 66% of opposition supporters and only 20% of politically neutral individuals
- Businesses appeal more than citizens, with about one in three companies (36%) appealing, compared to one in five citizens (20%). This is a notable shift in appeal behavior, with businesses becoming more active in appeals compared to citizens, and also compared to the previous period. The previous survey wave showed the opposite trend.
- However, most first-instance courts' decisions go unchallenged. Specifically, 80% of citizens and 67% of businesses don't appeal. Misdemeanor cases are the least likely to be appealed, with 93% remaining unchallenged
- Higher courts mostly uphold decisions with 60% of appealed judgments being upheld in the last three years, while 23% of judgments were reconsidered or required revision.
- Enforcement is generally effective with 68% of judgments fully enforced, and 30% partially enforced

682. Most court users with recent experience with court cases trust the appellate system. Yet, businesses show a higher degree of trust compared to citizens. More precisely, 52% of citizens and 66% of businesses confirmed they have confidence in the appellate system. According to data reported by citizens, the higher court most frequently upheld the judgment.

683. Just over half of citizens with experience in court cases express trust in the appellate system in Montenegro. However, nearly 30% lack confidence in the appeals process, and a significant portion has no opinion on the matter. Among businesses, the percentage without an opinion is noticeably lower, and company representatives show a slightly higher level of trust in appellate decisions, with 62% believing in the judgments of higher courts. Nevertheless, businesses also express a higher level of distrust.

684. A subpopulation analysis reveals that individuals involved in criminal cases demonstrate a significantly higher level of distrust in the appellate system, with 46% expressing this sentiment. In contrast, 10% of those who participated in civil cases share distrust. Additionally, citizens involved in misdemeanor cases are notably more likely to select a 'don't know' response, with 32% choosing not to provide an opinion. This is much higher compared to just 4% of individuals involved in criminal cases, while 16% of those in civil cases also opted for this response. Interestingly, citizens who hold political views aligned with the ruling party tend to have more trust in the appellate process than those who lean towards the opposition. Specifically, 74% of individuals aligned with the ruling party express trust in the appellate process, compared with 29% of those closer to the opposition. On the other hand, only 13% of ruling party supporters express distrust, compared to 66% of those who share political beliefs with opposition.

Figure 164 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: TRUST IN APPELLATE SYSTEM



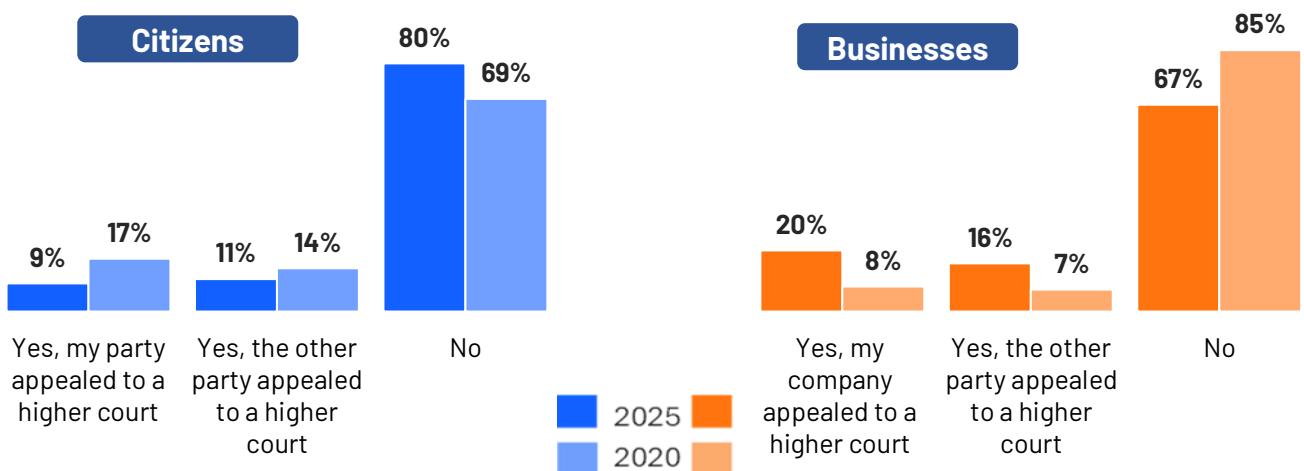
(Do you trust the appellate system?); Base: those who took part in a court proceeding in the past three years who were given the first instance judgement as a physical person or defendant, or plaintiff, or party in litigation (Citizens, 2025, n=343; 2020, n=357; Businesses, 2025, n=79; 2020, n=109)

685. Compared to 2020 survey wave, there are no significant differences in 2025. In other words, trust in the appellate system shows stability among users.

686. Appeals are more common among businesses than among individual citizens. Approximately one in five citizens (20%) go through the appeals process, regardless of whether they file an appeal themselves or the opposing party, while the appeal ratio in the business sector is about one in three (36%). This indicates that 80% of citizens and 67% of businesses did not take their cases to a higher court. (Figure 165).

687. Among citizens, in terms of their own willingness to appeal, men are significantly more likely than women to appeal to a higher court. Over the past three years, 14% of men made an appeal, compared to only 4% of women. On the other hand, 88% of women and 73% of men chose not to seek a revision of the first-instance court's decision. Additionally, decisions in misdemeanor cases are the least likely to be appealed, with 93% remaining unchallenged, compared to 78% of civil cases and 70% of criminal cases.

Figure 165 - CITIZENS AND BUSINESSES: APPEALING TO A HIGHER COURT

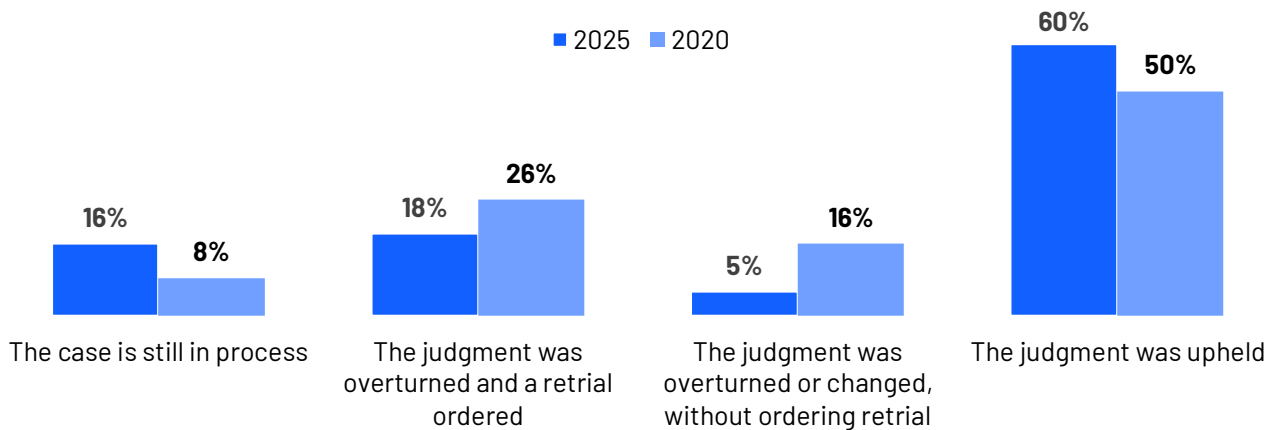


(Did you or the other party appeal to a higher court? / Did your company or the other party appeal to a higher court?); Base: Those who had court experience in the past three years and a first instance judgement rendered (Citizens, 2025, n=343; 2020, n=357; Businesses, 2025, n=79; 2020, n=109)

688. Compared to 2020 - Interestingly, compared to the previous wave, businesses have been more active in appealing to higher courts in the last three years than citizens, contrasting with the previous period when citizens were more likely to take their cases to appellate courts.

689. After the case was appealed to a higher court, the judgment was upheld in 60% of the cases involving citizens. In 23% of cases, the judgments were reconsidered by higher court or required revision. The sample size of business representatives who appealed is too small to draw any valid conclusions. (n=28)(Figure 166). After the appellation proceedings were completed, nearly 68% of the judgments have been fully enforced, 30% have been enforced only partially, and just 2% are still awaiting enforcement.

Figure 166 - CITIZENS



(What was the decision of the higher court after the appeal(s) which were submitted following the first instance court judgment?); Base: Citizens who had experience with cases where one of the parties filed an appeal to a higher court (Citizens, 2025, n=70; 2020, n=66)¹⁴

¹⁴ The base of businesses that have had experience with a higher court is too small for valid conclusions.

