

# Public confidence in the NSW criminal justice system: 2025 update

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## SUMMARY

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### BACKGROUND

In 2025, BOCSAR conducted its fifth ‘Public confidence in the criminal justice system’ survey. The survey was administered to a broadly representative sample of 2,000 adults living in NSW in 2025 (1,000 adults were surveyed by telephone and 1,000 online).

Confidence levels were assessed for the criminal justice system (CJS), police and courts in 2025, and factors associated with confidence in the CJS were examined. Perceptions of the appropriateness of court sentences were also measured. Trend analyses were conducted to assess if there was a change in the share of telephone respondents who were confident in the CJS, police and courts between 2012 and 2025.

### KEYWORDS

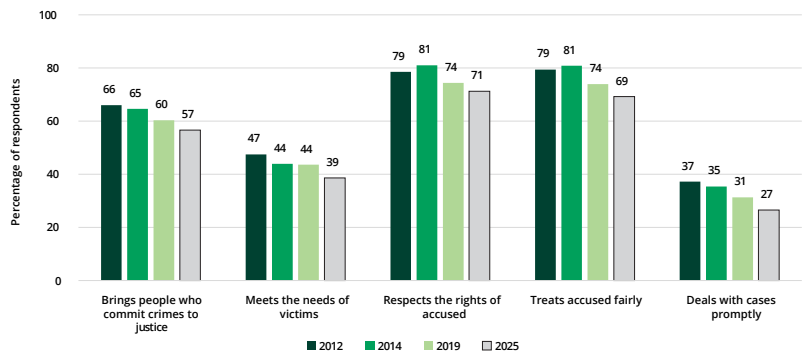
- Public confidence
- Sentencing
- Repeated cross-sectional survey
- Police
- Courts
- Knowledge
- Media

### KEY FINDINGS

In 2025, just over half of respondents were confident that the CJS brings people who commit crimes to justice. A high proportion thought that the rights of the accused are respected and the accused are treated fairly. Confidence that the CJS meets the needs of victims and deals with cases promptly was low. Obtaining information about the CJS from government publications, educational sources or newspapers was associated with higher levels of confidence in the CJS. By contrast, talkback radio, social media and word-of-mouth were associated with lower confidence levels. Levels of confidence also varied significantly by socio-demographic factors, and victims had lower confidence in the CJS across all measures except timely case resolution.

In 2025, confidence in the CJS was significantly lower on all five measures compared with 2019, 2014 and 2012 (Figure 1). Confidence in both the police and the courts fell, with declines seen across nine of the 10 measures included in the survey. The drop in confidence was most pronounced for the police between 2019 and 2025. There was also an increase between 2019 and 2025 in the percentage who thought that the sentences handed down by the courts were about right.

Figure 1. Confidence in NSW CJS by survey year, 2012-2025 #



# Telephone respondents only

### CONCLUSION

Confidence in the NSW CJS has declined significantly since 2019 across all measures and is at the lowest levels observed since BOCSAR’s survey began in 2007. While the exact drivers of declining confidence in the CJS are not clear, several significant events since 2019 may have impacted public opinion, including police enforcement of restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic, a reported rise in media concerns about crime and policing, and economic disruptions during the pandemic.