

The State of Wellbeing in Caribbean Judiciaries (2025): Insights and A Call for Systemic Action

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The [Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers](#) (CAJO) is a non-profit organisation that brings together chancellors, chief justices, judges, magistrates, and other judicial staff from across the Caribbean region. Its primary functions are to provide judicial education, training, and support to improve the administration of justice and promote judicial wellbeing in the region.

The [Caribbean Association of Women Judges](#) (CAWJ) is an organisation consisting of judges and judicial officers of the courts, throughout the Caribbean, focused on the goal, among others, of promoting a greater understanding and better resolution of legal issues facing women and girls see Caribbean Association of Women Judges.

Table of Contents

Introduction: A New Global Context for Judicial Wellbeing	4
Some Key Data Insights (2025 survey)	7
General.....	7
Emerging Themes	8
1. Work as the main source of stress and non-wellbeing	8
2. Fulfilment derived outside the judicial sphere – family/social life	9
3. Workplace cultures – navigating leadership and exclusion.....	9
4. Bullying.....	10
5. Gendered Insights.....	10
Methodology (2025 Survey)	12
Research Design.....	12
Target Group and Sampling.....	12
Data Collection Instrument	12
Data Collection Procedure	12
Data Analysis and Reporting	13
Ethical Considerations	13
Demographic Profile (2021 vs 2025).....	13
Concerns of Wellbeing	16
The Duality of the Judicial Experience: Exploring Fulfilment and Flourishing.....	17
The Intensifying Burden: A Comparative Look at Stress, Anxiety, and Exhaustion	20
Prevalence and Intensity of Stress (2021 vs. 2025)	20
The Anatomy of Judicial Stress in 2025	21
The Specter of Burnout.....	24
An Unsettling Climate: Experiences of Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination	26
The Gendered Experience of the Bench: Unique Challenges for Women Judicial Officers	29
The Impact on the Administration of Justice: A Widening Gyre?.....	32
Beyond the Paradox: Unpacking the Sources of Judicial Resilience and Wellbeing	35
The Anchors of Personal Life	35
Intrinsic Professional Motivation and the Pursuit of Justice.....	37
Proactive Coping and Boundary Setting.....	38
A Conscious and Evidence-Based Way Forward: Recommendations for Systemic Change	40

Institutional and Structural Interventions.....	40
Cultural and Leadership Interventions.....	42
Peer and Individual Support Interventions.....	43
Limitations.....	47
1. The Impact of Modern Technology and Social Media.....	47
2. Self-Reported Data.....	47
3. Cross-Sectional Design.....	47
Conclusion.....	48
Acknowledgements.....	48

Introduction: A New Global Context for Judicial Wellbeing

“... human wellbeing is fundamentally connected to and connects all parts of our beings individually and relationally, and impacts institutions systemically, and ... we must not only ensure healthier Judicial Officers and judiciary staff, but healthier judicial systems that all operate optimally for the benefit of all citizens and court users, and for the advancement of the administration of justice.”¹

Judicial wellbeing is a state of optimal physical, mental, emotional, psychological, and social health that allows judicial officers and judiciary staff to perform their duties effectively, resiliently, and ethically, while maintaining a healthy work-life integration and flourishing in their roles.²

In July 2021, the Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO) released its foundational report, *Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers*, which provided the first systematic, region-wide evidence of the significant wellbeing challenges facing the judiciary.³ That report gave voice and data to what had previously been anecdotal "smoke signals" of distress, confirming concerning levels of stress and its tangible impact on the professional lives of judicial officers. It concluded with a call for deeper investigation and a "conscious way forward" toward whole-system change.

This report is a further response to that call. It is the product of a more comprehensive and nuanced survey instrument, the CAJO-CAWJ 'Judicial Wellbeing Survey', designed not only to measure the current state of judicial wellbeing but also to conduct a limited four-year comparative analysis measured against 2021 benchmarks. It is a joint initiative of the CAJO and the Caribbean Association of Women Judges (CAWJ).

The findings of this 2025 present a reality for concern. While global, regional, and local conditions have changes, pressures and stressors that presented in 2021 have remained mostly the same, if not increased. The data points to increases, albeit not exponentially, in stress, a deterioration in workplace culture, and a negative impact on core judicial functions relevant to the administration of justice. The 2025 Survey, similar to the 2021 survey, was conducted via an online survey platform and disseminated through the CAJO's and the CAWJ's respective networks.

¹ Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (CAJO), 'Statement on the Wellbeing of Judicial Officers and Judicial Staff' (adopted 22 November 2024, CAJO Biennial Conference, Bermuda, 2024) <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CAJO-Statement-on-Judicial-Wellbeing-and-Work.pdf> (Accessed on 2 August 2025).

² Jamadar P 'Judicial Integrity and Judicial Wellbeing' (CCJ Papers and Speeches 2025) at page 1.

³ CAJO "Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers: Report on the CAJO's Judicial Officer Wellbeing Survey (CAJO July 2021) < <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Exploring-the-Wellbeing-of-Caribbean-Judicial-Officers-Wellbeing-Survey-Report-July-2021.pdf>> accessed 21 July 2025.

Notably, and as mentioned above, the landscape in which these findings are presented has fundamentally changed. The 2021 survey was on the heels of the COVID-19 pandemic and all the changes that were imposed as a result. Since 2021, not only has there been a normalisation of post-pandemic working life, but in addition a powerful global movement has emerged, transforming the conversation on judicial wellbeing from a peripheral concern into a core tenet of judicial integrity, competence, and the rule of law. This shift is epitomised by a few landmark developments.

First, in September–October 2021, and also prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Judicial Integrity Network (‘GJIN’) conducted a global survey with the aim of, among other things, gaining insights into the experiences of judicial officers with respect to physical and mental wellbeing in connection to their judicial duties. Key CAJO researchers supported this initiative. That GJIN Wellness Survey generated a 2022 Global Report: ‘Exploring Linkages between Judicial Well-Being & Judicial Integrity’.⁴ Significantly, at that time almost all survey participants expressed the view that there was not enough awareness about the importance of judicial wellbeing and its impact on judicial integrity and on the performance of the judiciary. Many participants reported the inadequacy or insufficiency of available support and existing stigma and stereotyping around mental health issues.

Second, the adoption of the *Nauru Declaration on Judicial Well-being* on July 25, 2024,⁵ represents a pivotal milestone. Drafted by a global collective of senior judicial leaders and experts, this declaration establishes seven universal principles that are central to the analysis in this report. It unequivocally states that judicial wellbeing is not a private matter but a “shared responsibility” of both individual judges and their institutions.⁶ Crucially, it links the health of judicial officers directly to “court users’ experience in court, for the quality of justice and ultimately for public confidence in the courts”. This provides an authoritative, international framework against which the findings of the 2025 Judicial Wellbeing Survey can be assessed.

Third, on November 22, 2024, the CAJO at its 8th Biennial Conference in Bermuda, issued its ‘*Bermuda Statement on the Wellbeing of Judicial Officers and Judiciary Staff*’.⁷ It affirmed the

⁴ See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), ‘Exploring Linkages between Judicial Well-being and Judicial Integrity’ (2022) <https://www.unodc.org/ji/resdb/data/2022/exploring_linkages_between_judicial_well-being_and_judicial_integrity.html?lng=en&match=judicial%20well-being> accessed 27 October 2025.

⁵ Regional Conference on Integrity and Judicial Well-being, ‘Nauru Declaration on Judicial Well-being’ (UNODC and Nauru Judiciary, Nauru, July 2024) < <https://judicialwellbeing.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Nauru-Declaration-on-Judicial-Well-being.pdf>> accessed 22 July 2025.

⁶ Regional Conference on Integrity and Judicial Well-being, ‘Nauru Declaration on Judicial Well-being’ (UNODC and Nauru Judiciary, Nauru, July 2024) < <https://judicialwellbeing.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Nauru-Declaration-on-Judicial-Well-being.pdf>> accessed 22 July 2025.

⁷ <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CAJO-Statement-on-Judicial-Wellbeing-and-Work.pdf> (accessed 27 October 2025)

Nauru Declaration and built on it by explicitly acknowledging that the wellbeing of judiciary staff is an important component of Judicial Wellbeing: "... that the physical, emotional, mental, psychological, and relational well-being of *all Judicial Officers and judiciary staff* is crucial for achieving the performance standards of competence and diligence in the discharge of functions, acting in integrity, effectively and efficiently, and for realising sustainable judicial excellence in all domains."⁸

Fourth, the formal adoption by the United Nations General Assembly on March 4, 2025, of July 25th as the International Day for Judicial Well-being solidifies a global consensus on the issue.⁹ This recognition elevates judicial wellbeing from a "taboo" topic to an official, internationally recognised imperative, underscoring the urgency for judiciaries worldwide, including those in the Caribbean, to align their practices with this global standard.²

The convergence of these global and regional developments with the insightful data from the 2025 survey creates an undeniable mandate for action. The challenges facing Caribbean judiciaries are no longer merely internal institutional matters of concern; they represent a demonstrable divergence from established global principles of judicial integrity and sustainability.

This report, therefore, moves beyond exploration and diagnosis. It is a data-driven call for systemic action. It provides some insights for regional judicial leaders about the impact the factors explored have on the administration of justice. It culminates with some evidence-based recommendations designed to bridge the gap between the current state of wellbeing and the global standards of sustainability to which all modern, effective, and efficient judiciaries must aspire.

It is worth restating, in relation to judicial officers' experiences around stress and wellbeing, that in so far as is evident from the responses gathered in 2021 compared to 2025; nothing much has changed. To truly be effective, the results of these surveys ought to be considered, and reasonable, practical, and effective strategies designed to target and eliminate these deficiencies.

⁸ See, Jamadar P 'Judicial Integrity and Judicial Wellbeing' (CCJ Papers and Speeches 2025) at pages 5-6. https://ccj.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PJ-Final-Paper-Judicial-Integrity-Judicial-Wellbeing_CCJ-PS.pdf

⁹ UNGA Res 79/261, 'International Day for Judicial Well-being' (4 March 2025) UN Doc A/RES/79/266.

Some Key Data Insights (2025 survey)

General

On average, judicial officers ***most times considered*** that they had sufficiently meaningful work relationships with their judicial colleagues. On closer look, **women judicial officers under the age of 50** only ***sometimes*** felt this was true, while **all other judicial officers**, women 50 and over and all male judicial officers, considered that ***most times*** their work relationships were sufficiently meaningful.

On average, judicial officers ***sometimes*** felt that their judicial work life was flourishing. On closer look, **male judicial officers** were on average more likely to ***most times feel*** like their judicial work life was flourishing while **women judicial officers**, on average, ***sometimes felt*** like their judicial work life was flourishing.

