

Our Mission

BDI is a non-partisan research initiative at Princeton University that tracks and mitigates political violence in the United States.

BDI's Understanding Threats and Harassment (UTH) Project

Survey Research

Analysis of data from our bi-annual, nationally representative survey of local elected officials.

13 waves; N = 6,500+

Interview Program

Reports presenting key findings from our in-depth interviews with local elected officials.

275+ interviews

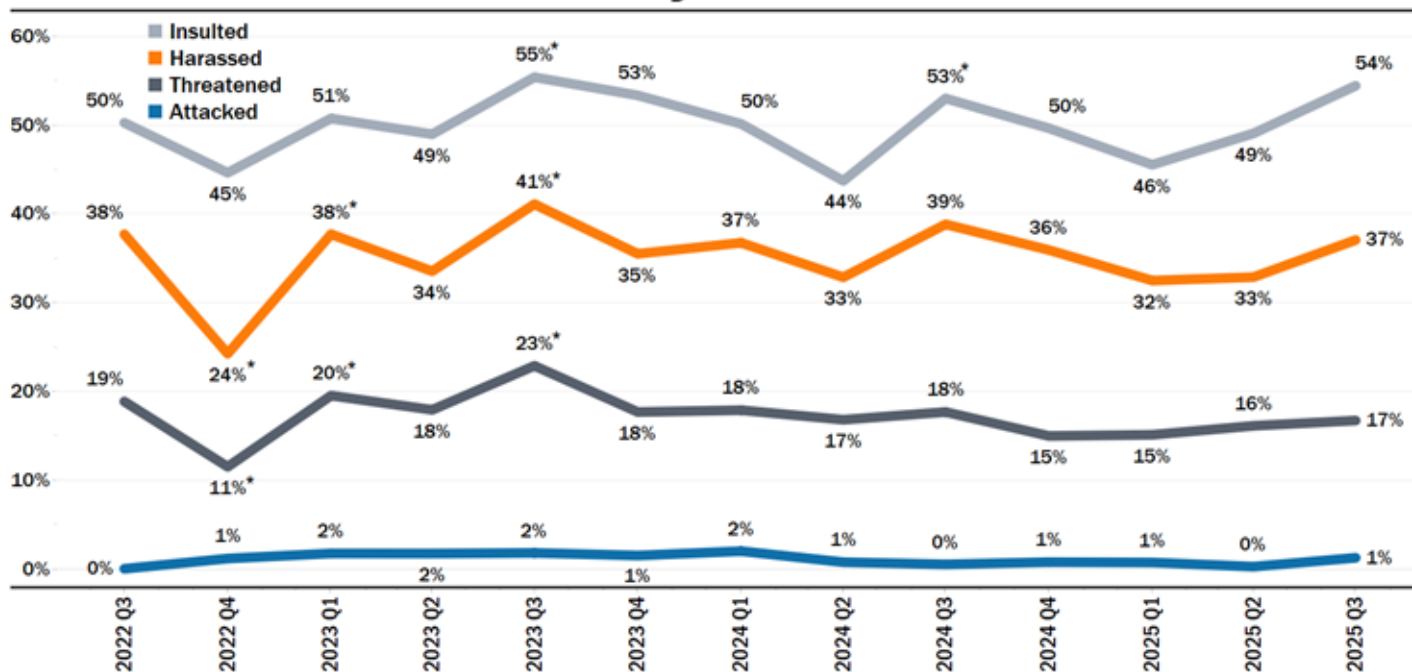
Threats and Harassment Dataset

Updates from our national event-level threat and harassment dataset.

