

TERRORISM IN THE WEST: AN AGE OF EXTREMES

HJS

Henry
Jackson
Society

BY TOM WILSON

A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF TERRORIST ATTACKS ACROSS THE WESTERN WORLD

IN BRIEF

Terrorism in the West: An Age of Extremes – a new 300-page study of terrorist attacks across the West – analyses the changing face of terrorism as it has evolved over the past two years.

The report draws upon data from 122 terrorist attacks committed in Western countries between 2016 and 2017. It provides detailed insights on terrorism trends, covering where attacks occurred, which ideologies were responsible, what weapons have been used and the casualty figures these attacks inflicted. It also profiles and documents the assailants, presenting data on their age, gender and background.

During the two years of the study, terrorism in western countries killed 280 people and left another 1,905 injured. By documenting the enduring and diversifying threat from terrorism, this research seeks to enhance our understanding of violent extremism so that we are in a stronger position from which to counter it.



84%
Fatalities caused
by Islamists in 2017

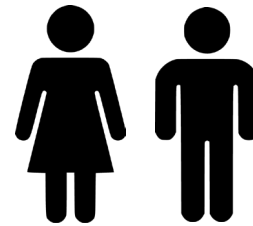


46%
Foreign-born
attackers in 2017

3x
Increase in
vehicular attacks



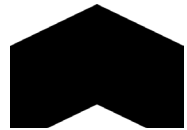
Female Male
3% 97%



No.1
Target for
western terrorism
is the UK



47%
Injuries caused
by assailants
with training



4x
Increase in
far right attacks



2x
Increase in % of
attacks aimed at UK



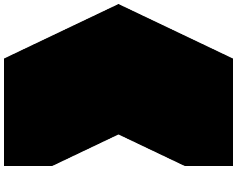
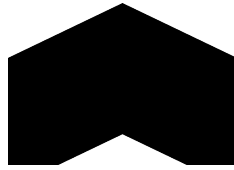
38%
Attacks featured
explosives in 2017



MONITORING TRENDS: YEAR ON YEAR

FATALITIES FROM FAR RIGHT TERRORISM

OVER-10-TIMES

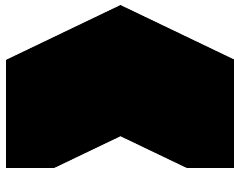
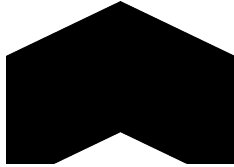


FAR LEFT ATTACKS

55.6%

FOREIGN-BORN ATTACKERS

50%



TOTAL NUMBER OF ATTACKS

25.9%

The nature of the terrorist threat has changed year-on-year. In 2017, 14 more terror attacks occurred than in 2016. The share of attacks suffered by the United Kingdom almost doubled from 2016 to 2017. The number of vehicular attacks almost tripled from the first year to the second, while the share of attacks using explosives fell marginally. Between 2016 and 2017, the study recorded a 50% rise in the number of foreign-born terrorist attackers, along with a quadrupling of attacks perpetrated by those on the far right. The percentage of attacks occurring at locations in city-centre increased by almost 50% between 2016 and 2017.

THE CONCE

TERRORISM

Total Attacks
(2016-2017)

- 15+
- 10-14
- 5-9
- 1-4
- 0

■ Data not included



SPOTLIGHT ON: ISLAMIST TERRORISM

Attacks by Islamists continue to be the most common form of terrorism in the West, in both absolute terms and as measured by casualties. These high casualty rates were particularly driven by Islamist assailants targeting civilians indiscriminately in mass-casualty attacks. Islamist attackers with training or combat experience were also able to carry out some of the deadliest attacks recorded. The average Islamist attack killed 3.75 people compared to 0.71 in the average far right attack. The Islamist assailants included the only female attackers in the study. These attackers tend to be younger and more likely to have been born in a country other than the one they perpetrated their attack in.

