

ISLAMIST TERRORISM

KEY FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

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Summary

- This paper summarises The Henry Jackson Society's (HJS) research database of Islamism-inspired terrorism convictions and suicide attacks in the United Kingdom (UK) between 1998 and 2015. Data relates to a base total of 269 individual offences. Variables studied include offenders' sociodemographic information and behaviours prior to offending as well as offence-specific information. Convictions resulting from arrests between 1998 and 2010 are also compared with those resulting from arrests between 2011 and 2015.
- The majority of the Islamism-inspired threat to the UK remains from "home-grown" terrorism. Young British men were most prevalent among offenders, while, although small, women's involvement nearly trebled in recent years. Analysis of offenders' residence shows the primacy of London- and Birmingham-based individuals as well as higher than average relative deprivation and Muslim population at neighbourhood level. There is little correlation between involvement in terrorism and educational achievement and employment status, and the majority of offences were committed by those living with their partner and/or children or, increasingly, at their family home.
- Religious converts were disproportionately involved in Islamism-inspired terrorism. Offenders commonly consumed extremist and/or instructional material prior to, or as part of, their offending. Three-quarters were previously known to the authorities through a variety of terrorism- and non-terrorism-related channels, including through a criminal conviction. Proportionally, fewer offenders had engaged in behaviours that brought them to the attention of the Security Service in recent years, despite fewer engaging in counter-surveillance. Establishing direct links to proscribed terrorist organisations or travelling abroad for terrorist training or combat experience are behaviours more commonly seen among those responsible for the most serious attack-related offences than other offences.
- The rate of offending doubled across the time periods and there was an increase in serious offending by small cells. Offences inspired by, but not connected to, a proscribed terrorist organisation more than doubled, suggesting a decline in command and control terrorism. Attack-related offences almost halved, while convictions for travel-related offences increased four-fold. Proportionally, attacks (planned or otherwise) against civilians and military targets were more prevalent among later offences, while attacks on critical infrastructure declined. Convictions for preparation for terrorist acts nearly trebled, owing in part to the conflict in Syria, while dissemination of terrorist publications more than trebled, reflecting the increasing role of the internet in jihadist propaganda.
- The internet was cited as a major site for engagement with extremism and inspiration in an increasing proportion of offences. At the same time, offenders were predominantly part of wider networks, formed in person and online, with friends and families – only one in ten offences was carried out by someone who acted entirely alone and had no extremist connections. Institutions remain significant, with the education sector, local authorities and prisons a feature in half of offences. Charitable and faith-based organisations were also a prominent, yet declining, feature. Local mosque representatives and family members were most commonly among those who had previously been concerned by behaviours which indicated offenders' engagement with extremism prior to their offending

Introduction

Islamism-inspired terrorism remains the principal terrorism threat to both the United Kingdom (UK) and British interests overseas. At the start of 2017, terrorism directed, approved or inspired by Islamic State posed the predominant threat to national security, while al-Qaeda and affiliate groups continue to aspire to attack Western interests. For more than two decades, militant Islamist groups have successfully recruited UK-based individuals for terrorist facilitation and training overseas, as well as directed or inspired involvement in terrorism at home.

This paper analyses The Henry Jackson Society's (HJS) research database of Islamism-inspired terrorism convictions and suicide attacks in the UK between 1998 and 2015, published as *Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)*.¹ Statistical findings derived from 264 separate convictions as well as five suicides during two attacks on British soil (the 7/7 attacks in London and the 2007 Glasgow airport car bombing) are situated within current threat assessments as well as counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation policy responses.

The first section summarises the current threat level as well as counter-terrorism policy and priorities. The second section examines characteristics and behaviours among offenders with a view to providing a typology of Islamism-inspired offenders in the UK. The third section summarises offence-related data to show the ways in which the threat from Islamism-inspired terrorism has manifested and developed in the UK over the last 20 years.

Methodology

Sampling technique

The sample includes 269 separate offences assessed as both Islamism inspired and terrorism related in the UK. A quantitative methodology for data collection was used, and in order to be included, individuals must have a) been convicted of terrorism offences in a British court or have committed suicide attacks in the UK and b) demonstrated inspiration drawn at least in part from adherence to Islamism.

Definitions

Terrorism is defined in accordance with the Terrorism Act 2000 (TACT 2000) as: "The use or threat [of action] designed to influence the government or an international governmental organisation or to intimidate the public or a section of the public [...] for the purpose of advancing a political, religious or ideological cause."² Terrorism offences included comprise those contrary to UK anti-terrorism legislation,³ as well as those prosecuted under non-terrorism legislation but where

¹ Stuart, H., *Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015)*, The Henry Jackson Society, 2017.

² Section 1(1), Terrorism Act 2000, available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/11/section/1, last visited: 23 February 2017.

³ The Terrorism Acts 2000 and 2006; the Anti-Terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001; the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005; and the Terrorism Prevention and Investigation Measures Act 2011. Offences contrary to Schedule 7 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and breaches of foreign travel restriction orders contained in the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 have been excluded.

the offence may reasonably be considered as terrorism.⁴ Such cases are included when the relevant behaviour both met the aforementioned definition of terrorism and satisfied at least one of the criteria for action used or threatened for terrorist purposes under TACT 2000.⁵

Islamism is defined as a political ideology which sees Islam as a complete sociopolitical system and, as such, advocates an expansionist 'Islamic' state, or Caliphate, within which state law is derived from *sharia* ('Islamic principles and law'). Individuals must have demonstrated inspiration drawn at least in part from adherence to Islamism identified by one of seven factors, namely: an Islamism-inspired motive either self-proclaimed (i.e. a suicide video or letter) or proven during trial; membership or support for a proscribed Islamist organisation or reciprocal contact with a member or associate; evidence of foreign travel to join and/or receive terrorist training from a militant Islamist organisation; and possession (at time of arrest) of jihadist material.

Data collection and analysis

The sample has been identified through open source material, including using keyword searches in the Nexis news archive and the British and Irish Legal Information Institute legal archive as well as monitoring police and CPS website press statements and social media. Data has been obtained from a number of sources. Court record sheets and indictments (obtained either through personal correspondence or Freedom of Information requests) are considered the most authoritative. Additional sources include (in order of authority): sentencing remarks, appellate court documentation, the CPS Counter-Terrorism Division website and police press statements, and news archives.

Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998-2015) contains profiles of all Islamism-inspired terrorism convictions and suicide attacks in the UK between 1998 and 2015 ordered chronologically by date of arrest or incident. The research database is derived from information contained in 30 profile data fields as well as recorded in the complementary notes section. The variables included range from sociodemographic information (e.g. gender, age, nationality, ancestry, place of residence, education, employment and family/living circumstances) and pre-offence behaviours or activities (e.g. religious conversion, criminal history, prior contact with the authorities, relationship with proscribed terrorist organisations, access to terrorist training) to offence-specific data (e.g. frequency of offending, type of offence, target selection, direction versus inspiration) and trial information (e.g. legislation, case length, sentence).

