

May 2024

Local Election Officials Survey

BRENNAN
CENTER

FOR JUSTICE

Methodology

- The Brennan Center Research Department administered the survey between February 23 and March 28, 2024, and 928 local election officials responded to the survey.
- The Brennan Center sent email invitations to participate in the online survey to a list of 11,678 local election officials created with the assistance of the U.S. Vote Foundation.
- Data was weighted on region and jurisdiction size to ensure it represents the universe of local election officials.
- The **margin of error is $\pm 3.1\%$** . The margin of error is higher among subgroups. Percentage totals may not add up to 100 due to rounding.
- The 2022 and 2023 surveys of local election officials referenced were conducted by Benenson Strategy Group, using lists provided by the U.S. Vote Foundation. The 2023 survey reached 852 respondents, and the margin of error is $\pm 3.22\%$. The 2022 survey reached 596 respondents, and the margin of error is $\pm 3.95\%$. Both were weighted on region and jurisdiction size.

Key Takeaways

1. Local election officials have taken important steps since 2020 to improve election security and staff safety.

- 92 percent have taken critical steps to increase election security for voters, election workers, and election infrastructure since 2020, including implementing or improving cybersecurity protections and enhancing physical security of election offices and polling places.
- A broad majority of election officials who identified changes in state law or additional funding to protect election workers in their jurisdictions say these efforts increased their sense of safety.

2. Reports of threats, harassment, and abuse remain high, and safety concerns have reached 2022 levels.

- 38 percent of local election officials report experiencing threats, harassment, or abuse.
- Safety concerns have reached or exceeded levels from the last federal election year. 54 percent are concerned about the safety of their colleagues and staff, and 28 percent are concerned about their family or loved ones being threatened or harassed.

3. A majority of local election officials are worried about political interference in election administration.

- 62 percent are worried about political leaders engaging in efforts to interfere with how election officials do their jobs.
- 13 percent are concerned about facing pressure to certify results in favor of a specific candidate or party.

4. Local election officials need more resources for day-to-day administration and security needs.

- 83 percent say their annual budget needs to grow in the next 5 years to meet administration and security needs.
- 43 percent are concerned about recruiting enough poll workers for the November election.
- 41 percent of those who have had a budget request denied would have used the funding for personnel and wages.

5. While few local election officials report using artificial intelligence in election administration, more see a need for guidance on AI use.

- 7 percent report using AI, including for things like drafting social media content and translating voter materials into different languages.
- 12 percent have been approached by vendors who sell products that use AI.
- 33 percent want guidance from government agencies about using AI in election administration.

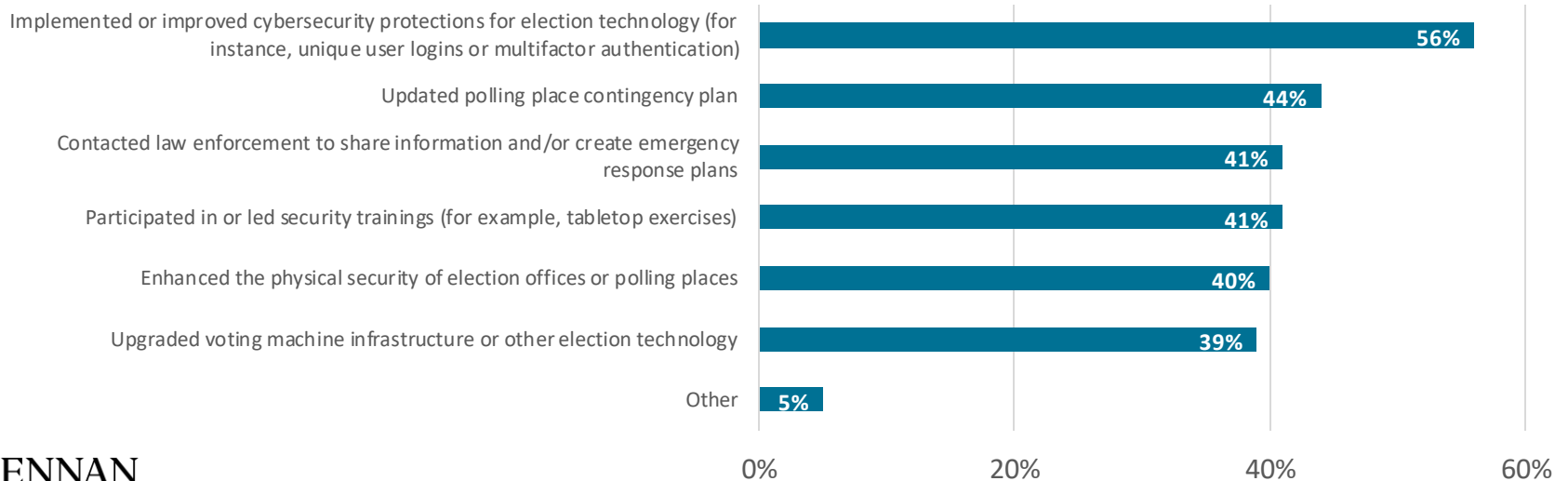
Election security and staff safety improvements

The vast majority of local election officials report that their offices have taken steps to increase election security since 2020

92 percent have taken action to increase election security since 2020

What steps, if any, has your office taken to increase election security since 2020? Please select all that apply.

Among all local election officials, n = 928



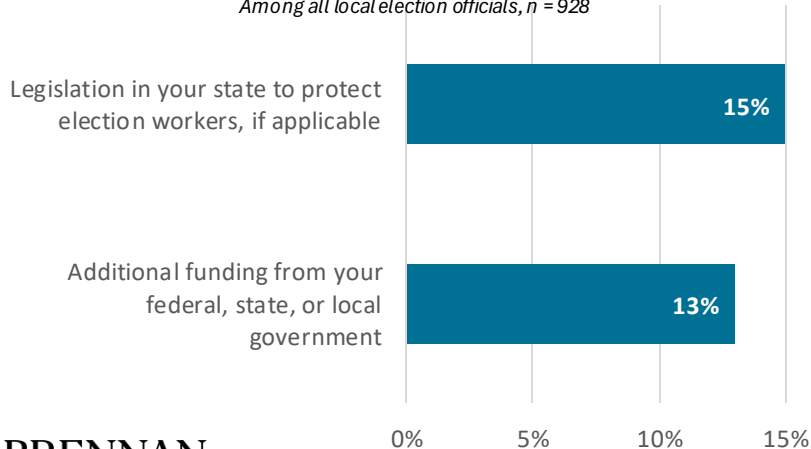
Most local election officials who reported legislation and additional funding to protect election workers say the changes were helpful

Which of the following steps, if any, have been taken to increase the safety of you and/or your staff since 2020?

Please select all that apply.