Younger judicial officers (40 and below) experienced ***more inspiration and joy*** from their work than **older judicial officers** (over 50). Meanwhile, across the board, **all judicial officers** felt ***more*** fulfilment, meaningfulness, awe, wonder, inspiration, and joy from their **personal lives than their work lives**.

Judicial officers received the ***least amount of fulfilment and happiness*** from **work environments, local socio-political realities, and global realities** (rating those a 2 out of 5 on a scale where 5 is the highest) regardless of their age, gender, or jurisdiction. Social relationships, hobbies, personal time, health, and personal beliefs provided the most happiness and fulfilment for judicial officers.

Heavy workloads and concerns around the availability of resources were the ***main causes of stress, anxiety, and non-wellbeing*** among judicial officers in the context of their judicial work.

- Of the respondents, 81% said that heavy workloads somewhat often (38%), often (20%), or very often (23%) contributed to stress, anxiety, and non-wellbeing.
- With regard to the availability of resources, 73% said that it somewhat often (33%), often (20%), or very often (20%) contributed to stress, anxiety, and non-wellbeing.

In the 6 months preceding completion of the survey, judicial officers indicated that they ***often*** felt **work-related stress** while only ***sometimes*** feeling **non-work-related stress**.

Judicial officers experienced a number of physical, emotional, and mental consequences of stress. The top six were:

- Fatigue
- Sleep disturbances

- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Isolation
- Burnout

Further, **at least 25% of judicial officers** experienced headaches, challenges with concentrating, intolerance of others, changed social behaviours, changed eating, chronic anxiety, and stomach issues.

On average, more women than men experienced:

- Fatigue (92% vs 71%)
- Sleep disturbances (77% vs 65%)
- Irritability (79% vs 56%)
- Muscle tension (73% vs 41%)

Emerging Themes

1. Work as the main source of stress and non-wellbeing

Judicial officers were more likely to experience stress and non-wellbeing from their work than non-work-related elements.

- In the 6 months preceding completion of the survey, judicial officers indicated that they ***often*** felt **work-related stress** while only *sometimes* feeling **non-work-related stress**.
- Judicial officers received the ***least amount of fulfilment and happiness*** from **work environments, local socio-political realities, and global realities** (rating those a 2 out of 5 on a scale where 5 is the highest) regardless of their age, gender, or jurisdiction.
- Heavy workloads and concerns around the availability of resources** were the ***main causes of stress, anxiety, and non-wellbeing*** among judicial officers in the context of their judicial work.
- Appeal court judges and Masters** experienced heavy workloads and availability of resources as **stronger stressors** than other judicial officers.
- Availability of Resources was a **stronger stressor** for **Magistrates/District Court Judges/Parish Court Judges** than other judicial officers.
- Apex court judges did not** experience **burnout** as much as other judicial officers (an average rating of not often versus somewhat often).
- Women judicial officers more often** had **burnout, heavy workloads, court user expectations, career development, execution of ancillary duties, and execution of core duties** as contributors of stress and non-wellbeing than their male counterparts.

- h. **Heavy workloads** also seemed to affect judicial officers **over the age of 51 more than those below the age of 51.**

2. Fulfilment derived outside the judicial sphere – family/social life

Generally, over the past 6 months, **judicial officers have often felt happy or fulfilled.** However:

- a. Specifically, **Joy, Inspiration, and Appreciation** are *more prominent* in **life outside work** as a judicial officer.
- b. Lower connection of work as integral to wellbeing. While a majority of respondents agreed that meaningful work life was a necessary part of wellbeing, it was the **lowest ranked amongst all the elements presented.**
- c. Respondents *more frequently* experienced **work-related anxiety and stress** than **non-work-related anxiety and stress.**
- d. Generally, judicial officers said that they *sometimes* have **sufficient time** for their **overall wellbeing, work-life balance, and personal interests.**
- e. **Apex court judges more often** have sufficient time for their overall wellbeing, work-life balance, and personal interests **than other judicial officers.**

3. Workplace cultures – navigating leadership and exclusion

- a. *Some* judicial officers experience **negative behaviours/attitudes/and workplace cultures.** Asked about their experiences over the last two years:
 - 44% experienced being excluded from discussions
 - 34% said that leadership was overbearing
 - 33% said that their work was undermined
 - 22% said that they were subjected to ridiculing or demeaning language
- b. More closely looked at, certain categories of judicial officers experienced the above more:

	% Magistrates	% High Court Judges	% Women	% Men	% Under 40	% 51 and Over
Exclusion from Discussions	60	38	45	41	50	49
Overbearing Leadership	54	26	33	38	21	41
Work Being Undermined	50	30	33	33	36	36
Ridiculing or Demeaning Language	37	15	24	18	7	27

- c. Further, **34% of Magistrates** said that they were **subject to malicious rumours**, and **29% said that they received consistent unconstructive criticisms**. Notably, **30% of male judicial officers** said that they received **consistent unconstructive criticisms**.
- d. **One in five** judicial officers also said that they **experienced behaviours from fellow judicial officers** that created a **hostile work environment**.

4. Bullying

A deeply concerning finding of the 2025 survey, which for the first time sought to quantify negative workplace behaviours, is evidence of an unsettling and unhealthy institutional climate. The data reveals that some judicial officers have experienced behaviours consistent with bullying, and a large portion of those who responded do not perceive their work environment as consistently fair or respectful. Some of the core data is stated above.

The survey directly asked judicial officers if they had experienced specific bullying behaviours from fellow officers or court administrators over the last two (2) years.¹⁰ The results are a cause for profound concern within an institution predicated on fairness, respect, and non-discrimination. This data is dealt with in a separate section in the substantive report.

5. Gendered Insights

The report also includes a section dedicated to the unique challenges faced by women judicial officers in the Caribbean. We consider this a very important area of interrogation, analysis, and consideration. As some of the data summarised above indicates, there are very specific impacts

¹⁰ Question 25 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

that women judicial officers in the Caribbean experience that need specific attention and accommodation.

Indeed, the survey confirms that a majority of judicial officers (53%) believe that there are indeed unique challenges to wellbeing faced by Caribbean Women Judicial Officers.¹¹ And the qualitative data provided by these officers paints a vivid picture of a systemic friction between the traditional, male-centric structure of the judicial profession and the lived reality of its female workforce.

¹¹ Question 30 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

Methodology (2025 Survey)

This section outlines the research methodology employed for the CAJO-CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey 2025. It details the research design, target population, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis.

Research Design

The 2025 Survey utilised a quantitative and qualitative cross-sectional survey design. This approach was chosen to capture a "snapshot" of judicial wellbeing at a specific point in time among the target population i.e. judicial officers across the Commonwealth Caribbean. The survey was administered online to ensure wide reach, ease of access for participants, and efficient data collection.

Target Group and Sampling

The target group for this survey consisted predominantly of Judicial Officers of the various Commonwealth Caribbean Countries, but not exclusively so. These judicial officers included Magistrates and Parish/District Court judges, Registrars, Masters, High and Appeal Court judges, and Caribbean Apex Court judges.

Given that the survey was disseminated to the entire email membership lists of both organisations, the sampling method is best described as a census approach, inviting all members of the defined population to participate. Participation was voluntary, making the final dataset a self-selected sample of members who chose to respond.

Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instrument was a structured, self-administered questionnaire developed by the project team. It was hosted and administered using the Microsoft Forms online survey platform. The questionnaire comprised a series of [e.g., multiple-choice, Likert scale, and open-ended] questions designed to measure various dimensions of judicial wellbeing as well as other considerations.

Data Collection Procedure

The survey was launched in June, 2025 and remained open for a period of approximately one month, closing in July, 2025.

An official invitation to participate, containing a direct link to the Microsoft Forms survey as well as an explanatory note, were disseminated via email to the membership databases of both CAJO and CAWJ. Periodic reminder emails were sent during the data collection period to encourage participation and improve the response rate.

Data Analysis and Reporting

Upon the closure of the survey period, the anonymous response data was exported from Microsoft Forms. The raw data was then assessed by members of the CAJO research team. A Draft Report was prepared by the research team and reviewed by CAWJ members. This report was then further reviewed by a research specialist and comments and feedback considered and incorporated. The findings presented in this Report are the product of this research, evaluation and review process.

Ethical Considerations

The survey was conducted with strict adherence to ethical principles. Participants were informed of the survey's purpose (including the preparation and publication of a report), its voluntary nature, and the measures in place to protect their anonymity and confidentiality. No personally identifiable information (PII) was collected. The submission of a completed survey was considered to be implied consent to participate in the research and permit the evaluation of the data collected as well as its analysis and the publication of this Report. Google Gemini was used to summarise some datasets, advise on grammatical corrections, and make suggestions on overall flow improvement. The data collected was also manually extracted and analysed by the CAJO's Research and Programme Coordinator.

Demographic Profile (2021 vs 2025)

A fundamental prerequisite for understanding the state of judicial wellbeing is to first understand the demographic profile of the officers who constitute the respondents.

The 2025 Judicial Wellbeing Survey cohort is defined by its age profiles, self-ascribed genders, and status/jurisdiction as a judicial officer (e.g. Magistrate, Master, Registrar, Judge). A significant majority, 62%, are aged 51 and over, with another 27% falling into the 41-50 age bracket.¹² This means that nearly nine out of ten respondents (89%) are over the age of 40. This stands in contrast to the 2021 survey, where 83% of the 126 respondents were 40 years old and under.¹³ Furthermore,

¹² Question 2 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹³ CAJO "Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers: Report on the CAJO's Judicial Officer Wellbeing Survey (CAJO July 2021) < <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Exploring-the-Wellbeing-of-Caribbean-Judicial-Officers-Wellbeing-Survey-Report-July-2021.pdf>> accessed 21 July 2025.

the 2025 Survey respondents were predominantly female, with 73% of respondents identifying as women, compared to 23% who identify as men.¹⁴ Representation was split across status/jurisdiction, with the largest contingents coming from the High Court (53 respondents), the Magistrates/Parish/District Court (35 respondents), and the Appeal Court (23 respondents), ensuring that the data reflects experiences from various levels of the justice system.¹⁵

This demographic shift from a predominantly “younger” respondent pool in 2021 to a predominantly “older” one in 2025 has interesting implications. The overwhelming response from older judicial officers (some of whom may likely have participated in the 2021 survey), suggests that the wellbeing crisis is acutely felt by a majority of members of the bench across a wide range of ages and experiences. This suggests that even where there is more time to familiarise oneself with the exigencies of the judicial position, the stress, constantly increasing workloads and the corresponding systemic erosion of wellbeing persist.

