Asymmetries of Vulnerability: How Race and Party Shape Online Violence Targeting Women Candidates in the 2024 U.S. Congressional Election

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Abstract

The widespread adoption of interactive technologies and social media platforms has transformed the political landscape, initially promising to democratize public discourse and enhance participation among marginalized groups, including women. However, rather than equalizing opportunities, these platforms have increasingly become sites of online violence, disproportionately targeting women politicians. In this study, we argue that the digital abuse faced by female political candidates is not merely a reflection of their gender alone but a product of the intersection between gender, race, and partisan identity. Specifically, women of color affiliated with the Democratic Party are particularly vulnerable to online violence due to their symbolic representation of progressive change, while Republican white women also face heightened hostility linked to their association with traditional gender norms. To test this argument, we analyze over 800,000 social media posts targeting candidates in the 2024 U.S. Congressional elections, using a large language model to detect and categorize offensive and hate speech. Our findings reveal that Democratic women of color experience significantly higher rates of online political violence compared to their white or Republican counterparts. These results underscore the need for an intersectional approach to understanding digital political violence, highlighting how the combination of gender, race, and party affiliation shapes the unique vulnerabilities of women in politics.

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1. Introduction

Widespread use of interactive technologies and social media platforms, with their ease of access, low-cost nature and real time exchange of information, have transformed the political landscape. Initially, such transformation promised an equalization and democratization effect on participation in public discourse and politics, expanding the reach beyond the confines of traditional political networks (Dahlgreen, 2005). Women, who have been competing on uneven political grounds and disadvantaged by party and campaign structures, were positioned to benefit most. Two decades of evidence from research conducted in different country contexts, however, has cast considerable doubt about these initial expectations (Amnesty International, 2018; Inter Parliamentary Union, 2016). Increasingly, these platforms have become spaces in which abusive and harmful content, such as hate speech, harassment, and misinformation, thrive, contributing to violence which women in politics have already been facing (Evans 2015; Ward 2016; Lumsden & Harmer 2018; Greenwood et al., 2017; Bardall et al., 2020). This type of violence poses serious threats to the psychological and physical well-being of women politicians and aspirants, leading them to self-censure and silence their voices and pull away from electoral competition entirely, consequently threatening broader democratic qualities of governance (Krook, 2020; Wilfore, 2022; Carlson, 2019; Sobieraj, 2020; Enock et al., 2024).

Existing research on online violence against women has increasingly highlighted the importance of an intersectional approach, recognizing that women's experiences of digital abuse are not solely shaped by gender but are compounded by other identity factors such as race and ethnicity. Scholars have emphasized that politically active women often face "many axes of discrimination," including those based on race, religion, sexuality, and political ideology, making certain groups of women particularly vulnerable (Kuperberg, 2018; Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo, 2019). This intersectionality lens is crucial in understanding why women of color in politics are disproportionately targeted compared to their white counterparts. Research on digital violence has demonstrated that women of color face distinct forms

of online harassment that combine racism and misogyny, such as "misogynoir" experienced by Black women (Bailey, 2018; Kwarteng et al., 2023). Studies like those by Norwood et al. (2021) and Thakur et al. (2022) provide empirical evidence that women of color candidates, particularly Black women, are more frequently subjected to misinformation, disinformation, and violent rhetoric on social media platforms compared to white women and men of color.

Despite significant scholarly attention to the intersectionality of online political violence, existing research often narrows its focus to the interplay between gender and ethnicity, overlooking the critical role of political partisanship as a compounding factor. Most studies highlight how women—particularly women of color—are disproportionately targeted online, especially when they occupy visible political roles. Scholars have established that women in politics, especially women of color, face unique vulnerabilities due to their intersecting identities of race and gender (Krook, 2020; Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo, 2019), but party affiliation has been largely ignored in the existing literature.

To address this gap, we investigate how race and partisanship intersect to shape online violence against women in contemporary American politics. In recent years, race and gender have become increasingly structured by partisan polarization, with the Democratic and Republican parties adopting fundamentally different approaches to these identities. The Democratic Party positions itself as a political home for marginalized groups, actively promoting multiculturalism and inclusion, making Democratic women of color symbols of progress. In contrast, the Republican Party, particularly since the Trump era, has leaned toward ethno-nationalist rhetoric and traditional gender norms, often portraying diversity as a threat to established social hierarchies. This ideological divide has important implications for how different groups of women within each party are likely to be targeted. Democratic women of color occupy a unique position at the intersection of racialized gender narratives and partisan identity, rendering them especially susceptible to online political violence. At the same time, white Republican women, who often advocate conservative values or traditional femininity, also face targeted hostility, albeit for different reasons. This study argues that the intersection of race, gender, and partisanship creates asymmetrical

vulnerabilities in digital abuse, with both Democratic women of color and Republican white women disproportionately affected.

To test these hypotheses, we examined online political violence directed at candidates during the 2024 U.S. Congressional elections on X (formerly Twitter). We collected a comprehensive dataset of 917 candidates from both the Democratic and Republican parties, covering House and Senate races, and recorded key attributes such as gender, race, party affiliation, and social media presence. To assess exposure to digital abuse, we gathered over 721,000 tweets mentioning these candidates between May 20 and August 23, 2024. Using advanced NLP models fine-tuned with human-annotated data, we identified offensive and hate speech, coding tweets as containing either or both based on explicit references to identity attributes.

Our findings reveal significant asymmetries in the distribution of online violence, shaped by the intersection of race, gender, and partisanship. Democratic women of color, particularly Asian and Black candidates, faced the highest levels of both offensive and hate speech, reflecting their symbolic visibility within a progressive framework. In contrast, white Republican women were also disproportionately targeted, often due, we argue, to their association with traditional gender norms. These results demonstrate that political identity interacts with gender in complex ways, making Democratic women of color and Republican white women especially vulnerable to digital harassment. Importantly, these asymmetric patterns challenge existing narratives that treat gender or race as singularly explanatory, showing instead that political identity is not additive but deeply intertwined. By foregrounding the intersection of race, gender, and partisan identity, our research not only enriches theoretical discussions on digital political violence but also offers a methodological contribution by demonstrating the importance of analyzing intersecting vulnerabilities in online abuse.