7. THE PERCEPTION OF THE MEDIA SECTOR INFLUENCE ON THE JUDICIARY

- There is a stark divide between judicial professionals and citizens in how they perceive media coverage. Judicial professionals view media coverage as predominantly negative: 90% of judges and 71% of prosecutors believe the media portrays courts worse than reality. Lawyers are closer to this opinion than the opinion of the general population. Citizens, on the other hand, view media coverage as more balanced, with most citizens believing media reporting is objective (42%), although this share has significantly dropped compared to 2020 (48%). Only 16% of citizens think courts are portrayed more negatively than reality, and 35% perceive this image as even better. Interestingly, virtually no judges (0.4%) think the media creates a better image than reality.
- Multiple factors influence citizens' views. Socioeconomic characteristics show that lower-income citizens (42%) are more likely to believe media portrays courts favorably, vs. higher-income (31%). Moreover, urban residents are more aware of both negative portrayals (17%) and are more likely to believe in media objectivity (44%), while rural residents are more undecided (18% with no opinion vs. 5% urban). Additionally, geographic differences reveal that northern region residents perceive media reports as more negative than they should be (20% vs. 13% in central areas)
- Political and ethnic dimensions show that half of the ruling party's supporters (51%) believe that the media is objective, which is significantly more than opposition supporters, among whom only 27% believe the media is objective and 55% think the media portrays courts better than reality. Additionally, near half of the citizens of Serbian ethnicity also view reporting as objective, vs. 36% of ethnic Montenegrins
- Prosecution is perceived as receiving slightly less negative media coverage than courts by judges and lawyers, though prosecutors themselves see similar negative treatment for both institutions. Thus, 60% of judges say prosecution is portrayed worse than reality (vs. 90% for courts), 54% of lawyers say same for prosecution (vs. 62% for courts), and around 70% of prosecutors maintain both institutions receive similarly more negative coverage
- Citizen perspectives follow similar demographic patterns for prosecution as for courts, with additional distinctions: state sector employees are more likely than others to perceive media reporting on prosecution as more negatively biased (20%, compared to 13% of those employed in the private sector and 10% of citizens of other working status). Regional variations persist, with northern residents being more uncertain than others (17%, compared to the population average of 8%), while those living in the central and southern parts, to a greater extent, believe in media objectivity (around 45%) compared to the population in the north (35%).
- The perception that media coverage is 'worse than reality' increased among some professional groups, particularly lawyers, suggesting growing concern about media portrayal within the judicial community.

690. The role of media in shaping public opinion about judicial affairs is generally viewed negatively by professionals in the field, while citizens tend to have more balanced perspectives. A significant majority of judges (90%) and prosecutors (71%) believe that media reports portray the courts in a worse light than they truly are. A similar trend is observed regarding the media's representation of prosecutors, with 67% of prosecutors and 60% of judges expressing the opinion that this portrayal is more negative than the reality. Lawyers' views are somewhat more balanced, yet most still contend that the courts and prosecution are depicted more unfavorably than they are in reality. In contrast, citizens are much more lenient in their perceptions, with many believing that media reporting is objective or even that media portrayals are more favorable than the truth.

7.1. Media image of courts

691. Most judicial professionals believe that the media presents a more negative image of the courts than reality warrants. This perspective is particularly strong among judges, with nine out of ten agreeing. Additionally, seven out of ten prosecutors and six out of ten lawyers share the sentiment that media reporting is not objective and depicts the courts in a more unfavorable light than they actually deserve. (Figure 167).

692. In contrast, citizens tend to have a milder view. The majority believe that the media's representation of the judiciary is objective, with only 16% thinking that the media portrays the courts more negatively than they really are. Notably, the general population shows skepticism towards media reporting in the opposite way than professionals, with over a third believing that the media creates a better image of the judiciary than reality. This contrasts with just 10% of lawyers, 6% of prosecutors, and almost none of the judges who share this viewpoint.

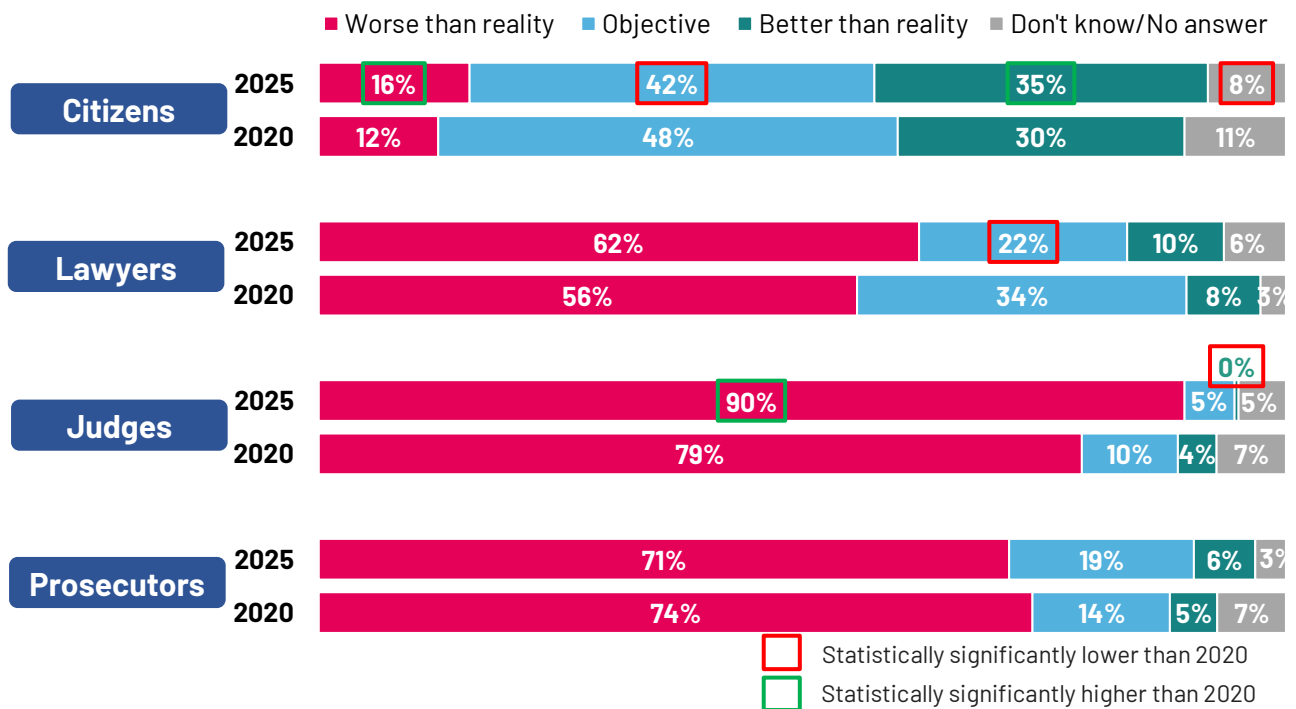
693. There are significant differences among various citizen groups regarding their perceptions of the media's portrayal of courts. Individuals with below-average household incomes are significantly more likely to believe that the media image of courts is more favorable than reality, with 42% holding this view compared to 31% of those with above-average incomes. On the other hand, people living in northern regions tend to perceive media exaggeration in a more negative direction than reality, with 20% expressing this sentiment compared to 13% of citizens in central areas. Additionally, residents of urban areas are more likely to share opinions about this negatively directed media exaggeration (17%) than those from rural regions (11%). Yet, urban inhabitants also tend to believe in the objectivity of the media more frequently, with 44% supporting this perspective compared to 37% of rural residents. Conversely, people in rural areas are more likely to remain neutral or undecided about media coverage of the judicial system, with 18% indicating no opinion, compared to just 5% of those living in urban settings.

694. The way citizens perceive media portrayals of the courts in Montenegro is influenced by their political and ethnic backgrounds. Specifically, a higher percentage of individuals of Serbian ethnicity view media reporting as objective, 49%, compared to 36% of ethnic Montenegrins. Citizens of Montenegro ethnicity, as well as those of other ethnicities, believe that the media creates a better image of courts more frequently than ethnic Serbs. Thus, 42% of both ethnic Montenegrins and those of other ethnicities share this view, compared to 21% of ethnic Serbs.

695. In terms of political preferences, supporters of the ruling parties are more likely to believe in media objectivity, with 51% sharing this view. In contrast, only 27% of those aligned with the opposition believe the media is objective. Additionally, 27% of ruling party supporters think that the media presents a more negative image of the courts than what is accurate. This perspective is held by only 10% of opposition supporters and 12% of politically neutral individuals. Conversely, supporters of the opposition tend to perceive the media's portrayal of the courts as more favorable than it actually is, with 55% holding this belief. This contrasts sharply with just 17% of ruling party supporters and 35% of politically neutral citizens who share that view.

696. In regard to judges, those with less work experience tend to view media coverage of the courts more negatively than it may deserve, with 95% of them sharing this perspective. In contrast, 85% of judges with more than five years of experience feel the same way. Among lawyers, older, as well as more experienced individuals, are more likely to have no opinion about the media portrayal of the courts than their younger and less experienced colleagues (12% vs. 3%, 11% vs. 3%, respectively).

Figure 167 - CITIZENS, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: IMPACT OF MEDIA ON COURTS' IMAGE



(What image of the court/judiciary system in Montenegro do the media create in general?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens: 2025, n=1305; 2020, n=1333; Lawyers: 2025, n=150; 2020, n=151; Judges: 2025, n=155; 2020, n=192; Prosecutors: 2025, n=71; 2020, n=83)

697. Compared to 2020 - Citizens are now more decisive than in 2020, with significantly fewer who have no opinion. On the other hand, the percentages across all three categories have changed notably: those who see biased media reporting have risen, while those who believe in media objectivity have dropped. Lawyers, as well, to a lesser extent, believe in objective media coverage. Judges are more critical of the media now than five years ago, with a rise in those who see media reporting as worse than it should be. Interestingly, almost none of them believe that this image is better than reality (0.4%). Prosecutors are the only population that has not significantly changed their perception of this matter.

7.2. Media image of prosecution

698. While citizens have almost the same opinion as for courts about the media image of prosecutors, the share of judges and lawyers who believe this image is worse than reality is somewhat lower than previously reported findings on the image of courts (Figure 168).

699. Judges believe that media coverage of the prosecution is less negative than the reporting on courts. Specifically, 60% of judges feel that the media portrays a worse image of prosecution than reality reflects, while 90% believe the same about the media's portrayal of courts. Lawyers share a similar perspective: 54% think that media reporting exaggerates the negative aspects of the prosecution, and 62% feel the same about the media's depiction of courts. Prosecutors believe that both the courts and the prosecution receive similar treatment in the media: over 70% of them observed more negative media coverage than the actual situation in both cases.