N = 2,000+ incidents

Hostility is elevated: persistent high baseline since 2022

Percentage of Local Elected Officials Reporting Hostility Over Time

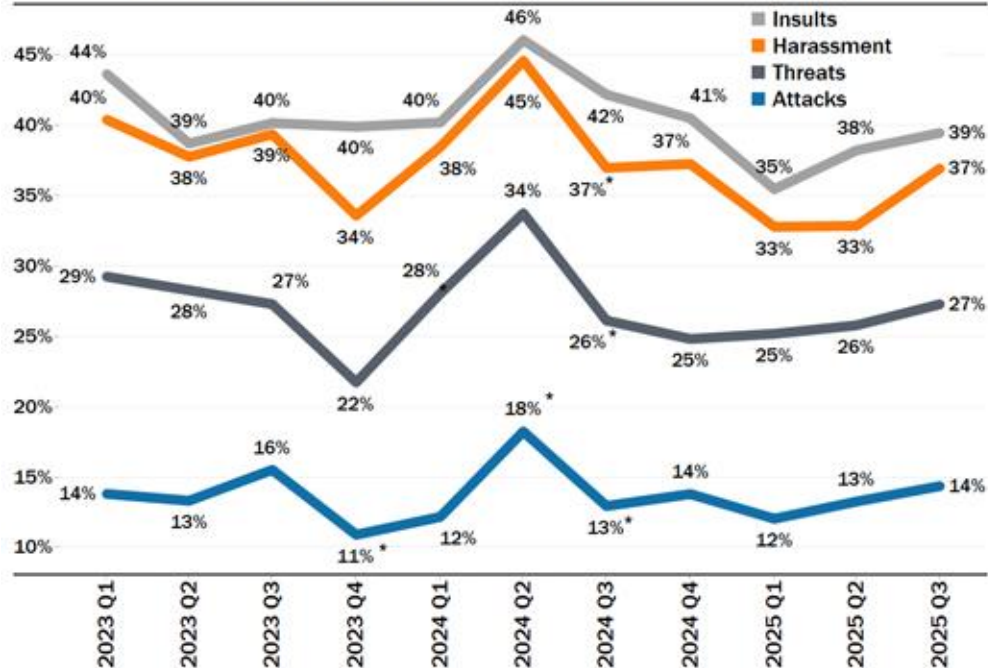


Note: Analysis above does not include school board officials ($n = 5,258$)

* indicates a statistically significant change from the prior quarter at the $p < .05$ level in a Pearson's Chi-Square test

Worry about hostility also remains elevated

Percentage of Local Elected Officials Reporting Worries about Hostility



Note: Analysis here does not include school board officials ($n = 4,789$)

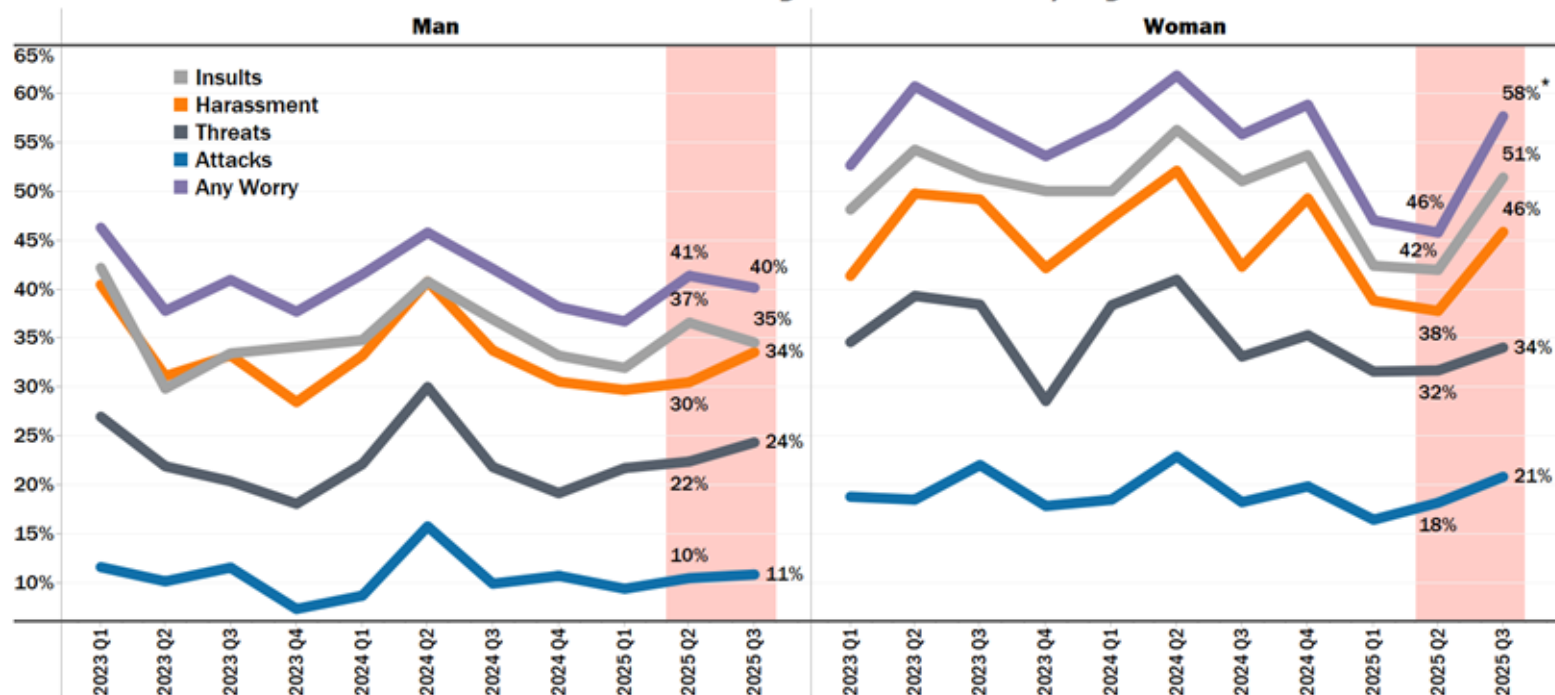
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“I really was afraid to go to those meetings, because I thought someone would **come in and blow my head off.** Because you read about it all the time... **it was very stressful.**”

