

2025 REPORT

RISING RISKS:

SAFETY, PRIVACY, AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION IN PRIVATE EQUITY



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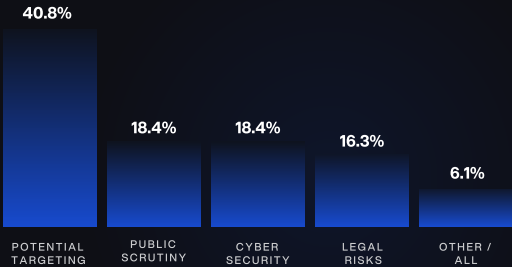
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KEY INSIGHTS AND INDUSTRY CONTEXT

A single act of violence caught the world's attention. But what followed, a wave of public support for the alleged killer of United Healthcare's CEO Brian Thompson, sent shockwaves through corporate boardrooms. For private equity professionals, where high-profile transactions and relentless public scrutiny are normal, this moment has crystallized a stark reality: the personal risks of leadership are no longer hypothetical — they are here.

OVERVIEW

The private equity industry thrives on high-value transactions and strategic decision-making, but its leaders are facing growing risks to their privacy, safety, and reputations. In 2025, these concerns have become more urgent as public attitudes toward corporate power grow increasingly divided. Executives are now dealing with challenges that go far beyond the usual business pressures.



40.8% of respondents cite potential targeting as their primary source of personal-related stress.



This report draws on insights from our survey of 117 senior private equity professionals to examine the growing risks executives face in an increasingly polarized business environment. The findings shed light on concerns around safety, privacy, and reputation, highlighting how these challenges are evolving for industry leaders. Alongside these insights, the report provides practical guidance on addressing emerging threats and protecting leadership, offering a roadmap for navigating these heightened risks while sustaining stability and trust.

KEY FINDINGS AT A GLANCE

100%

Perceived Increase in Public Hostility

All respondents believe there has been either a moderate or significant rise in hostility toward high-level corporate figures.

40.8%

Concerns About Targeting by Activists or Individuals

Nearly half of all respondents identify potential targeting by activists or disgruntled individuals as their primary source of personal stress.

32%

Critical or Negative Media Coverage

Over 1/4 respondents reported facing critical or negative media coverage related to their role in the past 12 months.

24%

Experienced Threats or Harassment

Nearly 1/4 of respondents reported that they have experienced threats or harassment directly related to their professional roles.

57%

of respondents said they are very concerned or extremely concerned about their personal safety due to their role.

17.9%

of respondents said they are extremely concerned about their personal safety due to their role.



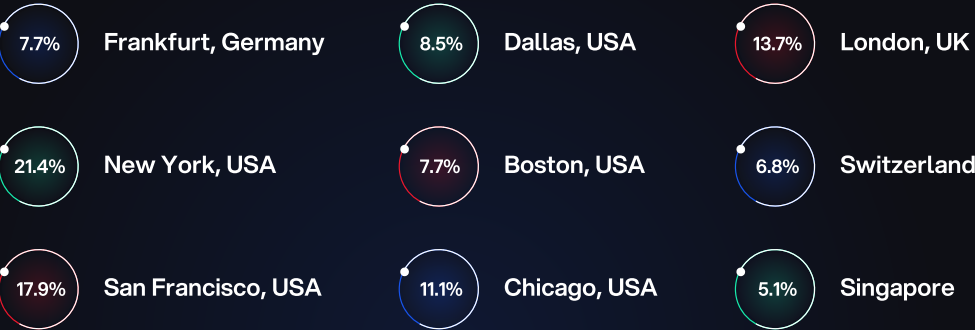
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This independent survey was conducted by Fisch & Vogel, a research consultancy specializing in data-driven analysis. The survey and data collection methodology followed ICC/ESOMAR Professional Standards to ensure accuracy and reliability.