700. As in the case of the media image of courts, there are significant differences across general population groups about the prosecution media portrait. Among the general population, citizens who work in the state sector more frequently than others perceive the media portrays prosecution worse

than it actually is (20%, compared to 13% of those employed in the private sector, or 10% in other working statuses¹⁵). Additionally, individuals who are not fully employed in either the private or public sector, such as the self-employed, students, retirees, homemakers, or the unemployed, are more likely to have no opinion about the media's image of the judiciary. This group reflects a 12% rate of indecision, while only 6% of those actively working in the private or public sectors share this uncertainty.

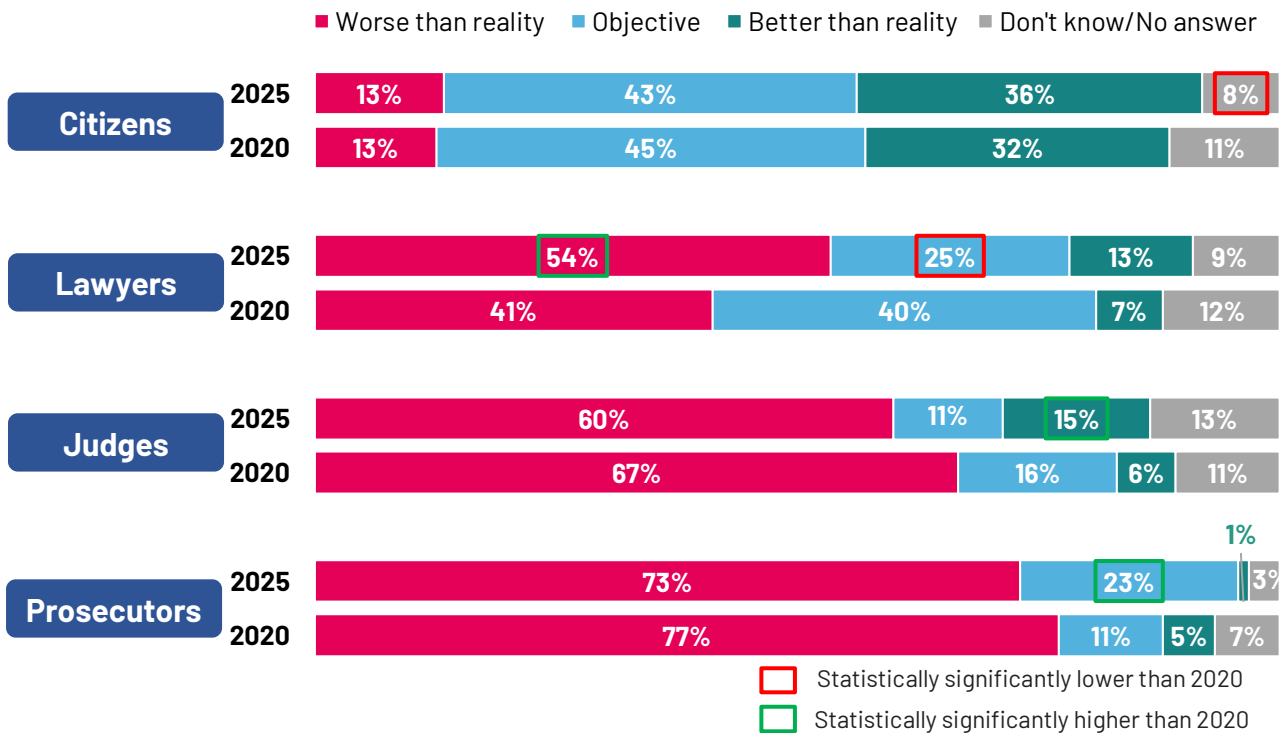
701. There are notable differences among citizens based on their regional locations. Those living in the central and southern regions are more inclined to believe that the media presents an objective view of prosecution, or at least that media portrayals are more favorable than reality. Specifically, about 45% of individuals in these regions believe the media is objective in reporting, compared to 35% in the northern region. Additionally, 40% of people in the south and 37% in the central region think that the media provides a better image of the prosecution, while only 28% of northern residents share this belief. On the other hand, citizens from the north are more uncertain about media portrayals, with a greater percentage believing that the media depicts a worse image of the prosecution than warranted. In fact, 17% of individuals in the north do not have an opinion on this issue, compared to 7% in the central region and just 2% in the south. Furthermore, 20% of respondents in the north feel that the media presents a more negative image, whereas only 11% of those in the central region share this perception. In addition to these regional differences, there are differences between urban and rural areas – citizens in urban parts significantly more often believe in objective reporting (45%, compared to 37% of citizens in rural areas), while people in rural areas more often have no opinion on this matter (16%, compared to 5% in urban areas).

702. Finally, differences are evident along ethnic and political lines. People of Serbian ethnicity, and those closer to the ruling party in their political views, significantly more often believe that media reports on prosecution are objective, or worse than reality. Specifically, every second citizen of Serbian ethnicity (51%) stresses objectivity, compared to 37% of ethnic Montenegrins. Additionally, 18% express an opinion about a worse media image than reality shows, compared to 8% of ethnic groups other than Montenegrins or Serbs. In contrast, ethnic Montenegrins or other ethnic groups are much more frequently stating that the media image is even better than reality (43% of both groups, compared to 21% of ethnic Serbs).

703. Among lawyers, older professionals are much more likely to be undecided about the media image of prosecution. Around one in five (18%) of those over 49 express no opinion, compared to just 4% of their younger colleagues.

¹⁵ Other working status: self-employed/entrepreneur, pupil/Student, housewife, pensioner, currently unemployed

Figure 168 - CITIZENS, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: IMPACT OF MEDIA ON PROSECUTIONS' IMAGE



(What image of the prosecution in Montenegro do the media create in general?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens: 2025, n=1305; 2020, n=1333; Lawyers: 2025, n=150; 2020, n=151; Judges: 2025, n=155; 2020, n=192; Prosecutors: 2025, n=71; 2020, n=83)

704. Compared to 2020 – As in the case of courts, citizens are now less indecisive about media portrayal of prosecution than in 2020, with significantly fewer who have no opinion. Citizens' perception of media reporting about the prosecution, though, has not significantly changed for the past five years. On the other hand, lawyers to a notably lesser extent believe in objective media coverage, while the share of those who perceive media reporting worse than reality, has significantly risen. In contrast, a higher percentage of judges now believe that media coverage of prosecutions is more favorable than it should be compared to 2020. Data from 2025 also shows that the share of prosecutors who see media coverage as objective has doubled in the past five years.

8. THE PERCEPTION OF THE JUDICIARY REFORM EFFECTS

Impact of the reforms over the past decade:

- Current Sentiment analysis on the state of the judicial reforms reveals that prosecutors are the most optimistic stakeholder group, with 73% holding favorable views of reforms over the past decade, followed by judges at 57%, while citizens, businesses, lawyers, and court staff all hover around 40% favorable perception, showing moderate support.
- Lawyers emerge as the most critical group, with 32% viewing reforms negatively—the highest negative perception among all groups.
- A significant portion across all groups (approximately one in four) believe reforms have had no impact whatsoever on the judiciary, rising to one in three among businesses
- Only prosecutors show strong confidence that reforms have made a difference, with just 15% perceiving no impact
- Compared to 2020, citizens are the only group showing improvement: positive views increased from 26% to 42%, while "no impact" perceptions dropped from 40% to 24%. Businesses, on the other hand, experienced a notable decline, with negative views tripled from 7% to 22%, while "no impact" views doubled from 17% to 35%; positive sentiment declined from 66% to 40%
- Among professionals, lawyers showed the steepest professional decline: favorable views dropped from 59% to 38%, while negative views more than doubled from 14% to 32%. Judges also became more skeptical, with negative perceptions nearly tripled from 6% to 16%, while "no impact" views more than doubled from 10% to 24%. Court staff followed similar patterns: negative views rose from 12% to 22%, "no impact" increased from 15% to 25%, and positive perceptions fell from 67% to 45%. Even prosecutors, despite remaining most positive, saw erosion of the reform process: favorable views declined from 93% to 73%, with negative perceptions rising from 3% to 11%.

Reform process direction:

- The assessment of the current reform direction indicates a cautiously optimistic yet divided landscape. Judges, businesses, citizens, and court staff each show that roughly half of their members express confidence in the direction of the reform process, reflecting a moderate level of optimism about future reform measures. However, lawyers are a notable exception, presenting the only group where a larger percentage feels that reforms are not moving in the right direction. Conversely, prosecutors remain the most optimistic stakeholders, with three-quarters believing that judicial reforms are on the right track.
- The nature of citizens' involvement with the court system significantly influences their assessment of reform direction. Individuals with experience in criminal cases hold substantially more negative views than those involved in civil matters. Specifically, 58% of criminal case participants express negative opinions about reform direction, while only 25% of civil case participants feel similarly.
- Additionally, citizens' perceptions of judicial system reforms are influenced by various factors, including geographic location, political views, and ethnicity. Generally, individuals living in the northern part of the country, those of Serbian ethnicity, and supporters of the ruling party tend to have a more positive outlook on the results and direction of these reforms. In contrast, ethnic Montenegrins, residents of other regions, and those aligned with opposition parties are more likely to view the reforms negatively.

Information channels about the judicial reforms:

- Among citizens, traditional media dominance is observed with the growth of digital sources. Namely, television remains the dominant channel for citizens, with 56% relying on it for information about judicial reform, far exceeding any other single source. Informal networks are the second most common channel, with 38% obtaining information through friends, family, and colleagues, highlighting the role of

word-of-mouth communication. Yet, digital platforms show significant adoption, 28% use social networks and 27% unofficial web portals, indicating a shift toward online information consumption, especially among younger and highly educated citizens. Young citizens (18–29) show the highest digital engagement: 39% use social networks and 34% access unofficial websites for reform information. Seniors (60+) show minimal digital engagement: just 17% use social networks and 15% access unofficial websites.

