



Hostility in Local Government Benchmarking Report

January 2023



Bridging
Divides
Initiative

Report Background

Overview

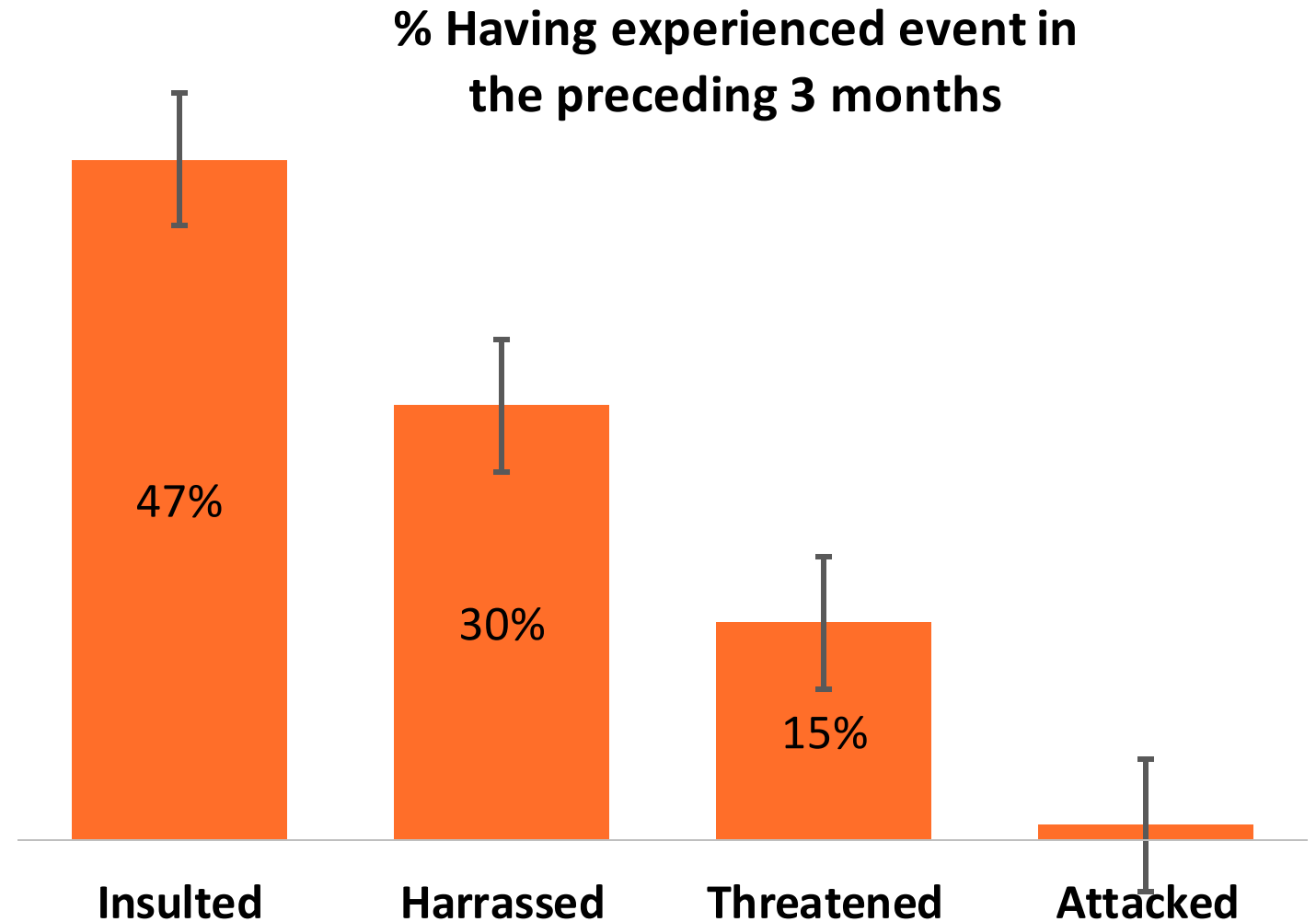
This report draws on a two-wave nationally representative CivicPulse survey of local elected officials conducted in Fall 2022. The first wave preceded the November elections, while the second wave coincided with the elections. Respondents were asked to report both their actual experiences of being insulted, harassed, threatened or attacked as well as whether they were concerned about such events occurring. Results are broken out both by survey wave and demographic groups.