It is evident that the systemic stressors identified in 2021, issues of workload, resource scarcity, and institutional pressures, have remained extant and may have compounded over the intervening four (4) years. This represents a potential crisis of sustainability even affecting the seasoned core of the judiciary, and even including persons responsible for institutional leadership, mentorship, and the perpetuation of judicial insight and wisdom. This context highlights the urgency of the findings that follow, as they reflect in some measure the lived reality of the human agents discharging the core functions of the Caribbean's judicial systems.

¹⁴ Question 3 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁵ Question 4 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

Characteristic	2021 Results (N=126)	2025 Results (N=125 ¹⁶)
Age Bracket		
40 and under	83%	11%
41 and over	17%	89%
Gender		
Female	NA*	73%
Male	NA*	23%
Top 3 Jurisdictions		
High Court	44%	41% (53)
Magistracy/Parish Court	33%	27% (35)
Appellate Court	14%	18% (23)

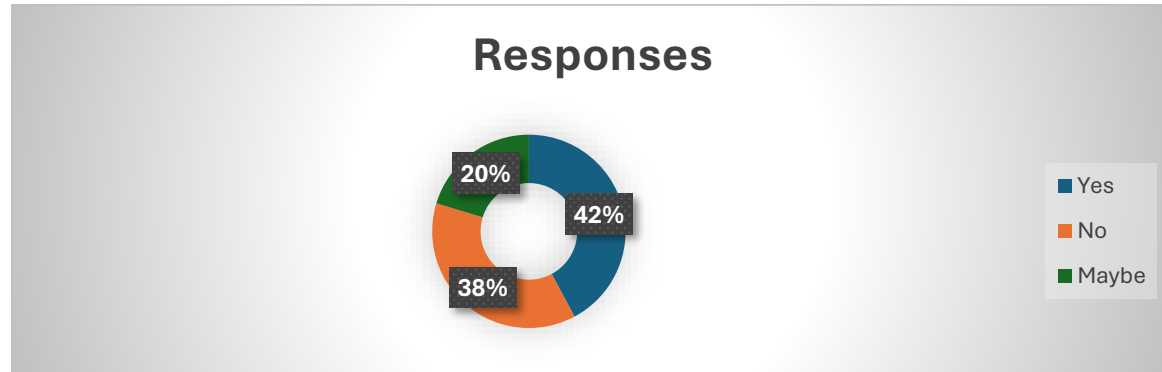
Table 1: Profile of Survey Participants (2021 vs. 2025). (*NA – Not Available)

¹⁶ Three (3) participants registered as not being judicial officers.

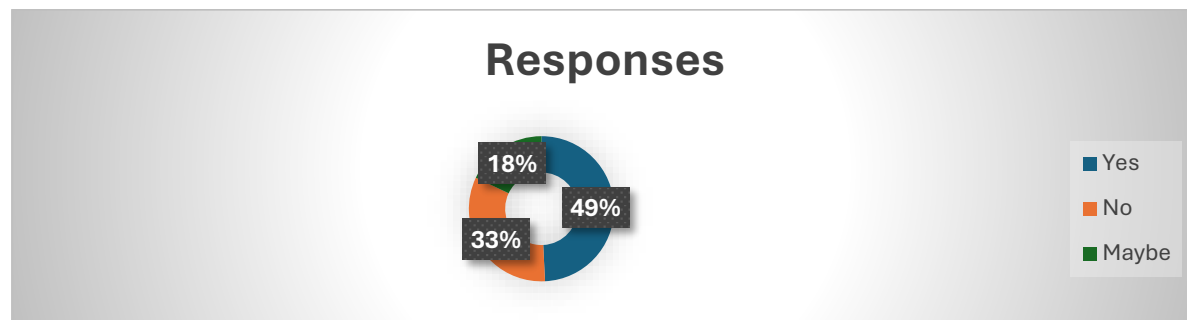
Concerns of Wellbeing

The CAJO-CAWJ 2025 Wellbeing Survey reveals that 42% of respondents had “current concerns about the physical, mental, emotional, or psychological wellbeing” of themselves,¹⁷ and 49% had similar concerns about the wellbeing of judicial colleagues. In both instances, about 20% of respondents indicated ‘maybe’, that they may have such concerns. These are significant statistics and should be cause for our own concern, individually, collectively, and institutionally.¹⁸ Thus, while more research is needed to assess, with greater precision, the types, qualities and degrees of these concerns, that should not be an excuse to ignore these findings.

Question 32: *Do you have any current concerns about the physical, mental, emotional, or psychological well-being of yourself?*



Question 33: *Do you have any current concerns about the physical, mental, emotional, or psychological well-being of any judicial colleagues?*



¹⁷ Question 32 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁸ Jamadar P ‘Judicial Integrity and Judicial Wellbeing’ (CCJ Papers and Speeches 2025) at pages 5-6. https://ccj.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/PJ-Final-Paper-Judicial-Integrity-Judicial-Wellbeing_CCJ-PS.pdf

The Duality of the Judicial Experience: Exploring Fulfilment and Flourishing

As apparent from both the 2021 and 2025 Judicial Wellbeing Surveys, the life of a judicial officer is one of inherent duality. It is a role that can provide purpose and satisfaction, yet it simultaneously imposes immense pressure and psychological burdens. The 2025 survey, allows for a deeper exploration of this duality, moving beyond a simple stress-based analysis to understand the sources of positivity and resilience that sustain judicial officers. The findings confirm the 2021 conclusion that personal life is a crucial anchor of wellbeing, but they also reveal a concerning erosion of this personal sphere under the weight of professional demands.

An analysis of positive emotional states in 2025 shows a generally resilient but pressured judiciary. When asked how often they have felt happy or fulfilled in the past six (6) months, a cumulative 93% of respondents reported feeling so at least "sometimes."¹⁹ However, this broad 'sometimesish' positivity may mask a more concerning reality. Only 25% felt happy or fulfilled "very often" or "always," a slight decline from 2021, when 30% reported feeling so in the top two categories ("very" or "extremely" often) in the past three (3) months.²⁰ This suggests that while baseline periodic happiness is maintained, peak experiences of fulfilment are becoming less frequent (accounting for slight percentage variances due to differences in the number of survey participants). Therefore, while judicial officers generally feel 'sometimes' happy or fulfilled, this is not consistent and seems to fluctuate.

The above data is derived from a general question: "Over the past six (6) months, how often have you felt happy or fulfilled?" 'Feeling happy' and 'feeling fulfilled' were not defined, and there is an inherent subjectivity in the responses. As well, this general data when compared to the responses to the specific question:²¹ "Over the past six (6) months, to what degree does your judicial work cultivate and create in you the following feelings?" - where happiness, fulfilment and sadness are included, reveals that on average, respondents were *sometimes* happy/fulfilled/satisfied but, *not often* sad/melancholic. Thus, and in relation to judicial work, respondents were on average, happier than they were sad, but also relatively less happy and fulfilled *very often* than otherwise.

Notably, the sources of this fulfilment remain remarkably consistent between both surveys. The 2025 data shows that positive experiences are overwhelmingly drawn from outside the Court and judiciary.²² When asked to rate contributors to happiness on a 5-point scale (5 being the highest),

¹⁹ Question 6 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

²⁰ Comparison between Question 6 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey and Figure 3 of CAJO "Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers: Report on the CAJO's Judicial Officer Wellbeing Survey (CAJO July 2021) at page 6 < <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Exploring-the-Wellbeing-of-Caribbean-Judicial-Officers-Wellbeing-Survey-Report-July-2021.pdf>> accessed 21 July 2025.

²¹ Question 16 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

²² Question 20 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

the highest scores were given to family life, personal values/beliefs, social relationships, and health.²³ Judicial work itself was a moderate contributor, reinforcing the 2021 finding that while officers derive fulfilment and satisfaction from their professional role,²⁴ only on average (approximately) 30% experienced this daily and their primary wellspring of wellbeing (fulfilment, meaningfulness, gratitude and appreciation) lies in their personal lives.²⁵ Further analysis of feelings and experiences cultivated specifically by work related activities, reveals that while a majority experience "fulfilment" and "satisfaction" "often" or "very often," work is not a significant source of "joy".²⁶

A new dimension explored in the 2025 survey is the concept of "flourishing", an indicator of a more holistic measure of a thriving life marked by experiences of, for example, joy, gratitude, hope and other positive emotions.²⁷ Here, a significant and noteworthy dissonance emerges. When asked if their judicial work life is flourishing, 46% of judicial officers responded, "most times" or "yes."²⁸ In contrast, only 42% said the same for their non-judicial life.²⁹ That dissonance aside, it is noteworthy that 15% considered that their **judicial work life** was **not** flourishing and 39% only reported work life as only 'sometimes' flourishing. That is, 54% considered that their judicial work life was either not or only sometimes flourishing.

This confluence of data points to a "resilience paradox."³⁰ It is evident that judicial officers possess a deep well of personal resilience, drawing strength and meaning from their families, values, and relationships, which enables them to endure the high-stress environment of their work. The institution, perhaps implicitly, relies on this private reservoir of strength to maintain its functionality. However, this model may be unsustainable, and even potentially exploitative.

The survey reveals that the pressures of the job may actively erode the very personal life resilience that serves as a primary coping mechanism. Stress plays a significant role. On a scale of 1-5 (5 being the highest), the average general degree of stress over the immediately preceding 6-month

²³ Question 21 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

²⁴ Questions 16 and 19 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey; CAJO "Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers: Report on the CAJO's Judicial Officer Wellbeing Survey (CAJO July 2021) at page 6 <<https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Exploring-the-Wellbeing-of-Caribbean-Judicial-Officers-Wellbeing-Survey-Report-July-2021.pdf>> accessed 21 July 2025.

²⁵ Questions 16, 19 and 20 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

²⁶ Question 19 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey

²⁷ Jamadar P, 'Judicial Wellbeing For Judicial Officers: Achieving Work-Life Balance: Challenges, Impacts, Solutions' (Papua New Guinea, Centre for Judicial Excellence, 15 July 2024) https://ccj.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/Jamadar_20240715.pdf (accessed 2 August 2025.)

²⁸ Question 14 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

²⁹ Question 15 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey. The survey does not interrogate and cannot offer any explanations for this dissonance between 'judicial work life' and 'non-judicial life'.

³⁰ Bonanno, G. A. 'The resilience paradox' (European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 12(1), 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2021.1942642> accessed 1 August 2025.

period was 3.32 and up to 45%, indicated stress levels of 4 or 5.³¹ The greatest negative impact of stress, as reported in the survey, is on “finding a healthy integrated work-life balance,” with approximately 43% of officers rating this impact as a 4 or 5 out of 5. Next in terms of the negative impact of stress were the capacity or ability to ‘get the work done’, managing cases, and rendering decisions or judgments – all core judicial functions, and on “interacting with court users” and “interacting with judiciary staff” – essential for meeting established procedural fairness standards.³²

The intense stress and overwork in the professional sphere may very well have a negative impact in the personal sphere. This can lead to a tipping point where a judicial officer may have neither professional satisfaction nor personal strength and support to draw upon, creating conditions for burnout, personal crises and interrelationship dysfunction. All of which, taken together can challenge the sustainability of judicial excellence, individually and institutionally.

