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Local Election Officials Survey

MARCH 2022



Methodology

- Benenson Strategy Group conducted 596 interviews from January 31-February 14, 2022 among local election officials across the country and of all political affiliations.
- The survey was conducted online using a list provided by the Brennan Center.
- The margin of error for the dataset is +/- 3.95% at the 95% confidence interval. It is higher among subgroups.

5 things to know about local election officials

1. Local election officials need more support in their roles overall.

- More than 3 in 4 believe the federal government should be doing more to support them.
- Although they feel the most support at the local level, nearly 1 in 3 local election officials still feel that their local government could be doing more to support them.
- Few were familiar with the DOJ task force, but after being told about it, 57% of local election officials believe that task force will have at least some positive impact on their safety.

2. Political attacks on the election system are taking a toll on local election officials – and are, in many cases, driving them out of their positions.

- Nearly three times as many local election officials are very worried about interference by political leaders in how they and fellow local election officials do their jobs going forward as they say they were before 2020.
- 1 in 5 local election officials are “very” or “somewhat unlikely” to continue serving through 2024; politicians’ attacks on the system, stress, and retirement plans are the primary reasons they plan to leave their jobs.

3. Threats against local election officials are more prevalent than data on reports to law enforcement indicate.

- 1 in 6 local election officials have experienced threats, and more than half of these cases have not been reported to law enforcement.

4. Local election officials are acutely aware of increased threats against their colleagues, leaving many worried about retaining and hiring local election officials and workers going forward.

- More than 3 in 4 local election officials feel that threats against local election officials have increased in recent years.
- Nearly 1 in 3 know of at least one election worker who has left their job at least in part because of fears for their safety, increased threats, or intimidation.
- 3 in 5 are concerned that threats and harassment will make it harder to retain or recruit election workers going forward.

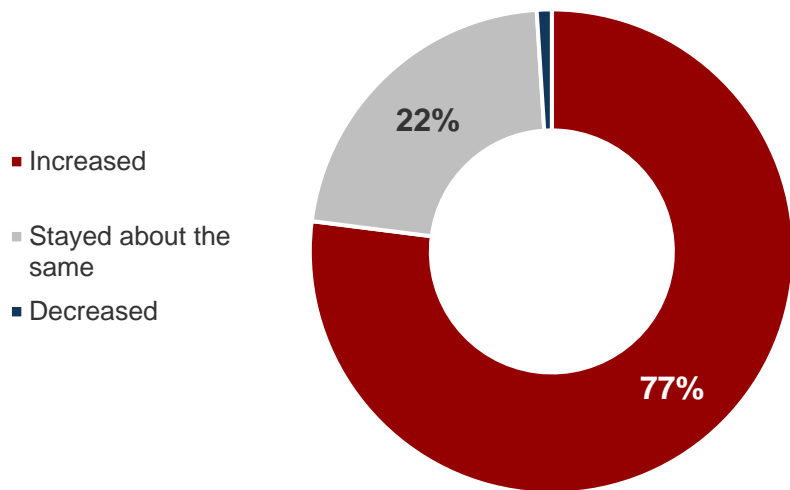
5. Nearly 2 in 3 local election officials believe that false information is making their jobs more dangerous, and almost all blame social media for spreading it.

- More than half worry that incoming local election officials might buy into the “widespread fraud” narrative of the 2020 elections.
- More than 3 in 4 local election officials believe that social media companies have not done enough to stop the spread of false information.

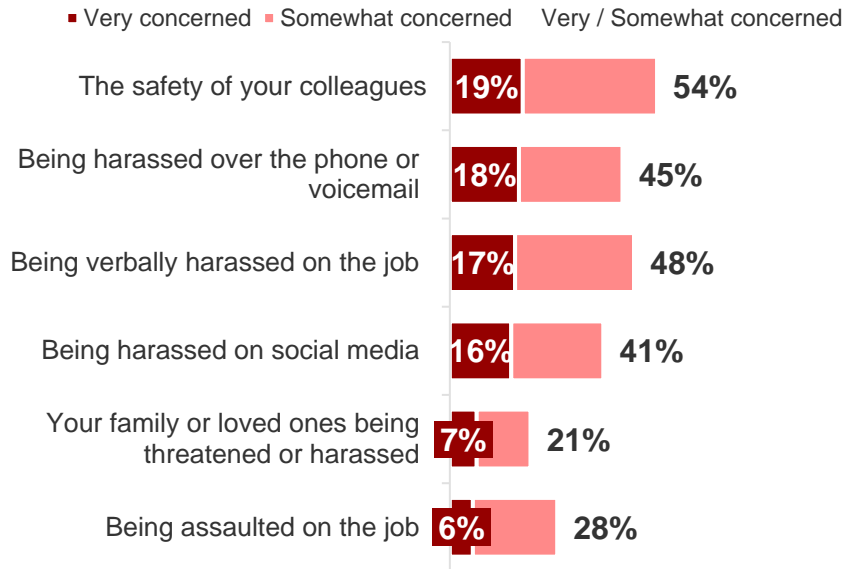
Threats, harassment, and intimidation

Local election officials are acutely aware of increased threats, and more than half are concerned about the safety of their colleagues going forward

Do you feel that threats against election officials have increased, decreased, or have stayed about the same as in recent years?