Key Findings

- 1— High levels of hostility toward local elected leaders**
- 2 — Hostile experiences especially common for women and minority officials**
- 3 — 2022 election period saw a modest decline in hostility**

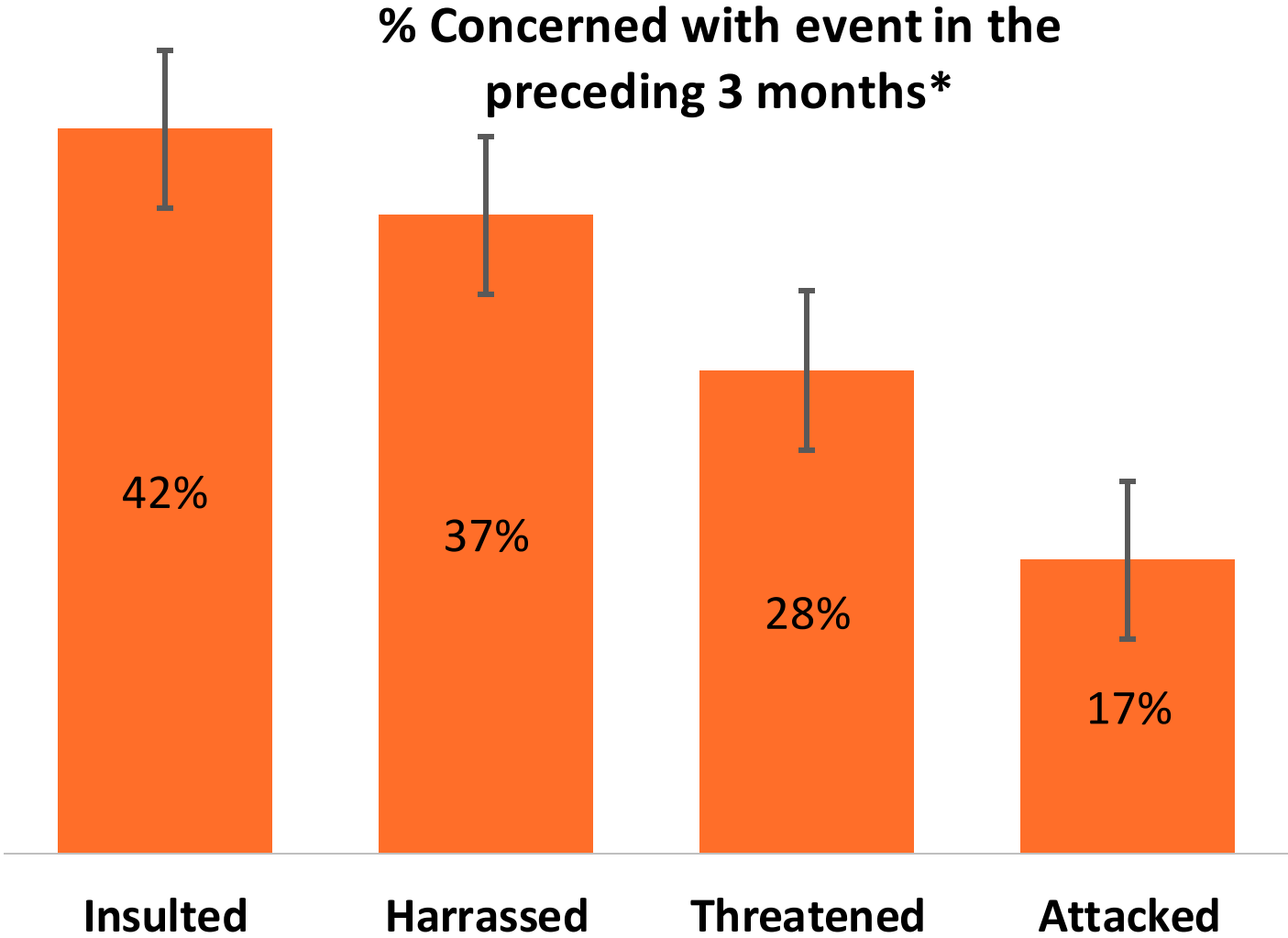
Experiences with hostile events

Insults and harassment were widespread, and threats were not uncommon.