The sample consists of 264 convictions as a result of arrests between 1998 and 2015 involving 253 British or foreign nationals,⁶ as well as five suicides as a result of attacks on British soil. All data relates to a base total of 269 individual offences collectively referred to as Islamism-related offences (IROs). Reflecting the shifts in global Islamism-inspired terrorism following both the death of Osama bin Laden in May 2011 and the uprisings known as the Arab Spring, particularly the ongoing conflict in Syria and Iraq which began that year, convictions resulting from arrests between 1998 and 2010 are compared with those resulting from arrests between 2011 and 2015.

⁴ For example, offences contrary to common law such as murder, or other legislation such as the Explosive Substances Act 1883 and the Offences Against the Person Act 1861 as well public order offences such as incitement to hatred based on race, religion or sexual orientation.

⁵ The action must involve serious violence against a person or serious damage to property; endanger another person's life; create a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public; be designed to seriously interfere with or to seriously disrupt an electronic system or involve the use of firearms or explosives. Action taken for the benefit of a proscribed organisation is also included. See sections 1(3)-(5), Terrorism Act 2000.

⁶ Nine of these individuals have been convicted of offences on two separate occasions and one has been convicted on three separate occasions.

Current threat assessment and counter-terrorism policy

Threat level

Terrorism directed, approved or inspired by Islamic State (IS) poses the greatest threat to the UK's national security. The government's annual report into the CONTEST counter-terrorism strategy, published in July 2016, found that Islamism-inspired terrorism remained the principal threat and assessed that Islamic State was "currently the predominant terrorist threat to the UK and our interests overseas".⁷

On 29 August 2014, the UK terrorism alert level was increased from "substantial", meaning that an attack was considered a strong possibility, to "severe", meaning that an attack was considered highly likely.⁸ In November 2016, the Director General of MI5 said that 12 terrorist plots had been prevented in the UK in the previous three years, a higher number of plots and attacks than at any point in the previous 30 years and a rate which he described as "concerning and [...] enduring".⁹

Since declaring a Caliphate in parts of Syria and Iraq in June 2014, Islamic State has directed or inspired almost 150 terrorist attacks in countries across the world, killing more than two thousand people.¹⁰ Official estimates suggest that up to 850 British-based Islamist extremists have travelled to Syria and Iraq to fight for or support militant groups in the country. Around half of these are thought to have since returned to the UK,¹¹ while a further 600 individuals have reportedly been prevented from travelling.¹²

The threat from al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda-linked terrorism also persists. The 2016 CONTEST report assessed that al-Qaeda core in Afghanistan and Pakistan as well as affiliate groups, most notably al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, "continue to aspire to attack Western interests".¹³

The Islamism-inspired terrorism threat is not limited to attacks in the UK and against overseas interests. The Security Service recognises the involvement of UK-based individuals in terrorist recruitment and facilitation networks, which focus on radicalising individuals to accept the legitimacy of terrorism, fundraising for terrorist purposes and assisting others' travel abroad to either receive terrorist training or engage in jihadist fighting overseas.¹⁴

In the UK, the police and Security Service have stated that the principal threats to national security come both from Islamic State propaganda encouraging individuals in the UK to carry out violent

⁷ 'CONTEST: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2015', HM Government (2016), paras. 1.3 & 1.7, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/539683/55469_Cm_9310_Web_Accessible_v0.11.pdf, last visited: 23 February 2017.

⁸ 'Threat Levels', MI5, undated, available at: www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels, last visited: 23 February 2017.

⁹ 'Exclusive: "There will be terrorist attacks in Britain," says MI5 chief', *Guardian*, 1 November 2016, available at: www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/nov/01/andrew-parker-mi5-director-general-there-will-be-terrorist-attacks-in-britain-exclusive, last visited: 23 February 2017.

¹⁰ 'ISIS goes global: 143 attacks in 29 countries have killed 2,043', CNN, 13 February 2017, available at: <http://edition.cnn.com/2015/12/17/world/mapping-isis-attacks-around-the-world/>, last visited: 23 February 2017.

¹¹ 'Who are Britain's jihadists?', *BBC News*, 10 October 2016, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-32026985, last visited: 23 February 2017.

¹² '1,500 Britons have fled to join ISIS in Syria - and 800 have successfully got in, Hammond admits', *Daily Mail*, 16 January 2016, available at: www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3402379/1500-Britons-fled-join-ISIS-Syria-successfully-got-war-torn-state-Foreign-Secretary-admits.html, last visited: 23 February 2017.

¹³ 'CONTEST The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism: Annual Report for 2015', HM Government (July 2016), p. 8.

¹⁴ 'International Terrorism', MI5, undated, available at: www.mi5.gov.uk/international-terrorism, last visited: 23 February 2017.

attacks here,¹⁵ as well as from returnees with combat experience and training seeking to engage in mass-casualty terrorism.¹⁶

Counter-terrorism policy

CONTEST was developed in 2003 in response to the threat from Islamism-inspired terrorism and is coordinated by the Home Office. Revised periodically,¹⁷ the counter-terrorism strategy remains organised around four key principles, each with a specific objective: Pursue, to stop terrorist attacks; Prevent, to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism; Protect, to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; and Prepare: to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.¹⁸

In response to the heightened threat from the ongoing conflict in Syria, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 was passed containing a number of targeted measures designed to meet the government's two foremost operational priorities: preventing foreign travel for terrorist purposes; and mitigating the risk of attack from those who return. This included enhancing border security, giving the police power to temporarily confiscate passports from aspiring foreign fighters and creating Temporary Exclusion Orders, designed to temporarily disrupt and therefore manage the return of British nationals entering the UK after suspected involvement in terrorist activity abroad.¹⁹

The act also reintroduced locational constraints on terrorism suspects under terrorism prevention and investigation measures (TPIMs). TPIMs are restrictions that the Home Secretary can place on an individual who can neither be prosecuted nor deported, but whom the Security Service reasonably believe is involved in terrorist-related activities.²⁰ In the same year, the Serious Crime Act 2015 conferred extra-territorial jurisdiction on UK courts for specific terrorism offences to more effectively prosecute activities abroad. This widened jurisdiction for two offences under the Terrorism Act 2006, namely preparation for terrorist acts (contrary to section 5) and training for terrorism (contrary to section 6).²¹

Countering radicalisation is also considered a “fundamental” component of counter-terrorism work.²² The current counter-radicalisation strategy, known as Prevent, was revised in 2011 around three strategic objectives: responding to “the ideological challenge of terrorism”; preventing people from being drawn into terrorism; and working with “sectors and institutions where there are risks of radicalisation”.²³ In 2013 a government taskforce found that some authorities had not fully

¹⁵ ‘Director General speaks on terrorism, technology and oversight’, MI5, 8 January 2015, available at: www.mi5.gov.uk/cy/news/director-general-speaks-on-terrorism-technology-and-oversight, last visited: 23 February 2017.