(Responses pertaining to local government action)

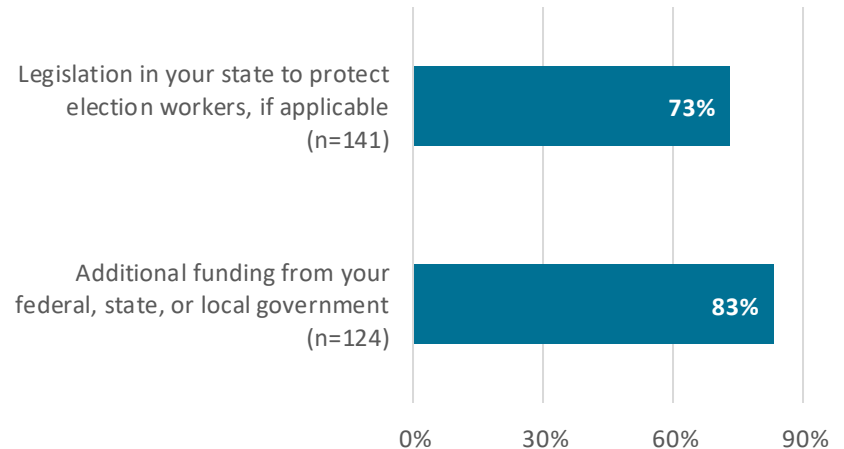
Among all local election officials, n = 928



Have any of the following measures been helpful for increasing the sense of safety of you and your staff?

Among local election officials who indicated the step had been taken

Percent Yes

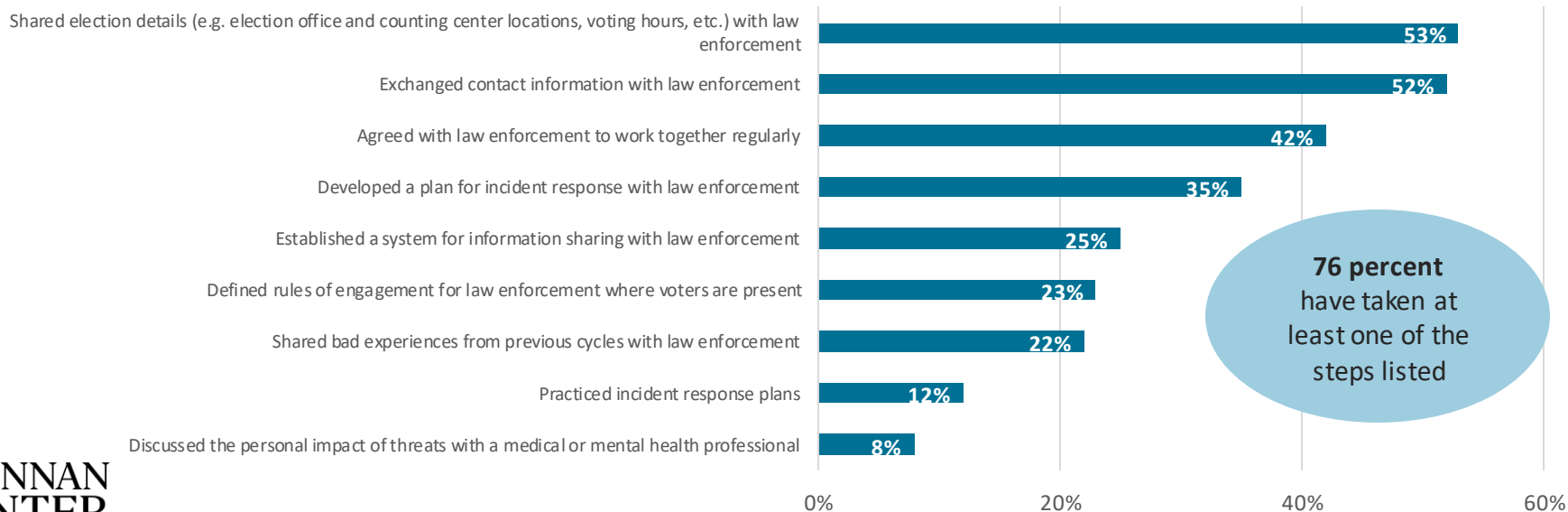


More than half have shared election details, including election office locations and voting hours, with law enforcement

Which of the following actions, if any, have you taken in the time since the 2020 election cycle?

Please select all that apply.

Among all local election officials, n = 928

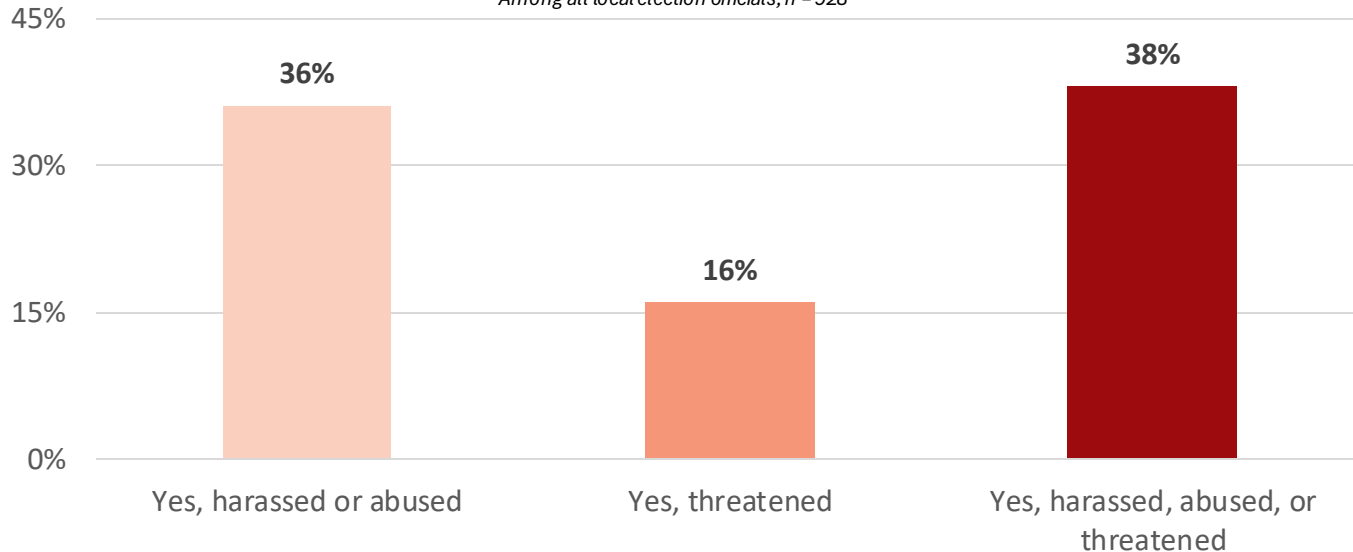


Threats, Harassment, and Abuse

More than 1 in 3 local election officials have experienced threats, harassment, or abuse

Have you ever been harassed or abused because of your job as a local election official?
Have you ever been threatened because of your job as a local election official?

Among all local election officials, n = 928



Pop up messages offered the following definitions:

Harassed: Persistent, uninvited behavior, attention, or actions that cause distress, fear, or discomfort, such as stalking.

Abused: Demeaning, derogatory, or offensive comments, gestures, or actions that upset, belittle, and/or humiliate.

