



Countering Extremism: time to reboot?

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About Crest Advisory

We are crime and justice specialists - equal parts research, strategy and communication. From police forces to public inquiries, from tech companies to devolved authorities, we believe all these organisations (and more) have their own part to play in building a safer, more secure society. As the UK's only consultancy with this focus, we are as much of a blend as the crime and justice sector itself.

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Foreword by Sara Khan, Lead Commissioner, Commission for Countering Extremism

In the last decade, despite the existence of both a Prevent and Counter-Extremism strategy, the unfortunate reality is that extremism has worsened in Britain. There are many reasons for this. The lack of regulation of online platforms has allowed the proliferation of extremist content at an unprecedented rate to an unprecedented number of people. The sophisticated tactics employed by extremists both online and offline to propagate their narratives, and their ability to adopt new methods and approaches at a rapid pace to radicalise and recruit people has put extremists in the driving seat.



However another key reason has been the lack of an effective and coherent counter-extremism approach which would act as a necessary bulwark. Counter-extremism has to date, been one of the most challenging and complex areas of policy for successive governments. As my Commission identified last year, the overly broad and confusing policy taken in the Government's 2015 Counter Extremism strategy has hampered efforts to reduce extremism in our country. We continue to call for a new definition of 'hateful extremism' to replace the Government's 2015 definition which we argue is ambiguous, incoherent and unsuitable to use operationally. It is hardly surprising therefore, as Crest's report shows, that there is confusion amongst the police how officers are expected to respond to extremism when there lacks clear operational objectives and outcomes.

Over the decades Britain has built a robust counter-terrorism machinery which has evolved with the changing terrorist threat. In contrast our national counter extremism machinery is weak, poorly coordinated and behind the curve. That is why the Commission has called on the Government to refocus efforts on countering hateful extremism. This has become even more pressing as we have seen extremists exploit the Covid-19 pandemic to spread disinformation and dangerous conspiracy theories in an attempt to incite hatred and violence, damage social cohesion and undermine our democracy. At the same time, polling clearly indicates that the public are increasingly worried about extremism and believe more needs to be done to counter it. Victims targeted repeatedly by extremists feel let down, and there is evident frustration among the police and other authorities who clearly want to do more but are unsure when and how they should.

That is why I welcome Crest's timely report calling on the Government to reboot its Counter-Extremism Strategy and making further recommendations for policing in particular. They pinpoint some of the crucial obstacles, from the lack of a shared understanding of the problem and objectives, to the necessary tools required in ensuring a robust and effective counter extremism approach. The growing threat of hateful extremism demands a response. It is imperative we rise to this challenge with urgent vigour and focus.

Sara Khan - December 2020

Executive summary

Extremism is a significant and growing threat to this country. When left unchecked, extremism can incite violence, threaten the democratic institutions and norms that underpin liberal democracy, and undermine the social fabric that binds us together. However, whilst there is political consensus around the urgency of tackling extremism, there remains a lack of clarity around how the government ought to respond.

Extremism occupies an ambiguous and contested space. Unlike hate crime, violence and terrorism - offences which can be defined and legally prohibited - extremism need not involve direct criminality (though it often overlaps). Ultimately it is this subjectivity that has made the task of constructing a policy framework so elusive. Five years on from the publication of its 'Counter Extremism Strategy', the government is yet to set out an agreed definition of extremism and/ or the role it expects individual agencies to play in tackling it.

Nowhere is this ambiguity more starkly illustrated than with respect to the police - the primary subject of this report. Our fieldwork has revealed a worrying level of confusion about how officers ought to respond to extremism within their communities, beset by conflicting objectives and a lack of clarity as to what success looks like.

Clearly, responding to extremism cannot be the job of any one single agency or institution. Schools, local authorities, charities, the NHS, prisons - all have a role to play in combating extremism. Nonetheless, it is clear that the police - whether they are disrupting extremists, responding to hate crimes, managing extremist protests, or dealing with community tensions - are likely to represent the front line of the government's response to extremism. The lack of a common framework for policing extremism is thus of significant public concern. It is that vacuum which this report seeks to address.

Key findings

Extremism is a significant and growing threat. While the data is imperfect, multiple indicators suggest that extremism is on the rise in the UK, with rises in recorded hate crime, online toxicity and cases referred to the counter-radicalisation 'Channel' programme.

Extremism is not limited to society's fringes: up to 24 per cent of the public have personally witnessed or experienced extremism. While attitudinal data suggests the British public has become more tolerant overall, there is evidence of a growth in extremist beliefs at the margins, in particular, with a worrying rise in anti-Muslim prejudice. New polling by Crest suggests that nearly a quarter of the public have experienced or witnessed extremism (7 per cent and 17 per cent respectively) - and almost 6 in 10 believe that extremist behaviour has increased over the last four years.

The nature of extremism has morphed over the last five years - it is more fluid and increasingly facilitated by social media, linked to a general coarsening of political discourse. Our report documents the rise in online abuse, including abuse aimed at MPs - a development that is likely to damage democratic institutions.

Despite widespread consensus around the urgency of tackling extremism, the government has found it difficult to drive and sustain progress. This is partly because the term extremism itself is contested but also reflects a lack of joined up thinking within government, with confusion over where counter-extremism 'sits' (on a spectrum between integration and counter-terrorism) and thus which departments (and agencies) are responsible for which aspects.

This has left the police confused about their role in responding to extremism. Our fieldwork has revealed officers are not clear about what constitutes extremism and what 'good looks like' in this area.

In many parts of the country, the police lack the required tools to sufficiently respond to extremism. Our fieldwork has revealed that many officers perceive there to be a lack of training and guidance in identifying and responding to extremism; officers are concerned about the hollowing out of neighbourhood policing and there is no national framework for the policing of extremist protests.

Principles for reform and recommendations

The UK's ability to counter extremism has been hampered by a lack of consensus: on what extremism means, on what the government's response should look like and on what role the police, other agencies, and civil society, ought to play. The government urgently therefore needs to establish a new vision and strategy for countering extremism (with the previous strategy having fallen out of date). This report argues that this ought to be based on the following four principles:

- **Shared understanding of the problem:** a precondition for success is the ability to agree a common definition of the problem and build consensus around key priorities for action.
- **Clear objectives:** the government needs to set out what it wants to achieve in relation to counter-extremism, including where counter-extremism 'sits' (between integration and counter-terrorism) and the role it expects key agencies, such as the police, to play.
- **Accountability:** it is vital that the different parts of government - and their respective delivery agencies - are clear about their own role in tackling extremism.
- **The right tools:** frontline agencies (including the police) need to be equipped with the right level of resources, skills and technology to identify and respond to extremism.

In order to build a shared understanding of the problem, government should:

- **Agree a common definition:** the government - and the police - should immediately adopt the Commission for Countering Extremism's definition of 'hateful extremism' and task the

Commission with producing an annual 'state of extremism' report, which is presented to Parliament.

- **Strengthen the evidence base:** the government should establish a research fund - into which universities and civil society organisations would be able to bid - to strengthen the evidence around what does and doesn't work in countering extremism. The Home Office should also consult on commissioning an annual survey to understand the prevalence of support for extremist ideologies across the UK and track sentiment over time.

In order to set clear objectives, the government should:

- **Publish an update to the 2015 Counter Extremism strategy, making clear where CE 'sits':** the updated strategy should make clear that the primary objective of CE is to prevent the risk of radicalisation. Accordingly, counter-extremism should sit within the counter-terrorism sphere, as part of a (broadened) Prevent strategy.
- **Task the College of Policing with producing and disseminating guidance on the police's role in preventing and responding to extremism:** ensuring there is greater clarity as to the police's contribution to countering extremism and greater coordination across the 43 forces.

In order to strengthen accountability, the government should:

- **Strengthen national leadership structures:** the government should designate a cabinet minister with inter-departmental responsibility for counter-extremism to coordinate and drive progress across government. In parallel, the National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) should identify a national lead to coordinate work across the 43 forces.

In order to equip frontline agencies with the right tools, the government should:

- **Invest in specialist capabilities within policing:** the government should invest in a training programme for front-line police officers in identifying and responding to extremism within their communities, backed by new national guidance from the College of Policing.
- **Establish a national framework for the policing of extremist protests:** the NPCC should work with the College of Policing to produce guidance for forces in dealing with extremist protests and managing local community tensions.
- **Task the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) with annually reviewing the powers required to disrupt extremists,** including online.

These policies are designed to provide the basis of a comprehensive strategy that can secure public consent and, in so doing, reduce the scope for extremists to drive a wedge between communities and sow division.

PART ONE: UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGE

1. Defining extremism

The rise of extremism represents a challenge to our social fabric and to the institutions which underpin liberal democracy. Yet while there is consensus around the urgency of tackling extremism, our ability to counter it has been hampered by a lack of consensus: on what it means, on what the government's response should look like and on what role different agencies, such as the police, should play.

At times extremism has been perceived to be synonymous with 'terrorism', for example, in the way that the London Bridge attacker in 2019 was described as an 'Islamist extremist'. At other times, it has been used as a means of describing behaviours that skirt the boundaries between illegality and immorality (for example, defining members of a perceived 'other' group as morally inferior and/ or dangerous). In recent years, extremism has increasingly been associated with a general coursening of public and political discourse, particularly within the online space.

This greyness is part of the reason why counter-extremism has had a troubled history both in policy and practice. Cast the net too widely and governments run the risk of curtailing the right to protest and of free speech. Street-based protests, from the anti-Apartheid movement to Extinction Rebellion, can fall foul of the law, but are part of a long and legitimate tradition in this country of civil disobedience campaigns. At the same time, if the net is cast too narrowly, much of what most fair-minded people would think of as extremism is left out. Far Right and Islamist groups have often engaged in behaviour that is compliant with existing laws, but whose primary aim is to normalise and mainstream their hateful propaganda, for example, by weaponising legitimate causes to magnify resentment and division.

"The more we try to define extremism, the more we get into a mess."
- Senior Home Office official

Within the UK there remains no legal definition of extremism. This is not for want of trying. On multiple occasions since the rise of the global Islamist extremist threat in the 1990s, successive governments have attempted to provide tougher legal measures against acts of extremism that do not meet the threshold of Terrorism or other Acts - but ended up running into the same definitional and human rights challenges. For example, an Extremism Bill under the 2015 Conservative majority government was repeatedly delayed and eventually dropped due to a failure to come up with a legally workable definition.

Given that the problem of locating a definition has proved beyond the ability of academics and senior lawyers to solve, it is perhaps unsurprising that the police have also struggled to interpret their own role in responding to extremism.

Policing extremism or stifling dissent: a history of mis-steps

In January 2020, The Guardian reported on a document produced by Counter Terrorism Policing South East to guide partners on how to respond to different extremist threats.¹ The document featured discussion of the environmental group Extinction Rebellion, who use non-violent civil disobedience measures as part of their modus operandi. Though the document made clear the lesser threat posed by the group, it nonetheless placed them alongside known extremist groups such as National Action and Al-Muhajiroun.

This provoked criticism from a range of figures, with Labour leadership candidate Sir Keir Starmer calling the group's inclusion "completely wrong" and the former Head of Prevent, Sir Peter Fahy, labelling the decision "clearly disappointing". The guide stated that:

"Anti-establishment philosophy that seeks system change underlies its activism; the group attracts to its events school-age children and adults unlikely to be aware of this. While non-violent against persons, the campaign encourages other law-breaking activities... 'while concern about climate change is not in itself extreme, activists may encourage vulnerable people to perform acts of violence.'"

Far from being an isolated example, the Extinction Rebellion controversy is merely the latest in a long line of cases involving the police appearing to mis-categorise legitimate dissent as 'extremism'. Revelations emerging from the ongoing Undercover Policing Inquiry² have documented a history of the police systematically targeting various anti-establishment groups, from Vietnam War protestors to animal rights activists, which with the benefit of hindsight appear disproportionate. Confusion around how to define extremism is far from a modern phenomenon.

For the purposes of this report, Crest has adopted the definition provided by the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE), which defines "hateful extremism" as a tripartite framework of behaviours, beliefs and harms, in accordance with the following characterisation:

- **"Behaviours** that can incite and amplify hate, or engage in persistent hatred, or equivocate about and make the moral case for violence;
- And that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist **beliefs** directed at an out-group who are perceived as a threat to the wellbeing, survival or success of an in-group;
- And that cause, or are likely to cause, **harm** to individuals, communities, and to wider society."

By uniting behaviours, beliefs and harms, this definition provides a useful framework with which to approach the issue from a policing perspective, as we will set out below.

¹ The Guardian (10 January 2020). [Terrorism police list Extinction Rebellion as extremist ideology](#) (Accessed on 18/03/2020)

² "Undercover officer targeted anti-establishment left", BBC, 12 Nov 2020, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-54924071>

Existing definitions

Attempts to define extremism often fall into two categories: those which are descriptive, and those which are iterative (listing common features of extremists / extremist behaviour).

Descriptive explanations

HM Government (Counter-Extremism Strategy 2015): *“Extremism is the vocal or active opposition to our fundamental values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs. We also regard calls for the death of members of our armed forces as extremist.”*³

Metropolitan Police: Domestic extremism is *“the activity of groups or individuals who commit or plan serious criminal activity motivated by a political or ideological viewpoint.”*⁴

Preventing hateful extremism and promoting social cohesion commission (Greater Manchester): Hateful extremism is *“both ideas and behaviours that are hateful towards specific ‘others’ and designed to undermine social cohesion.”*⁵

J. M. Berger (academic): *“Extremism refers to the belief that an in-group’s success or survival can never be separated from the need for hostile action against an out-group.”*⁶

“Common-feature” explanations

Sir Mark Rowley (former Head of Counter Terrorism Policing): Extremists adopt a common set of techniques

1. reach into communities through sophisticated propaganda
2. create intolerance and isolation by exploiting grievances
3. reinforce this sense of isolation by generating distrust of state institutions
4. offer warped parallel alternatives that undermine our values of tolerance and diversity”⁷

Tony Blair Institute for Global Change: Islamism and the far-right share a similar worldview, based around a set of key themes

1. Islam vs. the West
2. Victimisation
3. Anti-establishment
4. Justification of violence”⁸

³ HM Government (2015). *Counter Extremism Strategy*, p. 9

⁴ https://www.whatdotheyknow.com/request/national_domestic_extremism_and#incoming-504973

⁵ Greater Manchester Preventing Hateful Extremism and Promoting Social Cohesion Commission (30 July 2018). [A Shared Future](#), p. 21

⁶ Berger, J. M. (2018). *Extremism*, London: MIT Press, p.44

⁷ Rowley, M. (February 2018). *Extremism and Terrorism: The need for a whole society response*

⁸ Tony Blair Institute for Global Change (2019). *Narratives of Hate: The Spectrum of Far-right Worldviews in the UK*, p. 9

The harms caused by extremism

Extremists often operate in the grey space between legality and illegality, making it difficult to pin down. Nonetheless, it is possible to identify a set of harms caused by extremists.

