

# Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) Comparing Violent and Non-Violent Offenders

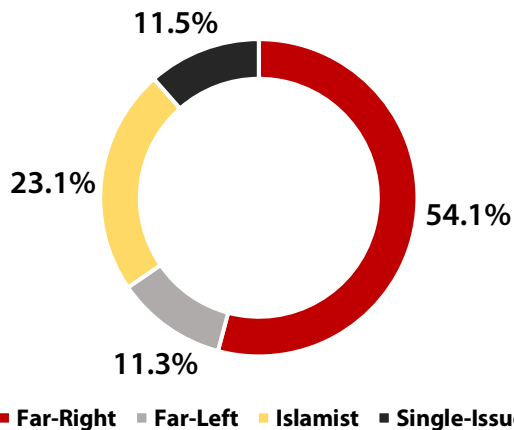
## PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) data include extremist offenders who committed violent and non-violent crimes in the United States through 2021. Violent crimes are defined as acts that are intended to hurt or kill people. Non-violent crimes include vandalism, financial crimes, and acts of property damage in which the offender(s) took steps to ensure that no one would be harmed. With the PIRUS data, users can (1) identify which ideologies, groups, and movements mobilize individuals to violence most often; (2) learn about the radicalization trajectories of violent and non-violent offenders; and (3) isolate the risk and protective factors that distinguish violent offenders from those who commit less serious crimes. This research brief provides an overview of these topics.

## VIOLENT VS. NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS: IDEOLOGICAL AND SUB-IDEOLOGICAL GROUPS



Approximately 60% of the offenders in PIRUS are classified as violent, meaning that their criminal acts were intended to hurt or kill people.

