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# **Violence, Risk, & Rightwing Extremism:**

Temporal, Perpetrator,  
Geographical, & Victim  
Patterns in Western &  
Central Europe

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# INTRODUCTION

Right Wing Extremism (RWE) is recognized as a growing threat across the globe.<sup>1</sup> However, it is not a homogenous entity.<sup>2</sup> There is broad consensus in the literature that RWE<sup>3</sup> incorporates such a complex web of movements and ideological currents<sup>4</sup> that any accurate assessment of threat or resource prioritization is hard to achieve. This report examines patterns of RWE violence within Western and Central Europe to tease out different manifestations of the threat, in particular as regards temporal, perpetrator, geographical and victim patterns.

Our aim is to help practitioners, policymakers and other stakeholders understand that RWE is not a one-size-fits-all problem; that responses need to be tailored; that geographic differences persist; and that while networks and groups may constitute the most visible components of the threat, they may not be the most violent.

This is the second report of two setting out the different ways in which RWE actors constitute a risk to public safety, national and international security. The first report provided a guide to key concepts, ideas and internal differences within movements associated with RWE, exploring—by way of example—different ways in which RWE groups and actors framed their approach towards Islam as a means to illustrate variation in RWE responses and attitudes. Expanding on the first report, this second report explores and dissects incidents of violence associated with RWE, their varied perpetrators, and victims. Together, insights from these reports will help analysts, observers and practitioners to navigate the complexities of RWE and different ways in which such activities can constitute risk.

In this report we begin by detailing how we undertook the current research, exploring the methodological challenges associated with researching RWE violence. We then explore variance in relation to violent RWE incidence in Western/Central Europe by examining a comprehensive terrorism database and other data. We look at four statistical trends in RWE violence: temporal patterns, perpetrator patterns, geographic patterns, and victim patterns. This quantitative study underpins a more qualitative assessment of the relationship between RWE and broader political trends, as well as who the perpetrators of such violence are.

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- 1 United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directory, “Member States Concerned by the Growing and Increasingly Transnational Threat of Extreme Right-wing Terrorism” (April 2020).
  - 2 Donald Holbrook and Graham Macklin, *Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism: Conceptual Variance and Attitudes Towards Islam* (Washington, DC: RESOLVE Network, 2022).
  - 3 Incorporating different definitions such as white supremacy, right-wing extremism and other labels.
  - 4 Tore Bjørgo, “Introduction,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 7, no. 1 (1995), 1-16; Jacob Aasland Ravndal and Tore Bjørgo, “Investigating Terrorism from the Extreme Right: A Review of Past and Present Research,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (2018): 5-22.

# RWE VIOLENCE: METHODOLOGICAL CHALLENGES

Designation of actors as RWE—or associated categories—offers poor predictions as to the focus of their violence and targeting unless their particular sympathies within the RWE domain and their individual interpretations of those sympathies are scrutinized with more care and nuance.<sup>5</sup> RWE incorporates different ideas, actors and movements, each of which pose national security challenges albeit in different ways. Understanding the ideological affiliations of particular actors within this domain gives no *a priori* sense of what sort of outcomes those actors would seek to achieve or indeed their likelihood of embracing violence as a method to achieve those outcomes.<sup>6</sup>

While RWE terrorist David Copeland murdered three and injured hundreds in a series of nail bomb attacks in London in 1999, targeting Afro-Caribbean, South Asian, and LGBTQ communities,<sup>7</sup> other attacks have been less expansive in their targeting. For instance, mass-casualty terrorists such as Anders Breivik—who murdered 77 people in Norway in 2011—and Brenton Tarrant—who killed 51 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand, in March 2019<sup>8</sup>—both defined Islam as a principal threat yet targeted very different groups in response to this perceived threat. Others, like Stephen Balliet—who killed two people in Halle, Germany, in October 2019 after failing to gain entry to a synagogue—combined attacks on Jewish targets with anti-Muslim violence, though the latter may have been less premeditated in his case.<sup>9</sup>

Highlighting the ideologically multimodal nature of RWE ideologies, other activists have sought inspiration *from* Islamist militancy<sup>10</sup>—particularly with regards the “spectacularization” of violence.<sup>11</sup> RWE actors have celebrated violence in pursuit of Islamist extremist causes, where sentiments such as antisemitism are shared.<sup>12</sup> In other cases, RWE actors have also targeted politicians, even those that are otherwise of a similar ethnic or racial background, deeming those politicians “traitors” because of their stance on immigration or national sovereignty. Instances of this include the murder of the British Labour MP Jo Cox in 2016 and the killing of German politician Walter Lübcke in 2019 by RWE-motivated terrorists. This variance in actors, ideas, and outcomes among RWE attackers is explored in greater detail in our companion RESOLVE report, ‘Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism’. In short, those who carry out RWE violence do so against a varied set of targets and in pursuit of an expansive, often contradictory set of objectives.

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5 Holbrook and Macklin, *Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism*.

6 Ibid.

7 Graeme McLagan and Nick Lowles, *Mr Evil: The Secret Life of Racist Bomber and Killer David Copeland* (London: John Blake, 2000).

8 Graham Macklin, “The Christchurch Attacks: Livestream Terror in the Viral Video Age,” *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 6 (2019), <https://ctc.usma.edu/christchurch-attacks-livestream-terror-viral-video-age/>.

9 The latter attack may have been spontaneous but signalled Balliet’s varied list of targets. Daniel Koehler, “The Halle, Germany Synagogue Attack and the Evolution of the Far-Right Terror Threat,” *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 11 (2019), <https://ctc.usma.edu/halle-germany-synagogue-attack-evolution-far-right-terror-threat/>.

10 For examples, see: George Michael, *The Enemy of My Enemy: The Alarming Convergence of Militant Islam and the Extreme Right* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2006).

11 Sara Brzuszkiewicz, “Jihadism and Far-Right Extremism: Attributes With Regard to Violence Spectacularisation,” *European View* 19, no. 1 (2020): 71-79.

12 Daniel Levitas, *The Terrorist Next Door: The Militia Movement and the Radical Right* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 2002), 335-42.

# RESEARCH DATA & DESIGN

Any broad analysis of RWE thus needs to appreciate its heterogeneity. Even when we limit our geographic scope, as we do here—focusing on Western and Central Europe, given that we have strong data for that region—variance emerges that adds to the challenge of mapping RWE incidents. This will need to be appreciated by any regional agencies seeking to design or implement policy in this area. Lessons from one country or area cannot be automatically translated to another.

In this report, we examine four related areas that shed light on RWE incident patterns in Western/Central Europe. These are:

- Temporal patterns
- Perpetrator patterns
- Geographical patterns
- Victim patterns

The first concerns any changes with respect to RWE violence over time within our region of focus. The second examines the features of the perpetrators, or whether acts were carried out by groups or by lone individuals. The third focuses on geographical differences within our region, reinforcing the heterogeneity of the threat picture. The fourth focuses on types of victims.

The purpose is to illustrate different ways in which acts of RWE violence vary across these four vectors, highlighting again the variegated nature of the phenomenon. One of the major problems facing researchers and analysts assessing the nature of the threat of violence from RWE actors is the lack of comparable systematic data. This lacuna is addressed, in part, by the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe (RTV) dataset hosted by the Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX) at the University of Oslo.<sup>13</sup> The RTV database includes “all *severe* forms of violent attacks and plots whose target selection is based on *right-wing* beliefs” in Western Europe between 1990 and 2020, though it should be noted that some of the methodology in the capturing of these incidents has evolved over the years.<sup>14</sup> Updated annually, the RTV dataset contained a total of 1,054 events of which 213 were fatal at the time of this research. “Severe” forms of violence are those defined as “cases in which the perpetrator(s) appear determined or willing to inflict deadly or physically disabling injury on the victim(s).”<sup>15</sup> The RTV dataset defines “right-wing” beliefs as “those who regard social inequality as inevitable, natural or even desirable,” often in

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13 Jacob Aasland Ravndal, “Right-wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe: Introducing the RTV Dataset”, *Perspectives on Terrorism* 10, no. 3 (2016): 2-15.

14 Ravndal, “Right-wing Terrorism and Violence in Western Europe.”

15 C-REX, “Codebook for the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) Dataset 1990- 2020 (Revised 02.07.2021),” Center for Research on Extremism (C-REX), University of Oslo.

pursuit of anti-egalitarianism, nativism and authoritarianism.<sup>16</sup> More on the specific elements and manifestations of these ideological currents can be found in our companion RESOLVE report.<sup>17</sup>

The RTV dataset includes significant amounts of information about each incident, including: their location, the type of incident, the type of perpetrator, the target of the attack, and the number of people killed or injured. For the most part, this report uses the same language and categories as the RTV. However, certain adjustments have been made. The RTV records four different types of incidents: premeditated attack, spontaneous attack, attack plot, and preparation for armed struggle.<sup>18</sup> This study only includes the first three types of incidents as they more directly relate to incidents of political violence, which is our focus. The perpetrator type category includes a number of different designations for attacks plotted or carried out by multiple individuals, for example organized groups, gangs, and autonomous cells.<sup>19</sup> This study simplifies the perpetrator type by dividing it simply into lone actor or group attacks (though we recognize that attacks committed by organized groups, unorganized gangs, and autonomous cells all require different counter-measures). Any incident that features two or more perpetrators is coded as a group. Finally, the victim type section combines the coding of left-wing and pro-immigration activist categories into one.

