

Election Violence Prevention Toolkit

A guide for U.S. Mayors
and city leadership

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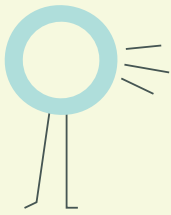
Democracy starts here.

What happens in our neighborhoods shapes our nation.

Peaceful elections have always been essential to the democratic process in the United States. As we find ourselves in a moment of heightened tensions at the national level, it's increasingly important to work proactively to prevent political and election-related violence. **Mayors play a critical role in creating a positive, peaceful, inclusive, and informative election environment in their communities.**

Local leadership. National election.

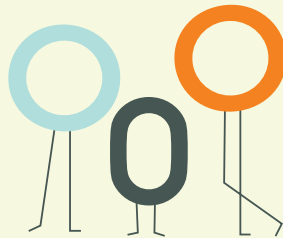
As we head into the final stretch of the 2020 election, Mayors are uniquely positioned to help prevent violence in their cities through:



Communication

Proactively offer clear and measured information for voters, helping to dispel misinformation and create a sense of voter safety and security around the election.

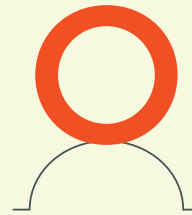
[!\[\]\(faf942dc3e59ce8eb64b4ac481eca7e0_img.jpg\) Access Communications Guidance and Templates](#)



Connection

Serve as a hub for residents, local organizations, city departments, state/county officials, and more to help build community and resilience.

[!\[\]\(95b425611cbd2b8716a140cf67c81822_img.jpg\) Access the Stakeholder Matrix](#)



Composure

Anticipate and de-escalate conflict, identify sources of risk, and make an action plan. Prepare to address any tensions that emerge throughout the electoral process.

[!\[\]\(56549452e01ca28bdf2500ced9653143_img.jpg\) Access the Risk, Resilience, and Response \(RRR\) Assessment](#)

We know it's a hard year for everyone, and Mayors and cities are no exception. This toolkit offers clear guidance and customizable templates to support Mayors as they do their part to ensure free and fair elections this year. **Join a growing number of U.S. cities working to reduce the risk of voter intimidation, heightened tensions and division, confusion, and even violence this Election Season—** from now through inauguration—and beyond.

If you have any questions or are interested in support, **we're here to help.** Over Zero, Delivery Associates, and other expert organizations are offering pro-bono support to cities. Reach out to us at cities@projectoverzero.org.

In this toolkit

Click on any link below to jump to a topic or tool.

This document outlines concrete actions Mayors can take to proactively mitigate the risk of local election violence—from now through inauguration and beyond.

The focus of this toolkit is on community-based resilience, as detailed throughout. While security forces (local law enforcement, state agencies, national guard, etc.) can play a role in immediate de-escalation of an imminent threat, research and practice from around the world has shown time and time again that the most effective violence prevention approaches include coordination between leaders representing stakeholder groups from across the community.*

Mayors are uniquely positioned to play a critical role in forming this type of comprehensive resiliency.

[Overview of Election Season Timeline and Tools](#)

Summary of the path from here to inauguration—and beyond.

[Your Resiliency Network](#)

Who you need on your team.

[Potential Risk Factors](#)

Big picture risk factors for heightened tensions, intimidation, violence, and a climate of misinformation and confusion.

[Taking Action: A Roadmap to Election Violence Prevention](#)

Detailed strategies and action items to mitigate election violence.

[Appendix](#)

Potential sources of risk in your community, along with 3rd party data to begin a local risk assessment.

*For more information on the research behind this approach, you can reference Over Zero's policy paper, ["Building U.S. Resilience to Political Violence: A \(Globally-Informed\) Framework for Analysis and Action."](#)

Worksheets and Tools for Cities

Downloadable, customizable assets to save time and effort.



[Stakeholder Matrix](#)

A framework to map stakeholders and plan how to engage with them.



[Sample Engagement Facilitation Guide](#)

A facilitation guide for stakeholder engagement.



[Risk, Resilience, and Response \(RRR\) Assessment](#)

A tool to guide your local action plan.