¹⁶ ‘Anti-terrorism chief warns of British girls inspired by Jihad’, *Evening Standard*, 23 January 2014, available at: www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/exclusive-anti-terrorism-chief-warns-of-british-girls-inspired-by-jihad-9080110.html, last visited: 23 February 2017.

¹⁷ ‘Countering International Terrorism: The United Kingdom’s Strategy’, HM Government (2006), available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/272320/6888.pdf, last visited: 23 February 2017; ‘Pursue Prevent Protect Prepare: The United Kingdom’s Strategy for Countering International Terrorism’, HM Government (2009), available at: www.northants.police.uk/files/linked/terrorism/The%20Governments%20Counter%20Terrorism%20Strategy.pdf, last visited: 23 February 2017; ‘CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s strategy for countering terrorism’, HM Government (2011), available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97995/strategy-contest.pdf, last visited: 24 February 2017.

¹⁸ ‘CONTEST: The United Kingdom’s strategy for countering terrorism’, HM Government (2011).

¹⁹ ‘Counter-Terrorism and Security Act’, HM Government, 12 February 2015, available at: www.gov.uk/government/collections/counter-terrorism-and-security-bill, last visited: 23 February 2017.

²⁰ *ibid.*

²¹ Serious Crime Act 2015 Fact sheet: Overview of the Act, HM Government, available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/415943/Serious_Crime_Act_Overview.pdf, last visited: 23 February 2017.

²² ‘Prevent scheme “fundamental” to fighting terrorism’, *BBC News*, 27 December 2016, available at: www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-38440939, last visited: 23 February 2017.

²³ ‘Prevent Strategy’, HM Government (June 2011), available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf, last visited: 23 February 2017, p. 1; ‘Revised Prevent Duty Guidance: for England and Wales’, HM Government, 16 July 2016, available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/prevent-duty-guidance, last visited: 24 February 2017, p. 2.

supported those working to tackle radicalisation and extremism.²⁴ As a result, the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015 also placed a duty on specified authorities, including the police, prisons, local authorities, schools and universities, to “prevent people being drawn into terrorism” by making the delivery of Prevent a legal requirement.²⁵

Challenging extremism as part of counter-terrorism is also predicated on the belief that violent and non-violent extremism can be used to “create an atmosphere conducive to terrorism”, “popularise views which terrorists exploit”, and “legitimise terrorism”.²⁶ Current counter-radicalisation efforts are therefore concentrated around both supporting at-risk sectors in order to build resilience and co-ordinate safeguarding responses, and, with respect to the threat from Islamism-inspired terrorism, deterring engagement with extremism and providing an effective ideological response to that of global *jihad*.

Characteristics and behaviours among Islamism-inspired terrorist offenders in the UK

This section examines sociodemographic characteristics among Islamism-inspired terrorist offenders in the UK as well as behaviours or activities the individuals engaged in prior to their offending.

Sociodemographic characteristics

Gender and age

The overwhelming majority (93%) of IROs were committed by men. Women accounted for 4% of IROs between 1998 and 2010 and 11% of IROs between 2011 and 2015, an increase of 175%. Eighteen women were convicted of a variety of terrorism offences, ranging from supportive offences such as assisting an offender to serious attack-related offences such as attempted murder. More than half of the female cases (n.=10) involved behaviour that was supportive of men involved in terrorist activity with whom they have a family or personal relationship, or was accepted by the trial judge as subordinate to their partner and co-accused.

All IROs were carried out by individuals aged between 14 and 52 years at the date of charge or suicide attack – an age range of 39 years. The mean age was 26.8 years and the modal age was 22. The most common age ranges overall, and across both time periods, were 21–24 and 25–29, with more than half (56%, n.=150) of all IROs committed by individuals aged 21–29. Overall, offenders are getting younger: 46% of 2011–2015 offences were committed by individuals aged under 25, a small increase from 42% for 1998–2010 offences.

One-quarter (25%) of IROs can be considered serious attack-related offences, defined as actual, attempted or planned (in advanced stages) attacks intended to lead to indiscriminate deaths and/or targeted civilian deaths for terrorist purposes. Women were less commonly involved in serious

²⁴ ‘Tackling extremism in the UK: Report from the Prime Minister’s Task Force on Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism’, HM Government (2013), available at: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263181/ETF_FINAL.pdf, last visited: 24 February 2017, p. 6.

²⁵ ‘Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015’ (Part 5, Risk of being drawn into terrorism), HM Government (2015), available at: www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/6/pdfs/ukpga_20150006_en.pdf, last visited: 23 February 2017, pp. 26–35.

²⁶ *ibid*.

attack-related terrorism (5%) than in other offences (7%); and the most serious offences were more commonly committed by younger individuals – 84% were aged under 30 compared to 66% for all other offences.

Nationality and ancestry

Seventy-two per cent of IROs were committed by UK nationals or individuals holding dual British nationality and there was little difference between the earlier and later time periods (72% and 71% respectively). British nationals' involvement was greater in the most serious offences (88%) than among other offences (66%).

IROs were committed by individuals of diverse ancestry, including those with family ties to countries in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Caribbean. More than half (52%) of IROs were committed by individuals of Southern Asian ancestry, most commonly by British-Pakistanis (25%) and British-Bangladeshis (8%). (This is lower than the proportion of Muslims of Southern Asian ancestry at national level, which is 60%.)

Place of residence

London was the place of residence at the time of arrest in 43% of IROs. The second most common region was the West Midlands, with 18%. Of these, 80% (14% overall) were in Birmingham. The third most common region was North West England, with 10% of IROs. Together these three regions contained the residences in almost three-quarters (72%) of cases. No other region contained 10% of residences.

London saw a 13 percentage point decrease in the proportion of individuals living there responsible for 2011–2015 offences (36%) compared to 1998–2010 offences (49%). Across both time periods, East London was home to half (50%) of London-based offenders, while the three most common boroughs – Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest – contained the offenders' residence in 38% of all Londoner IROs (and 16% overall).

The West Midlands saw an eight percentage point increase between the time periods (from 15% to 23%). Birmingham residences were more concentrated in a smaller number of wards and constituencies than those in London, which were spread across a higher number of boroughs and sub-regions. The constituencies of Hall Green and Hodge Hill contained almost three-quarters (74%) of Birmingham cases.

Deprivation and segregation

The official measure of relative deprivation is known as the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD 2015).²⁷ The IMD combines information from seven different domains of deprivation and ranks every neighbourhood in England from the most deprived area (1) to the least deprived area

²⁷ For more information see 'English indices of deprivation 2015', Department for Communities and Local Government, 30 September 2015, available at: www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015, last visited: 23 February 2017.

