



NATIONAL  
ABORTION  
FEDERATION

# 2020 VIOLENCE AND DISRUPTION STATISTICS

Despite a global pandemic, abortion providers continued to experience an escalation in targeted violence and disruption in 2020. Abortion providers reported an increase in vandalism, assault and battery, death threats/threats of harm, stalking, and hoax devices/suspicious packages from 2019.

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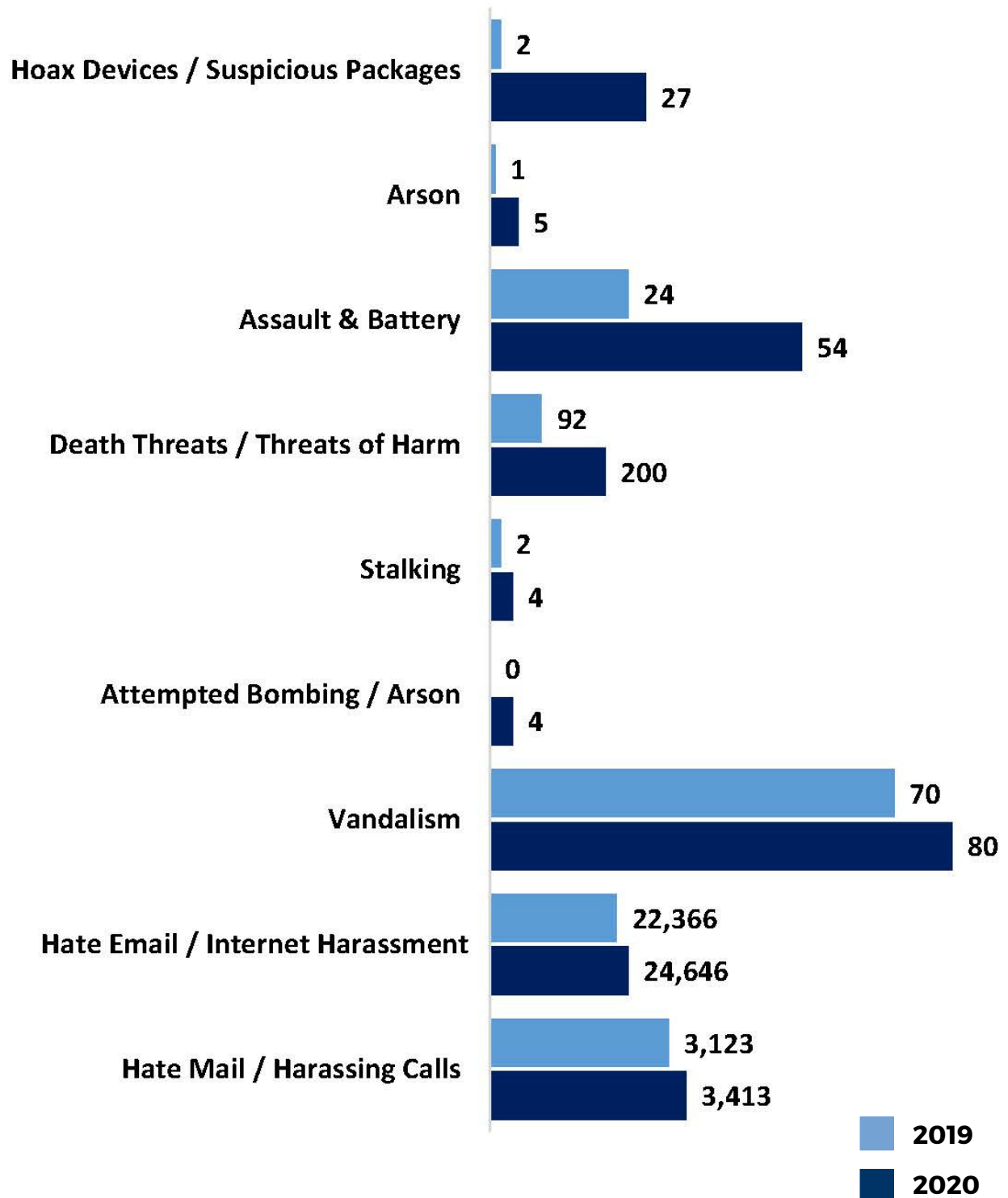
Throughout 2020, anti-abortion individuals and groups exploited the COVID-19 pandemic, racial justice uprisings, and 2020 elections as opportunities to harass abortion providers.