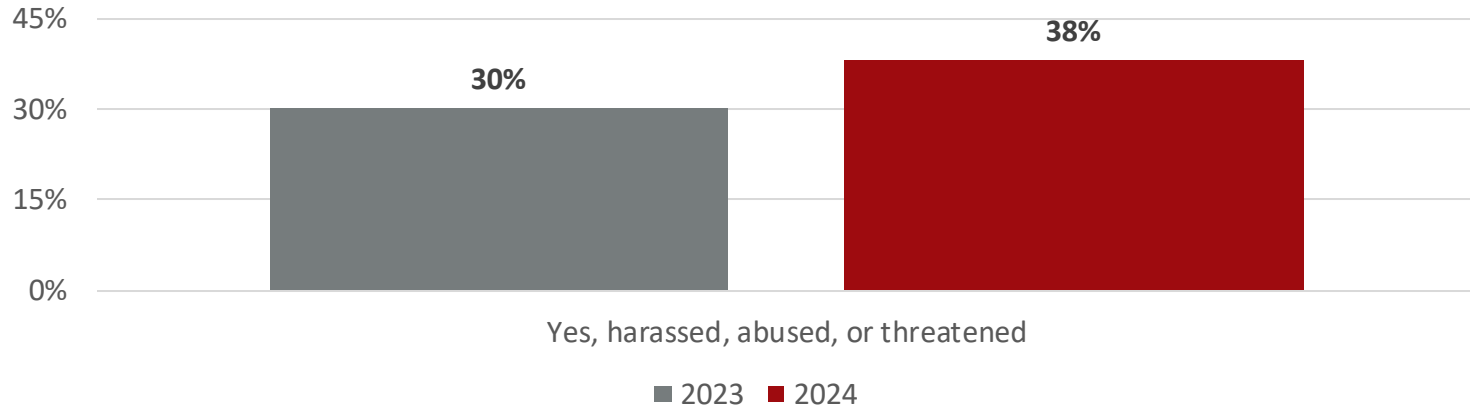
Threatened: Explicit or implicit expressions communicating an intention to harm, injure, or cause damage to an individual or others associated with them, implying imminent risk to a person's well-being and safety.

Reports of threats, harassment, or abuse have risen since 2023

Have you ever been harassed or abused because of your job as a local election official?

Have you ever been threatened because of your job as a local election official?

Among all local election officials, n = 852 (2023), n = 928 (2024)



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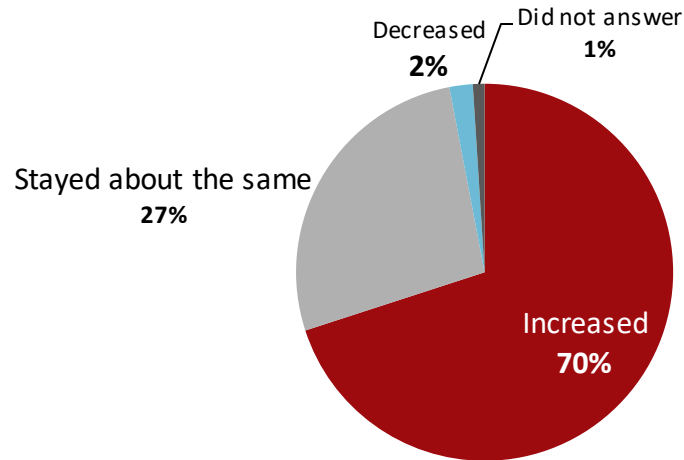
Abused: Demeaning, derogatory, or offensive comments, gestures, or actions that upset, belittle, and/or humiliate.

Threatened: Explicit or implicit expressions communicating an intention to harm, injure, or cause damage to an individual or others associated with them, implying imminent risk to a person's well-being and safety.

7 in 10 local election officials feel that threats have increased since 2020

Regardless of whether or not you have personally been threatened because of your job as a local election official, do you feel that threats against election officials have increased, decreased, or have stayed about the same since 2020?

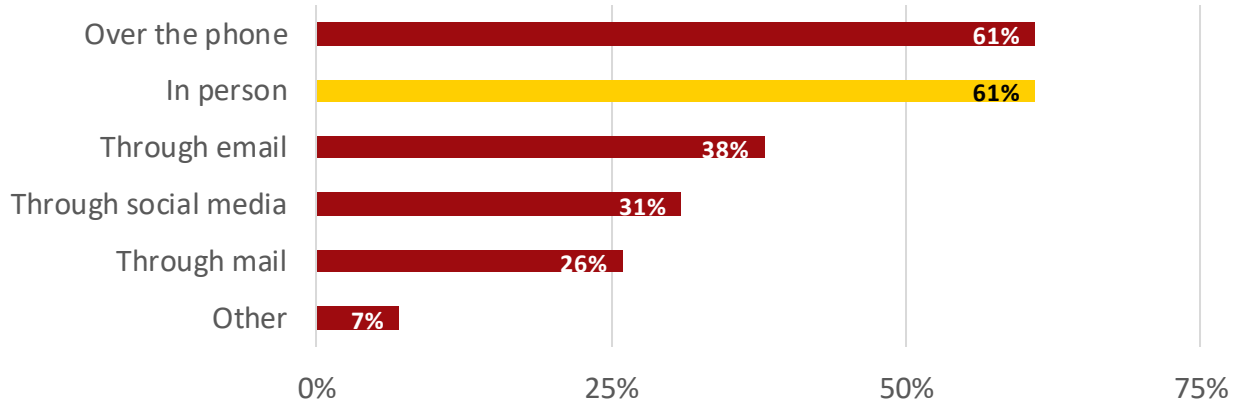
Among all local election officials, n = 928



Of those threatened, more than 3 in 5 have been threatened in person

You indicated that you have been threatened because of your job as a local election official. How have you been threatened? Please select all that apply.

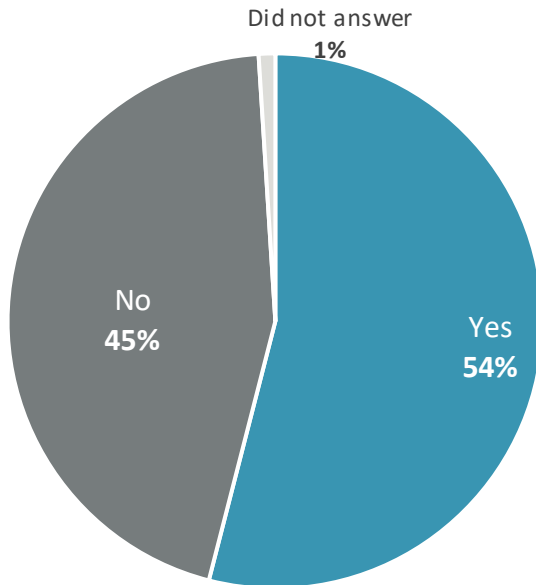
Among local election officials who report being threatened, n = 146