- Official sources, court, and ministry websites reach only 11% of citizens. Traditional print media (newspapers at 9%) and radio (4%) seem to play marginal roles in informing citizens about reforms.
- Recent court experience notably increases the use of lawyers' consultation as a source: 22% of those with recent experience consult lawyers (2% is the rate among those without experience). Those with court experience also use official websites at nearly double the rate (18% vs. 10%) and are six times more likely to check court bulletin boards (12% vs. 2%)
- Experience with other legal services (court administration, notaries, bailiffs) similarly increases both lawyer consultation and official website usage
- Unlike citizens, businesses rely most heavily on informal social networks: 40% obtain information through colleagues, friends, and family members, and engage notably more with official institutional sources: 33% use official court and ministry websites, three times the citizen rate (11%). Television is less dominant for businesses (29%) than for citizens (56%).
- Unofficial web portals (21%) and social networks (17%) are used less by businesses than by citizens
- Among professionals, lawyers use a mixed approach to gather information about judicial reforms, utilizing both official channels and their professional networks, as well as public media. In contrast, judges and prosecutors primarily depend on official channels, such as official websites, emails, written correspondence, professional associations, and events.

705. The evaluation of judicial reforms in the last decade varies considerably across different populations. Prosecutors emerge as the most positive group, with 73% holding favorable views of the reforms implemented over the past decade. Judges follow with 57% expressing positive sentiments. Among citizens, businesses, lawyers, and court staff, approximately 40% view the reforms favorably. Lawyers present the most critical perspective, with one-third viewing the reforms negatively. This skepticism is shared to varying degrees by other groups: 27% of citizens and approximately one-fifth of business representatives and court staff also hold unfavorable views. A concerning finding is that a significant portion of surveyed populations, approximately one in four among citizens, lawyers, judges, and court staff, believe the reforms have had no impact whatsoever on the judiciary. This perception is even more pronounced among business representatives, where one in three holds this view. Only among prosecutors is this sentiment less common, with 15% perceiving no impact.

706. The five-year comparison reveals that only citizens have shown a slight improvement in their perception of judicial reforms, with positive evaluations increasing from 26% in 2020 to 42% in 2025. Simultaneously, the proportion of citizens believing reforms have no impact decreased significantly from 40% to 24%. In contrast, other population groups have developed increasingly negative attitudes. The business community has experienced a particularly dramatic shift. The percentage of business representatives viewing reforms negatively more than tripled from 7% to 22%, while those perceiving no impact doubled from 17% to 35%. Concurrently, positive sentiment among businesses declined from 66% to 40%. Among legal professionals, lawyers have experienced the most significant decline in confidence. Favorable views dropped substantially from 59% to 38%, while negative perceptions more than doubled from 14% to 32%. Judges, too, have shown increased skepticism. Negative perceptions rose from 6% to 16%, and those reporting no impact increased from 10% to 24%. Court staff mirror this trend, with negative views rising from 12% to 22% and "no impact" perceptions increasing from 15% to 25%. The percentage of administrative employees perceiving positive impact declined from 67% to 45%. Even prosecutors, despite remaining the most optimistic

group, experienced erosion in their confidence. Favorable views decreased from 93% to 73%, while negative perceptions increased from 3% to 11%, and those believing reforms had no impact rose from 4% to 15%.

707. Regarding the direction of the judicial system reforms, prosecutors maintain their position as the most optimistic group, with three-quarters believing that the direction of judicial reforms is appropriate. Judges, businesses, citizens, and court staff each show roughly half their populations expressing confidence in the direction of the reform. The presence of substantial "don't know" responses, particularly among court staff (24%) and judges (17%), suggests uncertainty or lack of clarity about the reform path even among those working within the justice system.

708. As with many other questions about the judicial system, geographic distribution, political views, and ethnicity influence citizens' perceptions of judicial system reforms. Those living in the northern part of the country, individuals of Serbian ethnicity, and ruling party supporters are generally more positive about the results and direction of the judicial reforms than ethnic Montenegrins, people living in other regions, and those who share political views with the opposition parties.

709. Among information sources on judicial reforms, television remains the dominant medium for citizens seeking information, with 56% relying on it. This is followed by informal channels, with 38% obtaining information through friends, family, and colleagues. The prevalence of informal networks highlights the importance of word-of-mouth communication in shaping public understanding of justice sector changes. Digital platforms have also gained significance, particularly among certain demographic groups: younger, highly educated groups, while television serves as the primary information source for older citizens and those with lower education. Official sources, websites of courts and ministries, are consulted by only 11% of citizens, and lawyers by only 6%. Yet, education level affects consultation with legal professionals. Highly educated citizens seek information from lawyers at a rate of 12%, compared to 4% of those with medium education and a negligible 0.3% of those with low education. This pattern suggests that more educated citizens not only have greater access to professional legal advice but may also perceive greater value in expert interpretation of reform initiatives. Notably, 7% of citizens report using no channels at all to inform themselves about judicial reforms, indicating a segment of the population that remains entirely disengaged from reform-related information.

710. Direct experience with the court system also significantly alters information-seeking behavior. Individuals with recent experience in legal services, whether in the citizenry or the business community, are significantly more likely to use official channels and consult lawyers when seeking information about judicial reforms than those without such experience. Among the general population, the type of case involvement also shapes perceptions: 58% of those with criminal court experience view reforms negatively, compared with 25% among those with civil court case experience.

711. Among professionals, lawyers demonstrate a hybrid approach to obtaining information about judicial reforms, combining official channels with professional networks and public media. Judges and prosecutors predominantly rely on official channels: official websites, email and written correspondence, professional associations, and events.

8.1. General perception of the judiciary reform effects by court service users, court service providers, and lawyers

8.1.1. Evaluation of the impact of recent justice reforms

712. The most positive about the judicial reforms in Montenegro over the past 10 years are prosecutors, with 73% holding favorable views of the reforms, followed by judges (57%). Among all other populations, around 40% think favorably about reform impact in the last decade (Figure 169).

713. In most populations, one in four representatives think that reforms have no impact on the judiciary (citizens, lawyers, judges, and court staff). This percentage is somewhat higher among business – one in three company representatives, and lower among prosecutors, where just 15% perceive justice system reforms not to have an impact.

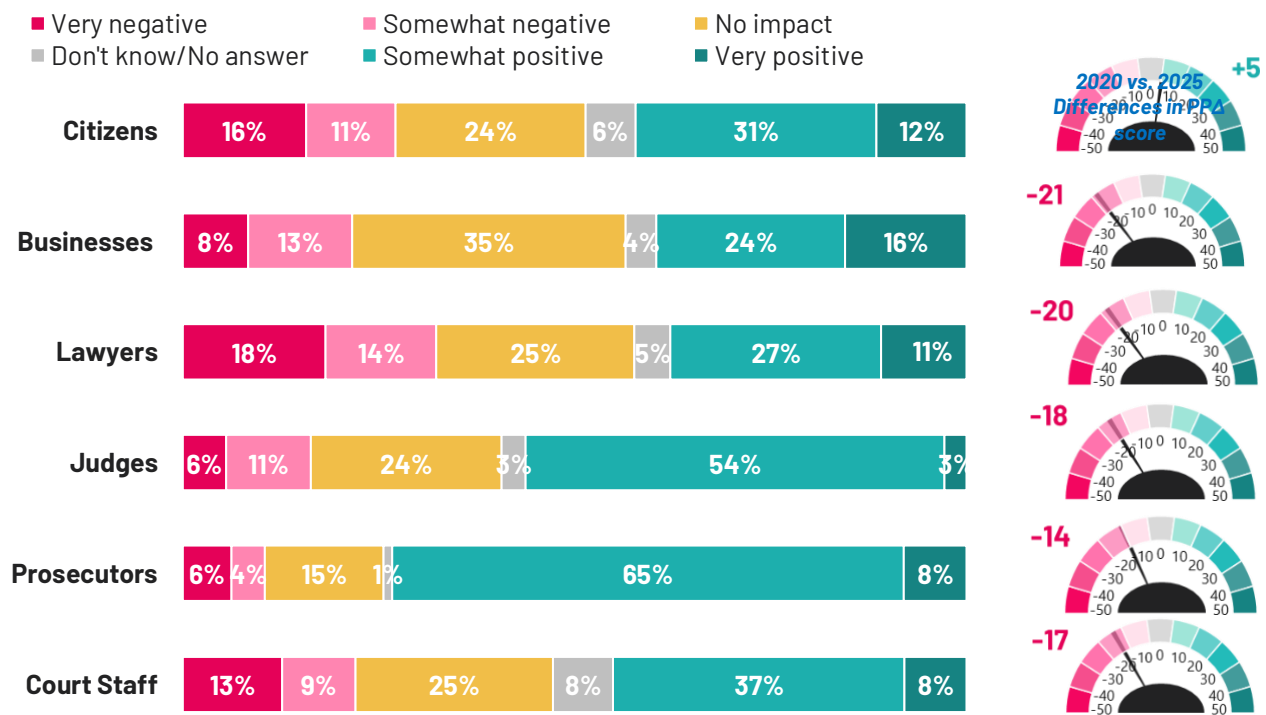
714. Lawyers express the most unfavorable sentiment toward judicial reforms over the past 10 years, with one-third viewing the reforms negatively. This view is also held by 27% of citizens and by approximately 20% of business representatives and court staff.