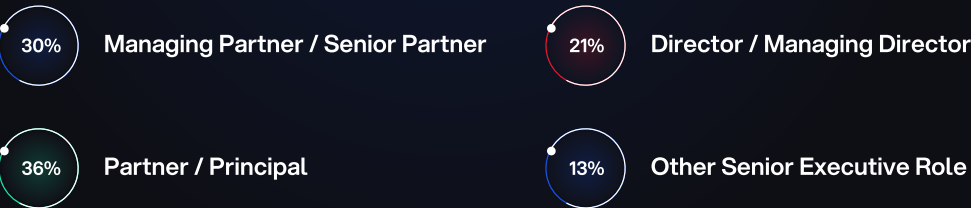
The initial sample size included a total of 193 respondents. 76 respondents in operational or support roles were excluded, focusing the report on decision-makers in transactions or public-facing roles.

The final pool consisted of 117 private equity professionals, aged 35 to 70, from mid-sized and large firms based in key international financial hubs such as New York, London, Frankfurt, and others.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY LOCATION



SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY ROLE



SURVEY QUESTIONS

*EXCLUDES DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

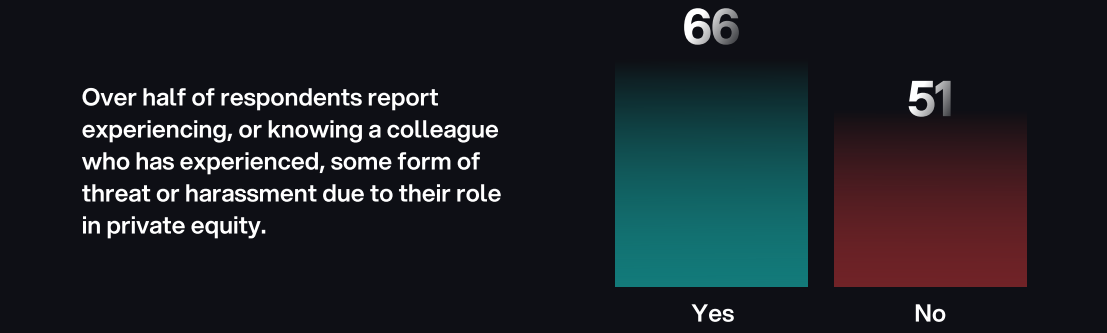
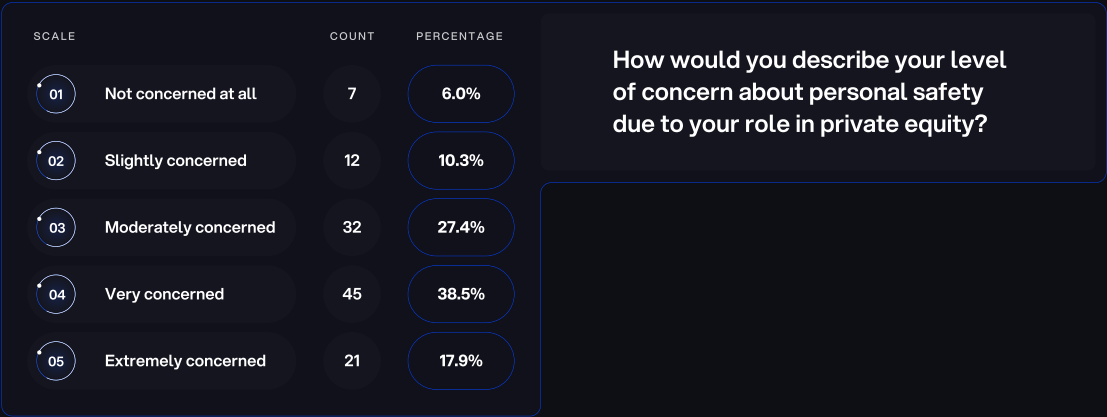
- 01 On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you rate your concern about personal safety due to your role in private equity?
- 02 Have you or a colleague ever experienced incidents of threats or harassment in your professional role?
- 03 To what extent do you think being targeted by activists, disgruntled individuals, or similar groups is a potential risk associated with your professional role?
- 04 Have you or your family ever taken any steps to address personal safety concerns related to your professional role?
- 05 To what extent are you concerned about the potential exposure of personal information (e.g. home address, family details) online?
- 06 Have you experienced instances of personal information being exposed or shared online in a malicious manner due to your professional role?
- 07 Which areas of your online presence, if any, do you believe may be most vulnerable to misuse or targeting?
- 08 Do you believe the public's attitude toward high-level corporate figures has changed in recent years?
- 09 To what extent do you feel your professional role exposes you to public or media scrutiny?
- 10 Have you ever been featured in media coverage that portrayed your professional activities in a critical or negative light?
- 11 How confident are you that your firm's policies adequately address safety and privacy considerations for executives?
- 12 How effective is your organization in communicating safety and privacy protocols to its employees?
- 13 How comfortable are you raising safety or privacy concerns with your organization?
- 14 How do you anticipate personal safety and privacy risks for private equity professionals will change over the next five years?
- 15 What resources or support, if any, would you find helpful in addressing safety and privacy concerns?