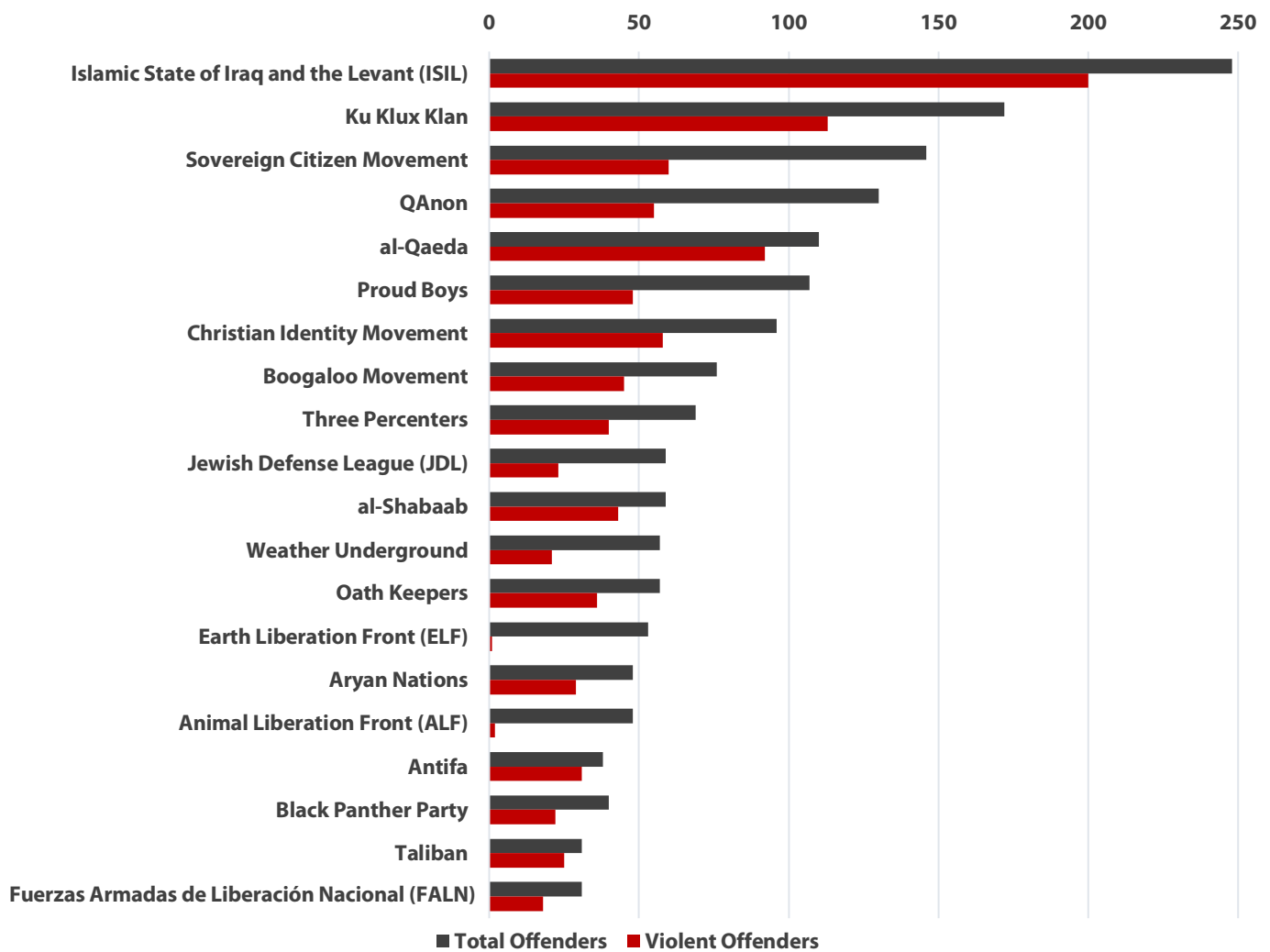


**Most (54.1%) of the violent offenders in PIRUS are classified as being affiliated with the extremist far-right.** However, violent far-right offenders disproportionately (67.4%) consist of individuals with ties to white supremacist and nativist groups and movements. Subjects affiliated with anti-government, militia, or sovereign citizen groups and movements constitute just 38.5% of all violent far-right offenders in PIRUS.

**Offenders affiliated with or inspired by Salafi Jihadist groups make up just over 23% of the violent offenders in PIRUS.** This includes individuals who plotted or committed attacks in the United States, as well as individuals who traveled overseas to fight with foreign terrorist organizations.

**Less than one quarter of all violent offenders in PIRUS are classified as either far-left or single-issue.** The largest (48.8%) cohort of violent far-left offenders in PIRUS are subjects classified as anti-capitalist or anarchist. This includes individuals who were associated with the “New Left” groups of the 1960s and 1970s, as well as contemporary anti-fascist offenders. Individuals classified as environmental or animal rights offenders make up only 4.7% of all violent far-left subjects in the data.

## VIOLENT AND NON-VIOLENT OFFENDERS BY GROUP OR MOVEMENT, 1948-2021



**More violent offenders were inspired by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) than any other group or movement in the data.** Two hundred U.S. individuals committed violent or potentially violent criminal offenses that were inspired by ISIL. These individuals include those who joined ISIL abroad, as well as those who plotted attacks in the United States. Less than 20% of the offenders in PIRUS who were inspired by ISIL committed non-violent crimes. These crimes consisted mainly of attempts to send money or equipment to ISIL group members in Syria and Iraq.

**Of the top 20 groups and movements who mobilized significant numbers of violent offenders in the PIRUS data, eight are classified as belonging to the extremist far-right.** This includes offenders who were affiliated with long-standing far-right groups, like the Ku Klux Klan, and those who acted on behalf of movements that emerged in the last several years, such as the Boogaloo Bois.

During the period of 2018-2021, more offenders were affiliated with the QAnon conspiracy theory than any other extremist group or movement.

Most (57.7%) QAnon-inspired offenders committed non-violent crimes. However, there were several high-profile violent crimes committed by QAnon supporters during this period, including seven homicides.

**Only one contemporary far-left movement—Antifa—was among the most active in terms of violent extremist offenders in the data.** However, Antifa offenders make up just 5% of all violent offenders in PIRUS from 2018-2021, the period for which the movement appears in the data. This ranks behind violent offenders associated with the QAnon conspiracy theory (9.1%), Proud Boys (7.8%), and Boogaloo Movement (7.5%) who committed crimes during the same period.