715. Significant differences in perceptions of the reforms are observed among citizens based on geographical distribution. Residents in the central region are the most negative about the impact of these reforms, with 36% indicating a negative perception, compared to 24% in the southern region and 14% in the northern region. In contrast, the northern population tends to view the impact of the reforms more positively than those in the central region, with 52% expressing a positive outlook compared to 37% in the central area. Furthermore, citizens in the southern region are more likely to report that they have experienced no impact from the reforms, at 30%, compared to 19% in the central region. Additionally, urban residents are more inclined than rural residents to perceive negative impacts from the reform, with 30% of urban dwellers reporting a negative view compared to 20% of those in rural areas. On the other hand, rural residents are significantly more likely to select the 'don't know' option, with 10% choosing this response compared to just 5% of urban residents.

716. Perceptions of the impact of judicial reforms are influenced by various factors, including economic conditions. Individuals with below-average household incomes are more likely to report no impact of the reforms, with 32% expressing this view, compared with 21% of those with above-average incomes. Ethnicity and political views also play significant roles in shaping perceptions of the reforms. Citizens of Serbian ethnicity tend to have a more positive outlook on the reforms, with 48% expressing this view, while only 37% of ethnic Montenegrins share a similar sentiment. In contrast, Montenegrins are generally more critical of the reforms, with 33% perceiving their impact as negative, compared to 24% of ethnic Serbs and 19% of individuals from other ethnic backgrounds. In terms of political alignment, those who lean towards opposition parties are the most critical of the reforms, with 37% viewing their impact negatively. This contrasts with 27% of individuals who align with the ruling party and 20% who identify as politically neutral. Interestingly, individuals with experience in criminal courts are significantly more likely to regard the reforms unfavorably: 42% do so, compared with 15% of those with experience in civil cases.

717. Regarding the perception of professionals, among lawyers, those with more experience are more critical of the impact of judicial reforms. Specifically, 42% of those with over 10 years of practice report that this impact is negative, compared with 24% of those with fewer than 10 years of experience. In contrast, older judges are more positive about the impact of reforms than younger ones (62% vs 46%). In addition, judges of the high, appellate, and supreme courts have a significantly more positive view of the impact of reforms than those who work in first-instance courts (68% vs 49%). First-instance court judges, to a much greater extent, see no impact of the reforms, compared to judges of higher-level courts (33% vs. 9%).

Figure 169 -CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES AND PROSECUTORS: EVALUATION OF IMPACT OF JUSTICE REFORMS



(How would you evaluate the impact of justice reforms in the past 10 years on the current state of the justice system in your country?); Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1303; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71)

718. Compared to 2020 – Citizens have shown slight progress in their perception of judiciary reforms. Specifically, the share of positive evaluations of judicial reforms has increased from 26% to 42%, with a significant drop in those who believe that reforms have no impact (from 40% to 24%). In contrast, other population groups now express a more negative attitude toward these reforms than they did five years ago.

719. Businesses, in particular, have a deteriorating perception; there has been a significant increase in the number of business representatives who perceive the reforms as having a negative impact or no impact at all. Specifically, the percentage of those who view the reforms negatively rose from 7% to 22%, while those who see no impact increased from 17% to 35%. Concurrently, the share of businesses with a positive attitude toward the reforms has decreased from 66% to 40%.

720. The most significant changes among professionals are observed among lawyers, where there has been a notable decline in those who view judicial reforms favorably, dropping from 59% to 38%. At the same time, the percentage of lawyers who view these reforms unfavorably has increased from 14% to 32%.

721. Judges have also shown significant shifts in their perceptions over the past five years, with the percentage of those who see either a negative impact or no impact at all rising substantially. Negative perceptions among judges increased from 6% to 16%, while those who felt there was no impact rose from 10% to 24%. Similarly, court staff reflect this trend; the share of court staff with negative views increased from 12% to 22%, and those reporting no impact went from 15% to 25%. In contrast, there has been a decline in the percentage of administrative employees who perceive a positive impact from judicial reforms, dropping from 67% to 45%.

722. Although prosecutors remain the most positive regarding judicial reforms, they too have experienced a decline in their favorable views, decreasing from 93% to 73%. Additionally, there has

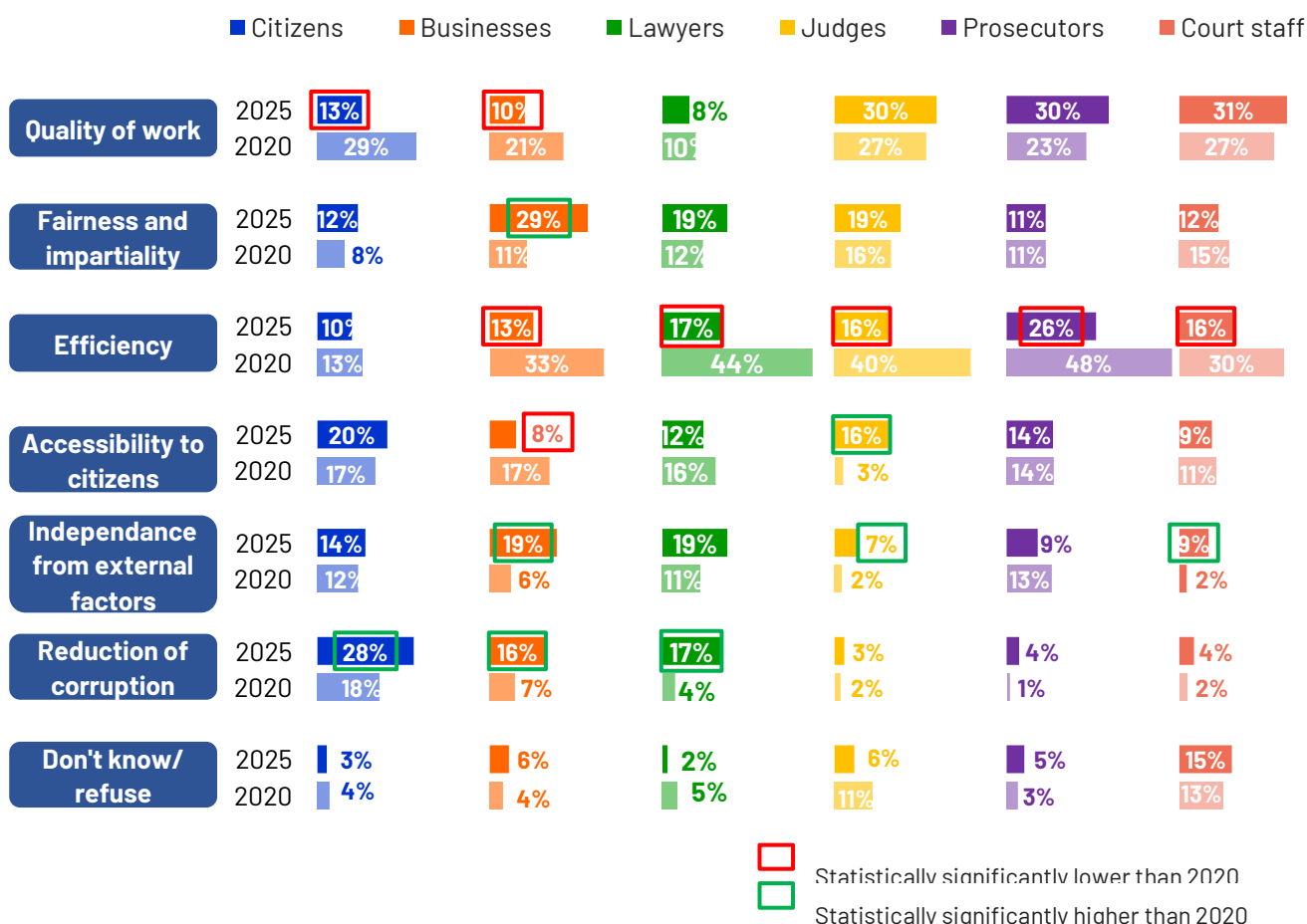
been an increase in both negative perceptions (from 3% to 11%) and those who believe the reforms have not impacted the judicial system at all (from 4% to 15%).

8.1.2. The perception of the previous judiciary reform effects

723. Those who experienced positive effects from the reforms were asked to identify which aspects of the judicial system are the most affected by the reforms. Among users, citizens report that reform primarily affected corruption reduction (28%), whereas businesses identify fairness and impartiality as the most affected areas (29%).

724. Among professionals, lawyers are indecisive about which aspect of the legal system improved as a result of reforms: a similar percentage identify fairness and impartiality, independence from external factors, efficiency, and reduced corruption as the most affected (19% or 17%). Judges, prosecutors, and court administration employees share a similar view on this topic: they all emphasize quality and efficiency in evaluating reform contributions. Additionally, judges identify independence as one of the most improved areas of the judicial system. (Figure 170).

Figure 170 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND COURT STAFF: ASPECTS OF THE JUSTICE SYSTEM FUTURE REFORMS WILL IMPROVE THE MOST



(In your opinion, to which of the following aspects of the justice system did those reforms contribute the most?) Base: Those who positive evaluate the impact of justice reforms in the past 10 years on the current state of the justice system; (Citizens: 2025, n=541; 2020, n=423; Businesses: 2025, n=107; 2020, n=179; Lawyers: 2025, n=56, 2020, n=88; Judges: 2025, n=94; 2020, n=166; Prosecutors: 2025, n=53; 2020, n=74; Court staff: 2025, n=366; n=471)

725. Compared to 2020 – According to responses from nearly all populations, efficiency is no longer a primary focus of judicial reforms, unlike five years ago, while quality and fairness remain prominent areas of the reform process for judges, prosecutors, and court staff. Additionally, judges now perceive accessibility and independence as areas that have received much more attention than they did five years ago. Court staff also recognize the improvements in independence to a greater extent than in 2020. Furthermore, users and lawyers, compared with five years ago, report a significant reduction in corruption attributable to these reforms. Businesses also report improvements in fairness and independence as outcomes of the reforms, to a greater extent than in 2020.