GROWING SAFETY CONCERNS AMONG PRIVATE EQUITY PROFESSIONALS

The high level of concern highlights the tangible risks professionals feel in an industry where high-profile events have sharpened awareness of personal exposure and the challenges of public scrutiny. The findings show that both individuals and firms need to take action to address these risks.

Recommendations

Minimize Personal Address Usage: Avoid sharing your personal address by using virtual office spaces or a business PO box. **Audit Your Digital Footprint:** Review social media pages, information on data brokerage sites, etc. **Monitor Mentions:** Set up alerts for online mentions of yourself and your firm online.



PRIVATE EQUITY EXECUTIVES FACE RISING PUBLIC AND DIGITAL THREATS

Insights

The overwhelming majority cited public hostility and digital exposure as key risks, highlighting the growing polarization of the private equity industry. Recognizing the potential danger of their online presence, private equity professionals must prioritize digital security and strategic public relations.

Public Sentiment

76.9%

perceive a negative shift in public sentiment toward corporate leaders.

Digital Exposure

60.7%

identify professional networks like LinkedIn as their most vulnerable online presence.

Digital Exposure

54.7%

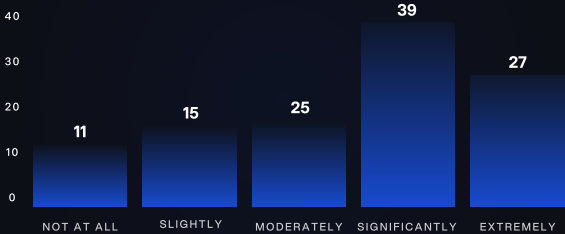
point to social media as a key area of concern.

Risk of Activist Targeting

42.7%

view activist targeting as a significant risk.

To what extent do you feel your professional role exposes you to public or media scrutiny?



Public Sentiment

77%

OF PE PROFESSIONALS

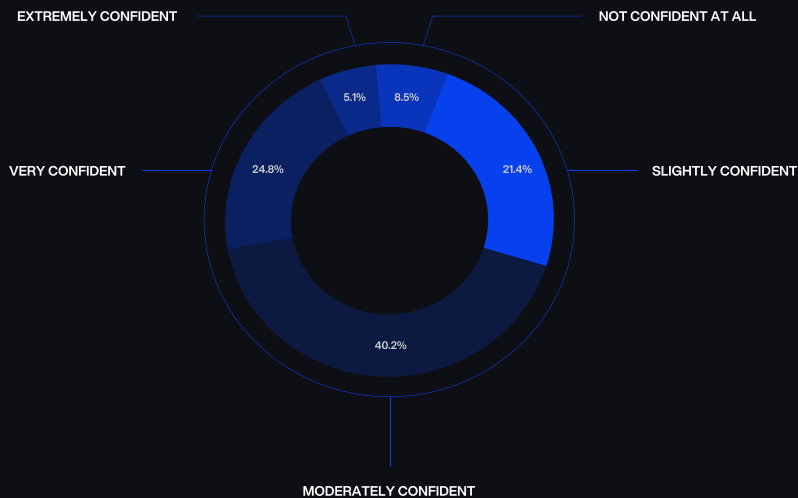
feel a negative shift in public sentiment toward executives and corporate leaders, very likely intensified by recent events



EVOLVING SAFETY RISKS DEMAND STRONGER SUPPORT FROM PRIVATE EQUITY FIRMS

Limited confidence in firm policies and communication suggests a gap in addressing safety concerns. Since most expect risks to rise, private equity firms should act now to boost confidence and preparedness.

Only 5% of respondents feel "Extremely Confident" in their firm's safety policies. This lack of strong confidence suggests that firms' current policies are perceived as generic and fail to address the changes in safety to high-profile executives. This disconnect between firm-level policies and individual perceptions indicates an opportunity for organizations to better align their strategies with executive expectations.