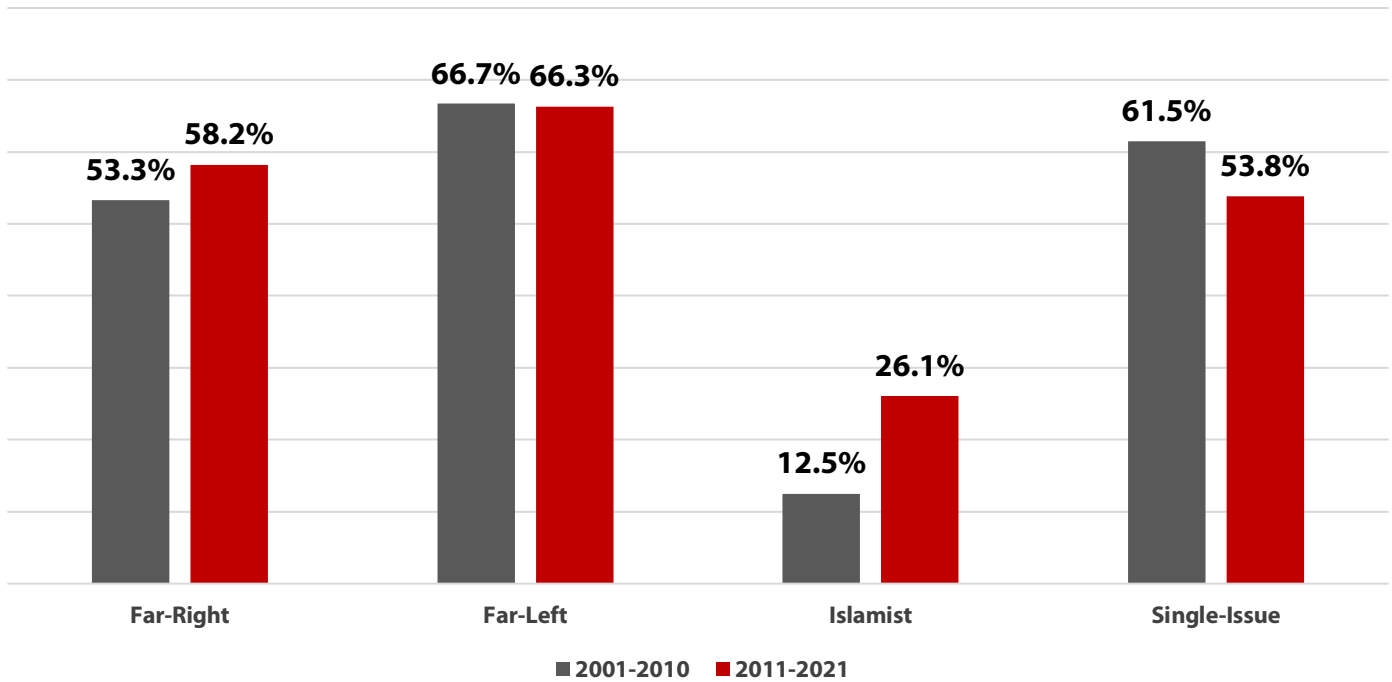
More non-violent offenders were associated with the Sovereign Citizen movement than any other group or movement in the data.

More than 80 sovereign citizens carried out non-violent crimes, such as tax evasion, frivolous lawsuits and liens, and other crimes commonly referred to as ‘paper terrorism.’

In addition to sovereign citizens, offenders affiliated with far-left groups, like the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) and the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), were the most likely to commit non-violent crimes.

## VIOLENT OFFENDERS BY PLOT SUCCESS RATE

Percentage of Violent Offenders Who Committed Successful Attacks, 2001-2021



Of the 1903 offenders in PIRUS who are classified as violent, 48% were successful in committing attacks in the United States.

**While violent Islamist offenders have been slightly more successful in the last decade than they were in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, their success rates continue to lag far behind violent offenders associated with extremist far-right (58.2%), far-left (66.3%), and single-issue (53.8%) ideologies.**

However, the success rates of violent offenders vary considerably when the ideologies of the offenders are taken into consideration.