Databases on political violence, including terrorism, such as the RTV face a formidable methodological challenge. Given the importance of the RTV to this study, they are worth discussing in detail. Although the RTV codebook sets out a criteria for selection (currently, in almost all cases the victim was either hospitalized or sought medical treatment), whether incidents fit this requires a subjective judgement. For example, the database includes references to assault. But when an assault can be classified as a severe form of violent attack, and when it cannot, is a grey area. Furthermore, the database is affected by methodological changes over time and in different spaces. The codebook discusses three particular areas: 1) “the number of relevant and available sources has increased over time”, 2) “public reporting on RTV events varies considerably between countries”, and 3) “our ability to identify relevant events has improved over the past years due to technological and methodological improvements.” It explains that the coverage of fatal incidents can be assumed to be comprehensive – “Such events receive broad news coverage and we have made an extensive effort to cover them all” – but the wider trends of non-fatal incidents ought to be treated with caution.<sup>20</sup> In particular, the codebook notes that recent methodological changes are responsible for a sharp rise in reported non-fatal incidents from 2019 onwards.<sup>21</sup> As a result of these significant methodological changes, we did not believe that the data for non-fatal attacks is consistent enough for inclusion in this report, beyond individual snapshots that exclude any temporal assessment. Therefore, the report only focuses on temporal changes of *fatal* RWE violence. Incidents of non-fatal violence in pursuit of RWE incidents and ideas, of course, will be far greater in overall number

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16 C-REX, “Codebook for the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) Dataset 1990- 2020 (Revised 02.07.2021),” 1.

17 Holbrook and Macklin, *Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism*.

18 C-REX, “Codebook for the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) Dataset 1990- 2020 (Revised 02.07.2021),” 7.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 C-REX, “Codebook for the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) Dataset 1990- 2020 (Revised 02.07.2021),” 2.

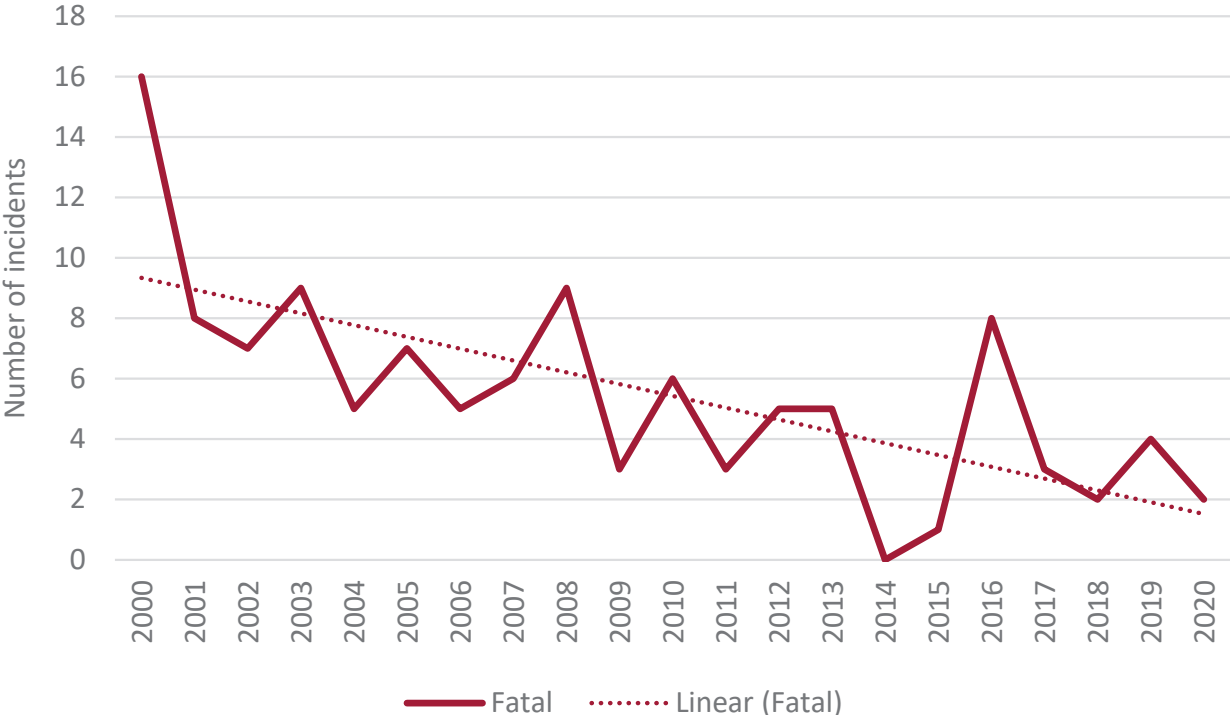
and reveal their own patterns that should be examined in their own right, when data allows. As we argue below, it is with non-fatal episodes, that we will find most of the dynamics behind the recent rise in RWE activity in Europe and beyond.

# TEMPORAL PATTERNS

We begin by exploring temporal dimensions to RWE incident rates in Western/Central Europe, bearing in mind the previous caveat on data and sourcing and our focus on fatal violence. As noted above, RWE is a growing concern on the continent, but what do these patterns look like? How has the number of violent RWE incidents changed since 2000?

The RTV dataset was mined in order to gauge these changes over the past two decades. Figure 1, below, illustrates these trends for all detected incidents of successful or attempted RWE violence as recorded in the database.

**Figure 1: Incidents that resulted in fatalities (Western/Central Europe)**



This graph shows that fatal RWE attacks have been on a downward trajectory for the past two decades. The millennium began at a peak of 16 fatal attacks in 2000. The number of fatal incidents has been in decline since then. There are two exceptions to this trend, with spikes in 2008, and in 2016. The extent



to which there is causation here is unclear. One of the central challenges when analyzing trends in fatal political violence is that the number of incidents is generally very low, but this means that a relatively small number of incidents can cause significant fluctuations. Indeed, when we look more closely at the eight fatal attacks carried out in 2016, the majority of the incidents seem unrelated (at least directly) to other observed spikes in RWE activity, which during that time concentrated on the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ concerning migrants entering Europe.

This finding - that incidents resulting in fatalities (i.e., successful attacks) have declined over the past few years in Europe – cuts against the conventional wisdom about RWE, which posits that the threat of RWE violence has increased. For example, the UN Security Council’s Counterterrorism Committee reported in 2020 “there has been a recent increase in its frequency and lethality”.<sup>22</sup> There have been two recent studies that have given some empirical backing to this claim: a report by the Institute for Economics of Peace (IEP), and a paper published in *Perspectives on Terrorism* by Jonathan Collins.<sup>23</sup> There are a number of explanations for why the findings in this paper differ from other empirical studies. First, we are looking at a slightly different geographical area (the above two studies include the United States). Second, this study is examining fatal incidents, whereas the other studies include non-fatal incidents. Third, and following from the previous point, there are significant differences between terrorism databases. The papers by the IEP and Collins are both based upon the data presented in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD).

To a certain extent, these studies can be said to show two different sides of the same coin: a decrease in fatal incidents is entirely compatible with an increase in non-fatal incidents. The findings that Collins makes – for example, 2015 seeing a large increase in attacks in Germany – correspond to findings in other reports. One dataset dedicated to chronicling anti-refugee violence and social unrest in Germany between 2014 and 2015 recorded a total 1,645 events, belonging to one or more of the following categories: demonstrations, assault, arson attacks, and miscellaneous attacks against refugee housing.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, a number of attacks against refugees (and pro-refugee politicians such as Henriette Reker) in this time demonstrated clear *intent* to cause fatalities, but were ultimately unsuccessful. This study’s focus on fatal incidents does not capture the entirety of the threat RWE poses. Notwithstanding methodological questions of how accurately and consistently databases such as the GTD or RTV can track non-fatal violent incidents,<sup>25</sup> although such studies can be seen to complement one another.

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22 United Nations Security Council Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directory, “Member States Concerned by the Growing and Increasingly Transnational Threat of Extreme Right-wing Terrorism.”

23 Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index 2020: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism*, (Sydney, November 2020): 61-66, <https://visionofhumanity.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/GTI-2020-web-1.pdf>; Jonathan Collins, “A New Wave of Terrorism? A Comparative Analysis of the Rise of Far-Right Terrorism,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15, no. 6 (2021).

24 David Benček and Julia Strasheim, “Refugees Welcome? A Dataset on Anti-Refugee Violence in Germany,” *Research & Politics* 3, no. 4 (2016).

25 As mentioned above, in recognition of these challenges the RTV significantly altered their methodology for including non-fatal incidents in 2019. It is for this reason that the current study does not include non-fatal incidents. Since the RTV cannot currently take account of the full range of non-fatal incidents over the time period studied it seems unlikely that the GTD, which is even less comprehensive in this regard, can be used for this purpose either.