Taking these realities into consideration, ideally, the judiciary should strive to have all its members and staff on the higher end of the wellbeing spectrum. This, as we will discuss below will inevitably not only lead to higher levels of productivity and efficiency, but to the prevention of burnout and the protection of the justice system. It can also likely enhance professional and personal flourishing.

³¹ Question 23 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

³² Question 24 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey. And see, *Proceeding Fairly: Report on the extent to which elements of procedural fairness exist in the court systems of the judiciary of the republic of Trinidad and Tobago*; <https://www.ttlawcourts.org/jeibooks/bookdetails.php?17>

The Intensifying Burden: A Comparative Look at Stress, Anxiety, and Exhaustion

While judicial officers find sustenance in their personal lives, their professional lives are partially characterised by a burden of stress that has not only persisted since 2021 but seems to have moderately intensified (relative to the period considered in 2025). This evolution is evidenced by increases in the intensity of reported stress, cultural and relational stressors, and the potential alignment of symptoms with burnout. Having said this, we must also be careful to note that the data also shows that for participants, their judicial work can also be a source of satisfaction and flourishing.

Prevalence and Intensity of Stress (2021 vs. 2025)

The prevalence of stress among Caribbean judicial officers appears to have remained relatively constant between 2021 to 2025. In 2021, 95% of respondents reported experiencing stress "sometimes," "frequently," or "always".³³ In 2025, 87% reported experiencing work-related stress within equivalent frequency bands.³⁴ The fact that nearly every judicial officer experiences occupational stress is a foundational truth of the profession. However, that should not mean a normalising of professional stress and an overlooking of its potentially damaging effects.

The critical shift, and the report's most alarming quantitative finding, lies in the *intensity* of that stress. In 2021, 40% of judicial officers rated their general degree of stress as high (as "4 - a lot" or "5 - overwhelming" on a 5-point Likert scale).³⁵ In 2025, the comparative figure has increased to **45%**.³⁶ This represents a small but relevant shift of 5%, demonstrating that the amount of judicial officers experiencing extreme stress could be on an incline, accepting that extrapolating trends from two surveys spread over 4 years has obvious limitations. Indeed, in 2025, 57.1% of respondents indicated to having experienced work-related stress, anxiety or distress: often (18.8%), very often (19.5%) and always (**18.8%**).³⁷

³³ CAJO "Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers: Report on the CAJO's Judicial Officer Wellbeing Survey (CAJO July 2021) at page 10 < <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Exploring-the-Wellbeing-of-Caribbean-Judicial-Officers-Wellbeing-Survey-Report-July-2021.pdf>> accessed 21 July 2025.

³⁴ Question 16 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

³⁵ CAJO "Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers: Report on the CAJO's Judicial Officer Wellbeing Survey (CAJO July 2021) at page 10 < <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Exploring-the-Wellbeing-of-Caribbean-Judicial-Officers-Wellbeing-Survey-Report-July-2021.pdf>> accessed 21 July 2025.

³⁶ Question 23 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

³⁷ Question 22 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

The Anatomy of Judicial Stress in 2025

The 2025 survey provides a detailed anatomy of the factors driving this intensified stress. The quantitative data from Question 17, which asked officers to what extent various work-related factors contributed to their stress (over the preceding 6 months), reveals a clear hierarchy of institutional and structural factors. The six most significant contributors, each cited as a stressor using the indicators ranging from "somewhat often", "often", to "very often" by the majority of respondents, are:

1. Heavy workloads (81.2%). Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 38.3%, "often" – 19.5%, and "very often" – 23.4%.
2. Availability of resources (67.9%). Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 32.8%, "often" – 19.5%, and "very often" – 15.6%.
3. Institutional systems, structures and policies (69.5%). Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 41.4%, "often" – 14.8%, and "very often" – 13.3%.
4. Institutional culture or values (62%). Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 31.3%, "often" – 16.4%, and "very often" – 15.6%.
5. Institutional responsibilities and standards of excellence (50.8%). Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 29.7%, "often" – 15.6%, and "very often" – 5.5%.
6. Physical and infrastructural work environment (50%). Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 26.6%, "often" – 12.5%, and "very often" – 10.9%.

Notably, factors like relationships with peers (35.2%) and staff (27.4%), which were low-rated stressors in 2021,³⁸ remain low but relatively unimproved, as evidenced by the quantitative data.³⁹ Moreover, the open-ended responses provide a visceral narrative that gives depth and context to these statistics. The thematic analysis presented in Table 2 synthesises these qualitative responses, illustrating the human realities behind the numbers.

³⁸ CAJO "Exploring the Wellbeing of Caribbean Judicial Officers: Report on the CAJO's Judicial Officer Wellbeing Survey (CAJO July 2021) at page 11 < <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Exploring-the-Wellbeing-of-Caribbean-Judicial-Officers-Wellbeing-Survey-Report-July-2021.pdf>> accessed 22 July 2025.

³⁹ Question 17 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

Thematic Category	Summary of Issue	Illustrative Anonymous Quote
Workload & Time Pressure	Overwhelming caseloads, insufficient time for judgment writing, long hours, and unrealistic deadlines are the most frequently cited stressors.	"Heavy reserved judgment list. Lack of judicial support - no judicial research counsel. Heavy trial lists." ⁴⁰
Resource Scarcity	A lack of trained support staff, inadequate technology, poor physical infrastructure, and insufficient tools to perform duties efficiently.	"POORLY TRAINED STAFF; ADMINISTRATIVE DECISIONS AND POLICIES THAT IMPACT WORK PERFORMANCE NEGATIVELY; INSUFFICIENT HUMAN RESOURCE ..."⁴¹ "Heavy workload, lack of proper equipment to enable the work to be efficiently carried out in a timely manner, need to improve training to understand the technology, improvement in the work plant."⁴²
Leadership & Management	A perceived lack of support, empathy, and understanding from judicial leadership and court administration. Decisions are made that negatively impact judicial work without consultation.	"Lack of respect for judges...it is evident that the managers and court administrators do not properly understand how a court operates..."⁴³ "Lack of good leadership skills in senior judges who think being in charge means total control over people, even their thoughts; poor physical spaces; no voice, not being heard because of the hierarchical system in place."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁴¹ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁴² Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁴³ Question 18 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁴⁴ Question 34 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

Collegial & Cultural Decay	An erosion of collegiality, marked by uncooperative colleagues, undermining behaviour, office politics, and a toxic work environment.	"Unco-operative colleagues." ⁴⁵ ; "Peer alienation; lack of adequate administrative support; insensitive leadership." ⁴⁶
Financial Insecurity	Concerns about inadequate remuneration, lack of promotion or upward mobility, and the absence of a secure pension, creating underlying financial anxiety.	"Nearing retirement, the lack of a pension weighs on me in the back of my mind everyday." ⁴⁷ "Lack of financial security, overbearing and unreasonable leadership, political pressure, lack of supportive ancillary services and staff, social media bullying and targeting." ⁴⁸

Table 2: Primary Stressors in 2025 - A Thematic Analysis of Qualitative Responses with Selected Sampling

This analysis reveals a critical evolution in the nature of judicial stress. In 2021, the primary stressors were largely operational and structural (workload, resources). By 2025, these have not only seen an apparent increase, but they have been joined by new themes of cultural and relational factors. The prevalence of a "***toxic work environment***," "***uncooperative colleagues***," and "***insensitive leadership***", as major stressors signal an arguable deterioration of the social and professional fabric and internal working cultures of Caribbean judiciaries. It is however important to note, that because the responses are anonymous, it is not possible to say whether these are territorially concentrated or evenly spread across jurisdictions from which responses were received.

⁴⁵ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁴⁶ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁴⁷ Question 18 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁴⁸ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

The Specter of Burnout

Burnout is not merely an extreme form of stress; it is an occupational phenomenon characterised by the World Health Organization as resulting from "...chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed".⁴⁹ It is defined by three core dimensions: chronic exhaustion, chronic cynicism or mental distance from one's job, and a sense of inefficacy or lost impact.⁵⁰ The 2025 survey data provides compelling evidence that may indicate the presence of some of these dimensions among Caribbean judicial officers, which could confirm that judicial officers who report experiencing burnout (51.6%),⁵¹ are accurately describing what they are experiencing.

- **Chronic Exhaustion:** This is arguably evidenced by the ratings for "Emotional exhaustion" (63.3% of respondents provided a rating of somewhat often, often, and very often⁵²) and "Physical exhaustion" (70.4% of respondents provided a rating of somewhat often, often, and very often⁵³)⁵⁴ as feelings cultivated by judicial work, and the fact that "Fatigue" (86.7%)⁵⁵ is one of the most commonly experienced stress indicators. One respondent explicitly lists "Chronic and Prolonged Burnout... Chronic Fatigue" as their primary stressors.⁵⁶
- On closer look, and moving away from the average judicial officer, about 41% of judicial officers experienced emotional exhaustion either *often* or *very often* in the six months preceding their completion of the survey. This means that 37% never or not often experienced emotional exhaustion and the remaining 22% experienced it somewhat often.

Chronic Cynicism and Mental Distance: This dimension manifests in the judicial contexts of respondents. The qualitative data is replete with expressions of a negative and detached view of the work environment, including "hypocrisy in judicial groups,"⁵⁷ a "toxic work

⁴⁹ WHO, "Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases" (WHO 2019) <<https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>> accessed 22 July 2025.

⁵⁰ WHO, "Burn-out an "occupational phenomenon": International Classification of Diseases" (WHO 2019) <<https://www.who.int/news/item/28-05-2019-burn-out-an-occupational-phenomenon-international-classification-of-diseases>> accessed 22 July 2025.

⁵¹ Question 28 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁵² Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 21.9%, "often" – 20.3%, and "very often" – 21.1%.

⁵³ Here the relevant disaggregated responses are: "somewhat often" – 29.7%, "often" – 21.9%, and "very often" – 18.8%.

⁵⁴ Question 16 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁵⁵ Question 28 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁵⁶ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁵⁷ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

environment,"⁵⁸ and a feeling of being undermined by colleagues and leadership (specifically in relation to challenges faced by women judicial officers).⁵⁹

- **Inefficacy:** A sense of lost effectiveness may be tentatively inferred (at least arguably so) in the perceived negative impact of stress on the ability to "get the work done".⁶⁰ Indeed, about 18% of respondents reported experiencing a "lack of purpose or meaning in work" (somewhat often – 10.2%, often – 3.9%, and very often – 3.9%).⁶¹ It is also reflected in qualitative statements about the frustration of good policy measures being unsuccessful.

