



FAQs: How to Cite BDI's Threats and Harassment Research

BDI's [Understanding Threats and Harassment \(UTH\)](#) project is a first-of-its-kind public effort to systematically monitor threats and harassment against local officials around the United States. The project employs a unique mixed methods approach that combines three distinct but interrelated research streams – event data, surveys, and interviews – each made possible by a different set of partners and information contributors. Below are citation guidelines for the three research streams as well as answers to frequently asked questions.

1. Event-Level Dataset

BDI's [Threats and Harassment Dataset \(THD\)](#) is a public event-level dataset capturing hostility towards local officials based on information gathered from traditional media, open-source monitoring, and a network of data contributors (*see below*). The longitudinal event-based data captures the rate, frequency, types, and targets of threats and harassment faced by a wide range of local officials around the country, from elected officials to appointed officials and election workers. Building on pilot data collection conducted in 2022, the THD was publicly released in April 2024, with regular monthly updates published thereafter.

- **What types of officials are covered in the event data?**
 - The THD covers five categories of local officials: 1) elected or appointed officials; 2) school officials; 3) election officials or poll workers; 4) health officials; and 5) judicial officials. The event data is based on public incident reports and open-source monitoring as well as information from the UTH consortium of data contributors (*see below*). BDI is working to expand the project to incorporate verified self-reported data from officials participating in our ongoing interview research program (*see below*) and self-reported data gathered through UTH consortium partners when applicable.
- **What types of information are captured?**
 - The THD captures reports of threats of physical harm (e.g. death) and harassment (e.g. invasions of privacy or intimidation). It also captures the method in which the threat or harassment is carried out (e.g. physically removed or physically present) and the type of targeting (e.g. if the event involved racist, sexist, anti-LGBTQ+, or anti-religious language or symbols), including the issue at stake (e.g. elections, education, or health), among other variables.
- **What time period does the data cover?**
 - The dataset covers events reported from 2022 to present.

- **Who leads the research?**
 - The THD is compiled by BDI, with support from the UTH consortium of data contributors (see *below*).

- **How do I cite the event data?**
 - The data and codebook are publicly available for direct download at the [BDI website](#), and can be cited as follows:
 - General: “Drawing on open-source monitoring and a network of key information and data contributors, BDI’s event-level [Threats and Harassment Dataset \(THD\)](#) has recorded more than 1,000 individual incidents of hostility since 2022.”
 - Formal: BDI, Princeton University, “Threats and Harassment Dataset (THD)” [MONTH OF LATEST UPDATE], [DATE ACCESSED], <https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/research/understanding-threats-and-harassment-against-local-officials/dataset>
 - *Note: It is important to indicate the access date when citing the THD, as the dataset is frequently updated to account for new or better information, including for past time periods. Please review the THD codebook for more detail about methodology and the process for tracking changes to the data.*
 - Updates and analysis are published to the [BDI website](#), and can be cited as follows:
 - General: “[Analysis of BDI data](#) finds that reported threat and harassment events are on the rise overall, with an increase from 2022 to 2023.”
 - Formal: BDI, Princeton University, “BDI Launches Public Event-Level Dataset on Threats and Harassment Against Local Officials,” April 2024, [DATE ACCESSED], <https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/updates/2024/bdi-launches-public-event-level-dataset-threats-and-harassment-against-local-officials>

2. Nationally Representative Survey

BDI and CivicPulse, with input and support from the Brennan Center for Justice, conduct nationally representative [surveys](#) of local elected officials and school board members capturing their experiences of threats and harassment, their worries about potential threats and harassment, and their responses to hostile incidents. The survey program began in 2022, and updates are published quarterly. School board members were added to the survey in the first quarter of 2024.

- **Who is being surveyed?**
 - Unlike the THD, the survey research focuses specifically on local *elected* officials at the municipal, county, and township level, as well as school board members.