2. An Intersectional Approach to Online Hate Speech against Female Politicians

Despite "the obvious positive consequences that the Internet extends and pluralizes the public sphere in a number of ways - [including its alignment with] the idea that democracy resides ultimately, with citizens who engage in talk with each other," the promise of social media platforms for democratization and equalization purposes have been short lived (Dahlgren, 2005). Instead, these platforms have evolved into spaces where violent, harassing, and discriminatory language thrives, disproportionately targeting women and girls — with 1 in 10 women over the age of 15 having experienced some form of online violence. (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2017). Furthermore, women who are actively involved in politics emerge as the second largest target group of online violence after women journalists - 27 times more likely to face abuse online than their male counterparts (Amnesty International, 2018).

As women's participation and representation in politics increase, unfortunately, so does their risk of becoming victims of online violence. Rheault, Rayment, and Musulan (2019) find that women breaking the glass ceiling by achieving high levels of public recognition in politics are more likely to receive uncivil messages than their male counterparts. The consequences of this growing and pervasive threat to women's equal rights to political and public participation globally are immense. At the macro level, in addition to the dangers online violence poses to gender equality, it also threatens the legitimacy of political and electoral processes and poses unprecedented challenges to the quality of democratic governance (Stevens et al., 2024; Haciyakupoglu & Wong, 2023; Phungula, 2023; Wilfore 2022). The U.N. Human Rights Council finds the erosion of women's human rights to be "a litmus test for the human rights standards of the society as a whole," points to the broader ramifications of the tech-enabled backlash against women's rights for global peace and security (Human Rights Council, A/HRC/38/46, 2018). At the individual level, online violence against women in politics presents a distinct form of gender-based violence by targeting women *because* of their gender, and by taking on gendered forms (Krook, 2020). As such, online violence perpetuates and expands the types of gender-based violence

women politicians already face, including physical, sexual, and psychological, through new mediums and tools, such as doxing, misinformation and disinformation (Krook, 2020; Bardall, 2023; Wilfore, 2023). Finally, it further disenfranchises both incumbent politicians and aspirants, known as the 'silencing effect' discourages women from being and becoming politically active (Amnesty International, 2018; Bardall, 2023; Carlson, 2019).

Existing research highlights that much of online violence is distinctly gendered, but it is also highly intersectional, targeting women's many and layered identities and putting certain groups of women more at risk than those who are less marginalized. Politically active women similarly face "many axes of discrimination" on the basis of their ethnicity, religion, ideology, race, sexuality, disability, and a multitude of other factors (Kuperberg, 2018; Bardall, Bjarnegård, and Piscopo, 2019). Their experiences with intersectional discrimination perpetuate existing societal stereotypes (Zetterberg et al., 2022) and contribute to women's underrepresentation across political decision-making positions (Zamfir, 2024). US-focused studies also point to increasing incivility across online platforms and discourse, which disproportionately affects female and minority candidates (Thakur, et al., 2024; Thakur & Madrigal, 2022; Rheault et al., 2019; Kuperberg, 2023).

A focus on intersectionality allows researchers to examine how different groups of people interact with political systems. It helps us to contextualize and assess the role of individual identities in political participation and representative politics. The seminal work of Crenshaw (1991) has established that people in some groups may hold multiple identities, which may in turn lead to multiple forms of oppression, that is unique compared to other groups. As has been the case for women and women of color, who experience participatory and representative politics differently than white women or men of color. Other scholars have argued that taking an intersectional approach is critical to the study of politics in general, however challenging that may be (Smooth 2006), and is instrumental in helping us understand differences between (e.g., men and women) and within (e.g., different types of women) groups, which can ultimately move us away from gender essentialism (Jordan-Zachery, 2007). Intersectional approach also

offers methodological advantages over separate analysis of race and gender as it forces us to construct new theories and approaches to explain how the complex categories of multiple identities shape political participation and outcomes, and hence advance ~~our~~ research on gender and politics (Simien,2007).

Several researchers have adopted an intersectional approach to study representative politics by looking specifically at women of color. For example, Hawkesworth (2003) examines how the combination of racism and misogyny has been used to exclude and silence women of color in Congress. Similarly, in their edited volume, Brown et al. (2023) explore how race, gender, and other intersecting identities shape the experiences of women of color in politics, including those engaged in representative roles beyond Congress. Other researchers have examined these issues as they occur in digital spaces, given the prominence of social media for political participation. To that effect, "Misogynoir", coined by Black feminist scholar Moya Bailey (2018), captures a specific type of hate that targets Black women through a combination of racism and sexism. As Black women's lived experiences shape their perspectives and contribute to a distinct understanding of social issues and political platforms, their experiences of misogynoir further highlight the unique challenges they face in navigating digital platforms for increased political participation (Kwarteng at., al, 2023).

Building on this body of research, scholars have sought to explore the experiences of women of color in politics, with a particular focus on their presence and challenges within digital spaces. Norwood et. al. (2021) interviewed Black women politicians to understand their experiences of being online and how that is related to the lack of representation of Black women in political offices. Thakur et. al. (2022) conducted a content analysis of posts from Twitter (now X) to show that women of color (and particularly Black women) political candidates running for Congress in 2020 were twice as likely to be the subject of mis- and disinformation, and were four times more likely to be the subject of violent abuse compared to white women and men of color. Their work also highlighted how women of color engaged in various tactics of resilience to carry out their political campaigns in the face of these attacks.