There is a continuing need to address the primary operational stressors identified in both the 2021 and 2025 surveys. The psychological progression from stress to burnout also means that interventions focused solely on operational fixes like resources or time management, while necessary, are insufficient and must be coupled with greater inter-personal institutional action and change.

⁵⁸ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁵⁹ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶⁰ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶¹ Question 17 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

An Unsettling Climate: Experiences of Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

A deeply concerning finding of the 2025 survey, which for the first time sought to quantify negative workplace behaviours, is evidence of an unsettling and unhealthy institutional climate. The data reveals that some judicial officers have experienced behaviours consistent with bullying, and a large portion of those who responded do not perceive their work environment as consistently fair or respectful. These findings move beyond general stress to pinpoint specific, toxic interpersonal and structural dynamics that can hinder wellbeing.

The survey directly asked judicial officers if they had experienced specific bullying behaviours from fellow officers or court administrators over the last two (2) years. The results are a cause for profound concern within an institution predicated on fairness, respect, and non-discrimination. One of the most prevalent reported behaviours was “overbearing leadership,” experienced by 35.2% of respondents.⁶² Judicial officers also reported experiencing “undermining of your work,” (34.4%) and “exclusion from discussions” (44.5%).⁶³

However, two categories are of special concern. Respondents reported experiencing being the objects of: (i) ‘ridiculing or demeaning language’, and (ii) ‘malicious rumours’, 23.4% and 21.9% respectively.⁶⁴ That is, almost 1 in 5 judicial officers reported having these experiences over the two-year period preceding the survey. And 18.8% of respondents thought they were subjected to ‘consistent unconstructive criticisms’, while 13.3% experienced themselves as receiving ‘explicit or implicit threats’⁶⁵ – all from fellow judicial officers or court administrators. These are extremely disturbing findings. They warrant further investigation and action.

These quantitative findings are corroborated by the qualitative data, where respondents repeatedly cite leadership and management as primary sources of distress. Open-ended responses include stark descriptions of an “untenable/unworkable environment created by current head of judiciary,”⁶⁶ “hostility from superiors, unsupportive professional environment, financial/professional uncertainty, unreasonable criticism and career uncertainty,”⁶⁷ and “insensitive leadership.”⁶⁸ This convergence of data points strongly to a “leadership deficit” as a core driver of the negative cultural climate within Caribbean judiciaries.

⁶² Question 25 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶³ Question 25 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶⁴ Question 25 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶⁵ Question 25 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶⁶ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶⁷ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁶⁸ Question 29 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

The issue appears to be not merely one of peer-to-peer incivility, but a systemic problem rooted in the judicial hierarchy and management structure, and likely deeper socio-cultural patterns of hierarchy, power-control dynamics, and discrimination. The fact that “overbearing leadership” is one of the most-cited bullying behaviours is a clear indicator and indictment of a top-down cultural and behavioural problem.

This is particularly troubling given that the Nauru Declaration places a “particular role” and responsibility on judicial leaders to promote a healthy culture and destigmatise stress,⁶⁹ and also because within the Caribbean, the CAJO’s Bermuda Statement asserts that: “The wellbeing of Judicial Officers and judiciary staff requires knowledgeable, sensitive, caring, and attentive judicial leadership at all levels that is committed to promoting, creating, and supporting judicial cultures of wellbeing that are holistic and inclusive, and ensuring that working conditions exist that are conducive to wellbeing.”⁷⁰ The data, regrettably, suggests that in some instances, the very individuals tasked with championing these principles are perceived as primary contributors to a toxic environment.

Overt forms of discrimination and harassment by fellow judicial officers and court administrators were reported by a smaller, yet still unacceptable, percentage of respondents (generally 5-10%). The data is revealing. The most cited grounds for discrimination were ‘status as a judicial officer’ (19.5%), ‘ethnicity’ (11.7%), ‘gender’ (8.6%), and ‘sex’ (6.3%).⁷¹ Given constitutional standards and named categories of non-discrimination in Anglo-Caribbean states, for this to be happening within Caribbean judiciaries is disappointing. Again, the data invites deeper explorations.

Finally, the overall perception of the institutional climate serves as an insightful summary indicator. When asked if their work environment is “sufficiently fair and respectful,” only a small minority of 19% could provide an unqualified “Yes.”⁷² A troubling 47% stated that it was only “sometimes” fair and respectful (31%) or a more absolute “no,” it was not (16%).⁷³ This demonstrates that nearly half of the judiciary experiences its workplace as, at best, inconsistently fair and, at worst, fundamentally unfair (53% consider it ‘most times’ and ‘yes’, fair and respectful).

⁶⁹ Regional Conference on Integrity and Judicial Well-being, 'Nauru Declaration on Judicial Well-being' (UNODC and Nauru Judiciary, Nauru, July 2024) < <https://judicialwellbeing.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Nauru-Declaration-on-Judicial-Well-being.pdf>> accessed 22 July 2025: Principle 2.

⁷⁰ <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CAJO-Statement-on-Judicial-Wellbeing-and-Work.pdf> (accessed 28.10.25)

⁷¹ Question 26 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁷² Question 13 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁷³ Question 13 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

Such an environment is antithetical to the principles of justice and is a significant barrier to wellbeing. It validates the Nauru Declaration's assertion that judicial wellbeing requires an ethical and inclusive culture with “zero tolerance for... discrimination, harassment, bullying and other negative behaviours,”⁷⁴ and the CAJO Bermuda’s Statement that “[t]he wellbeing of all judicial officers and judiciary staff must be institutionally facilitated and supported.”⁷⁵ The data shows that Caribbean judiciaries have significant work to do to meet these standards. Any effective intervention must therefore address not only peer relationships but, critically, leadership behaviour, accountability, and the power dynamics and institutional cultures inherent in the judicial hierarchy. In this latter regard, local and regional judicial and legal service commissions have an extremely critical role to play and must avoid the notorious ‘bystander effect’⁷⁶ and Bestian *unresponsible* behaviour.⁷⁷

From this, albeit preliminary research, justifiable questions around authoritarian and anti-democratic models of judicial leadership and governance need further investigation. As well, consideration of codes of conduct that specifically address these concerns with effective avenues for redress also need to be explored. Internal integrity in the judicial spheres of governance is crucial for maintaining public trust and confidence in the administration of justice.

⁷⁴ Regional Conference on Integrity and Judicial Well-being, 'Nauru Declaration on Judicial Well-being' (UNODC and Nauru Judiciary, Nauru, July 2024) < <https://judicialwellbeing.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Nauru-Declaration-on-Judicial-Well-being.pdf>> accessed 23 July 2025: Principle 4.

⁷⁵ <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CAJO-Statement-on-Judicial-Wellbeing-and-Work.pdf> (accessed 28.10.25)

⁷⁶ The social and psychological phenomenon where persons choose not to respond to offer help or assistance to others in distress in social contexts and when other persons are present or can also act/intervene; typically, in the face of bullying or during assaults or the occurrence of other criminal behaviours.

⁷⁷ Trinidadian economist and philosopher Lloyd Best used/coined the term ‘*unresponsibility*,’ to describe a systemic issue where leaders and elites in Caribbean societies avoid taking responsible action or responsibility for poor governance falling under their purview.

The Gendered Experience of the Bench: Unique Challenges for Women Judicial Officers

The demographic reality of the contemporary Caribbean judiciary, as reflected in the 73% female respondent rate of the 2025 survey, necessitates a specific and focused analysis of the gendered dimensions of judicial wellbeing. The survey confirms that a majority of judicial officers (53%) believe that there are indeed unique challenges to wellbeing faced by Caribbean Women Judicial Officers.⁷⁸ The qualitative data provided by these officers paints a vivid picture of a systemic friction between the traditional, male-centric structure of the judicial profession and the lived reality of its female workforce.

A thematic analysis of the unique challenges described by women judicial officers reveals several recurring issues. It is an apt entry point for analysis.



79

The most dominant theme, by far, is the immense difficulty of integrating professional demands with societal gender role expectations, often referred to as the “second shift.”⁸⁰ Respondents consistently described the pressure of being expected to function as high-performing judicial officers while simultaneously fulfilling the role of primary caregiver for children and, increasingly, for aging parents. As one officer articulated: “Women are often expected to be homemakers while simultaneously carrying an extensive Judicial load”.⁸¹ Another noted: “Home management is an additional stressor to managing work. It still is the case that more is expected of Women in this regard. Caring work and responsibility for children and elderly parents is still primarily women's responsibility and being a judicial officer does not negate this role.”⁸² And also illustratively: “Caribbean Women Judges usually have significant family responsibilities in addition to duties as

⁷⁸ Question 30 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁷⁹ Question 32 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸⁰ Bennett B, ‘WOMEN WORKING OVERTIME: THE INFLUENCE OF THE SECOND SHIFT DISCREPANCY ON RELATIONSHIP AND LIFE SATISFACTION’ (Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi, May 2024) <https://tamucc-ir.tdl.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/e6a1fa95-6ad9-4d2f-a529-29db49965d47/content> accessed 1 August 2025.

⁸¹ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸² Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

Judicial Officers. Balancing the responsibilities so that neither suffers is challenging.”⁸³ This disproportionate dual burden is a profound and gender-specific source of stress and exhaustion that undermines wellbeing.

The second major theme is the persistence of systemic sexism and a lack of professional respect. This manifests in subtle and overt ways, from being patronised or undermined by male colleagues and counsel, to being excluded from the informal and patriarchal “Old Boys' Network” that can be crucial for career advancement and support.⁸⁴ Respondents described a “...patriarchal, patronising aura that seems to demand more of us than the... male counterparts”⁸⁵ and the reality of “Endemic sexism among peers and members of the public.”⁸⁶ This requires women judicial officers to expend additional physical, emotional and psychological energy simply to achieve parity, and to assert their authority and be taken seriously, a burden not typically faced by their male colleagues. As one respondent opined, “it is still a man's world, despite the overwhelming number of female judicial officers”, and as another added, “... the reins of power are still held by the ole boys’ club. In addition, when intersectionality is factored in, ... if you are young, female and have no ties to the ole boys’ or the new girls’ clubs, you are marginalised or treated contemptuously.”⁸⁷

Finally, the survey brought to light specific health challenges, with one respondent courageously noting the impact of “Perimenopause and Menopause and a lack of understanding of same and how these can affect women and impact our overall health and ability to properly function to do a stressful and demanding job.”⁸⁸ Several others shared experiences along similar lines, speaking about the “Challenges presented by menopause” and the “... strong hormonal changes in menopause, which causes emotional, psychological and physical disturbances at times.”⁸⁹ In fact, there were 66 narrative responses to this question (constituting about 52% of all respondents), “what are the unique challenges faced by Caribbean Women Judicial Officers”,⁹⁰ which itself speaks to pertinence of the issue in the Caribbean. This data therefore highlights a lack of institutional awareness and accommodation for the biological and psychological realities that can significantly impact the wellbeing of a large segment of the more senior judicial workforce.