Indeed, the increased focus on RWE extremism on the continent has resulted from this large volume of non-fatal attacks, though statistics are unclear in terms of how these non-fatal, not to mention foiled attack plots, have evolved over time in cases where there have been reported increases.<sup>26</sup> Groups and online subcultures that support and incite this violence have also proliferated, as have their followers. The UK, for instance, has witnessed a rise in the number of individuals suspected of RWE sympathies over the past four years, and a marked increase in the number of RWE sympathizers referred to its counter-extremism program *Channel*, where right-wing sympathizers now outnumber those with suspected Islamist-extremist sympathies. In the twelve months from March 2019 alone there was a 21% increase in the number of individuals referred to the program for suspected support for RWE extremism.<sup>27</sup>

While incidents resulting in fatalities have declined over the past few years in Europe, a number of other elements of this threat picture appear to be on the rise, which could explain the rise in prominence of RWE within Europe.

## PERPETRATOR PATTERNS

What about the perpetrators behind this violence? Who is seeking to carry out these attacks and what does the data tell us about any changes in this regard over time?

We also mined the RTV dataset to gauge the type of perpetrator—lone actor or group/cell—responsible for each violent incident. Lone actor terrorists, as already noted, have been responsible for a number of high profile and mass casualty attacks within Europe that have also inspired similar acts of mass violence outside Europe, such as those that followed Christchurch massacre during the course of 2019. Yet, prominent groups and networks associated with RWE violence, such as National Action in the United Kingdom or the wider “Siege culture”<sup>28</sup> networks, have also formed in recent years and been active in their efforts to sponsor and encourage RWE violence through offline and online means. What patterns emerge in terms of this division of actor types?

Figure 2 illustrates differences between lone actor and group perpetrator categories for all detected incidents of fatal RWE violence.

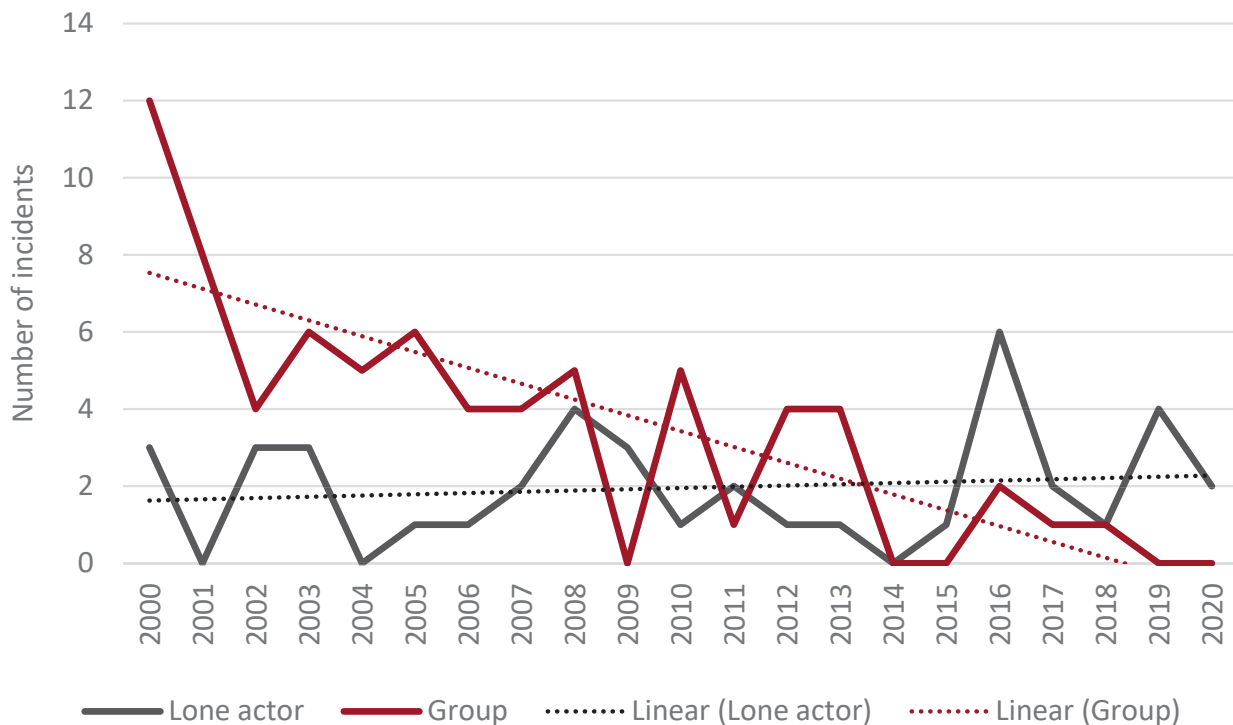
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26 The Soufan Center, *A Perfect Storm: Insurrection, Incitement and the Violent Far-Right Movement* (The Soufan Center, October 2021), <https://thesoufancenter.org/research/a-perfect-storm-insurrection-incitement-and-the-violent-far-right-movement/>.

27 Home Office, “Individuals Referred to and Supported Through the Prevent Programme England and Wales, April 2019 to March 2020” (November 2020), [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938755/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2019-mar2020-hosb3620.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938755/individuals-referred-supported-prevent-programme-apr2019-mar2020-hosb3620.pdf).

28 Ben Lee, *Think Global: Act Local: Reconfiguring Siege Culture* (Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, March 2021), <https://crestresearch.ac.uk/comment/think-global-act-local-reconfiguring-siege-culture/>.

**Figure 2: Incidents resulting in fatalities**



This graph illustrates that the decline in fatal RWE violence coincides with a sharp drop in the number of attacks carried out by groups. By contrast, the number of attacks carried out by lone actors has remained consistent; even increasing very slightly.

This finding has implications for counter-terrorism and counter-violent extremism policy and practice, especially if it holds true—as research has suggested—that lone actors are more affected by unresolved mental health issues than a pre-determined desire to join extremist groups or pursue their political agendas.<sup>29</sup> Focusing energy and resources on the most prominent RWE networks and groups, at least in Europe, may not reflect the nature of the actual RWE *terrorist* threat in these countries—though we should recall that the majority of lone actors, whilst acting alone, still remain embedded to varying degrees within broader RWE ideological communities, creating further challenges for resource allocation.<sup>30</sup>

This distinction highlights the difference between actors associated with RWE, the ideas that inspire them, the varied roles they assume within this domain—from propagandists to perpetrators of violence for instance—and the different outcomes associated with their actions.<sup>31</sup> While some RWE groups

29 Emily Corner and Paul Gill, “A False Dichotomy? Mental Illness and Lone-actor Terrorism,” *Law and Human Behaviour* 39, no. 1 (2015): 23-34, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/lhb0000102>.

30 Lars Erik Berntzen and Sveinung Sandberg, “The Collective Nature of Lone Wolf Terrorism: Anders Behring Breivik and the Anti-Islamic Social Movement,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 26, no. 5 (2014), <https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09546553.2013.767245>.

31 Holbrook and Macklin, *Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism*.

certainly have carried out acts of violence, collectively, in Europe in recent years (notably the National Socialist Underground (NSU) in Germany<sup>32</sup>) lone actors commit much of the most serious violence. One might argue that groups, meanwhile, including those proscribed as terrorist organizations, concentrate on incitement and propaganda, seeking—in part—to spawn more lone actor violence, without instigating it directly. We examine this further with our case studies, below.

Responses to RWE, in turn, and assessments of threat associated with the milieu, need to reflect this heterogeneity. For example, and as noted above, lone actor mobilizations to violence may differ significantly both individually and in comparison to those who mobilize through groups. Some lone actors engage only superficially with RWE ideas whilst others are deeply engaged ideologically. The case of Darren Osborne, who targeted Muslim worshippers in London in June 2017, is a telling example of the former. His journey to violence is detailed on the following page.<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, research has suggested that certain group dynamics may limit the propensity of individuals to carry out acts of violence or to escalate that violence, in part because groups can offer opportunities for other roles and positions that can be seen as meaningful expressions of rightwing extremism, without resulting in direct participation in violence.<sup>34</sup> The case of Benjamin Raymond, a key founder of National Action in the UK, is an example of such dynamics. His involvement in RWE is also described on the following page.<sup>35</sup>

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32 The NSU carried out nine racist murders; killed a police officer; perpetrated two bomb attacks, one in Nuremberg in 1999 and another in 2004; as well as fourteen bank robberies to finance its activities between 2000 and 2007.

33 Collective sources for the case are: Lizzie Dearden, “Darren Osborne: How Finsbury Park Terror Attacker Became ‘Obsessed’ with Muslims in Less than a Month,” *The Independent*, February 2, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/darren-osborne-finsbury-park-attack-who-is-tommy-robinson-muslim-internet-britain-first-a8190316.html>; “Darren Osborne Guilty of Finsbury Park Terror Attack,” *Tell Mama*, February 1, 2018, <https://tellmamauk.org/darren-osborne-guilty-of-finsbury-park-terror-attack/>; “Finsbury Park Attack: Theresa May Condemns ‘Sickening’ Terror Attack,” *BBC*, June 19, 2017, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-40322960>; Patrick Grafton-Green “Finsbury Park Attack Trial: Darren Osborne Hoped to Kill Jeremy Corbyn and Sadiq Khan at London March,” *Evening Standard*, January 30, 2018, <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/finsbury-park-terror-trial-darren-osborne-had-planned-to-attack-jeremy-corbyn-and-sadiq-khan-at-london-march-a3753656.html>; Rohit Kachroo, “Finsbury Park Mosque Murder: Darren Osborne’s Rapid Path to Extremism,” *ITV*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.itv.com/news/2018-02-01/finsbury-park-mosque-attack-darren-osbornes-rapid-path-to-extremism/>.