8.1.3. Evaluation of current justice reforms

726. Every population group, except for lawyers, has around half of its respondents believing that the reform process is moving in the right direction. Among lawyers, a larger percentage believe the reforms are not heading in the right direction than those who believe they are. The most optimistic about the future of reforms are prosecutors, with three-quarters believing that the direction of judicial reforms is appropriate (Figure 171).

727. Perceptions of ongoing reforms among citizens are influenced by economic, geographic, ethnic, and political factors. Those with below-average household incomes tend to view the reforms negatively more often than those with above-average incomes, with 50% of the former group perceiving the process as wrong compared to 35% of the latter. Conversely, individuals with higher incomes are more likely to be optimistic about the reform process, with 58% expressing positive opinion, compared to 41% of those with below-average incomes and 49% of those with average incomes. In terms of geographic distribution, citizens in the northern regions are more likely to perceive the reforms positively, with 62% supporting the changes. In contrast, only 44% of citizens in the central region and 46% in the southern region view the reforms favorably. Additionally, the urban population is more negative about the reform process than citizens in rural areas (43% vs. 33%).

728. Ethnic background and political alignment also play significant roles in perceptions of the reforms. A notable 70% of ethnic Serbs and 75% of the ruling party supporters evaluate the direction of the reforms positively, while the same opinion is shared by only 37% of ethnic Montenegrins and 22% of those who support opposition. Negative opinion about the reform effects is expressed by 24% of ethnic Serbs and 20% of ruling party supporters, while this figure rises to over half (53%) among ethnic Montenegrins and 70% among opposition supporters. Additionally, significant difference is observed between ethnic Serbs and ruling-party supporters, on the one hand, and other ethnicities and politically neutral citizens, on the other (70% vs. 49% for ethnicity and 75% vs. 47% for politics).

729. Individuals with experience in criminal cases tend to have a much more negative view of the reform process compared to those with experience in civil cases. Specifically, 58% of participants involved in criminal cases express negative opinions, while only 25% of those in civil cases feel the same way. Conversely, 35% of criminal case participants shared positive opinions, compared to 66% of civil case participants.

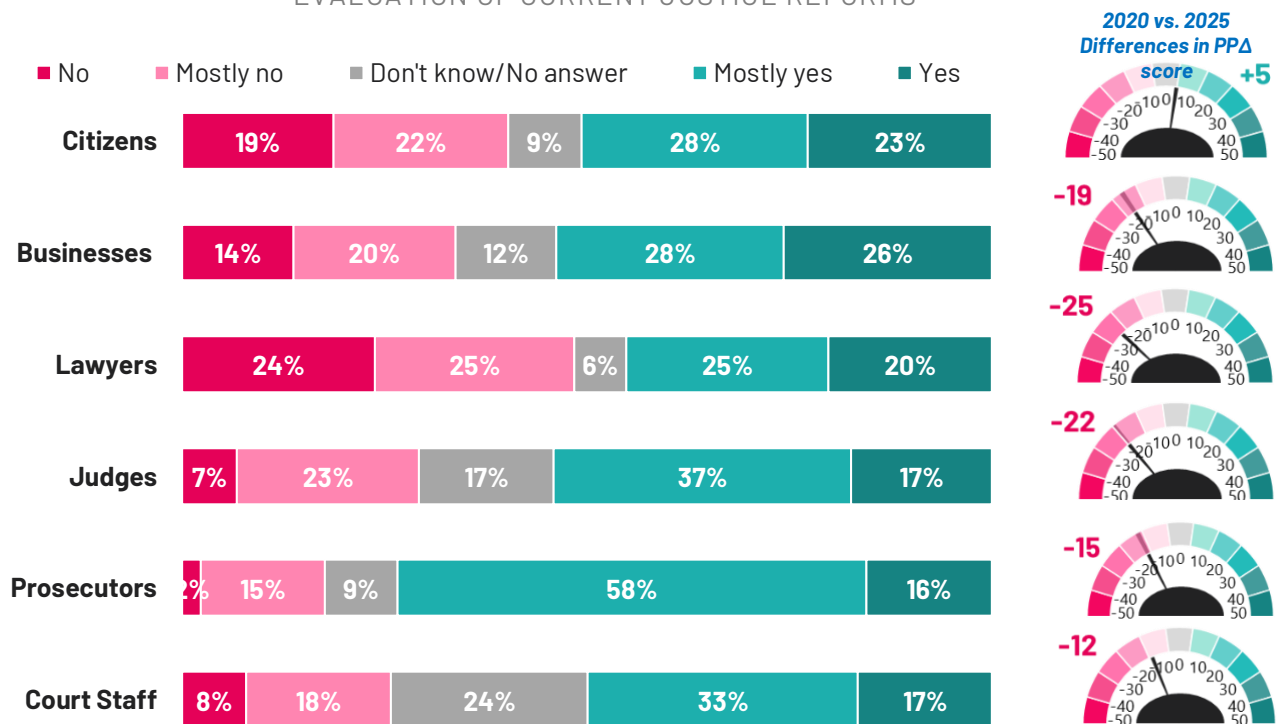
730. Among businesses, representatives of companies operating in the southern region are much more positive about the direction of reforms (64% express that it is going in the right direction, while 21% believe that it is heading in the wrong direction). Conversely, 51% of companies in the north and 40% in the central region report that reforms are moving in the wrong direction, compared with only 21% in the south.

731. Interestingly, a significant difference is observed between judges working in first-instance courts and those serving in higher courts. Judges in high, appellate and supreme courts are more optimistic about the reforms, while pessimism is notable among judges in first instance courts. Specifically, 74% of judges in higher-level courts express a positive opinion, compared with 42% of

judges in first-instance courts. Conversely, 39% of first-instance court judges share a pessimistic opinion, while only 13% of higher-courts judges share this negative perception.

732. The presence of substantial "don't know" responses, particularly among court staff (24%) and judges (17%), suggests uncertainty or lack of clarity about the reform path even among those working within the justice system.

Figure 171 - CITIZENS, BUSINESSES, LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS AND COURT STAFF: EVALUATION OF CURRENT JUSTICE REFORMS



(Thinking about the current justice reform processes in your country, would you say that they are going in the right direction?)
 Base: Total target population; (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272; Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff n=687)

8.2. Channels of information

733. When it comes to sources of information about recent and upcoming justice reforms, citizens most frequently cite television (56%). In contrast, businesses often rely on informal channels, such as friends, family, and colleagues (40%). Besides television, citizens also turn to their close contacts for information (38%). Other sources for citizens include unofficial channels like social networks (28%) and unofficial web portals (27%).

734. On the other hand, businesses utilize formal channels more than citizens when seeking information about reforms. These formal sources include official websites of courts and ministries (33%) and lawyers (14%). Additionally, businesses also use newspapers more often than citizens. The least commonly used methods for gathering information about changes in the judiciary are leaflets, court bulletin boards, and the radio.

735. The use of social networks and other websites as sources of information about judicial system reforms decreases with age. The youngest age groups, particularly those aged 18 to 44, are the most frequent users. Specifically, 39% of individuals aged 18 to 29 use social networks, while 34% access unofficial websites. For those aged 30 to 49, the figures are 35% for both social networks and unofficial websites. In contrast, these percentages drop significantly in older generations: 27% of

those aged 45 to 59 use social networks, and 26% use unofficial websites; for individuals aged 60 and over, the numbers are even lower, at 17% and 15%, respectively.

736. Furthermore, highly educated citizens tend to utilize official websites more than others, with 16% of them doing so, compared to 9% of those with a medium level of education and just 3% of those with low education. Generally, the internet is a more frequently used source of information among citizens with medium to high education levels and higher household incomes. In contrast, television is the primary source for individuals with lower education levels, with 76% of this group relying on it for information, compared to about 55% of higher-educated citizens. Among those with below-average incomes, 72% use TV, while the percentages are 61% for those with average incomes and 51% for those with above-average incomes.

737. Highly educated citizens also seek information from lawyers more often than those with lower educational levels, with 12% consulting lawyers compared to 4% of those with a medium education and only 0.3% of those with low education. Additionally, employees in both state and private sectors are more likely to consult lawyers than individuals with other employment statuses: 11% of state employees and 6% of private-sector employees seek legal advice, while only 3% of self-employed individuals, unemployed persons, pensioners, students, and housewives do the same.

738. Newspapers are a less-used source of information than television. Yet, it has more usage rate for reforms among men (12% compared to 7% of women), urban residents (11% versus 2% of the rural population), and citizens with average household incomes (15% versus 7% of those with above-average incomes).

739. Court experience significantly influences the selection of information sources. While they primarily rely on television and informal sources to learn about judicial reforms, those with recent court experience are more likely to use official channels for information. For instance, 22% of individuals with this experience consult lawyers, 18% turn to official websites, and 12% check bulletin boards in courts, compared to those without any court experience (2% rely on lawyers, 10% on official websites, and 2% on bulletin boards). Furthermore, even individuals who have had court experience prior to 2022 or have a family member involved in a court case are more likely to seek advice from a lawyer regarding justice system reforms, with 13% doing so compared to just 2% of those without any court experience.

