

A YEAR OF HATE: ANTI-DRAG MOBILISATION EFFORTS TARGETING LGBTQ+ PEOPLE IN THE US.

New research from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue reveals that anti-drag protests, threats, and violence continue to accelerate in the US and illuminates the coalitions of actors driving it.

A [new report](#) by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD) authored by ISD's Digital Research Analysts Clara Martiny and [Sabine Lawrence](#) documents **203 incidents** that targeted all-ages drag events online and offline across the United States from June 1, 2022 to May 20, 2023.

Although drag events by no means encompass all of the LGBTQ+ community, they are a highly visible part of the community. In an environment which is seeing threats against this community significantly increase globally, understanding threats against drag events provides a useful insight into the nature of the threats targeting LGBTQ+ communities today.

The report is part of a [larger project](#) that evaluated similar threats in the United Kingdom, France, and Australia, as well as finding isolated incidents in several European countries. The US witnessed the **highest incidence of anti-drag protests**, as well as the **highest number of violent incidents** associated with anti-drag activism of the countries analyzed.

According to the report, anti-drag threats are not carried out by just anti-LGBTQ+ groups, but include a hybridized threat environment that includes the neo-fascist group Proud Boys, who are the most active aggressors against drag events, as well as white supremacists, parents' rights activists, anti-vaxxer groups, and Christian nationalists. The report also finds increasing incidents where much of the anti-drag online commentary leads to offline activity.

"The numbers in this report suggest that we run the risk of dangerous backsliding toward hate and violence directed at LGBTQ+ people," said Clara Martiny, digital research analyst of ISD. "It is no surprise that when political leaders advance anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and schools are forced to censor LGBTQ+ voices, anti-LGBTQ+ threats and harassment rise."

Key findings

ISD tracked anti-drag activity in the US between June 1, 2022 and May 20, 2023 to understand the actors involved, the narratives and tactics used, and the impact of such activity. The key findings are as follows:

- **203** incidents that targeted drag events online and offline across the U.S.
- Of the 203 U.S. incidents:
 - **182** (89%) online targeting resulted in offline incidents.
 - **100** (49%) targeted drag queen story hours.
 - **75** (37%) targeted drag shows.
 - Other targets included drag brunches and drag bingos.
- As the leading group of anti-drag activity, local Proud Boys chapters targeted **60** drag events, with **39** of these events resulting in verbal or physical clashes.
- **6.4%** of drag events were cancelled for security reasons after being targeted online and offline. **Five** of the canceled events still faced protestors in-person.

- New York, Texas, California, and Illinois are states with the highest numbers of anti-drag activity.
- Libs of TikTok on Twitter is one of the largest purveyors of anti-drag content online, earning millions of views.
- Protestors use tactics such as on-site protests, occasionally with weapons; stickering campaigns, doxxing, sending threatening messages to performers and hosts, and harassing email or phone call campaigns to get events canceled.

Key recommendations

In order to help reduce the worsening attacks on drag-related events, ISD makes the following recommendations to policymakers and law enforcement:

- States must improve their hate crimes statistics processes so that there is consistent collection and reporting of LGBTQ+ hate crimes in every community.
- School boards must ensure that LGBTQ+ students are protected from discrimination and harassment.
- Law enforcement must be vigilant of the tactics, techniques and procedures advanced online and offline by groups targeting drag events.

“The spread of anti-LGBTQ+ hate in the U.S. is advancing across the globe,” said [Dixon Osburn](#), Executive Director of ISD, United States. “It’s imperative that policy makers address the rise of hate and extremism online and off. It starts with taking online threats seriously. We need to be proactive in protecting LGBTQ+ communities to avoid a snowballing effect of hate.”

Through ethnographic monitoring of relevant US-based Telegram channels, Twitter profiles, Facebook groups, external resources such as the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), Crowd Counting Consortium, and previous reports on anti-drag activity by groups such as the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) and the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), ISD analysts compiled, categorized, and analyzed anti-drag protests or online threats against drag events within the last year.

Interviews with the author are available on request.

The full report is available on ISD’s website.

Please direct enquiries to media@isdglobal.org.