3. Partisanship, Gender, and Race: New Layers of Intersectionality

One important gap in the literature on intersectionality is that of party affiliation. Although the work by Thakur et. al. (2022) highlighted anecdotal differences between women of color who ran on either Democratic or Republic platforms, there is as yet no systematic work on whether political party affiliation, as a form of political identity, combines with other identities (e.g., race and gender) to influence political behavior. We argue that the partisanship dimension is critical for understanding the different ways that women are targeted for online violence.

In American politics, gender and race are not only salient identities — they are increasingly structured by partisan polarization. The Democratic and Republican parties do not treat these identities symmetrically. Democratic elites and voters have, over time, adopted a platform of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion, embracing women of color as symbols of progress and as representatives of the party's commitment to historically marginalized groups. This orientation is reflected in both rhetoric and recruitment patterns, particularly since the 2018 and 2020 election cycles (Montoya et al. 2022; Schaffner 2022). Meanwhile, Republican discourse has increasingly leaned into appeals that resonate with ethno-nationalist sentiment, with Trump's campaigns in 2016 and 2020 amplifying racial resentment and hostile sexism as mobilizing tools (Cassese and Barnes 2019; Schaffner 2022; Kim and Junn 2024). These divergent ideological positions place women of color at the intersection of partisan identity formation and racialized gender discourse.

Additionally, the notion of a cohesive "women's vote" has long obscured stark racial divisions within the electorate. While women overall are more likely than men to vote for Democratic candidates, this gender gap is, in large part, a reflection of the overwhelming support that women of color—particularly Black women—consistently give to the Democratic Party (Junn and Masuoka 2021; Bejarano 2013; Harris-Perry 2011). In contrast, white women have voted in majority for Republican presidential candidates in nearly every election since the 1950s, with the only exceptions being 1964 and 1996 (Junn 2017). Research shows that support for Donald Trump among white women in 2016 and 2020

was strongly predicted by the endorsement of sexist beliefs and diminished perceptions of discrimination against women (Cassese and Barnes 2019). These patterns suggest that gender alone cannot explain vote choice; rather, the intersection of race and gender—mediated by ideology—plays a pivotal role in shaping political behavior.

Intersectionality provides a critical lens for understanding how political identities are constructed and mobilized in partisan contexts. As Montoya et al. (2022) and Kim and Junn (2024) demonstrate using multiracial post-election surveys, shared racial and gender identities significantly shape perceptions of representation, but their effects vary depending on the group in question and the broader political environment. For African American and Latina women, descriptive representation within the Democratic Party signals greater inclusion and empowerment, a pattern that aligns with the "minority empowerment" thesis (Bobo and Gilliam 1990; Pantoja and Segura 2003). At the same time, the absence or delegitimization of women of color in Republican politics contributes to political alienation and signals exclusion. Voters often assume that women and minority candidates are Democrats (Gershon and Monforti 2021), reinforcing partisan stereotypes and making women of color, especially those in Democratic roles, potent symbols of ideological and demographic change.

These dynamics also help explain why women of color aligned with the Democratic Party attract outsized attention—both positive and negative—in the public sphere. Their symbolic role as challengers to traditional hierarchies of race and gender makes them especially salient targets for backlash, particularly in a political climate increasingly shaped by the fear of demographic replacement and loss of status among segments of the white electorate (Junn 2017; Junn and Masuoka 2021). As such, Democratic women of color are not simply treated as political actors but as existential threats to a social order rooted in white patriarchal dominance. This perception, deeply tied to the preservation of "white womanhood" as a political identity (Junn 2017; Collins 1990), enables the justification of racialized and gendered attacks—rhetorical or otherwise—against these figures. This pattern also resonates with findings that suggest that women of color politicians who explicitly advocate feminist strategies are further targeted with online violence rhetoric. (Banet-weiser and Miltner 2016, Lewis et al., 2017)

In line of this view, while women of color across the political spectrum are often subject to gendered and racialized marginalization, the intensity and nature of their exposure to online hate speech are deeply contingent on their partisan affiliation. Women of color running as Democratic candidates are likely to be significantly more vulnerable to online political violence than their white Democratic counterparts. While white Democratic women may also face online misogyny—particularly when advancing feminist rhetoric—they are often spared the racialized abuse that uniquely targets women of color. Moreover, white Democratic women can more easily be integrated into mainstream political narratives without triggering the same intersectional backlash. The combination of being a woman, a person of color, and a progressive voice places Democratic women of color at the epicenter of racialized and gendered vitriol in digital spaces.

In contrast, within the Republican Party, it is white women candidates who are likely to face more online political violence than their women-of-color counterparts. Republican white women often embody traditional, submissive femininity or explicitly support policies perceived as hostile to gender equality—stances that can provoke intense criticism, particularly from liberal and progressive audiences. Their visible alignment with patriarchal authority and anti-feminist rhetoric renders them highly legible targets for those who oppose Republican ideology and its gender politics. In contrast, Republican women of color may be more shielded from online attacks, not because they are spared misogyny or racism, but because their racial identity intersects with broader Democratic values of diversity and multicultural inclusion. For Democratic partisans and progressive critics, the racial identity of Republican women of color can produce ambivalence—limiting the extent of vilification they receive, or at least moderating the tone of attacks. Their identity may even complicate simplified narratives of Republican regression, making them less prominent figures in online hate campaigns. In this way, race can serve as a moderating force, reducing the visibility and intensity of political violence against Republican women of color compared to their white counterparts.

These arguments lead to the following testable hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Among Democratic candidates, women of color are more likely to be targeted by online violence than white women.

Hypothesis 2: Among Republican candidates, white women are more likely to be targeted by online violence than women of color.

Hypothesis 3: Among women of color candidates, those affiliated with the Democratic Party are more likely to be targeted by online violence than their Republican counterparts.