34 Joel Busher, Donald Holbrook, and Graham Macklin, *The Internal Brakes on Violent Escalation: A Descriptive Typology* (Centre for Research and Evidence on Security Threats, January 2019), 5; Joel Busher, Donald Holbrook, and Graham Macklin, “The Internal Brakes on Violent Escalation: A Typology,” *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression* 11, no. 1 (2019).

35 This description is a summary of: Graham Macklin, “Only Bullets will Stop us! – The Banning of National Action in Britain,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 12, no. 6 (December 2018). See also: “National Action: Ben Raymond Jailed for Eight Years,” *BBC*, December 3, 2021, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-wiltshire-59519211>.

# CASE STUDIES: DARREN OSBORNE & BENJAMIN RAYMOND

## DARREN OSBORNE

Darren Osborne had, as far as anyone can tell, shown no indications of supporting RWE for almost his entire adult life. His partner testified that in their relationship of over two decades she had never known him to be openly racist or hostile to Muslims. Their daughter would bring her Muslim friends home to play. Nonetheless, in the early hours of the morning on 19 June 2017, he drove a hired van into a crowd of worshippers outside Finsbury Park Mosque; murdering Makram Ali, 51, and injuring several others.

The information presented at Osborne's trial paints a picture of a man whose radicalization occurred rapidly, and almost immediately led to lethal violence. It seems that the trigger for Osborne's radicalization occurred just a month before the attack, when he and his partner watched the BBC miniseries *Three Girls*. This three-part series dramatized the Rochdale child sex abuse scandal, which saw the sexual abuse of predominantly white British children by British Pakistani men. This, it seems, may have led to Osborne becoming "obsessed" with Muslims, and he began searching online for prominent far-right figures, including Paul Golding, Jayda Fransen, and Tommy Robinson. His partner stated: "Darren has been watching a lot of Tommy Robinson stuff on the internet... I have pleaded with Darren to stop watching this sort of thing, but he just wouldn't stop."

The earliest recorded instance of Osborne taking a concrete step towards carrying out an attack occurred when he enquired about hiring a van on the 16 June, just 3 days before the attack. Further evidence of his prior intent to carry out an attack can be seen in testimony from attendees of a Welsh pub who spoke to a drunken Osborne on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June. According to those present, Osborne ranted that he was "going to kill Muslims" and made a reference to the Palestinian Al-Quds march the following day; an event which police said was Osborne's original target before he was foiled by road closures. Aside from his hostility towards Muslims, Osborne was said to have also ranted about the leader of the Labour Party, Jeremy Corbyn, whom he saw as a "terrorist sympathizer". Corbyn was due to attend the aforementioned Al Quds march.

Whilst Osborne was in the pub, the night before his attack, he began to write a note – something that he referred to as a "letter to Parliament". This note would later be found in the van Osborne used in the attack, and echoed the sentiments he expressed in the pub. According to press reports, the note called Muslims "feral" and raged against "inbred raping Muslim men" who were "hunting in packs preying on our children". The note made reference to recent Islamist terrorist attacks in the UK. Osborne, however, also reportedly expressed his desire to kill politicians, including Corbyn. Ejected from the pub for his anti-Muslim statements, Osborne claimed he was a "soldier". Another customer who actually was in the Armed Forces asked him which regiment. "You'll find out tomorrow," he replied.

Thwarted in his initial plan to attack the Al Quds rally, Osborne seems to have decided to find a new target, and at approximately 8pm he asked a member of the public where the nearest mosque was. After being told that there was no mosque nearby, for unknown reasons he travelled to Finsbury Park, and just after midnight he rammed the hired van into a crowd of pedestrians who had come out of evening prayers. Osborne was then beaten by a crowd of people, before the mosque's imam intervened and ensured that he was detained. As this happened, Osborne was heard to shout a number of remarks: "I want to kill Muslims", "You deserve it", and "I did my bit".

In terms of ideology, the material that Osborne consumed during this process was easily available. Although it promoted a grievance narrative and a vague call to action, it was not explicitly violent. This is an important reminder that material does not have to actively promote violence in order to incite it. Indeed, the material that appears to have triggered Osborne's initial radicalization was not extremist at all: a BBC program watched by 5 million people.

Finally, the "letter to Parliament" that Osborne wrote demonstrated the intersection of target identities. Although Osborne would go on to target a group of Muslims, he threatened to kill a number of Labour Party figures, including the then leader Jeremy Corbyn. When asked in court if he had hoped to get the opportunity to attack Corbyn at the Al Quds rally, Osborne replied in the affirmative, saying that it would mean "one less terrorist off our streets". He also referred to the possibility of killing London mayor Sadiq Khan as being like "winning the lottery."

## **BENJAMIN RAYMOND**

Benjamin Raymond had been involved in far-right politics for almost his entire adult life. He claimed that reading *Mein Kampf* transformed his life as a teenager, and he was involved in a number of RWE projects including the 'New Right', the Integralist Party of Great Britain, and was an administrator on the neo-Nazi internet forum 'Iron March'. Raymond would go on to gain notoriety as co-founder of the group National Action, which was proscribed as a terrorist group in late 2016.

National Action produced some of the most extreme RWE material ever seen in the UK. The group first emerged to prominence after organizing online harassment of the Jewish MP Luciana Berger, and later held provocative stunts such as their "#HitlerWasRight" marches and issued a call to "White Jihad". More disturbingly for authorities, the group privately held a number of training camps, where members were given instructions in Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) and physical training.

National Action was directly and indirectly involved with a significant number of RWE individuals who either committed, or attempted to commit, acts of terrorism. The group also celebrated the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox by Thomas Mair in 2016, their glorification of her killing playing a large role in the government's subsequent decision to proscribe it. However, despite the fact that Raymond was central to National Action, and almost certainly an influence on a number of figures who would go on to plan acts of terrorism, he never actually turned to violence himself.

The reasons that Raymond did not turn to violence, despite heavy involvement in RWE, are likely to be complex. What evidence that is publicly available suggests that Raymond saw himself as an intellectual, rather than a fighter. Raymond wrote copious amounts on RWE strategy, and happily made himself the public face of NA, giving several interviews on camera to the media. He may, thus, have been able to achieve his ends (whether political or personal) without turning to violence. In April 2021, Raymond was charged with membership of a proscribed organization (NA) between December 2016 and September 2017 as well as three charges relating to the possession of material likely to be useful for terrorism including information about explosives contained on hard drives. In December 2021, Raymond was convicted for these offences, and sentenced to 8 years in prison.

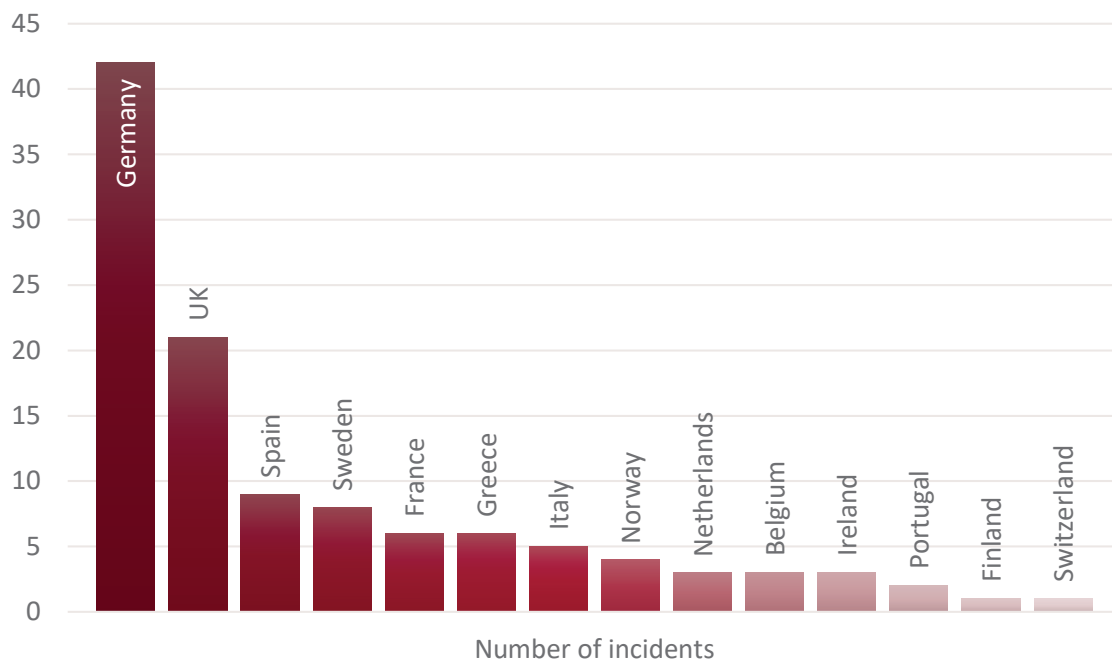
These examples serve as a reminder of the complexity associated with RWE. To reiterate: RWE engagement breeds different actors whose ideological involvement varies, both in terms of substance and depth, and whose engagement results in different political outcomes associated with RWE, ranging from mass outreach to isolated acts of lethal violence.<sup>36</sup>

## GEOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

So far, we have looked at temporal patterns associated with RWE violence in Europe and at trends in relation to the perpetrators behind this violence. But what differences emerge between different countries in this regard in Europe? To what degree can we generalize about RWE incident patterns in different countries?