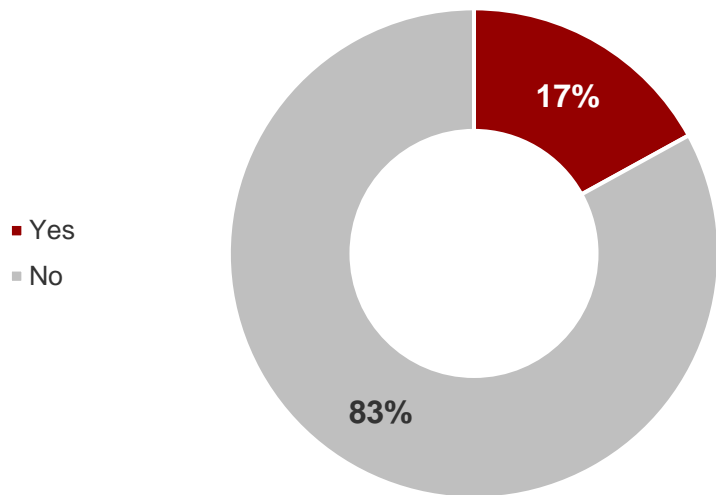


Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official with each of the following in future elections.



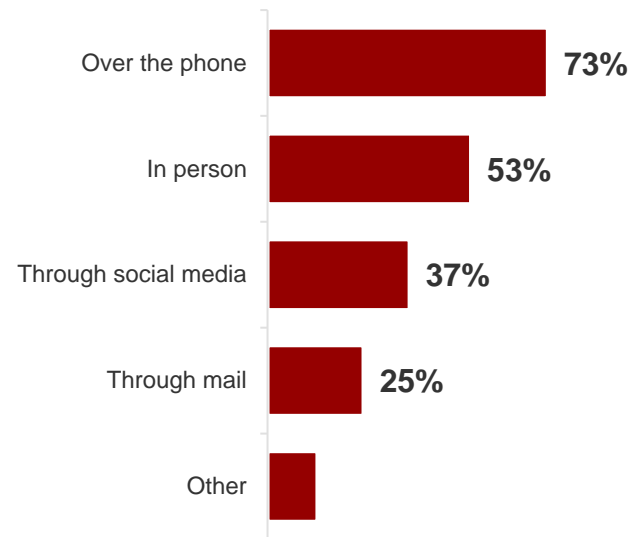
1 in 6 local election officials have personally experienced threats; more than half of these local election officials have been threatened in person

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



How have you been threatened?

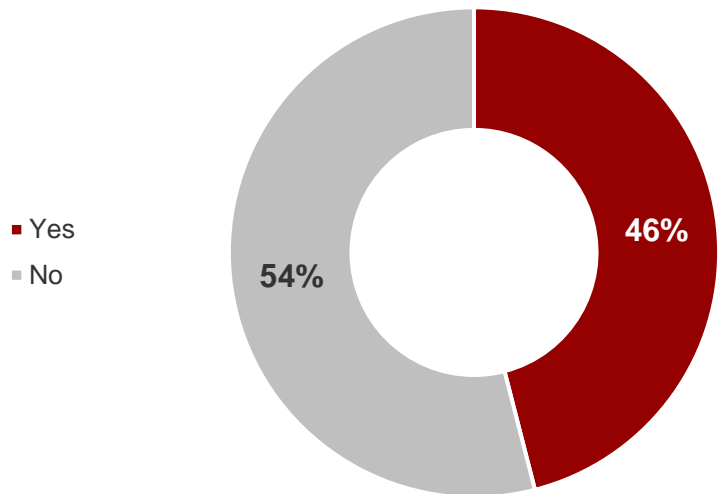
Among the 17% of local election officials who have been threatened because of their jobs



More than half of threats against local election officials have gone unreported

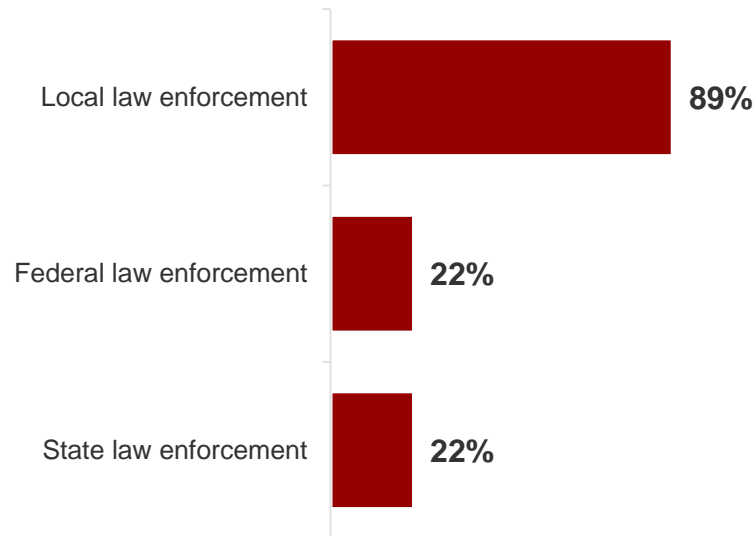
Did you report this threat to law enforcement?