Anti-abortion protesters congregated outside abortion clinics despite stay-at-home orders and public health guidance to avoid group gatherings, and we observed an alarming trend of armed, white supremacist individuals meeting outside NAF member facilities and protesters co-opting the language of the movement for Black lives in their attempts to intimidate providers and patients.

Emboldened by the passage and enforcement of abortion restrictions in several states, anti-abortion individuals and groups continued to harass abortion providers this year. A January 2020 unclassified report from the FBI outlined an ongoing increase in anti-abortion threats, disruption, and violence, stating, "The FBI assesses the increase in abortion-related violent extremist threats and criminal activity, including violations of the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances (FACE) Act, against targets including reproductive healthcare facilities (RHCFs) likely is driven in part by the recent rise in state legislative activities related to abortion services and access."

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# 2020 INCREASES



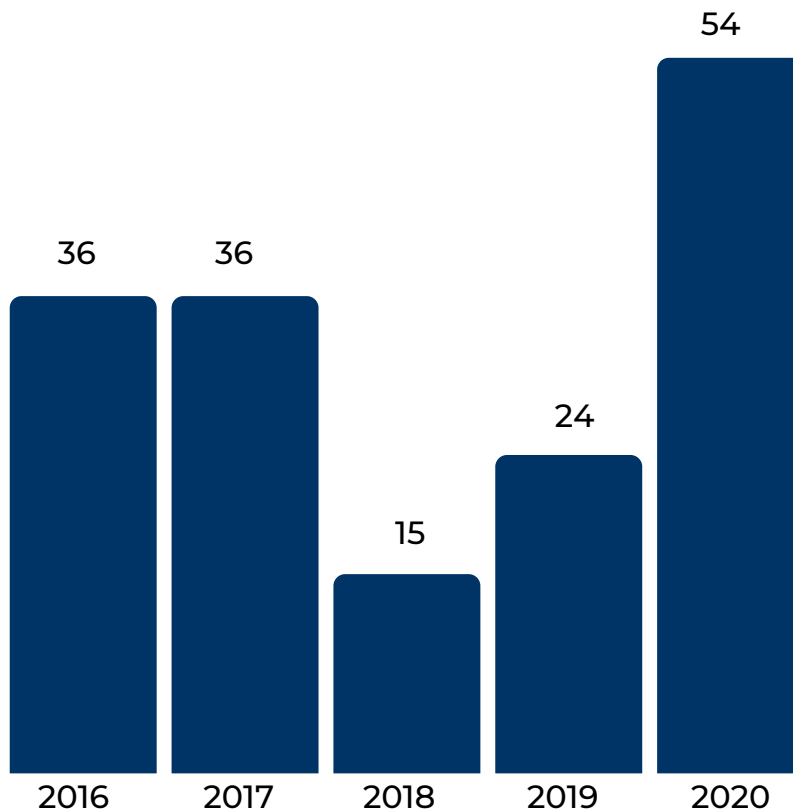
# ASSAULT & BATTERY

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REPORTS OF  
ASSAULT & BATTERY  
INCREASED 125%  
FROM 2019

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NAF members reported an increase in assault and battery outside of clinics, with the majority of incidents involving anti-abortion protesters having altercations with clinic escorts, patient companions, and patients. We received reports of anti-abortion individuals shoving, pushing, tripping, and spitting on clinic escorts, staff, and others outside of clinics. These reports were particularly disturbing given the public health concerns around COVID-19 and the guidance to practice social distancing.



# INTERNET HARASSMENT & DEATH THREATS

Internet harassment, hate mail and harassing phone calls, and death threats all rose once again this year. During the pandemic, some anti-abortion individuals and groups encouraged their followers who were staying at home to target abortion care providers online.

Providers reported:

**3,413 targeted incidents of hate mail and harassing phone calls, rising from 3,123 in 2019.**

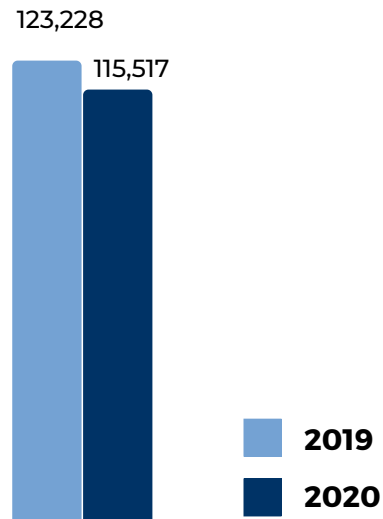
Abortion care providers continued to receive focused threats through phone calls and text messages as well as postal mail and flyers sent to health care facilities and the homes of clinic staff. This hate speech often escalates and turns into death threats and threats of harm.