Hypothesis 4: Among white women candidates, those affiliated with the Republican Party are more likely to be targeted by online violence than their Democratic counterparts.

4. Research Design

For our empirical analysis, we examined offensive and hateful speech directed at political candidates during the 2024 U.S. elections on X (formerly Twitter). We began by compiling a comprehensive list of 917 Congressional candidates from both the Democratic and Republican Parties—covering races for the House and Senate—drawing on publicly available sources such as Ballotpedia. For each candidate, we recorded their name, gender, race, party affiliation, state, incumbency status, follower count, and X account username. Table 1 presents the distribution of these candidates by gender, race, and party affiliation.

Table 1. Distribution of 2024 U.S. Congress Candidates by Gender, Race, and Party

	Male Candidate		**Female Candidate**	
	Republican	**Democrat**	**Republican**	**Democrat**
White	330	163	64	123
Black	21	52	6	44
Hispanic	22	21	7	20
Asian	12	16	7	9

The demographic distribution of the Congressional candidates in the 2022 U.S. elections reveals striking patterns in race, gender, and party affiliation. White candidates overwhelmingly dominated the field, particularly among Republicans, who fielded 330 white men and 64 white women. In contrast, Democratic candidates displayed significantly greater racial and gender diversity. Women of color—Black, Hispanic, and Asian—were far more likely to run as Democrats than Republicans, highlighting the Democratic Party's alignment with multicultural representation. For example, among Black candidates, Democrats nominated 44 women and 52 men, compared to only 6 women and 21 men fielded by Republicans. Similar gaps are evident among Hispanic and Asian candidates.

We then gathered all tweets posted between May 20 and August 23, 2024, which mentioned any of these candidates with at least one active X account. To improve data quality, we excluded tweets that were not in English or that included more than three user mentions, as these were more likely to be spam or unrelated content. The final dataset comprised 721,567 tweets. The table below summarizes the distribution of these tweets by the gender, race, and party affiliation of the mentioned candidates.

Table 2. Distribution of Tweets Targeting Candidates by Gender, Race, and Party

	Male Candidate		**Female Candidate**	
	Republican	**Democrat**	**Republican**	**Democrat**
White	263,780 (799)	119,247 (732)	72,321 (1,130)	82,952 (674)
Black	10,255 (488)	48,234 (928)	99 (17)	42,864 (974)
Hispanic	21,158 (962)	8,255 (393)	965 (138)	31,438 (1,571)
Asian	2,473 (206)	11,907 (744)	752 (107)	4,867 (541)

Note: The first number in each cell represents the total count of tweets mentioning the candidate categorized within the group. The number in parentheses indicates the average number of tweets mentioning an individual candidate from that group.

As shown in Table 2, the distribution of tweets is highly uneven across gender, race, and party affiliation. When examining the total number of tweets for each group, Republican white male candidates garnered the highest volume, with over 263,000 mentions, followed by white Democratic male candidates, who received over 119,000 tweets. However, when considering the average number of tweets per candidate, female candidates, on average, attract more attention. Notably, Democratic Hispanic female candidates received the most mentions per candidate, averaging 1,571 tweets each, followed by Republican white female candidates with 1,130 tweets, and Democratic Black female candidates with 974 tweets. In contrast, Republican women of color received fewer mentions, with Black (17), Hispanic (138), and Asian (107) candidates being the least mentioned. Additionally, Democratic white (674) and Asian (541) female candidates also received relatively fewer tweets compared to other groups within the female category.

Our analysis focuses on two primary dependent variables for online violence: *Offensive Speech* and *Hate Speech*. Offensive speech is defined as language that demeans, threatens, insults, or ridicules a political candidate. These categories allow us to assess the varying levels of intensity in the offensive content directed at candidates on X. The *Offensive Speech* variable is coded as 1 if a tweet falls into this category, and 0 otherwise. *Hate Speech* is defined as a specific subset of offensive speech, marked by explicit references to a candidate's identity—such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or religion. For a tweet to be classified as hate speech in our analysis, it must directly target at least one of these identity-based attributes. The *Hate Speech* variable is similarly coded as 1 when a tweet meets this criterion, and 0 otherwise.

While conducting multiple offensive and hate speech detection tasks, we employed human-annotated gold standard data to fine-tune BERT-based transformer models. Fine-tuning with human-verified annotations allows the models to learn the specific linguistic and contextual patterns present in politically charged discourse, improving their accuracy for nuanced classification. To build our training dataset, we annotated 4,000 tweets with the help of four domain experts. Given the rarity of offensive and hateful content in randomly sampled data, we adopted an active learning approach to enrich

the dataset with relevant examples while minimizing systematic recall bias. An initial set of five high-recall models—including ChatGPT-4.0 and traditional classifiers—was trained on a small, random sample of annotated tweets. These models were then used to scan a larger pool of tweets and identify likely instances of hate speech. From this, 3,000 tweets flagged by at least one model were selected for annotation. These were combined with 1,000 randomly sampled tweets, resulting in a cleaned and adjudicated gold-standard corpus of 3,690 tweets, including 959 labeled as offensive and 277 labeled as hate speech. Using this corpus, we developed a suite of binary classifiers to identify both the presence of offensive and hate speech. For binary offensive speech detection, we fine-tuned the cardiffnlp/twitter-roberta-base-offensive model (Vidgen et al. 2021), while we used the facebook/roberta-hate-speech-dynabench-r4-target model (Camacho-Collados, 2022) for hate speech binary classification.