Justifying violence

Extremists often justify violence, even if they do not directly incite such violence or act violently themselves. UK-based Islamist extremist groups, such as al-Mahajiroun, have a history of equivocating or making the moral case for violence against other groups. While not directly encouraging participation in violence (which would be illegal), they carefully portray violence as inevitable in achieving the desired end state required by their ideology, or express solidarity with those actively engaged in violence. For example, Lewisham Imam Shakeel Begg was found by a high court in 2016 to have made public statements that promoted and encouraged violent jihad by praising “the virtues and ‘good deeds’ of these jihadis who have travelled to conflict zones and engaged in armed struggle in the name of Islam”.⁹ Indeed the legal judgement explicitly labelled Begg as an ‘extremist Islamist speaker who espouses extremist Islamic positions’.

Amplifying hatred and division

Hate crimes and acts of terror can be motivated by extremist ideologies, which have often been propagated by individuals making a careful effort to stay just within existing legal parameters. For example, Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) has repeatedly used videos to promote a narrative espousing Islamisation as a mortal threat to British culture and/ or claiming to show Muslims violating the UK’s lockdown. Indeed the 2017 Finsbury Park attack is among the plots inspired by extremist material that fell short of existing terror laws. Similarly, the radical preacher Anjem Choudary was for several years able to exploit gaps in Britain’s laws in order to foment hatred. Strikingly, nobody has been prosecuted for membership of Choudary’s al-Mahajiroun Islamist network, 14 years after it was banned.

Infiltrating institutions

Extremists have sought to exploit weaknesses in governance arrangements to re-mould institutions. In April 2014, Peter Clarke, a former senior police officer, was appointed by the government to investigate allegations that extremists had gained control of several schools in Birmingham – the so-called ‘Trojan Horse’ case. His detailed report found evidence of “co-ordinated, deliberate and sustained action... to introduce an intolerant and aggressive Islamic ethos”... and “clear evidence that there are a number of people, associated with each other and in positions of influence in schools and governing bodies, who espouse, endorse or fail to challenge extremist views”¹⁰ Clarke’s report described extremists gaining positions on governing bodies and joining the staff, unequal treatment and segregation of boys and girls, extremist speakers making

⁹ Begg v BBC [2016] EWHC 2688 (QB)

<https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/shakeel-begg-v-bbc-judgment-final-20161028.pdf>

¹⁰ Peter Clarke, July 2014, Report into Allegations concerning Birmingham schools arising from the ‘Trojan Horse’ letter. www.gov.uk/government/publications/birmingham-schoolseducation-commissioners-report

presentations to pupils, and bullying and intimidation of staff who refused to support extremist views.

Undermining democracy and the rule of law

Extremists have attempted to coerce people not to participate in the UK's democratic system or to subvert our democratic processes. During the 2015 general election, a campaign targeting British Muslims called "Stay Muslim Don't Vote" used leaflets and posters claiming that voting "for man-made law" was forbidden under Islam. Extremists do not simply encourage apathy or argue that the existing political process is flawed. Instead, they reject the very principles upon which democracy is based.

The relationship between extremism and crime

When seeking to define the scope, scale and nature of extremism a critical question is around how extremist and/or hateful beliefs find expression: specifically the relationship between extremism and crime.

Unlike extremism, a working definition of hate crime already exists (see below). Inevitably, this makes hate crime more straightforward to police. Once an incident or crime is logged, if there is evidence that it was motivated by hate (for example, if the victim perceived it as such), the police will usually flag it as a hate incident/ crime. The process is clear and easy to understand. However, since no such definition of extremism exists, the parameters of the police's response are much less clear. And the boundary between extremism and hate crime is not well understood.

Definition of a hate crime

"A hate crime is defined as any criminal offence which is perceived, by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a person's race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or disability, or the perception of the person of having any of these characteristics. A non-crime (i.e. anything that is not a criminal offence) is defined as a hate incident."

- Metropolitan Police Service¹¹

In recent years, hate crime, intolerance and extremism have often been described interchangeably. For example, in his 2016 Police and Crime Plan, the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan drew a direct link between extremist views and hate.¹² Similarly, in evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, Assistant Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Neil Basu, suggested that hate crime should be viewed as a 'proxy' for levels of extremism, suggesting that it served the function of providing a more permissive environment for terrorism.¹³

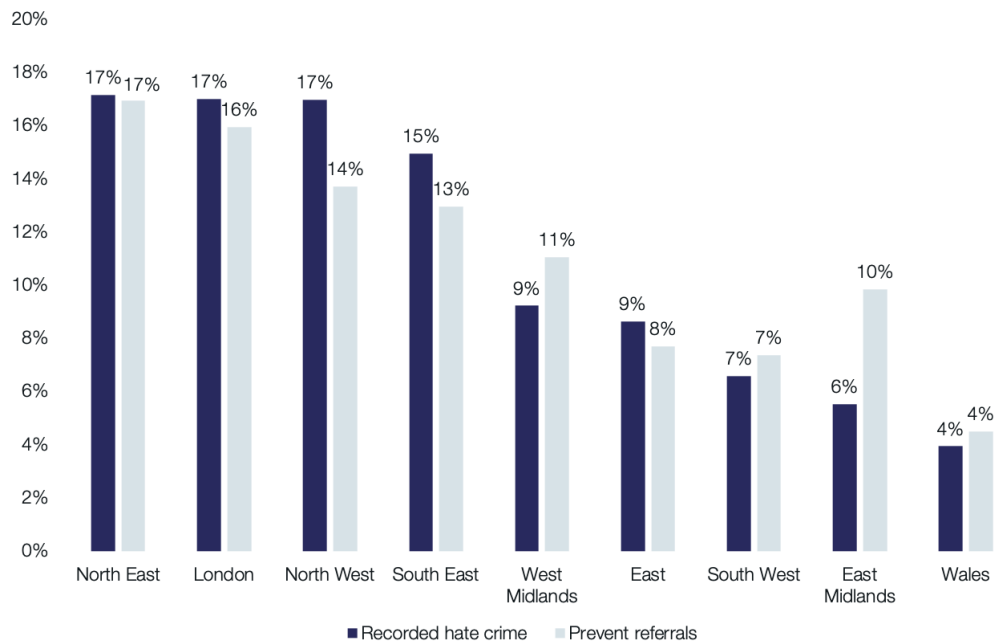
¹¹ Metropolitan Police Service. [What is hate crime?](#) (Accessed on 09/03/2020)

¹² The Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) (2017). [Police and Crime Plan 2017 - 2021](#), p. 124

¹³ The Independent (September 2019). [Far right poses fastest growing terror threat to UK, head of terror police says](#) (Accessed on 09/03/2020)

There is some evidence to support this idea. For example, Crest’s analysis suggests an overlap between areas with high numbers of ‘Prevent’ referrals (an indicator of extremism) and levels of recorded hate crime (see chart below). In a similar vein, an academic study in 2015 concluded that “hate crime and terrorism may be more akin to close cousins than distant relatives”.¹⁴

Proportion of total police recorded hate crime offences and Prevent referrals made in England and Wales, by region, 2018/19¹⁵



However, there are some important caveats to the notion that hate crime is a proxy for extremism. For a start, academic research suggests that the individuals committing hate crime offences are unlikely to be the same individuals being referred into Prevent. A 2012 paper from the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) found that hate crime is often committed unplanned by young offenders with previous criminal offences, under influence of drugs/alcohol, and without strong political associations or ideology, and there appears to be no indication that hate crimes suggest a likelihood of future terrorist attacks.^{16 17} Similarly, as the Lead Commissioner for Counter Extremism has pointed out, hate incidents are not always perpetrated by individuals with extremist views:

¹⁴ Mills, C. E., Freilich, J. D., & Chermak, S. M. (2017). ‘Extreme hatred: Revisiting the hate crime and terrorism relationship to determine whether they are “Close Cousins” or “Distant Relatives”’. *Crime & Delinquency*, 63(10), pp. 1191-1223

¹⁵ Home Office - *Hate crime, England and Wales, 2018/19: Bulletin Tables;- Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2018 to March 2019*

¹⁶ START (September 2012). [Analysis of Factors Related to Hate Crime and Terrorism, Final Report to the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism](#)

¹⁷ For more detail on the characteristics of hate crime offenders, see Annex

“The problem with hate crime as an indicator of extremism is not all hate crime is a consequence of hateful extremism but is instead motivated by prejudice or ignorance combined with circumstantial factors such as alcohol. Hate crime data does not currently record whether there is an extremist element or motivation to any given crime.”

- Commission for Countering Extremism¹⁸

Arguably, therefore it would make more sense to understand the connection between hate crime and extremism at a population level, rather than individually i.e. in the sense that hate crime creates a permissive environment for extremism to flourish.

Equally, it is important to recognise the existence of offences - beyond hate crime - that may be inspired by extremist beliefs. For example, an extremist could be arrested for confronting a police officer during a protest or demonstration; though this would not necessarily be classified as a hate crime by the police. Moreover, even where it is clear that a hate crime has occurred, offences will often be charged under separate offence codes if the police and Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) consider them more likely to result in a conviction. A case study from the CPS' report on hate crime in 2013 makes this clear:

“The defendant posted on his Facebook page following the announcement of the deaths of 6 soldiers in Afghanistan, comparing the reaction to the soldiers' deaths to those of Afghani civilians. The posting went on to rail about soldiers in abusive terms. In addition, there was a picture on the page of a dead Afghani family with the comment: “This is why your soldiers should burn in hell” and “Islam will dominate the world”.

The offence came to light as a result of a comment made by an individual who saw a comment criticising the posting. The witness searched for the posting and was distressed by it. The mother of one of the soldiers killed described feeling extremely distressed by the posting.

The offence of stirring up racial hatred and soliciting murder were rejected and instead a charge contrary to section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 was put before the court.”

- Crown Prosecution Service¹⁹

In order to better deal with the phenomenon of extremism in a policing context, it is vital to clarify its relationship with the crimes through which it is expressed. Currently, however, there is no mechanism for flagging incidents and offences as 'extremist.' Not only does this make the measurement of extremism problematic, it hinders intelligence-gathering, research, and information-sharing with other agencies, such as schools and local authorities.

¹⁸ Commission for Countering Extremism (October 2018). [Challenging Hateful Extremism](#), p. 48

¹⁹ CPS (2013). [Hate crimes and crimes against older people report, 2012 - 2013](#), p. 36

“There are specialist units, but often the burden falls on community officers.”
- Expert in Islamist extremism

The infographic below depicts the relationship between extremist beliefs and criminal acts. It classifies terrorism as directly related to extremist belief, as the possession of such beliefs on the part of the perpetrator is intrinsic to the nature of the crime. It classifies hate crimes as predominantly related to extremist beliefs, but recognises that such beliefs may not actually be the most important factor behind the incident occurring - for example, a run of the mill dispute between neighbours over excessive noise may escalate into the sphere of hate crime if one of the party expresses hostility towards the other using terminology based on extremist beliefs, such as islamophobia or homophobia.²⁰ Finally, it identifies a subset of offences that may be related to extremist beliefs, even if they are not officially classified as terrorist or hate crimes by the police.



There is a need for further research to investigate the links between extremist beliefs and different types of crime. The criminal history of hate crime offenders is particularly striking. For example, hate crime offenders in prison have an average of 42 previous offences per offender; which is likely to be higher than the average prisoner (89 per cent of all cautioned or sentenced offenders in 2018 had committed 35 offences or fewer).^{21 22} This raises a question as to whether extremist behaviours could be identified earlier.

²⁰ This is not to say that hate incidents may be non-extremist, but instead that not all perpetrators of such incidents are necessarily directly motivated by extremist beliefs. This distinction was supported by representatives from campaign groups during stakeholder meetings, who stressed the need to employ different responses to those who perpetrate targeted hate crimes, and those who may invoke hate for subsidiary ends.

²¹ Jolliffe, D.; Farrington, D. P. (3rd April 2019). 'The criminal careers of those imprisoned for hate crimes in the UK'. *European Journal of Criminology*

²² Ministry of Justice - Criminal Justice System statistics quarterly: December 2018 (Offending History Data Tool: Sanction statistics)

“As regards those that the data shows as hate offenders (circa 42 criminal convictions) they will almost always have a grievance or perceived grievance, such as housing, benefits or access to jobs. Their prejudices and hatred will not normally result in recorded hate crime but it will manifest in levels of antisocial behaviour, that generally goes unreported or unrecorded. This is the iceberg of hate and extremism as we still struggle to expose what is below the waterline.”