Nearly half of threats to local election officials go unreported

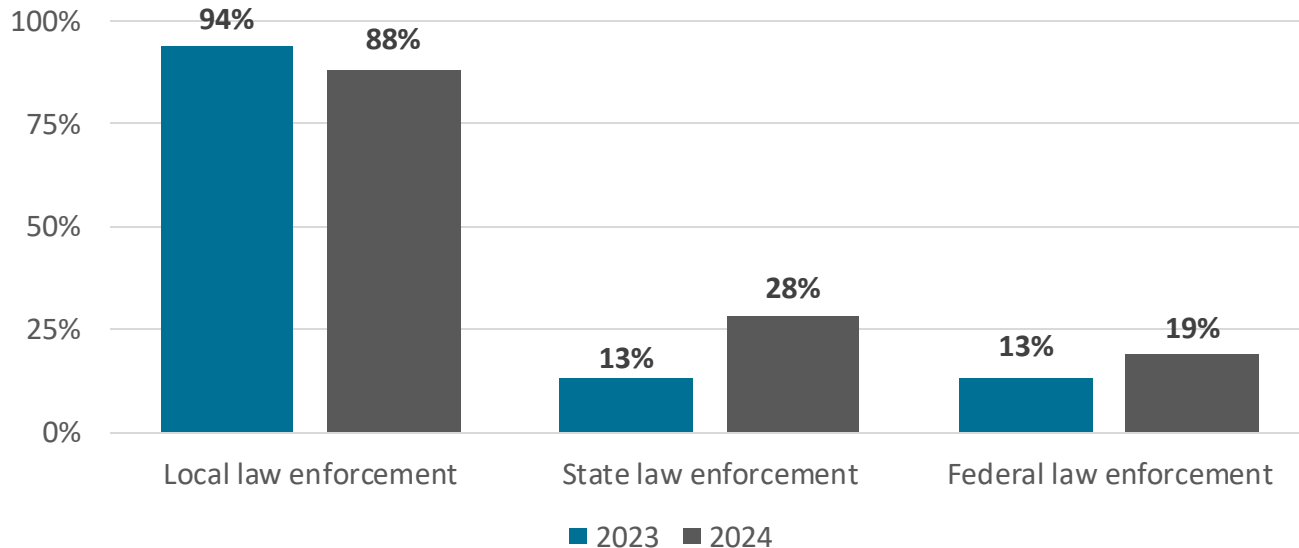
Did you report this threat to law enforcement? Please select all that apply.

Among those who have been threatened, n = 146



Those who report threats typically go to local law enforcement; reports to state law enforcement have roughly doubled since 2023

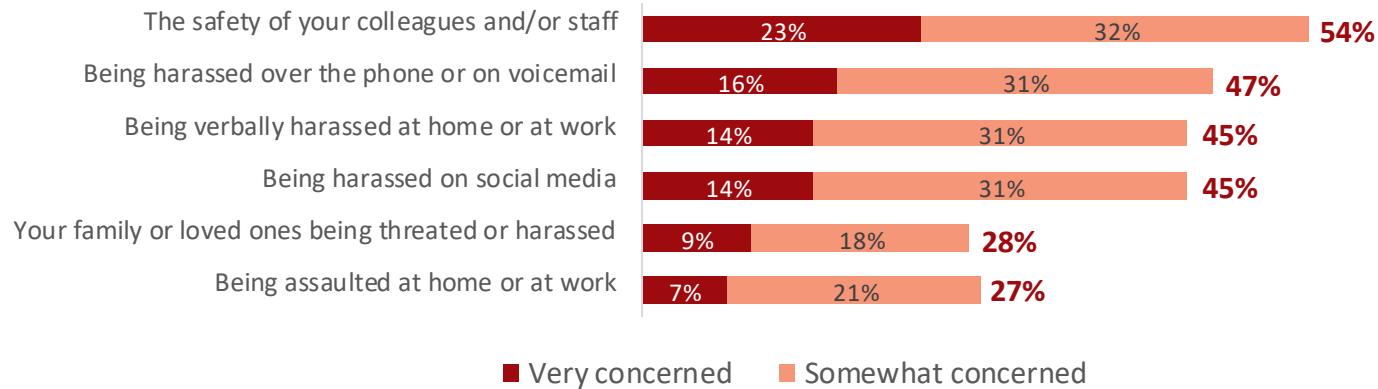
Did you report this threat to law enforcement? Please select all that apply.
Among those who reported a threat to law enforcement, n = 80 (2024), n = 52 (2023)



More than half of local election officials worry about their colleagues' safety, and more than a quarter worry about being assaulted

Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.

Among all local election officials, n = 928

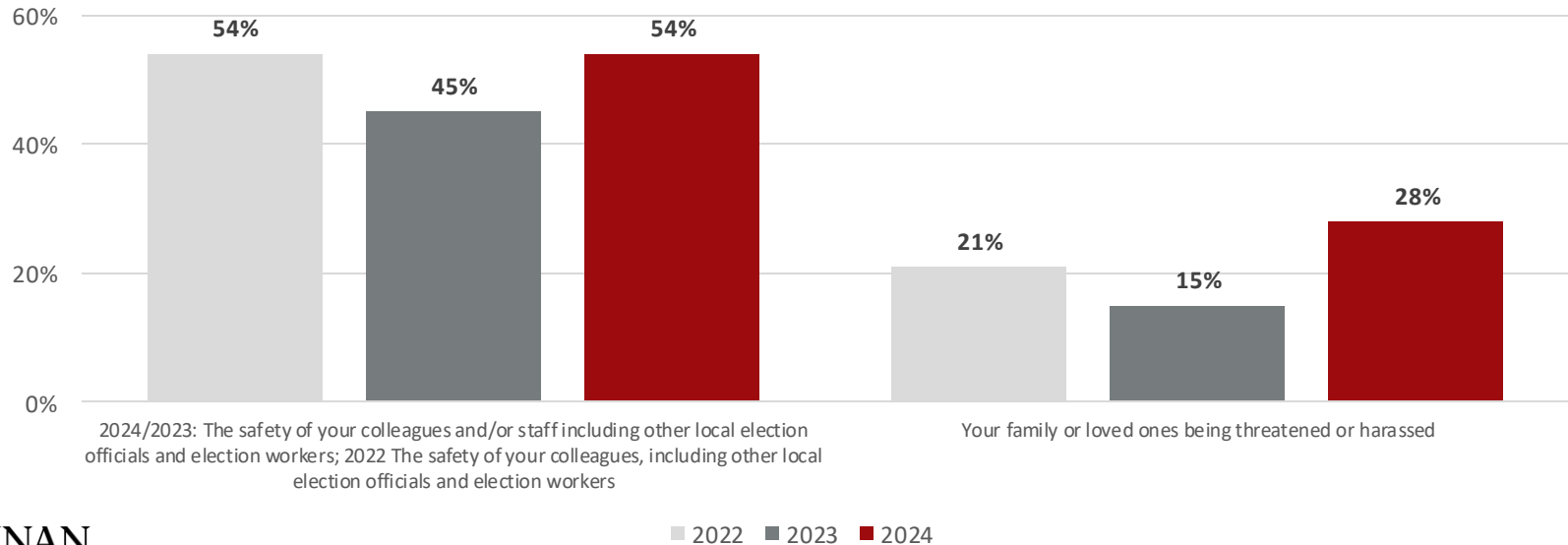


Physical safety concerns have increased since 2023

Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.

Among all local election officials, n = 596 (2022), n = 852 (2023), n = 928 (2024)