It is historically the case that the institution of the judiciary, in its traditions, expectations, and operational structure, was designed around a male-centric model of work, i.e. one that assumes total professional devotion, enabled by a domestic support system (typically a spouse) that

⁸³ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸⁴ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸⁵ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸⁶ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸⁷ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸⁸ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁸⁹ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁹⁰ Question 31 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

manages all other aspects of life. The judiciary is now staffed by a significant number of women judicial officers, including single mothers, many of whom do not have this traditional (or any equivalent) support system and who bear the primary responsibility for caregiving in their families (including aging parents and elderly relatives) as both a personal and societally expected obligation. Yet, the institution has failed to adapt to take the pragmatic realities of our Caribbean culture into account. Our Caribbean judicial institutions therefore continue to demand a level of inflexible commitment: long hours, resistance to flexible schedules, with a philosophy that often views family responsibilities as a distraction, that is out of touch and incompatible with the reality of a large portion of its workforce.

This creates a systemic, gendered conflict. Caribbean judiciaries are hiring and promoting women but forcing them to operate within a system traditionally designed for men. The resulting stress is not a personal failing or an individual "work-life balance" issue; it is a direct and predictable consequence of institutional inertia.

Therefore, addressing the wellbeing of women judicial officers is not a niche concern that can just be solved by conducting training programmes and hosting wellbeing events. It requires a fundamental modernisation of the institution's concept of work itself. It demands the implementation of concrete, structural changes such as flexible work policies, more predictable hours, robust and non-punitive leave policies for family care, and a cultural shift that recognises, respects and supports caregiving responsibilities as a legitimate part of a modern judicial officer's life. That is not to say that these responsibilities and obligations are not also felt by men, however, the reality of our Caribbean society is that men are not traditionally expected to "tuff it out" in relation to family caregiving in the same ways that are expected of women.

The Impact on the Administration of Justice: A Widening Gyre?

*Wellbeing is intrinsic and integral to judicial and judiciary integrity and performance.*⁹¹

There is a direct link between judicial officers and judiciary wellbeing and a 3D model of judicial integrity, on the one hand, and judicial performance.⁹² The Commentary on the Bangalore Principles, in the section dealing with the principle of ‘Competence and Diligence’, asserts this link as one between judicial officer wellbeing and the “effective performance of judicial functions.” Paragraph 194, affirms that:

“A judge should have sufficient time to permit the maintenance of physical and mental well-being ... necessary for the effective performance of judicial functions.”

The possibly escalating stress and current cultural institutional conditions detailed in this report are not merely internal, private individual challenges. The 2025 survey data demonstrates, with some alarming concern, that these issues have the potential to directly impact the administration of justice itself. The constitutional imperative to ensure a fair and efficient hearing, and the performance of judicial officers who are consistently independent and impartial, demands judicial officers who are functioning at an optimal and sustainable levels of wellbeing. The current survey suggests that this capacity could be under threat.

A comparative analysis of the impact of stress on core judicial functions as per the 2021 and 2025 surveys reveals what appears to be a troubling escalation. As shown in Table 3 (below), the percentage of judicial officers reporting that stress had a medium-to-high negative impact (a rating of 3-5 on a 5-point scale) on their work has increased across all core functions.

⁹¹Jamadar P, ‘Thematic brief: Judicial integrity and judicial well-being’ (UNODC, 2025) https://track.unodc.org/track/en/track/resourcehub/2025/thematic_brief_judicial_integrity_and_judicial_well-being.html (accessed 2 August 2025).

⁹² Jamadar P, ‘Thematic brief: Judicial integrity and judicial well-being’ (UNODC, 2025) https://track.unodc.org/track/en/track/resourcehub/2025/thematic_brief_judicial_integrity_and_judicial_well-being.html accessed 2 August 2025.

Core Judicial Function	2021 Reporting Impact (3-5)	%	2025 Reporting Impact (3-5)	%	Percentage Point Increase (%)
Managing Cases	~40%		~64.1%		+24.1
Hearing Cases	~25%		~50%		+25
Delivering Decisions/Judgments	32%		~53.8%		+21.8

Table 3: Reported Impact of Stress on Core Judicial Functions (2021 vs. 2025).⁹³

An increase of over 20% in the negative impact on fundamental duties like managing and hearing cases and delivering judgments is a potentially calamitous trend. It translates the personal experiences of judicial officers' stress directly into a measurable threat to the sustainability of the ability and capacity of a judiciary to do justice for all persons, at all times, and in an efficient, effective and timely manner. It confirms that the wellbeing of judicial officers is not a "soft" issue but is inextricably linked to the hard metrics of sustainable and predictable judicial performance. This finding aligns with global surveys where judges report that poor wellbeing directly impacts the efficiency of justice and the quality of decisions.⁹⁴

The 2025 survey also explored the impact of stress, anxiety or distress on a broader range of systemic functions, revealing a potentially looming crisis that extends beyond individual case processing. The negative impact was highest on "Finding a healthy integrated work-life balance," with approximately 74.3% of officers reporting an impact of 3-5, and 43% rating it as a 4 – 5.⁹⁵ On "ability to get the work done" respondents reported an impact of 64.8% between a rating of 3-5. This validates the "resilience paradox"⁹⁶ and shows that, arguably, the existing systems are systemically undermining judicial officers' capacity for recharging and performing to standards of excellence.

⁹³ Question 24 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁹⁴ UNODC and Global Judicial integrity Network, "Exploring Linkages between Judicial Well-Being and Judicial Integrity: Report on the Global Survey Conducted by the Global Judicial Integrity Network" (UNODC 2022) at page 14 <https://www.unodc.org/res/ji/resdb/data/2022/exploring_linkages_between_judicial_well-being_and_judicial_integrity_html/Global_Report_Judicial_Well-being.pdf> accessed 23 July 2025.

⁹⁵ Question 24 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁹⁶ Bonanno, G. A. 'The resilience paradox' (European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 12(1), 2021) <https://doi.org/10.1080/20008198.2021.1942642> accessed 1 August 2025.

Furthermore, stress is reported to have a high negative impact on “enhancing your skills and knowledge,” with approximately 59.5% rating the impact at 3-5.⁹⁷ This can potentially create a vicious cycle: judicial officers may be too stressed, fatigued or burnt-out out to engage in the very training and professional development that could equip them with new skills to manage their work more efficiently, effectively, and reduce their stress.

Judicial systems are human systems, and human relationships are integral to its functioning. Judicial stress can also have a significant negative impact on interactions with colleagues, court users, and staff, reinforcing the theme of cultural institutional decay.⁹⁸ This can have consequences for professional institutional morale and court user satisfaction. All of which can negatively impact public perceptions and trust in the administration of justice.

The 2025 survey data demonstrates that judicial stress does not just pose a risk to the *quality* of justice on a case-by-case basis (e.g. poor case management, inapt decisions, inappropriate treatment of court staff and court users, delayed or poorly reasoned judgments). Conceivably, it has the potential to become a threat to the long-term sustainability of the judicial system itself. By actively degrading the judiciary's capacity to “get the work done”, learn, adapt, maintain healthy internal relationships, facilitate individual wellbeing, and to refresh human capital, the system should be considered under threat. This is predictably and potentially a pathway to systemic decline, if unabated. The issue of judicial wellbeing may be appropriately seen and framed as a clear and present danger to the long-term health, effectiveness, and integrity of Caribbean judiciaries, demanding immediate, deep, human and structural interventions.

⁹⁷ Question 24 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

⁹⁸ Question 24 [almost 20% of respondents reported that stress impacts relationships with colleagues] and 18 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

Beyond the Paradox: Unpacking the Sources of Judicial Resilience and Wellbeing

While this report has extensively detailed the stressors and institutional challenges facing Caribbean judiciaries, a complete picture also requires an examination of the countervailing forces that sustain judicial officers. The “resilience paradox,” whereby the personal lives that provide a crucial buffer against professional stress and are themselves being eroded by it, is a relevant factor.

However, to move toward effective interventions, it is necessary to look beyond this paradox and understand the specific protective factors and coping mechanisms that enable a significant portion of the judiciary to maintain their wellbeing and even flourish despite systemic pressures. The 2025 Judicial Wellbeing Survey data provides a nuanced view of these sources of strength and resilience, revealing a combination of deeply held personal values, intrinsic professional motivation, and proactive, intentional strategies for self-preservation and flourishing.

The Anchors of Personal Life

The most powerful and consistently reported sources of resilience lie outside the courthouse walls. When asked to rate contributors to happiness, judicial officers gave the highest scores to family life, personal values/beliefs, social relationships, and health.⁹⁹ This seems to be an actively cultivated intervention and intentionally used as a coping mechanism. The qualitative data from the survey shows that judicial officers intentionally engage in activities that provide sustainable relief from stress, with the most effective strategies being rooted in their personal lives.¹⁰⁰

Four dominant themes emerge from their responses that can be connected to international interventions to ameliorate stress, anxiety and distress:

- **Connection with Loved Ones:** The most frequently cited source of relief is spending quality time with family and friends. Responses like, "Quality time with my husband - cooking, listening to music, yard work, movies ... and talking together",¹⁰¹ and "family time, time with friends, swimming", “spending quality time with loved ones”, and “interacting with family and friends”,¹⁰² all underscore the restorative power of these relationships for judicial officers. This social connection acts as a direct antidote to work based stressors including the professional isolation that many judicial officers experience.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Question 21 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰⁰ Question 36 inquired into “three things you generally do that bring sustainable relief from stress, anxiety, of distress”.

¹⁰¹ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰² Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰³ In response to Question 28, which inquired about stress indicators, 51.6% of respondents identified a “sense of isolation” as one such factor.