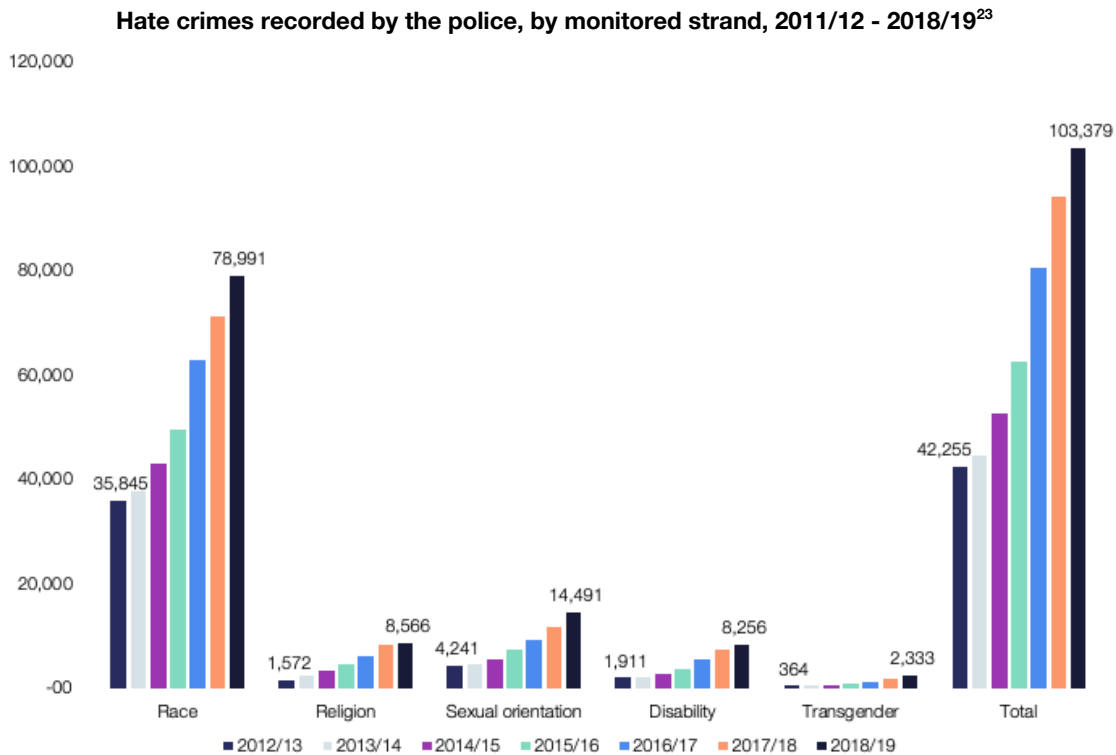
- Former police chief constable

2. The scale of the threat

On 23 September 2020 the Head of Counter Terrorism Neil Basu presented evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee in which he stated that his ‘single biggest fear’ was ‘the rise in hateful extremism’ and its ability to incite malleable, vulnerable people towards violence. The following section examines the strength of the evidence behind that statement.

Trends in hate crime

The data on hate crime paints a mixed picture. According to police recorded statistics, hate crime has increased by 145 per cent since 2012/13, with a particularly sustained increase of 97 per cent since 2014/15. Racial hate crime accounts for the vast majority of hate crime (76 per cent), though religious and disability hate crime have seen the biggest proportional increases.



In 2019, over half of the hate crimes recorded by the police were for public order offences, and a further third were for violence against the person offences. Just over half of religiously motivated hate crimes were targeted against Muslims and around 20 per cent were against Jews. These trends are mirrored in data held by civil society organisations, such as Tell Mama and the Community Security Trust, who monitor reports of Islamophobia and antisemitism respectively.^{24 25}

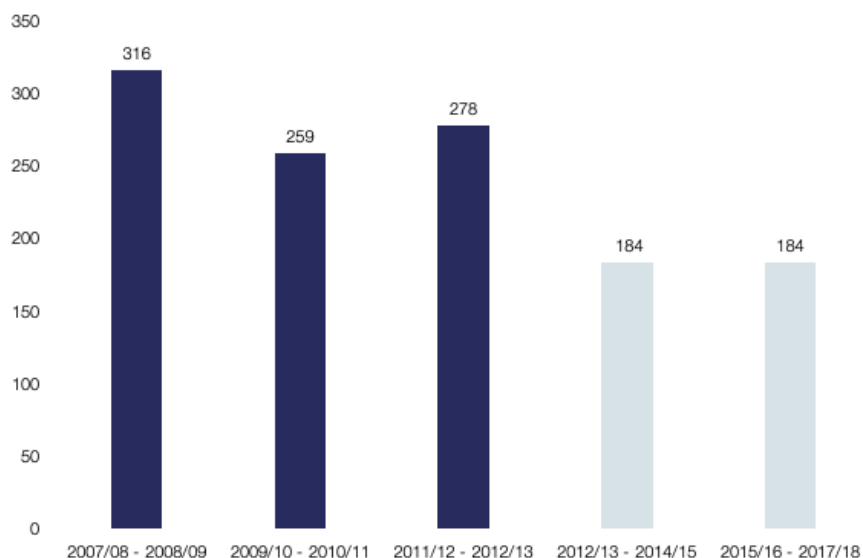
²³ Home Office - *Hate crime, England and Wales, 2018 to 2019: data tables*, Table 2

²⁴ Community Security Trust (2019). [Antisemitic Incidents Report 2018](#)

²⁵ Tell Mama (2 September 2019). [Normalising Hatred: Tell Mama Annual Report 2018](#)

It is important to caveat these figures. We cannot be certain whether rises in recorded hate crime reflect an underlying trend, rather than better recording and/ or a willingness to report hate crime as society's tolerance for bigotry reduces. Furthermore, in contrast to the recorded figures, incidents of hate crime as measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) have decreased steadily since 2009 (see chart below) though there are doubts about how useful the Crime Survey is in estimating 'low volume' offences, such as hate crime, which tend to be highly localised.²⁶

Incidents of hate crime (thousands) as measured by the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW), 2007/08-2008/09 - 2015/16-2017/18*²⁷



There does appear to be an association between prominent public incidents, such as terrorist attacks, and levels of reported hate incidents. In a 2015 paper, Awan and Zempi found that 'trigger' events such as the 9/11 bombings, and terrorist attacks in Woolwich and Paris led to substantial increases in Islamophobic hate incidents.²⁸ Tell MAMA recorded a 692 per cent spike in reports of anti-Muslim hatred and a 433 per cent increase in anti-Muslim attacks in the UK following the Christchurch Mosque shooting in New Zealand in 2019.²⁹

Indeed this association appears to extend beyond terror attacks and encompasses a general drift towards polarisation within political discourse and a general coarsening of public debate. For example, a comparison of hate crimes immediately before and after the EU Referendum in May 2016 by the Metropolitan Police Service revealed increases of over 10 per cent in every strand of

²⁶ The ONS has commented that for certain types of 'low volume' offences, where the impacts are highly localised, recorded crime statistics may offer a more reliable measure than the Crime Survey

²⁷ Home Office - *Hate crime, England and Wales, 2017 to 2018: data tables* (and earlier editions), Figure 3.1

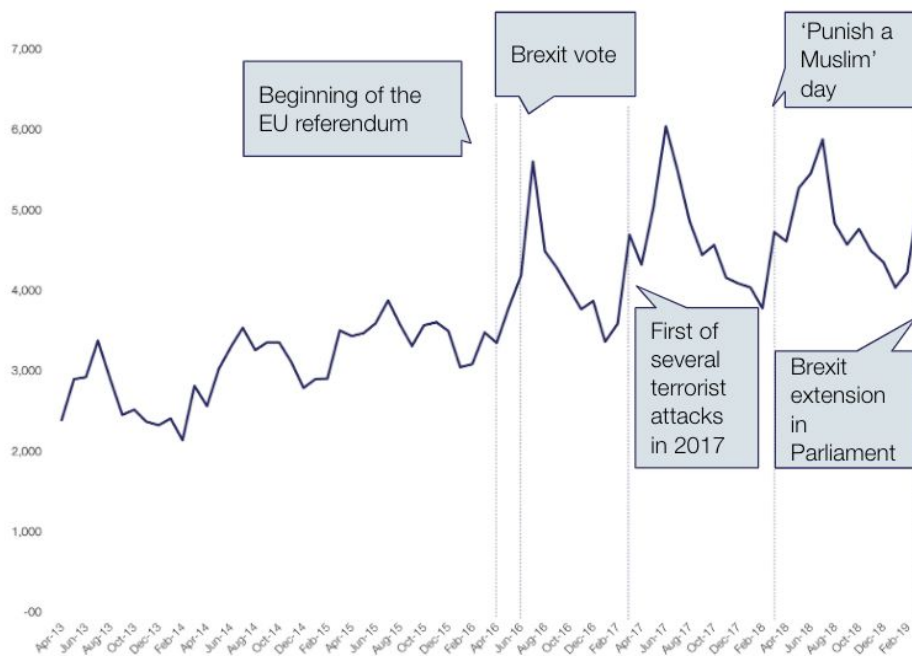
²⁸ Awan, I. and Zempi, I. (1 March 2017). ["I will blow your face off" - Virtual and Physical World Anti-muslim Hate Crime](#), *The British Journal of Criminology* (57.2), pp. 362 - 380

²⁹ Tell Mama (2 September 2019). [Normalising Hatred: Tell Mama Annual Report 2018](#)

hate crime, with a 30 per cent increase overall.³⁰ According to Tell Mama, the number of street-based Islamophobic attacks increased by 375 per cent (from 8 to 38) in the week following a column by the then Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, in which he referred to veiled Muslim women as ‘letterboxes’ and bank-robbers’.³¹ Likewise, in their most recent incident report, the Community Security Trust (CST) found that the highest monthly totals of antisemitic incidents in the first half of 2019 were February and March, months in which the debate around antisemitism in the Labour Party reached greatest national prominence (due in part to the departure of nine MPs from the party).³²

An analysis of monthly trends in recorded hate crime mapped against events of national significance shows this in more detail (see chart below).

Monthly trends in recorded hate crime and their association with relevant national events, April 2013 - March 2019³³

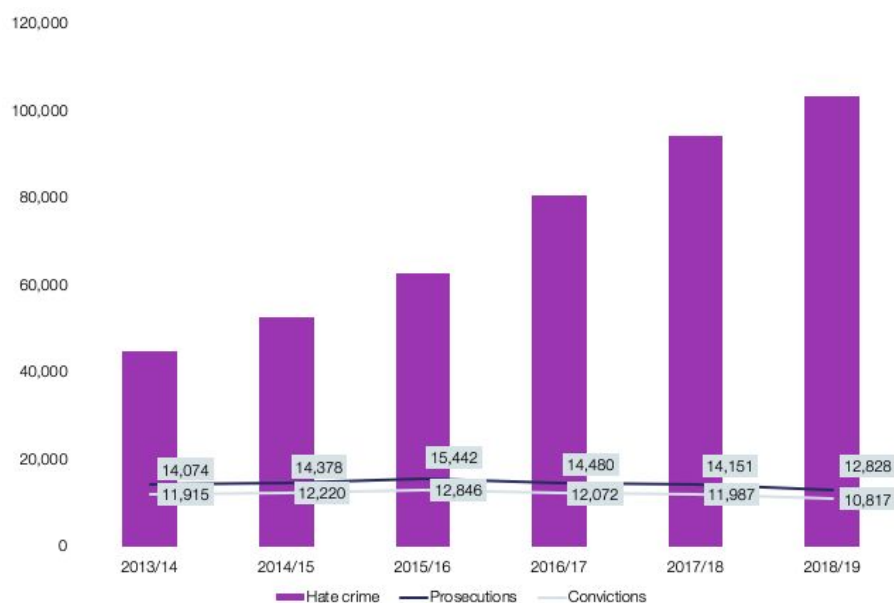


The other principal category of hate crime relates to the stirring up of racial or religious hatred (under the Public Order Act 1986 and the Racial and Religious Hatred Act 2006). Recorded crime statistics are not published for these offences, however, the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) does publish annual breakdowns of prosecutions and convictions. As the chart below demonstrates, despite a significant rise in recorded hate crimes offences, prosecutions have fallen

³⁰ Schilter, “Hate crime after the Brexit vote”, LSE, Nov 2018, <https://www.lse.ac.uk/economics/Assets/Documents/job-market-candidates-2018-2019/JobMarketPaper-ClaudioSchilter.pdf>
³¹ Tell Mama (2019). Ibid, p. 48
³² Community Security Trust (2019). *Antisemitic Incidents Report January - June 2019*, p. 2
³³ Home Office - *Hate crime, England and Wales, 2018 to 2019: data tables*, Figure 2

slightly. As a result, only 12 per cent of recorded hate crime now progresses to prosecution, and only 10 per cent leads to conviction (at least with the “hate” aspect still intact).

Recorded hate crimes, prosecutions and convictions for hate crime, 2013/14 - 2018/19³⁴



In summary, while we cannot be certain that rises in recorded hate crime reflect an underlying trend, the reported increases following high profile events and political controversies suggests spikes may be genuine. At the very least, we can conclude that hate crime is responsible for a growing volume of demand on the police and the wider criminal justice system.

Extremist protests and demonstrations

The number of protest events has risen steadily over the last decade, going from 83 in 2007 to 280 in 2016. While the vast majority of these protests have been peaceful, there has been a rise in more confrontational protest tactics. In particular, there has been a dramatic spike in the number of confrontational protests, increasing from seven in 2000 to 126 in 2019 (almost certainly linked to the Extinction Rebellion (ER) protests in 2018 and 2019).

While the data is limited, there is evidence that more individuals are attending far-right protests, than was the case a decade ago. Research by David Bailey mapping protests between 2010 and 2019 suggests the number of Right Wing protests has roughly doubled over the last two years - and in 2019, represented just over a tenth (11 per cent) of all reported protest events.^{35 36}

³⁴ Home Office - *Hate crime, England and Wales, 2018 to 2019: data tables*, Table 2; CPS - [Hate crime annual report, 2018/19](#)

³⁵ David Bailey, 'How Protest Is Shaking The UK And Why It's Likely To Continue', Jan 2020, <https://eachother.org.uk/protest-shaking-uk-likely-continue/>

³⁶ See also Allchorn and Dafnos, "Far Right mobilisations in Great Britain: 2009-2019", Centre for the Analysis of the Radical Right, October 2020

Similarly, the campaign group ‘Hope Not Hate’ has pointed out that in recent years, Far Right demonstrations have attracted ‘the biggest numbers since the 1930s’. For example, the ‘Free Tommy’ demonstration in June 2018 (connected to the EDL’s former leader, but without the organisational structures) attracted 15,000 people, with 50,000 attending a protest in October 2017 by the Football Lads Alliance (a group with a strong anti-Islam inflection).³⁷ By contrast, the largest recorded protest by the English Defence League (EDL) in February 2011 attracted approximately 3,000 individuals. There is little available data on Islamist protests and demonstrations.

