



**Tithe an
Oireachtais**
**Houses of the
Oireachtas**



UCD Centre for Digital Policy
Ionad um Bheartas Digiteach UCD

Report on the Abuse and Harassment of Members of the Houses of the Oireachtas and Political Staff

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About this report

This report has been commissioned by the Task Force on Safe Participation in Public Life and carried out by the UCD Centre for Digital Policy. Although this is an independent report, we acknowledge the helpful comments and input of members of the Task Force.

Front Image: Courtesy of the Houses of the Oireachtas

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Executive Summary

This report contains the findings of survey of members of the Oireachtas and political staff, run in February 2024. This is the first ever survey in Ireland conducted with currently serving Oireachtas members and political staff. The objective of the survey was to examine the prevalence of abuse and harassment (including on-line abuse), experiences of abuse/harassment, and the impact of abuse and harassment for those who participate in political life. The survey is further intended to provide a benchmark for future studies tracking the incidence of abuse and harassment against politicians in Ireland. The survey was distributed to all 220 members of the Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann and to 580 political staff, with 61 (28%) and 200 (35%) completed questionnaires respectively.

Overall, the survey found a high prevalence of abuse against Oireachtas members (94%) and political staff (72%), with the most frequent type being the use of abusive language (52%). These incidents are having a clear negative impact on Oireachtas members and political staff, who are reporting feeling anxious and afraid (89% and 75% respectively) and have considered their role in public life (43% and 26% respectively). Additionally, 55% of Oireachtas members have increased security at home, while 60% of political staff requested increased security at constituency office. Abuse was also found to have an impact on political participation with Oireachtas members hesitating to come forward with a particular opinion (51%), avoiding engaging in a specific policy area (45%) and restricting their freedom of speech on a political issue (33%). These findings suggest the need to develop measures to improve the political climate and promote civil political discourse.

In particular, the **key findings** of the survey are:

Prevalence of abuse

94% of the Oireachtas members and 72% of the political staff who responded to the survey reported that they experienced some form of threat, harassment, abuse or violence.

- **73%** of the Oireachtas members experience abuse **on social media** frequently and **22%** occasionally.
- **36%** of Oireachtas members occasionally experience abuse when **socialising** in a personal capacity and **35%** at **social events** while participating as politicians.
- Almost **25%** of political staff occasionally experience abuse on **social media**, **28%** at their **constituency office** and 40% when **canvassing** for an employer.

Experiences of abuse

The most frequent types of abuse for **Oireachtas members** are:

- Use of abusive language (**52%**)
 - Use of prejudicial slurs (**38%**)
 - Publication of false information (**34%**)
-

-
- Comments on physical appearance **(35%)**
 - Spread of malicious and false rumours **(27%)**
 - Persistent unwanted telephone calls/messages **(21%)**

The most frequent types of abuse for **Political Staff** are:

- Use of abusive language **(33%)**
- Comments on physical appearance **(13%)**
- Persistent unwanted telephone calls or texts **(12%)**
- Prejudicial slurs (gendered, racist, homophobic) **(10%)**
- Malicious and false rumours **(5%)**
- Unwanted approaches/attempts to contact **(5%)**

Impact of abuse

- Incidents of abuse resulted in **89%** of Oireachtas members and **75%** of political staff reporting feeling anxious or afraid
- **49%** of Oireachtas members increased security at home
- **45%** hesitated to come forward with a particular opinion, worried about being in public and reduced social activities
- **40%** reported avoiding engaging with a specific policy area
- The effects of these incidents were such that **43%** of the Oireachtas member respondents reported that they have made it less likely that they will run for office in the future
- **28%** of political staff requested increased security at their constituency office
- **11%** feared about being physically attacked
- **10%** reported suffering from serious mental and physical health impacts
- **26%** of political staff reported that these incidents have made it less likely to continue in their role

Issues linked to abuse

Asked if any specific issues were related to the abuse experienced, Oireachtas members reported:

- Immigration **(67%)**
- Women's Rights **(47%)**
- Housing/homelessness **(40%)**
- LGBTQ+ issues **(40%)**

Political staff reported the following issues connected to abuse:

- Immigration **(46%)**
 - Housing/homelessness **(40%)**
 - Women's Rights **(27%)**
-

-
- LGBTQ+ issues **(25%)**

Reporting of abuse and awareness of support mechanisms

Overall, there are good levels of awareness of supports, and in particular of the Security Allowance and the Workplace Support programme, with **79%** and **75%** of the Oireachtas members being aware of these

- **75%** of Oireachtas members have reported instances of abuse. Of these reports, **90%** were submitted to the Garda
- For Oireachtas members, the main reasons for not reporting an incident were feeling it was not sufficiently serious (**64%**) and that they did not think that reporting would lead to any solutions (**57%**).
- **83%** of political staff are aware of the Workplace Support Programme
- **39%** of political staff have reported an instance of abuse. Of these reports, **80%** were reported to the Garda and **80%** to the employer
- For **67%** political staff, the main reason for not reporting an incident was feeling that it was not sufficiently serious, followed by **44%** thinking that reporting would not lead to a solution

Gender dimensions

Our statistical tests indicate a significant association between gender and type of abuse. In particular, women members of the Oireachtas are more likely to experience digital harassment, to be subjected to prejudicial slurs, to be threatened with sexual violence, to be sexually harassed, to receive unwanted sexual approaches and sexually explicit messages, and more likely to receive comments on their appearance.

Age

Our statistical tests indicate that older members of the Oireachtas are less likely to experience any type of abuse.

Recommendations

Overall, improvements in political culture appear necessary for a broader shift towards more civil political discourse. Positive reinforcement and modelling of civil discourse are potentially likely to contribute to such a shift. Similarly, engagement with communities is likely to promote civic education and dialogue on respectful political discourse.

Prevalence:

Tackling the high prevalence of abuse and harassment against politicians and political staff requires evidence-based policies. This in turn points to the need for further research to (i) deepen the insights gained by the present survey; (ii) provide systematic evidence on the abuse and harassment experienced over time. In this respect, the present survey can constitute a benchmark for future studies; (iii) connect the various findings from different studies on abuse and harassment in Irish political life; and (iv) develop new and innovative methodologies for the study of prevalence of abuse in political life.

Experiences:

Significant rates of abuse are related to social media presence, despite recent measures to deal with harmful online contents (e.g. DSA, OSMR, HHCA). In conjunction with further research on trends and patterns of abuse against politicians, more targeted efforts should be made to protect politicians from social media-enabled abuse.

The gendered nature of abuse should be addressed with specific and targeted measures and integrated in all actions to remedy or mitigate abuse. For instance, approaches to media and political literacy should incorporate the gendered dimensions of political abuse. Since women are specifically targeted, the impact of abuse on female participation in politics should be emphasised.

Impact:

The survey indicated three different kinds of impact of abuse: emotional/psychological impact, impact on the political ambitions of politicians and political staff; and societal impact in terms of silencing debate on certain topics/issues. There is a need for (i) more in-depth research to explore these different kinds of impact and their broader implications; and (ii) to develop specific measures to mitigate these impacts at the level of the individuals affected and at the level of society and political culture.

Supports:

Although there is good awareness of reporting mechanisms and supports, these are unevenly taken up. The development of a specific guide for reporting and seeking support may enable Oireachtas members and political staff to make the most of the resources available.

Introduction

The Task Force for Safe Participation in Public Life

The Task Force on Safe Participation in Political Life was established to examine and make proposals on how to safeguard and support participation in political life and to promote civil discourse. The Taskforce has been set up in response to reports in the media and survey results that indicate there is a significant level of abuse, including on-line abuse, and harassment experienced by those who participate in political life and that this abuse disproportionately impacts women, and will have long term negative impact on women’s and minority groups’ participation in political life.

The Task Force commissioned the UCD Centre for Digital Policy to conduct a survey of members of the Oireachtas and Political Staff on their experiences of abuse and harassment.

This report contextualises the survey and its findings in terms of broader research on polarisation and its impact on public life, as well as in terms of previous findings on abuse against politicians in liberal democracies and in Ireland.

Abuse Against Politicians and Affective Polarisation

Abuse and harassment against politicians are not a recent development, as their public profile makes them more susceptible to such phenomena. Nevertheless, the current prevalence and type of abuse experienced by politicians must be contextualised in terms of broader trends in contemporary political culture to understand how best to address it. In recent years, discussions of political culture have referred to the issue of democratic backsliding even in established liberal democracies. Democratic backsliding is defined as “a deterioration of qualities associated with democratic governance, within any regime. In democratic regimes, it is a decline in the quality of democracy” (Waldner and Lust, 2018: 95¹). Declining **trust** in institutions, **polarisation** and **political violence** are all factors associated with this decline in the quality of democracy.

