

# Societal Workforce Threats

Safety Culture  
Optimization  
Understanding  
and Training for  
Organizations  
of All Sizes



Safer with  
**SCOUT**<sup>™</sup>  
Safety Culture Optimization, Understanding, and Training  
a NobleSix Initiative

[SaferWithScout.com](http://SaferWithScout.com)

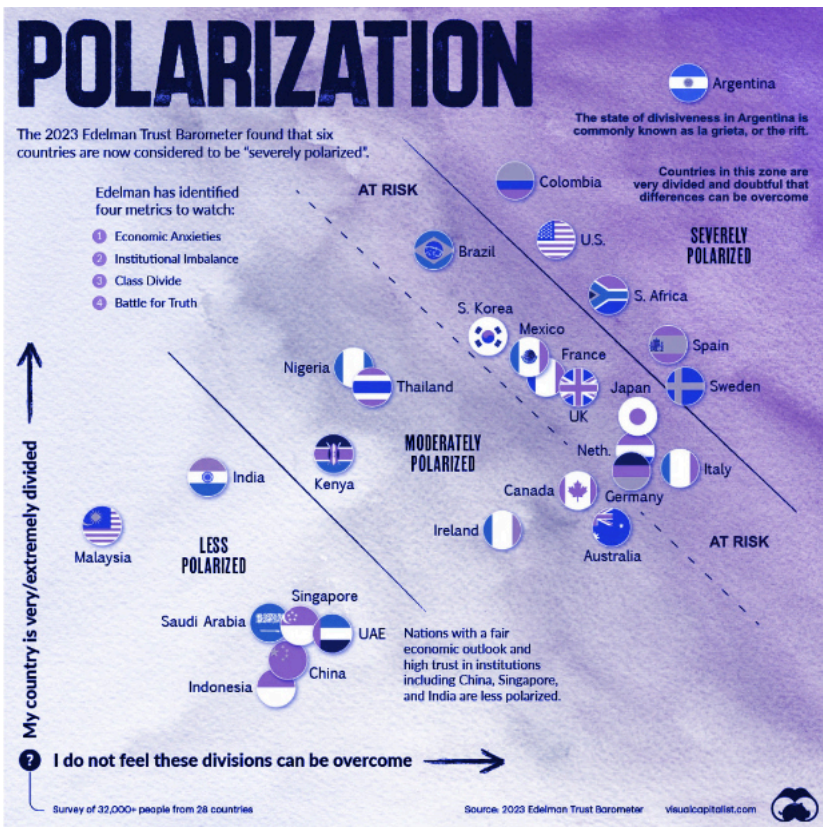
# PREFACE

Start with a question... do you believe that you are safer today, in any environment, than you were yesterday, a week ago, a month ago, or even last year? The truth is, finding someone who genuinely believes the world is any less dangerous than it was a few short years ago (even last year) is an inherently tough task. Our world is seemingly obsessed with violence... a statement backed by our local news channels reporting daily violent acts (shootings, stabbings, robberies, carjackings, etc.) in major metropolitan areas. But do not be fooled to think these acts of violence only happen in the big cities. They happen in any size city, at any time, at any place, and are happening with increased frequency. Violence knows no bounds, nor does it discriminate. Our society is filled with more risks than ever before. Normal activities such as going to work, the grocery store, a movie, a concert, or a religious service all carry with them a higher-level of risk. We must always be looking over our shoulder, increasing our situational awareness, and be prepared to act should we find ourselves face-to-face with an act of violence.

# CURRENT STATE

In our country, as well as globally, societies and individuals have become increasingly polarized, divisive, and consequently, "tribalistic." We are divided over racial, ethnic, religious, gender, economic, and political differences. It is no wonder we have reached a point where tolerance, manners, and acceptance are in short supply... a fractured society cannot expect to maintain high levels of civility.

We must examine what has led to these divisions, what are these deep fractures, and what are the potential ramifications when it comes to our focus here: **workplace safety**.



*In 2023, among 32,000+ respondents, the United States, at large, is seen as being among the most polarized populations in the world.*

## SOURCE OF CONFLICTS

One could argue that interpersonal conflicts have happened since the dawn of humanity, and while that is correct, the recent rate of acceleration towards violence is beyond anything that we have seen in past decades. So... what is different?