- The survey does not currently include other categories of officials like local *election* officials or poll workers, appointed officials, health officials, or judicial officials.
- **What types of information are captured?**
 - The survey captures officials’ experiences of threats, harassment, insults, and physical attacks, as well as their experiences of worry about such hostility. It additionally captures the impact of these experiences on their willingness to engage in activities like running for re-election or posting on social media.
- **Who leads the survey research?**
 - The survey is a joint project of BDI and CivicPulse. BDI developed the initial survey questions, and CivicPulse implements the survey waves. Each organization then publishes independent analysis of the results. Survey data is made available at the CivicPulse website.
- **How do I cite the survey?**
 - When citing the *survey data and/or program* as a whole, please reference both BDI and CivicPulse, and link to the main CivicPulse project page.
 - General: “CivicPulse and BDI conduct a [quarterly survey](#) of local elected officials and school board members capturing their experiences of threats and harassment.” or “The BDI-CivicPulse survey finds that local officials and school board members report a high baseline of threats and harassment.”
 - Formal: CivicPulse and BDI, “Threats and Harassment in Local Government,” [DATE OF QUARTERLY RESULTS BEING REFERENCED], [DATE ACCESSED], <https://www.civicpulse.org/threats-harassment>
 - When citing specific *survey analysis*, please reference the organization that published the analysis, and link to the respective organization’s website. Each organization conducts analysis of the survey data independently.
 - General: “BDI [analysis](#) of results from the quarterly survey conducted in partnership with CivicPulse indicates that 1 in 6 local elected officials has experienced threats.”
 - Formal: BDI, Princeton University, “New Survey Results Confirm School Board Officials at High Risk of Threats and Harassment,” May 2024, [DATE ACCESSED], <https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/updates/2024/new-survey-results-confirm-school-board-officials-high-risk-threats-and-harassment>

3. In-Depth Interview Program

Drawing on the sample pool used in the joint survey conducted in partnership with CivicPulse, BDI carries out follow-up [interviews](#) with respondents who opt in to participate in further research, as well as targeted officials who are referred or reach out to take part in the program. BDI compiles

the findings from the interview program into qualitative reports to elevate the voices of impacted officials and their recommendations for solutions to inform effective policy interventions. The interview research began in 2022, and the first report was published in 2023.

- **Who is being interviewed?**

- The interview research includes a subset of survey respondents who opt into the program, officials outside of the survey pool who are referred to BDI by CivicPulse or others, as well as officials who reach out directly to BDI researchers to participate in the program. Unlike the THD, the interview program focuses on local *elected* officials at the municipal, county, and township level, as well as school board members.
- The interview program does not currently include other categories of officials like local *election* officials or poll workers, appointed officials, health officials, or judicial officials.

- **What types of information are captured?**

- The interviews capture full narrative descriptions of threats, harassment, insults, and/or physical attacks relayed by participating officials, as well as the impacts on their lives and work. The interviews additionally capture potential policy interventions and solutions proposed by affected officials.

- **Who leads the research?**

- The interview research draws on the sample pool used in the joint BDI-CivicPulse survey, but is conducted independently by BDI.

- **How do I cite the interview research?**

- Qualitative reports based on the interview research are made available at the [BDI website](#). Each report can be cited directly, per the following examples.
 - General: “BDI publishes [qualitative reports](#) based on in-depth interviews with local elected officials concerning their experiences of threats and harassment. Interviewees are drawn from the larger pool of respondents that participate in the quarterly nationally representative surveys of local elected officials conducted in partnership with CivicPulse.”
 - Formal: BDI, Princeton University, “In Their Own Words: Threats and Harassment Facing Local Officials” May 25, 2023, [DATE ACCESSED], <https://bridgingdivides.princeton.edu/updates/2024/their-own-words-threats-and-harassment-facing-local-officials>

What is the UTH consortium?

To help address challenges in rapid data collection, the UTH project brings together multiple research streams to provide the most comprehensive picture yet of America’s threat and

harassment landscape for local officials. Powered by a consortium of partners and data contributors, the project aims to develop and advance a shared framework for understanding – and countering – hostile incidents against local officials.

Current members of the UTH consortium include the Anti-Defamation League, the Brennan Center for Justice, CivicPulse, the Prosecution Project, the National League of Cities, and the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, among others. BDI regularly works to expand data contributions to address gaps in coverage. If you believe your organization has relevant data to contribute, please reach out to bdi@princeton.edu.

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