

## Dozens of Incidents of Political Violence, Intimidation and Threats Detected During Irish Election Campaign

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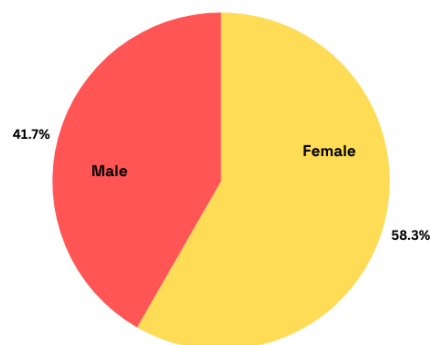
A joint analysis by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) and the Hope and Courage Collective (H&CC) has uncovered 36 incidents of politically motivated violence, intimidation, harassment or threats since campaigning for local and European elections officially kicked off in Ireland on 6 May.

The analysis is based on monitoring for such incidents reported both online and in news reports. As priority was given to documenting offline incidents targeting individuals, acts of vandalism targeting posters were not included. Online incidents where hate speech, falsehoods or doxing were aimed at individuals were also recorded. However, due to the nature of online spaces and the large number of candidates running in the elections, it is likely that the totality of such incidents is much higher.

### Disproportionate targeting of women candidates and candidates with migrant backgrounds

In this year's local elections, [more women ran for office](#) than in any previous local election. Additionally, [record numbers of candidates](#) from a migrant background ran in the 2024 elections, more than half of whom were women. Of the 36 incidents, 21 targeted women and 15 targeted men. In 13 of the incidents, individuals from a migrant background who are running for election were targeted, with all of these cases featuring racially-charged abuse.

Incidents of political violence/intimidation by gender



Incidents of political violence targeting migrant candidates

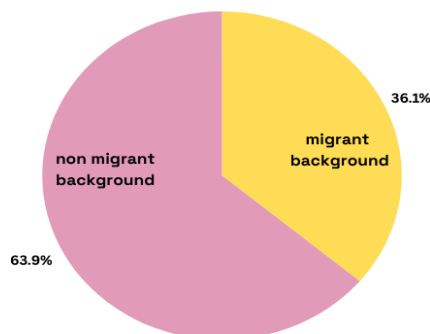


Figure 1: Incidents of political violence/intimidation by gender (L) and those targeting candidates with a migrant background (R)

Illustrative examples of attacks on women candidates and candidates from migrant backgrounds include:

- In Limerick, where canvassers for Fine Gael's Suzzie O'Deniyi were [aggressively confronted](#) when distributing flyers in the city, receiving racist and sexually-charged abuse.
- In Artane, Fine Gael candidate Linkwinstar Mattatil Matthew and his team were [targeted](#) while putting up posters and told to go "back to where they came from".
- A video [published by Fine Gael](#) featuring Ejiro O'Hare-Stratton, a local candidate in Drogheda, was copied by a far-right account on X (formerly Twitter) and overdubbed with monkey noises.
- Two of the most extreme incidents, which were both reported in the media after the fact and did not feature content of the attacks posted online, involved physical assaults on two female councillors - Independent Tania Doyle and the Green Party's Janet Horner. Both of these attacks happened on the same night while the candidates were putting up posters in their localities.

### **A third of incidents occurred online**

11 of the 36 incidents occurred online, where individuals were either threatened, doxxed or targeted with hate speech or falsehoods. This included the [doxxing](#) of Limerick mayoral candidate Daniel Butler, where his address and threats to smash his windows were posted on TikTok. Further threats also targeted Butler's family, including his two young children.

In another incident, an account on X falsely claimed that Sivakumar Murugadoss, an independent candidate in Ashbourne who has [lived in Ireland for 21 years](#), had only recently moved to the country. The tweet was viewed more than 40,000 times before it was deleted and attracted claims that Murugadoss's candidacy was a sign of "foreign interference".

Similarly, Natalya Krasnenkova, a local election candidate in Kerry originally from Ukraine, was also targeted online with claims that her candidacy amounted to "foreign electoral interference".

### **Incidents demonstrating an overlap between online and offline attacks**

14 incidents had both an offline and online element. A recurring tactic is to film confrontations and then use them as content on social media platforms. These videos are quickly shared across online networks, sometimes receiving tens of thousands of views and attention from prominent international figures. This also results in further abuse being directed towards candidates.

Individuals targeted in this way included Fine Gael local election candidate Sarah Adedeji, who was harassed and recorded by a man when putting up posters in Clondalkin. Following the incident, the individual who targeted Adedeji posted on X saying, "All these traitors will be arrested and publicly executed for treason against the Irish people".

Government politicians have also been targeted in this way, including Minister for Children Roderic O'Gorman, who was followed and recorded for more than two minutes by two individuals associated with an alternative news site. In two further incidents, Taoiseach Simon Harris, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee and MEP Maria Walsh were followed and harassed while campaigning in Castlebar, Co Mayo on 2 June.

In Cork, local election candidate for Labour Dr Lekha Menon Margassery [posted on X](#) about facing “racism and bullying” while putting up election posters. Her tweet was swarmed by far-right accounts who targeted her with xenophobic and racially-charged abuse in hundreds of replies.

### **Targeting of candidates from established political parties as “traitors”**

Fine Gael candidates were the most commonly targeted, with nine incidents, followed by independents, who were the victims in eight incidents. Green Party candidates were singled out in six incidents and Sinn Féin five times. Three incidents were directed at Labour Party politicians, while People Before Profit and the Social Democrats were targeted twice. Lastly, one incident was linked to a candidate running for the far-right party Ireland First. This incident resulted in the doxxing and targeting of the person who confronted the candidate.

Common themes that emerged from those involved in the intimidation and harassment included referring to members of established political parties as “traitors” and issuing sinister threats to candidates. Racism and anti-migrant hate speech were widespread, particularly when migrant candidates were harassed. In seven incidents, the perpetrators specifically confronted candidates over their stance on immigration. In one incident, a candidate was confronted aggressively over a specific local issue. In another, the issue raised was far-right violence and criminality in the area, specifically arson attacks.

### **Conclusion: an unprecedented influence of far-right rhetoric on Irish elections**

While this analysis uncovered incidents targeting political figures across the political spectrum, it is clear that the majority of those taking part in such actions are influenced by far-right rhetoric. The trends in Ireland mirror those [seen in countries across Europe](#), where acts of violence targeting political figures and motivated by far-right ideology are increasing.

These incidents, and many others throughout the campaign which have not been reported on, are a sign of a sea change in Irish politics, where confrontational and aggressive tactics are used to attempt to silence political opposition.

For the vast majority of candidates who contested the elections in June 2024, it was free from threats, intimidation and violence. However, it is deeply concerning that most of those who received intimidation, threats and violence come from the very groups who are already underrepresented in Irish politics as a whole. If this worrying trend continues it could impact the recent gains made in the diversity of candidates contesting Irish elections, and in turn impact Irish democracy as a whole.