[Communications Guidance and Templates](#)

DOs and DON'Ts and key considerations for proactive and crisis response communication.
Pre-populated, customizable social media posts and video talking points for Mayors.



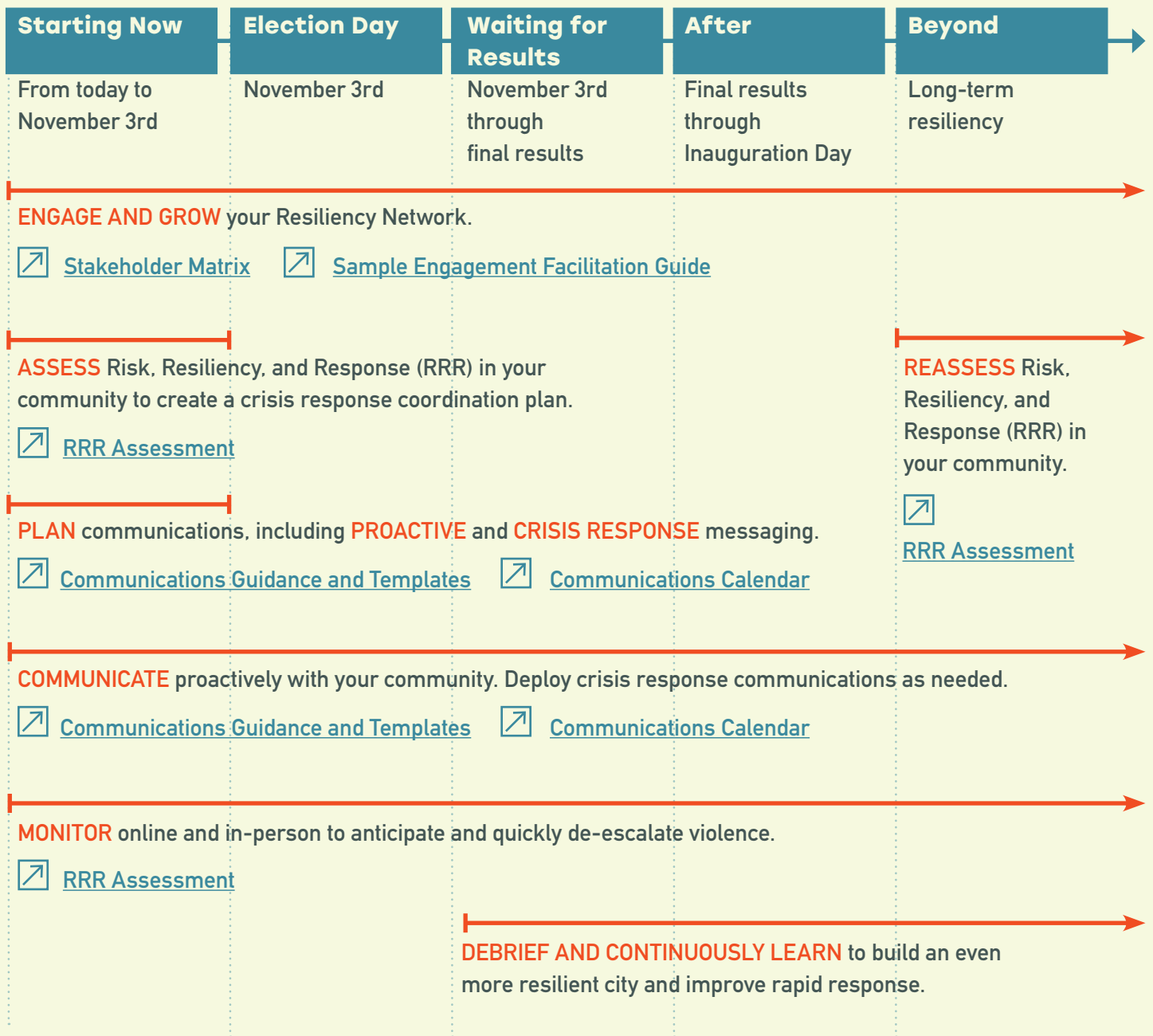
[Communications Calendar](#)

Interactive tool for planning proactive communications.