Percent Very/Somewhat Concerned

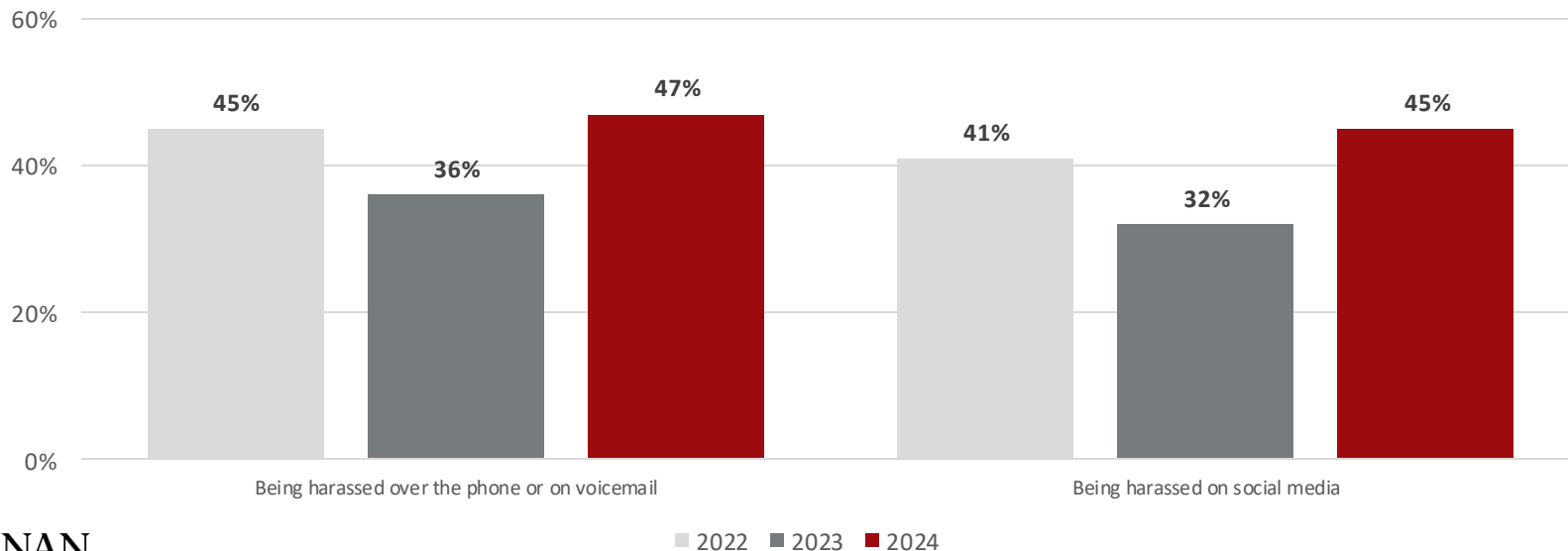


Concerns over verbal and social media harassment have increased as well

Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.

Among all local election officials, n = 596 (2022), n = 852 (2023), n = 928 (2024)

Percent Very/Somewhat Concerned



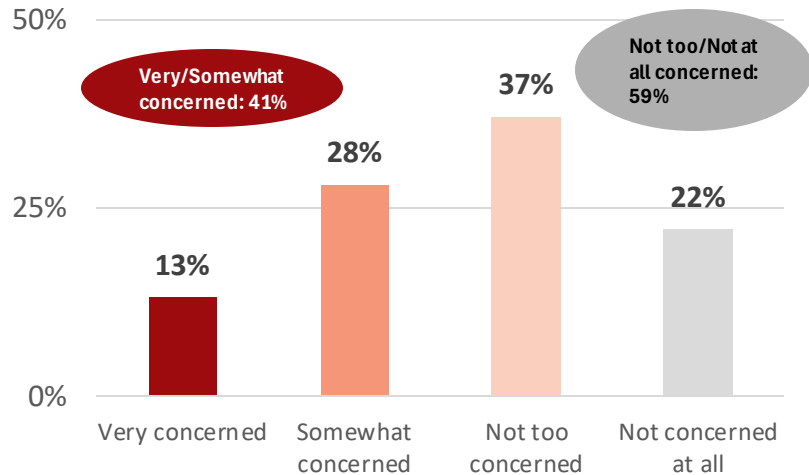
4 in 10 local election officials are concerned about being doxed; nearly 1 in 4 are concerned about swatting

Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.

Among all local election officials, n = 928

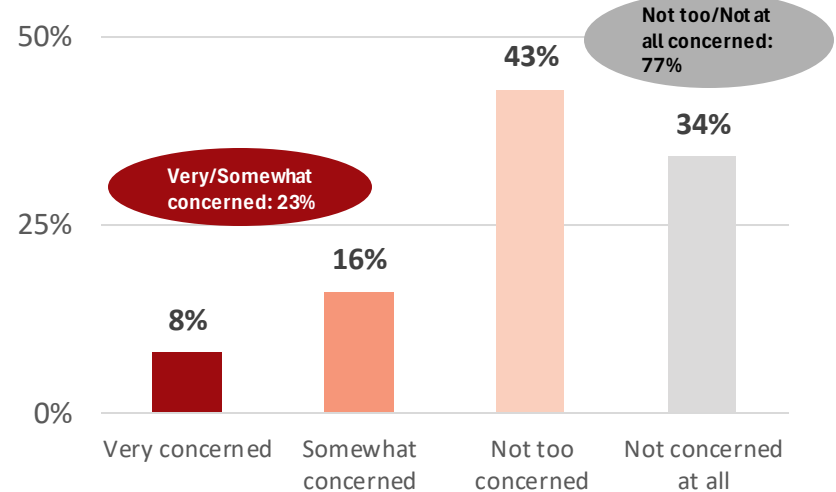
Being doxed

(having your personal information published online with the intent to threaten your safety)



Being targeted in a “swatting” incident,

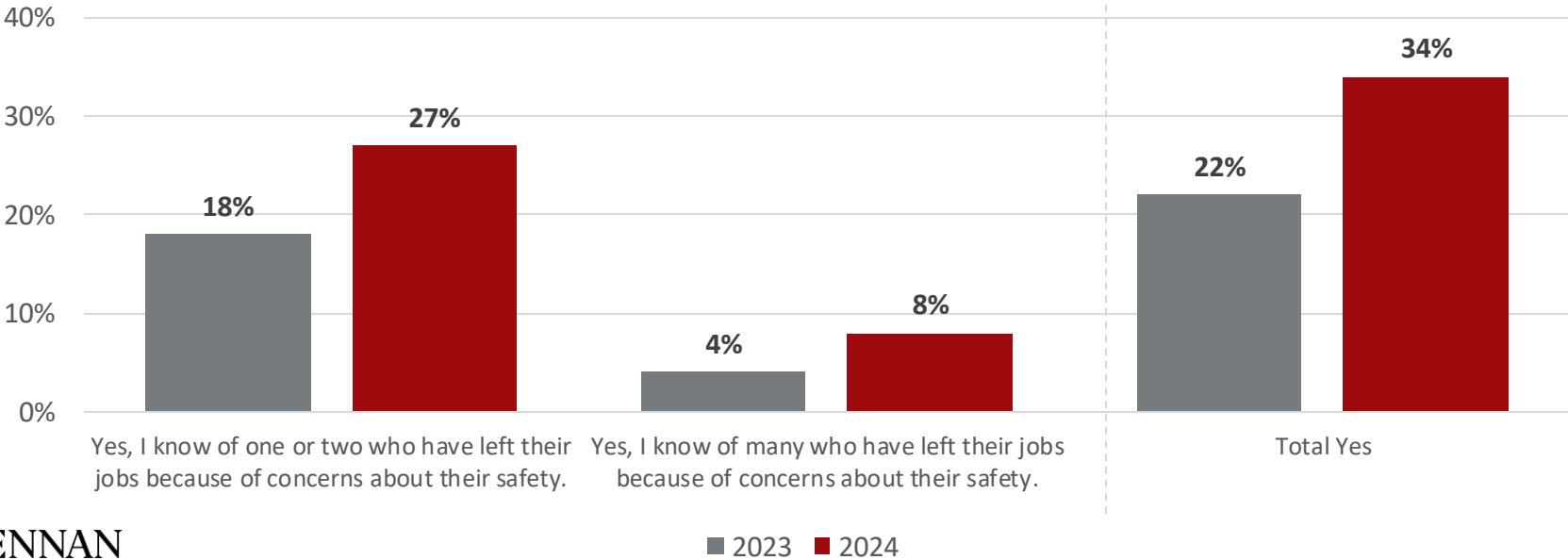
when a fake emergency call sends an armed response to the victim’s home



Safety concerns continue to drive some local election officials to leave their jobs

Do you personally know of any local election officials or election workers who have left their jobs at least in part because of fear for their safety, increased threats, or intimidation?