Among the 17% of local election officials who have been threatened because of their jobs



To whom did you report this threat?

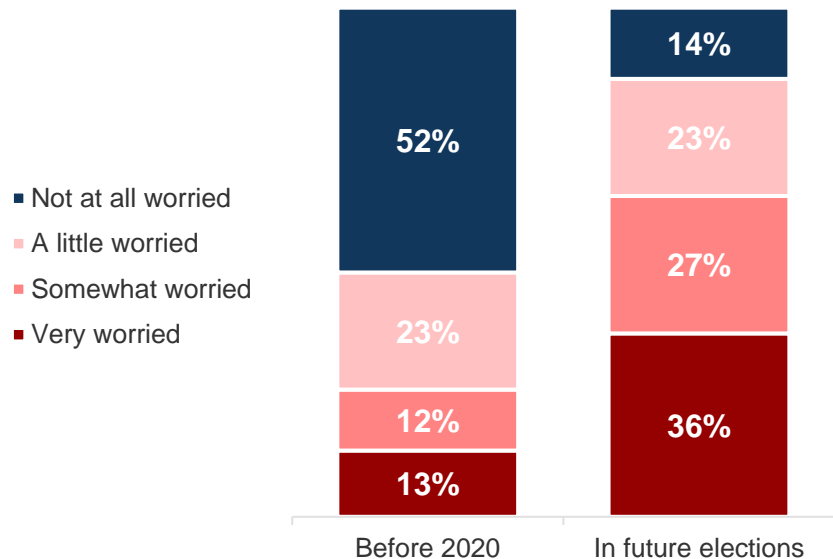
Among the 8% of local election officials who have been threatened because of their jobs and reported this threat to law enforcement



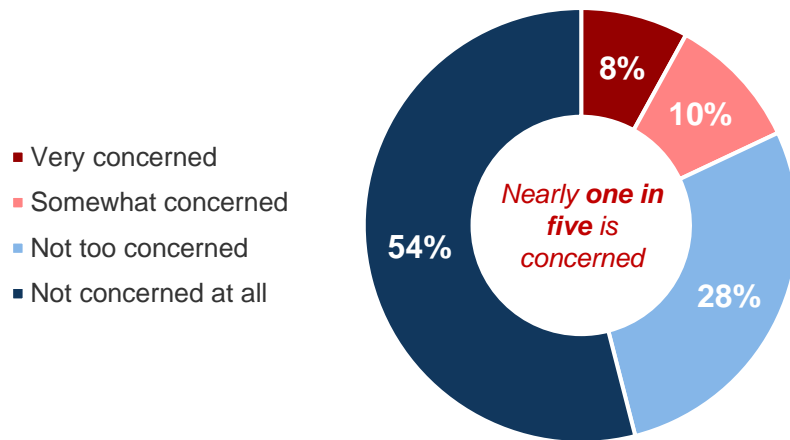
Political interference

Local election officials are concerned about political interference in the election process; 2020 appears to have been a tipping point

How worried are / were you about interference by political leaders in how you and your fellow election officials around the country do / did their jobs...?



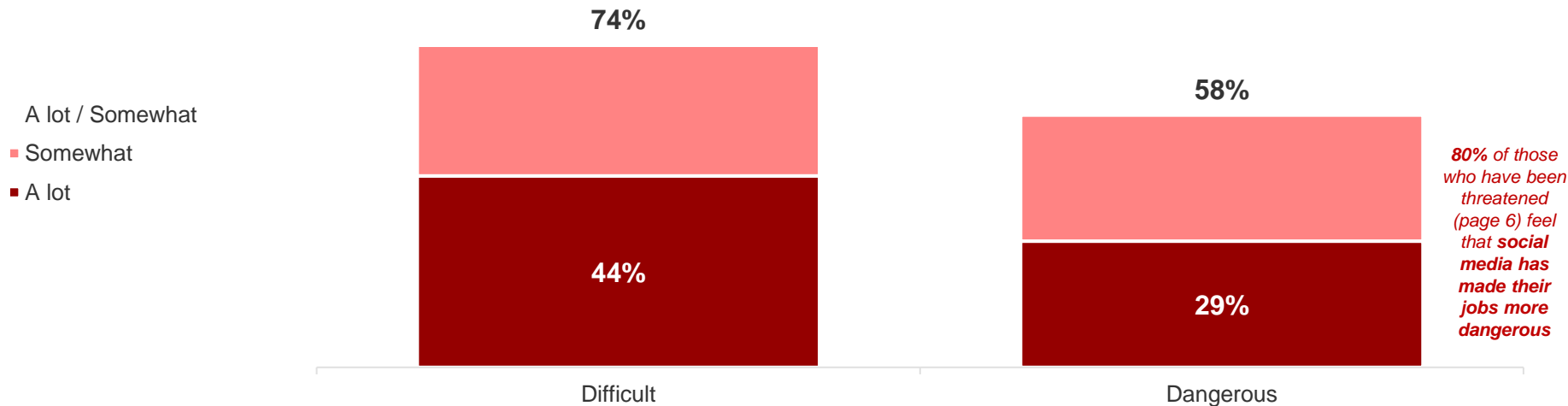
Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official about facing pressure to certify election results in favor of a specific candidate or party.