Statistical findings on **trust** in the national government, political parties, and politicians indicate an overall decline (see [Pew Research, 2023](#) for the US). In Ireland, both the [European Social Survey of 2018](#) and the [CSO-OECD survey of 2021](#) reported similar findings with around 54 percent of respondents not trusting politicians/political parties (0-4 on the scale). Trust in national government tends to be higher with 50.6 percent reporting a score of 5 and above. Comparatively speaking, Ireland is above the UK (38 percent) but below Norway (63.8 percent). It is significant to note that in Ireland, 29 percent of younger people (ages 18 to 44) report no trust or are neutral compared to 21 percent of 45–55-year-olds and 15 percent of over 65s.

Polarisation refers to a sharp divergence of political attitudes, opinions, and beliefs that map on to different policy preferences (Haggard and Kaufman, 2021; Iyengar, Sood and Lelkes, 2012). While this kind of polarisation captures ideological or political divergence, Iyengar et al.

¹ Waldner, D., & Lust, E. (2018). Unwelcome change: Coming to terms with democratic backsliding. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 21, 93-113.

Recent research has established a link between affective polarisation and political violence (Piazza, 2023)². In particular, dehumanisation, demonisation and othering of political opponents are all aspects of affective polarisation. Once politicians are demonised, the transgression of social norms, such as being polite or refraining from violence, is seen as justified, makes attacks more acceptable. This is how affective polarisation may be linked to violence. Piazza's research shows that polarised democracies are associated with greater levels of political violence compared to non-polarised democracies. Physical violence between partisans in advanced liberal democracies has remained relatively stable in European democracies, but when it happens, its consequences are terrible, as we have seen for example, in the terrorist attacks in Utoya in Norway, and the murders of Jo Cox and David Ames in the UK and Walter Lübcke in Germany. At the same time, the rise of social media platforms has been associated with an increase in other kinds of political violence and intimidation including hate speech, harassment and cyberbullying.

The prevalence of political violence, physical, verbal and through social media, can have detrimental effects both for the individuals at the receiving end, and for political culture as a whole. It can be seen both as a symptom of affective polarisation and, to the extent that it is public and visible to all, it can intensify affective polarisation through blaming, dehumanising and 'othering' politicians. It is therefore important to map the frequency, forms and impacts of political violence as experienced by politicians as well as other professional participants in political life, such as political staff that supports the work of elected officials. The next section offers a brief overview of what we know about abuse against politicians from previous research.

Abuse and Harassment Against Politicians: Previous research

A key research finding concerns the high prevalence of abuse against politicians and its tendency to increase in recent years³. Secondly, research has focused on the forms of abuse encountered by politicians, finding a high frequency of abuse⁴. Thirdly, research sought to identify the targets of political violence, and specifically if demographic factors such as gender, race/ethnicity and religion are linked to political violence, finding that women, ethnic and religious minorities are targeted more frequently than men⁵. Importantly, research was concerned with the impact of experiences of political violence on the individual politicians targeted and more broadly on political culture, identifying both psychological impacts as well as chilling effects and impacts on

the political ambition of those targeted. Four types of methods are typically used in studying

² Piazza, J. A. (2023). Political polarization and political violence. *Security Studies*, 32(3), 476-504.

³ For example, Every-Palmer, S., Hansby, O., & Barry-Walsh, J. (2023). Stalking, harassment, gendered abuse and violence towards politicians in the Covid-19 Pandemic and Recovery Era. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 15, 1357907

⁴ For example, Akhtar, S., & Morrison, C. M. (2019). The prevalence and impact of online trolling of UK members of parliament. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 99, 322-327.

⁵ For example, Gorrell, G., Bakir, M. E., Roberts, I., Greenwood, M. A., & Bontcheva, K. (2020). Which politicians receive abuse? Four factors illuminated in the UK general election 2019. *EPJ Data Science*, 9(1), 18.

Frequency of abuse

Elaborating on studies focusing on liberal democracies, the following key findings emerge. In general, political violence is not uncommon even in established liberal democracies, although physical violence is rare compared to what we call here communicative violence, such as threats, hate speech, doxxing, circulation of false information and similar types of abuse. There is clear evidence of high prevalence of abuse and harassment against politicians: for example, in New Zealand, Every-Palmer et al. (2023) found that 98% of MPs that responded in their survey had experienced some form of abuse, a significant increase since 2014. Similar findings are reported in other studies: in the US, 84% of former members of Congress said they were worried about the prospect of political violence, including 74% of Republicans and 94% of Democrats surveyed⁶; a 2018 study of female parliamentarians in Europe found that 85.2% of female MPs who took part in the study said that they had suffered psychological violence during their tenure – up from 82% in 2016.⁷ In Norway, a 2022 survey found that 87% of the MPs who responded had experienced one or more incidents of harassment or threats⁸. In the UK, a 2021 survey of Scottish Holyrood members found that 70% had feared for their safety since becoming an MSP, rising to 87% among the female MSPs, with nearly a third of the respondents having received a death threat⁹. In Wales, a 2023 survey found that 80% of Welsh MPs and Senedd Members said they have felt threatened since being in office, while 43% had received a death threat¹⁰.

Forms and Targets

The most common finding here is that types of online abuse are increasingly common. At the same time, physical violence still exists, although serious violence is rare. In a 2019 study of US mayors, the most common form of abuse was via social media, through images or disrespectful comments.¹¹ In the Welsh survey cited above, 96% of respondents said they had received a threatening or abusive message via social media, email, telephone or face-to-face, with similar findings in the New Zealand study (96% of respondents had experienced harassment over social

⁶ UMassAmherst, 2023, available at: <https://polsci.umass.edu/poll-nearly-300-former-members-congress-reveals-disappointment-government-functioning-concern-state>

⁷ InterParliamentary Union, (201), Sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments in Europe. Available at: <http://www.assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/EGA/WomenFFViolence/2018/20181016-WomenParliamentIssues-EN.pdf>

⁸ Bjørge, T., Jupskås, A. R., Thomassen, G., & Strype, J. (2022). Patterns and Consequences of Threats Towards Politicians. *Perspectives on terrorism*, 16(6), 100-119.

⁹ Marshall, C., (2021), A growing threat: is the rising tide of intimidation towards our politicians harming democracy? In Holyrood, available at: <https://www.holyrood.com/inside-politics/view,a-growing-threat-is-the-rising-tide-of-intimidation-towards-our-politicians-harming-democracy>

¹⁰ ITV News, (2024), Threatened with decapitation and burning – shocking abuse faced by Welsh MPs and Senedd members, January 31, available at: <https://www.itv.com/news/wales/2024-01-31/threatened-with-decapitation-the-shocking-abuse-faced-by-welsh-politicians>

¹¹ Herrick, R., Thomas, S., Franklin, L., Godwin, M. L., Ghabasik, E., & Schroedel, J. R. (2019). Physical violence and psychological abuse against female and male mayors in the United States. *Politics, Groups, and Identities*.

media), and the Norwegian study (70% of the respondents experienced unwanted or troublesome contact via social media in 2021, an increase of 30% since 2013).

One of the most robust findings in the literature concerns the **targeting of women**. Krook and Sanin (2019) argue that the targeting of women in politics is rooted in structural violence, which refers to the ways in which social stratification results in unequal life chances for certain categories of people. For women, it involves their association with the private sphere in contrast to men's association with the public sphere. Structural violence both inspires and justifies hostility against women in politics because they are perceived as violating strong cultural norms. This effect is magnified for women coming from ethnic or sexuality minority backgrounds. Indeed, previous research in the UK has shown that female political candidates are more likely to face harassment and intimidation, and the effect is larger if they are also from an ethnic minority background (Collignon and Rudig, 2020)¹². However, this finding is not replicated in the Norwegian study by Bjørge et al (2022), which found no significant difference between female and male politicians in terms of reported incidents. Similarly, a study in Sweden by Håkansson (2021)¹³ found that female politicians experience only marginally more violence than their male counterparts. On the other hand, women are more likely to face gendered forms of abuse: for example, in Every-Palmer et al. (2023) New Zealand study, women were at a higher risk of reporting gendered abuse, for example, misogynistic slurs, threats of sexual violence and sexualised contents. Other gender effects include the higher risk of violence for more high-ranking female politicians: Håkansson (2021) reports that in Sweden, the higher the rank and power of a female politician, the higher the exposure to violence and this is not the case for high-ranking male politicians. Additionally, a gender gap in experiences of violence was found among female politicians who represent minorities, even if they do not come from a minority themselves, suggesting that women are likely to be penalised more for challenging the status quo (Håkansson, 2021: 516).