(32,844).²⁸ Relative deprivation data excludes non-English places of residence and relates to a base total of 246 IROs committed by individuals living in England at the time of their arrest.²⁹

More than three-quarters (76%) of (English residence) IROs were committed by individuals whose neighbourhood was among the 50% most deprived neighbourhoods in England (as of 2015), while only 3% were committed by individuals whose neighbourhood was among the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods (in 21% of IROs the offenders' neighbourhood, determined by postcode, was unspecified). Almost half (48%) of IROs were committed by individuals living in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods nationally, commonly referred to as "highly deprived".

Based on religious identity and neighbourhood population data collected in the 2011 census,³⁰ individuals who committed IROs were more likely than the national Muslim average to be living in Muslim-majority neighbourhoods. Almost a quarter (24%) of (English residence) IROs were committed by individuals who lived in a neighbourhood where the Muslim proportion of the population is 60% Muslim or above (as of 2011), compared to the Muslim national average of 14%. Inversely, 38% of IROs were committed by individuals whose neighbourhoods are under 20% – while nearly half (48%) of self-identified Muslims live in such neighbourhoods in England.

Education and employment

Just over a quarter (26%) of individuals who committed IROs had some form of higher education, having (as a minimum level) attended or graduated from a Higher Education Institution. More than a third (36%) had studied for or achieved secondary level, further education or vocational qualifications, while educational attainment is unspecified in 38% of cases. Between 1998–2010 and 2011–2015 the proportion of IROs committed by individuals with higher education or above decreased by seven percentage points (from 29% to 22%).

Thirty-eight per cent of IROs were committed by individuals who were unemployed. Of these, almost one-quarter (24%, 9% overall) were in or had recently been released from detention or had recently left full-time education or returned from months-long foreign travel. Thirty-five per cent of IROs were committed by individuals in employment at the time of their arrest and a further 12% were full-time students – almost half (47%) of IROs, therefore, were committed by those who were in either employment or education. Between 1998–2010 and 2011–2015 the proportion of IROs committed by individuals who were in either employment or education increased by five percentage points, from 45% to 50%.

Family and living circumstances

More than half (55%) of IROs were committed by individuals who were known to be either living with family, meaning with a partner and/or children (28%), or living at their family home, meaning with parent(s) (and in some cases siblings) (27%). The proportion of 2011–2015 offences where the

²⁸ The seven domains are Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education, Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services; and Living Environment Deprivation. Neighbourhoods are small areas called Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) with an average of 1,500 residents each.

²⁹ Relative deprivation data excludes 23 IROs: seven committed by individuals living in Wales, five in Scotland, one in Northern Ireland, eight committed by individuals who were already in detention and two committed by foreign nationals detained on arrival in the UK on suspicion of terrorism offences. IMD data was obtained from 'English indices of deprivation 2015 – Postcode Lookup', Department for Communities and Local Government, undated, available at: <http://imd-by-postcode.opendatacommunities.org/>, last visited: 23 February 2017.

³⁰ The data-set was created using information collected during the 2011 census, specifically, the population of England by religion within LSOAs as a value and percentage, correct as of census day, 27 March 2011. IRO data relates to the 194 IROs where the neighbourhood is known (some neighbourhoods are represented on multiple occasions), while the Muslim average at national level relates to 30,308 LSOAs which contain one or more individuals who self-identified as Muslim in the 2011 census. Census data was obtained from 'Religion; Key Statistics; Census 2011; Home', Nomis Official Labour Market Statistics, available at: www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/ks209ew, last visited: 23 February 2017.

offender was living at the family home rose to 35% from 21% for 1998–2010 offences. One in ten (11%) IROs was committed by those living alone, while a further 9% were committed by those categorised as ‘other’ who were living with friends, other family members (e.g. siblings, grandparents), were living abroad, living in student accommodation or staying at a mosque. In eight cases (3%) the individual was in detention and for 22% of IROs the circumstances were unspecified.

One in five IROs (21%) was committed by an individual whose living arrangements and family circumstances were connected to terrorism or a terrorism investigation. In 55% of these cases, individuals were convicted alongside relatives and/or a partner or they were part of the same cell. In a further 20% of these cases relatives, partners or flatmates were also arrested or charged but were later released or acquitted; and in the remaining cases the individual had a relative or lived with someone who had previously been involved in terrorism (13%) or lived with another cell member (13%). Female offenders were more than twice as likely as male offenders to be living with a partner, relative or individual who was also involved in terrorism (50% and 19% respectively).

Conclusion

The majority of the Islamism-inspired threat to the UK remains from “home-grown” terrorism. Young British men were most prevalent among offenders, while, although small, women’s involvement nearly trebled in recent years. Analysis of offenders’ residence shows the primacy of London- and Birmingham-based individuals as well as higher than average relative deprivation and Muslim population at neighbourhood level. There is little correlation between involvement in terrorism and educational achievement and employment status, while the majority of offences were committed by those living with their partner and/or children or, increasingly, at their family home.

Behaviours and activities prior to offending

Religious converts

While IROs were mainly carried out by individuals who were raised as Muslim, 16% of IROs were committed by individuals known to have converted to Islam prior to their offending (and three converts were convicted on two separate occasions). This is more than four times higher than the estimated proportion of converts among the Muslim population at national level.³¹ Converts came from a variety of backgrounds, in the majority of cases from Christianity, and the length of time between conversion and arrest, where known, ranged from four to five months to 14 years. Almost a third of converts (32%) were linked to the UK-based proscribed terrorist organisation al-Muhajiroun – a higher proportion than overall (25%).

Extremist or instructional terrorist material

Over two-thirds of IROs (69%) were committed by individuals who were known to have consumed extremist or instructional terrorist material. This includes being found in possession of extremist and/or instructional material on arrest, having viewed such material (typically with other cell members) or having produced and disseminated such material. The proportion of 2011–2015 offences where the offender consumed extremist and/or instructional material rose to 76% from 63% for 1998–2010 offences.

³¹ A 2010 study estimated that there were between 90,000 and 100,000 converts in Great Britain, equivalent to between 3.2% and 3.6% of the Muslim population of Great Britain. See Brice, K., ‘A minority within a minority: a report on converts to Islam in the United Kingdom’, Faith Matters, (2010), p. 11, available at: <http://faith-matters.org/2010/12/28/report-on-converts-to-islam-in-the-uk-a-minority-within-a-minority/>, last visited: 23 February 2017; Muslim population data correct as of the 2011 census in both England and Wales as well as Scotland.