Social media and false information

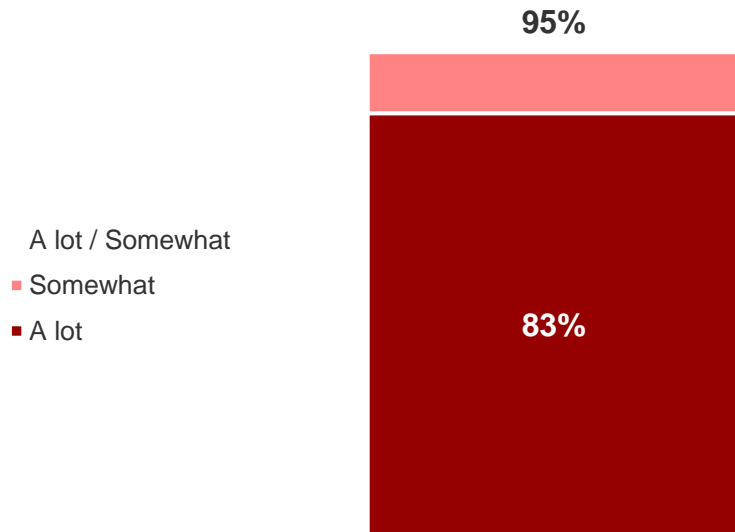
Local election officials say social media is making their jobs more difficult and dangerous

How much, if at all, do you believe social media has made your job as an election official more...?

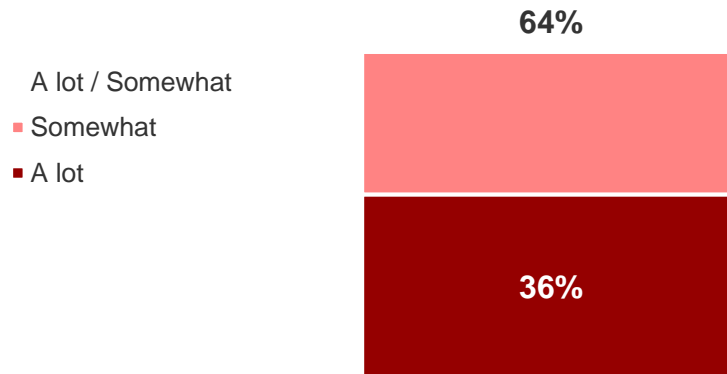


Local election officials agree that social media is responsible for spreading false information, which nearly 2 in 3 say is making their jobs more dangerous

How much, if at all, do you believe social media is responsible for spreading false information?

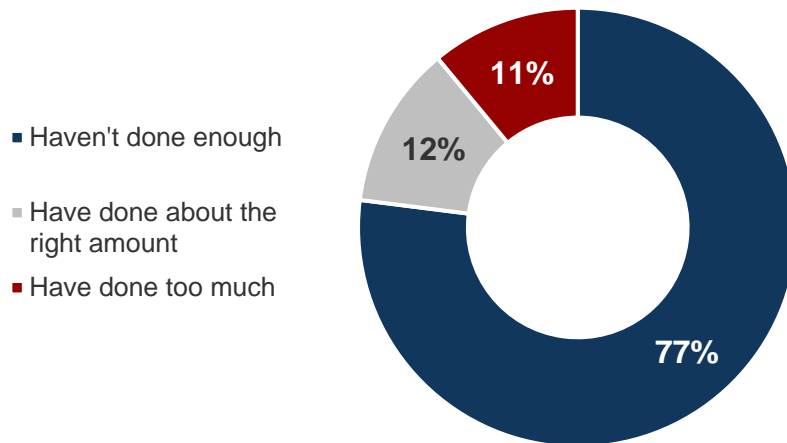


How much, if at all, do you believe the spread of false information about elections has made your job as an election official more dangerous?



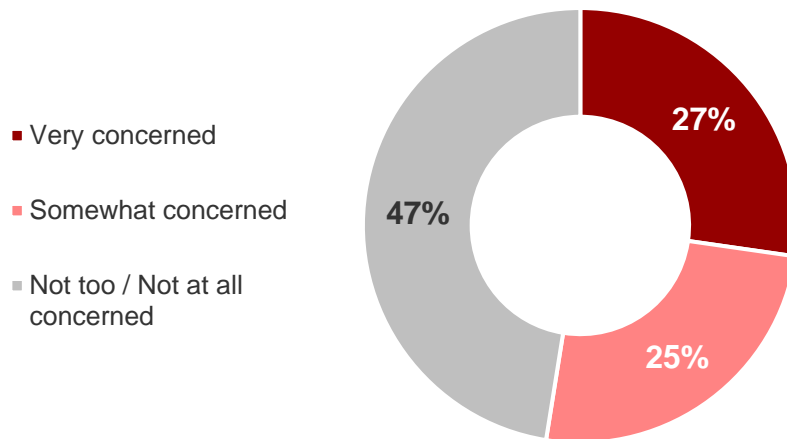
...and more than 3 in 4 want social media companies to do more to stop the spread of false information

Which of the following comes closest to your view?
“Social media companies...to stop the spread of false information.”