Among all local election officials, n = 852 (2023), n = 928 (2024)

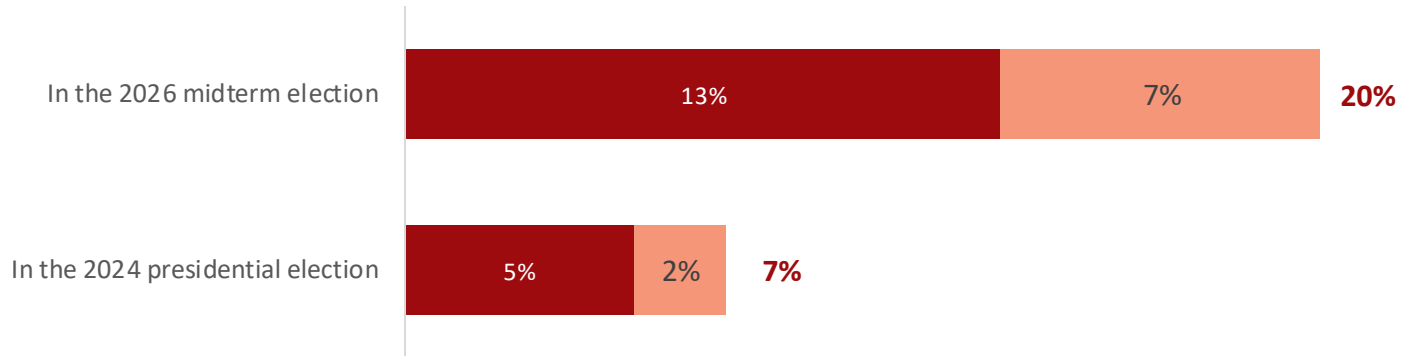


1 in 5 local election officials are unlikely to continue to serve in the 2026 midterms

How likely are you to continue serving as a local election official going forward?

Among all local election officials, n = 928

■ Very unlikely ■ Somewhat unlikely

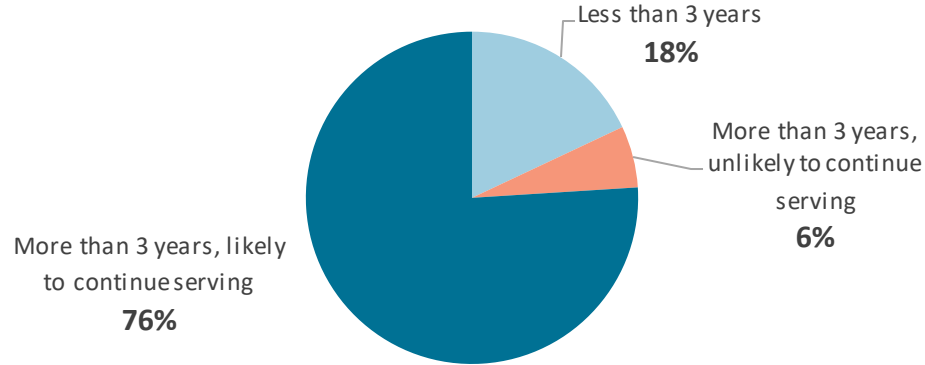


Nearly 1 in 4 local election officials will likely serve in their first presidential election in 2024

How long have you been serving as a local election official?
How likely are you to continue serving as a local election official going forward?

In the 2024 presidential election

Among all local election officials, n = 928



Threat of political interference

More than 3 in 5 local election officials are very or somewhat worried about political interference

Thinking ahead to elections in the future, how worried are you about political leaders engaging in efforts to interfere with how you or your fellow election officials around the country do their jobs?

Among all local election officials, n = 928

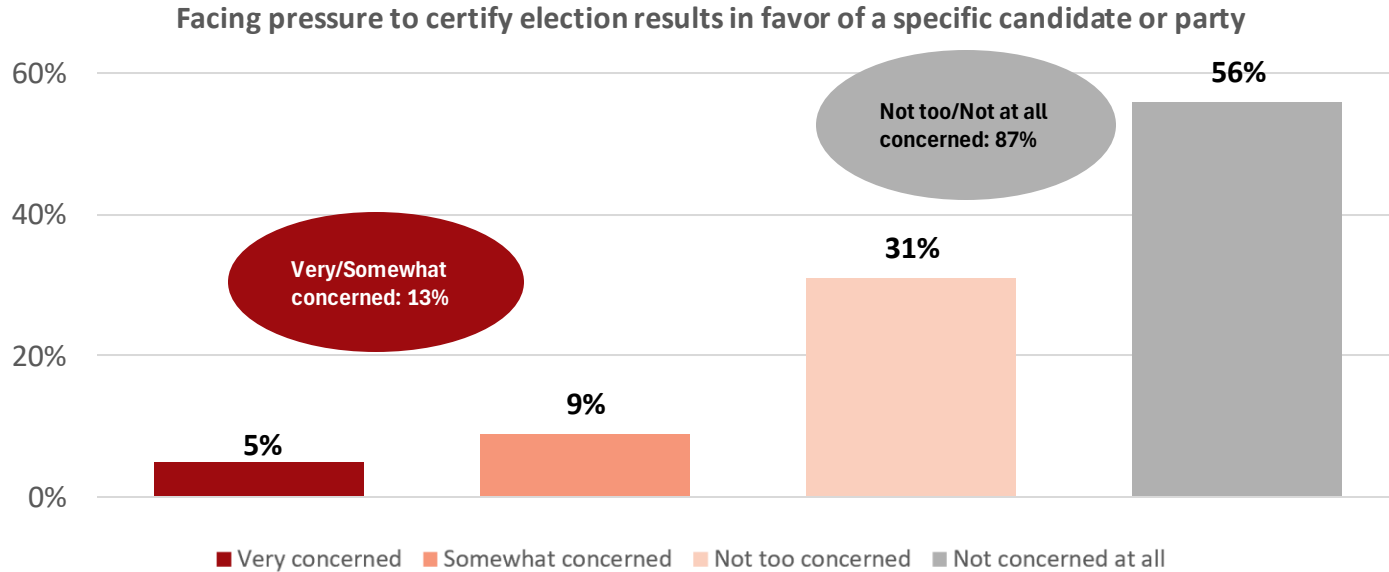


62% total

Nearly 1 in 7 are concerned about interference in the certification process

Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.