Forty-one per cent of IROs were committed by individuals who had accessed instructional terrorist material i.e. containing practical information, typically bomb-making guides, rather than solely jihadist propaganda. The proportion of 2011–2015 offences where the individual consumed instructional material rose to 44% from 38% for 1998–2010 offences. Extremist and/or instructional material was most commonly found in files stored on electronic devices or accessed via social media, but also included books, handwritten notes, CDs and DVDs.

Among the most commonly-found material was *Inspire*, al-Qaeda's first online English-language magazine, to which Yemeni-American al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula cleric Anwar al-Awlaki was a key contributor (before his death in 2011). 16 editions have been published online since July 2010, with the most recent edition published in November 2016. Alongside ideological jihadist material and encouragement of western Muslims to carry out terrorist attacks in their home countries, *Inspire* contains instructional material, including on pipe bombs, vehicular attacks, weapons handling and the manufacture of explosives and detonators.³²

Other commonly-found literature included *Zaad-e-Mujahid* (essential provision for holy fighters), an illegal document which the Crown Prosecution Service has argued contains "a strategic manual for the development of Jihad organisations", as well as Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Salim's *39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad*, which, alongside perceived justifications for violent *jihad*, contains practical instructions on weapons training and online dissemination of terrorist material. Audio lectures by al-Awlaki were also popular, particularly 'The Dust Will Never Settle', in which he urges a stronger reaction to perceived blasphemy, and a series titled 'Constants in the path of Jihad'.

Commonly-watched videos showed insurgent attacks on local and/or coalition forces or the beheading of civilian hostages in jihadist conflict zones – almost one in ten IROs (9%) was committed by individuals who were known to have watched beheading videos. Much of the material consumed advocated the duty of Muslims to fight armed *jihad* against western forces, Jews, apostates and their supporters in Muslim-majority countries, and claimed that enemies should be killed wherever they are regardless of whether they are military or civilian targets.

More recently offenders accessed *Dabiq*, Islamic State's English-language magazine, which instructs supporters in the West to carry out attacks against non-believers (referred to derogatively as *kuffar*) in their home countries, as well as videos that showed footage of Islamic State fighters glorified jihadist violence.

Prior contact with authorities and criminal history

Three quarters (76%) of IROs were committed by individuals who were previously known to the authorities through one or more of eight identifiable points of contact. Almost half (48%) of IROs were committed by those who were already known to the Security Service (typically through surveillance or as peripheral associates during previous investigations). In the five years since 2011, the proportion known to the Security Service halved, from 61% to 29%. Those responsible for most serious offences, however, were more commonly known to the authorities than their less serious counterparts (88% and 72%); in particular, to the Security Service (73% and 39%).

³² Issues of *Inspire* Magazine, *Anti-Defamation League*, undated, available at: www.adl.org/combating-hate/m/inspire-magazine/c/issues-of-inspire-magazine.html, last visited: 17 February 2017.

Thirty-eight per cent of IROs were committed by individuals with previous criminal convictions (26%) or a history of police contact, including prior investigations, arrests and charges that did not result in a conviction or control order/TPIM (12%). Previous convictions were for a variety of offences – most commonly public disorder, theft-related, terrorism, assault, drug-related and offensive weapons or firearms offences. More than a third (36%, 9% overall) of previous convictions were for extremism- or terrorism-related activities, and almost half (46%, 12% overall) of individuals with prior convictions had previously received a custodial sentence. The prevalence of prior convictions is consistent across IRO severity: 25% of the most serious offences and 26% of other offences were committed by individuals with (a) criminal conviction(s). The most serious offences were less commonly committed by individuals whose convictions were extremism-related than other offences (4% and 11%).

Other prior contact includes known public engagement in extremism-related activism (13%); being stopped or detained in relation to (suspected) travel for terrorist purposes (9%); known contact with the government counter-radicalisation and de-radicalisation programmes Prevent and Channel (5%); known mental health issues (4%); immigration offences/intended deportation or extradition (4%); and regulatory or financial investigation or sanction (1%).

Engagement in counter-surveillance

In a quarter (24%, n.=64) of IROs the offender demonstrated an awareness of counter-surveillance methods, including meeting in open-air spaces, changing phones regularly or limiting mobile use as well as using draft emails or code words. The proportion of 2011–2015 offences where the offender demonstrated an awareness of counter-surveillance fell to 18% from 30% for 1998–2010 offences.

Links to proscribed terrorist organisations (PTOs)

Forty-four per cent of individuals who committed IROs had known or suspected direct links to one or more PTOs.³³ Of these, 56% were directly 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).

The prevalence of PTOs varied between the time periods covered. The proportion of all IROs where the individual was linked to al-Muhajiroun rose from 22% to 27%, while the proportion of offences where the individual was linked to al-Qaeda dropped from 17% to 2%. Since its emergence as an independent entity in 2014, Islamic State has been directly linked to in 12% of 2011–2015 IROs. The proportion of links to the Pakistani-based groups Lashkar-e-Taiba and Harakat ul-Mujahideen both fell in the later time period (from 4% and 3% respectively to 2%), while the Somali-based group al-Shabaab, which did not feature in 1998–2010 offences, was linked to in 5% of 2011–2015 cases.

Serious attack-related offences were almost equally commonly committed by individuals with direct links to one or more PTO (51%) as they were by someone with no links to a PTO (49%). The most

³³ A “direct link” is defined as: known membership of, or operational capacity for, a PTO; the direct provision of material or financial support for a PTO; reciprocal contact with known members of or fighters for a PTO; or regular attendance at meetings hosted by members of a PTO. Having a direct link to a PTO does not necessarily mean the individual is a formal member. Known links mean a clear indication (accepted at trial or by the prosecution or the police) that the individual had direct links to a PTO, while suspected links are those that have been assessed as likely (by the prosecution or security sources) or have been alleged (e.g. by the individual or an associate).

serious offences were five times more commonly committed by individuals with direct links to al-Qaeda than all other offences (25% and 5% respectively). While Islamic State has been linked to 5% of IROs, as yet none of the most serious attack-related offences have featured direct links to the group.

Terrorist training and combat experience

One-fifth (22%) of IROs were committed by individuals who were known to have or suspected of having attended training camps for terrorist purposes; the majority (78%) were not. Of those with training, the majority (78%) had trained at camps abroad, 19% had trained at a UK-based camp only, and in two cases (3%) the location was unspecified. (UK-based camps are limited to those run by convicted terrorists – i.e., Mohammed Hamid and Atilla Ahmet during the mid-2000s.)

Seventeen per cent of 1998–2010 IROs were committed by an individual who had previously trained in Pakistan, dropping to 3% among 2011–2015 offences. Neither the UK nor Afghanistan (locations for training in 8% and 6% of 1998–2010 IROs respectively) was a location for training among 2011–2015 offences, while Syria, which had not featured among 1998–2010 cases, was the location for training in 8% of the later offences.