- December 2025 interview

Women officials reported increases in worry in Q3 2025

Percentage of Local Elected Officials Reporting Worries about Hostility Over Time, by Gender



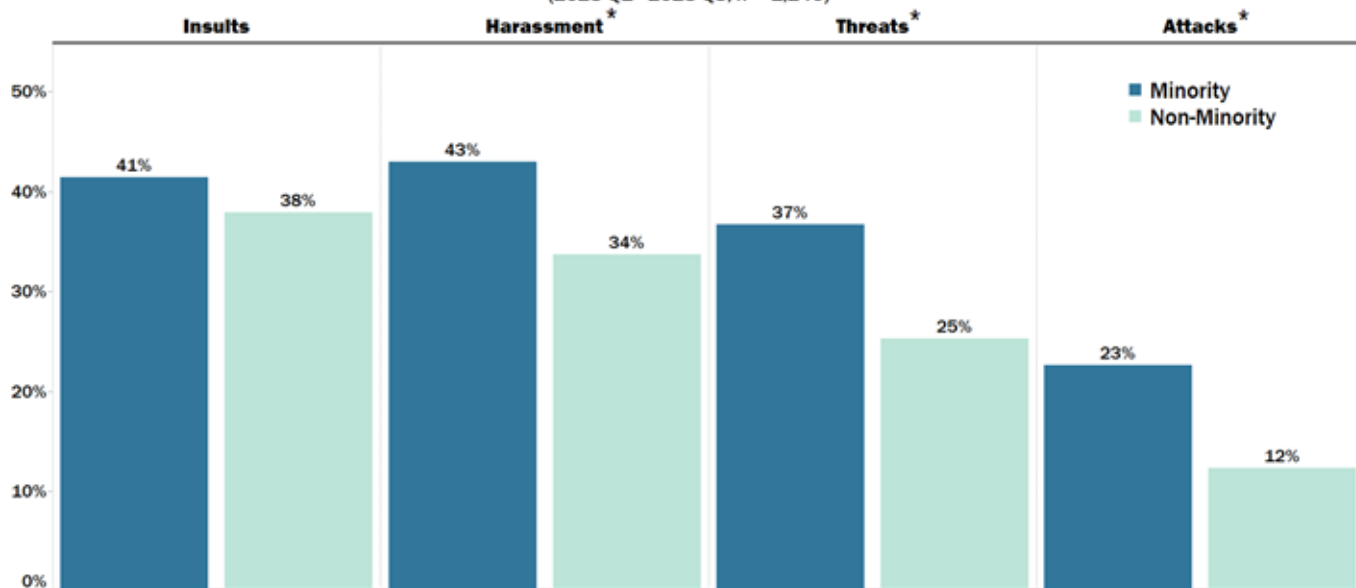
Note: Analysis here does not include school board officials (n = 4,789)