Concern with hostile events

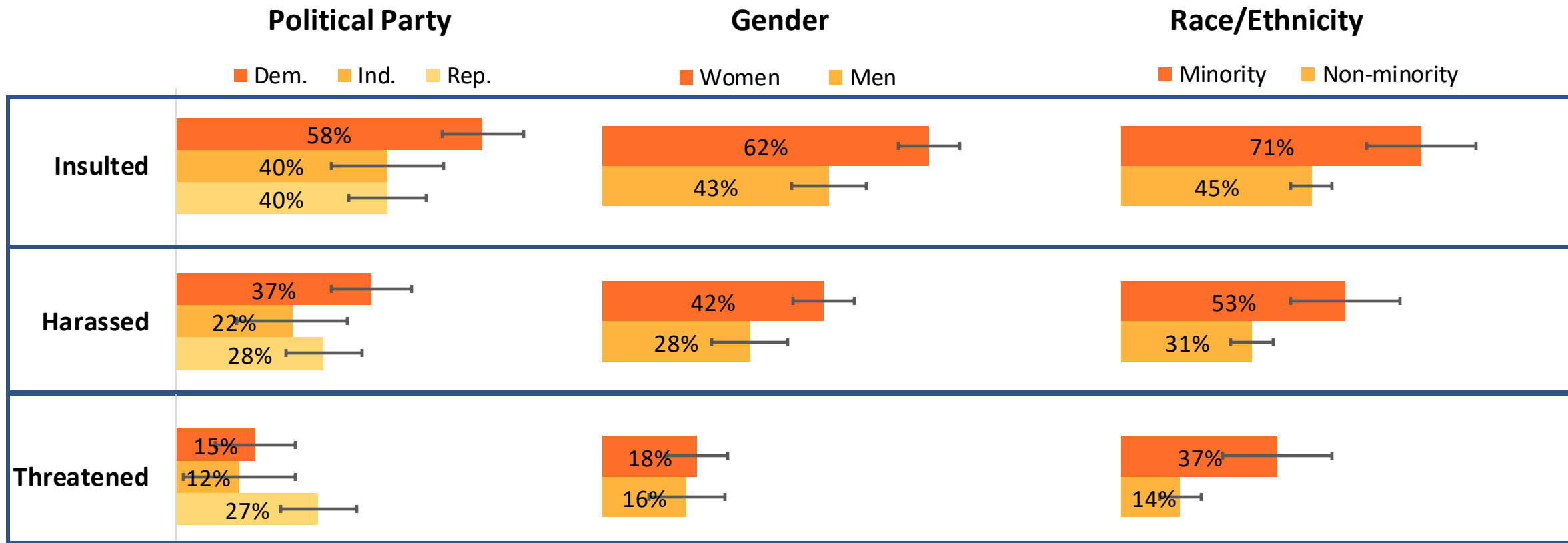
While reported experiences of attacks were rare, almost one-in-five respondents were concerned about them.