Membership/ reach of extremist groups

Similarly, measuring trends in the membership of extremist groups is problematic. Such groups do not produce annual reports, nor are they always structured in the manner of traditional membership-based organisations. In fact, evidence suggests that both Islamist extremists and the extreme far-right have moved even further away from formal group structures in recent years, embracing a loose and light-touch model of association based on prominent influencers and known group identities.³⁸ For example, two of the most prominent far-right attackers over the last three years, Brenton Tarrant (Christchurch) and Darren Osborne (Finsbury Park), were radicalised online and were not *members* of formal groups, even if they were influenced by the ideas those groups disseminated online.³⁹ Brenton Tarrant’s published manifesto spells this out, clarifying that he was not a member of any formal group, though was radicalised online and sought approval from online figures (the “Knights Templar”).⁴⁰

There are different ways to track the size of the threat posed by particular groups, though none should be considered authoritative without additional evidence. For example, the anti-racism charity, Hope not Hate, produces estimates of the size of the membership of different groups involved in extremism.⁴¹ However, as they recognise, this does not take into account wider online engagement with their ideas and communications outside of the structures of a formal group.

Estimated membership of known extremist organisations⁴²

Extremist Organisation:	Membership:
English Defence League	Unknown, less than 100

³⁷ Commission for Countering Extremism, Mulhall, J., (2019). [Modernising and Mainstreaming: The Contemporary British Far Right](#)

³⁸ Commission for Countering Extremism, Mulhall, J., (2019). Ibid.

³⁹<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/darren-osborne-finsbury-park-attack-who-is-tommy-robinson-muslim-internet-britain-first-a8190316.html>

⁴⁰ Brenton Tarrant (March 2019), *The Great Replacement*. Following the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, due to the sensitivity of this content, and the ongoing legal action in New Zealand, we do not include a link to the original document

⁴¹ Hope not Hate Charitable Trust (May 2019). [Know Your Extremist Group](#)

⁴² For example, though Britain First is estimated to possess between 200 and 300 members, at the point of prohibition on Facebook it had over 2 million ‘likes’

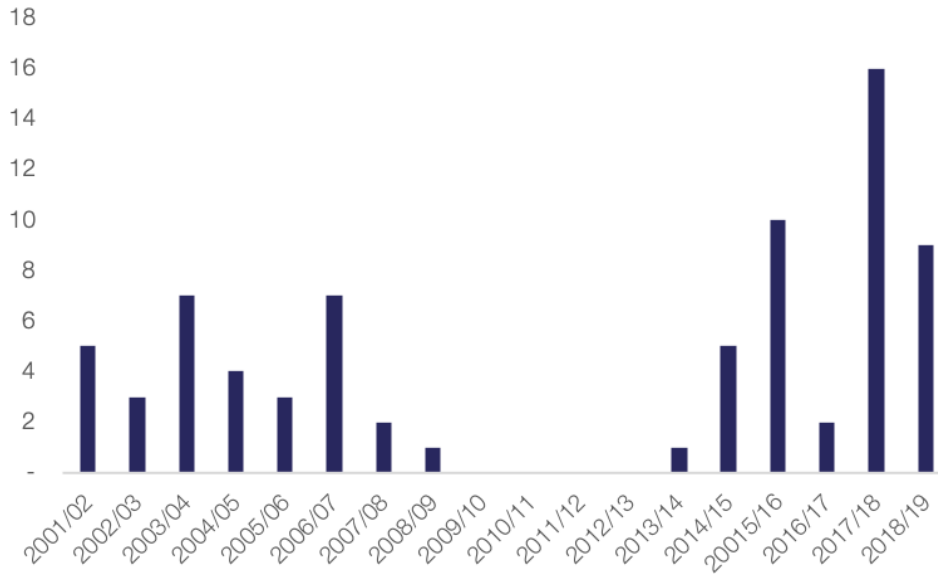
Democratic Football Lads Alliance	1,000
North West Infidels (NWI)	10 to 50
Britain First	200 to 300
BNP	300 to 500
National Front	Under 100
Al Muhajiroun	Unknown, but increasing
Hizb ut-Tahrir	Possibly one million worldwide
Neturei Karta	Globally around 5,000
National Action	Around 60
British Movement	Less than 20
Blood and Honour	Very small
Generation Identity	'Growing'

Arguably, the size of membership lists is in any case the wrong metric, given that many of the most influential groups now exist almost entirely online. Previous research undertaken by Crest into the role and influence of Islamist groups in fomenting opposition to Prevent suggests that 'online reach' may be a more reliable indicator of extremism. For example, analysis of CAGE's online interactions between 28 January and 11 February 2019 suggests their reach is significant. During the target time period, CAGE's content reached up to 1.27 million accounts and its Twitter account had a reach of 651,000.⁴³

There is evidence that the number of individuals prosecuted for membership of a proscribed organisation has increased. However, the very small sample size means we ought to treat this data with caution. In addition, it is heavily influenced by decisions about which organisations have been proscribed. For example, the decision to proscribe the far-right group National Action in December 2016 is likely to have contributed to the spike in prosecutions in 2017-18.

⁴³ Crest unpublished research (2018)

Number of individuals charged under terrorism legislation whose principal offence was membership of a proscribed organisation (ss. 11 - 13 of the Terrorism Act 2000), 2001/02 - 2018/19⁴⁴



Given the caveats over these statistics, more research is needed before any firm inferences can be made regarding the size, influence and reach of extremist groups.

Terrorism

It is vital to examine trends in terror-related activity, given its close relationship to extremism, along with the fact that many terrorist offenders were previously known to the authorities in some way (up to three-quarters of Islamist-inspired terror convictions, according to a paper published by the Henry Jackson Society).⁴⁵

In total, 3,411 people have died in the UK as a result of terrorism since 1970.⁴⁶ Most deaths between 1970 and 1990 were a result of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Since the Lockerbie bombing in Scotland, which killed 271 people in 1988, there has been a decline in the numbers of fatalities, apart from peaks in 2005 and 2017. Since the September 11 attacks, 92 people have died as a direct result of terrorist attacks. Al Qaida claimed responsibility for the deaths of 56 people, including the four suicide bombers, during the London bombings of 7th July 2005, while, in 2017, 42 people were killed in Islamist terror attacks in London and Manchester.

The latest available data from Europol’s European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report indicates that, in 2018, the UK had 60 foiled, failed and completed attacks which was the highest

⁴⁴ Home Office - *Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000: quarterly update to September 2019: annual data tables*, Table A.05a

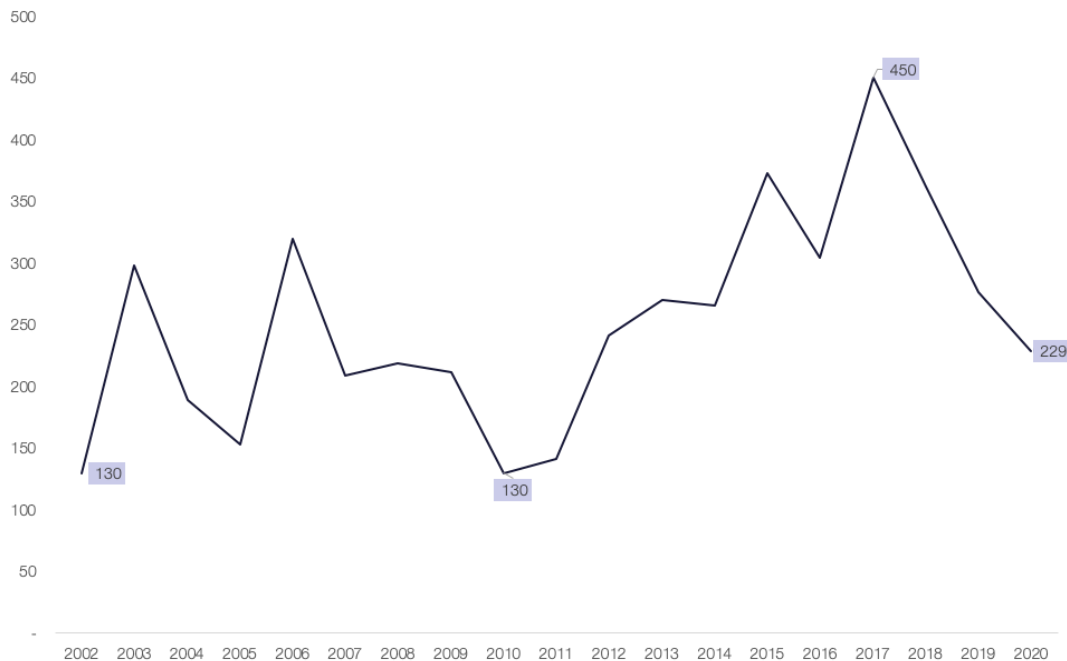
⁴⁵ Stuart, H. (The Henry Jackson Society) (5th March 2017). *Islamist Terrorism: Analysis of Offences and Attacks in the UK (1998 - 2015)*

⁴⁶ “Public Safety and Security in the 21st Century”, Police Foundation, July 2020, https://policingreview.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/phase_1_report_final-1.pdf

number reported by EU member states. The majority of these related to the situation in Northern Ireland. Of the rest, four were Islamist, and all but one was foiled.⁴⁷

As the chart below demonstrates, the number of individuals arrested for terrorism-related activity has generally increased over the last decade, although it has fallen from the spike witnessed in 2017 (following the four terrorist incidents during that year). In the year ending June 2020 there were 229 arrests for terrorism-related activity, of which 31 per cent resulted in a charge.

Number of individuals arrested for terrorism-related activity, years ending September 2002 - 2020⁴⁸



While the most substantial threat is still from Islamist extremism, there is also a growing one from Far Right extremism. During evidence given to the Home Affairs Select Committee in September 2020 the Head of Counter Terrorism ACC Neil Basu confirmed there were ‘well over 800 live investigations’, around ten per cent of which related to rightwing terrorism (a near doubling since 2016).⁴⁹ In the year ending June 2020 the proportion of White people arrested exceeded the proportion of Asian people arrested for the third consecutive year, having not done so previously since the year ending June 2005.⁵⁰

It is predicted that the demand on the police generated by terrorism, both right wing and Islamist, will continue to increase, even if the number of attacks does not. The methodology and sophistication of terrorist plots are expected to continue to evolve and, according to interviews

⁴⁷ Europol, 2018

⁴⁸ Home Office - *Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000: financial year ending June 2020: annual data tables*, Table A.11

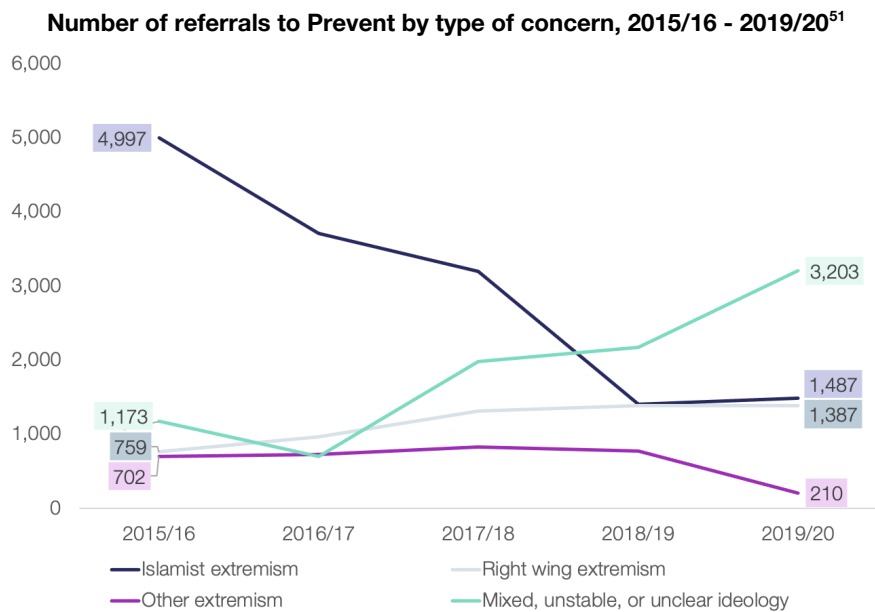
⁴⁹ Home Affairs Select Committee, September 2020

⁵⁰ Home Office - *Operation of police powers under the Terrorism Act 2000: financial year ending June 2020: annual data tables*, Table A.11

conducted with senior counter terrorism officers, there will continue to be a threat from “self-radicalising lone actor terrorists.”

Prevent and Channel referrals

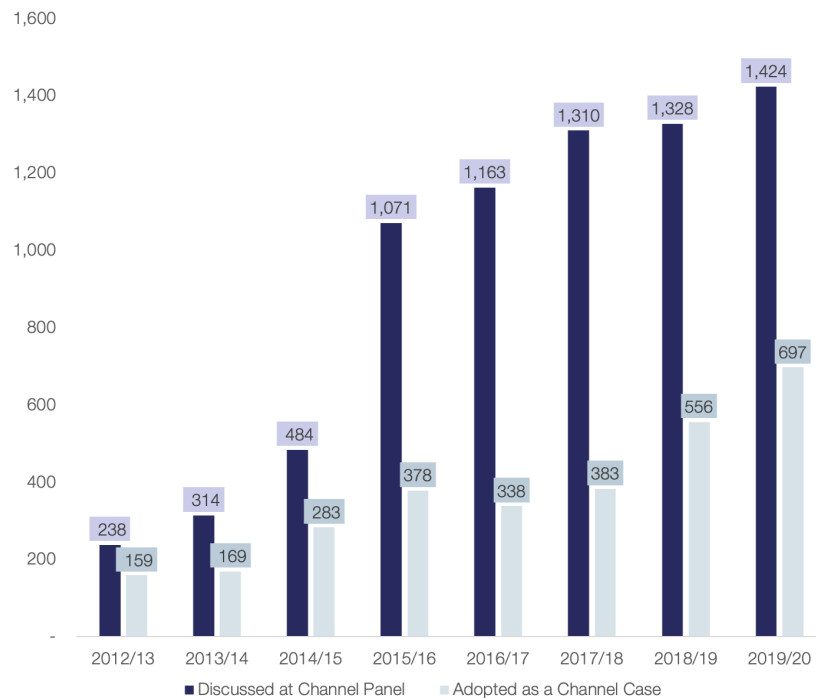
In the year ending March 2020, Prevent referrals rose by 10 per cent compared to the previous year (2019), following three years of continuous decline. This was principally due to an increase in referrals relating to Islamist radicalisation (up 6 per cent compared with the previous year) - the first year-on-year increase in such referrals since March 2016. As in previous years, most referrals were for males (88 per cent), and over half of all referrals were for individuals aged 20 years or under (54%).



The number of referrals discussed at a Channel panel (1,424) and adopted as a Channel case (697) continued to increase and were the highest recorded since records began. Of the 697 Channel cases, the most common were cases referred due to concerns regarding right-wing radicalisation (43%), followed by Islamist radicalisation (30%).