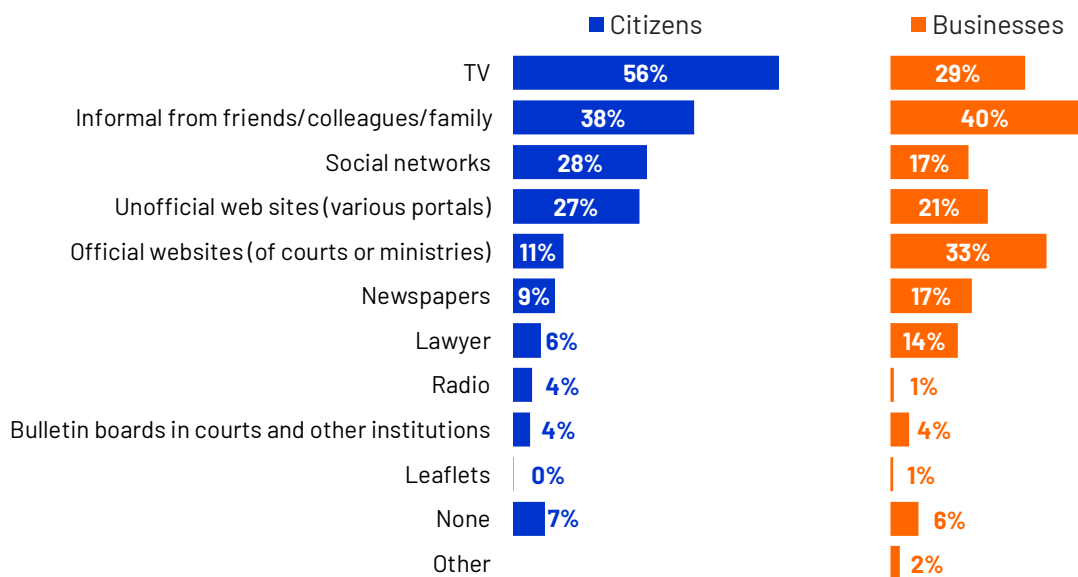
740. Experience with other legal services also influences the choice of information source. Those with experience in court administration, notary, and bailiff services are more likely to rely on lawyers and official websites than those without such experience.

741. Notably, 7% of citizens report using no channels at all to inform themselves about judicial reforms, indicating a segment of the population that remains entirely disengaged from reform-related information.

742. Experience with legal services in a similar manner influences the information on judicial reforms in the business sector. Companies that use court administration, notary, or bailiff services are more likely to rely on lawyers to inform them about the judicial reforms. Specifically, 30% of those with experience in using court administration services consult lawyers, compared with 13% without such experience. Similarly, 23% of companies that have experience with notary services seek information about reforms from lawyers, while only 10% of those without such experience would do the same. Finally, 28% with bailiff services experience use lawyers as a source of information, compared with 12% of those without such experience. Additionally, lawyers' consultations as a formal source of information are more commonly used by companies with ten or more employees (28%) than by small-sized companies (11%).

743. As with citizens, traditional channels such as radio (1%), bulletin boards (4%), and leaflets (1%) see minimal use. Six percent of businesses report using no channels to inform themselves about judicial reforms.

Figure 172 - CITIZENS: CHANNELS OF INFORMATION



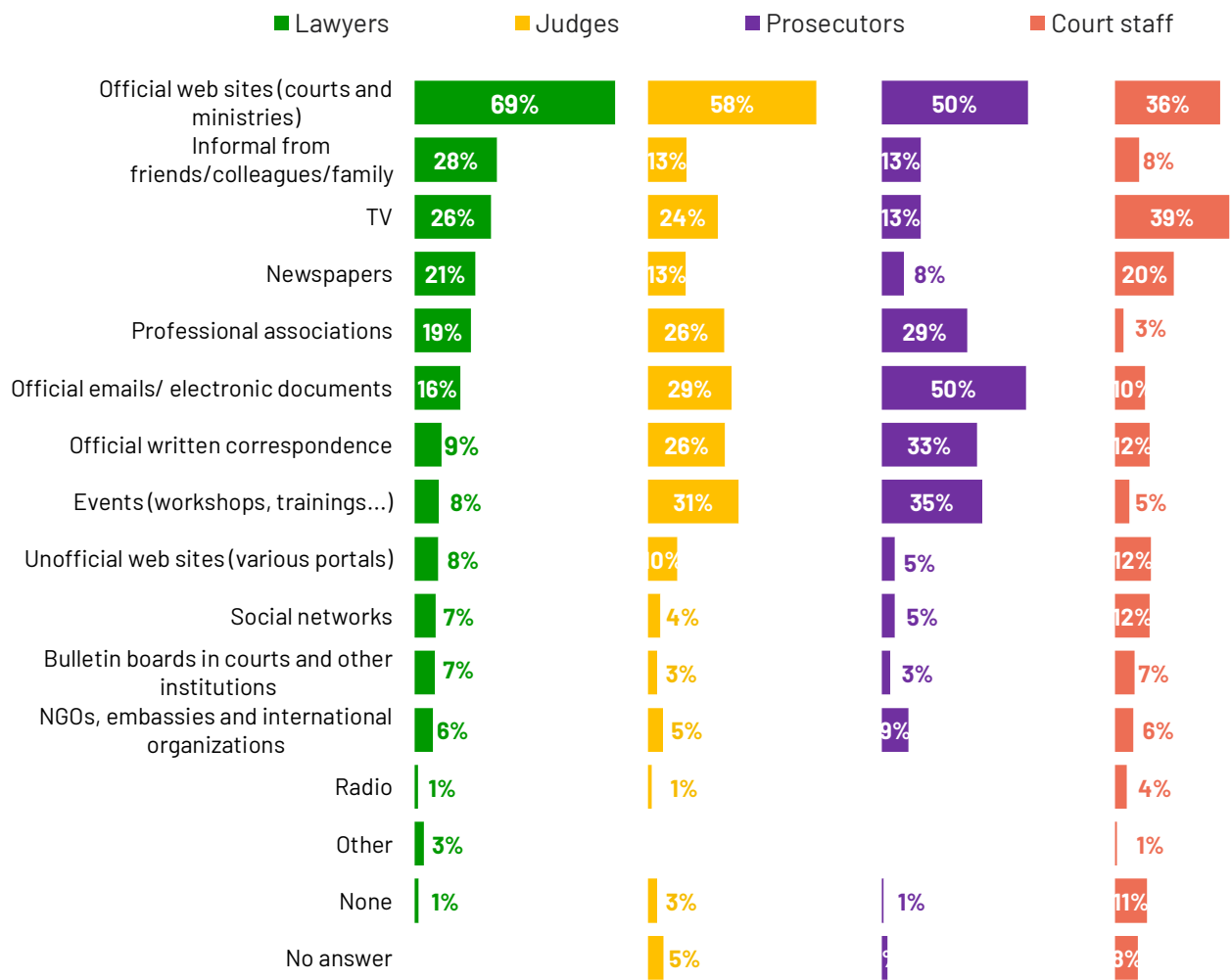
(What three channels do you use most to inform yourself about justice reforms (past, ongoing, future); Base: Total target population, (Citizens n=1305; Businesses n=272)

744. With regard to sources of information that justice system professionals depend on, official web sites are by far the most common way they get informed about justice reforms in general, with addition of official email communication by prosecutors. Yet, court staff rely slightly more on television (39%) than on official websites (36%) to stay informed. Apart from official websites, lawyers most commonly learn about past and future reforms from close people (friends, colleagues, or family members) (28%) and from television (26%). Judges and prosecutors, more than lawyers and court administration employees, rely on official channels to stay informed about judicial system reforms, such as official emails and written correspondence, professional associations, and various events (Figure 173).

745. Younger lawyers (up to 49 years old) are more likely to use official websites as a source of information on ongoing judicial reforms compared to older lawyers (50 years and older), with usage rates of 50% versus 31%. In contrast, lawyers aged 50 and above tend to rely more on professional associations and television; they use these sources at rates of 15% compared to 3% for younger lawyers for associations, and 14% versus 3% for television. Additionally, more experienced lawyers are more likely to use professional organizations as a source of information on judicial reforms than their less experienced counterparts, with rates of 12% versus 3%.

746. When it comes to judges, women tend to rely more on official websites and written correspondence, while men are more inclined than women to use newspapers to gather information about reforms (21% of men versus 6% of women utilize newspapers for this purpose). Specifically, 65% of female judges rely on official websites, and 32% rely on written correspondence, whereas 48% of male judges rely on official websites and 16% rely on written correspondence. Furthermore, judges with more than five years of practice tend to use informal sources more than those with less experience, with 36% using television and 22% using colleagues, friends, and family as sources of information. In contrast, judges with less experience use television at a rate of 16% and informal social circles at 7%.

Figure 173 - LAWYERS, JUDGES, PROSECUTORS: THREE CHANNELS THAT YOU USE MOST TO GET INFORMED ABOUT THE JUSTICE REFORMS



(Which three channels do you use most to get informed about the results of recent justice reforms?; Which three channels do you use most to get informed about the recent and future justice reforms?); Base: Total target population; (Lawyers n=150; Judges n=155; Prosecutors n=71; Court staff n=687)

Annex I Methodology

This section outlines the methodology used in the survey, including the definition of target groups, sample design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques.