*Responded "always", "often", or "sometimes" concerned

Experiences with hostile events, by demographics

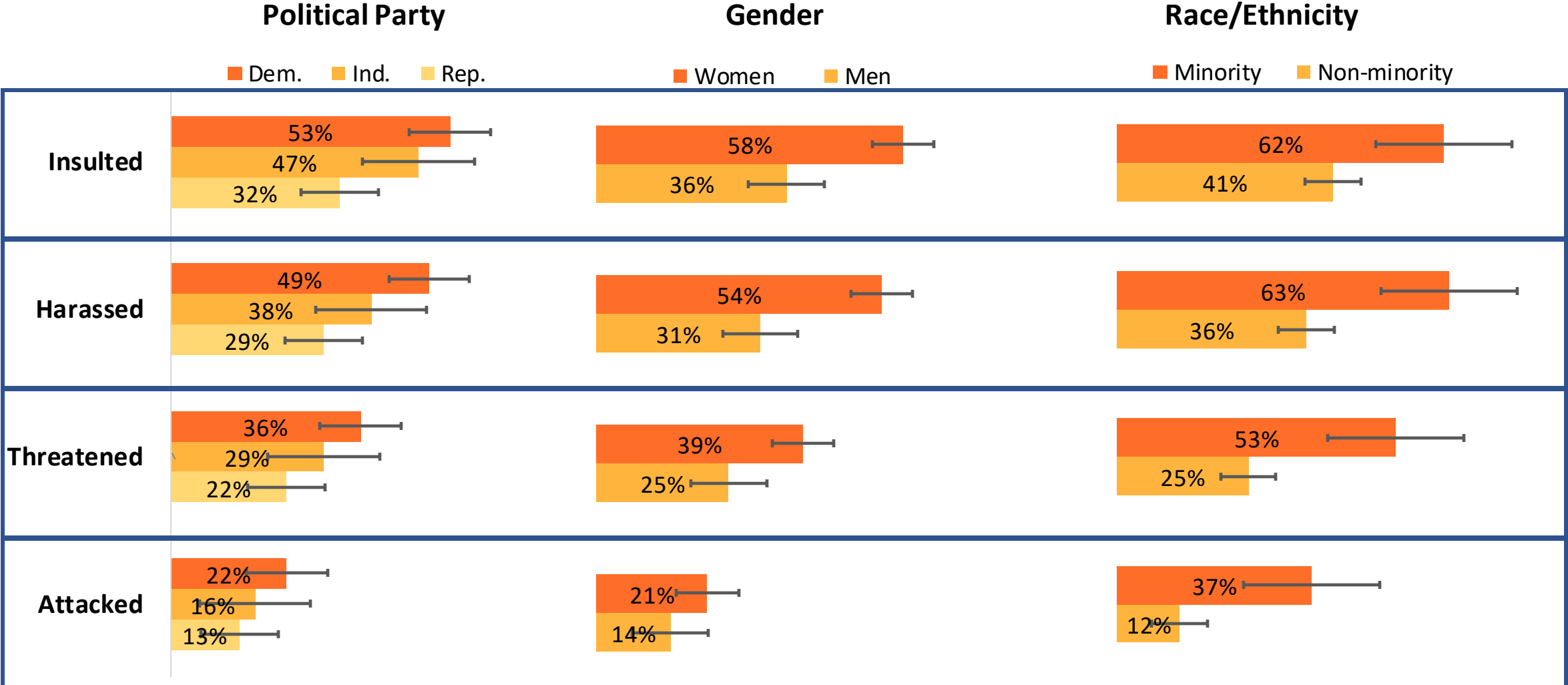
Democratic officials were more likely to report being insulted and harassed, while Republican officials were more likely to report being threatened. Both women and minority officials were much more likely to report being insulted, harassed, and threatened compared to men and non-minority officials.



