START
NATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR THE
STUDY OF TERRORISM AND RESPONSES TO TERRORISM

Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) is a database of 2,148 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 2017. The database is freely available for download on START's webpage 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.

- Far-right extremists make up the largest ideological group in the database (n=922), followed by Islamist extremists (n=496). The remainder of the individuals in the data are far-left extremists (n=366) or individuals in the "single-issue" category (n=364), whose beliefs vary, but include anti-abortion extremists, Puerto Rican nationalists, and members of the Jewish Defense League.
- The data show 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 1970s, far-right extremism beginning in the 1980s and continuing today, and Islamist extremism becoming more prominent after the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.
- 2017 PIRUS data showed an increase in the number of extremists on both the left and right, including 90 new far-right cases (up from 66 in 2016), and 28 new far-left cases (up from 13 in 2016).

Extremism in the United States, 1970-2017 (%)
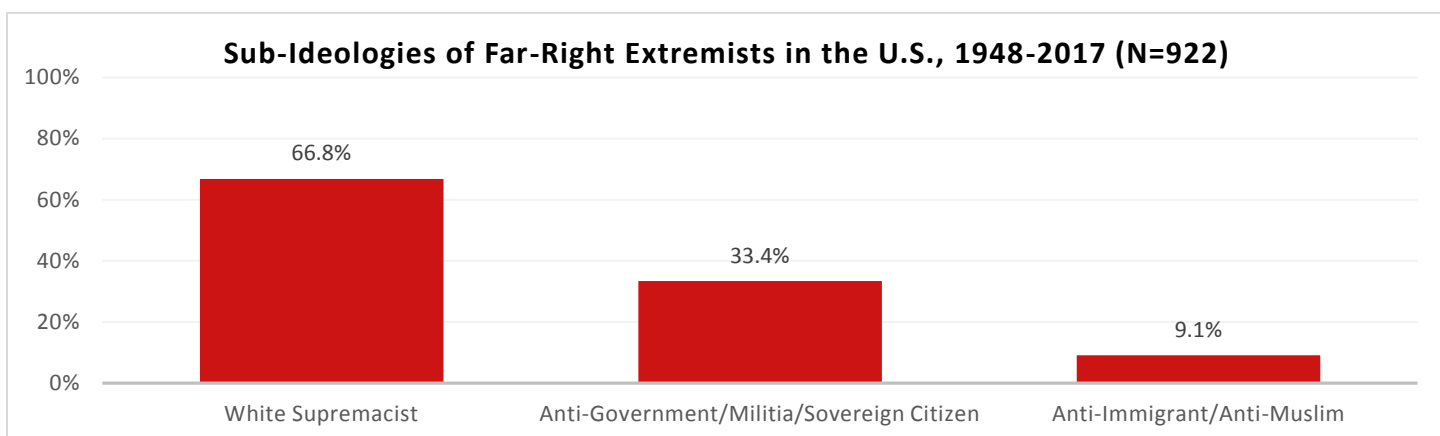
■ Islamist ■ Far Right ■ Far Left
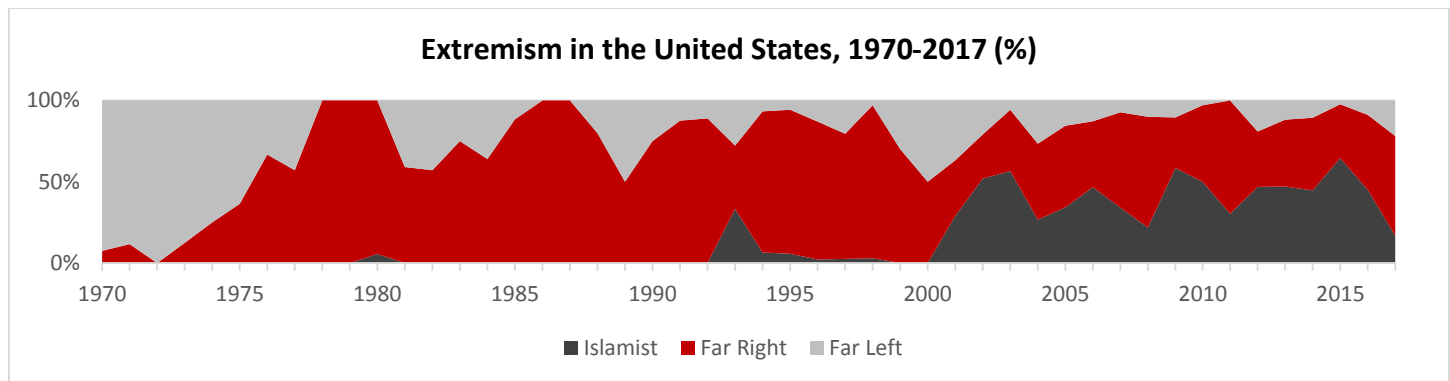
Note: Graph above displays year of exposure of each individual in PIRUS by ideology. Exposure is most commonly the time at which an individual is arrested for or commits an ideologically motivated illegal act.