Timeline and Tools

Overview of actions between now and Inauguration Day.

Actions are paired with downloadable templates and tools to streamline your efforts as much as possible. If you have any questions or are interested in support, please reach out to cities@projectoverzero.org.



Strong connections. Peaceful elections.

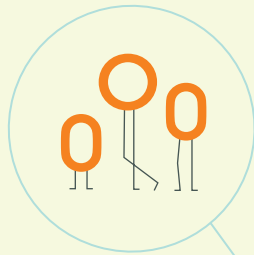
Build your local Resiliency Network.

Building a local relational infrastructure—a network of leaders across a community with well-established, designated communication channels—is the foundation of effective violence prevention and mitigation. As a Mayor, use your community ties, communication platform, and convening power to help:

- **Monitor** risk
- **Mobilize** stakeholders
- **Manage** and allocate resources

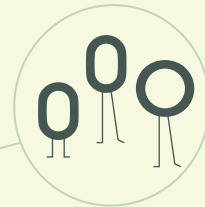
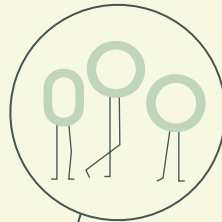
Community leaders

Examples: Faith organizations, NGOs, business owners, community organizers, bridge-building organizations

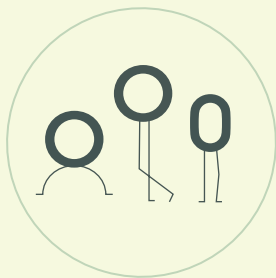


Internal city departments

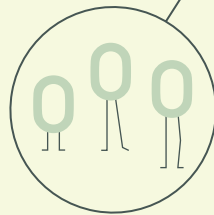
Examples: Emergency Management Services, Neighborhood Services, local law enforcement



Official local poll-monitoring organizations

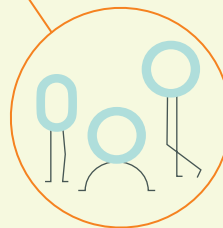


Residents



State and county officials

Examples: Secretary of State, Governor, Board of Elections



Neighboring jurisdictions

Examples: Peer Mayors, local governments

What you can do with members of your Resiliency Network

Community leaders

Examples: Faith organizations, NGOs, community organizers, business owners, bridge-building organizations

- Partner with influencers who reach different groups in your community
- Connect with leaders from marginalized groups, especially those who have been targets of voter intimidation and suppression
- Connect groups with each other as appropriate
- Serve as a liaison for groups who are not comfortable engaging each other directly (including internal city departments)
- Make sure community leaders have a clear, accessible, confidential channel for reporting emerging risks to you
- Respond to concerns and questions

Residents

- Communicate in a clear, measured manner to avoid confusion throughout Election Season
- Set the tone for a positive, peaceful, inclusive election cycle
- Provide a clear channel for residents to submit issues, concerns, and complaints

Internal city departments

Examples: Emergency Management Services, Neighborhood Services, local law enforcement

- Coordinate proactive mitigation strategies
- Align on strategy and goals
- Engage local security while moving away from violence-prevention approaches that rely solely on security forces

Neighboring jurisdictions

Examples: Peer Mayors, local governments

- Coordinate efforts and share ideas, analyses, and experiences

State and county officials

Examples: Secretary of State, Governor, Board of Elections

- Coordinate on state-specific voter education messaging
- Align on non-partisan, non-polarizing, non-alarmist, and non-speculative messaging to counter national tensions
- Reinforce positive, localizing norms and narratives

Official local poll-monitoring organizations

- Proactively establish communication channels
- Coordinate rapid, clear, measured communication around glitches, concerns, or changes

Who else? Ask yourself who in your city may be critical to prevent violence and strengthen community resilience.

The need to build community resilience to political violence is particularly acute in 2020.

National tensions in a global pandemic.

