Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)
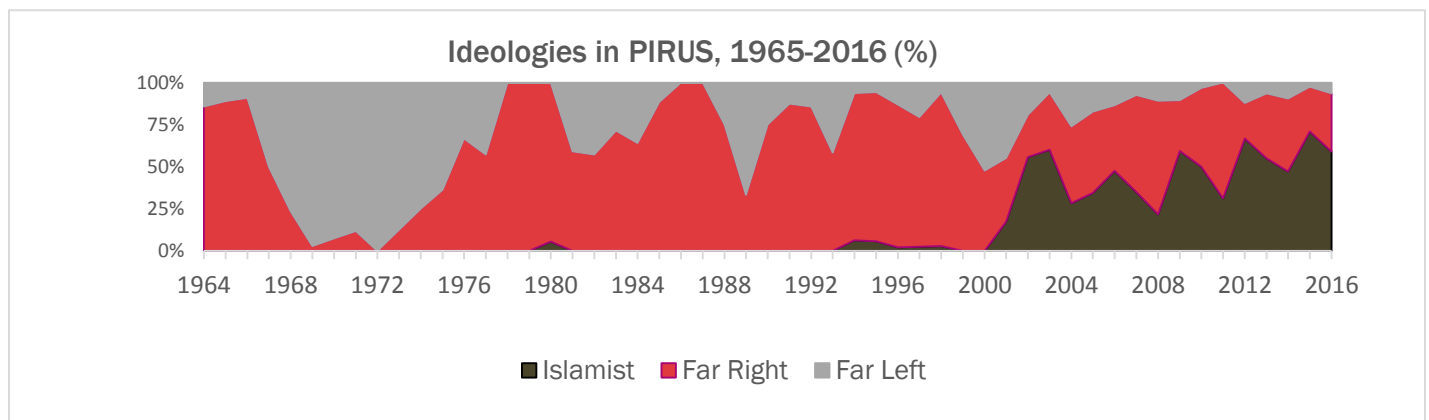
PROJECT OVERVIEW

Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) is a database of 1,867 Islamist, far-left, far-right, and single-issue extremists who have radicalized to violent and non-violent extremism in the United States from 1948 through 2016. The database is freely available for download on START's webpage or can be accessed through the project's data visualization tool at http://www.start.umd.edu/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus-keshif. The analysis for this research brief draws on the full dataset and illustrates the important differences that exist across ideological groups, as well as those which distinguish violent from non-violent extremists.

PROJECT FINDINGS – COMPARING IDEOLOGICAL GROUPS

The PIRUS data can be used to explore the radicalization trajectories of individuals from far-right, far-left, and Islamist ideologies.

- Individuals adhering to extreme far-right views make up the majority of the database (n=746), followed by Islamist extremists (n=457), and those on the extreme far-left (n=324).
- However, it is important to recognize that radicalization in the United States has generally occurred in several waves. These waves roughly correspond to the rise of far-left extremism in the late 1960s and early 1970s, far-right extremism in the 1980s and 1990s, and Islamist extremism after 2001.

Graph above displays year of exposure of each ideology in PIRUS. Exposure is most commonly the time at which an individual is arrested or commits an attack.

- The PIRUS data show that, on average, far-right extremists tend to be older, have lower rates of college experience, and higher rates of pre-radicalization crime than their far-left and Islamist counterparts.
- Far-left extremists tend to be young and well educated, and are significantly more likely to be female than their far-right or Islamist counterparts.
- Islamist extremists tend to be young and male, and show the highest rates of internet radicalization (since 2005).

	Far-right	Far-left	Islamist
Age at Public Exposure (Mean)	37.8	28.8	28.8
% Female	5.4%	24.3%	6.1%
Low Education (no college exp.)	52.8%	19.6%	41.5%
Low Socioeconomic Status	25.3%	18.6%	27.0%
Military Experience	26.0%	10.5%	8.1%
Criminal History	57.9%	39.1%	35.9%
Internet Radicalization	72.5%	78.6%	91.5%
Evidence of Mental Illness	10.6%	4.6%	12.5%

Table based on the analysis of 1,867 individuals in PIRUS and displays valid percentages. Internet radicalization is measured only for cases from 2005 to present.