Future Outlook

With 85.5% of respondents expecting safety risks to escalate over the next five years, private equity firms must adopt proactive strategies. This includes developing crisis management frameworks, investing in advanced monitoring tools, and establishing clear ownership of executive safety.

Industry-wide collaboration can further help firms benchmark their policies against best practices, ensuring alignment with the evolving threat landscape.

Expect Increased Risk
Over Next 5 Years

85.5%

The majority of respondents anticipate a rise in safety and privacy risks, driven by heightened public hostility, digital vulnerabilities, and activist targeting.

STRATEGIC ACTIONS AND FINAL THOUGHTS

The research in this report reveals a growing sense of concern among private equity professionals. Most are moderately to very concerned about their personal safety, expect risks to increase, and are calling for stronger organizational measures and open communication to address these Challenges.

This shift reflects more than just individual worries; it signals a broader challenge for the industry. The combination of public scrutiny and heightened media attention has made personal safety a more pressing issue. Many now see it as essential for firms to provide tools, training, and clear protocols to help their teams feel secure and supported.

Addressing these challenges requires a proactive approach that balances individual safety with organizational resilience. Ultimately, investing in personal and team safety isn't just about mitigating risk, it's about strengthening trust, focus, and morale across the organization.

Recommendations

Priority

Institute Safety and Crisis-Response Policies

Draft or update protocols for scenarios like office protests, online harassment campaigns, and negative media exposure.

Tip: Form an internal committee responsible for protocols and conducting exercises that cover various relevant scenarios.

HIGH

Training Module Addressing Safety and Privacy

Create a training module addressing digital risks, reporting threats, and responding to business-related hostility.

Tip: Cover reporting mechanisms for threats, responding to traditional media / social media scrutiny, and handling physical or online harassment. Include real-world scenarios and simulations to reinforce learning and ensure preparedness for evolving risks.

HIGH

Develop Executive Risk Profiles

Identify risks specific to high-profile executives by assessing factors such as role responsibility, public appearances, transaction involvement, social media use, etc.

Tip: Internal committee should compile profiles based on corporate data, public records, and interviews to understand risks and tailor mitigation strategies.

MEDIUM

Secure Personal Digital Footprint

Individuals should review their own digital footprint to determine what information is publicly available. Strengthen privacy settings on personal social media accounts and scrutinize information/posts before sharing online.

Tip: Review our guide "Managing Personal Privacy Risks for Private Equity Executives."

MEDIUM

Risk Mitigation Strategies During Transactions

Incorporate confidentiality clauses during sensitive transactions to anonymize executives' personal details where legally permissible.

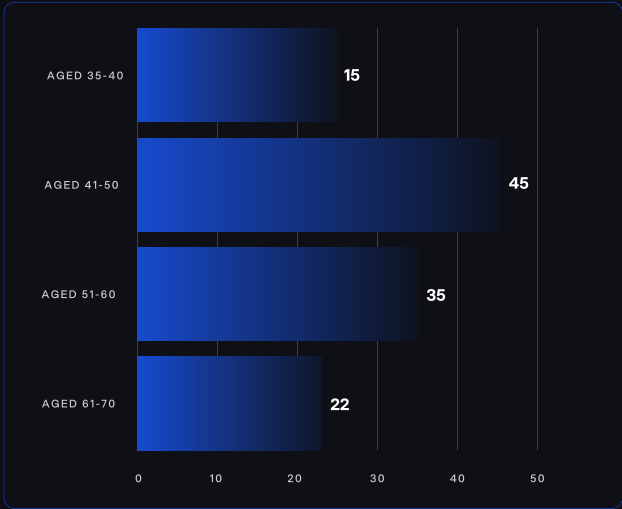
Tip: Explore tailored endorsements on Directors and Officers (D&O) insurance policies that cover crisis management expenses, providing an additional layer of protection in high-risk scenarios.

LOW



DEMOGRAPHICS: WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE SURVEY

ROLE / TITLE	RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE
Managing Director/Partner	45	38.5%
Partner	35	29.9%
Director / Principal	12	10.3%
Senior VP / Vice President	10	8.5%
Other	15	12.8%



SURVEY QUESTIONS & AGGREGATED RESULTS

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how would you describe your level of concern about personal safety due to your role in private equity?