**Due to limited number (n = 3) of reported physical attacks, this data is not shown by demographic*

Concern with hostile events, by demographics

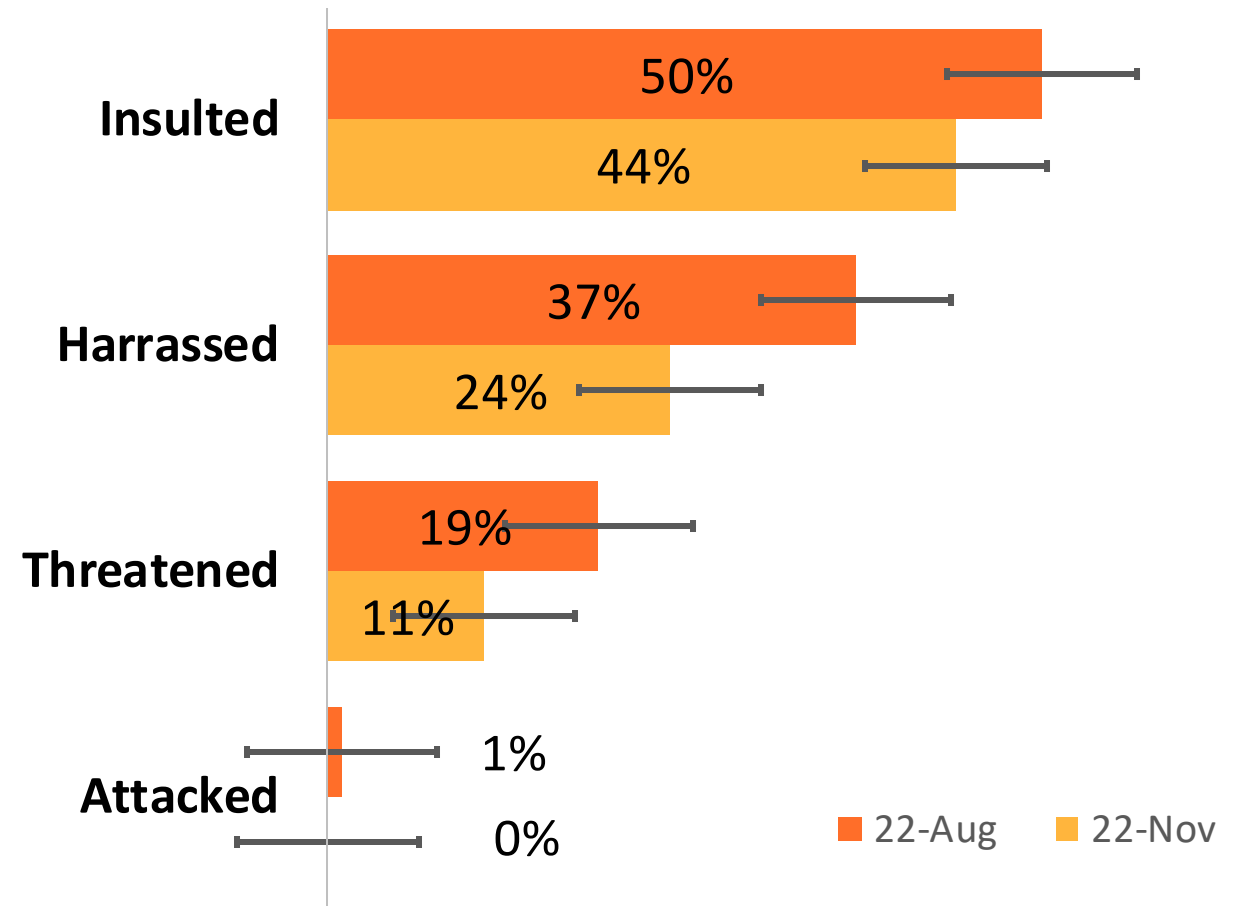
Democratic officials were more worried about all types of hostile events than Republican officials. Women and racial/ethnic minority officials were much more worried about such events than men and non-minority respondents.



Experiences with hostile events, by time period

Hostile events across all categories dropped modestly between the summer and fall of 2022.