The 2020 U.S. election cycle is unprecedented in many ways. In addition to taking place amidst a global pandemic, the U.S. entered this election cycle in a bitterly partisan landscape where even the question of how to have a free and fair election has been politicized. The tensions within this partisan landscape are further compounded by:

- [High levels of identity-based polarization](#) not seen since the immediate aftermath of the Civil War
- [Normalization of hate speech and dangerous speech](#) in political and public rhetoric
- [Divided media environment](#) pushing competing narratives
- [Widespread mis- and disinformation](#) disseminated more broadly and rapidly than ever through social media
- [Procedural changes](#) necessitated by COVID-19, and accompanying technical challenges on a short timeline
- [Preemptive claims of election fraud](#) and unwillingness to accept defeat

What are the risks closer to home?

In the 2020 election, it is critical for Mayors to be aware of the myriad risks for political violence in their communities. Coercive pressure, intimidation, threats of violence, or physical violence itself jeopardize citizens' rights to democracy.

Further, in the waiting period before we know the final results—and even leading up to Inauguration Day—tensions and disputes could lead to calls for violence. Managing and preventing potential violence is a key function of resiliency networks; once violence occurs, it has the potential to spiral into cycles of retaliation, where new violence is justified as revenge or retaliation.

Every city is different.

Understand the unique risks and resiliencies in your neighborhood.

Understanding sources of risk in your city begins with a high-level review of the data. We've compiled a list of reputable 3rd-party data sources to get you started. These are found in the [Appendix of this document](#).

However, it is not enough to rely on 3rd-party data alone. Official documentation often often under- or misrepresents the reality for residents, especially in marginalized communities. **Therefore, it is important for cities to engage their Resiliency Network for a comprehensive understanding of sources of risk in their community**, such as historical or current conflicts or tensions between certain groups, or intimidation and harassment of specific groups.

To conduct an in-depth analysis of risks and resiliencies in your community, and to begin to make a response plan, see our [Risk, Resilience, and Response Assessment](#).

Get started: A detailed roadmap for election violence prevention

Starting Now

Actions to take from today until November 3rd.

Risk Factors

Leading up to an election, it is critical to be aware of efforts to manipulate the election itself by influencing who will turn out to vote—often through coercive pressure, intimidation, threats of violence, physical violence itself, and targeted mis- and disinformation campaigns.

Role of Mayors

Local leaders play a key role in providing reliable information and mitigating threats of violence leading up to an election. During this time, it's also essential to set up the relationships and plans you need to respond to emerging events.

STARTING NOW

ELECTION DAY

WAITING FOR RESULTS

AFTER

BEYOND



STARTING NOW

Build a Resiliency Network.

- Assign a point person in your administration for election violence prevention.**
 Ensure this person is well-equipped and authorized to lead stakeholder engagement and coordination throughout this Election Season.
- Map stakeholders.**
 - **Consider** different types of stakeholders, including those with whom you are already connected and those with whom you wish to establish a connection.
 - **Determine** an outreach strategy for different stakeholders and what questions to ask. It is important to remember that this outreach should be aimed at building a working partnership formed on mutual trust, rather than being transactional.
 - ↗ [Tool: Stakeholder Matrix](#)
 - **Engage stakeholders:** Work 1:1 or in small groups to build relationships and analyze risks and capacities for response.
 - ↗ [Tool: Sample Engagement Facilitation Guide](#)

Conduct a risk, resilience, and response assessment.

Leverage Network knowledge and experience to conduct a Risk, Resilience, and Response Assessment for your city.

- Risk:** Review historical and current tensions within your community. Brainstorm scenarios that could escalate, list warning signs to monitor and prepare for, and consider who in your network has knowledge and capacity to respond.
- Resilience:** Identify existing structures and experiences of mutual cooperation and aid. Assess resources your Resiliency Network can access (such as skills, materials, and in-kind support) and where there are gaps.
- Response:** Plan how your Resiliency Network will communicate and work together to prevent, prepare for, monitor, and respond to election violence. Move away from violence prevention approaches that rely solely on security forces by engaging local security alongside a broader constellation of stakeholders in your response planning.
 - ↗ [Tool: Risk, Resilience, and Response Assessment](#)

Plan your communications.