To address these questions, we examined attack patterns in different parts of Western/Central Europe. Figure 3 shows the total number of RWE incidents recorded by country. We concentrate first on the temporal patterns of fatal attacks.

**Figure 3: Fatal incidents by country (aggregate 2000-2020)**

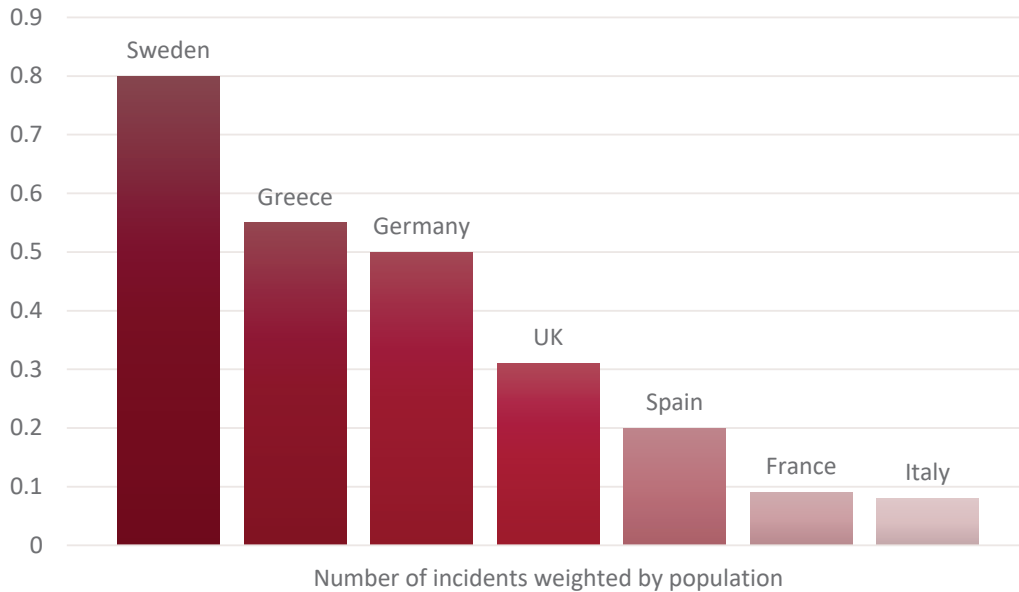


The database shows that Germany suffered the highest number of fatal RWE incidents overall across the period studied, and also records high numbers in the UK. However, these figures need to be put into greater context. After all, Germany also has the highest population in Europe, so the country also having

<sup>36</sup> Holbrook and Macklin, *Deconstructing Rightwing Extremism*.

the highest number of fatal RWE incidents is perhaps not that surprising. By weighing the number of fatal incidents by population size, we can gain a better understanding of levels of violence (Figure 4).<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 4: Fatal incidents by country weighed by population (aggregate 2000-2020)**



Here a slightly different picture emerges, with Sweden and Greece revealed as particular hotspots. The number of attacks in Germany also remains high even when weighed by population size. The levels of fatal attacks in Spain, France, and Italy are comparatively low.

Much of the violence in Greece was targeted at immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers/foreigners, which may reflect social attitudes in the country. According to Pew Research Centre’s 2018 Global Attitudes Survey, the vast majority of Greeks view immigrants as a burden to their country, with 74% of respondents saying this as opposed to just 10% who see immigrants as making the country stronger. Further immigration-related questions show that views in Greece are some of the most hostile towards immigration in Europe.<sup>38</sup>

Greece experienced some of the most severe extreme right violence per capita in Europe between 2016 and 2019. The RTV records that whilst there were few murders during this period there were 3.1 severe violent incidents per million inhabitants per annum compared to 1.3 violent incidents per million inhab-

37 This graph is limited to countries with 5 fatal incidents or more. The RTV’s 2021 Trend Report followed a similar method, “due to the susceptibility in small countries to reflect high political violence with low number of attacks.” See: C-REX, “Codebook for the Right-Wing Terrorism and Violence (RTV) Dataset 1990- 2020 (Revised 02.07.2021),” 8 (fn. 8).

38 Ana Gonzalez-Barrera and Phillip Connor, *Around the World, More Say Immigrants Are a Strength Than a Burden* (Pew Research Centre, 2019), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/03/14/around-the-world-more-say-immigrants-are-a-strength-than-a-burden/>



itants in Germany, the other RWE “hotspot”.<sup>39</sup> That Greece has the highest levels of RWE incidents, and some of the highest levels of anti-immigrant sentiment, might suggest a correlation between the two. However, the examples of the Nordic countries show the complete opposite. Sweden, which has the second highest levels of RWE incidents, also has some of the highest levels of pro-immigration sentiment in Europe. The same Global Attitudes Survey found that only 32% of Swedes view immigrants as a burden to their country, as opposed to 62% who see immigrants as making the country stronger. This is the second highest level amongst the European countries included in the survey, after the UK. The European Social Survey has also consistently found that the Nordic countries have some of the highest levels of support for immigration in Europe.<sup>40</sup> What both Greece and Sweden have in common, however, is high levels of refugees/immigration which offers one possible explanation as to why RWE activists in those countries turn to violence.

That broadly pro-immigration Nordic countries have significantly higher levels of RWE incidents targeted at immigrants than countries such as Italy, which have strong public hostility towards immigration,<sup>41</sup> can seem to be a puzzle. This points to the importance of understanding the local political context to RWE activity and the vehicles of mobilization that it may provide. It is important to stress that relative to the size of a country’s population, the number of individuals who go on to carry out RWE violence are extremely small. The number of people who share RWE ideological views within a country may matter less than the pathways with which these individuals can take towards carrying out acts of political violence.

We can use the geographical patterns to look more specifically at the perpetrators of RWE incidents. By breaking down the perpetrator type by country, we can see whether RWE perpetrator types are consistent across Europe, or whether certain countries have higher levels of lone or group actors than others.

The RTV dataset recorded 113 incidents with known perpetrators that resulted in fatalities between 2000 and 2020. These of course included mass-casualty incidents such as the Breivik attacks in Norway on 22 July 2011, but most fatal attacks resulted in far fewer victims. Indeed, between 1990 and 2020 the RTV dataset records 191 attacks with one fatality, 11 attacks had two fatalities, five attacks had three fatalities, one attack had four fatalities and ‘only’ five attacks resulted in five or more fatalities.<sup>42</sup>

Figure 5 (next page) shows the overall distribution of fatal incidents by perpetrator in the fourteen countries where they occurred.

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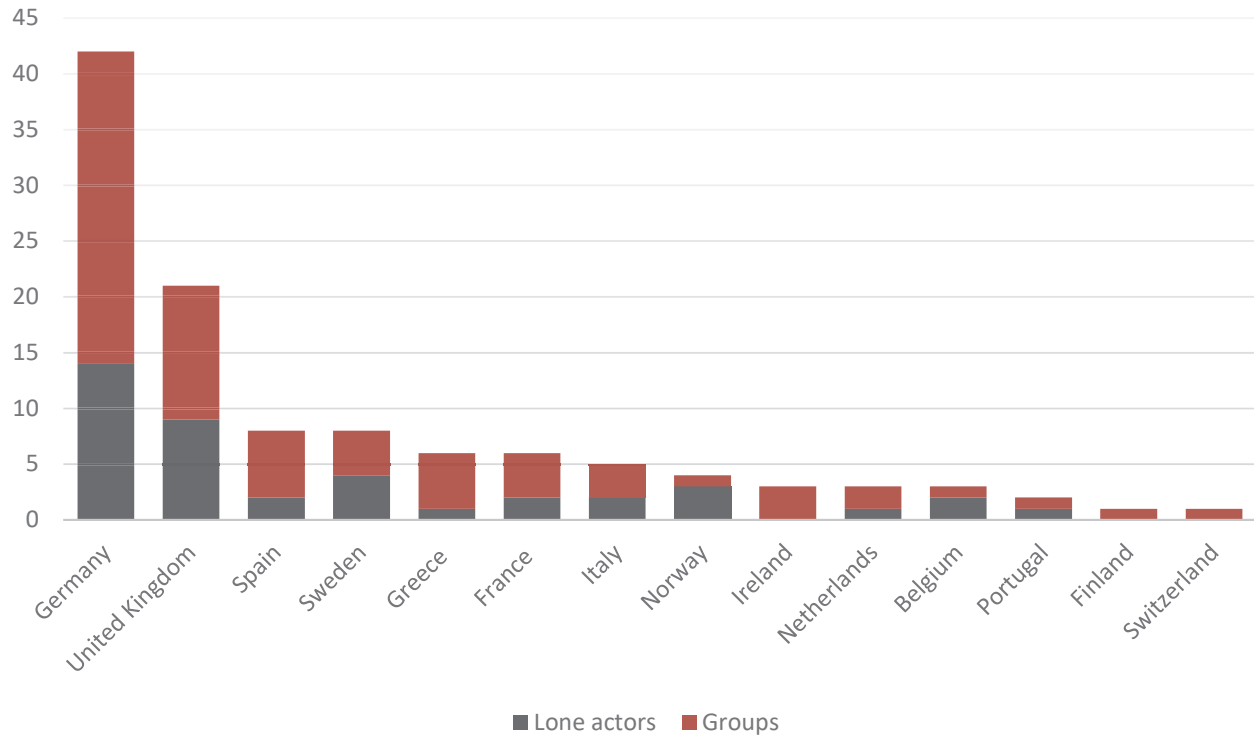
39 Anders Ravik Jupskås and Maik Fielitz, “Greece: More far-right violence than any other country in Western Europe,” *C-REX*, September 7, 2020, <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2020/greece-more-far-right-violence-than-any-other-coun.html>. See also: Anders Ravik Jupskås and Maik Fielitz, “Far-Right Violence in Greece in Comparative Perspective,” *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 40, no. 1 (May 2002): 95-115.