While there is no doubt that increased technology advances society, it can also hurt it. The rise in popularity of social media platforms, coupled with the widespread global use of the internet, has caused many of us to “join a tribe” or “pick a side” as alluded to earlier. Undoubtedly, there has always been darkness in the hearts of people. But before the internet and social media, there was never the immediate and wide-ranging sharing of ideas. And where there is the potential for good, there is also the equal potential for evil.

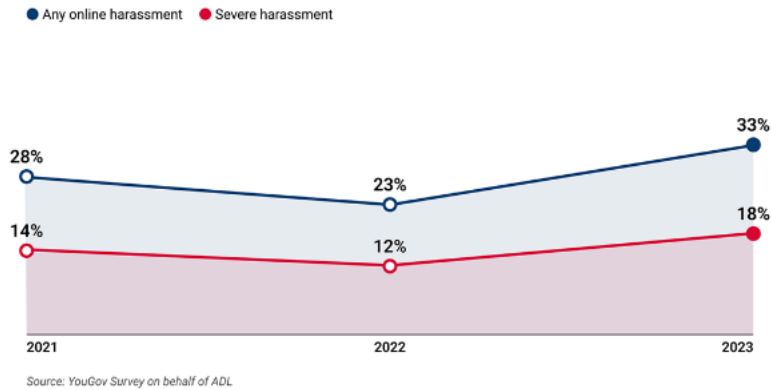
What does this mean? With online interaction, there is the issue of anonymity. Many people hide behind a username or “handle,” so their identity remains unknown, and with this cloak of invisibility there comes a sense of invulnerability. These people often are referred to as “keyboard warriors” or “cyberbullies,” and they often use social media interaction to fuel and further confrontation. Arguments, disagreements, and disdain for other viewpoints often are expressed online to validate one side. Validation is created from comments and “likes,” providing affirmation to an original “poster.” Conversely, “dislikes” or negative comments are used as a vehicle to reinforce counter-positions that would have likely receded and/or completely ended the argument. Take such exchanges and multiply them by orders of magnitude, and you begin to understand that this is an epidemic of bad and hostile behavior that is largely unaddressed... where those stoking the fires are (in many cases) emboldened via anonymity and positive reinforcement from like-minded individuals.

In addition, let us not forget about those on the other end of the spectrum... those who are subjected to online hate speech/rhetoric. Bullying (and now cyberbullying) is a real threat to individuals, workplaces, and society as it has repeatedly led to acts of violence! To prove this point, Dr. Laura Finley, a professor of Sociology and Criminology at Barry University, and a member of the Board of Directors for The Humanity Project – a group focused on achieving equality and respect for everyone in society – cites a noteworthy fact in her article titled *Bully Today, Criminal Tomorrow*, that some of America’s most heinous serial killers all have one thing in common... they were all bullied in some way, shape, or form as both children and adults.

At this point, you may still be questioning the relationship between online interaction and workplace safety. You may be asking yourself, “what is the big deal?” You may be one of the many people that believes that if individuals are online, venting, getting it out of their system, and thus relieving their pressure, that it is non-threatening behavior. People often make the argument that an exchange of “mere words” rarely leads to anything more than a few hurt feelings. Unfortunately, that is not the case. It is well known among both law enforcement and behavioral scientists that there can be a noticeably short distance between “saying something” and “actually doing it.”

### Online Harassment in the Past 12 Months Increased Sharply in 2023

Share of Americans who experienced online harassment in the past 12 months, by year



This is precisely why law enforcement professionals take verbal or written threats very seriously. It is also why “communicating threats” is considered a crime in almost every jurisdiction within the United States. Likewise, those that push people to the brink online are now being criminally charged when the victim acts and becomes the perpetrator.

Along with online interactions, there is the traditional media component, that in many cases reinforces bias or unhealthy belief systems. We have seen examples of violent rhetoric broadcast by news organizations, along with countless images and video clips of violent demonstrations. In today’s world, if a person wants to reinforce their point of view, no matter how illogical or harmful it may be, they can find an outlet (or series of outlets) to confirm their ideas.