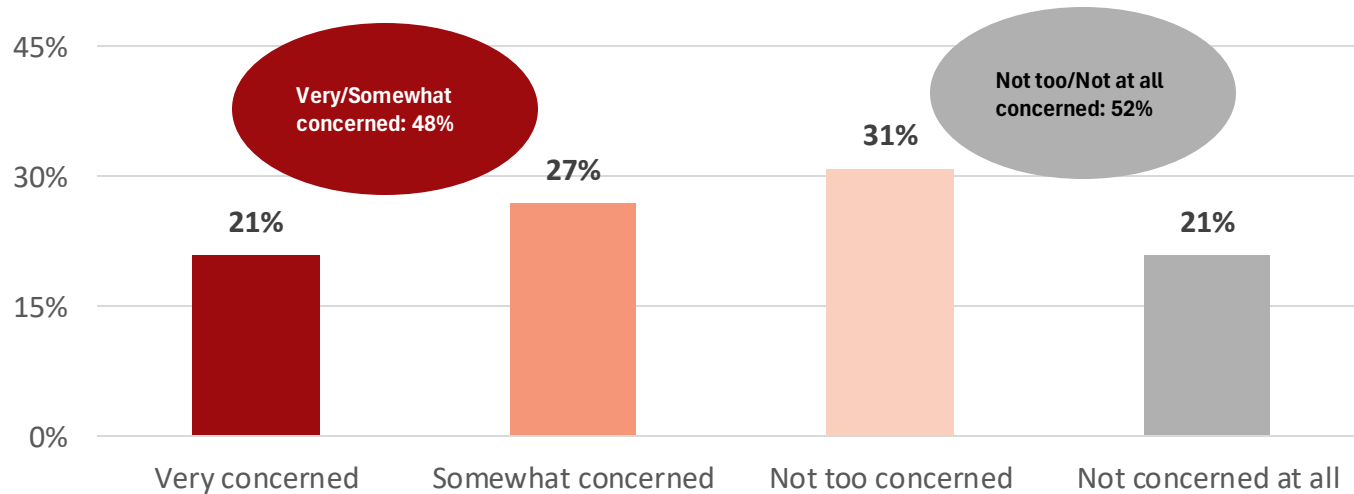
Among all local election officials, n = 928



Nearly 1 in 2 are concerned that some incoming colleagues may believe in widespread fraud

Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.
Among all local election officials, n = 928

That some incoming local election officials might believe that there was widespread voter fraud during recent elections

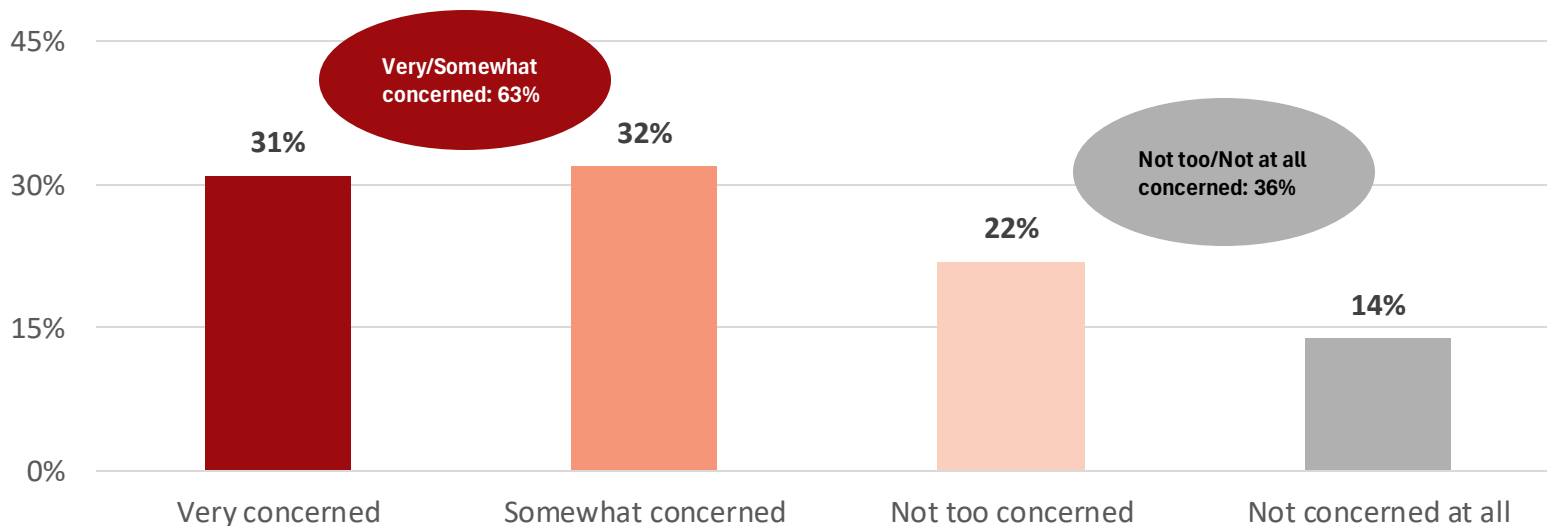


Nearly 2 in 3 are concerned about bad-faith information requests

Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.

Among all local election officials, n = 928

Your office being harassed with bad-faith information requests

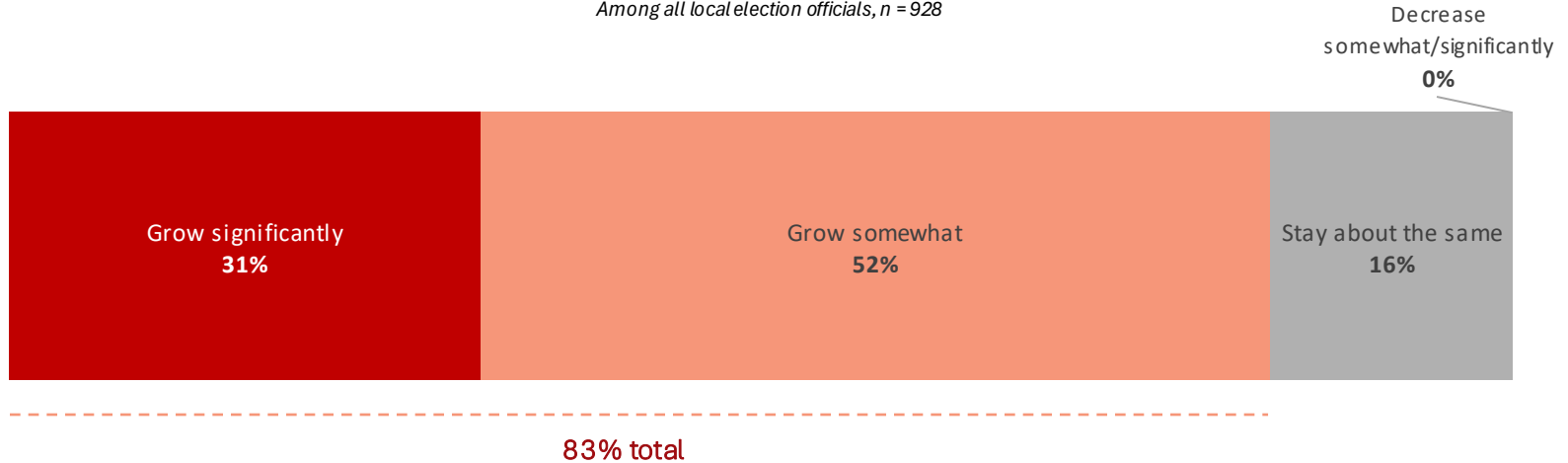


Need for additional resources

More than 4 in 5 local election officials need their budgets to grow to keep up with their administration and security needs

Thinking about your election administration and security needs over the next 5 years, would you say your annual budget needs to...