The overwhelming majority (93%) of IROs were committed by individuals who had no combat experience prior to their arrest. Seven percent had some combat experience, most commonly in Afghanistan or Syria. Taken together (and excluding UK-based training), almost one-fifth (19%) of IROs between 1998 and 2015 were committed by individuals who had prior terrorist training and/or combat experience abroad.

The most serious offences were twice as commonly committed by individuals with prior terrorist training than all other offences (34% and 17%) and less commonly by those with combat experience (4% and 8%). Taken together (and excluding UK-based training), 30% of serious attack-related offences were committed by individuals who had prior terrorist training and/or combat experience abroad – almost double the proportion of other offences (16%), and 11 percentage points higher than among all IROs (19%).

Awareness of engagement with extremism

In almost a quarter (24%, n.=64) of IROs other people demonstrated or claimed to have had prior awareness of offenders' increased engagement with extremism. The proportion of 2011–2015 offences with prior awareness rose by four percentage points to 26% from 22% for 1998–2010 offences. Prior awareness was claimed by a number of sources, most commonly by local mosque representatives (7%) or members of the offenders' families (6%).

The proportion of 2011–2015 offences where mosque representatives had prior awareness fell compared to 1998–2010 offences (from 10% to 4%), while the proportion of later offences where family members had prior awareness rose compared to earlier offences (from 4% to 8%). Other sources, in descending order, were friends or former friends, a partner or ex-partner, neighbours, colleagues or former colleagues and prison staff (for those already in detention).

Conclusion

Religious converts are disproportionately involved in Islamism-inspired terrorism. Offenders commonly consumed extremist and/or instructional material prior to, or as part of, their offending. Most were previously known to the authorities through a variety of terrorism- and non-terrorism-related channels, including through a criminal conviction. Proportionally, fewer offenders had engaged in behaviours that brought them to the attention of the Security Service in recent years, despite fewer engaging in counter-surveillance. Establishing direct links to proscribed terrorist organisations or travelling abroad for terrorist training or combat experience are behaviours more commonly seen among those responsible for the most serious attack-related offences than all other offences. Local mosque representatives and, increasingly, family members were most commonly among those concerned by behaviours which indicated offenders' engagement with extremism prior to their offending.

Developments in Islamism-inspired terrorism in the UK

The third section summarises offence-specific data to show the ways in which the threat from Islamism-inspired terrorism has manifested and developed in the UK over the last 20 years.

Frequency of offending

The 269 IROs comprise 135 distinct terrorism cases. The rate of offending in the five years from 2011 increased from that in the previous 13 years: IROs have almost doubled, increasing by 92% from 12 to 23 per year, while distinct terrorism cases have almost tripled, increasing by 180% from an average of five per year in the last decade to 14 per year between 2011 and 2015. Sixty-seven serious attack-related offences accounted for 22 separate terrorism cases. The average rate of terrorism cases involving the most serious offences doubled between the time periods covered and those serious cases typically featured fewer offenders, indicating an increase in serious offending by small cells.

Proscribed terrorist organisation – direction / support / links / inspiration

IROs varied in how they were related to proscribed terrorist organisations – such as operationally or by virtue of specific inspiration, or at all – and can be placed into five categories:

- **PTO-inspired:** Offences that were demonstrably inspired by the rhetoric or propaganda of a PTO but where there was neither direction from PTO operatives nor links between the offender and a PTO accounted for 28% of all IROs – the most common category. Proportionally, these offences increased from 17% among 1998–2010 offences to 42% among 2011–2015 offences.
- **No PTO affiliation:** Offences that cannot be shown to be predominantly inspired by a particular PTO (nor where the offender has any links to groups or operatives) accounted for 23% of all IROs. These offences remained consistent between the two time periods (23% and 22%).
- **PTO-linked:** Offences where the offender has direct links to a PTO but where the offences were not directed by a PTO operative accounted for 22% of IROs. Proportionally, these offences increased between the two time periods (from 19% to 27%).

- **PTO-directed:** Offences that were directed by a non-UK-based PTO operative accounted for 17% of IROs overall. There were no convictions for PTO-directed IROs among 2011–2015 offences.
- **PTO-supportive:** Offences that involved providing support for a proscribed group or its fighters (typically funds and equipment) accounted for 11% of IROs overall. These offences also remained consistent between the two time periods (12% and 10%).

Al-Qaeda remains dominant overall: 53% (n.=143) of all IROs have supported or taken direction or inspiration from al-Qaeda and its regional franchises. Islamic State has become the principal PTO in 9% (n.=25) of IROs. The most serious offences were overwhelmingly either directed by a non-UK-based PTO operative (52%) or demonstrably inspired by (without being linked to) the rhetoric or propaganda of a specific PTO (42%).

Diversity of threat and type of attack

Four categories reflect the type of terrorist-related activities engaged in, the immediacy of the threat and the intent of the individual:

- **Attack-related:** Individuals who committed, attempted or were planning attacks were responsible for 37% of IROs. Proportionally, attack-related offences fell across the time periods (from 46% to 24%).
 - Among these offences (some of which included multiple types of attack), bombing was the most commonly featured type of attack, both overall (74%) and in both time periods (78% and 63%).
 - Proportionally, offences involving beheadings or stabbings (planned or otherwise) increased eleven-fold across the time periods, from 4% to 44%.
- **Facilitation:** Individuals involved in facilitating acts of terrorism, either by fundraising or recruiting or by providing material goods or documentation, or ideologues who encouraged terrorist acts through incitement or by disseminating terrorist publications, were responsible for one-third (33%) of IROs. Proportionally, facilitation offences were relatively unchanged across the time periods (34% and 32%).
- **Aspirational:** Individuals who demonstrated an interest in terrorism, but whose plans were not advanced enough to pose an imminent threat or whose offences were limited in scope, were responsible for 18% of IROs. Aspirational IROs increased by half across the time periods (from 15% to 23%).
- **Travel-related:** Individuals whose offences related to travel (including attempted or planned) for terrorist purposes, namely to receive terrorist training or to engage in fighting overseas, were responsible for 12% of IROs. Travel-related IROs increased four-fold across the time periods (from 5% to 21%).

Across the two time periods, convictions for both travel-related and aspirational offences have become more common (increasing from 5% to 21% and from 15% to 23% respectively) while attack-related convictions have become less common (dropping from 46% to 24%).