Two more factors were found to be associated with the likelihood of receiving abuse: media exposure and controversial subjects. Specifically, the Norwegian survey found that politicians with a higher media profile were more susceptible to attacks, a finding that is replicated in the Swedish survey. Issues that are deemed controversial or polarising, for example in the US, Donald Trump and the Black Lives Matter movement were perceived as associated with a higher risk for violence (Herrick et al., 2019). In the Norwegian study, housing and shutting down services were perceived by local politicians as issues driving abuse and harassment, and in the New Zealand study Covid-19 was deemed an issue connected to abuse.

Impact

Research has identified at least four negative effects that forms of political violence, including abuse and harassment, can have. At the individual level, it is linked to mental health impacts, anxiety, stress and even trauma. It is also found to impact the political ambitions of those

¹² Collignon, S., & Rüdig, W. (2020). Harassment and intimidation of parliamentary candidates in the United Kingdom. *The Political Quarterly*, 91(2), 422-429.

¹³ Håkansson, S. (2021). Do women pay a higher price for power? Gender bias in political violence in Sweden. *The Journal of Politics*, 83(2), 515-531.

Specifically, in the New Zealand study, 62 percent of respondents reported mental or emotional stress, while in the Norwegian study most of the respondents reported feeling anxiety following incidents of abuse. The impact on the political ambitions of those targeted is well documented and significant. It also has a gender dimension: in an interview-based study in Sweden, Håkansson (2024)¹⁴ found that experiences of violence are linked to decreased political ambition among female politicians to a greater extent than among men. Finally, abuse and harassment have a chilling effect with respondents in the qualitative Swedish study reporting that they draw back from policy debates to avoid receiving threats. Similarly, respondents in the Norwegian study stated that they “limit their freedom of speech”, “hesitated to state a particular opinion”, “avoided engaging with a specific policy issue” as a consequence of unwanted incidents¹⁵.

These impacts in turn are likely to discourage some people from entering politics altogether; discourage the discussion of difficult topics; and diminish the political ambitions of those who are already in politics. Taken together these impacts are likely to have a detrimental effect on political culture and democracy.

Abuse against politicians in contemporary Ireland

Overall, it seems that Ireland is indeed following trends similar to those in other Western countries, such as Norway and New Zealand. The main findings come from three studies: a survey of local councillors conducted by the Association of Irish Local Government (2023)¹⁶; a qualitative study of female former and current members of the Oireachtas and local councillors conducted by NUIG (2020)¹⁷; and a survey of candidates in the 2019 local election and in the 2020 general election on their experiences of political violence, conducted by UCC as part of The Cost of Doing Politics: Gender Aspects of Political Violence project, funded by the Research Council of Norway (2023).¹⁸

All three studies report alarming levels of abuse: the AILG study of local councillors found that 64% of respondents experienced threats, harassment or intimidation in the last two years; the NUIG study reported that 96% of the respondents had received abuse through social media; and

¹⁴ Håkansson, S. (2024). The gendered representational costs of violence against politicians. *Perspectives on Politics*, 22(1), 81-96.

¹⁵ Bjorgo et al., 2022, pp. 112-113.

¹⁶ AILG (2023) *Threats, Harassment and Intimidation in Public Office: A Survey report on councillors' Perspective*, available at: <https://ailg.ie/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/AILG-CMG-Report-Threats-Harassment-and-Intimidation-in-Public-Office-1-compressed.pdf>

¹⁷ Galway (2023), University of Galway research highlights urgent need for action against cyber violence towards women in politics, available at: <https://www.universityofgalway.ie/about-us/news-and-events/news-archive/2023/september/university-of-galway-research-highlights-urgent-need-for-action-against-cyber-violence-towards-women-in-politics.html>

¹⁸ Buckley, F., Keenan, L., and Mariani, M. (2023), *The cost of doing politics in Ireland: What does violence against politicians look like and how is it gendered?*, The Christian Michelsen Institute, CMI Brief no. 2023:6) available at: <https://www.cmi.no/publications/8986-the-cost-of-doing-politics-in-ireland>

the UCC study reported that 75% of the respondents had experienced at least one form of political violence. The most prevalent forms of abuse across the three studies were threats of violence, degrading talk and slurs, and repeated unwanted messages. The gendered nature of the abuse is highlighted in both the NUIG and the UCC studies: the former reported that 38% of their female respondents had received rape and sexual violence threats, while the latter found not only that women were subjected to threats of a sexual nature but that they were also more affected psychologically (they were more afraid) and ended up having lower levels of political ambition (for example not running for office in the future). Similar findings are reported for local councillors: the AILG study found that 50% of the respondents have considered or are considering leaving their role because of harassment, while one in five of the female respondents in the NUIG study have considered quitting because of online harassment.

Building up on these findings, the present study looks to expand and deepen our knowledge and understanding of the abuse and harassment faced by politicians in Ireland. It does this by focusing on elected members of the House of the Oireachtas and on political staff that support the work of members of the Oireachtas. The next section offers details on the current survey.

Survey Design

The objective of survey was to provide a comprehensive understanding of abuse and harassment in the Oireachtas while adhering to ethical standards and maintaining participant confidentiality. The survey was designed to target members of the House of the Oireachtas and political staff. The research team sought and received ethics approval from the UCD Research Ethics committee. To protect participant anonymity, the IT Dept of the Oireachtas generated a list of email aliases for each participant. The survey was conducted on Qualtrics, which is compliant with GDPR regulations, protecting participants' privacy.

The survey questionnaire covered the following areas: demographic information, types of experiences encountered, perpetrators of abuse, impact of abuse, reporting mechanisms, and awareness of available support. Making use of the Norway survey instrument by Bjørge et al. (2022), the questionnaire was tailored to suit the Irish political context. Recognising the diversity of roles and experiences, separate paths were created for Oireachtas members and political staff. The survey was distributed via email aliases over a designated period from February 8 to 29.

The survey was distributed to all 220 members of the Oireachtas and to 580 political staff. Of these, 61 members and 200 political staff finished the survey representing a response rate of 27.7% and 34.5% respectively. This is higher than the AILG study, which had a response rate of 23.8% and the UCC survey that had a response rate of 16.9%. Future surveys may benefit from identifying some of the barriers for responding to these kinds of surveys.

Findings

The findings are presented in three sections: Section I presents the responses of the Oireachtas members Section II presents the responses of the political staff and Section III presents the findings of the statistical analyses.

SECTION I: Members of the Oireachtas

Participants and Demographics

This section presents the responses to demographic questions.

*Key observation: The majority of Oireachtas members who responded were men (67%), reflecting the unequal representation of women among the elected members.

Gender

Oireachtas Members - What is your gender identity? - Selected Choice	
Field	Percentage
Man	67%
Woman	33%
Non-binary	0%
If your gender identity is not included in the list above, or you would prefer to self-identify your gender identity, please do so in the open box below	0%
Prefer not to say	0%

Graph 1 Oireachtas Members – Gender

Political Affiliation

Oireachtas Members - Are you part of the government or a member of the opposition?

Field	Percentage
Government	58%
Opposition	42%

Graph 2 - Members: Government/Opposition

Experiences of Abuse

This section reports the key findings on the prevalence and types of abuse and harassment that Oireachtas Members experienced.

*Key observations:

- A large majority of the Oireachtas members have experienced some form of abuse and harassment. The percentage of the respondents who have experienced abuse (94%) is higher than the AILG (64%) and the UCC (75%) studies. Although the high percentage may reflect the self-selected nature of the sample, it still represents over a quarter of the members of the Oireachtas.
- While physical abuse is rare (almost 79% have experienced physical attacks never or once), most other types of abuse are experienced occasionally and frequently.
- Social media is the most common location where abuse occurs, with 73% experiencing abuse on social media frequently.
- The most common types of abuse are abusive language (54%), prejudicial slurs almost 40%) and publication of false information.
- Most abuse experiences (33%) are ongoing for the Oireachtas members.
- The majority of Oireachtas members have experienced isolated incidents of abuse (40%), but a sizable minority has experienced abuse for months (24%) and weeks (14%).

-
- Immigration (72%), women's rights (51%), homelessness/housing (44%), and LGBTQ issues (44%) are all associated with abuse.