⁵¹ Home Office - *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2019 to March 2020 - Annex A: Prevent statistics, April 2019 to March 2020, Table 6*

Number of individuals discussed at a Channel panel and adopted as a Channel case, 2015/16 - 2019/20 ⁵²



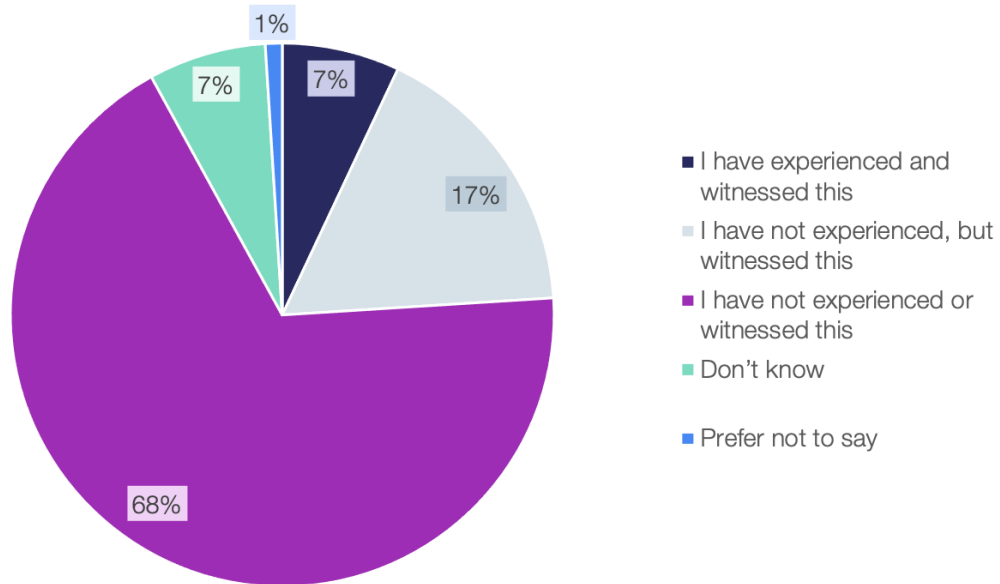
The rise in case numbers tallies with what senior police officers have told us, namely, that there has been a notable and visible rise in the level of hateful extremism since around 2015-16.

Public attitudes

Examining the true scale of extremist attitudes and beliefs has historically been problematic because of the lack of attitudinal data to explicitly measure the public's experience of extremism in Britain. Partly in order to address that gap, Crest commissioned new polling from Yougov, using a nationally representative sample. The results were striking. Nearly a quarter (24 per cent) of the general public claimed to have 'witnessed or experienced extremism in the last 12 months' (see chart below), suggesting that extremist ideology and behaviours are visible to a significant proportion of society. Moreover, a further ten per cent of respondents said that they had 'experienced or witnessed views promoting, endorsing or supporting terrorism'.

⁵² Home Office - *Individuals referred to and supported through the Prevent Programme, April 2019 to March 2020 - Annex A: Prevent statistics, April 2019 to March 2020*,

Have you witnessed or experienced any of the following in the past 12 months? Views promoting, endorsing or supporting extremism⁵³



While we should be careful not to over-extrapolate on the basis of a single poll, it is notable that when the same question was asked in 2018 - for a poll conducted for the Mayor’s Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC) - a similar proportion (25 per cent) of respondents said they had witnessed views “promoting, endorsing or supporting extremism”.⁵⁴

Our poll also shines some light on how different groups within society have differing perceptions of extremism. For example, 29 per cent of men had witnessed or experienced views promoting extremism whereas this figure fell to 20 per cent of women. Age also seemed to be an important factor - 37 per cent of 18-24 year olds said they had experienced or witnessed extremism compared to just 15 per cent of those aged 65 up.⁵⁵

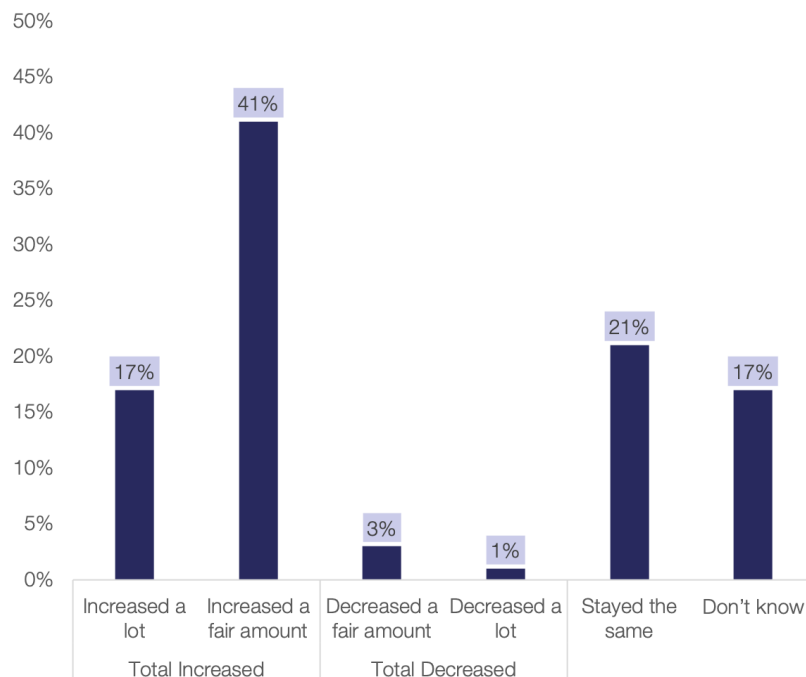
Our polling also suggests there is a perception that hateful extremism - as defined by the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) - is a growing problem. More than half of the public (58 per cent) felt that extremist behaviour had increased over the last four years, with 17% feeling it had increased ‘a lot’.

⁵³ Defined as ‘views opposing values like democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty or the mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs’. Yougov polling carried out on behalf of Crest Advisory, Nov 2020

⁵⁴ The Independent (02 February 2019). [One in four Londoners ‘have witnessed extremism’, poll suggests](#) (Accessed on 12/03/2020)

⁵⁵ Interestingly, the poll also showed that in London (albeit on a smaller weighted sample $n=214$) 36% now said they had experienced or witnessed extremism, a significant increase on the 2018 figure of 25%, whereas 31% said they had experienced or witnessed hate crime, broadly in line with the 2018 figure of 29%

Over the last four years, on average do you think that the level of extremist behaviour⁵⁶ described above has increased, decreased, or stayed the same?



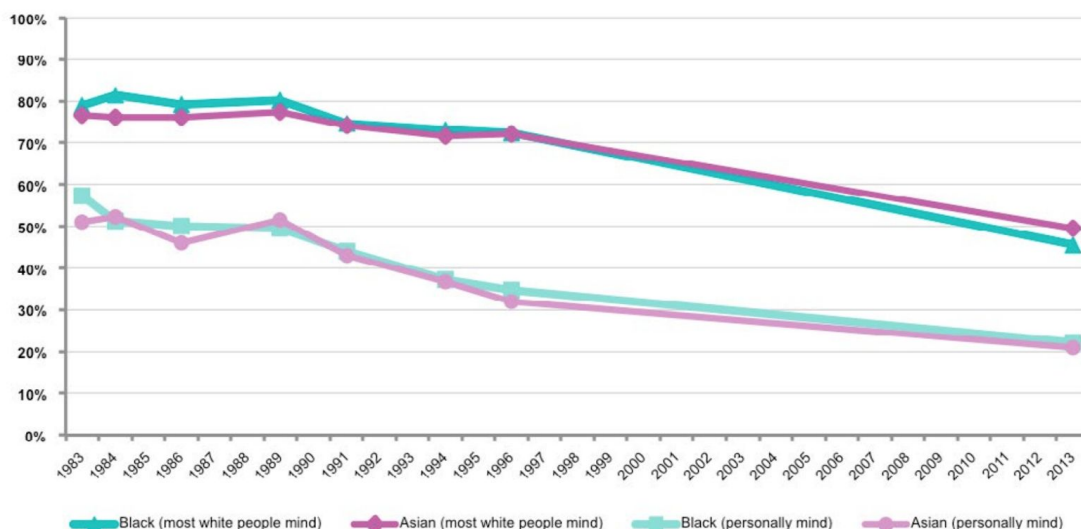
Notwithstanding the polling above, empirical data tracking how public sentiment has changed over time is thin on the ground. Some insight can be generated by analysis of broader societal attitudes data, which appears to paint a mixed picture. For example, the British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) suggests that there has been a marked liberalisation in attitudes towards same sex marriage, immigration, race and ethnicity.⁵⁷ Between 1983 and 2013 the BSA asked respondents if they believed that most white people would mind if a close relative were to marry a person of black or West Indian / Asian origin, and whether or not they would personally mind if such a relative of theirs were to do so.⁵⁸ Over the course of that period, the proportion who believed that most white people would mind or that they themselves would mind fell dramatically. For example, the proportion who said they would mind if a close family member married a black person fell by more than half, from 58 per cent to 22 per cent.

⁵⁶ Using the definition provided by the Commission for Countering Extremism - 'behaviours that can incite and amplify hate, that draw on hateful, hostile or supremacist beliefs directed at an out-group, or that cause harm to individuals, communities or wider society'. Yougov polling for Crest, Nov 2020

⁵⁷ The National Centre for Social Research (2019). [British Social Attitudes: The 36th Report - Relationships and gender identity](#)

⁵⁸ The National Centre for Social Research (September 2017). [Racial prejudice in Britain today](#)

Proportion of respondents agreeing with the question, “do you think most white people would mind / would you mind if a close relative were to marry a person of black or West Indian / Asian origin?”⁵⁹



However, within the context of a shift towards greater tolerance overall, there appear to be specific causes for concern, particularly around anti-Muslim prejudice. Though time series data is not available, double the proportion of respondents to the latest round of the same survey stated that they would mind if a family member were to marry a person of Muslim origin (44 per cent), compared to the respective figure for those of black origin.⁶⁰ According to a YouGov poll carried out for Hope Not Hate in January 2018, more than a third of British citizens (37 per cent) saw Islam as a threat to the British way of life.⁶¹ More recently, a 2019 poll found that more than 40 per cent of the public thought that Islam poses a threat to western civilisations.⁶²

That said, the UK remains one of the most liberal countries in Europe regarding attitudes towards minority groups and comfort with immigrants (regardless of support for immigration). For example, in a special Eurobarometer survey published in 2018 the proportion of respondents feeling ‘comfortable’ or ‘moderately comfortable’ with a child entering into a loving relationship with a Muslim person (as discussed above) was the highest in the UK out of any EU28 country:

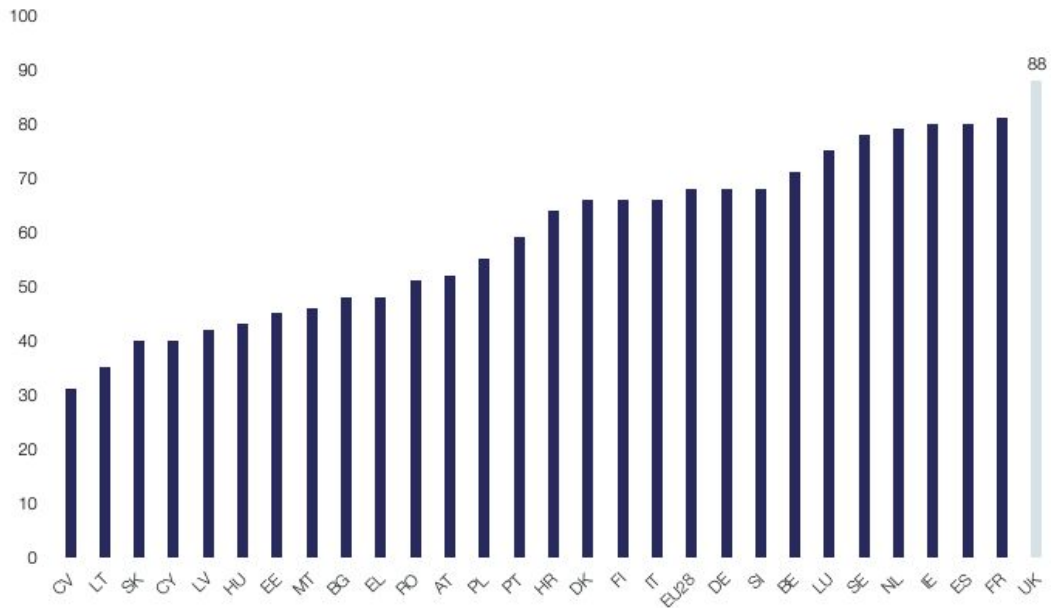
⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 11

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 11

⁶¹ Hope not Hate (April 2018). *Britain Divided? Rivers of Blood 50 Years On*

⁶² The Independent (13 July 2019). *Britons believe far-right groups a greater threat to society than Islamist extremism, poll says* (Accessed on 12/03/2020)

Proportion (%) of respondents who would feel comfortable or moderately comfortable if one of their children was in a love relationship with a Muslim person (regardless of whether the respondent does or does not have children)⁶³



In summary, a number of indicators - from rising hate crime to the growth in online abuse - suggest extremism is a growing problem in the UK. These trends need to be contextualised: membership of extremist organisations remains low and Britain is, overall, a more liberal, tolerant country than it was twenty years ago (though there is some evidence of rising anti-Muslim prejudice at the margins). Nonetheless, it is clear that extremism is placing a growing burden on police time.

⁶³ European Commission, [Special Eurobarometer 493 - Report](#)

3. The changing nature of the threat

A review of the academic literature combined with extensive fieldwork conducted for this report has revealed several ways in which extremism has evolved in recent years, with profound implications for how it is policed. These are set out in more detail below.

