

ISLAMIST TERRORISM

Hannah Stuart

ANALYSIS OF OFFENCES AND ATTACKS IN THE UK (1998-2015)

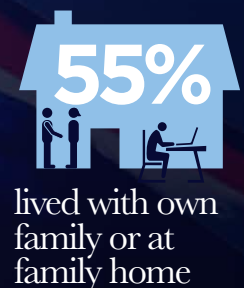
IN BRIEF

Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015) – a new 1000-page study from The Henry Jackson Society – identifies and profiles all Islamism-inspired terrorism convictions and suicide attacks in the UK between 1998 and 2015.

This major research project provides analysis of the changing nature of the threat to British national security. Statistical analysis include offenders' background information, types of offences, roles and targets as well as the prevalence of links to terrorist networks and travel for terrorist purposes, including training and combat experience.

There were 264 convictions as a result of arrests between 1998 and 2015 involving 253 British or foreign nationals as well as five suicides as a result of attacks on British soil – data relates to a base total of 269 individual offences collectively referred to as Islamism-related offences (IROs). Sources include court documentation, police and Crown Prosecution Service statements and news articles.

Overview of findings

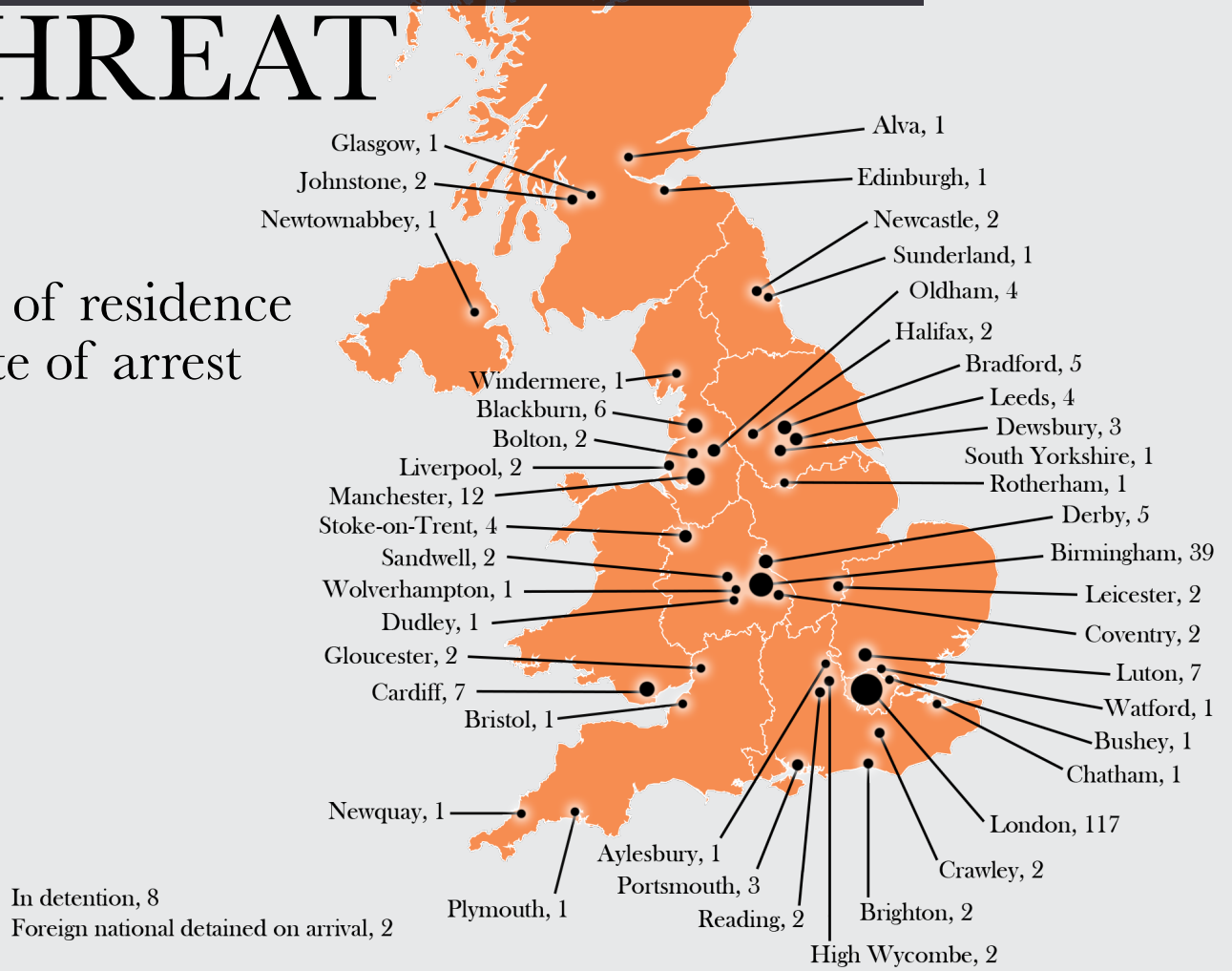


“Terrorism uses emotional shock in order to confuse and to divide. An important tool in understanding and defeating it is a reliable and dispassionate account of its perpetrators, their characteristics, their offences and their networks. Precisely such an account is provided in the latest edition of this encyclopaedic work.”