To examine how gender, party affiliation, and race intersect to shape candidates' exposure to offensive or hate speech, we estimate a logistic regression model where the dependent variable is a binary indicator coded as 1 if a tweet is classified as offensive/hate speech and 0 otherwise. The key independent variables are candidate gender, party affiliation, and race, along with all two-way and three-way interaction terms. This specification allows us to assess whether and how the effect of one identity dimension (e.g., gender) varies depending on the others (e.g., race and party). We also include a set of control variables—such as incumbency status, follower count, chamber (House vs. Senate), and the timing of tweets—to account for additional factors that may influence the likelihood of receiving offensive or hate speech. The model estimates the log-odds of a tweet i being offensive (or hateful) and is formally specified as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} logit\left(\Pr\left(Y_i = 1\right)\right) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 female_i + \beta_2 race_i + \beta_3 party_i + \beta_4\left(female_i \times race_i\right) \\ + \beta_5\left(female_i \times party_i\right) + \beta_6\left(race_i \times party_i\right) \\ + \beta_6(female_i \times race_i \times party_i) + \beta_7 \gamma_i + \varepsilon_i \end{aligned}$$

5. Results

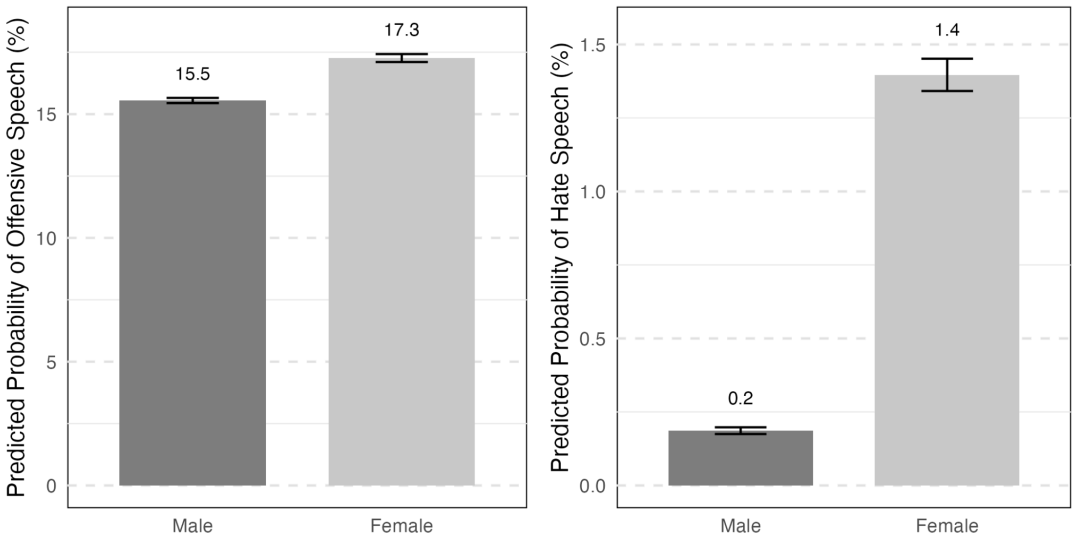
Table 3 displays the results from our logistic regression models examining offensive and hate speech targeting congressional candidates. Models 1 and 4 evaluate the impact of candidate gender on offensive and hate speech, respectively, while controlling for multiple variables, including race and partisanship. The results consistently show that being female has a positive and statistically significant effect, indicating that online violence disproportionately targets female candidates during the 2024 U.S. congressional elections. In Models 2 and 5, we introduce interaction terms between gender and race to assess whether women of color face heightened levels of online violence. The positive and significant interaction effects in most cases indicate that women of color are particularly vulnerable to such hostility. Models 3 and 6 further extend the analysis by examining the interactive effects of gender, race, and partisanship on both offensive and hate speech. These models reveal that intersectional identities significantly shape the nature and extent of online aggression faced by candidates.

To enhance clarity and interpretability, we calculated predicted probabilities to better illustrate the effect of gender on online violence. While doing so, we held the control variables—such as Senate, Incumbency, Follower Count (log), and Tweet Count (log)—at their mean values. Firstly, as depicted in Figure 1, the analysis shows that female candidates are more frequently targeted by offensive and hate speech compared to their male counterparts. The predicted probability of offensive speech against female candidates is 17.3%, which is approximately 1.8 percentage points higher than for male candidates. The disparity is even more striking regarding hate speech, where the predicted probability for female candidates is 1.4%, nearly seven times greater than that for male candidates.