The shift to a looser, more decentralised model of organisation

As outlined above, traditionally-structured organisations linked to extremism have steadily declined in membership, size and reach. This is particularly the case for the far-right. According to Hope not Hate, many of the most prominent far-right influencers have been imprisoned, whilst several groups have been proscribed under terror legislation, including National Action.⁶⁴ This has coincided with a decrease in the electoral presence of extreme far-right parties; for example, whereas the British National Party fielded 338 candidates and secured 563,743 votes in the 2010 election, this fell to just one candidate (David Furness) and 510 votes by 2019.⁶⁵

However, on the far-right these traditional political groupings have been replaced by loose, decentralised networks of individuals - largely operating online - led by prominent 'influencers' who are careful to avoid crossing the line into overt criminal action. High-profile figures and brands such as Tommy Robinson have co-opted popular grievances, such as the Rotherham grooming scandal, to access mainstream media and disseminate extremist messaging.⁶⁶ Far from being confined to the fringe, far-right rhetoric has expanded into new areas of debate, such as fears over Muslim integration, which are more likely to appeal to a wider audience.⁶⁷

"The far right now encompasses a much wider group of political currents (such as the alt-right, incels and conspiracy theorists) than previously, which means the paths into it are more numerous and less obvious than before. The new fronts for the far right are a culture war and arguments over identity, rather than a more explicit and overtly fascist worldview."
- Hope not Hate⁶⁸

Similar shifts can be discerned with respect to Islamist extremism. For example, while aliases of Al-Muhajiroun (ALM) have been proscribed by the Home Secretary over the last 15 years, extremists such as Abu Haleema have been able to build up a significant online following in recent years, whilst individual ex-ALM members are identified in a recent report as operating online and through individual community stalls.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Hope not Hate (February 2020). [State of Hate 2020: Far-right terror goes global](#)

⁶⁵ BBC News (2010). [Election results 2010](#); London Borough of Havering (2019). [2019 Hornchurch and Upminster constituency results](#)

⁶⁶ Rotherham Advertiser (23 November 2018). [Advertiser responds after Tommy Robinson's "rant in Rotherham"](#) (Accessed on 17/03/2020)

⁶⁷ Commission for Countering Extremism, Mulhall, J., (2019). [Modernising and Mainstreaming: The Contemporary British Far Right](#)

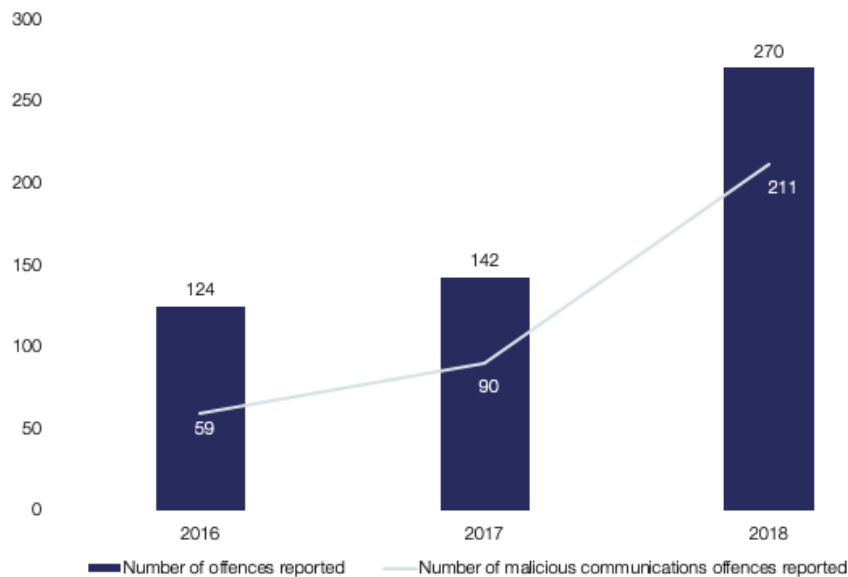
⁶⁸ Hope not Hate (February 2020). Ibid., p. 8

⁶⁹ The Independent (15 February 2019). [UK's 'most dangerous terrorist group' regenerating after terrorist prisoners released](#) (Accessed on 17/03/2020)

Normalisation of incivility: the persistent harassment of elected representatives

Our research has revealed a worrying trend in online abuse of elected representatives. The Metropolitan Police Service's Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team (PLaIT) was set up after the murder of Jo Cox in 2016 to provide better security and protection for Members of Parliament. As the chart below indicates, the number of offences reported to this body has more than doubled since 2016, driven by an almost quadruple increase in reported cases of malicious communications.

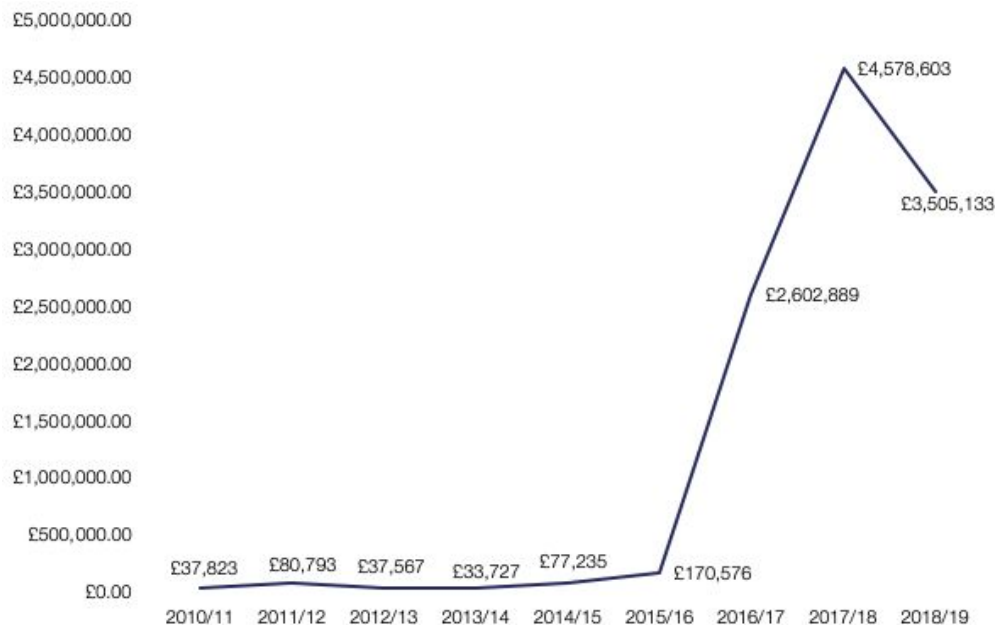
Number of reports made to the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team and number of reports made for malicious communications offences, 2016 - 2018⁷⁰



The parliamentary authorities have reported rising concern about MPs' security. This is reflected in rising levels of spending on security assistance for MPs and their offices (see chart below).

⁷⁰ Metropolitan Police Service (March 2019). [Freedom of Information request - Crimes against MPs reported to the MPS' Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team \(PLaIT\) in 2016, 2017, and 2018](#)

Spending by the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) on security assistance for MPs, 2010/11 - 2018/19 (financial year)^{71,72}



This is also supported by the findings of the Committee on Standards in Public Life during their review into intimidation.⁷³ The Committee found that “while intimidation in public life is nothing new, the scale and intensity of intimidation is now shaping public life in ways which are a serious issue”, with social media being the principal enabler (see the following section for more detail). Evidence submitted to the Committee highlights the practical impact of this escalation in threat:

- 33 per cent of surveyed political candidates experienced ‘inappropriate’ behaviour during the 2017 election campaign;
- 56 per cent were concerned about abuse and intimidation;
- 31 per cent claimed to be fearful.⁷⁴

Arguably the most concerning conclusions were about women and minorities: not a single female MP active on Twitter had been free from online intimidation, and ethnically black and Asian women (despite being only 11% of women in Parliament) received 35% more abusive tweets than white female MPs. Parliamentary candidates responding to the CSPL’s call for evidence said that intimidation was already dissuading individuals from standing for public offices, particularly those most at risk of receiving abuse – women, ethnic and religious minorities and LGBT+ candidates.

In 2019, the then Prime Minister Theresa May voiced her fear that the tenor of political debate was ‘coarsening’ and that it was ‘becoming harder to disagree, without also demeaning opposing

⁷¹ Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority - [MP Costs, Annual Publication 2018/19](#)

⁷² A range of new security measures for MPs and their offices were put in place after the murder of Jo Cox in 2016, accounting for a substantial proportion of this increase in security expenditure by IPSA

⁷³ Committee on Standards in Public Life (December 2017). [Intimidation in Public Life](#)

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27

viewpoints in the process'. She further noted that the online space, in particular, was too often being used for 'intimidation and abuse' – much of it targeted against women and members of BAME and LGBT communities – and that this posed a threat to the endurance of a 'genuinely pluralist' public sphere.⁷⁵

The new frontier in extremism: physical threats to female MPs

In recent years, there has been a growth in the number of cases involving individuals, often using the anonymity of being online, to persistently abuse and harass MPs, with misogyny appearing to be a common factor. For example, the then Labour MP, Luciana Berger, was subjected to a campaign of threats and antisemitic abuse, following the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party. In December 2016, Joshua Bonehill-Paine was convicted of racially aggravated harassment and sentenced to 2 years in prison. Berger expressed concern that extremism 'crosses the line into physical threats'

In 2019, two pro-Brexit protestors, who intimidated and threatened Anna Soubry MP, were convicted of causing the MP harassment, alarm and distress and sentenced to suspended sentence orders. The CPS told the Court that both men - James Goddard and Brian Phillips - had been part of a group which had shouted abuse and chanted at Soubry as she was being interviewed by Sky News - and that after the interview, they had followed her along the street, surrounded her and verbally abused her with Goddard filming her on his mobile phone.⁷⁶

In May 2019, Jack Renshaw, a neo-Nazi, was jailed for life for plotting to murder Labour MP Rosie Cooper and threatening to murder a police officer. Sentencing Renshaw, the Judge explicitly referred to the process by which he had become inspired by other examples of extremist behaviours. She said: "*You praised the murder of Jo Cox in tweets and posts in June 2017. In some bizarre way you saw this as a commendable act and set out to replicate that behaviour*".⁷⁷

In February 2020, Joshua Spencer, a Conservative activist, was sentenced to nine weeks in prison and given a restraining order preventing him from contacting Cooper or her office manager for 10 years, following evidence he had sent messages promising to 'pay crackheads' to attack the MP. Cooper, who revealed at least 10 individuals had been cautioned for making threats against her and her staff, said:

"MPs across the country, particularly women MPs, have unfortunately become accustomed to a

⁷⁵ 'Theresa May calls abuse in public life a threat to democracy', Guardian, Feb 5 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/feb/05/theresa-may-calls-abuse-in-public-life-a-threat-to-democracy-online-social-media>

⁷⁶ "Pro-Brexit protestors sentenced after abusing Anna Soubry MP", CPS, July 2019, <https://www.cps.gov.uk/london-south/news/pro-brexit-protestors-sentenced-after-abusing-anna-soubry-mp>

⁷⁷ "Jack Renshaw: MP death plot neo-Nazi jailed for life", May 2019, BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-lancashire-48306380>

continued stream of abuse online and threats from a small number of people, often on the extreme fringes of politics. But this behaviour is not normal, and we must never treat it as so”⁷⁸

MPs spoken to as part of this report suggested the volume of hate crime was ‘huge’ and that physical threats towards them had grown, which they linked to a political environment which has become more polarised and febrile. In evidence supplied to the Joint Committee on Human Rights, Cressida Dick, stated that *“the current context [in terms of threats to MPs], in our policing time at least, is unprecedented”* while the Committee on Standards in Public Life reflected of *“a culture in which the intimidation of candidates and others in public life has become widespread, immediate and toxic”*.⁷⁹

“The data we have show that there are masses of attacks on politicians [online], not all reaching the crime threshold but lots reaching the incident threshold.”

- Former MP

The online arena in particular is a source of information and motivation for offenders who are often anonymous, or difficult to trace. Particular concerns were raised with regards to the effectiveness of the Parliamentary Liaison and Investigation Team (PLAIT), run by the Metropolitan Police and tasked with responding to threats to MPs. More generally, MPs were sceptical about the police’s ability to respond to the scale of the online threat.

“Where you’ve got people using the Internet as part of their attack modality, the British police force is totally incapable of dealing with that. Totally incapable.”

- Former MP

Clearly these issues raise a number of challenges, in particular for the policing of extremism. There is currently no consistent method of data collection about the level of crime related to political activity, making it difficult to quantify the scale of the threat. Police forces are not required to record whether victims are MPs, Councillors, or standing for public office, and whether crimes are related to the victim’s political work. Moreover, it is clear that many MPs are reluctant to report threats meaning many offences go unreported. Finally, the scale of traffic on social media means that the police are unlikely to have the resources to respond sufficiently to online abuse.