Target groups

The survey was conducted across eight distinct target groups: the general population (a nationally representative sample and a booster sample of those who have had court case experience), the business sector (a nationally representative sample of enterprises from the private sector and a booster sample of enterprises with court case experience), employees in the judiciary (judges, prosecutors, and court administrative staff), private practice lawyers, public notaries and public bailiffs.

a) General Population

- Without Court Case Experience: citizens who had not been involved in any court cases from the beginning of 2022 to spring 2025 (i.e., till the moment of the survey realization).
- With Court Case Experience: citizens who were participants in court proceedings where a first-instance judgment was rendered between the beginning of 2022 and spring 2025 (i.e., till the moment of the survey realization).
- With Court Administrative Service Experience: citizens who had engaged in administrative tasks at court within the 12 months before the survey, unrelated to participating in court proceedings.
- With Public Notary Service Experience: citizens who used services provided by public notaries in the 12 months leading up to the survey.
- With Bailiff Service Experience: citizens who interacted with bailiffs in the 3 years preceding the survey.

b) Business Sector – Enterprises from the Private Sector

- Without Court Case Experience: enterprises that have not participated in any court proceedings from the beginning of 2022 to spring 2025 (i.e., till the moment of the survey realization). The respondent is the highest-ranking manager available.
- With Court Case Experience: enterprises that were a party in court proceedings where a first-instance judgment was rendered between the beginning of 2022 and spring 2025 (i.e., till the moment of the survey realization). The respondent for this category is the person most familiar with the respective court case.
- With Court Administrative Service Experience: enterprises that have engaged in a court-related administrative task in the 12 months leading up to the survey, without it being related to any court proceedings. The respondent is the individual most familiar with the most recent administrative task performed in court.
- With Public Notary Service Experience: enterprises that have engaged with a public notary within the 12 months before the survey participation. The respondent is the employee most familiar with the most recent notary task.
- With Bailiff Service Experience: enterprises that have interacted with bailiffs within the 3 years before the survey participation. The respondent is the person most knowledgeable about the most recent interaction with the bailiff.

- c) **Lawyers Working in Private Practice:** defined as lawyers registered with the National Bar Association for at least 12 months before the survey.
- d) **Judges** who held their positions during the survey period.
- e) **Prosecutors** who were in their roles during the survey period.
- f) **Court Administrative Staff** who have worked in court in the same capacity for at least 12 months before the survey, and were responsible for document authentication, managing document receipt and dispatch, archive-related administrative tasks, and managing the court registry office during the survey period.
- g) **Public Notaries** who have held that position for at least 12 months before participating in the survey.
- h) **Bailiffs** who have held that position for at least 12 months before participating in the survey.

Type of sample and method of data collection

a) General Population

- Sample universe: Citizens of Montenegro aged 18+ according to data from the 2023 Census of Population.
- Type of sample: Three-stage random representative stratified sample; boosted sample of the citizens with court case experience - combined sample based on criteria of geographic distribution and quotas by type of case.
- Sample size: a nationally representative sample - 1003 respondents; booster sample - 302 respondents.
- Stages: Units of the first stage - statistical circles; Units of the second stage - households; Units of the third stage - household member (respondent).
- Strata: Geographic regions (North, Central, South), and type of settlement (urban and rural).
- Type and method of sample selection: Units of the first stage (statistical circles) were selected using the Lachirie selection method, ensuring probability proportional to size; Units of the second stage (households) were selected through simple random sampling, using a systematic approach with a randomly chosen starting point and equal selection intervals; Units of the third stage (household members aged 18 - respondent) - were selected using simple random sampling; Boosted sample, i.e., citizens with court case experience were chosen using quasi-random techniques, such as snowball sampling. This sample was integrated into the general population survey and adjusted to match the regional, age, educational, and settlement type distribution of the overall population.
- Method of data collection: Face-to-face interviews in the respondents' households. These were conducted by trained interviewers using a structured questionnaire facilitated by Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technology. This setup enabled respondents to view potential answers on a screen, enhancing the clarity and accuracy of responses.

b) Business Sector - Enterprises from the Private Sector

- Sample universe: Private business entities with at least 2 employees in the records of the Business Registers Agency
- Type of sample: Quota sample, boosted with enterprises with court case experience. Quotas were defined based on the region, enterprise size, and economic activity.

- Sample size: a nationally representative sample – 202 respondents; booster sample – 70 respondents.
- Strata: Geographical regions (North, Central, South).
- Strata allocation: Proportional to the number of enterprises in the stratum by the criterion for the definition of quotas.
- Method of data collection: Interviews with recruited respondents were conducted using the face-to-face method, facilitated by Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technology. The interview location was selected by the respondent, typically within company premises, to ensure maximum privacy and confidentiality.

c) **Lawyers Working in Private Practices**

- Sample universe: Lawyers who have been working in private practice for at least a year before the survey period and who are registered in the National Bar Association.
- Type of sample: One-stage random representative stratified sample.
- Sample size: 150 respondents.
- Strata: Geographical regions (North, Central, South)
- Strata allocation: Proportional to the number of lawyers registered in the National Bar Association in a stratum.
- Selection method: Random selection from the list of lawyers who are registered in the National Bar Association in a stratum.
- Method of data collection: Interviews with recruited respondents were conducted using the face-to-face method, facilitated by Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI) technology. The interview location was selected by the respondent, usually in a lawyer's office, to ensure maximum privacy and confidentiality.

d) **Employees in the Judiciary**

Judges, Prosecutors, and Court Administrative Staff

- Sample universe: Judges, prosecutors, and court administrative staff who held these positions during the survey period. The survey targeted the whole clusters, not the sample.
- Number of completed interviews with judges: 155 respondents
- Number of completed interviews with prosecutors: 71 respondents.
- Number of completed interviews with court administrative staff: 687 respondents.
- Method of data collection: To ensure the utmost privacy and confidentiality of the data obtained, a self-administered questionnaire method was used. Respondents were provided with questionnaires along with envelopes; upon completion, they could place their questionnaires into the envelopes and seal them. These sealed envelopes were then collected by local research agency staff who visited courts and prosecutors' offices on predetermined dates.

e) **Public Notaries**

- Sample universe: Public notaries who have been holding that position for at least a year before the survey period. The survey targeted the whole cluster, not the sample.
- Number of completed interviews: 15
- Method of data collection: Interviews with recruited respondents were conducted using the face-to-face method, facilitated by Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI)

technology. The interview location was selected by the respondent, usually in a notary's office, to ensure maximum privacy and confidentiality.

f) **Bailiffs**

- Sample universe: Bailiffs who have been holding that position for at least a year before the survey period. The survey targeted the whole cluster, not the sample.
- Number of completed interviews: 10
- Method of data collection: Interviews with recruited respondents were conducted using the face-to-face method, facilitated by Computer-Assisted Personal Interviewing (CAPI). The interview location was selected by the respondent, usually in a bailiff's office, to ensure maximum privacy and confidentiality.

Weighting procedure¹⁶

To align the sample structure with that of the defined sample universe, addressing any deviations caused by non-response, standard weighting procedures were applied across relevant variables for each defined cluster.

a) **General Population**

Two weighting procedures were used for the general population sample. Initially, a representative sample was weighted using the Rim weighting technique, which incorporated variables such as age, gender, education, geographical region, and type of settlement as weighting classes. Subsequently, the incidence rate of court case experiences, determined by the weighted representative sample, served as a margin for weighting the total sample of the general population (including a booster sample of citizens with court case experience), alongside the aforementioned variables.

b) **Business Sector**

For the enterprise sample weighting, the Rim weighting procedure was employed, using geographical strata, main business activity, and the number of employees as weighting classes. The incidence of court case experience, as identified in this weighted sample, was then leveraged as a margin for weighting the entire enterprise sample, together with the previously noted variables.

c) **Lawyers**

The sample of lawyers was weighted using the Rim weighting procedure, applying geographical strata and gender as margins.

d) **Judges, Prosecutors, and Court Administrative Staff**

To correct the structural bias among these three population segments caused by incomplete response rates, post-stratification was employed using geographic regions, gender, and type of institution as weighting variables.

Questionnaire

- The data was gathered using structured questionnaires. Six of these questionnaires have already been used in the previous wave of RJS (2019/2020). Instruments designed for the survey of notaries and bailiffs are newly created for this wave, as these populations are being surveyed for the first time. It is important to mention that while the previously used

¹⁶ As mentioned in the Disclaimer section, due to a small basis of completed interviews with notaries and bailiffs, it was not possible to weight the collected data.

questionnaires underwent some revisions, their core aspects were retained to enable longitudinal comparisons. Moreover, the design of the questionnaires was intended to facilitate the comparison of perceptions across different target groups, including court service users, court service providers, and lawyers who act as intermediaries between these groups.

- The questionnaires designed for both citizens and businesses as users of court services were especially comprehensive, comprising several distinct modules: 1. General perceptions of the judicial system and judiciary reforms (answered by all respondents); 2. Perceptions of judicial work based on personal court case experience (answered only by respondents with court case experience); 3. Perceptions of court administrative services based on personal experience (answered only by those with experience in court administrative services); 4. Perceptions of notary services based on direct experience (answered only by those experienced with public notaries); 5. Perceptions of bailiff services based on direct experience (answered only by those experienced with bailiffs).

Assessment of the Dimensions

The questionnaires were designed to measure three dimensions of justice system services:

- Efficiency (perception and evaluation in the concrete case)
- Quality (perception and evaluation in the concrete case), including the accessibility of the justice system
- Independence (perception and evaluation in the concrete case), including fairness and corruption

Definitions of efficiency and quality used in this survey are as follows:

- Efficiency includes promptness, rational use of resources, while complying with determined quality standards
- Quality shows how well, properly, and fairly a job is performed

Below is a table showing a set of indicators for each of the three dimensions:

Category	Indicator
Efficiency of the judiciary	The overall perception of efficiency
	Duration of proceedings
	Number of hearings
	Efficiency of hearings
	The efficiency of judgments' enforcement
	Overall satisfaction with efficiency
Quality of the judiciary	The overall perception of quality
	The overall quality of judicial services
	Legal quality of court decisions
	Quality of laws and their applications
	Perceived accessibility of the judiciary to the general public
	Experiences with accessibility
	The overall perception of the fairness of the judiciary

Independence of the judiciary	Perceived fairness in cases
	Perceived equality of treatment of all citizens
	Trust in institutions and factors perceived to undermine trust in the judiciary
	Perception of independence of the justice system
	The overall perception of corruption in the judiciary
	Experience with corruption in the judiciary