- 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 far-right or Islamist extremists.
- Islamist extremists tend to be young and male and show high rates of internet radicalization (since 2005).

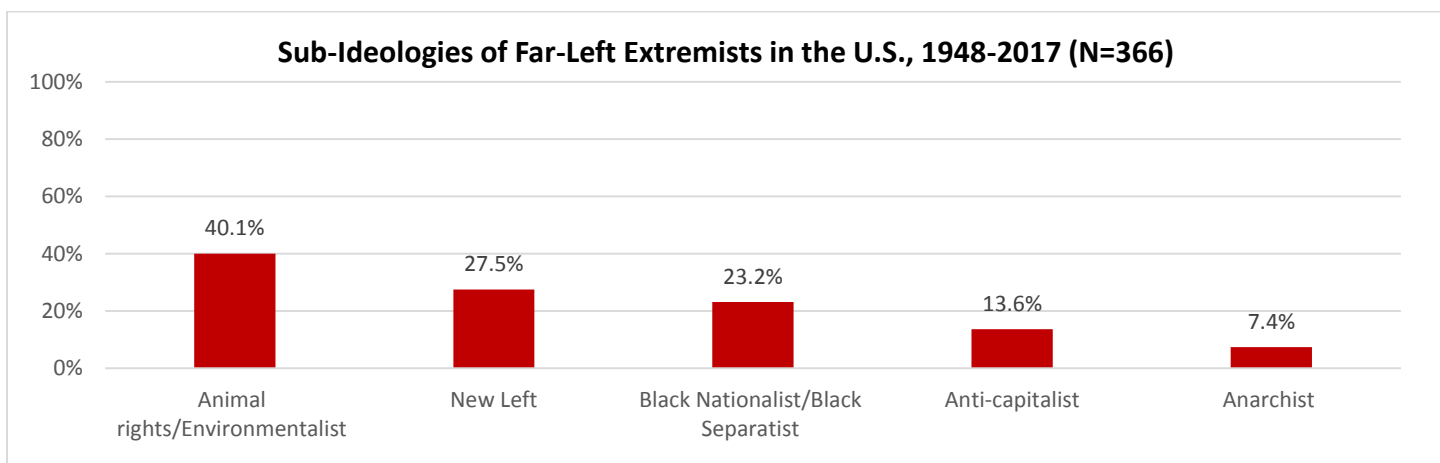|	Far-right	Far-left	Islamist
Age at Public Exposure (Mean)	37.5	29.6	28.8
% Female	5.6%	25.3%	6.3%
Low Education (no college exp.)	52.6%	21.4%	42.1%
Low Socioeconomic Status	26.1%	23.3%	25.7%
Military Experience	23.3%	9.6%	8.7%
Criminal History	53.1%	30.0%	33.2%
Internet Radicalization	80.6%	93.3%	90.4%
Evidence of Mental Illness	12.4%	5.4%	14.1%

Table based on the analysis of 2,148 individuals in PIRUS and displays valid percentages. Internet radicalization is measured only for cases from 2005 to present.

- The PIRUS data also capture the sub-ideological affiliations of U.S. extremists, showing both distinct and overlapping views within the far-right and far-left movements.
- Among far-right extremists, the majority (67%) demonstrate some expression of White supremacism, a view that people of European descent (typically Christians and especially men) are inherently superior to others and should therefore dominate social, political, and cultural institutions.
- Anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim views are typically integrated into White supremacists' racialized definitions of religion, ethnicity, and nationality. However, some far-right extremists are animated directly in opposition to people who are or are perceived to be immigrants or of the Islamic faith. The PIRUS data show that U.S. extremists with anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant views have increased recently, making up over 25% of all far-right extremists in the database for each of the last three years.
- Finally, nearly a third of the far-right extremists in the PIRUS database are or were members of the Sovereign Citizen movement, anti-government militias, and/or express anti-government views. While some anti-government extremists also subscribe to racist, nativist, and anti-Semitic views, others are motivated by a belief that the federal government lacks legitimate governing authority and they work actively to disrupt the enforcement of tax, land, traffic, and weapons laws.