Prevalence

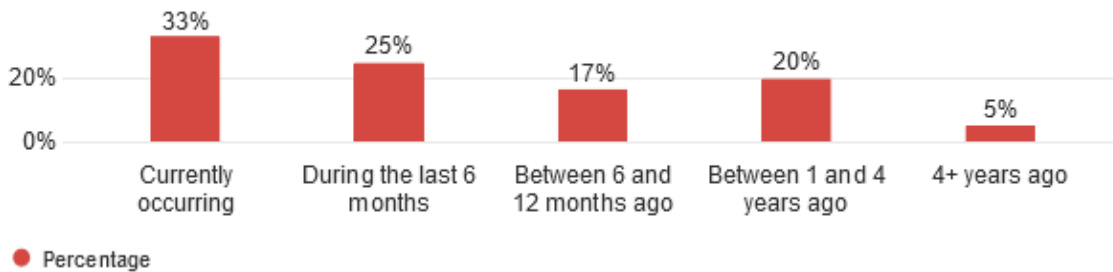
Oireachtas Members - During your time as an Oireachtas member, have you ever experienced any form of threat, harassment, abuse or violence as a result of being a politician?



Graph 3 Oireachtas Members experience of abuse

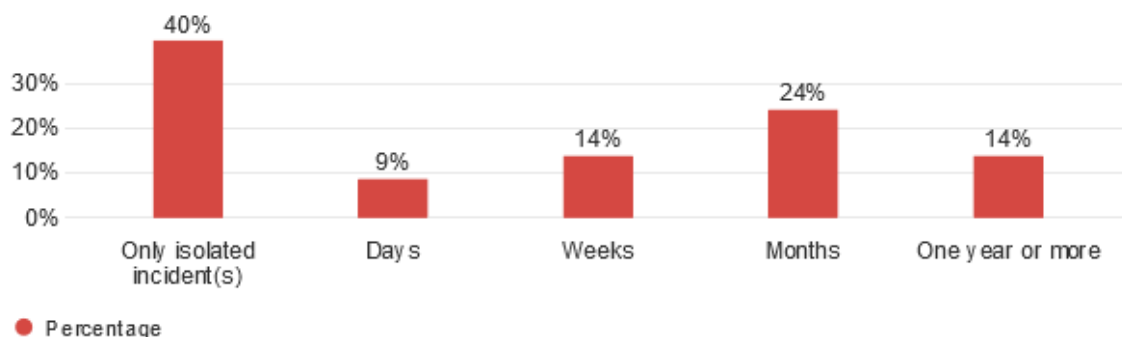
Time and Duration

Oireachtas Members - How recently has this taken place?



Graph 4 - Oireachtas Members - Recency of the abuse

Oireachtas Members - Have any instances of threats/abuse extended beyond one incident? If so, how long did they last?



Graph 5 - Oireachtas Members - Duration of the abuse

Oireachtas Members - Have you experienced unwanted incidents in any of the following locations?

Field	Never	Once	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Online	2%	2%	2%	22%	73%
At constituency office (if TD)	29%	4%	27%	25%	14%
Out socialising in personal capacity	20%	5%	31%	36%	7%
At social event in role as politician	21%	9%	27%	36%	7%
At home address	43%	9%	23%	20%	5%
Other	41%	0%	21%	33%	5%
While travelling	60%	7%	13%	16%	4%
At party office	80%	4%	7%	5%	4%
While in Parliament	46%	13%	21%	16%	4%
At place of residence in Dublin (if different from above)	66%	12%	10%	10%	2%

Graph 6 - Oireachtas Members – Location of the abuse

Types of Abuse

Oireachtas Members - During your time as an Oireachtas member, has anyone subjected you to any o...

Field	Never	Once	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Used abusive language toward you	8%	0%	3%	34%	54%
Used prejudicial slurs toward you (eg. gendered, racist, homophobic, etc.)	28%	2%	7%	24%	40%
Published false information about you	11%	9%	11%	33%	37%
Commented on your physical appearance (including 'compliments')	23%	5%	11%	26%	35%
Spread malicious and false rumours about you	12%	2%	17%	41%	28%
Made persistent unwanted telephone calls or text messages to you	18%	4%	20%	38%	21%
Made unwanted approaches or attempts at contact (at home, in work, or in a public place)	37%	9%	21%	19%	14%
Threatened to harm you	14%	14%	19%	42%	11%
Sent sexually explicit messages	65%	11%	9%	7%	9%
Threatened sexual violence toward you	75%	4%	9%	4%	9%
Called for you to come to serious harm, including self harm	24%	14%	15%	39%	8%
Loitered around your home or workplace	49%	9%	16%	19%	7%
Subjected you to sexual harassment	77%	5%	5%	7%	5%
Threatened to harm family/loved ones	44%	21%	12%	18%	5%
Caused damage to property or items belonging to you	55%	20%	9%	13%	4%
Made unwanted sexual approaches	70%	7%	9%	11%	4%
Threatened to harm staff	60%	15%	13%	11%	2%
Made death threats towards you	47%	19%	10%	22%	2%
Made death threats toward staff	82%	9%	4%	5%	0%
Made death threats toward family/loved ones	75%	9%	2%	14%	0%
Physically attacked or tried to attack you	44%	35%	11%	11%	0%

Graph 7 - Oireachtas Members - Types of abuse

Topics/Issues Related to Abuse

Oireachtas Members - In your view, were any of the instances of abuse you experienced related to the following issues? Choose more than one if relevant

Field	Percentage of Responses
Immigration	72%
LGBT+ issues	44%
Women's rights (eg feminism, reproductive rights, etc.)	51%
The environment	25%
Housing/Homelessness	44%

Graph 8 - Topics/issues associated with the abuse

Issues - Other- please elaborate in the space provided - Text



Graph 9 - Oireachtas Members - Other topics

Impact

This section presents the impact that experiences of abuse have on Oireachtas members. The findings suggest that abuse and harassment have a significant impact on emotional and psychological health, as well as on the political ambition of the respondents. Importantly, abuse also seems to have an impact on voicing opinions on controversial topics.

***Key Observations:**

- The majority of Oireachtas members felt a little anxious or afraid (44%) and increased security measures at their home (55%). A sizeable minority (24%) felt very anxious or afraid.
- Oireachtas members reported that their families feared for their safety (47%)
- 51% of Oireachtas members reported that experiences of abuse made them hesitate to express an opinion; 45% avoided engaging with a specific policy area; and 33% restricted their freedom of speech on a political issue. These findings indicate that abuse has strong chilling effects.
- A sizable part (44%) of the Oireachtas members reported that abuse incidents have made it less likely to run for elected office in the future.

Oireachtas Members - What impact did these incidents have on you?

Field	Percentage
I was a little anxious or afraid	44%
I was very anxious or afraid	24%
I was anxious or afraid	20%
I was not anxious/afraid	11%

Graph 10 Emotional Impact on Oireachtas Members

Oireachtas Members - Have any of these incidents affected you such that you....

Field	Percentage of Responses
Increased security at home	55%
Hesitate to come forward with a particular opinion	51%
Worried about being out in public	51%
Reduced social activities	51%
Feared for safety of family/loved ones	49%
Avoided engaging with a specific policy area or field	45%
Increased security at constituency office (if TD)	42%
Changed daily activities	38%
Restricted your freedom of speech on a political issue	33%
Feared being physically attacked	27%
Suffered from serious mental and physical health impacts (eg. stress related illnesses, anxiety disorder, etc.)	24%
Stayed away from work	13%
Worried about being home alone	11%
Changed telephone number	9%
Became influences to make a different decision	2%

Graph 11 Oireachtas Members - Impact on behaviour

Oireachtas Members - Have any of these incidents affected you such that your family members/loved ones....

Field	Percentage of Responses
Feared for your safety	47%
Increased security at home	47%
Worried about being home alone	35%
Worried about being out in public	35%
Reduced social activities	33%
Changed daily activities	30%
Feared being physically attacked	21%
Suffered from serious mental and physical health impacts (eg. stress related illnesses, anxiety disorder, etc.)	7%
Stayed away from work	2%
Changed telephone number	2%

Graph 12 Oireachtas members - Impact on family

Oireachtas Members - Have these incident(s) influenced your decision to continue to participate in political life?