- **Physical and Mental Health Practices:** A vast number of respondents identified physical exercise in all forms as a primary coping mechanism.¹⁰⁴ Beyond physical activity, many engage in meditation, faith based and spiritual practices. "Meditation, prayer, exercise,"¹⁰⁵ "Quiet time for spiritual connection and meditation", and "Prayer /Gratitude / Meditation"¹⁰⁶ were illustrative of common responses. One respondent noted the importance of "a proper diet and exercise programme"¹⁰⁷ and seeking "out more spirituality".¹⁰⁸ All indicating that exercise and a connection to one's deeper philosophies, faith and spirituality are profound sources of wellbeing.
- **Engagement in Hobbies and Leisure:** Respondents actively pursue non-work-related interests to destress. These range from reading, listening to music, singing, playing musical instruments, watching television, board games, going to the beach, enjoying the theatre, nature bathing, photography, having pets, and gardening, to travel.¹⁰⁹ These wide-ranging activities are not mere pastimes; they are deliberate acts of disconnection from the high-stakes environment of their work, allowing for mental, emotional and psychological replenishment.
- **Community Service:** Though not as widely reported, several respondents identified "community involvement", "Community volunteer activities", and "Helping the underprivileged", as things done to bring sustainable relief from stress, anxiety or distress.¹¹⁰ One respondent also remarked that they experience wellbeing by "participating in volunteer activities that give back to the community."¹¹¹

These findings demonstrate that the resilience of judicial officers is not simply an innate trait but is actively built and maintained through intentional investment in idiosyncratic activities that are consciously incorporated into one's personal life. There is no 'one size fits all' here. This sphere of personal life anchors and provides an essential grounding and perspective needed to endure professional work-based pressures. What this data facilitates, is institutional awareness and intentional responses to support and enable the cultivation of these resilience building activities and practices.

¹⁰⁴ Questions 5 and 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰⁵ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰⁶ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰⁷ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰⁸ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹⁰⁹ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹⁰ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹¹ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

As before in relation to individual and more personal wellbeing strategies, this data facilitates institutional awareness and intentional responses to support and enable the cultivation of these resilience building opportunities and activities.

Intrinsic Professional Motivation and the Pursuit of Justice

While the institutional environment is a significant source of stress, the judicial role itself continues to provide a powerful sense of purpose and fulfilment for many. Although work itself is not a primary source of "joy" for judicial officers, a majority of respondents report feeling "Fulfilment" and "Satisfaction" from their duties "often" or "very often".¹¹² This suggests that the intrinsic rewards of the job also serve as a key protective factor for wellbeing.

Qualitative responses reveal that this professional satisfaction and resilience is drawn from several sources:

- **The Art of Judging:** There is a clear sense of satisfaction derived from the intellectual and ethical demands of the role. Respondents find wellbeing in "writing a good judgement,"¹¹³ achieving "effective case management," and the simple act of "Daily preparation".¹¹⁴ This speaks to a pride and fulfilment in their craft that transcends daily frustrations.
- **A Sense of Purpose and Impact:** Many respondents are sustained by the belief that their work has a positive impact on people and society. One respondent finds fulfilment by reminding themselves that they are a "servant ... to dispense ... justice," while another feels gratified when incarcerated persons "feel listened to" and believe that "justice is accessible to them", and even another by "Listening carefully to litigants. Trying to help litigants as effectively and quickly as possible."¹¹⁵ Another remarked, for example, that they derived experiences of wellbeing in the discharge of their judicial functions through: "Producing meaningful and quality work; making a real positive impact on people; bringing about systemic changes that improve lives."¹¹⁶ And finally, as illustrative, wellbeing was experienced by: "My ability as well to contribute to capacity building ... to the advancement of the goals of the Court."¹¹⁷ This connection to a higher purpose: serving justice and the community not only motivates individuals but protects their wellbeing.

¹¹² Question 16 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹³ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹⁴ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹⁵ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹⁶ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹⁷ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

- **Positive Collegial and Staff Interactions:** Despite the evidence of broader institutional challenges, many respondents find strength in their immediate work relationships. They derive wellbeing, for example and illustratively, from "Good relations with staff," "fruitful discussions with colleagues," and taking the time to "appreciate the people who are closest to me" on their team.¹¹⁸ Indeed, for one respondent the opportunities to "Consult with a few trusted Judicial colleagues regarding difficult cases" was considered a positive experience of wellbeing.¹¹⁹ These positive micro-climates of mutual respect and support are vital sources of professional resilience.

Proactive Coping and Boundary Setting

Thriving in a high-stress environment requires more than just external sources of support; it demands proactive, individual strategies for managing otherwise debilitating and disempowering pressure. The survey responses highlight that many judicial officers are not passive victims of their circumstances but are actively employing techniques to maintain control and preserve their wellbeing. Some of these have already been identified. However, from the survey data three key macro-strategies can be discerned.

Key strategies include:

- **Setting Firm Boundaries:** A crucial theme is the intentional separation of work and personal life. This includes practical steps like deciding to "not bring work home,"¹²⁰ taking "a day off from work,"¹²¹ and having "at least one weekend for non-work-related activities".¹²² One officer makes it a point to "leave the office as soon as I can,"¹²³ while another emphasises the need to "switch off all court related communication".¹²⁴
- **Strategic Time and Case Management:** Respondents find relief through effective organisation. Strategies include using an "Important vs Urgent matrix"¹²⁵ to prioritise tasks and dedicating specific days for judgment writing to protect evenings and weekends. This sense of control over their schedule seems to mitigate feelings of being overwhelmed.

¹¹⁸ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹¹⁹ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²⁰ Question 38 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²¹ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²² Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²³ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²⁴ Question 37 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²⁵ Question 39 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

- **Seeking Formal and Informal Support:** A significant number of officers recognise the value of seeking help. This ranges from formal therapeutic support, "Attend therapy sessions once a month (at least)"¹²⁶ to informal peer debriefing "I have an accountability friend with whom I work and from whom I keep no secrets".¹²⁷ The willingness to engage with colleagues about challenges is a powerful coping mechanism that directly counters the culture of isolation and its potentially negative impacts on wellbeing.

Therefore, while the challenges facing Caribbean judiciaries are many, there are clear and identifiable sources of strength and resilience that enable many judicial officers to persevere and even thrive. These protective factors: a robust personal life, a deep sense of professional purpose, and a toolkit of proactive coping macro-strategies, are not incidental. They are the bedrock of judicial wellbeing in current circumstances.

Any institutional effort to improve wellbeing must therefore adopt a dual approach: not only mitigating the systemic stressors but also actively protecting and fostering these existing sources of strength and resilience. Policies that safeguard personal time, programs that reinforce the meaningfulness of the judicial role, and initiatives that promote peer support and mentorship will be essential in building judiciaries that are not only effective and efficient, but truly sustainable.

¹²⁶ Question 36 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²⁷ Question 38 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

A Conscious and Evidence-Based Way Forward: Recommendations for Systemic Change

The data and analysis presented in this report constitute an unequivocal call to action. The "smoke signals" of 2021 have not abated based on a comparative analysis of the 2021 and 2025 survey results. These insights must now be contextualised within a global movement that recognises judicial wellbeing as a cornerstone of judicial integrity, and that creates an irrefutable mandate for Caribbean judiciaries and regional judicial leaders to spearhead transformative change. The findings are not ambiguous; they point directly to a series of institutional, structural, and cultural gaps that require a commensurate institutional, structural, and cultural response.

The desire for such a response from within the judiciary is overwhelming. When asked what types of support they would find beneficial, judicial officers expressed a clear demand for institutionalised action. Approximately 69.5% desire support for building networks and interacting with other judges, 68.8% want education and training on maintaining health, 65.6% call for the development of systemic strategies and policies for wellbeing, and 54.7% would find therapeutic support, such as counselling, beneficial.¹²⁸

However, there is also evidence of correctly demonstrated cynicism born from past inaction. As one respondent noted, past surveys and reports seem to "net zero change".¹²⁹ Caribbean judiciaries, through their judicial officers, are asking for help, and it is an institution's responsibility to respond. This is a duty owed to judicial officers, judiciary staff, and the public at large.

Therefore, the following recommendations must be considered with genuine commitment, transparent implementation, and measurable accountability. They are organised into three interconnected tiers, each designed to address specific findings of this report and aligned with the principles of the Nauru Declaration and the CAJO Bermuda Statement on wellbeing for judicial officers and judiciary staff. These tiers are: (i) institutional and structural interventions, (ii) cultural and leadership interventions, and (iii) peer and individual support mechanisms.

Institutional and Structural Interventions

These recommendations target the foundational, operational stressors related to workload, resources, and policy. They align with Nauru Principles 3, 5, and 6, which emphasise shared institutional responsibility, a systemic approach to prevention, and adaptation to local needs.¹³⁰ They also align with the CAJOs Bermuda Statement that affirms the Nauru Principles and builds

¹²⁸ Question 40 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹²⁹ Question 35 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹³⁰ Regional Conference on Integrity and Judicial Well-being, 'Nauru Declaration on Judicial Well-being' (UNODC and Nauru Judiciary, Nauru, July 2024) < <https://judicialwellbeing.info/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Nauru-Declaration-on-Judicial-Well-being.pdf> > accessed 23 July 2025.

on them by recognising as a corresponding imperative, due consideration for the wellbeing of all judiciary staff (and of court users).

- **Recommendation 1: Conduct an Urgent, Independent Resource and Workload Audit.** The number one stressor identified is "Heavy workloads," compounded by a lack of resources. To address this, judiciaries must consider moving beyond anecdotal complaints and commission independent, scientific audits to establish evidence-based standards for caseloads and staffing levels for both judicial officers and support staff. The goal of this audit should be to inform strategic investment and advocate for, among other things, the appointment of more judges and the hiring of more qualified, trained support staff, a solution recommended repeatedly by respondents.
- **Recommendation 2: Develop and Implement a Formal, Regionally Standardised Judicial Wellbeing Policy.** A formal policy can be created to codify the rights and responsibilities related to wellbeing. This policy should be comprehensive, addressing, among other things:
 - **Leave:** Business, vacation and other forms of appropriate leave (e.g. sick, casual, bereavement, childbirth etc) ought to be available, accessible, and encouraged. Provisions for say, sabbatical leave to combat long term burnout and promote professional renewal may now need to be incorporated. This intervention may even be an imperative given the younger ages at which judicial officers are currently assuming office (which the demographics of the 2025 survey seem to confirm).¹³¹ There may also be a need to consider implementing supporting policies such as dedicated and periodic 'mental health' days and 'no meeting' weeks.¹³²
 - **Flexibility:** Formalising flexible work arrangements where feasible, to support better work-life integration. Consideration of the appropriate deployment of hybrid work and court hearings can aid flexibility. As can, structured, transparent and accountable 'work from home' days. Given the gendered data insights of the 2025 survey, gender sensitive accommodation policies and practices may also need to be urgently explored, developed and implemented.
 - **Hours of Work:** Establishing clear protocols regarding work-related communication, especially outside of standard work hours may be necessary in the current open-access technological era that we work and function in. Constitutional rights to privacy and protections related to family and life, compel attention to appropriate work-life integrity and balance. The survey data suggests that institutional recognition of the value of these and the need to protect personal time, embodied in appropriate policies and protocols, are necessary wellbeing interventions¹³³.

¹³¹ Trinidad and Tobago has a formal sabbatical policy for judicial officers.

¹³² The Caribbean Court of Justice has implemented such a policy.