Among all local election officials, n = 928

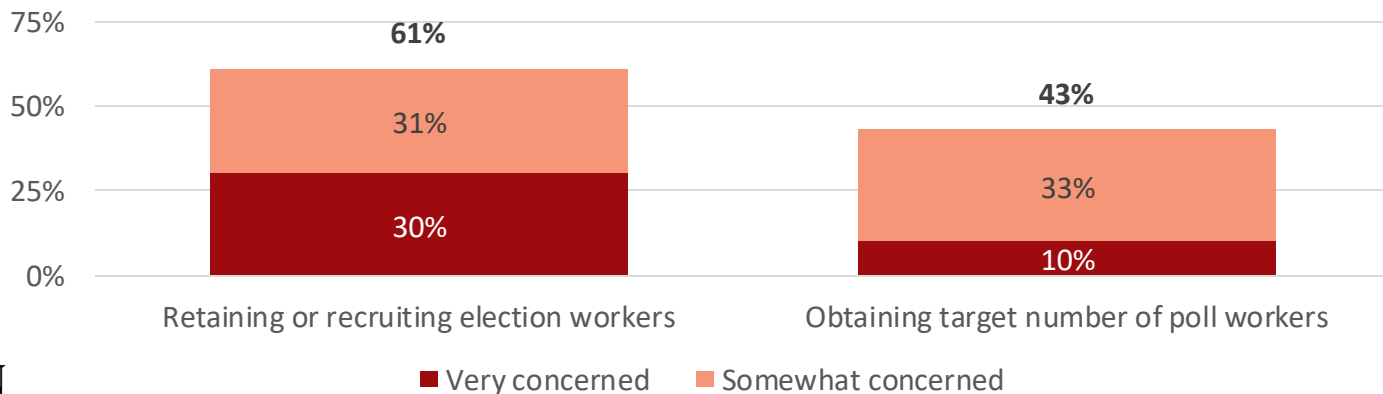


More than 6 in 10 are concerned about retaining or recruiting enough election workers, and more than 4 in 10 are concerned about obtaining enough poll workers

How concerned are you about obtaining your target number of poll workers for the November 2024 general election?
Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.

That threats, harassment, and intimidation against local election officials will make it more difficult to retain or recruit election workers in future elections

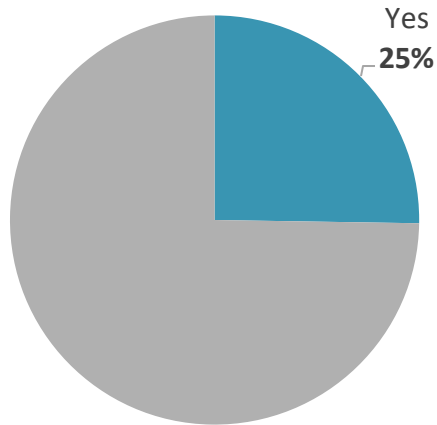
Among all local election officials, n = 928



Denied budget requests most commonly included resources related to personnel and wages

Have you ever had a budget request denied?

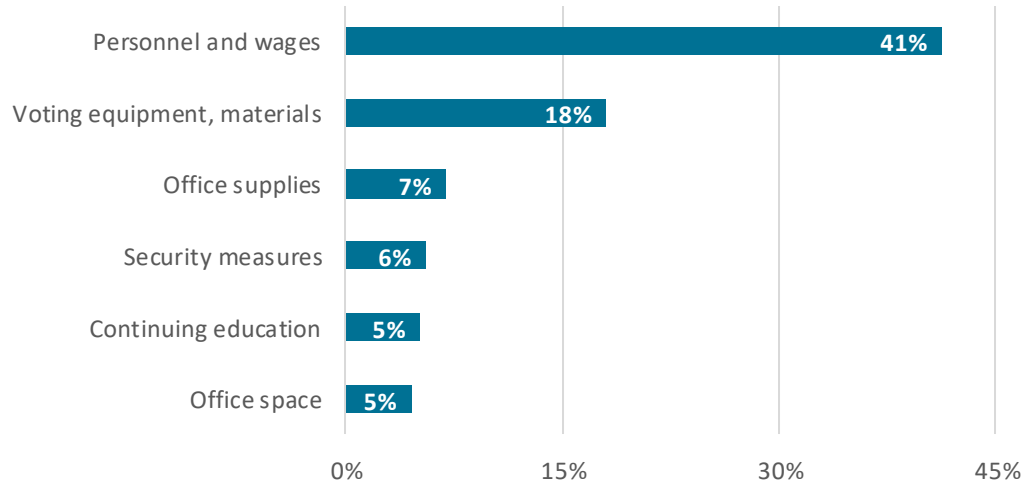
Among all local election officials, n = 928



What was an important item or service on a denied request?

Among those who have had a budget request denied, n = 231

(Most common responses) (Open ended, multiple responses accepted)

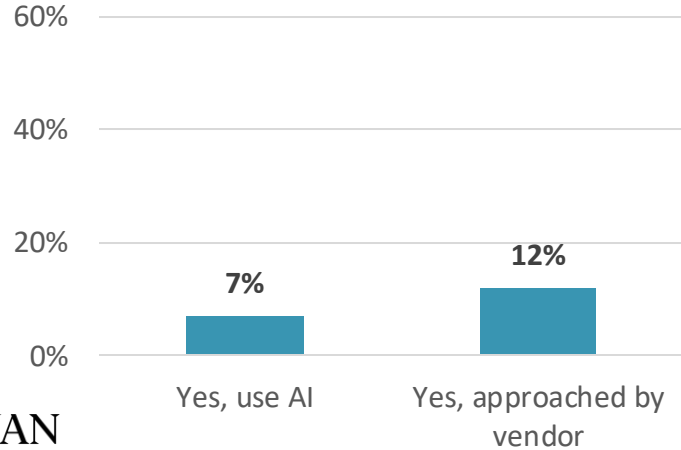


Artificial intelligence

Few local election officials use artificial intelligence in election administration, but many more would like government guidance for potential future use

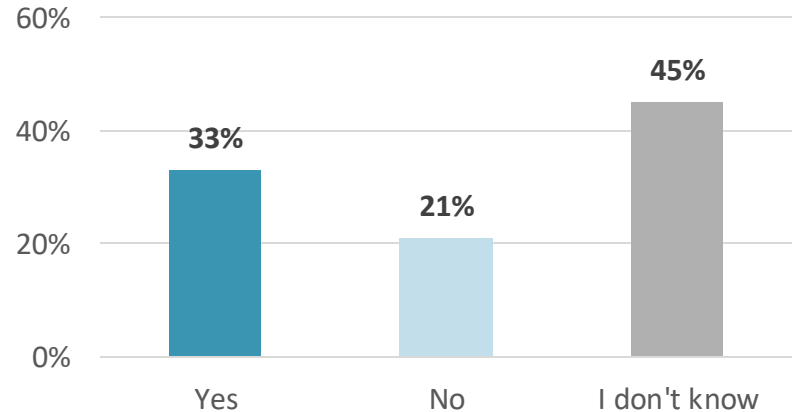
Are you currently using artificial intelligence in any of the following ways in your work as an election official? Please select all that apply. Have any vendors or outside groups approached you with products that they advertise as using artificial intelligence?

Among all local election officials, n = 928



Would it be helpful for federal, state, or local agencies to give you guidelines about using artificial intelligence in election administration?

Among all local election officials, n = 928



2 percent of local election officials use AI in their work in each of the following ways

Are you currently using artificial intelligence in any of the following ways in your work as an election official? Please select all that apply.

Among all local election officials, n = 928

2%

To draft social media content and/or press releases

2%

Locating polling locations

2%

To translate materials into different languages