Field	Percentage
They have not affected my involvement in politics	54%
They have made it less likely that I will run for elected office in the future	44%
I am not running for elected office again and they are a significant contributor to this	2%

Graph 13 - Oireachtas members - Impact on political career

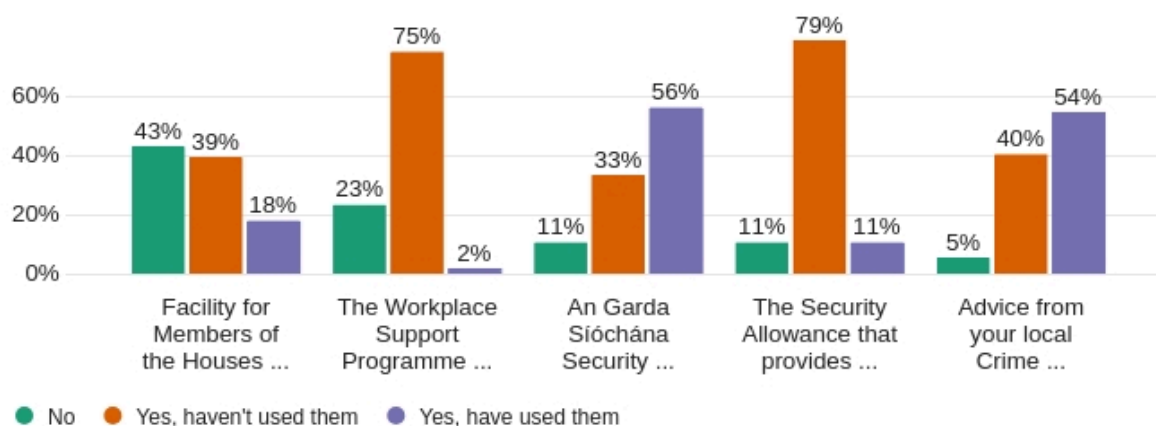
Reporting and awareness of remedial actions and supports

This section reports on awareness and use of existing supports.

*Key observations

- Overall, there are good levels of awareness of supports with 79% and 75% being aware of the Security Allowance and the Workplace Support Programme respectively.
- 75% of Oireachtas members have reported an incident of abuse
- The most used action taken was reporting incidents to the Guards (90%) with generally high levels of satisfaction (40% being very satisfied).
- 64% of the Oireachtas members stated that their main reason for not reporting an incident is not feeling it was serious enough

Oireachtas Members - Are you aware of any of the following supports available to members of the...



Graph 14 - Oireachtas Members - Awareness of supports

Oireachtas Members - Have you ever reported an instance of threat, harassment, abuse or violence

Field	Percentage
Yes	75%
No	25%

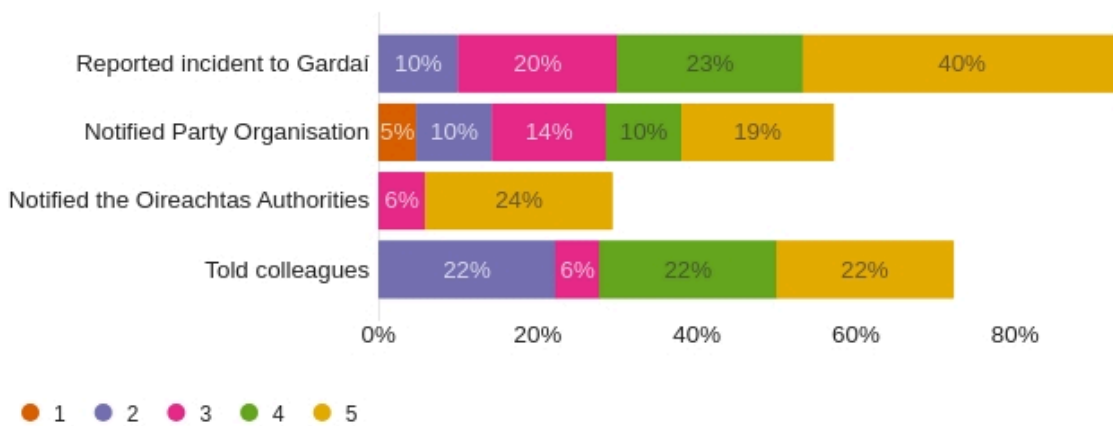
Graph 15 - Oireachtas Members - Reporting Frequency

Oireachtas Members - If yes, how and to whom did you report it?

Field	Percentage of Responses
Reported incident to Gardaí	90%
Told Colleagues	50%
Notified Party Organisation	36%
Notified the Oireachtas Authorities	10%
Other	5%

Graph 16 - Oireachtas Members - Who was notified

Oireachtas Members - On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied were you with the response after taking th...



Graph 17 Oireachtas Members - levels of satisfaction

Oireachtas Members - If you did not report an incident that you experienced, was there any particular reason? - Selected Choice

Field	Percentage of Responses
Did not feel it was sufficiently serious	64%
Did not think reporting incident would lead to solution	57%
Concerned about impact on reputation, image or parliamentary career	29%
Process of reporting more difficult than it is worth	21%
Did not know who or what authorities to report incident to	14%
No reason	0%
Did not think I would be believed	0%
Was afraid to report	0%

Graph 18 Oireachtas Members - Reasons for under-reporting

SECTION II – Political Staff

Participants and Demographics

*Most political staff who responded were women. Government and Opposition were equally represented.

Gender

Political staff - What is your Gender? - Selected Choice

Field	Percentage
Woman	66%
Man	34%
Non-binary	1%

Graph 19 Political Staff - Gender

Political Affiliation

Political staff - Is the member/party you work for part of the government or opposition?

Field	Percentage
Government	50%
Opposition	50%

Graph 20 – Political staff – Government or Opposition

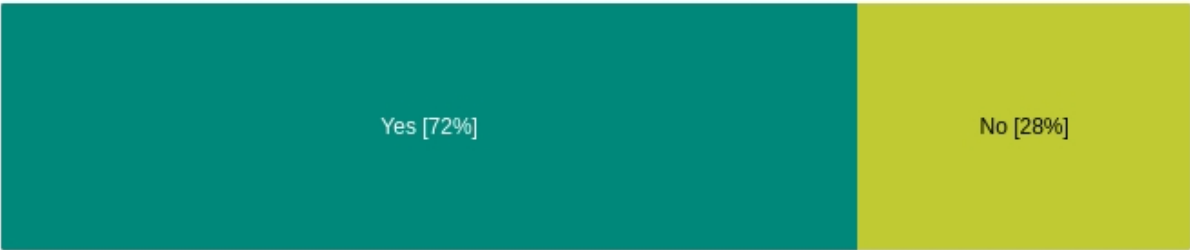
Experiences of Abuse

This section reports the key findings on the prevalence and types of abuse and harassment that Political Staff experienced.

***Key observations**

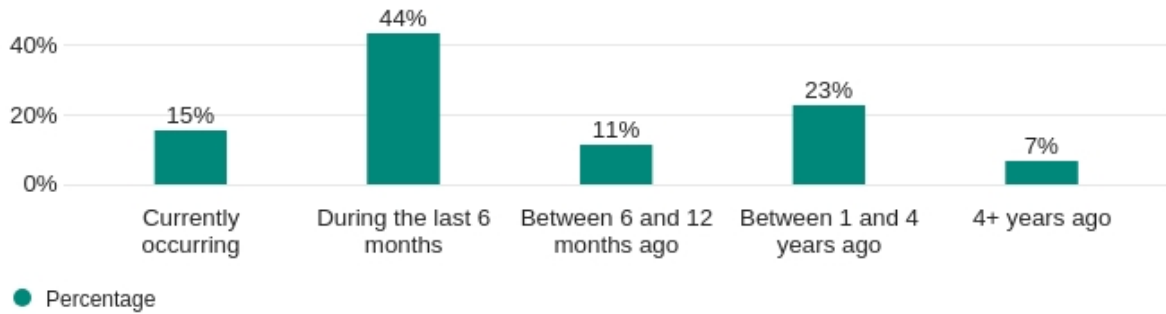
- Political staff reported high levels of abuse (72%), but below those reported by Oireachtas members (94%), and those reported in the UCC (75%) survey. The prevalence seems to be close to that reported by the local councillors in the AILG survey (64%)
- While physical abuse is rare, other types of abuse are experienced occasionally and frequently
- Social media is the location where respondents reported experiencing the most frequent abuse (14%). However, over 64% responded that they had experienced abuse in constituency offices 'rarely', occasionally' and 'frequently', while over 40% had experienced abuse 'occasionally' when canvassing
- The most common types of abuse are abusive language (34%), comments on appearance (13%) and unwanted communications (12%)
- Most abuse experiences (44%) have occurred in the last six months
- Most political staff (60%) have experienced isolated incidents of abuse
- Immigration (67%), homelessness/housing (58%), women's rights (39%) and LGBTQ issues (36%) are all associated with abuse

During your time as political staff in the Oireachtas, have you ever experienced any form of threat, harassment, abuse or violence as a result of working for a politician?



