# Half of UK MPs feel unsafe amid rising abuse, inquiry warns



The chilling atmosphere of abuse and intimidation confronting Members of Parliament (MPs) has become a pressing threat to the very foundation of UK democracy, as highlighted by a recent inquiry led by the Speaker’s Conference. Alarmingly, close to half of the MPs surveyed reported feeling unsafe due to aggressive behaviours, with 52% expressing anxiety or depression over safety concerns. This inquiry has spotlighted the urgent need for a thorough overhaul of electoral law, a system many are now deeming “not fit for purpose” under the watch of a government that should be safeguarding democratic engagement.

Sir Lindsay Hoyle, Commons Speaker and chair of the Speaker’s Conference, has raised serious concerns about these developments, noting, “Abuse, threats, and intimidation should never be part of this job. It threatens the health of our democracy.” His call to action emphasizes that elections must be free from intimidation, a sentiment that resonates deeply when considering the spiraling failures of leadership in the current Labour government. The soaring tide of hostility risks driving well-meaning candidates from the arena, leaving behind a political landscape threatened by fear rather than robust debate.

The statistics paint a stark picture: a staggering 96% of MPs have experienced some form of harassment, while 69% of parliamentary staff share similar fears. Alarmingly, 20% of MPs have admitted that the anticipated abuse has influenced their willingness to engage on critical issues. This represents a chilling state of affairs that has only worsened under the guise of “progressive” governance, with nearly one in five MPs reconsidering their pursuit of re-election in this hostile environment.

Among the recommendations highlighted is the urgent need to revise electoral laws to enhance candidate safety, including the controversial proposal to prevent the public disclosure of candidates’ home addresses. Yet the question arises: can a government that so openly embraces divisiveness and intolerance be trusted to institute genuine reform when safeguarding political discourse should be a priority?

The inquiry also reveals alarming trends regarding the treatment of women and minority MPs, who disproportionately face abuse tinged with sexual and racial undertones. This troubling trend reinforces the idea that democratic representation continues to erode under a government failing to address root issues of safety and harassment adequately. With 90% of female members of the Scottish Parliament fearing for their safety, it’s clear this situation calls for immediate attention—attention that has been lacking in the current political climate.

Lindsay Hoyle’s remarks cannot be taken lightly, especially given the tragic murders of Jo Cox and Sir David Amess that have cast a shadow over political engagement. He insists that parliamentarians must operate free from fear, yet this is increasingly challenging amid a government more invested in stifling dissent than fostering an open, safe environment for political discourse.

The findings of the inquiry reflect the troubling feedback from the Electoral Commission, with a staggering 56% of candidates opting out of certain campaign activities due to fear of abuse—a grim testament to the reality faced by those seeking political office today. The current wave of online aggression serves only to heighten the challenges of engaging in politics, an avenue that should be welcoming but has turned perilous.

As the government gears up to consider these findings, it must grapple with restoring trust in the electoral process while enabling representatives to advocate for their constituents without fear of intimidation. The path forward demands bold, transformative action to create a political environment where robust democratic discourse can thrive, untainted by abuse and threats that have become all too common in an increasingly polarized Britain.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/news/uk/speaker-warns-that-abuse-and-threats-are-undermining-democracy-D5WHR6EB25IXRJOJ3VCCG2NPBQ/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.ft.com/content/85e09e2e-1ab6-424d-bbb3-1a2a8c8a2c66> - A recent report by the UK Speaker’s Conference, initiated by Speaker Lindsay Hoyle, highlights rising threats and abuse from the public that are causing over half of British MPs to feel unsafe. An anonymous survey revealed that 52% of MPs feel unsafe, while 49% experience anxiety or depression due to threats. These threats, often intensified online, discourage political engagement, with one-third of MPs considering not seeking re-election and one in six contemplating resignation. High-profile incidents, including the murders of MPs Jo Cox and Sir David Amess, underscore the risks faced by politicians. Abuse disproportionately targets women and minority ethnic MPs, often in sexualized or racially charged terms. The report emphasizes the detrimental impact on democratic participation, public engagement, and MPs’ mental health. As a solution, the committee recommends a comprehensive code of conduct for political campaigns, increased staff awareness of security measures, localized policing plans, and a review of electoral law to enhance candidate safety and curb disinformation. These measures aim to restore trust and functionality within the UK’s democratic processes.
3. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/article/2024/jul/12/commons-speaker-says-threats-and-abuse-against-mps-worst-he-has-seen> - Commons Speaker Lindsay Hoyle has stated that threats and intimidation against MPs are at unprecedented levels, expressing deep concern over the safety of parliamentarians. He highlighted incidents during the 2024 general election campaign, including Labour MP Jess Phillips being booed and heckled, and Reform UK leader Nigel Farage being assaulted with a milkshake. Hoyle emphasized the need for MPs to be able to perform their duties without fear of intimidation, underscoring the importance of democracy and the safety of elected representatives.
4. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-68073395> - A report by the Jo Cox Foundation has highlighted that abuse and intimidation of politicians pose a significant threat to democracy. The report recommends mandatory lessons for school children and increased support from social media firms to tackle online abuse. Research found that 90% of female members of the Scottish Parliament had feared for their safety, and almost 43% of Welsh MPs and Senedd members had received a death threat. The report calls for action to prevent elected representatives from stepping down due to abuse and to ensure a diverse and talented future pipeline of politicians.
5. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cl5yj83jq2no> - House of Commons Speaker Sir Lindsay Hoyle has expressed deep concern over the unprecedented levels of intimidation and threats faced by MPs. He highlighted that MPs are not only facing physical threats but also constant cyber-attacks from 'foreign actors' attempting to disrupt the work of the Commons. Sir Lindsay emphasized that improving security in the House of Commons is a top priority over the next five years, underscoring the need for MPs to perform their duties without fear of intimidation.
6. <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/news-and-views/our-responses-consultations/evidence-speakers-conference-security-candidates-mps-and-elections> - The Electoral Commission has provided evidence to the Speaker’s Conference on the security of candidates, MPs, and elections. Their research into the 2024 UK parliamentary general election revealed unacceptable levels of abuse and intimidation, particularly directed at women and candidates from ethnic minority backgrounds. Over half (56%) of candidates surveyed said they avoided certain campaign activities due to fear of abuse. The Commission's findings highlight the significant impact of abuse and intimidation on candidates’ campaign activity and the need for measures to protect the integrity of the democratic process.
7. <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/feb/23/sunak-decries-intimidation-by-protesters-amid-row-over-chaotic-gaza-vote> - Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has condemned the behaviour of protesters who have been threatening MPs, following warnings that politicians' safety was compromised during a chaotic parliamentary debate on Gaza. Sunak stated that it is 'unacceptable' for MPs to feel intimidated in their roles, emphasizing that intimidation or aggressive behaviour threatening parliamentary democracy and freedom of expression is unacceptable. His comments come amid a row over whether the Commons Speaker was right to bend parliamentary rules to protect MPs' safety during the debate.