Develop a communications plan, including:

- **Proactive messaging:** Prepare and schedule messages for use throughout Election Season. Clear, measured communications can address underlying dynamics that foment violence, and help voters feel safe and engaged. Use your platform to set expectations for the election cycle, provide civic education about voting procedures, offer clarity around changes related to COVID-19, proactively counter any mis- or disinformation about the election, and set positive expectations for your community around voting.
- **Crisis response messaging:** Lay the groundwork for effective rapid response messaging in the event of election violence, tensions, unrest, confusion, and misinformation. Coordinate stakeholders and review best practices so you'll be ready for rapid deployment if needed.
 - [Tool: Communications Guidance and Templates](#)
 - [Tool: Communications Calendar](#)

2 WEEKS BEFORE ELECTION DAY

Grow your support.

- **Engage with the community:** Use your Resiliency Network to form and strengthen relationships with community leaders, understand their groups' concerns and goals, manage any tensions that arise, respond to threats and intimidation in ways that restore safety and security for those targeted, introduce groups to one another to support cooperation, and build trust. Consider meeting with groups who are at greatest risk of being targeted with election violence and get familiar with best practices for preventing violence at protests using the "[Protests & Public Safety: A Guide for Cities & Citizens](#)" resource from Georgetown University Law Center's Institute for Constitutional Advocacy and Protection (ICAP).
- **Check in with Resiliency Network members:** Find out how they're feeling, what they're seeing, what they're hearing from their communities, etc.
 - [Tool: Sample Engagement Facilitation Guide](#)

Allocate resources.

Certify you have allocated all the resources you need for your response plan. If resources are tight, think creatively about what other municipal resources or capacities can be brought in or leveraged, or how you can collaborate with neighboring municipalities and state-level efforts.

Communicate proactively.

- Coordinate closely with your Secretary of State on all voter information.
- Identify reputable sources of real-time voter information for residents to follow on social media and/or elsewhere.
- Use your platform to establish trust in the electoral process. Start communications around positive norms, a shared local identity, and the expectation for a peaceful Election Season.
- Encourage everyone to vote.
- Proactively communicate to residents about what to expect on voting day and/or during early or mail-in voting, including clear information on how to find polling places, what’s changed this year due to COVID-19, and any other locally relevant information.
- Embed in your messaging the idea of a waiting period—for example, referring to Election Season instead of Election Night, and highlighting the hard work of dedicated election officials from both parties. **Note that messaging to manage expectations should be careful not to inadvertently depress voter turnout.**
- Be positive and action-oriented. When communicating about long lines, for instance, express gratitude and community pride in high voter turnout, coupled with tips (for example: “Make sure to bring water when you go vote!”).
- Prepare your Election Day communications (twitter, social, etc.).
- Prepare your post-Election Day communications (press releases, etc.).
 - [Tool: Communications Guidance and Templates](#)
 - [Tool: Communications Calendar](#)

Continue to prepare your crisis response communications plan.

In the case of emerging tensions, intimidation, or violence, you’ll need to quickly deploy accurate, measured information, de-escalate, and help restore a sense of safety and support for communities. Coordinate ahead of time on key channels and best practices, included below and in the [Communications Guidance and Templates](#).

Rapid Response Messaging DOs and DON'Ts

DOs

Listen to and consult with targeted communities before acting

Set and model positive norms

Tell people “who we are,” rather than “who we’re not”

Emphasize agency

Model or showcase empathy

Offer a concrete path forward for grievances

Be careful and specific when sharing information about violence or other related events

Ensure that you don’t dehumanize

Use best practices for correcting mis- and disinformation*

Anticipate and prepare

DON'Ts

Don’t call for peace without offering a way to address the underlying issues

Don’t be vague or dishonest

Don’t fuel stories about violence that could serve to intimidate communities. If you must share stories about violence, always talk about what is being done to address it.

Don’t inadvertently suggest violence is more widespread than it is

Don’t dehumanize

Don’t signal negative norms

Don’t raise the profile or notoriety of violent actors

Don’t repeat misinformation or rumors

Don’t emphasize or create chaos or confusion

Don’t buy into a zero-sum frame

More guidance on crisis response communications, including social media process in case of emergency, can be found in the [Communications Guidance and Templates](#).