Table 3. Logistic Regression Models on Offensive and Hate Speech

DV:	*Offensive Speech*			*Hate Speech*		
	Model 1	**Model 2**	**Model 3**	**Model 4**	**Model 5**	**Model 6**
Female	0.07*** (0.01)	0.04*** (0.01)	0.30*** (0.01)	1.97*** (0.04)	1.96*** (0.05)	2.41*** (0.05)
Democrat	-0.14*** (0.01)	-0.09*** (0.01)	0.15*** (0.01)	-1.22*** (0.04)	-1.19*** (0.05)	0.51*** (0.08)
Black	0.10*** (0.01)	-0.07*** (0.01)	0.06 (0.03)	1.89*** (0.05)	1.69*** (0.07)	1.47*** (0.16)
Hispanic	-0.12*** (0.01)	0.22*** (0.02)	0.44*** (0.02)	0.11 (0.07)	0.94*** (0.13)	1.31*** (0.14)
Asian	0.04 (0.02)	-0.26*** (0.03)	-0.20* (0.08)	1.18*** (0.11)	1.80*** (0.16)	0.08 (1.00)
Senate	-0.31*** (0.01)	-0.41*** (0.01)	-0.46*** (0.01)	-1.08*** (0.06)	-1.24*** (0.07)	-1.34*** (0.07)
Incumbency	0.14*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.06*** (0.01)	0.04 (0.07)	-0.05 (0.08)	-0.07 (0.08)
Follower Count (log)	0.12*** (0.00)	0.12*** (0.00)	0.11*** (0.00)	0.04* (0.02)	0.04** (0.02)	0.04* (0.02)
Tweet Count (log)	0.05*** (0.00)	0.06*** (0.00)	0.07*** (0.00)	0.31*** (0.02)	0.31*** (0.02)	0.34*** (0.02)
Female:Black		0.29*** (0.02)	-9.25 (19.66)		0.20** (0.08)	-11.21 (145.90)
Female:Hispanic		-0.63*** (0.02)	0.93*** (0.11)		1.01*** (0.15)	-3.39*** (1.01)
Female:Asian		0.74*** (0.04)	-0.09 (0.15)		0.97*** (0.20)	10.66 (53.74)
Female:Democrat			0.59*** (0.02)			-2.50*** (0.10)
Democrat:Black			-0.31*** (0.03)			1.05*** (0.18)
Democrat:Hispanic			-0.75*** (0.04)			1.64*** (0.44)
Democrat:Asian			-0.21* (0.09)			0.53 (1.02)
Female:Democrat:Black			9.88 (19.66)			13.32 (145.90)
Female:Democrat:Hispanic			1.01*** (0.12)			4.30*** (1.10)
Female:Democrat:Asian			1.21*** (0.15)			11.76 (53.75)
(Intercept)	-3.62*** (0.02)	-3.66*** (0.02)	-3.70*** (0.02)	-9.16*** (0.14)	-9.11*** (0.14)	-9.60*** (0.15)
AIC	634204.24	632924.40	631487.79	53328.95	53259.59	52666.25
BIC	634319.13	633073.76	631717.57	53443.84	53408.95	52896.03
Log Likelihood	-317092.12	-316449.20	-315723.90	-26654.47	-26616.80	-26313.13
Deviance	634184.24	632898.40	631447.79	53308.95	53233.59	52626.25
Num. obs.	721540	721540	721540	721540	721540	721540

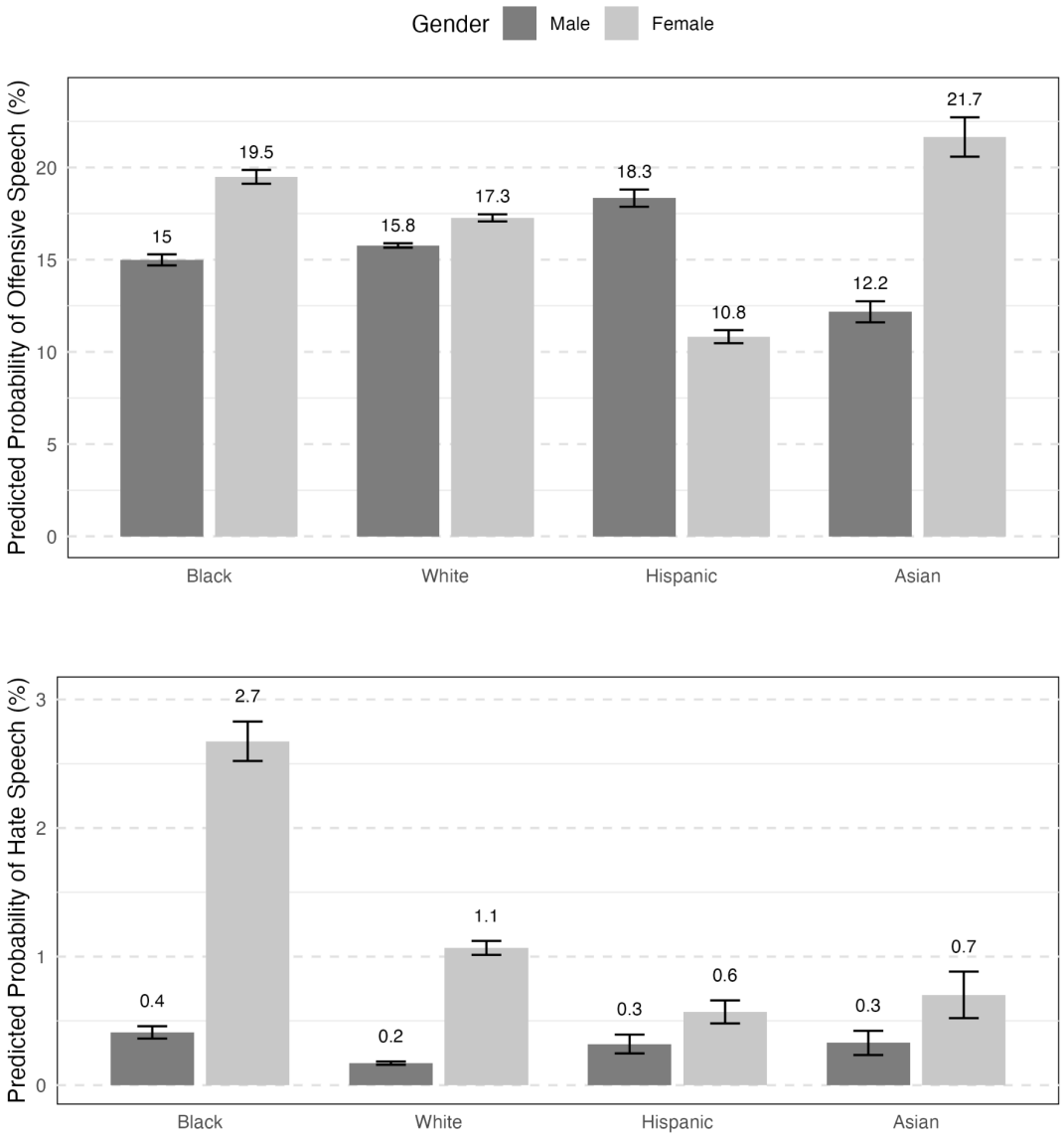
Figure 1. Predicted Probability of Offensive and Hate Speech by Gender



Note: The predicted probabilities of these results are derived from logistic regression models, with other control variables—such as Senate, Incumbency, Follower Count (log), and Tweet Count (log)—held at their mean values.