40 Anthony Heath and Lindsay Richards, *Attitudes Towards Immigration and Their Antecedents: Topline Results from Round 7 of the European Social Survey*, (European Social Survey, 2016), [https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS7\\_toplines\\_issue\\_7\\_immigration.pdf](https://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/docs/findings/ESS7_toplines_issue_7_immigration.pdf).

41 This is demonstrated both in the Pew Research Centre and European Social Survey reports cited above. See footnotes 38 and 40.

42 Tore Bjørgo and Anders Ravik Jupskås, “The Long-Term Impacts of Attacks: The Case of the July 22, 2011 Attacks in Norway,” *Perspectives on Terrorism* 15, no. 3 (2021), p. 9 (figure 3).

**Figure 5: Incidents resulting in fatalities by country and perpetrator type (aggregate 2000-2020)**

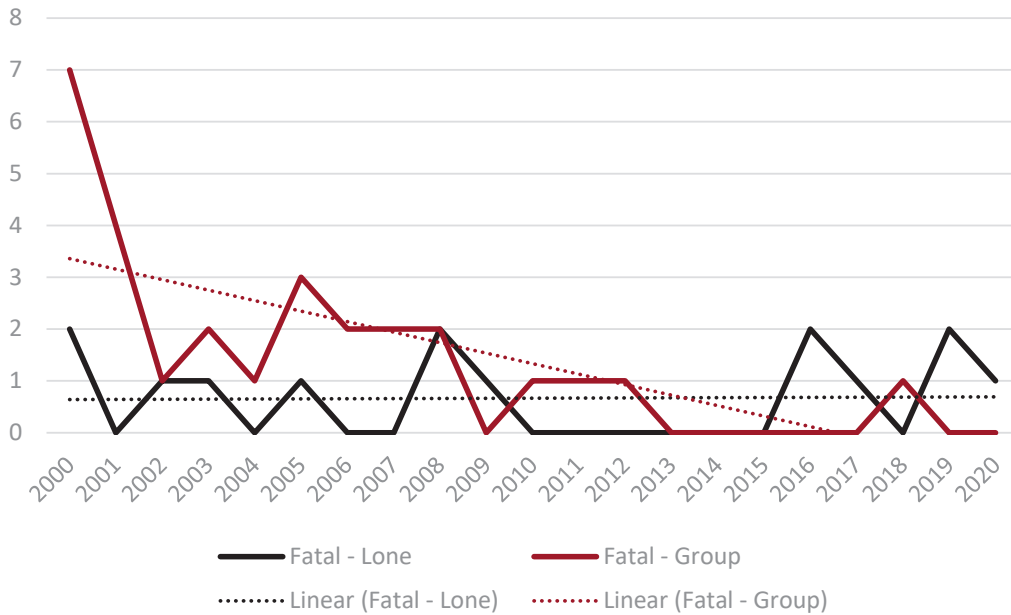


As discussed above, given the small number of incidents in question we need to be cautious with the statistical analysis. Still, the above figures indicate that levels of lone actor and group-perpetrated violence differ from country to country. There are countries where lone actor attacks are at a similar level to or even higher than group attacks (UK, Sweden, Norway), as well as countries where there are noticeably more group-based attacks (Spain, Greece, Netherlands).

These geographical trends can be broken down further to look at how perpetrator patterns have changed over time in certain countries. This is an important perspective given the variance described above. In order to illustrate these differences, we can look at four countries that are of particular interest: Germany, the UK, Sweden, and Greece.

Figure 6 (next page) shows that the number of RWE incidents in Germany broadly correspond to what we see in Europe as a whole: a gradual decline in the number of fatal attacks carried out by groups, whilst the number of attacks carried out by lone actors remain stable. The high numbers of attacks carried out in the early to mid-2000s reflect the actions of a single group: the Nationalsozialistischer Untergrund (NSU), referred to above, who carried out a large number of attacks.

**Figure 6: Germany**



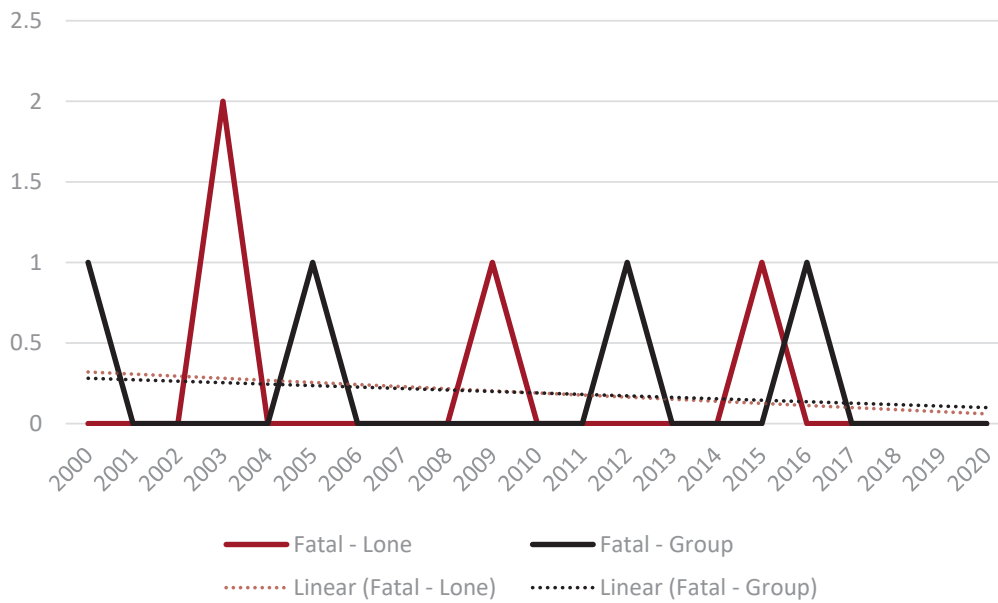
The data from the UK (Figure 7) broadly follows that of Germany, with attacks perpetrated by groups declining sharply as lone actor attacks increase slightly.

**Figure 7: United Kingdom**



The data on Sweden (Figure 8) shows a stable timeline, with both lone actor and group attacks declining at a very similar rate.

**Figure 8: Sweden**



For Greece (Figure 9), the RTV records no fatal incidents at all until 2012, when there is a spike of four fatal attacks in two years. This spike coincided with a period of great social and political turmoil in the country when, over two consecutive summer elections, Golden Dawn reached its zenith in the Hellenic parliament.<sup>43</sup> Cases returned to a low but sustained level, in 2014. Of the six attacks recorded, only one was perpetrated by a lone actor.