* indicates a statistically significant difference from the previous quarter at the $p < .05$ level in a Pearson's Chi-Square test

Minority officials also report disparities, including more worry about severe forms of hostility

Percentage of Local Elected Officials Reporting Worries about Hostility, by Minority-Status

(2025 Q1 - 2025 Q3, n = 1,240)



Note: Analysis above does not include school board officials

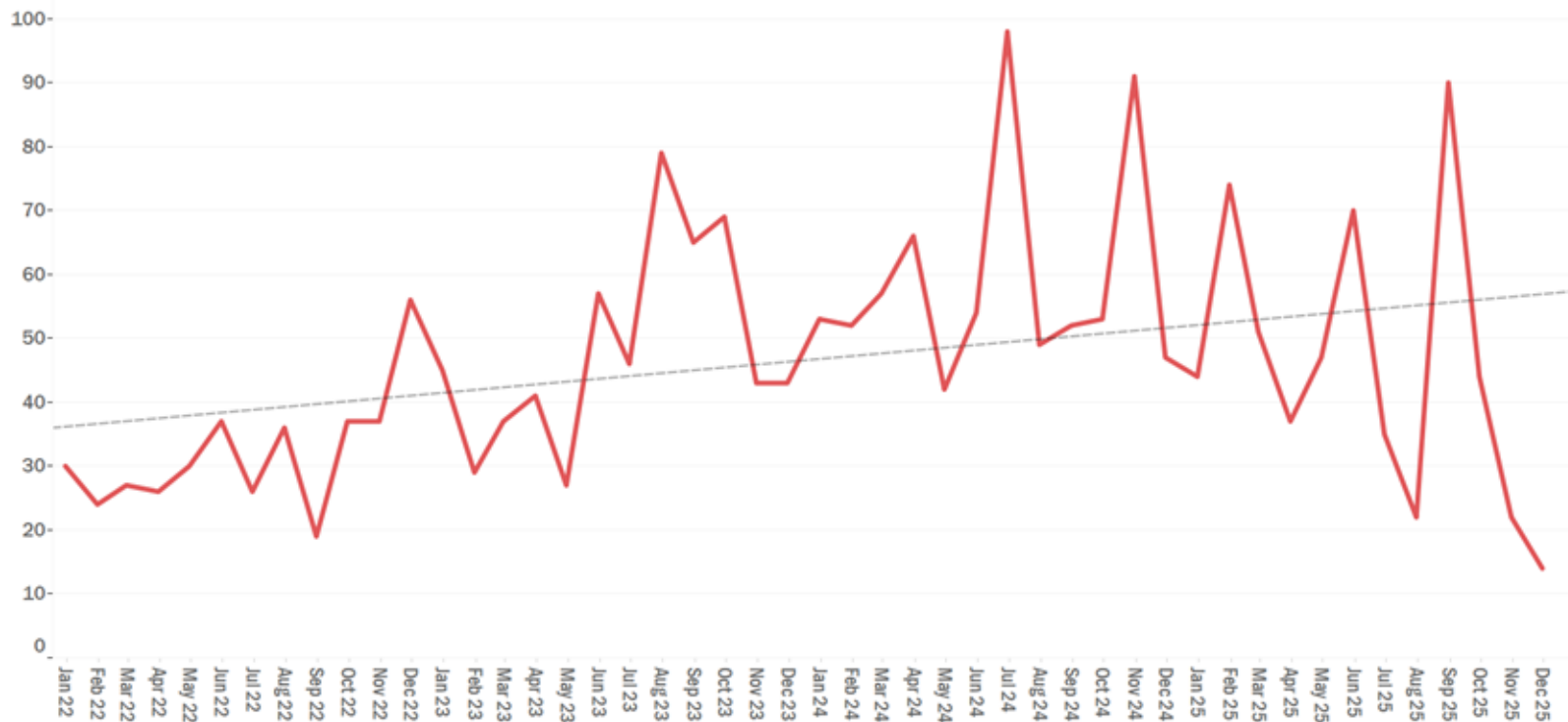
* indicates a statistically significant difference between minority and non-minority officials at the $p < .05$ level in a Pearson's Chi-Square test

BDI event data cross validate survey trends

Threats and harassment have trended upward, with spikes around high-profile events