More than half are concerned that some of their incoming colleagues might believe that widespread fraud occurred in 2020

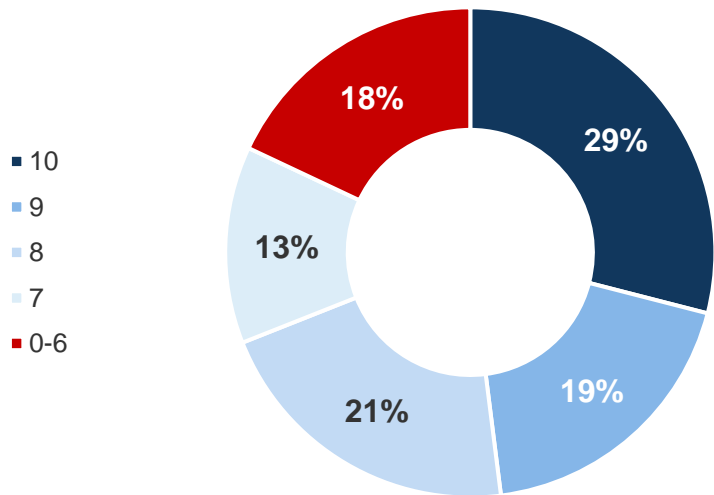
Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official that some incoming local election officials might believe that there was widespread voter fraud during the 2020 elections.



The big picture

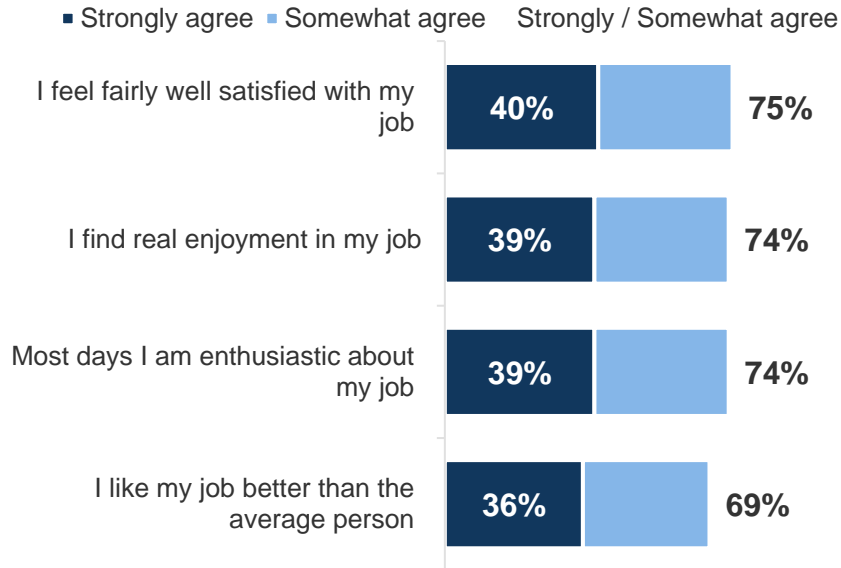
Despite numerous challenges, most local election officials enjoy their jobs and nearly a third say they are completely satisfied

How satisfied are you with your job as a local election official?
 Please use a scale from 0-10 where 0 means "Not at all satisfied" and 10 means "Completely satisfied".