Moreover, our findings indicate that gender-biased online violence is prevalent across racial groups, though the degree of disparity varies. As shown in the figure below, which presents the predicted probabilities of offensive speech by gender and race, female candidates consistently face higher levels of offensive speech than their male counterparts across all racial categories. The gender gap is particularly stark among Asian and Black candidates: 21.7% of tweets mentioning Asian women candidates contain offensive speech, compared to 12.2% for Asian men—a difference of 9.5 percentage points. Similarly, Black women face a rate of 19.5%, while Black men experience 15%. The bottom panel of the figure, which displays hate speech probabilities, reveals even more pronounced disparities. Black women candidates are targeted by hate speech in 2.7% of tweets, compared to just 0.4% for Black men. White women also face substantially higher hate speech (1.1%) than White men (0.2%). Thus, our results challenge the existing views that online hate is exclusively concentrated on women of color, pointing instead to broader patterns of gender-based hostility in political communication.

Figure 2. Predicted Probability of Offensive and Hate Speech by Gender and Race



Note: The predicted probabilities of these results are derived from logistic regression models, with other control variables—such as Senate, Incumbency, Follower Count (log), and Tweet Count (log)—held at their mean values.

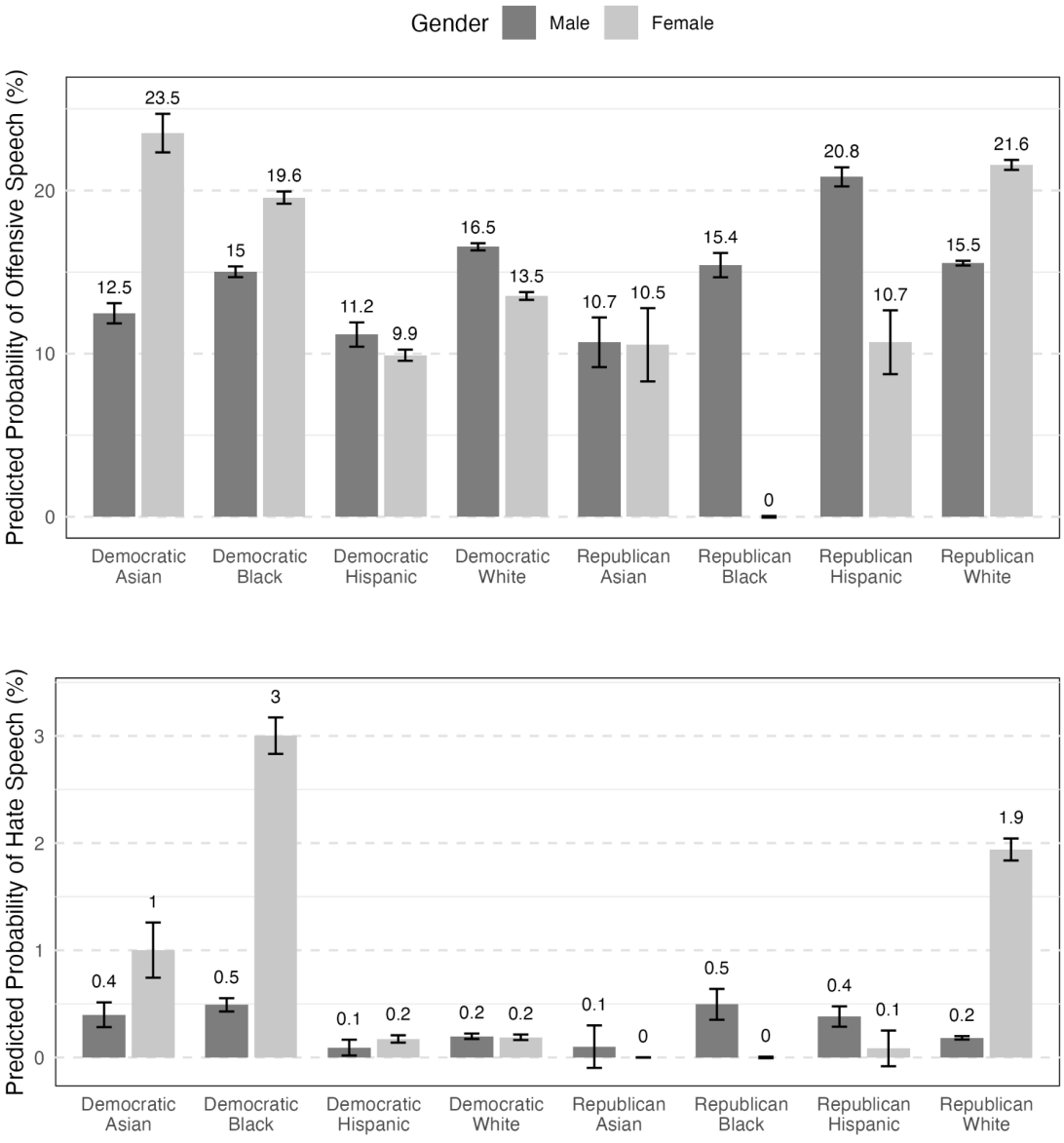
Figure 3 below offers compelling empirical evidence for our core claim that online political violence is shaped by the intersection of race and party affiliation in the contemporary U.S. context. To begin, the results lend strong support to *Hypothesis 1*. Among Democratic candidates, women of color—particularly Asian and Black women—are significantly more likely to be targeted by both offensive and hate speech than their white counterparts. Democratic Asian women experienced the

highest level of offensive speech at 23.5%, followed by Democratic Black women at 19.6%, both of which exceed the 16.5% rate for Democratic white women. Similarly, Democratic Black women were subjected to hate speech at a rate of 3%, the highest of any group in the dataset, while Democratic white women were targeted at a much lower rate of just 0.2%. These results confirm that within the Democratic Party, race compounds gender-based vulnerability to online abuse, with women of color disproportionately affected by identity-based attacks.