*For best practices on correcting mis- and disinformation, consult "[The Debunking Handbook](#)" by John Cook and Stephan Lewandowsky.

1 WEEK BEFORE ELECTION DAY

Monitor actively.

- Monitor online activity.** Monitor social media and other platforms to continue to keep track of risks, including any new developments from armed groups. Look for active disinformation campaigns and tailor city communications to combat them.
- Check in specifically about any efforts at voter intimidation.** Work with community leaders in your Resiliency Network to coordinate a response that helps ensure any targeted communities feel safe and secure voting.
- Take the temperature in your city.** Use your Resiliency Network to get a sense of how things are going on the ground.

Keep communicating.

- Continue to provide people with the information they need to vote.** Provide accurate information in the face of any misinformation or disinformation. Coordinate closely with your Secretary of State, and make sure you give residents a link or social media page to follow for real-time updates.
- Set the tone.** Highlight positive norms, model empathy, correct misinformation,* and use inclusive language, such as “we” instead of “they.” Emphasize the unifying, local identity of your community and draw on relevant community narratives and values. For example, you might say, “Our city has a long history of running successful elections. 2020 has been tough on all of us, but we’re not going to let it stand in the way of a free and fair election for every voter.” Where possible, tell stories of people supporting others and share voter education information.
- Embed in your messaging the idea of a waiting period—for example, referring to Election Season instead of Election Night, and highlighting the dedication of election officials from both parties. **Note that messaging to manage expectations should be careful not to inadvertently depress voter turnout.**
- Prepare communications in advance.** Prepare communications for immediately after the election, empathizing with the difficulty of waiting and encouraging residents to wait patiently and peacefully for results.

↗ [Tools: Communications Guidance and Templates](#)

*For best practices on correcting mis- and disinformation, consult [“The Debunking Handbook”](#) by John Cook and Stephan Lewandowsky.

Election Day

Actions to take on November 3rd.

Risk Factors

On Election Day (and during early voting), violence can be used to intimidate people at polling stations, on the way to polling stations, and after they have left. Recent changes due to COVID-19 increase the risk of confusion and tension around any technical or procedural issues that arise, such as long lines, changes in polling station locations, or other unanticipated technical issues such as power outages.

Role of Mayors

Create a clear channel for reporting emerging issues, and actively monitor for those issues. Communicate real-time updates to residents and voters, including congratulating them on voter turnout and providing context and action plans for any challenges or concerns that come up. Be prepared to deploy resources as necessary.

STARTING NOW

ELECTION DAY

WAITING FOR RESULTS

AFTER

BEYOND



ON ELECTION DAY

Actively monitor and respond.

- Monitor risks with your Resiliency Network, especially close to polling areas.**
 Keep in touch with Network members throughout the day to get a sense of how the day is going and learn about any issues as they arise. Remember to also monitor threats online.
- Specifically check in with stakeholders about any efforts at voter intimidation.**
 If necessary, work with key community stakeholders to coordinate a response that helps ensure the targeted community feels safe and secure voting.
- Respond appropriately.** Work with partners throughout the day to ensure that responses to issues or concerns are appropriate and meet the needs of different stakeholders.
- Ensure poll watchers are engaging in lawful behaviors.** National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) [Poll Watchers and Challengers resource](#) lists required poll watcher qualifications by state.
- Understand state-specific rules regarding militias.** ICAP's [State Fact Sheets](#) describe militia-related laws in each state, what constitutes a militia, and what to do if militia-like activity is observed at a polling place.

Deploy resources.

Deploy mitigation tools and resources if needed. Coordinate across your Resiliency Network and across city departments to ensure transparency and accountability.

Communicate clearly.

Keep emphasizing positive norms and a shared local identity, and continue to proactively and responsively correct mis- and disinformation. Respond quickly to any technical issues or challenges that come up on Election Day and include a clear plan for resolution, as well as any relevant action items for voters.

Waiting For results

Actions to take from November 3rd to the announcement of final results.