- Amajority (56.4%) indicate high levels of concern (scores of 4 or 5).
- Very few (6.0%) are entirely unconcerned, suggesting a palpable shift in perceived risk post-incident.

SCALE		COUNT	PERCENTAGE
01	Not concerned at all	7	6.0%
02	Slightly concerned	12	10.3%
03	Moderately concerned	32	27.3%
04	Very concerned	45	38.5%
05	Extremely concerned	21	17.9%

RESPONSE		COUNT	PERCENTAGE
01	Yes	66	56.4%
02	No	51	43.6%

2. Have you or a colleague ever experienced incidents related to threats or harassment in your professional role?

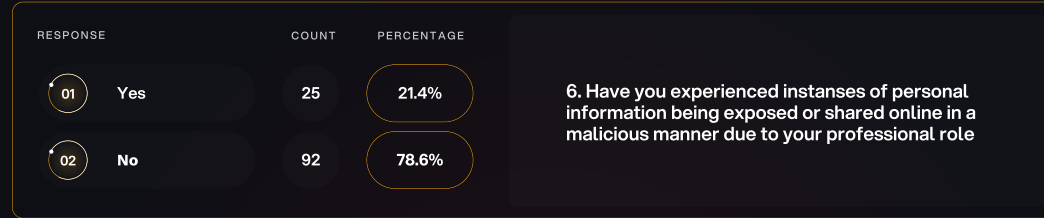
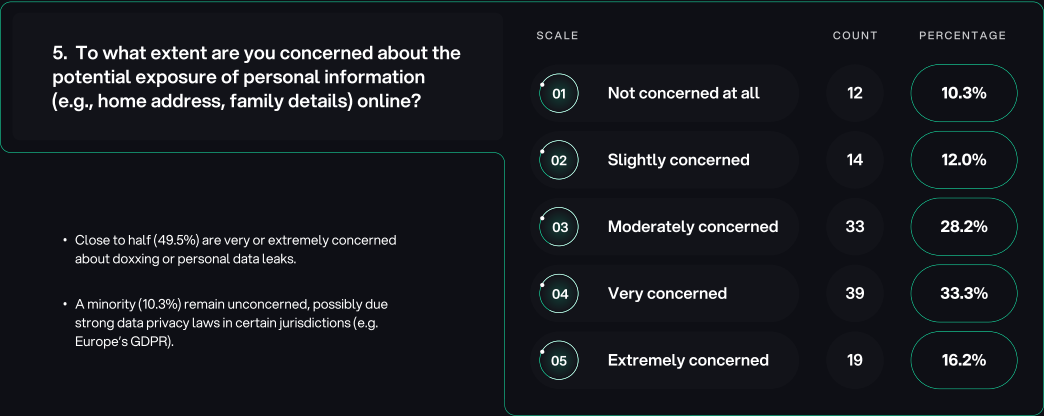
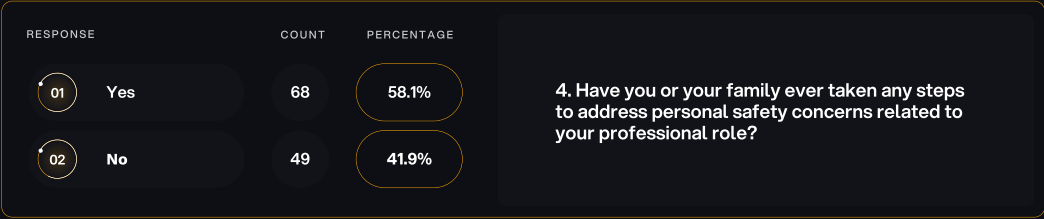
3. To what extent do you think being targeted by activists, disgruntled individuals, or similar groups is a potential risk associated with your professional role?

- A good amount (42.7%) view targeting as a "significant risk," with nearly 20% considering it "extreme."
- Only a small fraction (2.6%) see no risk at all.