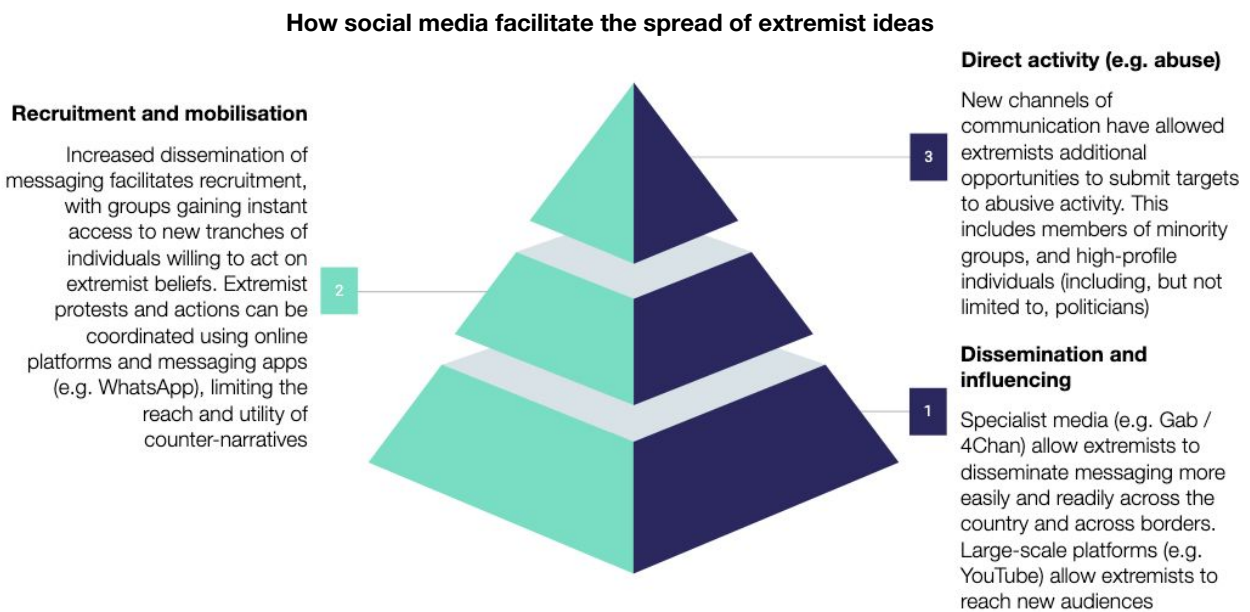
Extremism online

The advent of social media has opened up a hugely efficient channel of communication between extremist groups and their potential followers. Many of these channels are explored in extensive

⁷⁸ “Yvette Cooper: Knottingley man jailed over threats about MP”, Feb 2020, BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-leeds-51417011>

⁷⁹ Joint Committee on Human Rights, “Democracy, freedom of expression and freedom of association: threats to MPs”, 16 October 2019, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/jt201919/jtselect/jtrights/37/37.pdf>

detail elsewhere.⁸⁰ However, of relevance to policing is the way in which these channels have facilitated the spread of extremist ideas in three particular ways:



Dissemination and influencing

The rise of social media has inadvertently facilitated the distribution and proliferation of extremist propaganda by providing extremists with unprecedented reach and lowering the cost of participation. It has also created a market for physical abuse offline i.e. whereby extremists are incentivised to threaten and intimidate people and film themselves doing so in order to create shareable content to disseminate and influence other like-minded individuals.⁸¹

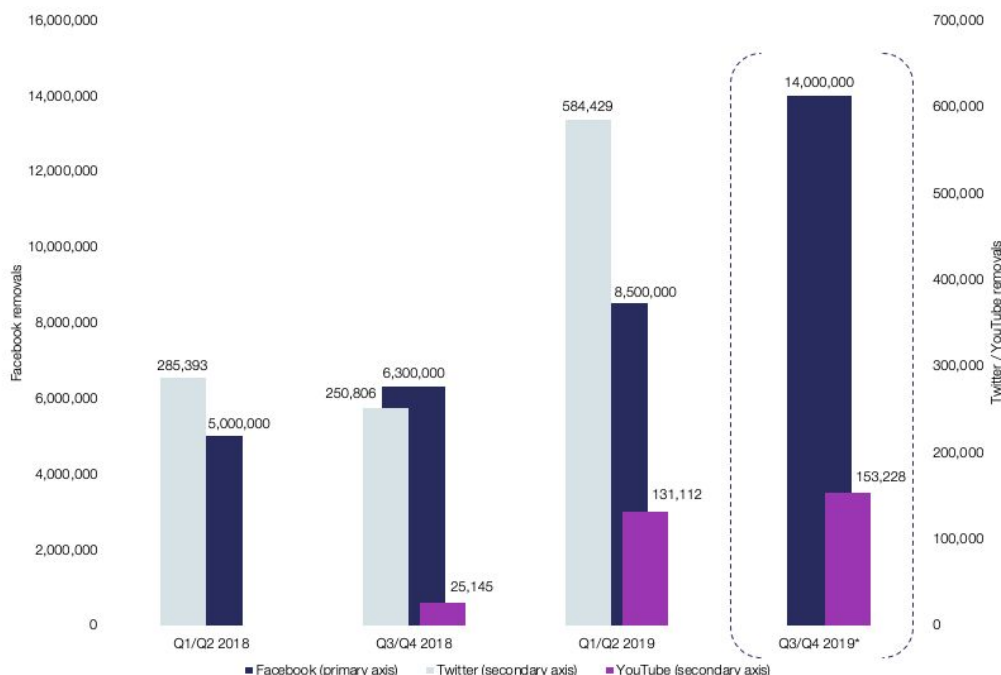
Aggressive action from social media platforms can limit this traffic and thus reduce oxygen for extremism, as demonstrated by the impact of bans on influential extremists, such as Tommy Robinson. Similarly, the chart below details a marked increase in the removal of hateful content from the three biggest social media platforms (Facebook, Youtube and Twitter) since the start of 2018.

⁸⁰ For example, see:

Ahmed, M.; Lloyd George, F. (Tony Blair Institute for Global Change) (August 2017). [A War of Keywords: How extremists are exploiting the internet and what to do about it](#)

⁸¹ "Far-right group Britain First are targeting hotels housing asylum seekers around the UK", Lancashire Post, August 2020, <https://www.lep.co.uk/news/crime/far-right-group-britain-first-are-targeting-hotels-housing-asylum-seekers-around-uk-2957346>

Number of accounts actioned for hateful conduct (Twitter), number of videos removed for hateful / abusive content (YouTube), and amount of content removed (Facebook) Q1/Q2 2018 - Q3/Q4 2019 (Q4 2019 estimated)*⁸²



Partly as a result of this action, extremists increasingly conduct their activity on online forums such as Gab and 4Chan (27 million and 14 million members respectively).⁸³ This is similarly true of encrypted messaging apps such as Telegram. The growing use of these forums represents a significant challenge to policing. For example, while an extremist preacher might be prevented from entering a country under immigration rules, they cannot easily be prevented from influencing individuals through online chats and forums.⁸⁴ Similarly, individuals lacking substantial financial backing are able to secure considerable influence through free uploads of social media material, and can leverage online followings to secure income through donations.⁸⁵

“Slickly produced videos are being targeted at those susceptible to far-right narratives, but the counter-narrative is unclear.”
 - Counter-extremism expert

⁸² Facebook (November 2019), [Community Standards Enforcement Report](#); Twitter, [Transparency Report: Rules enforcement](#); YouTube, [Transparency Report: Community Guidelines Enforcement](#)

*Q4 figures have been estimated by copying over from Q3 and assuming no change. Given the quarter-by-quarter increases witnessed over the last two years, this means that figures for Q3/Q4 2019 are likely to be underestimates

⁸³ For example, see:

BBC (06 September 2018). [Twitter bans Alex Jones and Infowars for abusive behaviour](#) (Accessed on 16/03/2020)

Alex Jones has subsequently created an account on Gab, named “@RealAlexJones@gab.com”. He has 71,500 followers

⁸⁴ For example, when the de facto spokesperson for Generation Identity (a European far-right network), Martin Sellner, was refused entry to the UK by the Home Office to deliver a speech at a Hyde Park demonstration, his speech was delivered by Tommy Robinson and was subsequently published on the Generation Identity UK and Breitbart websites for international consumption

⁸⁵ For example, see <https://tommyrobinson-therebeluk.nationbuilder.com/donate>

Recruitment and mobilisation

The precise role of the internet and social media platforms in securing recruits for extremist causes is contested. While known far-right terrorists such as Darren Osborne (of the Finsbury Park attack) were known to have become radicalised online, some academic research indicates that a significant amount of the Islamist web presence involves ‘preaching to the choir’ rather than securing new recruits.⁸⁶ A review published by the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (in conjunction with the Community Security Trust) in 2009 found that whilst online channels may often be involved in the process of recruitment, this process must be understood as a process nonetheless anchored in the real world.⁸⁷

“Where radicalisation has a virtual component, that element needs to be seen as part of an iterative process through which events and developments in the real world are fed into cyberspace and vice versa.”

- The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence

Even if technology does not succeed in creating new recruits, it can nevertheless be successful in motivating individuals to take action. For example, major extremist protests such as the “Free Tommy” demonstration were organised and advertised through Facebook and Twitter, with livestreaming and subsequent video uploads to platforms designed to attract more recruits to future events. Similarly, a joint briefing by the Home Office and Department for Education to schools gives examples of the ways in which platforms including Tumblr and Ask.fm were deployed to attract young individuals to join DAESH and other groups in Syria and Iraq.⁸⁸

Direct abuse

The significant expansion in communication channels opened up by the Internet (and social media in particular) has offered extremists new opportunities to directly intimidate and abuse others, including high-profile individuals. In this vein, the Committee on Standards in Public Life concluded that:

“The widespread use of social media has been the most significant factor accelerating and enabling intimidatory behaviour in recent years...[as it creates] an intensely hostile online environment.”

- Committee on Standards in Public Life⁸⁹

The number of people receiving hate messages online is significant, and the increasing use of social media to spread extremism means that those targeted may have little respite. Polling carried

⁸⁶ Hoskins, A.; Awan, A.; O’Loughlin, B. (2009). [Legitimising the discourses of radicalisation: political violence in the new media ecology](#)

⁸⁷ The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence (2009). [Countering Online Radicalisation: A Strategy for Action](#), p. 13

⁸⁸ Home Office / Department for Education. [How social media is used to encourage travel to Syria and Iraq: briefing note for schools](#)

⁸⁹ Committee on Standards in Public Life (December 2017). [Intimidation in Public Life](#)

out on behalf of Stonewall in 2017 found that one in ten (10 per cent) of LGBT people had experienced homophobic, biphobic or transphobic online abuse directed towards them personally in the last month.⁹⁰

There are no centrally published statistics on the proportion of hate crime committed online or through social media channels, preventing analysis of potential rises over time. However, in the year ending September 2019, 17 per cent of all offences classified as “harassment and stalking” were flagged as online crime (rising by two percentage points over the last two years).⁹¹ Though this will include general incidents of harassment and stalking, the fact that it also covers “malicious communications” (code 8R) and “racially or religiously aggravated harassment” (code 8M) makes it a useful proxy for identifying the level of online hate.

⁹⁰ Stonewall (2017). [LGBT in Britain: Hate crime and discrimination](#)

⁹¹ ONS - *Crime in England and Wales: other related tables (year ending September 2019)*, Table F8; ONS - *Crime in England and Wales: Additional tables on fraud and cybercrime (year ending September 2017)*, Table E4

PART TWO: THE GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

4. The national policy context

This section assesses the development of Counter Extremism policy over the last twenty years - within the context of broader efforts to strengthen integration and prevent radicalisation - and considers the barriers to reform. It contends that the ways in which Counter Extremism, integration and counter-terrorism share overlapping objectives, have led to confusion and a lack of focus regarding outcomes and activities.

Prevent: a potted history

Origins of Prevent: 2003-2010

It is impossible to assess the impact of counter-extremism policy, without understanding the role played by the Prevent programme. Prevent aims to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. It is part of the Government's wider counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST) and sits alongside three other key principles, each with a specific objective – Pursue, to stop terrorist attacks; Protect, to strengthen our protection against a terrorist attack; and Prepare, to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack.

Prevent came into being following the 'homegrown' July 2005 attacks on London with a broad aim of preventing people from becoming radicalised in the first place. At the time, the programme was jointly delivered by the Home Office from a 'security' perspective and by the then Department for Communities and Local Government from a 'community' perspective. The police were charged with leading on downstream disruptive activities while local authorities were tasked with putting in place upstream programmes to support and improve local partnerships with communities, particularly Muslim faith leaders, with an overwhelming concern at the time about the threat of extreme Islamist terrorism. However, the programme subsequently attracted criticism for conflating these two security and community elements of counter extremism. In particular, critics argued that it had led to a 'securitising' of the relationship between local authorities and Muslim communities and an over-willingness to work with organisations that themselves appeared to share extremist views.⁹²

Re-casting of Prevent: 2010-2015

In 2010 the then independent reviewer of anti-terrorism legislation Lord Carlile was asked to review the Prevent programme. In his report, Carlile recommended a sharper distinction between the 'security' and 'community' elements. This led to Prevent becoming a solely Home Office-led initiative. At the same time, Carlile recommended a re-casting of the programme's scope,

⁹² Shiraz Maher and Martyn Frampton, "Choosing our friends wisely Criteria for engagement with Muslim groups", Policy Exchange (2009), <https://policyexchange.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/choosing-our-friends-wisely-mar-09.pdf>

transforming what was previously a narrow focus on opposing violent extremism into a commitment to tackle extremism 'in all its forms'.⁹³

The Prevent Duty and claims of a 'toxic brand': 2015

In 2015, the Government broadened the scope of Prevent by placing 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. This principally took the form of mandatory awareness training for frontline staff on the warning signs of radicalisation and an obligation to act appropriately on any concerns regarding people in their care or that they come into contact with.

The commencement of the Prevent Duty was publicly opposed by a minority of (highly vocal) organisations, who asserted that it targeted Muslims and stifled debate - and also saw the increasing prominence of an active anti-Prevent lobby, with claims that the programme had become 'toxic' within Muslim communities.⁹⁴ In fact, as previous research by Crest has demonstrated, most British Muslims had never heard of Prevent and those that had were broadly supportive of its aims.⁹⁵ In January 2019, during the passage of the Counter-Terrorism and Border Security Act 2019, the Government appeared to bow to pressure from critics and committed to carrying out a fresh independent review of Prevent. However, following controversy over the government's designated choice of reviewer, the beginning of the review has subsequently been delayed.

Integration policy

Alongside the development of the Prevent programme, there has been a long-standing debate about the purpose, role and impact of integration policy in the UK - and how it meshes with counter-extremism policy. The first explicit integration policy (then termed 'community cohesion') arose following the riots across a number of Northern towns and cities in 2001 and the subsequent reports by Ted Cante and others, which referred to communities living 'parallel lives'.⁹⁶ Initial pathfinder projects were established by the Home Office and these developed, later under the Department for Communities and Local Government, into a broader policy framework which included guidance and funding for local authorities.