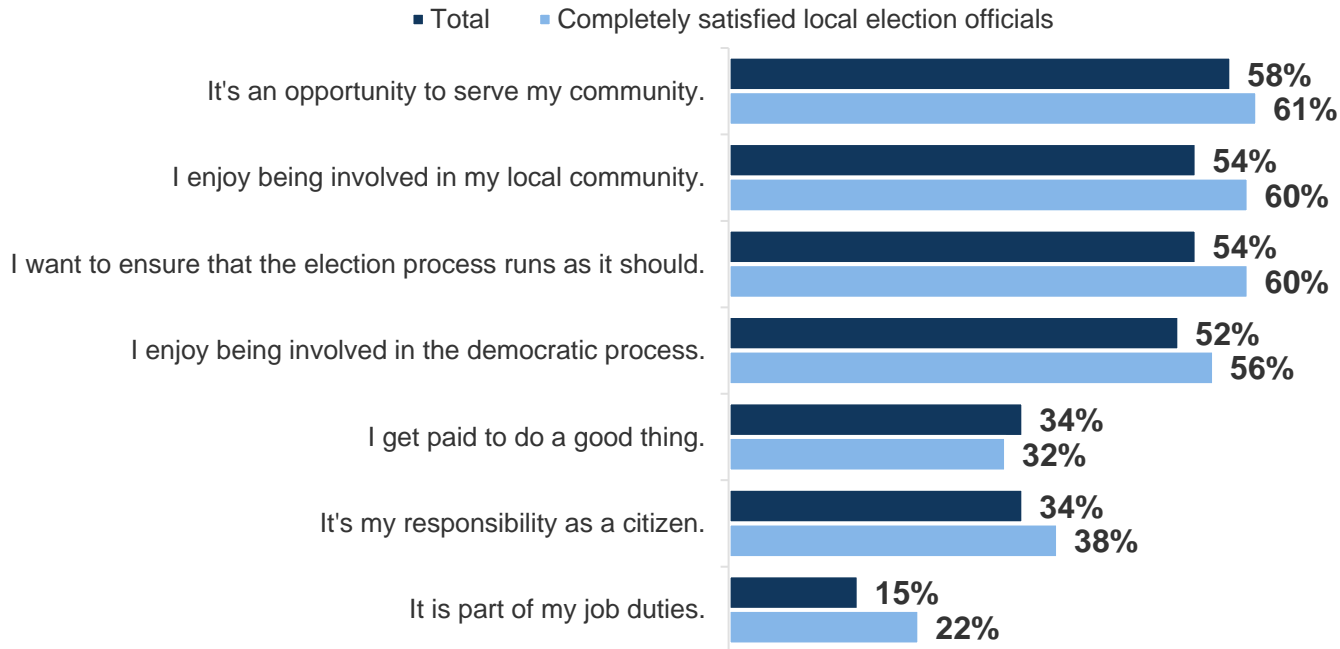
Average satisfaction rating: 8/10

How much do you agree or disagree with the following?
 Please use a scale from 1-5 where 1 means "Strongly disagree" and 5 means "Strongly agree".



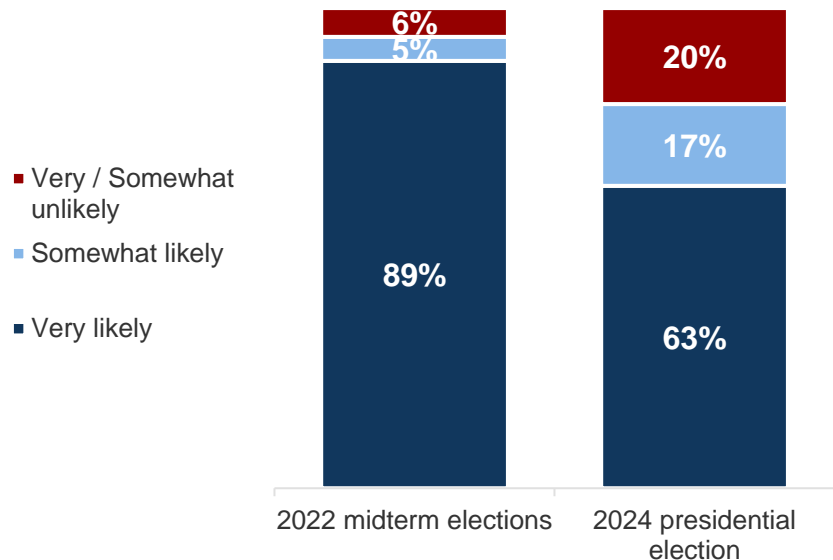
Altruistic factors motivate local election officials to do their jobs

Which of the following statements describe why you became a local election official?



However, we are facing a potential retention problem in 2024, driven primarily by politicians' attacks on the system as well as stress and retirement

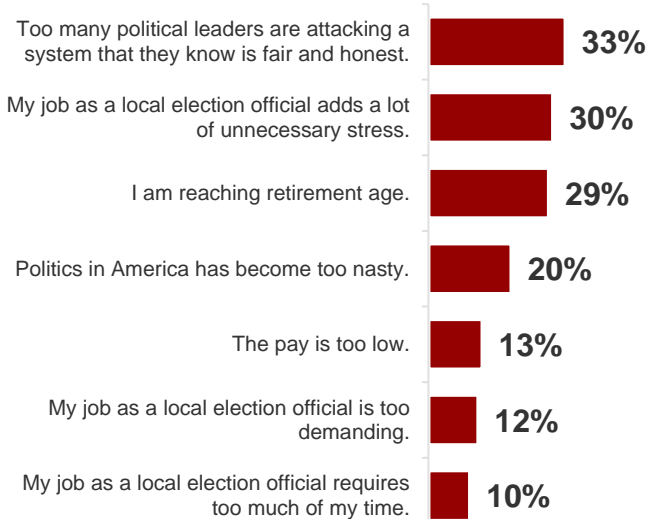
How likely are you to continue serving as a local election official going forward in the...?



Which of the following statements come closest to describing why you are unlikely to continue to serve as a local election official?

Please select your top two reasons.