SCALE		COUNT	PERCENTAGE
01	Not a risk at all	3	2.6%
02	Slight risk	10	8.5%
03	Moderate risk	31	26.5%
04	Significant risk	50	42.7%
05	Extreme risk	23	19.7%



SURVEY QUESTIONS & AGGREGATED RESULTS



SURVEY QUESTIONS & AGGREGATED RESULTS

7. Which areas of your online presence, if any, do you believe may be most vulnerable to misuse or targeting?

(Multiple selections possible. Percentages reflect how many respondents selected each option)

- Professional networks like LinkedIn are viewed as a top exposure, followed closely by personal social media.
- A small subset (10.3%) believes they have effectively minimized all online vulnerabilities.

OPTION	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)	64	54.7%
Professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn)	71	60.7%
Personal email or phone number	42	35.9%
Other (e.g., databases, old press)	18	15.4%
None (no perceived vulnerabilities)	12	10.3%

RESPONSECOUNTPERCENTAGE

Become more positive

9

7.7%

Stayed the same

18

15.4%

Become more negative

90

76.9%

8. Do you believe the public's attitude toward high-level corporate figures has changed in recent years?

- A strong majority perceives a negative shift in public sentiment toward executives and corporate leaders, very likely intensified by recent events.

9. To what extent do you feel your professional role exposes you to public or media scrutiny?

- A majority (57.3%) rate their exposure at 4 or 5, correlating with the view that private equity transactions can draw heightened public/media interest.

SCALE	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
01 Not at all	10	8.5%
02 Slightly	15	12.8%
03 Moderately	25	21.4%
04 Significantly	40	34.2%
05 Extremely	27	23.1%



SURVEY QUESTIONS & AGGREGATED RESULTS

RESPONSE	COUNT	PERCENTAGE	10. Have you ever been featured in media coverage that portrayed your professional activities in a critical or negative light?
01 Yes	42	35.9%	• Over a third indicate direct negative media coverage, which can amplify personal safety and reputation risks.
02 No	75	64.1%	

11. How confident are you that your firm's policies adequately address safety and privacy considerations for executives?	SCALE	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
• Most respondents (65%) fall between "moderately" and "very" confident, but only 5.1% feel "extremely confident," indicating room for improvement.	01 Not confident at all	10	8.5%
	02 Slightly confident	25	21.4%
	03 Moderately confident	47	40.2%
	04 Very confident	29	24.8%
	05 Extremely confident	6	5.1%

SCALE	COUNT	PERCENTAGE	12. How effective is your organization in communicating safety and privacy protocols to its employees?
01 Not effective at all	11	9.4%	• The highest single group (37.6%) rates communication as "moderately effective," suggesting general efforts exist but could be more comprehensive or frequent.
02 Slightly effective	28	23.9%	
03 Moderately effective	44	37.6%	
04 Very effective	27	23.1%	
05 Extremely effective	7	6.0%	

SURVEY QUESTIONS & AGGREGATED RESULTS

13. How comfortable are you raising safety or privacy concerns with your organization?

While a combined 41.1% feel "very" or "extremely" comfortable, over a quarter remain only "slightly" or "not comfortable," suggesting a need for more open dialogue at many firms.

SCALE		COUNT	PERCENTAGE
01	Not comfortable at all	9	7.7%
02	Slightly comfortable	21	17.9%
03	Moderately comfortable	39	33.3%
04	Very comfortable	32	27.4%
05	Extremely comfortable	16	13.7%

RESPONSE	COUNT	PERCENTAGE
Decrease significantly	1	0.9%
Decrease slightly	4	3.4%
Stay the same	12	10.3%
Increase slightly	46	39.3%
Increase significantly	54	46.2%

14. How do you anticipate personal safety and privacy risks for private equity professionals will change over the next five years?

- Astrong majority (85.5%) predict further increases in risk. This view aligns with heightened activist sentiment and public scrutiny of private equity deals.

15. What resources or support, if any, would you find helpful in addressing safety and privacy concerns?

(Open-ended responses summarized below.)



Open Communication Channels

Respondents stress the need for clear dialogue on threats and best practices. Some feared being labeled paranoid.



Digital Privacy Tools

Requests for enhanced cybersecurity measures, secure communication apps, and monitoring services.



Legal Support

Access to firm-sponsored legal resources for handling defamation or other work-related issues.



Media and PR Training

Guidance on dealing with negative press and social media harassment.