Threats & Harassment Against Local Officials by Month

(Jan 2022 - Dec 2025)

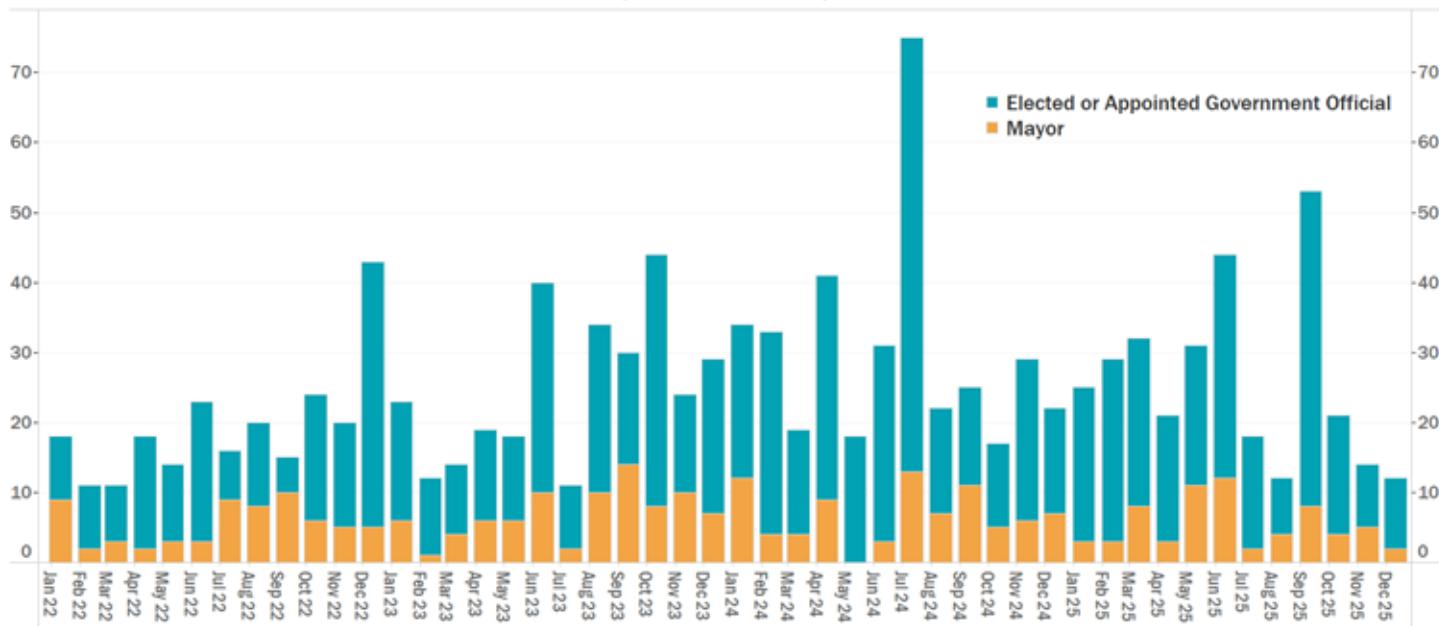


Data Source: BDI's Threats and Harassment Dataset (THD)

Mayors face disproportionately high rates of threats and harassment

Threats & Harassment Against Local Elected or Appointed Officials by Month

(Jan 2022 - Dec 2025)



Data Source: BDI's Threats and Harassment Dataset (THD)

Across the last 3 years, what overall approaches do officials highlight?

1. Equip officials with skills, training, and preparation
2. Make safety and security purposeful and more accessible
3. Provide clear rules and practice for when and how to respond to a range of threats and harassment
4. Sustain dedicated efforts to reduce isolation and strengthen peer + institutional support, maintaining transparency
5. Include efforts to change norms and fix systems, through local efforts and more long-term solutions