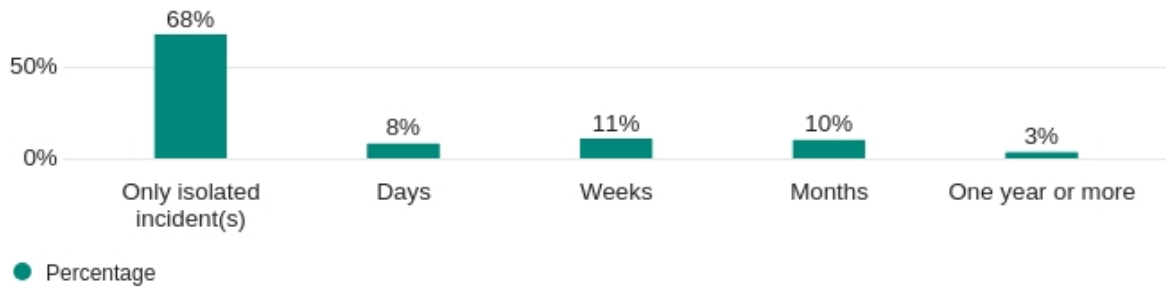
Graph 21 Political Staff experience of abuse

Political staff - How recently has this taken place?



Graph 22 - Political staff - Recency of the abuse

Political staff - Have any instances of threats/abuse extended beyond one incident? If so, how long did they last?



Graph 23 - Political Staff - Duration of the abuse

Political staff - Have you experienced unwanted incidents in any of the following locations?

Field	Never	Once	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Online	41%	5%	15%	25%	14%
At home address	93%	1%	4%	1%	1%
At constituency office (if employed by TD)	27%	8%	23%	28%	13%
At party office	85%	4%	4%	6%	1%
While in Parliament	68%	4%	14%	12%	2%
While canvassing for employer	31%	4%	14%	41%	10%
At social event in role as political staff	67%	5%	15%	12%	1%
Out socialising in personal capacity	50%	10%	18%	16%	5%
Other	84%	1%	8%	5%	2%

Graph 24 – Political Staff – Location of the abuse

Political staff - During your time as political staff, has anyone subjected you to any of the...

Field	Never	Once	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently
Used abusive language toward you	3%	7%	16%	40%	34%
Commented on your physical appearance (including 'compliments')	42%	9%	15%	21%	13%
Made persistent unwanted telephone calls or text messages to you	45%	8%	14%	21%	12%
Used prejudicial slurs toward you (eg. gendered, racist, homophobic, etc.)	43%	5%	17%	25%	10%
Spread malicious and false rumours about you	72%	12%	7%	5%	5%
Made unwanted approaches or attempts at contact (at home, in work, or in a public place)	60%	7%	15%	14%	5%
Called for you to come to serious harm, including self-harm	58%	10%	15%	13%	4%
Threatened to harm you	45%	26%	13%	13%	3%
Threatened sexual violence toward you	87%	5%	4%	1%	3%
Loitered around your home or workplace	65%	10%	11%	12%	3%
Published false information about you	75%	10%	7%	5%	2%
Subjected you to sexual harassment	89%	3%	3%	3%	1%
Sent sexually explicit messages	91%	3%	3%	2%	1%
Made death threats toward family/loved ones	92%	4%	3%	1%	1%
Made death threats towards you	80%	11%	5%	3%	1%
Threatened to harm family/loved ones	88%	2%	6%	3%	1%
Made unwanted sexual approaches	84%	6%	5%	4%	1%
Caused damage to property or items belonging to you	93%	3%	1%	2%	0%
Physically attacked or tried to attack you	84%	10%	3%	2%	0%

Graph 25 - Political Staff - Types of abuse

Political staff - In your view, were any of the instances of abuse you experienced related to the following issues? Choose more than one if relevant - Selected Choice

Field	Percentage of Responses
Immigration	67%
Housing/Homelessness	58%
Other- please elaborate in the space provided	41%
Women's rights (eg feminism, reproductive rights, etc.)	39%
LGBT+ issues	36%
The environment	14%

Graph 26 - Political Staff - Topics/issues connected to abuse

Political staff - Other issues/topics connected to abuse



Graph 27 - Political staff - Other topics

Impact

This section presents the impact that experiences of abuse have on Oireachtas members and political staff. Abuse has a clear psychological impact on political staff as well as an impact on their career ambitions.

***Key Observations:**

- 49% of political staff have felt a little anxious or afraid and increased security measures
- 60% of political staff requested increased security at constituency offices
- Over a quarter of political staff (26%) stated that abuse made it less likely for them to continue in their role

Political staff - What impact did these incidents have on you?

Field	Percentage
I was a little anxious or afraid	49%
I was not anxious/afraid	25%
I was anxious or afraid	17%
I was very anxious or afraid	9%

Graph 28 - Emotional impact on Political Staff

Political staff - Have any of these incidents affected you such that you....

Field	Percentage of Responses
Increased security at home	19%
Requested increased security at constituency office (if employed by a TD)	60%
Changed telephone number	5%
Were unable to attend work	8%
Reduced social activities	14%
Changed daily activities	23%
Worried about being out in public	19%
Worried about being home alone	9%
Feared being physically attacked	24%
Suffered from serious mental and physical health impacts (eg. stress related illnesses, anxiety disorder, etc.)	23%
Feared for safety of family/loved ones	16%

Graph 29 - Political Staff - Impact on behaviour

Political staff - Have unwanted incidents made you consider your continued employment as political staff?

Field	Percentage
They have not affected my desire to continue in my role	68%
They have made it less likely that I will continue in my role after the next election	26%
I am not planning to continue working for a politician after the next election and they are a significant contributor to this	6%

Graph 30 - Political Staff - Impact on political career

Reporting and awareness of remedial actions and supports

This section provides the findings on reporting incidents and awareness and use of existing supports.

*Key observations

- Overall, there are good levels of awareness of supports with 83% of the respondents being aware of the Workplace Support Programme.
- On the whole, political staff are less likely to report incidents (39%) compared to Oireachtas members (75%)
- The most used actions taken were reporting incidents to the Guards (80%) and informing employers (80%) with generally high levels of satisfaction (58% were very satisfied)
- The main reason for not reporting an incident was not feeling it was sufficiently serious (67%)

Political staff - Are you aware of any of the following supports available to members of the...

Field	No	Yes, haven't used them	Yes, have used them
Advice from your local Crime Prevention Officer	32%	40%	28%
An Garda Síochána Security Briefing that was provided by the Houses of the Oireachtas in 2023.	31%	49%	20%
The Workplace Support Programme which provides counselling services for Members and their staff	10%	83%	7%

Graph 31 Political Staff – Awareness of supports

Political staff - Have you ever reported an instance of threat, harassment, abuse or violence

Field	Percentage
Yes	39%
No	61%

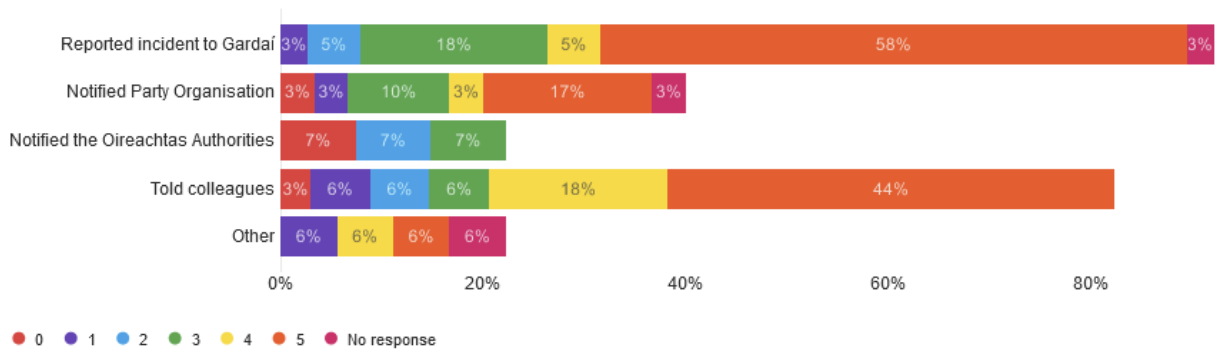
Graph 32 - Political Staff - Reporting frequency

Political staff - If yes, how and to whom did you report it?

Field	Percentage of Responses
Reported incident to Gardaí	80%
Notified my employer	80%
Told Colleagues	46%
Notified the Oireachtas Authorities	7%

Graph 33 - Political Staff - Reporting Recipients

Political Staff - On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied were you with the response after taking th...



Graph 34 - Political Staff - Satisfaction Levels

Political Staff - If you did not report an incident that you experienced, was there any particular reason?