Risk Factors

The wait time between Election Day and announcement of results will be longer than in recent years due to the need for a longer counting period. During this time, it is critical to pay attention to any **preemptive declarations** of victory or attempts to **undermine the integrity** of the election process. We should also pay attention to any **tensions and mobilization** of armed actors and networks.

Role of Mayors

This can be a precarious time which requires active, ongoing monitoring and communication. In this time period, you are holding people's hands to help them clearly understand, trust in, and have patience with the process while undermining any attempts to sow discord. Provide clear, official channels for people to address any grievances.



BETWEEN ELECTION DAY AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

Actively monitor and respond.

- Coordinate with your Resiliency Network to continue to monitor and address any issues that arise.
- Pay close attention to groups that are planning protests or making threats of violence.
- Pay close attention to tensions and mobilization of armed actors and networks.
- Begin preparations for different types of response based on the behaviors you are seeing, which may include:
 - Protests disputing or opposing results, including armed protestors and/or the potential for them to be met with counter-protests.
 - Armed militia mobilization. ICAP’s [Protest & Public Safety guide](#) provides a legal review for city and state attorneys regarding the best approaches to protests where there is a risk of armed actors.
 - “Victory violence,” where the declared winner may violently express dominance over the perceived loser, whether members of a political party or a minority or marginalized group (this includes hate crimes, property destruction). Even if the results haven’t been finalized, preemptive declarations of victory could lead to victory violence.

Communicate.

- Explain to citizens why there might be longer wait times for results.** With the uptick in mail-in voting due to COVID-19, more time will be required to count votes than usual. Election workers are counting and double-checking every ballot. Explain the process to normalize and ease tension during the waiting period.
- Frame expectations around a positive;** for example, highlight the careful counting process and hardworking elections officials. Emphasize your community’s commitment to the full democratic process.
- Communicate about what happened just after elections.** If elections were peaceful, reinforce social commitment; if negative, reinforce the importance of being patient while election workers count the ballots. For example, consider saying, “What an amazing day. Thank you to all the voters and volunteers who made it possible. Now we wait for every vote to be counted.”
- Guide people through the counting process** and create clear official channels for reporting, elevating, and working to resolve any grievances that arose from Election Day.
- Be prepared to offer clear and accurate information amidst confusion.** If results are not out, continue to provide clear expectations about when to expect election results and how results will be announced.
 - [Tool: Communications Calendar](#)
 - [Tool: Communications Guidance and Templates](#)

After

Actions from announcement of final results to Inauguration Day.

Risk Factors

After an election we must monitor for violence arising from **contestation of results, victory violence** (where the winner expresses domination over the perceived loser—either political opponents or marginalized groups), or a combination of both.

Role of Mayors

Continue to monitor, and deploy resources as needed. In the meantime, communicate around positive democratic norms and create clear, constructive channels for reporting grievances.

STARTING NOW

ELECTION DAY

WAITING FOR RESULTS

AFTER

BEYOND



WHILE WAITING FOR INAUGURATION DAY

Continue to monitor and respond.

- Continue to monitor threats when results are out and mobilize your Resiliency Network to act upon your risk mitigation plan.
- Do everything you can to help ensure protests remain peaceful. This includes helping manage relationships between protesters and security forces, ensuring that you avoid use of force against protesters, addressing any risks posed by armed militias, and managing any risks posed by concurrent protests and counter-protests. ICAP's [Protests & Public Safety guide](#) provides a legal review for city and state attorneys regarding the best approaches to protests where there is a risk of armed actors. The guide also provides a less technical FAQ section, suitable for a wider audience.
- If any community is at risk of being targeted with violence during this time, ensure and reinforce open lines of communication.

Communicate.

- Once results are out, discuss the expectation for next steps (transition or continuity) and how that impacts residents. If there are disputes, educate residents on the channels that exist for resolving those disputes so they are aware of the range of options available.
- Continue to reinforce and encourage positive civic engagement.
- Prepare communications based on what's taking place in the community.

Plan for Inauguration Day.

- Consider potential scenarios that may take place on Inauguration Day and ensure your city is equipped to handle them adequately.

Beyond

Actions to build long-term resiliency.