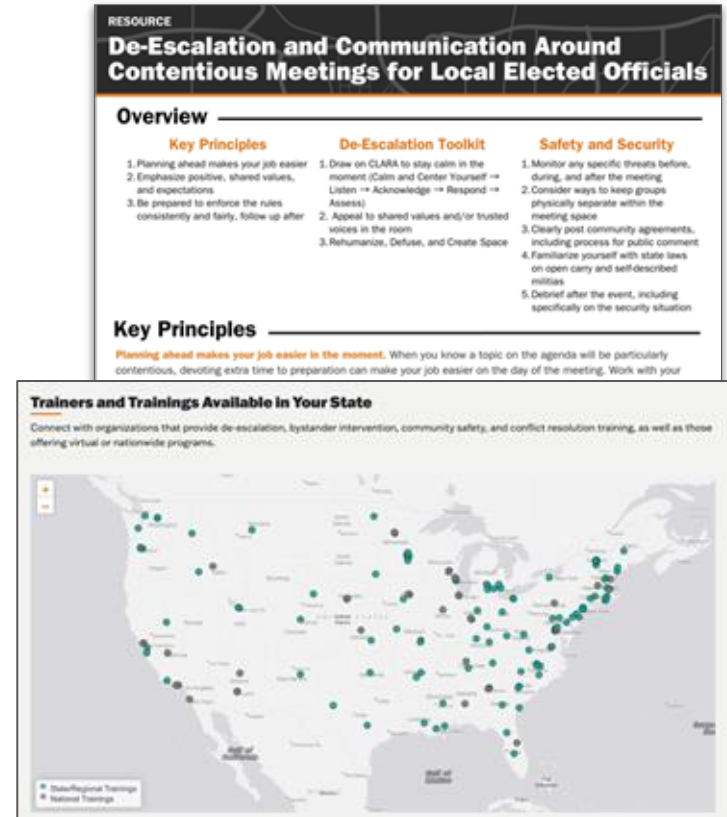
Additional tools: De-escalation as a framework

- **Keep people safe**
 - Supporting the demand for more practical tools from local community and elected officials, empowering where otherwise there was fear and a sense of exhaustion.
- **Prevent fear from becoming overwhelming**
 - Those affected by political violence have legitimate reasons to be fearful, but having a framing and opportunity to join training can instill more confidence in individuals when faced with fear
- **Undermine disruptive and anti-democratic behavior** that seeks to divide and polarize communities.
- **Protect civic space** so that communities have a place to continue resolving differences via the political process.



Additional tools: Resources for local officials

- **De-escalation and community safety:**
 - [BDI](#) will actively link local leaders with de-escalation and other safety resources, alongside our **interactive map**.
 - [BDI's](#) 'one pager' on De-escalation and Communication Around Contentious Meetings
 - [Massachusetts Municipal Association](#)'s video on de-escalation strategies for public meetings
- **Safety planning AND crisis planning:**
 - [National League of Cities guide](#) provides specific recommendations from local officials on safety
 - [Ohio State's Divided Community Project](#) provides comprehensive modules on 'leading through conflict'
 - Drawing on existing emergency management training but focused on examples of threats to officials
- **Digital Safety and Doxxing:** This guide from [OnlineSOS/Pen America](#) has concrete steps that public officials can take to protect themselves online, respond to harassment, and take action when personal details become public.



Elevating stories of success and investing in community infrastructure can help interrupt cycles of conflict



Knowledge and concrete skills empower us all to build towards a shared future



Get the Latest Data and Analysis

Fear and rumors can be equally harmful, so make sure you have resources to correctly identify early warnings signs, monitor developing trends, and right-size your understanding of the threat.



Think Before and Beyond Elections

Drivers of conflict can boil over or get weaponized before, during, and after election season. Are there ways you can help reduce tension in the community on any issue?



Stand up and Speak Out

Address threats and harassment before they worsen. Local officials tell us that silence from their peers or community when they are targeted is disheartening and deflating.

BDI Resources

🔍 Our state-by-state **De-Escalation Directory** of de-escalation, community safety, and bystander trainings

📊 **Research** from our mixed-methods *Understanding Threats and Harassment Against Local Officials* project

💛 **Case studies** in positive local community responses to mitigate political violence risk

🗣️ Our **joint guide to taking action** against violent rhetoric during periods of heightened tension – *Speaking Out Against Bigoted, Dehumanizing Rhetoric: What We Can Do* – developed in partnership with the Western States Center

📧 And the BDI **newsletter** delivers the latest updates right to your inbox





Bridging Divides Initiative

Thank you! For more information about our research
and resources, please visit our website and get in touch:
bridgingdivides.princeton.edu