Sub-Ideologies of Far-Right Extremists in the U.S., 1948-2017 (N=922)

Sub-Ideology	Percent
White Supremacist	66.8%
Anti-Government/Militia/Sovereign Citizen	33.4%
Anti-Immigrant/Anti-Muslim	9.1%

Note: Chart reflects the percent of far-right extremists in PIRUS who are associated with specific sub-ideologies. Individual extremists may be coded for up to three sub-ideologies, so total percent of cases does not equal 100.

- Traditionally, far-left ideologies in the U.S. have been oriented around an opposition to capitalism, as well as racial, gender, and other inequalities.
- Beginning in the 1960s and through the 1980s, Black nationalists and "new left" movements dominated the far-left. Some members of these groups advocated for violence and other illegal activities to advance specific political agendas, including opposition to the Vietnam War and support for Black separatism.
- However, beginning in the 1980s, far-left extremists were increasingly motivated by animal rights and/or environmental concerns. Animal rights and extremist environmentalists comprise the largest far-left group in PIRUS (40%).
- Anarchist movements, which generally argue that state power is oppressive and advocate for voluntary, collective social arrangements, make up 7.4% of total far-left cases in the PIRUS data. However, in 2017, the number of Anarchists in the data grew to 21% of all far-left cases.

Sub-Ideologies of Far-Left Extremists in the U.S., 1948-2017 (N=366)

Sub-Ideology	Percent
Animal rights/Environmentalist	40.1%
New Left	27.5%
Black Nationalist/Black Separatist	23.2%
Anti-capitalist	13.6%
Anarchist	7.4%

Note: Chart reflects the percent of far-left extremists in PIRUS who are associated with specific sub-ideologies. Individual extremists may be coded for up to three sub-ideologies, so the total percent of cases does not equal 100.

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 Extremist Outcomes Among U.S. Extremists
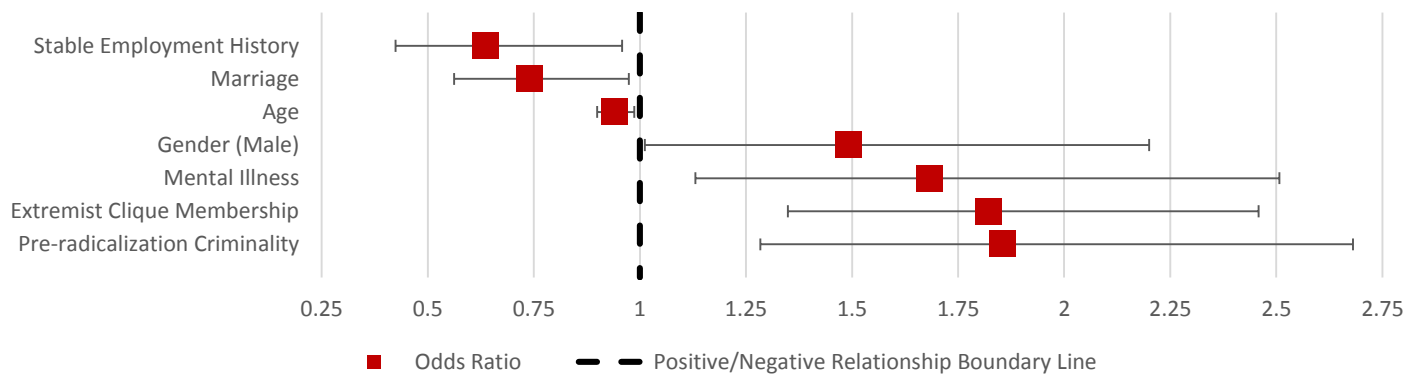
Note: The chart above displays odds ratios from multivariate logistic regression. All variables are significant at $p \leq .05$

ABOUT THE DATASET

PIRUS is a de-identified 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 2017. 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

Principal Investigator: Michael Jensen
Project Manager: Patrick James
Senior Researcher: Elizabeth Yates
Other Project Researchers: Gary LaFree, Aaron Safer-Lichtenstein

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