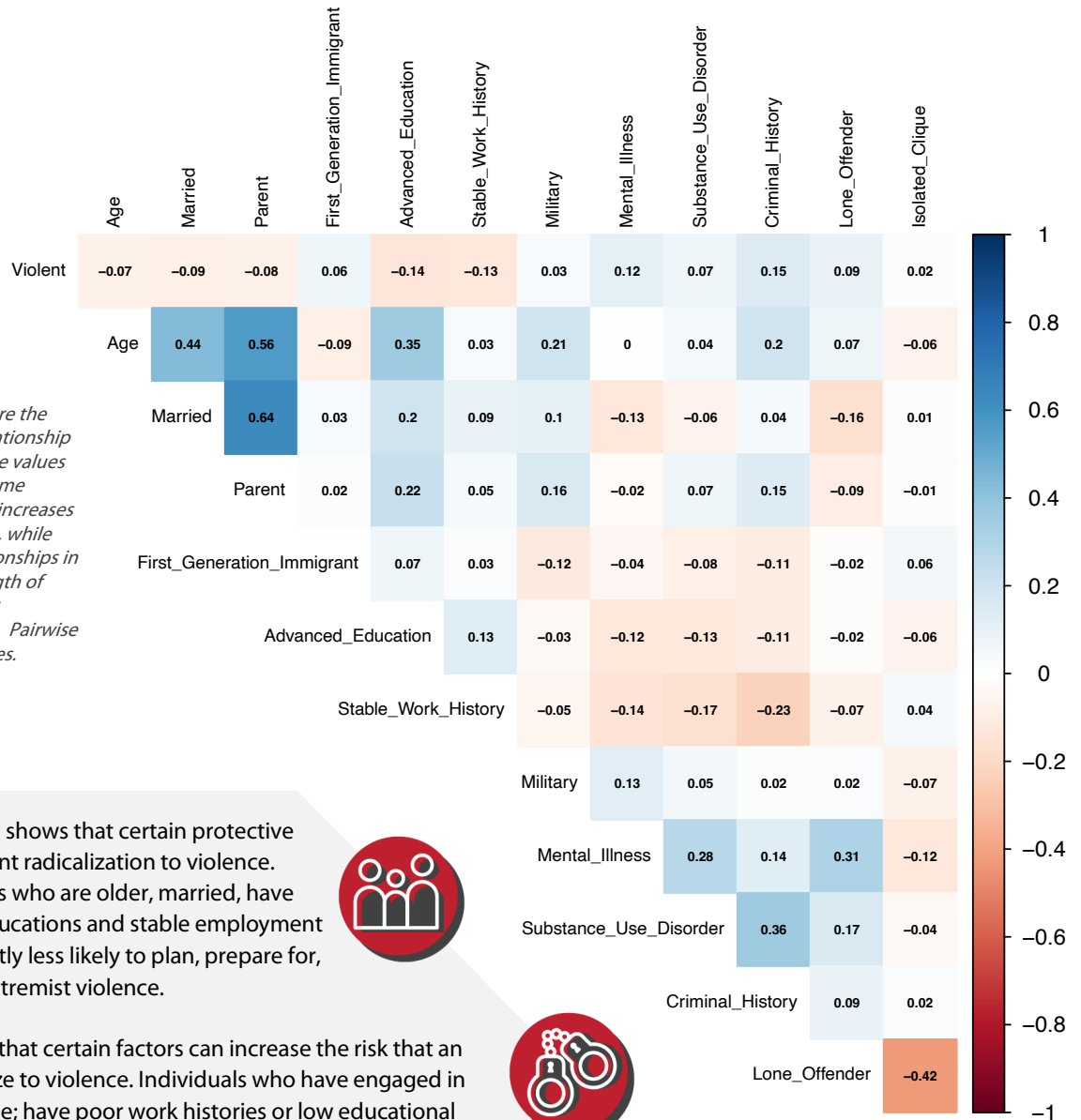
For instance, in the post-9/11 era, Islamist offenders have had a violent crime success rate of 20.8%. During the same period, individuals associated with domestic extremist ideologies were successful in committing violent crimes 57.5% of the time.

These differences could reflect disparities in federal law related to material support for foreign versus domestic terrorist groups, and disparities in law enforcement resources allocated towards both. However, they could also be the result of target selection (e.g., hard versus soft targets) and the relative skill of the attackers.

## INDIVIDUAL ATTRIBUTES AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

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.

### Correlation Matrix: Individual Attributes and Violent Extremism



Correlation coefficients measure the strength and direction of a relationship between two variables. Positive values indicate relationships in the same direction (e.g., as one variable increases in value so too does the other), while negative values indicate relationships in opposite directions. The strength of relationships increases as their coefficients approach 1 and -1. Pairwise deletion used for missing values.

An analysis of the data shows that certain protective factors can help prevent radicalization to violence. Specifically, individuals who are older, married, have children, advanced educations and stable employment histories are significantly less likely to plan, prepare for, or engage in acts of extremist violence.



The data also suggest that certain factors can increase the risk that an individual will radicalize to violence. Individuals who have engaged in pre-radicalization crime; have poor work histories or low educational achievements; show evidence of mental illness or substance use disorders; and act alone are more likely to engage in extremist violence.



Military experience does not appear to be significantly related in either direction to violent extremism.



The data show that risk and protective factors tend to cluster together. In terms of protective factors, there are strong positive correlations between age, advanced education, and stable employment. Similarly, there are positive correlations between several risk factors, including mental illness, substance abuse, and previous non-ideological crime.



## 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 to 2021. 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

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### START

The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) is a university-based research, education and training center comprised of an international network of scholars committed to the scientific study of terrorism, responses to terrorism and related phenomena. Led by the University of Maryland, START is a Department of Homeland Security Emeritus Center of Excellence that is supported by multiple federal agencies and departments. START uses state-of-the-art theories, methods and data from the social and behavioral sciences to improve understanding of the origins, dynamics and effects of terrorism; the effectiveness and impacts of counterterrorism and CVE; and other matters of global and national security. For more information, visit [start.umd.edu](http://start.umd.edu) or contact START at [infostart@umd.edu](mailto:infostart@umd.edu).



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