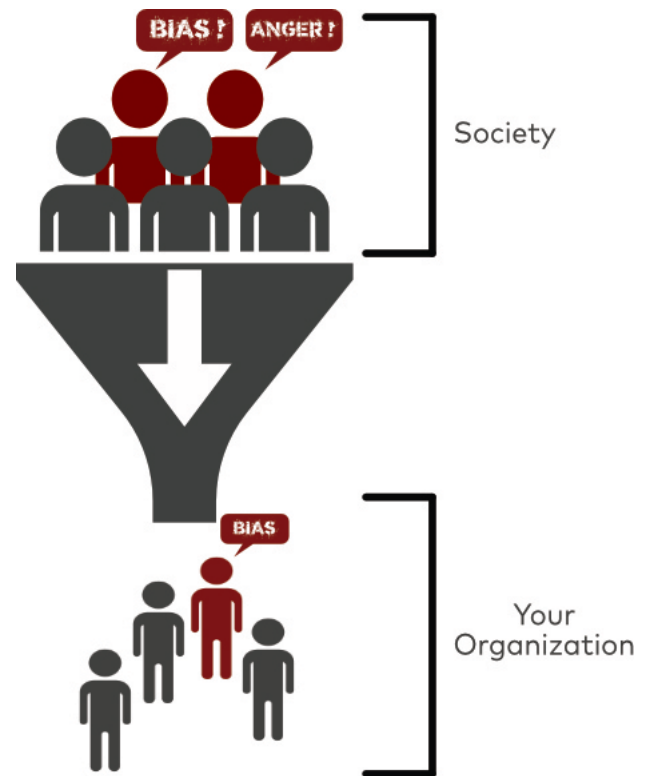
## YOUR ORGANIZATION

**What does this all mean for your organization? It is quite simple: THE SAME DYNAMICS EXPRESSED ONLINE AND IN THE BROADER (REAL) WORLD ARE WALKING THROUGH YOUR ORGANIZATION’S DOORS EVERY DAY, AND IF YOU DON’T RECOGNIZE IT, YOU ARE MISSING THE BIG, AND POTENTIALLY CATASTROPHIC, PICTURE.**

Your organization is a microcosm of society. You have employees within your walls, right now, that have extreme prejudices and biases; some of which may run directly counter to other employees within your ranks. Your organization is no different than the outside world, with one major compounding element... within your organization any differences between workers are subjected to a proximity enhancement; meaning that your workforce is under added pressure due to “having” to work in close contact with each other. This potentially dangerous component does not exist to the same degree in the world outside your doors.

It is within this context that workplaces operate daily. Workers with differing backgrounds, beliefs, and attitudes interact in organizational environments that often contain elements of tension and stress. Any disagreement, no matter how seemingly inconsequential, can incite an emotional and passionate response, resulting in threats or even acts of aggression. Likewise, you may have an employee(s) who is an online bully or victim of online bullying by a fellow employee(s). These situations must be taken seriously. Unsurprisingly, there has been an increase in the level of workplace violence incidents occurring throughout our society that can be tied back to many factors mentioned above.

As an aside, many owners, managers, and employees within organizations have no idea these conditions exist since tensions are often masked by the routine of conducting daily organizational activities. All the aforementioned items provide a potentially toxic situation that can spawn negative attitudes and subsequent incidents, seemingly without warning ... but there are signs.





## WHAT DO YOU DO?

First, you must realize that your organization has a culture. This culture may not have been well-articulated, but it is there! It is the way you do business, and it consists of the values, the principles and the manner in which people relate to one another to successfully attain the overall business mission. There is also a subset of this culture called your “safety culture,” and this cultural component is predicated on many variables, including the nature of the specific jobs, the work environment, the existing security of the workplace, as well as protocols, procedures, communications, and training. It is particularly important for management to promote this safety culture and then to assure the workforce has “bought into” the idea of working within this “safety culture.” This will allow for greater security, enjoyment, and profitability for your organization. Your people are your greatest asset (and unfortunately, could be your greatest threat). Employees should be trained in the elements of situational awareness, continual behavior observation, and fully understand how to report behaviors that rise to a level of concern. Moreover, beyond knowledge and understanding, there should be a training component that includes drills on a regular frequency to assure that all employees know exactly how to respond in the event of a critical incident.

Businesses that do not continually monitor employees, including online postings, often miss signs of potential threats. Additionally, it is important to note that some employees may fear reprisal or some form of retribution for reporting threats; therefore, many warning signs may go unreported. Because of this, observational activities of your workforce are of vital importance. They need to be structured and refined to the extent that there are no valid reasons for not reporting a plausible threat. There is no lack of fuel when looking for a match to ignite underlying violence in any organization... you must know what to look for and you must be proactive.

The NobleSix initiative (Safer with SCOUT) is committed to protecting and training against the spark that could cause havoc to your organization. We offer training and services to protect your workforce and the entirety of your organization.

**For more information about Safer with SCOUT and NobleSix, please visit <https://www.saferwithscout.com> and <https://www.noblesix.us>**