**In 2020, abortion providers reported an increase in death threats and threats of harm, rising from 92 in 2019 to 200 in 2020.**

# PROTESTS AMID A PANDEMIC

Although reports of picketing were slightly lower in 2020, this is likely due to a decrease in anti-abortion protester activity in some locations at the very beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, after the onset of the pandemic, anti-abortion individuals and groups went back to targeting clinics and we received anecdotal accounts of increased threats and disruptions at member clinics specifically linked to COVID-19, with anti-abortion protesters threatening to sneeze and cough on patients and surrounding patients' cars as they waited to enter clinic buildings. Many anti-abortion protesters were unmasked and defied stay-at-home orders and restrictions on gatherings:

- In March 2020, four men were charged—and three of them arrested—while protesting outside a clinic in Greensboro, NC, even though there was a local stay-at-home order in place. The following week, eight people were arrested for violating North Carolina's stay-at-home order by participating in a protest of approximately 50 people outside an abortion clinic in Charlotte.
- The first citation for violating San Francisco's COVID-19 stay-at-home order was issued to an anti-abortion protester outside a clinic.
- In Michigan, the Governor issued a stay-at-home order that prohibited



public and private gatherings but did not apply to churches and other houses of worship. Anti-abortion protesters exploited this and gathered in large groups outside Detroit clinics during the pandemic claiming that they were having a religious gathering.

- More than 700 anti-abortion individuals held a march in Charlotte, NC, in November with no social distancing and few people wearing masks during a record-breaking spike in COVID-19 cases.

NAF members also reported an escalation in aggressive behavior from protesters during 2020 so although there was a slight decrease in picketing, the activities were often more intense and disruptive.

# METHODOLOGY

NAF has been tracking incidents of violence and disruption against reproductive health care providers since 1977. NAF asks our member facilities and allied organizations to submit monthly reports on the anti-abortion incidents that they experience. We conduct telephone and email follow up to our member clinics to acquire completed reports and to gather additional information about reported incidents as needed. If we are not able to validate an incident, it is not included in our statistics, which suggests that actual incidents are higher than reported. In the 2020 statistics, we suspect underreporting in picketing, blockades, obstructions, robbery, stalking, suspicious packages, trespass, and vandalism.

NAF continues to work with an outside security firm to monitor threats, track scheduled anti-abortion events, and develop comprehensive profiles of anti-abortion extremists. NAF collects and compiles this data to detect patterns in anti-abortion criminal activities and appropriately report these trends to law enforcement.

Numbers prior to 2013 represent the United States and Canada only. Numbers from 2013-2020 represent the United States, Canada, and Colombia.

## ABOUT NAF

*The National Abortion Federation (NAF) is the professional association of abortion providers in North America. We represent all types of abortion providers. Our members include private and non-profit clinics, Planned Parenthood affiliates, women's health centers, physicians' offices, and hospitals who together care for more than half the women who choose abortion in the U.S. and Canada each year. Our members also include public hospitals and both public and private clinics in Mexico City and private clinics in Colombia.*



[www.prochoice.org](http://www.prochoice.org)

naf NATIONAL ABORTION FEDERATION	NAF VIOLENCE AND DISRUPTION STATISTICS (2010 - 2020)											
	INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE & DISRUPTION AGAINST ABORTION PROVIDERS											
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Totals 2010-2020
<b>Violence</b>												
Murder	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Attempted Murder	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	9
Bombing	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Arson	0	1	5	0	1	4	1	1	1	1	5	20
Attempted Bombing / Arson	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	4	8
Invasion	0	0	0	8	1	6	7	11	8	19	7	67
Vandalism	22	27	12	5	12	67	109	92	125	70	80	621
Trespassing <sup>1</sup>	45	69	47	264	78	118	247	823	1,135	1,507	1,265	5,598
Butyric Acid Attacks	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Anthrax / Bioterrorism Threats	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
Assault & Battery	4	3	7	0	1	6	36	36	15	24	54	186
Death Threats / Threats of Harm <sup>2</sup>	2	2	6	2	1	94	33	62	57	92	200	551
Kidnapping	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burglary <sup>3</sup>	13	8	5	0	1	9	66	34	13	9	8	166
Stalking <sup>4</sup>	7	1	6	20	4	9	22	21	14	2	4	110
<b>Totals</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>1,369</b>	<b>1,724</b>	<b>1,627</b>	<b>7,342</b>
<b>Disruption</b>												
Hate Mail / Harassing Calls	404	365	452	420	367	373	869	1,156	1,388	3,123	3,413	12,330
Hate Email / Internet Harassment <sup>5</sup>	44	17	41	88	91	25,839	42,726	15,773	21,252	22,366	24,646	152,883
Hoax Devices / Suspicious Packages <sup>6</sup>	8	2	7	2	9	35	29	30	4	2	27	155
Bomb Threats	12	1	1	4	1	4	9	8	3	8	5	56
Picketing <sup>7</sup>	6,347	4,780	5,706	5,574	5,402	21,715	61,562	78,114	99,409	123,228	115,517	527,354
Obstruction <sup>8</sup>			79	396	251	242	580	1,704	3,038	3,387	2,712	12,389
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6,815</b>	<b>5,165</b>	<b>6,286</b>	<b>6,484</b>	<b>6,121</b>	<b>48,208</b>	<b>105,775</b>	<b>96,785</b>	<b>125,094</b>	<b>152,114</b>	<b>146,320</b>	<b>705,167</b>
<b>Clinic Blockades</b>												
Number of Incidents	1	5	6	3	23	45	51	104	43	9	2	292
Number of Arrests <sup>9</sup>	0	0	4	1	0	0	1	10	2	0	18	36