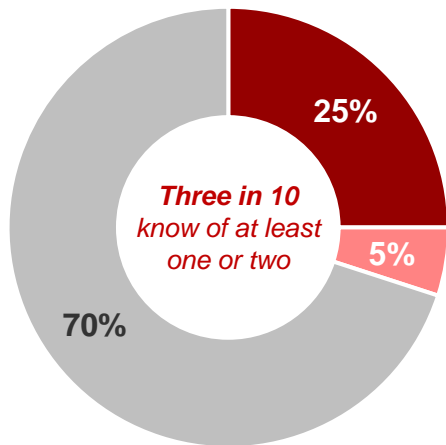
Among the 20% of local election officials who say they're unlikely to serve either in the 2022 or 2024 elections



In fact, many know an election worker who has left their job at least in part out of fear for their safety; 3 in 5 worry threats will make recruitment difficult

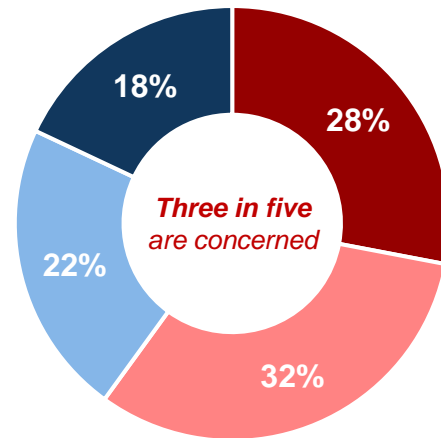
Do you personally know of any local election officials or election workers who have left their jobs at least in part because of fear for their safety, increased threats, or intimidation?

- Yes, I know of one or two.
- Yes, I know of many.
- No, I don't know of any.



Please indicate how concerned you are as an election official that threats, harassment, and intimidation against local election officials will make it more difficult to retain or recruit election workers in future elections.

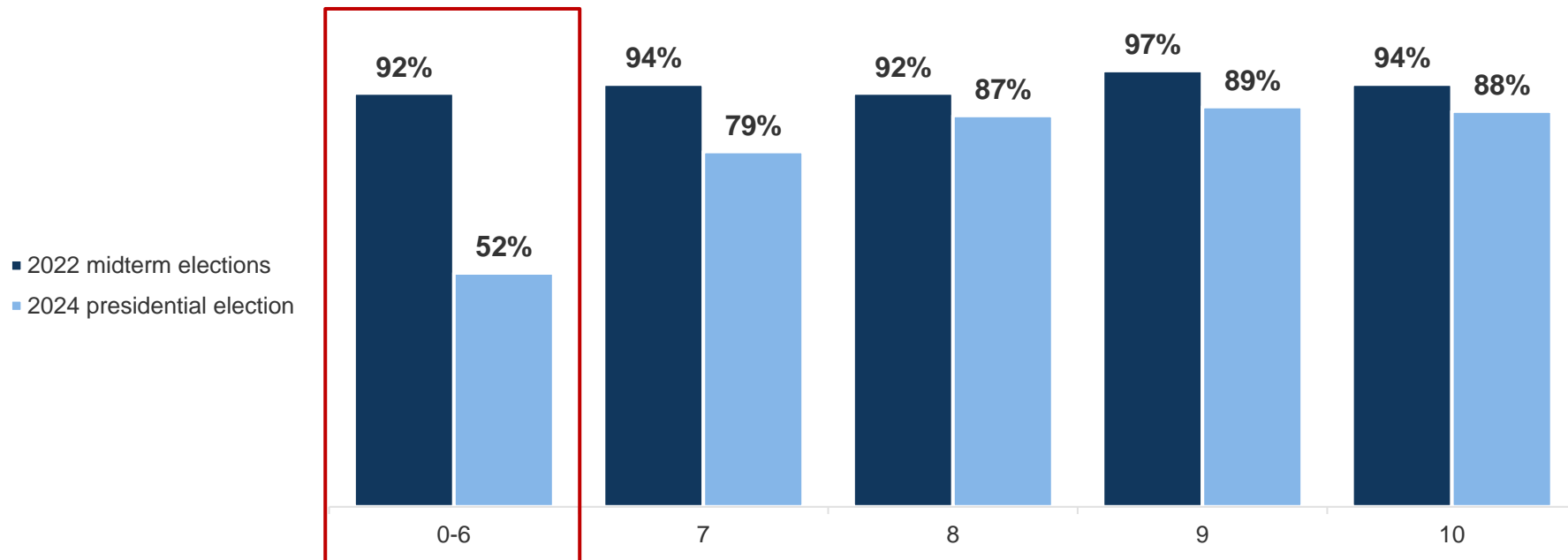
- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Not too concerned
- Not concerned at all



The retention problem is concentrated nearly entirely among the least satisfied local election officials

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

Showing total likely to continue serving in each election by satisfaction level out of 10