Targets for attack

More than half (53%) of IROs were assessed as including one or more known or suspected target(s) for attack across four categories:

- **Targeted civilian:** Civilian targets specifically chosen for inherent characteristics (race, sexual orientation), beliefs (religion or absence of, political views), perceived behaviour (blasphemy or other transgression) or public role (security and law enforcement, civil service, politician or royalty) were a feature in one-third (33%) of targeted offences. Proportionally, civilian targets increased between the two time periods (from 30% to 40%).
- **Critical infrastructure:** Six infrastructure sectors and institutions, predominantly transportation (excluding transport terminals) and banking and finance, were a feature in just under one-third (32%) of targeted offences. Proportionally, critical infrastructure targets decreased between time periods (from 47% to 4%), reflecting the focus of al-Qaeda-directed cells on attacking transportation and financial buildings between 2004 and 2006.
- **Urban soft target:** Areas into which large numbers of citizens regularly gather for usual activities or special events were among the intended targets for attack in 31% of targeted offences. This also includes indiscriminate attacks against civilians in an undetermined setting. Urban soft targets were more prevalent among relevant 2011–2015 offences (42%) than among 1998–2010 offences (26%).
- **Military:** Military targets both overseas (including British or coalition forces) and at home (military bases and processions as well as soldiers) were a feature in almost a quarter (24%) of targeted offences. Military targets were also more prevalent among relevant 2011–2015 offences (31%) than among 1998–2010 offences (20%).

Offences and legislation

A total of 386 separate charges were successfully prosecuted in 264 convictions between 1998 and 2015 (and five individuals died in suicide attacks). The most common principal offences (the most serious based upon the maximum penalty for each offence) were preparation for acts of terrorism (27%) and possession/collection of information useful for terrorism (14%). They are followed by fundraising offences (8%), dissemination of terrorist publications and conspiracy to murder (both 6%) as well as conspiracy to cause explosions and assisting offenders (both 5%).

More than two-thirds (69%) of principal offences were secured under terrorism legislation. A higher proportion of 2011–2015 principal offences were successfully prosecuted under terrorism legislation (88%) than 1998–2010 offences (56%). The 22 percentage point increase is the direct result of the increase in convictions for two offences under the Terrorism Act 2006: principal offence convictions for preparation for terrorist acts nearly tripled (from 15% to 42%), while dissemination of terrorist publications more than tripled (from 3% to 10%).

Prevalence of individual convictions and “lone wolves”

Almost a third (32%, n.=85) of IROs resulted in the offender being convicted alone, while the remaining two-thirds (68%) of IROs resulted in multiple convictions as part of one trial or terrorism investigation. In two thirds (67%, n.=57) of individual convictions, however, the offender was part of a wider network – i.e. they belonged to a proscribed terrorist organisation or a known extremist

network or they were in contact with known extremists online. Therefore, one in ten (10%, n.=28) IROs were carried out by those who acted entirely alone and had no extremist connections.

“Lone wolf” offences are increasing – they accounted for 16% of 2011–2015 offences compared to 6% of 1998–2010 offences. This rise may be explained by the increased prevalence of aspirational offences – those where the offender demonstrated an interest in terrorism, but whose plans were not advanced enough to pose an imminent threat or whose offence was limited in scope – such as dissemination of terrorist publications. The majority (53%) of “lone wolf” offences were aspirational; very few attack- or travel-related IROs were carried out by those acting alone.

Role of public-sector institutions

The UK education sector featured in one in seven (15%, n.=40) IROs, owing to either the role educational institutions played in the offender’s engagement with extremism or the facilitation of offending, or the fact that concerns had previously been raised within the sector about the offender’s behaviour which indicated engagement with extremism. (Cases where cell members knew one another from school or college are not included in this data). In a quarter (25%, n.=10) of IROs that involved the education sector the individual profiled was a student at the time of arrest. The proportion of 2011–2015 offences that involved the education sector fell to 4% from 23% for 1998–2010 offences. Separately, 12% (n.=33) of IROs overall were committed by individuals who were in education at the time of their arrest.

Local authorities featured in one fifth (20%, n.=54) of IROs, owing to either the role local authority facilities played in offenders’ engagement with extremism or the facilitation of offending, or the fact that offenders were known (by the police and/or local authorities) to have engaged in public extremism-related activism (such as extremist *dawah*, or proselytisation, stalls, public preaching or protests). The proportion of 2011–2015 offences that involved local authorities fell to 17% from 22% for 1998–2010 offences.

In a small minority (6%, n.=16) of IROs the offender was known to have engaged in radicalising or extremism-related activities while in detention. This included targeting vulnerable prisoners with a view to converting them to a jihadist interpretation of Islam, preparing to build explosive devices and engaging in ideologically-motivated attacks on prisoners and prison staff. Separately, 12% (n.=32) of IROs were committed by individuals who had previously served a custodial sentence prior to their engagement in Islamism-inspired offending. Five individuals were known to have converted to Islam while detained in prison or a young offender institution and in four of these cases the individual was subsequently convicted for behaviour during (or partly during) detention.

Taken together, the education sector, local authorities and prisons were a feature in half (50%) of IROs. The proportion of 2011–2015 offences that involved these public sectors fell to 39% from 58% for 1998–2010 offences. This figure includes both the offenders’ backgrounds (being a student at the time of their arrest or having a previous custodial sentence) and their behaviours (the sector being a site for engagement with extremism or the facilitation of offending).

Charitable and faith-based organisations

Thirty-eight per cent (n.=101) of IROs were connected to charitable and faith-based institutions, owing to the role charities, mosques or informal fundraising played in offenders’ engagement with

extremism or the facilitation of offending, or the fact that concerns had previously been raised within the sector. As such, this includes organisations that knowingly facilitated offending as well as instances where premises or names were used or targeted by the individuals profiled. The proportion of 2011–2015 offences that involved charitable and faith-based institutions fell to 25% from 47% for 1998–2010 offences.

Internet

In over a third (35%, n.=94) of IROs the internet was cited as a major site for the offender's engagement with extremism and inspiration. (Use of the internet for operational purposes alone is not included in this data). Online radicalisation is increasing - the prevalence of the internet as a medium for engagement with extremism more than doubled among 2011–2015 offence (53%) compared to 1998–2010 offences (22%).

Conclusion

The rate of Islamism-inspired offending doubled across the time periods and there was an increase in serious offending by small cells. Offences inspired by, but not connected to, a proscribed terrorist organisation more than doubled, suggesting a decline in command and control terrorism. Attack-related offences almost halved, while convictions for travel-related offences increased four-fold. Attacks (planned or otherwise) against civilians and military targets were more prevalent among later offences, while attacks on critical infrastructure declined. Convictions for preparation for terrorist acts nearly trebled across the time periods, owing in part to Syria-related travel, while dissemination of terrorist publications more than trebled, reflecting the increasing role of the internet in jihadist propaganda.

The internet was cited as a major site for the offender's inspiration in an increasingly proportion of offences. At the same time, offenders were typically part of wider networks, formed in person and online, with friends and families – only one in ten offences was carried out by someone who acted entirely alone and had no extremist connections. Institutions remain significant, with the education sector, local authorities and prisons a feature in half of offences. Charitable and faith-based organisations were also a prominent yet declining feature.