Field	Percentage of Responses
Did not feel it was sufficiently serious	67%
Did not think reporting incident would lead to solution	44%
Process of reporting more difficult than it is worth	12%
Did not know who or what authorities to report incident to	11%
Other	6%
No reason	6%
Was afraid to report	4%
Did not think I would be believed	2%

Graph 35 – Political Staff Reasons for not reporting incidents

SECTION III: Statistical Tests

We performed statistical tests to identify and correlations between demographic variables (gender and age), political variables (position: member or staff, length of service, government or

opposition), Issues/Topics and Types of experiences, Frequency of incidents, Incidents at different locations, Incidents on social media, Overall impact on emotional wellbeing, Participation in political life, and Likelihood of reporting. This section reports the correlations that were statistically significant, focusing on medium size effects and above.

Gender and Type of Abuse

Overall, the tests show that female members of the Oireachtas are significantly more likely to experience gendered abuse, such as slurs, threats of sexual violence, sexual harassment, unwanted sexual approaches, comments on their physical appearance, and online harassment. These findings support the findings of the UCC study on the gendered nature of the abuse.

- Women had significantly higher rates of being subjected to threatened sexual violence than men.
- Women had significantly higher rates of being subjected to prejudicial slurs than men.
- Women had significantly higher rates of being sexually harassed than men.
- Women had significantly higher rates of subjecting to unwanted sexual approaches than men.
- Women had significantly higher rates of receiving comments on physical appearance than men.
- Women had significantly higher rates of receiving sexually explicit messages than men.
- Women had significantly higher rates of experiencing digital sexual harassment than men.

Gender and impact on emotion

Female political staff had significantly higher levels of anxiety than men.

Age

The tests reveal that in general older members of the Oireachtas are less likely to experience any type of abuse.

Topics and Frequency of Incidents

Tests reveal significant connections between certain issues and types of abuse. Immigration and housing/homelessness were linked to physical attacks, threats to harm, calling for Oireachtas members and political staff to come to serious harm, while Women's Rights and LGBTQ issues were linked to threats of sexual violence.

Digital Platforms and Issues

Tests revealed a significant association between issues including immigration, women's rights and LGBT+ and online types of abuse.

Government or Opposition

Tests revealed that being in government is associated with more physical attacks, but with lower rates of encountering people loitering around home or workplace.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This report presented the findings of a survey of the members of the Oireachtas and political staff on the abuse and harassment they receive in the course of their duties. If we consider abuse and harassment against politicians to be a symptom of affective polarisation, then it is clear that the survey findings indicate the existence of this kind of polarisation in Ireland.

In particular, in terms of the **prevalence of abuse**, the survey found that the overwhelming majority of Oireachtas members (94%) and a large majority of political staff had experienced abuse (72%). In terms of the **types of abuse experienced**, respondents indicated that abusive language, slurs, threats, and spreading false information are common even if physical violence is rare. For members of the Oireachtas, **social media** is the most common location where abuse takes place, suggesting that efforts to tackle social media abuse have not been successful. One of the most striking findings of the survey is that abuse is strongly correlated with the following **topics**: immigration, housing/homelessness, women's rights, and LGBT+ issues.

The **impact of this abuse** on Oireachtas members and political staff was such that the majority of all respondents reported feelings of anxiety, while a large percentage (49% and 28% respectively) increased security at home and at their constituency office. Importantly, a significant percentage of Oireachtas members (45%) hesitates to come forward with a particular opinion; in other words, abuse seems to have a notable chilling effect on politicians voicing their views. If we take into account the topics/issues linked to abuse, then debate on immigration, housing, women's issues and LGBTQ issues is likely to be impacted. Additionally, a significant percentage of members of the Oireachtas (43%) and political staff (26%) reported that abuse has made it less likely to continue their political career, indicating that abuse affects political ambition.

The survey further showed the **gendered nature of the abuse**, with female members of the Oireachtas more likely to experience threats of sexual violence, slurs, as well as sexual harassment and unwanted messaging. Finally, the survey found a good level of **awareness of supports** available to those experiencing abuse and harassment, though overall there is some reticence over using them.

These findings are similar to international surveys such as those in Norway, Sweden, and New Zealand, indicating that Ireland follows international trends similar to other established liberal

democracies. The findings also support those of the 2023 survey of councillors by AILG and those of the UCC survey of candidates in the local elections of 2019 and the general election of 2020.

The findings call attention to the impact of this abuse on democracy and participation in public life. As experiences of abuse and harassment against politicians are becoming increasingly normalised, important questions arise concerning who is ultimately able to participate in public life. We note especially the gendered nature of abuse that may put off women from participating in public life. Secondly, given the association between experiences of abuse and the topics of immigration, housing, women's rights and LGBTQ issues, the terms under which political debate takes place around these issues are likely to privilege only certain voices while discouraging others.

As Ireland is moving towards local, European and general elections in the next few months it is important to develop a systematic approach to tackling abuse and harassment against politicians. The following recommendations aim to contribute to the development of this approach.

Recommendations

Overall, improvements in political culture appear necessary for a broader shift towards more civil political discourse. Positive reinforcement and modelling of civil discourse are potentially likely to contribute to such a shift. Similarly, engagement with communities is likely to promote civic education and dialogue on respectful political discourse.

Prevalence:

Tackling the high prevalence of abuse and harassment against politicians and political staff requires evidence-based policies. This in turn points to the need for further research to (i) deepen the insights gained by the present survey; (ii) provide systematic evidence on the abuse and harassment experienced over time. In this respect, the present survey can constitute a benchmark for future studies; (iii) connect the various findings from different studies on abuse and harassment in Irish political life; and (iv) develop new and innovative methodologies for the study of prevalence of abuse in political life.

Experiences:

Significant rates of abuse are related to social media presence, despite recent measures to deal with harmful online contents (DSA, OSMR). In conjunction with further research on trends and patterns of abuse against politicians, more targeted efforts should be made to protect politicians from social media-enabled abuse.

The gendered nature of abuse should be addressed with specific and targeted measures and integrated in all actions to remedy or mitigate abuse. For instance, approaches to media and political literacy should incorporate the gendered dimensions of political abuse. Since women

are specifically targeted, the impact of abuse on female participation in politics should be emphasised.

Impact:

The survey indicated three different kinds of impact of abuse: emotional/psychological impact, impact on the political ambitions of politicians and political staff; and societal impact in terms of silencing debate on certain topics/issues. There is a need for (i) more in-depth research to explore these different kinds of impact and their broader implications; and (ii) to develop specific measures to mitigate these impacts at the level of the individuals affected and at the level of society and political culture.

Supports:

Although there is good awareness of reporting mechanisms and supports, these are unevenly taken up. The development of a specific guide for reporting and seeking support may enable Oireachtas members and political staff to make the most of the resources available.

Appendix - Full List of Statistical Tests

We performed statistical tests to identify and correlations between demographic variables (gender and age), political variables (position: member or staff, length of service, government or opposition), Issues/Topics and Types of experiences, Frequency of incidents, Incidents at different locations, Incidents on social media, Overall impact on emotional wellbeing, Participation in political life, and Likelihood of reporting. This section reports the correlations that were statistically significant.

Gender and Type of Abuse

Overall, the tests show that female members of the Oireachtas are significantly more likely to experience gendered abuse, such as slurs, threats of sexual violence, sexual harassment, unwanted sexual approaches, comments on their physical appearance, and online harassment. These findings support the findings of the UCC study on the gendered nature of the abuse.

Prejudicial slurs

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and the frequency of using prejudicial slurs towards **Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=53) = 13.39, p < 0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.5$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that women had significantly higher rates of being subjected to prejudicial slurs than men.** There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of using abusive language toward political staff, $X^2(8, n=132) = 5.59, p=0.7$.

Threatened sexual violence

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and the frequency of threatened sexual violence toward **Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=52) = 23.02, p < 0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.67$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that women had significantly higher rates of being subjected to threatened sexual violence than men.**

There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of threatened sexual violence toward political staff, $X^2(8, n=133) = 2.07, p=0.98$.

Sexual harassment

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and the frequency of sexual harassment toward **Oireachtas member**, $X^2(4, n=52) = 19.7, p < 0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.62$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that women had significantly higher rates of being sexually harassed than men.**

There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of threatened sexual violence toward political staff, $X^2(8, n=131) = 4.85, p=0.77$.

Unwanted sexual approaches

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and the frequency of unwanted sexual approaches toward **Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=53) = 13.94, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.51$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that women had significantly higher rates of subjecting to unwanted sexual approaches than men.**

There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of unwanted sexual approaches toward political staff, $X^2(8, n=133) = 4.48, p=0.81$.