Hypothesis 2 is also supported by findings, which show that white women candidates in the Republican Party are more frequently subjected to both offensive and hate speech compared to their women-of-color counterparts. Republican white women receive offensive speech at a rate of 21.6%, the highest within their party. For hate speech, they are targeted in 1.9% of tweets, far exceeding the near-zero rates for Republican Asian, Black, and Hispanic women. Notably, Republican Black and Asian women receive no recorded instances of hate speech in the dataset and have offensive speech rates of just 15.4% and 10.5%, respectively. These findings suggest that while gendered political violence is present in conservative spaces, it disproportionately affects white Republican women—likely due to their increased public visibility and associations with patriarchal authority—while women of color in the party remain comparatively insulated.

Furthermore, the results affirm *Hypothesis 3*, which predicted that Democratic women of color would be more frequently targeted than Republican women of color. This trend is consistent across racial categories. Democratic Black women experience 3% hate speech compared to 0% for Republican Black women, and offensive speech rates are also higher among Democrats (19.6% vs. 0%). Similarly, Democratic Asian women face 23.5% offensive speech compared to just 10.5% for Republican Asian women. These disparities suggest that party affiliation significantly shapes how women of color are perceived and treated in online spaces. This result indicates that, although women of color across the political spectrum experience gendered and racialized marginalization, their exposure to online hate speech is significantly influenced by their partisan affiliation, with Democratic candidates facing higher levels of online political violence than their Republican counterparts.

Figure 3. Predicted Probability of Offensive and Hate Speech by Gender, Race, and Party.



Note: The predicted probabilities of these results are derived from logistic regression models, with other control variables—such as Senate, Incumbency, Follower Count (log), and Tweet Count (log)—held at their mean values.

Finally, *Hypothesis 4* is validated by the observed differences among white women candidates. Republican white women face more online hostility than their Democratic counterparts, with 21.6% of tweets directed at them classified as offensive—compared to 16.5% for Democratic white women—and

1.9% as hate speech, far exceeding the 0.2% rate for Democratic white women. This finding suggests that white women in the Republican Party may be particularly exposed to backlash when they are publicly associated with traditionalist or patriarchal ideologies. While they are not subject to racialized attacks, their gender alone appears to make them visible targets in polarized online spaces—especially when not paired with a racial minority status that might afford symbolic protection. These results collectively highlight the uneven distribution of online political violence, shaped by intersecting hierarchies of gender, race, and party.

While male candidates are certainly subjected to offensive and hate speech, the patterns observed in the data reveal far less variation across race and party among men compared to women. For example, among Democratic men, offensive speech rates range from 9.9% to 15%, with relatively modest differences across racial groups (e.g., 15% for Black men, 13.5% for white men, and 12.5% for Asian men). Hate speech targeting male candidates remains minimal across the board, with all Democratic male subgroups receiving hate speech at or below 0.5%. Similarly, Republican men show constrained variation, with offensive speech rates falling between 10.5% and 15.5%, and hate speech targeting remaining negligible (0% to 0.4%). In contrast, female candidates—particularly women of color—exhibit both higher rates and greater disparities across racial and partisan lines. These distinctions underscore that the dynamics of online political violence are not merely about race or party alone, but about how race and party intersect with gender, making female candidates—especially Democratic women of color and Republican white women—uniquely vulnerable to identity-based online abuse. This gendered asymmetry is central to the theoretical argument and empirical contribution of the study.

6. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that online political violence in the contemporary U.S. is not structured solely by gender, race, or party affiliation in isolation, but rather by the intersection of all three. While women of color are often treated as a homogeneous group in public discourse, our analysis reveals that their

exposure to digital abuse is highly contingent on partisan identity. Democratic women of color—particularly Asian and Black candidates—emerge as the most frequent targets of both offensive and hate speech, reflecting their symbolic representation of progressive, multicultural politics. These candidates, by virtue of their race, gender, and political affiliation, are perceived as challenging traditional hierarchies, making them high-salience targets for online hostility. In contrast, Republican women of color receive far less attention and are less frequently attacked, likely because their political alignment does not position them as symbolic disruptors of racial and gender norms. Meanwhile, white Republican women experience a distinct form of gendered hostility, particularly when they are publicly aligned with patriarchal or anti-feminist rhetoric. These asymmetric patterns validate our four hypotheses and offer a nuanced understanding of how symbolic threat operates within polarized digital discourse.

Our findings further highlight that the intersectional nature of online violence disproportionately affects women compared to men, whose exposure to offensive and hate speech remains relatively low and consistent across race and party. This distinction underscores the unique vulnerabilities faced by female candidates, especially when their racial identity and partisan affiliation render them visible and contentious figures within political conflict. Unlike male candidates, who tend to face uniform patterns of online abuse regardless of race or party, women—particularly Democratic women of color and Republican white women—experience intensified hostility driven by their intersecting identities. Such disparities call for more nuanced analyses of political violence that move beyond simplistic categorizations of gender alone.

By integrating race, gender, and partisanship into the empirical study of online political violence, our research provides critical insights into how identity-based targeting operates in the digital public sphere. This intersectional approach challenges dominant frameworks that treat identity dimensions as additive rather than interactive, showing instead how political polarization shapes asymmetric vulnerabilities. Our findings carry important implications for democratic representation and political communication, as well as for social media platforms tasked with moderating harmful content.

Recognizing how intersecting identities shape digital abuse can inform the development of more targeted and equitable content moderation practices. Moreover, by highlighting the unique risks faced by specific groups of women candidates, this study underscores the broader societal challenge of ensuring equal political participation in an increasingly polarized and digitally mediated environment.

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