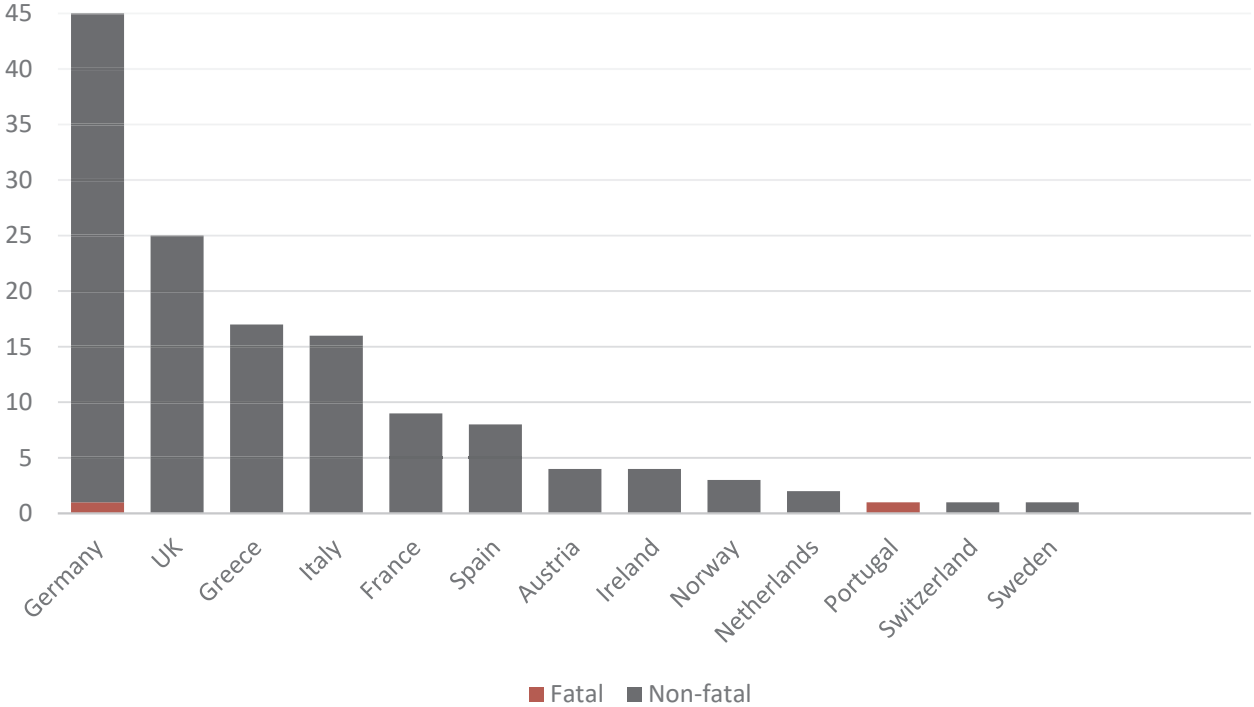
**Figure 9: Greece**



43 Hellenic Parliament, "Election Results," <https://www.hellenicparliament.gr/en/Vouli-ton-Ellinon/To-Politevma/Ekloges/Eklogika-apotelesmata-New/#Per-14> (as of August 2021).

What about non-fatal, as well as fatal events? The database does not permit us to examine these trends over time, and even across countries there will be variance in terms of how incidents are reported. However, these figures give us an indication about how RWE violence, including non-fatal violence, compares across the continent when we concentrate on a single year. Figure 10 (below) shows the number of recorded non-violent and violent incidents in Europe in 2020.

**Figure 10: Violent and non-violent incidents in 2020**



These figures do show how, predictably, much of the violence associated with RWE does not result in any fatalities. Here, again, Germany, the UK, Greece and Italy emerge as particular hotspots. Weighted by population, Greece has by far the highest incident rate RWE violence overall.

How do these geographical patterns compare with incident rates of political violence more broadly? To address this broader comparative question we scrutinized data held in the Global Terrorism Database (GTD) maintained by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism.<sup>44</sup> This database logs 3,597 terrorist incidents (successful, failed/foiled, fatal and non-fatal) in Western Europe between 2000 and 2019. In terms of overall incidents, a large majority occurred in the United Kingdom, followed by Greece, France, Spain and Germany. Weighted by population, Greece, again, tow-

<sup>44</sup> We use RTV for this study as it records incidents specifically of right-wing extremist violence. GTD incorporates a broader categorization of incidents where underlying ideological motive, in our case right-wing extremist sentiments, is not usually recorded.

ers over the rest with the largest number of terrorist incidents, irrespective of ideology. The next countries in line are Ireland, United Kingdom and Cyprus.<sup>45</sup>

Here, obviously, we are not comparing the same datasets or methodologies, but the comparison gives us some indication of how to interpret figures in relation to RWE violence in Europe. High incident rates in Greece, for example, appear to reflect a generally high volume of political violence, while the high numbers of RWE violence in Germany and Scandinavia are not reflected as prominently in the GTD data for terrorist incidents in Western Europe overall. This might suggest that political violence in these countries is disproportionately of a right-wing extremist flavor, but much less so in countries like the United Kingdom. This picture is reinforced when we look at data from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), which collects information relating to political violence and protest events, irrespective of ideology. For the year 2020, its reported hotspots for Western Europe were Greece and Cyprus (in terms of incidents per capita), with low numbers for Germany and Scandinavia (except Denmark).<sup>46</sup> Again, this would suggest that high rates of RWE violence in Greece could simply reflect higher rates of political violence and unrest more broadly.

## VICTIM PATTERNS

An examination of violent RWE incidents in Europe, therefore, reveals distinct differences in terms of geographical and temporal patterns and in terms of the perpetrators behind this violence. Perhaps the most important question, however, concerns the way in which this violence is targeted. Who are the victims of RWE violence and what trends emerge in this regard?

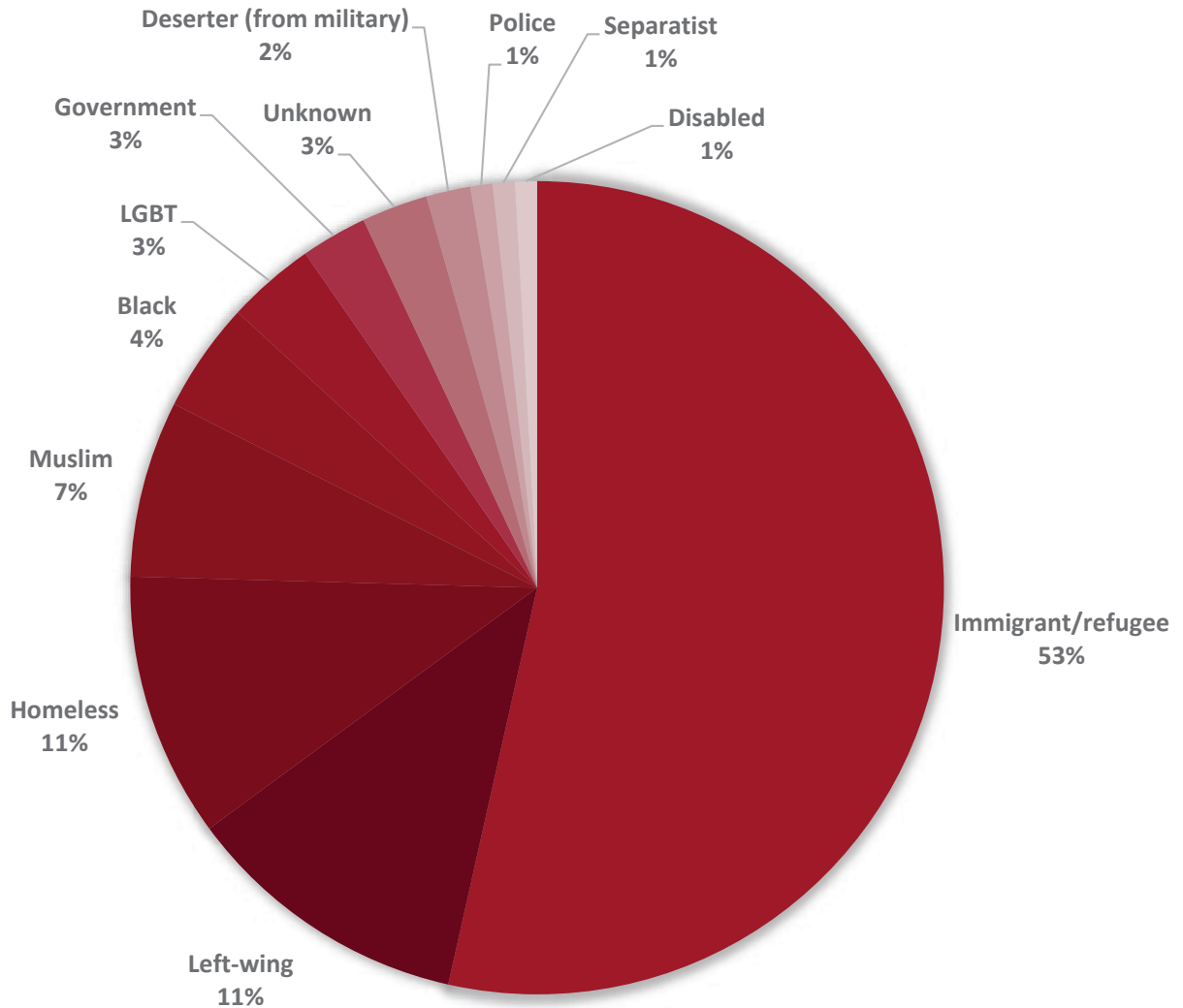
The number of attacks directed against each target group, as recorded in the RTV, are detailed in Figure 11 on the following page.

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45 Based on analysis of the downloadable version of the GTD database listing all logged terrorist incidents (attempted and successful) in Western Europe between 2000 and 2019. See: <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/> (as of August 2021).

46 Events coded as “battles”, “violence against civilians”, “explosions/remote violence”, “riots”. See: <https://acleddata.com> (as of August 2021).

**Figure 11: Incidents involving fatalities by victim type 2000-2020**



The data shows that immigrants/refugees/asylum seekers/foreigners are the primary targets of RWE attacks, as they constitute the majority of targets for lethal attacks. Attacks against left-wing targets are also common.<sup>47</sup> The number of attacks directed towards Muslims (8%) are low, however this in part reflects the thresholds used in the RTV coding.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps the most surprising statistic is that according to the database, 11% of RWE incidents involving fatalities were directed at the homeless (though there may also be intersecting factors too that have weighed on the perpetrators decision to target them based on perceptions of race or religion).<sup>49</sup> These

<sup>47</sup> As noted above, this categorization includes both the victim types categorised in the RTV as “left-wing” as well as “pro-immigration activists”.