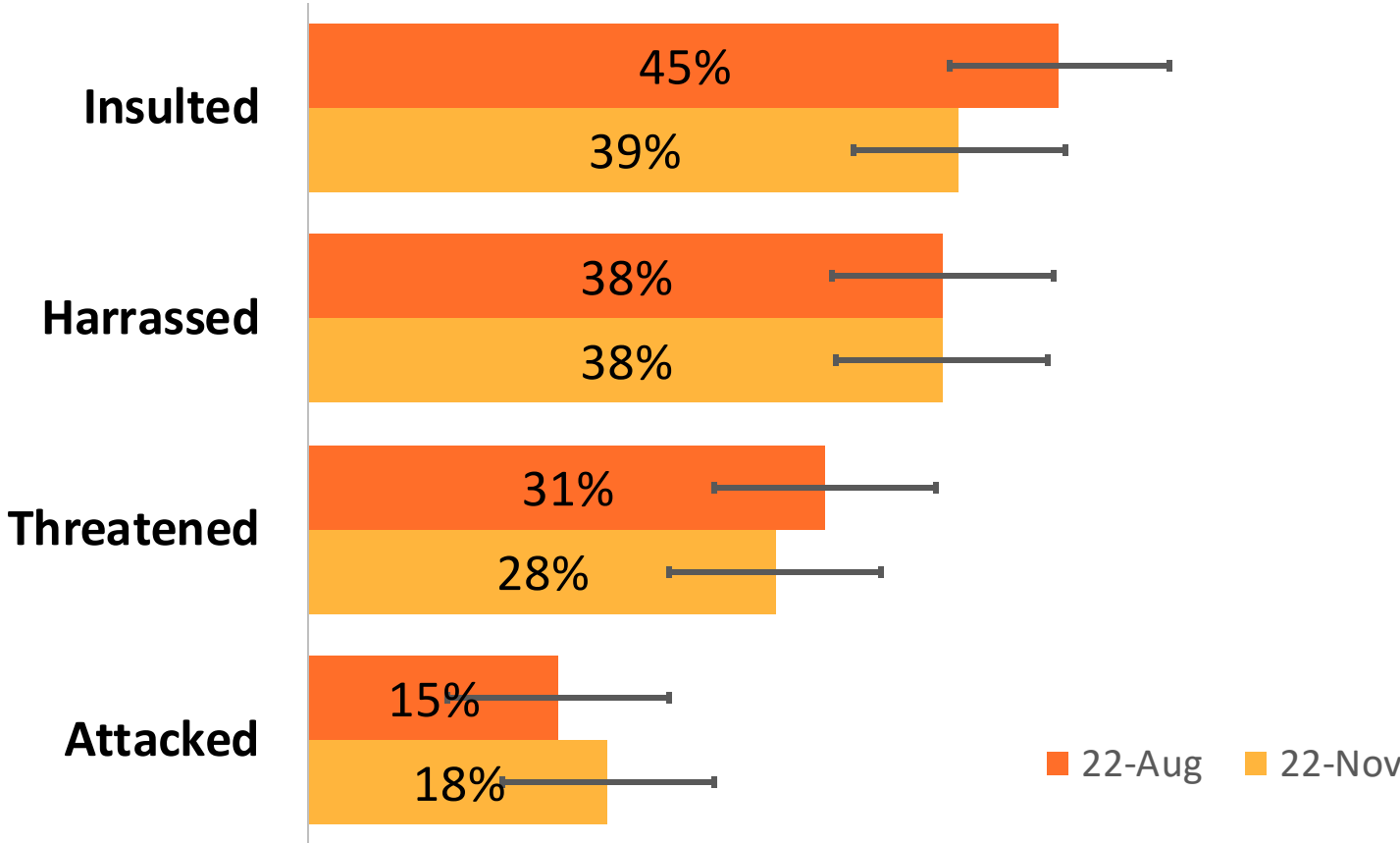
% Having experienced event in the preceding 3 months



Concern with hostile events, by time period

Local elected officials' concern for hostile events remained similar between the summer and fall of 2023

% Concerned with event in the preceding 3 months*



*Responded "always", "often", or "sometimes" concerned

Respondents by wave

Respondent group	N
Respondents in Wave 1 (8/12/22 - 9/21/22)	219
Respondents in Wave 2 (11/16/22 - 12/05/22)	266
Respondents in Both Waves	69

Respondent by demographics

Respondent Group		n	%
Gender	Men	281	63%
	Women	157	35%
Race/Ethnicity	Minority	54	12%
	Non-minority	362	82%
Political Party	Democrat	162	36%
	Independent	86	19%
	Republican	180	41%

Respondent by government characteristics

Respondent Group		n	%
Role	Governing board member	347	76%
	Top elected official	110	24%
Population	Small	64	14%
	Medium	145	32%
	Large	248	54%
Gov Type	County	72	16%
	Municipality	278	61%
	Township	107	23%

Survey Items

Personal Experiences

In the last three months have you been...

Rows:

- Insulted verbally, in writing, or online
- Harassed verbally, in writing, or online
- Threatened verbally, in writing, or online
- Attacked physically

Columns:

- Yes
- No

Personal Concern

In general, how often do you worry about being...

Rows:

- Insulted verbally, in writing, or online
- Harassed verbally, in writing, or online
- Threatened verbally, in writing, or online
- Attacked physically

Columns:

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- All the time

Media Contacts

CivicPulse

Nathan Lee, PhD

Managing Director

(618) 319-3404

nathanlee@civicpulse.org

Bridging Divides Initiative

Shannon Hiller

Executive Director

shiller@princeton.edu