¹³³ Question 21 of the CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

- **Recommendation 3: Prioritise Investment in Technology and Physical Infrastructure.** The survey data identified outdated technology and poor physical work environments as significant stressors. Judiciaries must accelerate the modernisation of court technology, including, for example, integrated case management systems, to improve efficiency and effectiveness. They must also ensure that all court facilities are safe, healthy, and conducive to professional work, addressing issues like poor air conditioning, inadequate space, deficient and defective infrastructure and amenities, and security concerns.¹³⁴
- **Recommendation 4: Prioritise the wellbeing of Judiciary staff.** The wellbeing of Judiciary Staff is integral to overall individual and institutional Judiciary performance and excellence. The CAJO has advocated for a 360-degree approach to the delivery of justice, in which the wellbeing of judicial officers, judiciary staff and court users must be addressed.¹³⁵ The 2025 survey supports this approach. In response to the question: “The wellbeing of Judiciary staff should also be given the highest priority”, 73.4% of respondents “strongly Agree”.¹³⁶ And in response to the question: “Individual and institutional strategies, policies and other organisational and structural measures must be implemented to facilitate Judiciary staff wellbeing and integrated work-life balance”, 71.1% of respondents also registered “Strongly Agree”.¹³⁷ In response to both questions, about 25% of respondents registered “Agree”, all on a 5-point scale ranging from ‘Strongly Disagree’ to ‘Strongly Agree’. Judiciaries must therefore consider Judiciary Staff in the development of their wellbeing policies and protocols.
- **Recommendation 5: Accommodate gendered wellbeing initiatives.** The composition of Caribbean judiciaries is increasingly becoming more gender representative, with the inclusion of more women judicial officers. The 2025 survey data reveals that women judicial officers experience unique challenges to their wellbeing based on social context and cultural expectations, that persist together with occupational status. There is therefore an imperative on Caribbean judiciaries to discover, design and implement institutional and structural interventions to optimise the well-being of women judicial officers.

Cultural and Leadership Interventions

¹³⁴ Questions 5 and 17 of the CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹³⁵ Jamadar P, ‘Thematic brief: Judicial integrity and judicial well-being’ (UNODC, 2025) https://track.unodc.org/track/en/track/resourcehub/2025/thematic_brief_judicial_integrity_and_judicial_well-being.html (accessed 2 August 2025).

¹³⁶ Question 42 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

¹³⁷ Question 42 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

These recommendations target the unhealthy and corrosive elements of bullying, disrespect, and lack of collegiality. They align with Nauru Principles 2 and 4, and with the CAJO Bermuda Statement, which call for destigmatising stress and fostering an ethical, inclusive, and supportive judicial culture.

- **Recommendation 6: Implement a Zero-Tolerance Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy with a Confidential Reporting Mechanism.** To directly address the disturbing findings of bullying and harassment, a clear, robust, and confidential policy is required. This policy must apply to all personnel, including senior leadership and court administration, and feature an independent reporting and investigation mechanism to ensure that officers feel safe raising concerns without fear of reprisal.¹³⁸
- **Recommendation 7: Mandate Leadership and Emotional Intelligence Training for all Judicial Leaders and Managers.** The data points to a significant "leadership deficit" as a driver of the negative wellbeing climate. All individuals in supervisory roles, from Chief Justices to court administrators, should undergo training focused on areas such as supportive and empowering appreciative leadership, providing constructive feedback, conflict resolution, active listening, emotional intelligence, and fostering a psychologically safe environment.
- **Recommendation 8: Systematically Foster a Culture of Collegiality.** To combat the sense of isolation and the challenges of some professional relationships, Caribbean judiciaries must be intentional about rebuilding collegial trust. This includes considering institutional support for both formal and informal opportunities for peer interaction, such as judicial retreats and conferences, structured legal discussion groups, and social events that are inclusive and encourage open dialogue.

Peer and Individual Support Interventions

These recommendations focus on providing direct support and resources to individual officers. They align with Nauru Principles 1 and 7, and with the CAJO Bermuda Statement, which recognise that wellbeing is essential and that individuals must be equipped with the tools to maintain it.

- **Recommendation 9: Establish a Confidential, Externally Managed Employee Assistance Program (EAP).** An overwhelming number of judicial officers stated they would benefit from therapeutic support. To meet this need and overcome the powerful stigma associated with seeking help, Caribbean judiciaries should consider contracting with external providers to offer

¹³⁸ The Caribbean Court of Justice has implemented such a policy; Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia *Judicial workplace conduct policy* < <https://www.fcfcja.gov.au/policies-and-procedures/judicial-workplace-conduct>> accessed 30 October 2025.

free or subsidised or insured, confidential access to professional services like counselling and therapy for judicial officers and their immediate families.

- **Recommendation 10: Create a Formal, Structured Mentorship Program.** A mentorship program, as desired by many of the respondents, should be established to pair junior officers with more senior colleagues. This provides a structured avenue for peer support, guidance, and knowledge transfer, helping to reduce isolation and integrate new officers into a supportive professional community. Recently the CAJO has launched such an initiative.¹³⁹
- **Recommendation 11: Provide a Continuous Calendar of Wellbeing Education.** Building on the success of past CAJO and CAWJ sessions, a regular schedule of workshops and resources should be offered on practical, evidence-based topics such as stress, time and financial management, health and medical matters, building resilience, diet and nutrition, age, stage and occupational appropriate exercise, meditation such as mindfulness, addiction and substance abuse, and healthy sleep practices.

¹³⁹ The CAJO has initiated such a programme at the regional level.

No.	Recommendation Title	Key Supporting Data	Relevant Nauru Principle(s)	Relevant Bermuda Statement
1	Conduct an Urgent, Independent Resource and Workload Audit	~81.2% cite "Heavy workloads" as a top stressor.	3, 5	6
2	Develop a Formal, Regionally Standardised Judicial Wellbeing Policy	~65.6% desire institutional policies for wellbeing.	3, 5, 6	2, 9
3	Prioritise Investment in Technology and Physical Infrastructure	~48.4% cite poor infrastructure as a stressor. ¹⁴⁰	3, 5	2
4	Prioritise the wellbeing of Judiciary staff	~ The wellbeing of Judiciary staff should also be given the highest priority", 73.4% of respondents "strongly Agree".	1, 4, 5	7,8
5	Accommodate gendered wellbeing initiatives.	-	2, 5	5, 9
6	Implement a Zero-Tolerance Anti-Bullying Policy	~35.2% report experiencing "overbearing leadership".	2, 4	4

¹⁴⁰ Question 17 of the 2025 CAJO & CAWJ Judicial Wellbeing Survey.

7	Mandate Leadership and Emotional Intelligence Training	Qualitative data points to a "leadership deficit".	2, 4	4
8	Systematically Foster a Culture of Collegiality	Qualitative data reveals "peer alienation" and a "toxic work environment".	4	4
9	Establish a Confidential, Externally-Managed EAP	54.7% of officers desire access to therapeutic support.	1, 2, 7	9
10	Create a Formal, Structured Mentorship Program	Data demonstrates a desire for institutionalised peer support.	4	9
11	Provide a Continuous Calendar of Wellbeing Education	68.8% desire education and training on maintaining physical, psychological and emotional health.	1, 5, 7	9

Table 4: Summary of Key Recommendations for Enhancing Judicial Wellbeing

Limitations

While this report coupled with the 2021 and the 2025 Judicial Wellbeing Survey provides insight into an invaluable dataset for understanding the challenges facing Caribbean judiciaries in the sphere of judicial officer wellbeing, its limitations must be acknowledged to ensure a comprehensive and forward-looking interpretation of the findings.

- 1. The Impact of Modern Technology and Social Media:** A significant gap in the 2025 Judicial Wellbeing Survey and consequently this report, is its failure to specifically question the impact of modern technology and social media on the wellbeing of judicial officers. In an era of pervasive digital media, judicial officers are increasingly exposed to online scrutiny, criticism, and even targeted harassment, which can be a profound source of stress and a threat to their sense of security and impartiality. The qualitative data touches upon "social media bullying and targeting" as a stressor, but the survey lacks dedicated quantitative questions to measure the prevalence and impact of this modern challenge. Future research must address this digital dimension of judicial life to fully capture the contemporary pressures on the judiciary.
- 2. Self-Reported Data:** This report relies exclusively on self-reported data from judicial officers. While this is essential for capturing subjective experiences of stress and wellbeing, it is also subject to inherent biases. Respondents may under-report or over-report their experiences due to factors such as personal resilience, fear of stigma, or a desire to present themselves in a particular light. The findings, therefore, represent the *perception* of wellbeing, which, while critically important, is not a substitute for objective, physiological, or observational data.
- 3. Cross-Sectional Design:** This report provides a cross-sectional snapshot of wellbeing at a specific point in time. While the comparison with the 2021 data offers useful comparative analysis, this design cannot establish definitive cause-and-effect relationships. For instance, while this report links increased stress to a negative impact on delivering judgments, it cannot prove that one directly causes the other without a longitudinal study that, say, tracks the same individuals over time.

Conclusion

The wellbeing of all judicial officers and judiciary staff is integral to achieving performance excellence in all domains in judiciaries, for sustaining public trust and confidence in the administration of justice, and for consistently upholding the rule of law.¹⁴¹

The findings of the 2025 Judicial Wellbeing Survey represent a critical juncture for Caribbean judiciaries. The data does not depict a system with minor issues at the margins; it reveals a system under continuous strain, where the wellbeing of its officers and the quality of justice they administer are conceivably being compromised, if only to a certain measure. The apparent consistency in stress intensity, the emergence of at times subjectively toxic work cultures, and the reported profound impact on core judicial functions, demand urgent and decisive responses.

Judicial wellbeing is not a luxury, nor is it a matter of personal weakness or resilience. As the global community has now formally recognised, it is a professional and ethical necessity, a prerequisite for an independent, impartial, competent, and effective judiciary. The recommendations outlined in this report provide some clear, evidence-based paths forward. They may not be simple suggestions but are likely necessary interventions that can address the deep, systemic roots of the current crisis.

Acknowledgements

The CAJO and CAWJ would like to acknowledge the efforts of the following persons who have contributed to this research and report:

- Peter Jamadar, Chair, CAJO
- Suraj Sakal, Legal Officer, CAJO
- Elron Elahie, Research and Programme Coordinator, CAJO
- Candace Simmons-Peters, Corporate Secretary and Executive Administrator, CAJO
- Anjili Persad, Intern, CCJ
- Nadia Kangaloo, President, CAWJ
- Camille Darville Gomez, CAWJ
- Anneil Coote-Guinness, CAWJ

¹⁴¹ Statement 1 CAJO Bermuda Statement on the Wellbeing of Judicial Officers and Judiciary Staff < <https://thecajo.org/newcajo/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/CAJO-Statement-on-Judicial-Wellbeing-and-Work.pdf>> accessed 30 October 2025.