David Anderson Q.C. Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation

THE “HOMEGROWN” THREAT

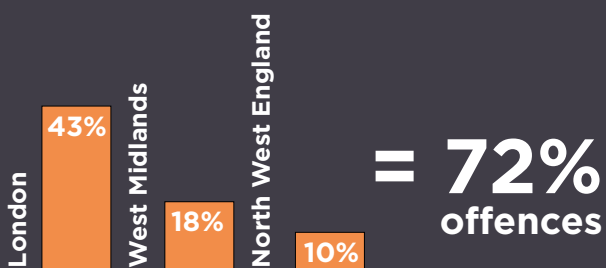
Place of residence
at date of arrest



London- and Birmingham-based individuals are pre-dominant among offenders



East London was home to half of London-based offenders (22% overall), the most common boroughs being Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest



Hall Green and Hodge Hill constituencies contain three-quarters of all Birmingham-based offenders (11% overall)



THREAT FROM ISLAMISM-INSPIRED TERRORISM

YEAR-ON-YEAR THREAT

The 269 Islamism-related offences (IROs) comprise 135 distinct terrorism cases. The rate of offending increased in the five-year period between 2011 and 2015 compared to the 13-year period between 1998 and 2010. IROs doubled in five years (increasing from an average of 12 to 23 per year) while distinct terrorism cases almost tripled (from five per year to 14 per year).



ATTACK-RELATED

Individuals who committed, attempted or were planning attacks were responsible for 37% of IROs



ASPIRATIONAL

Those whose plans were not advanced enough to pose an imminent threat or whose offences were limited in scope were responsible for 18% of IROs



FACILITATION

Facilitators of terrorism or ideologues who encouraged terrorist acts were responsible for one-third (33%) of IROs



TRAVEL-RELATED

Individuals whose offences related to travel (including attempted or planned) for terrorist purposes were responsible for 12% of IROs



TYPE OF ATTACK

Bombing

74%



Beheading or stabbing

15%



Vehicular attack

12%



Between 1998 and 2015 there were 99 attack-related IROs involving attacks, attempted and planned attacks (some of which included multiple types of attack):

- Bombing was the most commonly featured type of attack overall (74%), as well as for 1998–2010 offences (78%) and 2011–2015 offences (63%)
- Offences involving beheadings or stabbings (planned or otherwise) increased eleven-fold across the time periods (from 4% to 44%)

TARGET

Just over half (53%) of all IROs were assessed as including a known or suspected target for attack

TARGETED CIVILIAN

Civilian targets specifically chosen for inherent characteristics, beliefs or public role were a feature in one-third (33%) of targeted offences



URBAN SOFT TARGET

Public areas such as shopping centres, transport terminals and leisure facilities were among the intended targets for attack in 31% of targeted offences

CRITICAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Six infrastructure sectors and institutions, predominantly transportation (excluding transport terminals) and banking and finance, were a feature in just under a third (32%) of targeted offences



MILITARY

Military targets both overseas (including British or coalition forces) and at home were a feature in almost a quarter (24%) of targeted offences



Quick notes on Islamism-inspired terrorism in the UK

Women's involvement in Islamism-inspired terrorism trebled in the five years between 2011 and 2015 – they accounted for just 4% of Islamism-related offences (IROs) between 1998 and 2010, but 11% between 2011 and 2015.

Offenders are getting younger – with more than half (56%) of all IROs being committed by individuals in their 20s.

There is little correlation between involvement in terrorism and educational achievement and employment status – a quarter (26%) of IROs were committed by individuals who had some form of higher education, while 38% were committed by those who were unemployed.

Offenders lived in neighbourhoods with both a higher than average relative deprivation and Muslim population – almost half (48%) of (English residence) IROs were committed by those living in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods nationally, referred to as “highly deprived”.

Offenders were more likely than the national Muslim average to be living in neighbourhoods where the Muslim proportion of the population was 20% or above (62% and 52% respectively).

Three-quarters of IROs were committed by individuals who were previously known to the authorities – almost half (48%) of IROs were committed by those who were already known to the Security Service, 38% had prior contact with the police, 13% engaged in extremism-related public activism and 9% had been stopped or detained in relation to (suspected) travel for terrorist purposes.

In 7% of IROs the offender re-engaged in criminal activities or foreign travel for terrorist purposes following their release from detention.

Almost half (44%) of individuals who committed IROs had known or suspected direct links to a proscribed terrorist organisation – of these, 56% were linked to the UK-based group al-Muhajiroun (25% overall), 24% were linked to al-Qaeda (10% overall) and 11% were linked to Islamic State (5% overall).

Over a quarter (28%) of IROs were demonstrably inspired by the rhetoric or propaganda of a proscribed terrorist organisation without being directed or linked to the group in any way.

One-quarter (25%) of IROs can be considered “serious attack-related offences” (actual, attempted or planned UK attacks intended to lead to indiscriminate and/or targeted deaths) – women were less commonly involved, offenders were typically younger, more commonly British (88%, compared to 66% for all other offences) and twice as likely to have received terrorist training (34% compared to 17%) than all other offences.

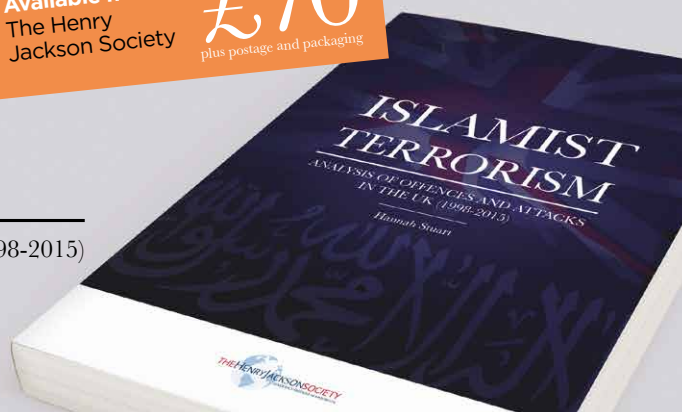
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The Henry Jackson Society is a think-tank and policy-shaping force that fights for the principles and alliances which keep societies free, working across borders and party lines to combat extremism, advance democracy and real human rights, and make a stand in an increasingly uncertain world.

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