ATTACKS THAT CAUSE FATALITIES

48.5%

SUBURBAN TARGET

49%

AVG. FATALITIES PER ATTACK

3.75

KNIFE ATTACKS

44.9%

ASSAILANTS AVG. AGE

29.1

COMBAT EXPERIENCE

9.8%

KNOWN TO AUTHORITIES

54.8%

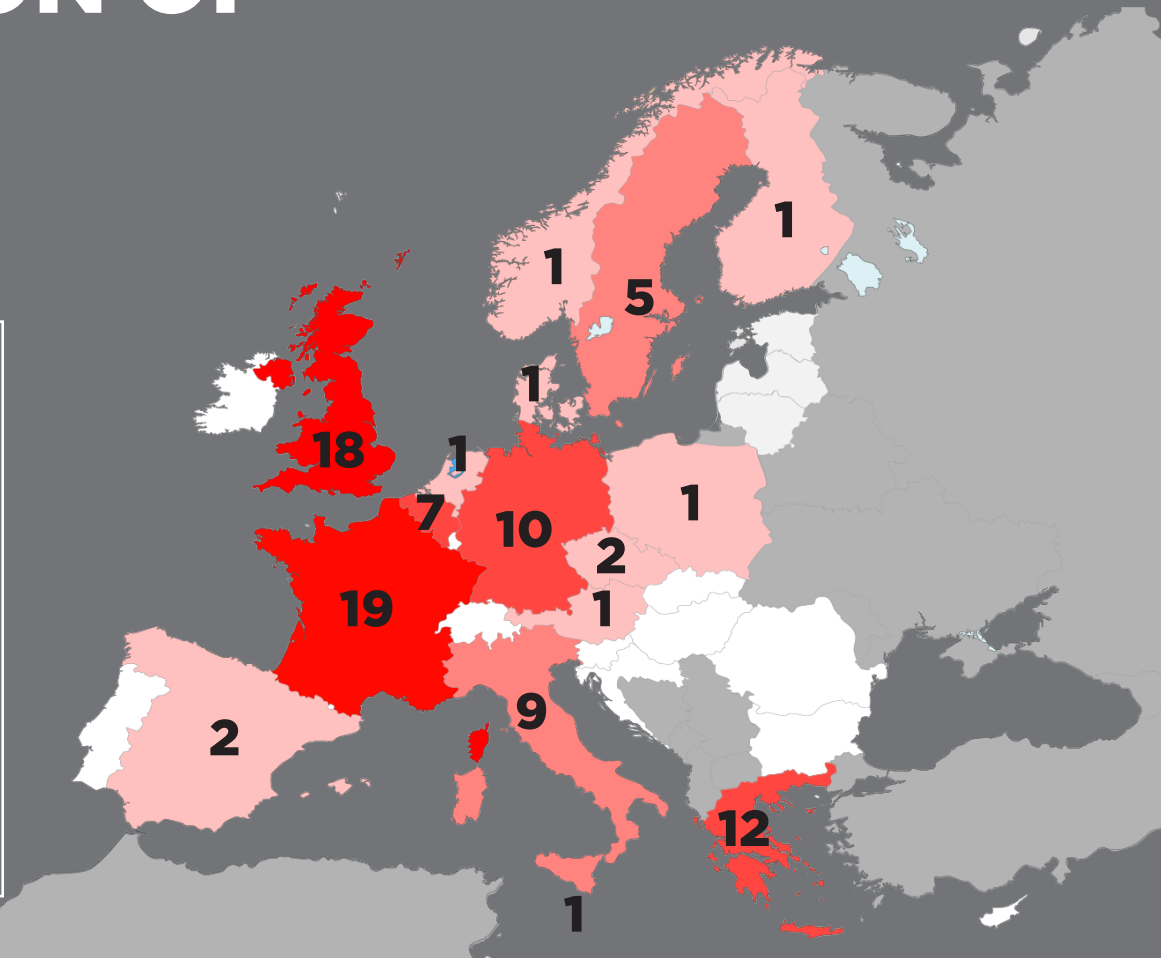
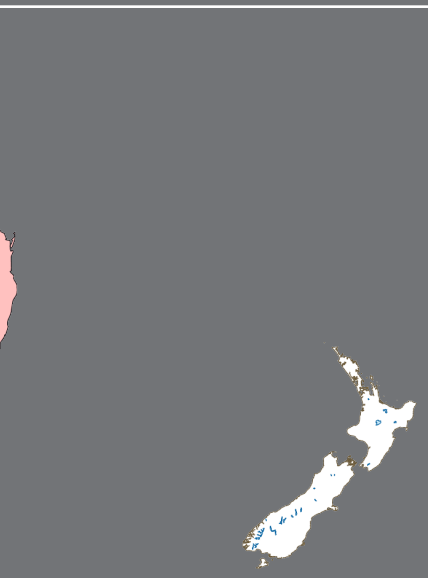
BORN ABROAD

66.7%

LINKED TO ISIS

35.3%

CONCENTRATION OF



KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM AN ANALYSIS OF TERRORISM ACROSS THE WEST

IN 2017, TERRORISM CLAIMED THE LIVES OF 89 PEOPLE OVER 68 ATTACKS - INJURING A FURTHER 918.

ISLAMIST TERRORISM CONTINUES TO BE THE MOST PREVALENT AND DEADLY FORM OF TERRORISM - KILLING 75 PEOPLE AND INJURING 876 OVER 33 ATTACKS.

THE UNITED KINGDOM WITNESSED MORE ATTACKS THAN ANY OTHER WESTERN COUNTRY.

THE AMOUNT OF TERRORIST VIOLENCE IN WESTERN COUNTRIES INCREASED IN 2017 COMPARED TO 2016, 68 ATTACKS UP FROM 54.

16.2% OF ATTACKS SAW THE ASSAILANT SHOT AND KILLED BY THE AUTHORITIES - A DECREASE FROM 2016, WHEN 27.8% OF ATTACKS SAW ASSAILANTS SHOT.

IN 2017, THE MOST COMMON AREAS FOR TERROR ATTACKS WERE CITY CENTRES, WHERE 36.8% OF ATTACKS TOOK PLACE.

IN 2017, 41% OF ASSAILANTS WERE PREVIOUSLY KNOWN TO AUTHORITIES BEFORE THEY CARRIED OUT THEIR ATTACKS.

45.9% OF ASSAILANTS HAD A DIFFERENT COUNTRY OF ORIGIN FROM THE ONE WHERE THEY COMMITTED AN ATTACK IN 2017.

THE IDEOLOGY THAT SAW THE GREATEST INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF ATTACKS WAS THE FAR RIGHT - MORE THAN QUADRUPLED BETWEEN 2016 AND 2017.

ALONG WITH THE RISING ATTACKS FROM THE FAR RIGHT, 2017 SAW THE SAME NUMBER OF ATTACKS FROM THE FAR LEFT, BOTH AT 20.59% OF ATTACKS.



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