Discussion

This paper summarised HJS's research database of Islamism-inspired terrorism convictions and suicide attacks in the UK between 1998 and 2015, focusing on the offenders' backgrounds and their activities as well as offence-specified data.

There is a general consensus – within academia and among practitioners – that terrorists cannot be profiled since there are multiple pathways into terrorism and violent extremism.³⁴ Both policy and

³⁴ Pantucci, R., et al, 'Lone-Actor Terrorism Literature Review', RUSI, 16 December 2015, p. 5, available at: <https://rusi.org/publication/occasional-papers/lone-actor-terrorism-literature-review>, last visited: 23 February 2017; Gill, P., et al, 'Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists', *Journal of Forensic Sciences*, March 2014, Vol. 59, No. 2, pp. 425-435, p. 434; Lloyd, M. & Dean, C., 'The Development of Structured Guidelines for Assessing Risk in Extremist Offenders', *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*, 2015, Vol. 2, No. 1, pp. 40-52, pp. 43-44; 'MI5 report challenges views on terrorism in Britain', *Guardian*, 20 August 2008, available at: www.theguardian.com/uk/2008/aug/20/uksecurity.terrorism1, last visited: 23 February 2017; 'Roots of violent radicalisation', House of Commons Home Affairs Committee, Nineteenth Report of Session 2010–12, 6 February 2012, paras. 16–17, available at: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmhafl/1446/1446.pdf, last visited: 23 February 2017.

policing should be evidenced-based, however, and we should look to understand the socio-demographic characteristics of those involved in Islamism-inspired terrorism as well as the behaviours these individuals engaged in prior to offending.

The threat to the UK remains from “home-grown” terrorism, and is heavily youth- and male-oriented with British nationals prevalent among offenders. Although small, women’s involvement nearly trebled in recent years and is typically supportive of men involved in terrorist activity with whom they have a family or personal relationship. Gender and age findings correlate with national counter-terrorism arrest statistics for 2008–2015.³⁵

Analysis of offenders’ residence shows the primacy of London- and Birmingham-based individuals as well as higher than average relative deprivation and Muslim population at neighbourhood level. There is little correlation between involvement in terrorism and educational achievement and employment status, and the majority of offences were committed by those living with their partner and/or children or, increasingly, at their family home. These findings challenge common stereotypes of terrorists as well-educated and middle-class or as isolated loners. Deprivation and segregation findings also raise difficult questions about how extremism can take root in deprived communities, many of which have high levels of segregation and limited access to local services. The data supports the proposition in a 2016 review into opportunity and integration that divided communities with poorer social and economic opportunities can be vulnerable to extremism.³⁶

While analysis of pre-offence behaviours shows that there is no one profile for engagement with Islamism-inspired terrorism, some trends can be identified. Offenders commonly consumed extremist and/or instructional material prior to, or as part of, their offending. Much of the pro-jihadist material accessed promotes ‘them and us’ thinking, dehumanisation of the enemy, and attitudes that justify offending – all factors identified in the vulnerability assessment framework used in the government de-radicalisation programme Channel to describe “the mindset that is associated with a readiness to use violence”.³⁷

Accessing instructional material, typically bomb-making manuals, can also be indicative of individuals seeking to develop their capability to cause harm, another dimension to vulnerability assessment framework. Establishing direct links to proscribed terrorist organisations or travelling abroad for terrorist training or combat experience demonstrate both intent and capability and are behaviours more commonly seen among those responsible for the most serious attack-related offences than all other offences.

Most offenders were previously known to the authorities through a variety of terrorism- and non-terrorism-related channels, including through a criminal conviction. While a wide range of criminal offences preceded offenders’ engagement with terrorism, some (typically those associated with al-Muhajiroun) displayed escalatory anti-social and criminal behaviour prior to offending. Conversely, offenders are increasingly less likely to be known to the Security Service, which, coupled with the increased prevalence of smaller cells and individualistic offending, suggests a rise in terrorism cases that feature shorter lead times to offending and fewer opportunities for identification.

³⁵ ‘Latest counter terrorism arrest statistics announced’, Metropolitan Police, 14 May 2015, available at: <http://news.met.police.uk/news/latest-counter-terrorism-arrest-statistics-announced-116776>, last visited: 23 February 2017.

³⁶ The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration, Department for Communities and Local Government, 5 December 2016, available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-casey-review-a-review-into-opportunity-and-integration, last visited: 23 February 2017.

³⁷ ‘Channel Duty Guidance: Protecting vulnerable people from being drawn into terrorism’, HM Government (2015), annex C.

Offences inspired by, but not connected to, a proscribed terrorist organisation more than doubled, suggesting a decline in command and control terrorism. Attack-related offences almost halved, while convictions for travel-related offences increased. Proportionally, attacks (planned or otherwise) against civilians and military targets were more prevalent among later offences, while attacks on critical infrastructure declined. While proscribed terrorist organisations are increasingly able to inspire individuals to attempt low-tech and violent attacks, the type and level of threat remains complex, and more sophisticated bombings remain the most popular method of attack.

Convictions for preparation for terrorist acts nearly tripled across the time periods, owing in part to Syria-related travel, while dissemination of terrorist publications more than tripled, reflecting the increasing role of the internet in jihadist propaganda. The findings suggest an increase in disruptive policing, utilising both less serious terrorism-related offences as well as other criminal offences. As the latter were not captured in the sample, this would be a productive area for future research.

Analysis of common sites of inspiration and facilitation appears to corroborate current counter-radicalisation policy priorities such as restricting terrorist and violent extremist material on the internet, supporting at-risk sectors and empowering families to safeguard against extremism. The internet was cited as a major site for inspiration in an increasing proportion of offences. Institutions and sectors remain significant, with the education sector, local authorities and prisons a feature in half of offences. Charitable and faith-based organisations were also a prominent, yet declining, feature. Offenders were predominantly part of networks, formed in person and online, with friends and families – only one in ten offences was carried out by someone who acted entirely alone who had no extremist connections. Local mosque representatives and family members were most commonly among those who had been concerned by behaviours which indicated offenders' engagement with extremism prior to their offending.

About the Author

Hannah Stuart is a Senior Research Fellow at The Henry Jackson Society where her work focuses on Islamism-inspired extremism, terrorism and jihadist ideology as well as religious law and the role of religion in the public sphere.

Hannah has advised government officials, MPs and other relevant stakeholders and has given evidence to relevant Home Affairs Select Committee inquiries, and her research and ideas have informed counter-radicalisation policy. She has extensive broadcast media experience and has written analysis for the *Wall Street Journal*, *The Times*, *Foreign Policy*, *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* and the *Guardian*, among others.

Hannah has a MA in International Studies and Diplomacy (with Distinction) from the School of Oriental and African Studies, and a BA in English Literature from the University of Bristol.



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David Anderson Q.C.
Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation

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Islamist Terrorism: Key Findings and Analysis
By Hannah Stuart

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