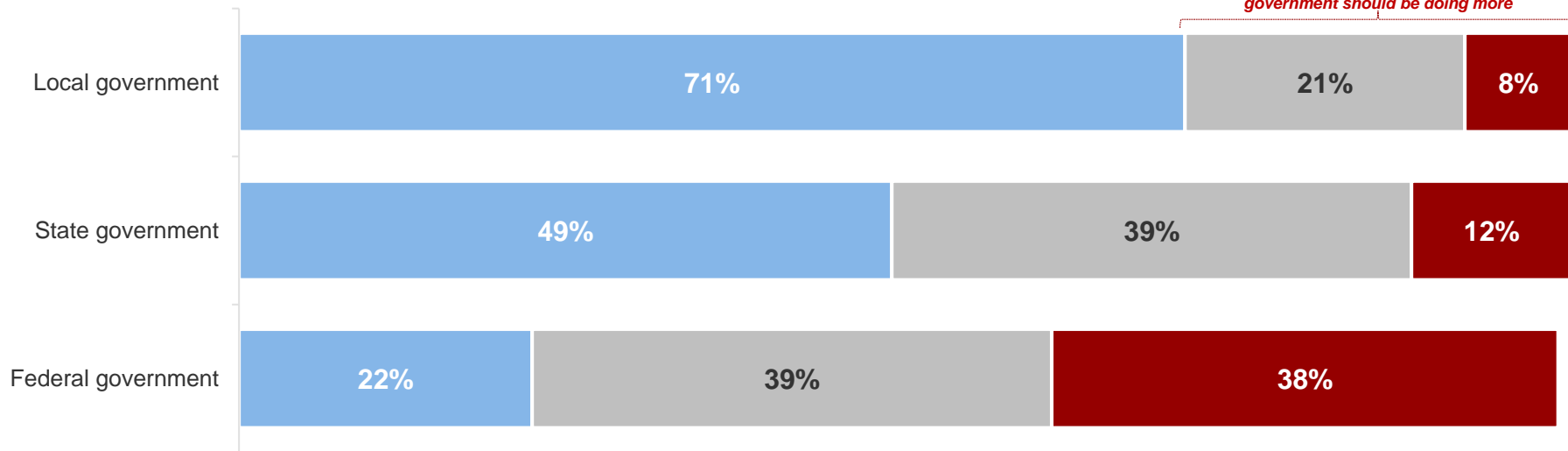
Support from government

Most local election officials say both state and federal government must do more to support them in their jobs

When it comes to being supported in your role as a local election official, which of the following comes closer to your view?

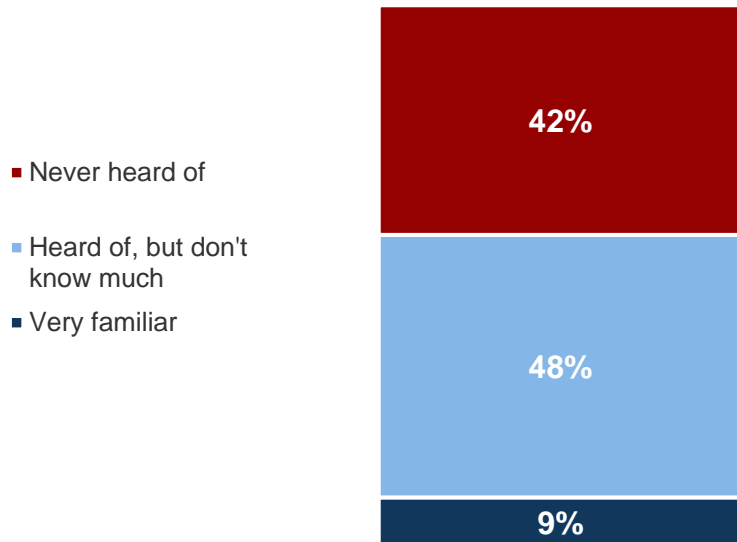
- Is doing a good job
- Is taking some steps, but it's not enough and it should be doing more
- Is not doing anything

Nearly 1 in 3 feels that their local government should be doing more



While few are familiar with the DOJ task force, 57% believe it will have a positive effect when they are told about it

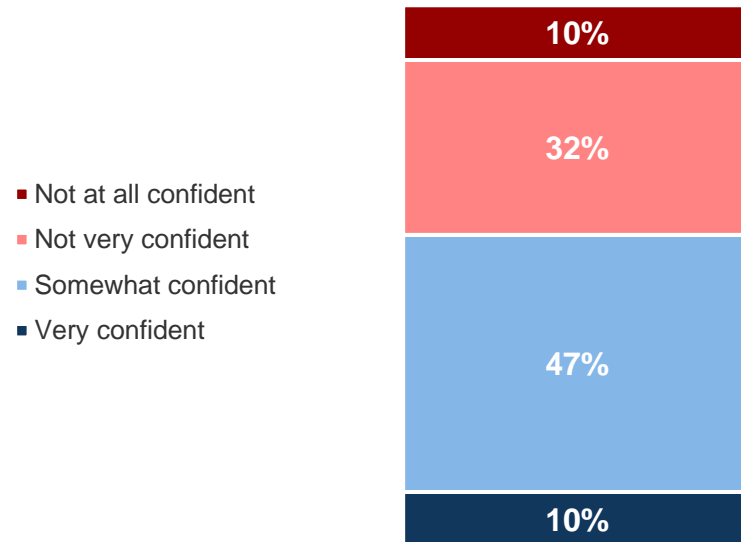
The U.S. Department of Justice recently launched a task force to identify, investigate, and prosecute threats against local election officials. How familiar, if at all, are you with this task force?



- Never heard of
- Somewhat familiar
- Very familiar

How confident are you that this task force's investigation and prosecution of threats against election officials will make you feel safer in your role as an election official?

After reading an explanation of the task force



- Not at all confident
- Not very confident
- Somewhat confident
- Very confident



Thank you

Shannon Currie
Vice President
scurrie@bsgco.com

Ben Wilentz
Associate
bwilentz@bsgco.com

Nadrina Ebrahimi
Analyst
nebrahimi@bsgco.com

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