<sup>1</sup> Tabulation of trespassing began in 1999.

<sup>2</sup> Death Threats, as of 2015, include any reported or discovered "Threats of Harm."

<sup>3</sup> This category includes incidents of Burglary, Robbery, and Theft that occurred at a reproductive health facility.

<sup>4</sup> Stalking is defined as the persistent following, threatening, and harassing of an abortion provider, staff member, or patient away from the clinic.

Tabulation of stalking incidents began in 1993.

<sup>5</sup> Tabulation of email harassment began in 2002. As of mid-November 2015, enhanced technology allowed for an increased ability to document internet harassment.


<sup>6</sup> Tabulation of hoax devices began in 2002.

<sup>7</sup> NAF changed its method of collecting picketing data in 2012. Obstruction was separated into its own category.

<sup>8</sup> Tabulation of obstructions began in 2012. Obstruction is defined as the act of causing a delay or an attempt to cause a delay in the conduct of business or prevent persons from entering or exiting an area. This would apply to violations of the FACE Act.

<sup>9</sup> The "number of arrests" represents the total number of arrests, not the total number of persons arrested. Many individuals were arrested multiple times



	<b>NAF VIOLENCE AND DISRUPTION STATISTICS (Summary by Decade)</b> <b>INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE &amp; DISRUPTION AGAINST ABORTION PROVIDERS</b>					
	1977 to 89	1990 to 99	2000 to 09	2010 to 19	2020	Totals
<b>Violence</b>						
Murder	0	7	1	3	0	11
Attempted Murder	0	16	1	9	0	26
Bombing	25	15	1	1	0	42
Arson	64	96	14	15	5	194
Attempted Bombing / Arson	37	39	20	4	4	104
Invasion	247	117	25	60	7	456
Vandalism	244	575	570	541	80	2,010
Trespassing <sup>1</sup>		193	1,864	4,333	1,265	7,655
Butyric Acid Attacks	0	100	0	0	0	100
Anthrax / Bioterrorism Threats	0	47	614	2	0	663
Assault & Battery	58	53	71	132	54	368
Death Threats / Threats of Harm <sup>2</sup>	70	247	88	351	200	956
Kidnapping	2	1	1	0	0	4
Burglary <sup>3</sup>	20	35	98	158	8	319
Stalking <sup>4</sup>		404	110	106	4	624
<b>Totals</b>	<b>767</b>	<b>1,945</b>	<b>3,478</b>	<b>5,715</b>	<b>1,627</b>	<b>13,532</b>
<b>Disruption</b>						
Hate Mail / Harassing Calls	192	6,327	6,210	8,917	3,413	25,059
Hate Email / Internet Harassment <sup>5</sup>			345	128,237	24,646	153,228
Hoax Devices / Suspicious Packages <sup>6</sup>			160	128	27	315
Bomb Threats	237	245	129	51	5	667
Picketing <sup>7</sup>	847	29,937	110,600	411,837	115,517	668,738
Obstruction <sup>8</sup>				9,677	2,712	12,389
<b>Totals</b>	<b>1,276</b>	<b>36,509</b>	<b>117,444</b>	<b>558,847</b>	<b>146,320</b>	<b>860,396</b>
<b>Clinic Blockades</b>						
Number of Incidents	385	289	87	290	2	1,051
Number of Arrests <sup>9</sup>	24,380	9,447	4	18	18	33,867

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