<sup>48</sup> The threshold for coding an attack as being against a “Muslim” is higher since the motive needs to be explicitly anti-Muslim compared to attacks on immigrants and refugees (who may well also be Muslim) where the nature of the target selected suffices.

<sup>49</sup> The precise nature of these dynamics were not detectable in the statistics.

instances are concentrated towards the start of the dataset – seven out of twelve incidents occurred between 2000-2001 – but they serve as a reminder that RWE attacks target an extremely large range of groups, and this includes some of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Unsurprisingly, considerable variance emerged between countries as far as victims or targets are concerned. Separatist violence, for instance, was largely limited to Spain, targeting, in the main, left-wing opponents.<sup>50</sup> Jewish targets featured disproportionately in Germany, Muslim targets in the United Kingdom where RWE anti-Semitic violence was rarer (though of course committed by those pursuing other ideological motivations too). Violence against left-wing targets was particularly common in Italy, and more frequent in that country than violence against immigrants or refugees.

There are a number of issues with this type of categorization, however. To state the obvious, none of the target identities discussed are mutually exclusive. For example, a clear plurality of attacks were directed against immigrants and refugees, but many of these immigrants and refugees were also Muslim, and non-white. They may have been targeted not just for their status as immigrants and refugees, but also for their religion, and the color of their skin. The complexity of identities is something that is extremely difficult for incident databases to capture, which in the case of RWE is exacerbated by its heterogeneity.

To take one example: the British MP Jo Cox, who was murdered in 2016. Cox is categorized in the RTV database as a “Government” target as she was an elected official, but she was also a left wing, female, pro-refugee politician. That she was targeted by a RWE terrorist may have reflected her intersection of multiple identities, rather than any single one. The case bears some comparison to that of Henrietta Reker who was campaigning to become Mayor of Cologne the year before Jo Cox’s murder when an RWE perpetrator stabbed her in the throat. The perpetrator also objected to Reker’s pro-refugee stance during the height of the refugee “crisis”. Reker survived the attack and was later elected as Mayor of Cologne.<sup>51</sup>

The data examined demonstrates that certain groups have been the victim of significant amounts of RWE violence. Immigrants and refugees have borne the brunt of RWE attacks in Europe for the past two decades, but not all immigrants and refugees face the same threat.

Research into social attitudes within Europe points to how populations have certain preferred characteristics in immigrants. For example, the European Social Survey found that there is greater hostility towards immigrants of a “Different race or ethnic group” than the “Same race or ethnic group”.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, Muslims and Roma immigrants face greater hostility.<sup>53</sup> This points to the likelihood that some immigrant populations – non-white, Muslim, poorer – may face a greater threat from RWE than others.

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50 Anders Ravik Jupskås and Carles Viñas, “Far Right Violence in Spain is More Organised and Against Political Opponents than in the Rest of Europe,” *C-REX*, June 25, 2020, <https://www.sv.uio.no/c-rex/english/news-and-events/right-now/2020/far-right-violence-in-spain.html>.

51 “Cologne Elects Stabbed Candidate Henriette Reker Mayor,” *BBC News*, October 18, 2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34568236>.

52 Heath and Richards, *Attitudes Towards Immigration and Their Antecedents*, 6.

53 *Ibid.*



Furthermore, the number of attacks that have been directed at each group does not necessarily reflect the threat that RWE poses. One notable finding in this report is that the RTV records no fatal attacks against Jewish targets in Europe between 2000-2020.<sup>54</sup> Given the preponderance of antisemitism in RWE ideology, as well as the history of violent antisemitism in the continent, this is surprising. One likely reason for this is that significant steps have been taken to protect the Jewish community from violent attack. For example, in the UK Jewish communal areas receive significant protection both in terms of infrastructure and also volunteers from the Community Security Trust (CST).<sup>55</sup> The work undertaken to protect the Jewish community, from a variety of threats, is almost certainly a contributing factor to the low number of fatal anti-Semitic attacks recorded. The Halle Synagogue Shooting (2019) might be seen as an example of this, as recently installed security features prevented the gunman from entering the place of worship.<sup>56</sup> The relatively low number of attacks against Jewish targets should therefore not be interpreted to mean that RWE pose little threat to the Jewish community, certainly this is to the contrary as the terrorist attacks in Halle (2019) and elsewhere indicate.

Another statistic that can seem surprising is the relatively low number of attacks aimed at the Roma population. According to multiple social attitude surveys, Roma face greater hostility than any other minority group in Europe. For example, Pew Research Centre's 2016 Global Attitudes Survey found that a medium of 48% of respondents in the countries surveyed had a negative attitude towards Roma, compared to 43% for Muslims, and 16% for Jews.<sup>57</sup> Again, this may suggest that there is a disparity between public hostility towards a group and the number of RWE incidents targeting the group, at least in terms of successful violent attacks.

## CONCLUSION

In recent years we have seen a rise in prominence of different manifestations of right-wing extremism. However, the frequency of the most serious, fatal, successful attacks have remained more stable, experiencing a steady decline. Rise in RWE violence, in turn, appears, at least to some degree, to be reactive and dependent on political realities on the ground that explain substantial shifts in terms of the rise and ebb of incident rates. Our examination of incident data, moreover, suggests that a rise in prominence and visibility of RWE activities in Europe may be largely driven by non-lethal incidents, foiled attacks and, especially, a rise in *support and sympathy* for RWE.

While the frequency of lethal attacks has remained stable, however, there have been important shifts in terms of the perpetrators of this violence. Lone actors are increasingly the perpetrators of these attacks

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54 Ibid. The report records three such incidents since its founding in 1990.

55 Harry Farley, "Anti-Semitic Hate Incidents at New High in 2021, Charity," *BBC*, February 10, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-60322106>.

56 "Halle Synagogue was Fortified Before Antisemitic Attack," *The Guardian*, October 11, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/11/halle-synagogue-fortified-ahead-antisemitic-attack-germany>.

57 Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes, and Katie Simmons, *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs* (Pew Research Center, 2016), <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2016/07/11/europeans-fear-wave-of-refugees-will-mean-more-terrorism-fewer-jobs/>.

across Western and Central Europe. Their radicalization and mobilization pathways are likely to differ substantially, as the case studies illustrated, with some being highly ideologically engaged and methodical while others are very superficially involved in RWE ideas and movements. Some of these actors have plotted their acts of violence for years whilst others have decided to act within a relatively short time span. Focusing energy and resources on the most prominent RWE networks and groups, may, as a result, not be the most effective strategy as far as countering RWE terrorism is concerned and may not reflect the changing nature of the threat, at least in terms of lethal acts of violence. It is at least arguable that the prior focus on these same networks and groups has been successful – hence the low number of attacks – and that the prominence of lone actors reflects the displacement of violence from one part of the movement to the other, though this point is necessarily speculative.

However, RWE engagement breeds different actors whose involvement in extremism varies, both in terms of substance and depth, and whose engagement results in different political outcomes, ranging from mass outreach efforts to isolated acts of lethal violence.

Considerable differences in terms of RWE violence exist within Western/Central Europe too and much appears to depend on the local political context and vehicles to mobilization. There is not necessarily a correlation between expressed public hostility towards a group and a successful violent attack against it. Germany, Italy and the UK emerge as hotspots in terms of incident rates overall, but per capita figures are highest for Greece and Scandinavia. Our study suggests that perpetrator types can also differ substantially from country to country. Lone actors, for instance are prominent in the UK and Scandinavia, while groups remain responsible for large shares of RWE violence in Greece and Italy. When compared with incident rates of political violence and turmoil more generally, moreover, high rates of RWE violence in places like Greece appear to reflect the generally high volumes of political violence in that country while political violence in Germany and Scandinavia appears to be disproportionately of a right-wing extremist flavor.

As far as the victims of RWE violence are concerned, a large plurality of attacks were directed against immigrants and refugees and other foreigners, as well as targets perceived to be “left-wing,” though it should be stressed that it is often hard to separate victim categories as many can fit under multiple labels. There was also considerable variation between countries as far as victims and targets of RWE violence is concerned which underscores the heterogeneous nature of the phenomenon.

While recent research has suggested that RWE has risen over the past few years worldwide, the rise of RWE doesn't necessarily mean that there is a corresponding increase in the most serious violent attacks inflicting fatalities. This can be for a number of reasons—opportunity, law enforcement efficacy, location, individual willingness and motivations to use violence, etc. While it is not possible to definitively discern the cause, it is important to take note of the patterns. Policy and practitioner audiences should focus more on the types of perpetrators (lone actor, given the trends identified in this report) and the nature of social dynamics (high incidents of political violence as in Greece or high levels of animosity toward migrant and immigrant populations) the heterogeneous nature of RWE and RWE violent perpetrators necessitates more attention to the complex pathways that may lead an individual (or group of individu-

als) to mobilize to violence (and upon whom). This report, and its companion report provide information useful in assessing both trends and possible evolution in RWE actors' varied attention to carrying out acts of violence. While data limitations left us unable to assess temporal trends regarding non-lethal or thwarted RWE violence, future research should build upon these findings, comparing the trends identified here to trends in non-lethal and thwarted RWE attacks. Doing so may help further illustrate the nature and extent of RWE violence and threats in Europe.

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