PROJECT FINDINGS – CORRELATES OF VIOLENT OUTCOMES

The PIRUS data can be used to explore which factors are most strongly associated with violent or potentially violent outcomes (as opposed to non-violent criminality) when controlling for ideology.

- An analysis of the data shows that individuals who were married and had stable employment histories were significantly less likely to plan, prepare for, or engage in acts of violence than were those who were unmarried, unemployed, or under-employed.
- Conversely, individuals who engaged in pre-radicalization crime, showed evidence of mental illness, were male, or were members of extremist cliques (i.e., small groups of like-minded peers) were significantly more likely to engage in extremist violence.
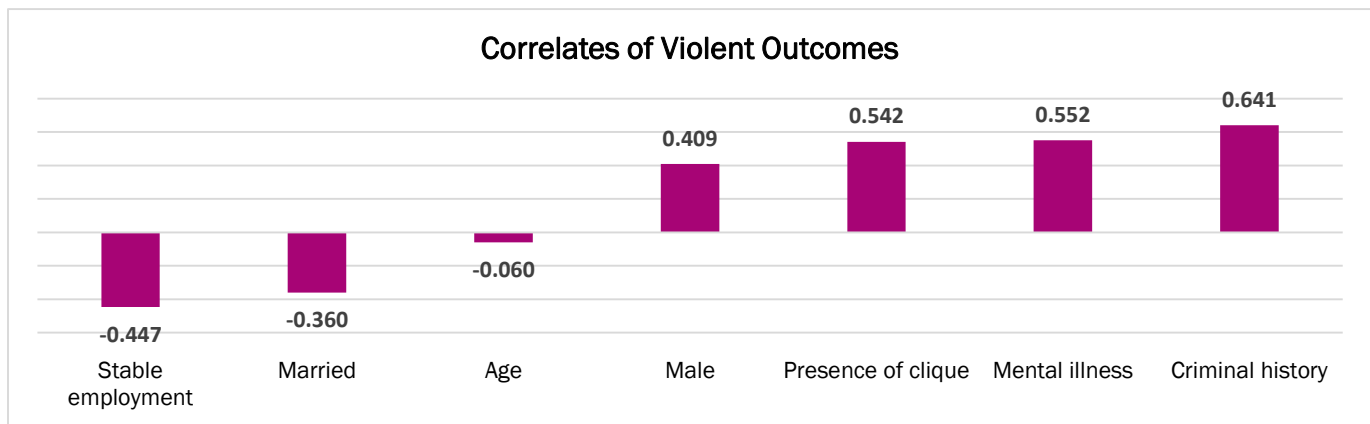
Correlates of Violent Outcomes

Category	Value
Stable employment	-0.447
Married	-0.360
Age	-0.060
Male	0.409
Presence of clique	0.542
Mental illness	0.552
Criminal history	0.641

Chart above displays beta coefficients from multivariate logistic regression. All variables are significant at p≤.05

ABOUT THE DATASET

PIRUS is a deidentified cross-sectional, quantitative dataset of individuals in the United States who radicalized to the point of violent or non-violent ideologically motivated criminal activity, or ideologically motivated association with a foreign or domestic extremist organization from 1948 until 2016. The PIRUS dataset was coded using entirely open-source material, including newspaper articles, websites (e.g., government, terrorist group, watchdog groups, research institutes, personal information finder sites), secondary datasets, peer-reviewed academic articles, journalistic accounts including books and documentaries, court records, police reports, witness transcribed interviews, psychological evaluations/reports, and information credited to the individual being researched (verified personal websites, autobiographies, social media accounts). PIRUS contains dozens of variables containing information on a wide range of characteristics, including the individuals' criminal activity and/or violent plots, their relationship with their affiliated extremist group(s), adherence to ideological milieus, factors relevant to their radicalization process, demographics, background, and personal histories. The dataset is not limited to a single ideological category, and includes individuals representing far right, far left, Islamist, and single-issue ideologies.

PROJECT TEAM

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