The Road Ahead

Long-term resiliency to political violence in your community is an ongoing process. Whether ensuring that you are able to withstand national-level division and escalation or working to address long-term local issues, sources of tension, and existing violence, continuing to work with your Network can build the muscle of multi-stakeholder collaboration to mitigate and respond to emerging risks. This type of network can be helpful not only in reducing risk of violence, but also in addressing other emerging threats.

Role of Mayors

An active, engaged, growing Resiliency Network provides a platform for Mayors to coordinate with and across stakeholder groups, and to serve as a hub for proactive community action and response to emerging threats.



BEYOND ELECTION SEASON

Debrief and learn.

- Convene your Resiliency Network and debrief.

Mobilize and grow your Resiliency Network.

- Reassess Risk, Resiliency, and Response techniques based on your Election Season experience. Recognize and celebrate the ways you worked together through the elections. Identify longer-term sources of risk in your community that your Resiliency Network could continue to work together to address. Strengthen and expand relationships now, so when elections and other contentious events happen, you are better prepared to respond.
- Continue strengthening relationships within your Resiliency Network and building ties in the community to address root causes of issues and enable the community to respond well to conflicts. Ensure that you keep lines of communication open.
- Address histories of discrimination, marginalization, and violence, as well as any current patterns of discrimination, marginalization, and violence.
- Support efforts to increase trust between stakeholders and government institutions.

Appendix

Data sources for local risk assessment.

Potential indicators of risk are listed below, along with recommended data sources as a starting point for local assessment. This is not an exhaustive list; cities should investigate, understand, and prioritize the unique risks present in their communities.

Potential Indicators of Risk	Resources to Better Understand/Assess Risk
<p>Violent responses to civil mobilization leading up to the election. Around the country, protests for racial justice have already been met with antagonism and violence from opposition groups, including armed organized militias in some cases. Violence has been used by individual protestors as well, and at times, there has been direct conflict with local law enforcement (more on this below). Recent events can be used to evaluate potential short-term risk.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) and the Bridging Divides Initiative (BDI) partnered to provide a “U.S. Crisis Monitor.” The tool displays current data about political violence as well as broader data on protests and demonstrations. • ACLED and BDI also provide a list of unrest-related events in U.S. cities that have occurred since May 24, 2020. • ICAP released the Prohibiting Private Armies at Public Rallies report, which highlights laws related to paramilitary and private militia activity in all U.S. states. Use this guide to consider your state’s legal options—and gaps that create risk.
<p>Violence by members of state forces (e.g. local police, national guard, federal forces) against civilians (often during protests). Any violence by members of state forces against civilians can serve as a barrier to civic engagement throughout the election cycle and erode trust in civic institutions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to any groups who have been on the receiving end of violence from state forces to learn about their experiences and concerns moving forward. • Look to local police department data to better understand the history of tension and conflict, and understand how this history informs your risk, resiliency, and response. • The ACLED and BDI unrest-related events list can be used to search for these incidents.

Continued 

Data sources for local risk assessment (continued)

Potential Indicators of Risk	Resources to Better Understand/Assess Risk
<p>Misinformation and disinformation may cause confusion and contribute to turmoil. False rumors about polling logistics may be spread over social media, which can impede citizens' rights to vote. Divisive narratives and conspiracy theories can also sow confusion and tension.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Society Foundation describes useful patterns and best practices for monitoring social media in its report, Social Media Monitoring During Elections. • Use social media monitoring tools, such as Google Analytics, Hootsuite, and Mention, to proactively understand and monitor the sources of mis- and disinformation in your community.
<p>Voter intimidation may be present in polling locations. Unauthorized "poll monitors" may create conditions of intimidation and harassment, threatening citizens' rights to vote.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poll monitoring and election protection guidelines vary from state to state. The National Conference of State Legislatures summarizes the poll watcher qualifications for all 50 states. This summary can help you identify whether your state laws create vulnerability to intimidation by poll watchers. • ICAP's Voter Intimidation Fact Sheet offers concrete examples of voter intimidation. • ICAP's State Fact Sheets explain the laws barring unauthorized private militia groups and what to do if groups of armed individuals gather near a polling place.