Comments on physical appearance

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and the frequency of comment on physical appearance toward **Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=53) = 14.35, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.52$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that women had significantly higher rates of receiving comments on physical appearance than men.**

There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of comment on physical appearance toward political staff, $X^2(8, n=133) = 4.35, p=0.82$.

Sexually explicit messages

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and the frequency of sending sexually explicit messages to Oireachtas members, $X^2(4, n=53) = 33.65, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.8$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that women had significantly higher rates of receiving sexually explicit messages than men.**

There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of sending sexually explicit messages to political staff, $X^2(8, n=133) = 4.84, p=0.78$.

Gender and online harassment

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and the frequency of online sexual harassment towards Oireachtas members, $X^2(4, n=54) = 21.13, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.63$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that woman had significantly higher rates of experiencing digital sexual harassment than man.**

There is no significant association between gender and the frequency of digital sexual harassment toward political staff published in a public forum, $X^2(8, n=131) = 2.77, p=0.95$.

Gender and impact on emotion

There is no significant association between gender and emotional impact of incidents on Oireachtas members, $X^2(3, n=52) = 3.78, p=0.29$.

A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between gender and impact of incidents on political staff's emotion, $X^2(6, n=136) = 18.38, p<0.01$. A

large effect size was observed, $V=0.26$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that female political staff had significantly higher levels of anxiety than men.**

Age

The tests reveal that in general older members of the Oireachtas are less likely to experience any type of abuse.

- There is a small, negative, statistically significant association between age and frequency of using **abusive language** toward **Oireachtas members**, $\rho = -0.29$, $n=55$, $p<0.05$. **Older members are less likely to have experienced abusive language.**
- There is a small, negative, statistically significant association between age and frequency of comment on **Oireachtas members' physical appearance**, $\rho = -0.29$, $n=53$, $p<0.05$. **Older members are less likely to have received comments on their appearance.**
- There is a medium, negative, statistically significant association between age and frequency of **publishing false information** about **Oireachtas members**, $\rho = -0.3$, $n=53$, $p<0.05$. **Older members are less likely to have experienced the publication of false information about them.**
- There is a small, positive, statistically significant association between age and frequency of **unwanted incidents at constituency offices** toward **political staff**, $\rho = 0.19$, $n=133$, $p<0.05$. **Older political staff are more likely to experience unwanted incidents at constituency offices.**
- There is a small, negative, statistically significant association between age and frequency of unwanted incidents at Parliament toward political staff, $\rho = -0.27$, $n=127$, $p<0.01$. **Older political staff are less likely to experience unwanted incidents at the Parliament.**
- There is a small, negative, statistically significant association between age and the **frequency of repeated and unwanted approaches made by one individual** on social media toward Oireachtas members, $\rho = -0.27$, $n=55$, $p<0.05$. **Older members are less likely to have experienced frequent repeated and unwanted approaches by one individual.**

Topics and Frequency of Incidents

The tests here reveal significant connections between certain issues and types of abuse. It is important to mention that immigration and housing/homelessness were linked to physical attacks.

- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of physical attacks towards political staff**, $X^2(3, n=144) = 8.57$, $p<0.05$. A medium effect size was observed, $V=0.24$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **housing or homelessness issues and the frequency of physical attacks towards political staff**, $X^2(3, n=144) = 12.24$, $p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.29$

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- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and frequency of threat to harm Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 9.88, p<0.06$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.42$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and frequency of threat to harm political staff**, $X^2(4, n=143) = 13.9, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.31$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of threat to harm political staff**, $X^2(4, n=143) = 11.82, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.29$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **housing or homelessness issues and the frequency of threat to harm political staff**, $X^2(4, n=55) = 11.46, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.46$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of calling for Oireachtas members to come to serious harm**, $X^2(4, n=59) = 11.12, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.43$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of calling for political staff to come to serious harm**, $X^2(4, n=140) = 20.53, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.38$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of calling for political staff to come to serious harm**, $X^2(4, n=140) = 14.7, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.32$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of using abusive language towards Oireachtas members**, $X^2(3, n=59) = 10.33, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.42$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of using abusive language towards political staff**, $X^2(4, n=149) = 11.22, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.27$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and the frequency of using abusive language toward Oireachtas members**, $X^2(3, n=59) = 11.39, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.44$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and the frequency of using abusive language toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=149) = 9.77, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.26$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of using prejudicial slurs towards Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=58) = 10.68, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.43$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of using prejudicial slurs towards political staff**, $X^2(4, n=145) = 15.45, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.33$.
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- LGBT+
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and the frequency of using prejudicial slurs towards Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=58) = 13.43, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.48$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and the frequency of using prejudicial slurs toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=145) = 23.56, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.4$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and the frequency of using prejudicial slurs toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=145) = 20.86, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.38$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of threatened sexual violence toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 13.59, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.31$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of threatened sexual violence toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 9.84, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.26$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of sexual harassment toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=144) = 10.95, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.28$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of unwanted sexual approaches toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 15, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.32$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and frequency of comment on political staff's physical appearance**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 12.67, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.29$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of comment on Oireachtas members' physical appearance**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 10.22, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.42$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of comment on Oireachtas members' physical appearance**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 14.48, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.5$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of sending sexually explicit messages to Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 10.31, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.43$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of sending sexually explicit messages to political staff**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 14.53, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.32$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **housing or homelessness issues and frequency of making unwanted**
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approaches or attempts at contact toward political staff, $X^2(4, n=147) = 10.71, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.27$.

- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of loitering around political staff's home or workplace**, $X^2(4, n=147) = 14.54, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.31$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and frequency of damaging political staff's property or items**, $X^2(3, n=145) = 8.32, p<0.05$. A medium effect size was observed, $V=0.24$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and frequency of publishing false information about Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 10.22, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.42$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of publishing false information about Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 11, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.44$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of publishing false information about Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 10.41, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.42$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of publishing false information about political staff**, $X^2(4, n=148) = 15.04, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.32$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of making persistent unwanted telephone calls or text messages to political staff**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 11.39, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.28$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of making persistent unwanted telephone calls or text messages to political staff**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 10.29, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.27$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **environment issues and frequency of making persistent unwanted telephone calls or text messages to Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=56) = 10.79, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.44$.
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **housing or homelessness issues and frequency of making persistent unwanted telephone calls or text messages to political staff**, $X^2(4, n=146) = 14.38, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.31$.

Digital Platforms and Issues

Testing here revealed a significant association between issues including immigration, women's rights and LGBT+ and online types of abuse.

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- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and frequency of unwanted incidents online toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=142) = 26.75, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.43$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and frequency of unwanted incidents online toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=142) = 14.24, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.32$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of unwanted incidents online towards Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=59) = 11.1, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.43$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and frequency of unwanted incidents online towards political staff**, $X^2(4, n=142) = 16.26, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.34$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of repeated and unwanted approaches made by one individual on social media to Oireachtas members**, $X^2(4, n=57) = 15.22, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.52$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of repeated and unwanted approaches made by one individual on social media to political staff**, $X^2(4, n=139) = 17.96, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.36$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **immigration issues and the frequency of unwanted and disturbing approaches made by many individuals on social media toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=140) = 12.7, p<0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.3$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and the frequency of personal information about political staff published in a public forum**, $X^2(4, n=139) = 14.77, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.33$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **LGBT+ issues and the frequency of digital sexual harassment toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=139) = 15.67, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.34$.
 - A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between **women's rights issues and the frequency of digital sexual harassment toward political staff**, $X^2(4, n=139) = 16.51, p<0.01$. A large effect size was observed, $V=0.34$.

Government or Opposition

Tests here indicate that members of the government had higher rates of being physically attacked but lower rates of being door-stepped.

- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between position and the frequency of physical attacks toward Oireachtas member, $X^2(3,$

n=51) = 10.8, $p < 0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V = 0.46$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that being part of the government had significantly higher rates of being physically attacked than being a member of the opposition.**

- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between position and the frequency of comment on physical appearance toward political staff, $X^2(4, n=133) = 12.09$, $p < 0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V = 0.3$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that being part of the government had lower rates of receiving comments on physical appearance than being a member of the opposition.**
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between position and the frequency of loitering around Oireachtas member's home or workplace, $X^2(4, n=53) = 11.25$, $p < 0.05$. A large effect size was observed, $V = 0.46$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that being part of the government had lower rates of encountering people loitering around home or workplace than being a member of the opposition.**
- A Chi-square test for independence indicated that there was a significant association between position and environment issues among political staff, $X^2(1, n=195) = 12.95$, $p < 0.01$. A medium effect size was observed, $V = 0.25$. **Post hoc analysis revealed that being part of the government had significantly higher rates of perceiving environmental issues as the cause of abuse than being a member of the opposition.**