

Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States

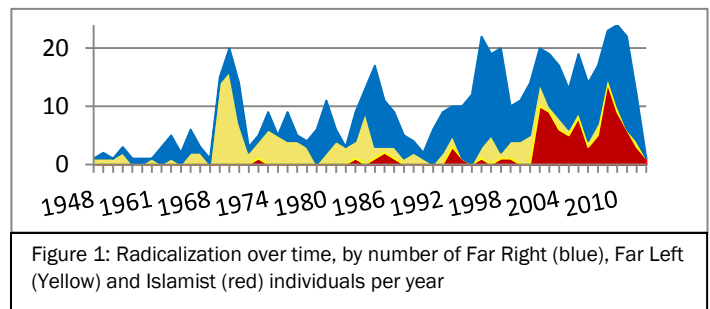
An Empirical Assessment of Domestic Radicalization

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Develop a quantitative cross-sectional dataset with in-depth information on the backgrounds and activities of violent and non-violent extremists who radicalized in the United States (non-violent extremism refers to individuals who engage in illegal extremist activity short of violence or who belong to a violent extremist group but do not participate in violent activities).
- Produce case studies on specific individuals' trajectories of radicalization to provide insight into different pathways towards radicalization in the United States.
- Assist policymakers and scholars in gaining a deeper understanding of radicalization in the United States.

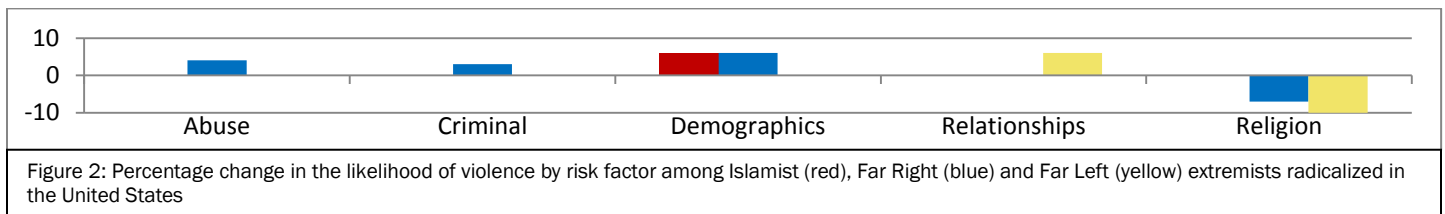
CURRENT PROGRESS AND FUTURE PLANS

- The research team divided the project into three waves of data coding taking place from Summer 2013 to Spring 2014. Summer 2014 will focus on completing the case studies and preparing the dataset and final report.
- The Wave 1 dataset is complete and includes more than 600 individuals and 15 case studies. Inter-rater reliability tests indicate reliable data and coding instruments.
- The research team began coding for Wave 2 in September 2013. Early inter-rater reliability indicates reliability scores equivalent to Wave 1.
- Members of the research team have applied the project to contemporary debates on radicalization. These include a piece on [The Huffington Post](#) discussing how this project can improve policymakers' understanding of radicalization and a [commentary piece](#) on the coding procedures in the October 2013 START newsletter. The team also presented a paper on the project and preliminary findings at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology.



PRELIMINARY FINDINGS¹

- Radicalization over time (measured by the number of extremists arrested or killed per year) has occurred in several waves, corresponding to the rise of Far Left extremism (in the late 1960s and early 1970s) Far Right extremism (in the 1990s) and Islamist extremism after 2001 (see Figure 1, above).
- Factors affecting the likelihood of violence varied by ideology. Far Left extremists with relationship issues (either platonic or romantic relationships with other extremists or problems with relationships in general) were more likely to be violent, as were Far Right individuals from lower socioeconomic strata, or with a history of having been abused or criminal behavior. Demographic factors mattered for Islamist extremists; individuals who were between 18 and 28, not married, and/or were not closely integrated into U.S. society were more likely to be violent. Interestingly, Far Right and Far Left extremists who were active in religious communities and activities were less likely to be violent (See Figure 2, below).
- Radicalization appears to be a social phenomenon. Approximately half of the individuals in the dataset were in a clique—a tight-knit, insular group of people—and only 10 percent of individuals were loners who did not have many close friends, although loners tended to be violent.



The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is supported in part by the Science and Technology Directorate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security through a Center of Excellence program headquartered at the University of Maryland. This project was supported by Award No. 2012-ZA-BX-0005, through the National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice or START.

¹ All findings are based on the Wave 1 data, and may change as the project is completed.