After 2010, the Coalition government promised to adopt a more robust policy on integration. In 2012 the then Prime Minister David Cameron made a speech in which he outlined the case for a

⁹³ "Prevent Strategy", HM Government (June 2011), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy.pdf

⁹⁴ "UK anti-radicalisation Prevent strategy is a 'toxic brand'", Guardian, March 9, 2015 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/09/anti-radicalisation-prevent-strategy-a-toxic-brand>

⁹⁵ Crest Advisory, "Listening to British Muslims: Policing, extremism and Prevent", 2019, <https://www.crestadvisory.com/post/listening-to-british-muslims-policing-extremism-and-prevent>

⁹⁶ 'Community cohesion: a report of the independent review team chaired by Ted Cante', 2001, <http://tedcante.co.uk/pdf/communitycohesion%20cantlereport.pdf>

more ‘muscular liberalism’ and greater efforts to ‘build stronger societies at home’.⁹⁷ In practice, however, government policy remained relatively light touch until 2016, when a landmark review was carried out by Dame Louise Casey - in which she was heavily critical of government inaction on integration - and a lack of clarity about the purpose of integration policy. Casey argued that part of the reason Prevent had become so toxic within communities was because it had increasingly been forced to step into the void left by the lack of an integration strategy i.e. funding community projects which ordinarily would be considered outside the scope of counter-terrorism.⁹⁸ Following her review, the government published an Integration ‘Green Paper’ in 2018 to ‘tackle the root causes of a lack of integration – including a lack of social mixing in some of our neighbourhoods and schools’...as well as action to reduce hate crime and extremism.⁹⁹

Counter-extremism policy: how we got here

Counter Extremism Strategy: 2015-2016

The development of Counter Extremism (CE) policy - as distinct from integration and counter terrorism - is more recent. In October 2015, the Government published its first CE Strategy, designed to challenge “the full spectrum of extremism: violent and non-violent, Islamist and neo-Nazi – hate and fear in all their forms” and to address the wider harms of extremism, identified as justifying violence, promoting hatred, encouraging isolation, rejecting democracy, and harmful and illegal cultural practices.¹⁰⁰

The strategy promised new targeted powers, such as banning orders, to disrupt extremists who spread extremist views but who had not broken the law. The context for this was the high-profile public activities of Anjem Choudhury, the extremist cleric and leader of the first UK-based proscribed Islamist group, whose supporters had carried out the murder of Lee Rigby. At the time, former lawyer Choudhury had managed to evade disruption (he was later jailed for inciting support for Islamic State) and his group’s deliberately provocative activities were successful in amplifying their message.¹⁰¹

The proposed Counter-Extremism Bill – contained in the Queen’s Speech in 2015 and 2016 – proposed powers to “ban extremist organisations that promote hatred and draw people into extremism; restrict the harmful activities of the most dangerous extremist individuals; and restrict

⁹⁷ Speech by David Cameron, Munich Security Conference, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-munich-security-conference>

⁹⁸ The Casey Review: a review into opportunity and integration, Dec 2016, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/575973/The_Casey_Review_Report.pdf

⁹⁹ Integrated Communities Strategy Green Paper, 2018, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/696993/Integrated_Communities_Strategy.pdf

¹⁰⁰ Counter-Extremism Strategy, HM Government (October 2015), https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/470088/51859_Cm9148_Accessible.pdf

¹⁰¹ Hannah Stuart, ‘Counter-Terrorism and Extremism in Great Britain since 7/7’, Counter Extremism Group, 2020, <https://counterextremism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Counter-Terrorism-and-Counter-Extremism-Since-7-7.pdf>

access to premises which are repeatedly used to support extremism”.¹⁰² However, the strategy was based on a broad understanding of extremism – “vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs” – which, as was made clear by the Joint Committee on Human Rights, at the time, risked capturing legitimate speech.¹⁰³

The Commission for Countering Extremism: 2018-2020

The lack of a precise definition of extremism resulted in a rowing back from the previous strategy. Rather than introduce new powers to disrupt extremists, the government instead established the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) as an independent body in March 2018 – headed by human rights campaigner Sara Khan – to support society to fight all forms of extremism and advise the Government on new policies to deal with extremism. In October 2019, Khan published a report assessing the Government’s delivery of the CE Strategy and setting out an approach based on a new concept of ‘hateful extremism’.¹⁰⁴

The Commission found that the Government’s approach had been “unfocused, unnecessarily broad, and at times confusing” by including within the strategy projects that sit within the remit of Prevent or integration policy. This, the Commission argued, had led to confusion about what is and what is not counter-extremism work, as well as some duplication between the roles of Prevent and Community Coordinators and the programmes they fund. More recently, Khan has gone further arguing that *‘although our country has strong and robust counter-terrorism machinery in place, the counter-extremism infrastructure is ‘weak, disjointed, behind the curve, and it is not operational’.*¹⁰⁵ However, to date, the government has so far failed to act on CCE’s report or Khan’s recommendations.

Why progress has proved so difficult

Politicians and policymakers have generally found it easier to talk about counter-extremism than to proactively drive change. This is to a certain extent understandable. In a liberal democratic society, there will always be limits to how far the state can influence people’s beliefs. But the current muddled approach, whereby counter-extremism overlaps with both integration and counter-terrorism, has left frontline agencies confused about their role. There are a number of factors which explain why progress has been difficult to achieve.

¹⁰² The Queen’s Speech 2015, HM Government, May 2015, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/430149/QS_lobby_pack_FINAL_NEW_2.pdf, p. 8; The Queen’s Speech 2016, HM Government, May 2016, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/524040/Queen_s_Speech_2016_background_notes_.pdf

¹⁰³ Hannah Stuart, ‘Counter-Terrorism and Extremism in Great Britain since 7/7’, Counter Extremism Group, 2020, <https://counterextremism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Counter-Terrorism-and-Counter-Extremism-Since-7-7.pdf>

¹⁰⁴ “Challenging Hateful Extremism”, Commission for Countering Extremism, October 2019

¹⁰⁵ Evidence to the Home Affairs Select Committee, 23rd September 2020, <https://www.parliamentlive.tv/Event/Index/4781d683-b027-43c3-a517-5a6c583c858d>

A contested term

Part of what has made it so difficult for the government to successfully counter extremism is that there is a lack of clarity over what extremism is. The Government's definition of extremism has been widely rejected as overly broad, legally unworkable and not specific enough to be of practical use to frontline agencies, such as the police. This has led to confusion over what counter-extremism work is, a lack of focus on the crucial issue of radicalisation, and a lack of impact.

Extremist expert, Hannah Stuart, has argued that the 2015 CE Strategy did not make a clear distinction between its remit and that of Prevent, especially in the area of tackling the causes of radicalisation.¹⁰⁶ *'This has led to duplication of work, with Prevent Coordinators and CE Community Coordinators operating in local areas and carrying out similar roles'*. A number of CE projects have focused on promoting integration and tackling illegal practices, such as honour-based violence, rather than countering radicalisation per se. At the same time, there is insufficient work being done - whether under the banner of CE or Prevent - to push back against individuals and groups, who, while not advocating violence or terrorism, nonetheless create a radicalising environment by promoting hateful narratives.

Reluctance to have difficult conversations

Tackling extremism is fraught with political sensitivities. MPs - of all political persuasions - have often not felt equipped with either the intellectual framework or the language to engage with the issues in a meaningful way. This has had damaging consequences, often leaving a vacuum of leadership locally, which extremists have been all too ready to exploit.

At the same time, there is a sense that public institutions have too often been willing to turn a blind eye to illiberal practices within minority communities, for fear of causing offence and being accused of prejudice. As former UK Prime Minister David Cameron pointed out, "when a white person holds objectionable views, racist views for instance, we rightly condemn them. But when equally unacceptable views or practices come from someone who isn't white, we've been too cautious frankly – frankly, even fearful – to stand up to them."

Case study: controversy over LGBT lessons in primary schools

In March 2019 a primary school that taught pupils about homosexuality as part of a programme to challenge homophobia was forced to stop the lessons after around 600 children, aged between four and 11, were withdrawn by Muslim parents in protest. Parkfield community school in Saltley, Birmingham, was subject to weekly protests over the lessons, which parents claimed were promoting gay and transgender lifestyles.

¹⁰⁶ Hannah Stuart, 'Counter-Terrorism and Extremism in Great Britain since 7/7', Counter Extremism Group, 2020, <https://counterextremism.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Counter-Terrorism-and-Counter-Extremism-Since-77.pdf>

The case raised difficult questions about the role of the state in balancing mainstream liberal norms and the views of religious minorities. Shabana Mahmood, the MP for Birmingham Ladywood, spoke out after parents in her constituency complained that primary schools were teaching their children about same-sex relationships. She said parents did not oppose sex and relationships education, but “it is all about the age appropriateness of conversations with young children in the context of religious backgrounds”. Mahmood, who had previously backed gay rights legislation in the House of Commons, said the government should ensure the rights of minorities were protected, but that included the rights of people with orthodox religious views, including some Jews and Christians as well as some Muslims. However, the chief inspector of the schools-inspection body, Ofsted, Amanda Spielman, supported the school, saying it was vital children knew about “families that have two mummies or two daddies”

A number of stakeholders noted that a lack of visible political leadership around the protests had left a vacuum for extremists to exploit. For example, the Commission for Countering Extremism documented how Islamist groups, such as Hizb ut-Tahir, had used the tensions to amplify hate against LGBT people, promoting a belief that ‘Western liberalism was a threat to Islam’ and lamenting the response from government and local leaders as ‘slow, insufficient and unfocussed’.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Dame Louise Casey accused ministers of ‘radio silence’ over the protests, following reports that teachers were facing threats of abuse outside the school gates.¹⁰⁸ Indeed it was notable that the most vocal intervention came from the Chief Constable of West Midlands Police, Dave Thompson, who published a blog calling for an end to the protests.¹⁰⁹

Weak understanding of the problem

There remains insufficient understanding of the nature and scale of extremism, the influence of extremist ideologies and what interventions work. This has negatively impacted policymaking and delivery. In particular, the government lacks a detailed understanding of the reach and influence of extremist influencers and organisations, particularly those operating in the online space, and what messages are most resonant. There is also a lack of robust attitudinal data to understand the prevalence of support for extremist ideologies and behaviours across the UK and how they change over time.

Maintaining political will

There is often pressure on governments to make symbolic, short-term and rhetorical commitments to counter-extremism, triggered by negative events such as a violent hate crime or terrorist attack. But there are few pressures for the type of sustained strategic drive for counter-extremism that would make the most difference. Consequently, counter-extremism policy has rarely featured

¹⁰⁷ “Islamist extremists exploited LGBT school teaching tensions to fuel hate - report claims”, Birmingham Mail, Oct 7 2019, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/islamist-extremists-exploited-lgbt-school-17039570>

¹⁰⁸ “Ministers accused of ‘radio silence’ over LGTB protests”, Guardian, 20 Sept, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2019/sep/20/ministers-radio-silence-lgbt-school-protests-birmingham>

¹⁰⁹ “Police Chief calls for an end to LGBT protests”, Birmingham Mail, 21 May 2019, <https://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/midlands-news/police-chief-calls-end-lgbt-16306747>

prominently in mainstream political parties' manifestos or programmes for government. Part of the problem has been an absence of civil-society pressure, though there is now a growing ecosystem of third sector/ campaigning organisations focused on extremism.

Cross-government coordination

Coherent counter-extremism policy needs action from local, regional and central governments, making coordination more challenging. Furthermore, within central government effective interdepartmental working is needed, as a number of government departments have a stake in counter-extremism policy, including education, home affairs and local government. Such coordination is often problematic, and ensuring effective interdepartmental working, both locally and nationally, remains one of the biggest delivery challenges.

5. The policing of extremism

Crest undertook 'deep-dives' within two police forces known to have a challenging extremism profile to better understand stakeholder perspectives around the policing of extremism, as well as structured interviews with national policing leads for extremism and hate crime. Our analysis points to four interrelated challenges:

1. There is **a lack of strategic and operational clarity** around where counter-extremism ought to sit, how it differs from the policing of hate crime and/ or Prevent.
2. The **hollowing out of community policing** has hindered police efforts to identify and respond to extremism within communities - and there is **no agreed approach to engaging local partners.**
3. Forces' resources are increasingly stretched, meaning they increasingly **lack specialist skills and capabilities.**
4. There is **no national framework for the policing of protests and demonstrations.**

Lack of strategic and operational clarity

A common theme in our interviews was that frontline officers lacked clarity on what constitutes extremism, hate crime, and where the boundaries lie between the two, including a number of officers who noted the absence of a legal definition of extremism.

"There isn't a clear understanding. The comfortable place to land it is in the terrorist world... To me it's a very nebulous notion that is used to suit the prevailing temperament of the government or law enforcement agencies."

- National Policing Lead

"We need a proper set of parameters, really well thought out parameters of what constitutes a hate crime and the definition of hate crime, because there's too much interpretation into it"

- Hate Crime Officer

"Do I think the definition [of extremism] is clear? I think there is always room for further clarity around it. Do I think that everyone in policing understands what extremism means? No."

- Officer with Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit

This confusion appeared to extend to the work of individual officers, a number of whom appeared unclear about their role in tackling hate crime and extremism. Some described their role as primarily focused on 'upstream' activity, for example, raising awareness within schools and universities, whereas others emphasised more harder-edged policing, such as the disruption of known extremist networks. Concern was especially strong for officers 'on the beat' who some of

our interviews felt lacked a consistent level of training and knowledge to make these subjective decisions, but who are also in a prime position to identify and respond to extremist ideology and behaviours in the community before it can escalate. It was put to us that, particularly in the case of extremism, if the signs are not recognised by the police, individuals were likely to ‘fall through the cracks’.

“Where partners are concerned, Prevent has also become confused with cohesion and hate crime. We completely understand the cross-overs, but this somewhat dissipates meaningful conversations.”

- Regional Prevent lead

It is important to point out that the police’s interpretation of the local extremism picture often differs from local government partners. Fieldwork carried out by Crest previously has revealed that civic leaders tend to emphasise the extreme right wing threat whereas the police have historically focused more on extreme Islamism. In Manchester we were told by local officers that they had been warned not to intervene in a Mosque suspected of being involved in radicalisation by the local authority, for fear of undermining ‘community cohesion’. This decision was only reversed following a protest by the English Defence League outside the Mosque.¹¹⁰

Hollowing out of community policing and setting responsibility locally

Proactive community policing is central to combating extremism. Successfully done, it enables officers to build an up-to-date intelligence picture, using their relationships within the community to identify tensions early on and get ahead of them. It also allows for partnerships to be built with community organisations, providing opportunities for safe discussion of controversial issues and credible voices to be heard, rather than just the loudest.¹¹¹ In both our ‘deep-dive’ police forces, police officers identified proactive work in the community, including in schools, as an asset and key part of their role in tackling extremism.

“Since I left neighbourhood policing, neighbourhood officers have been reduced quite considerably ... It’s not good. It reduces the chance of getting intelligence from the local community. It reduces the chance of police officers alongside PCSOs proactively going out there and seeing what is happening in the communities.”

- Officer with Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit

¹¹⁰ Unpublished Crest research on Prevent - funded by the Dawes Trust, 2019

¹¹¹ Hannah Stuart, ‘Community Policing and preventing extremism: lessons from Bradford’, Henry Jackson Society, 2015 <http://henryjacksonsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Community-Policing-and-Preventing-Extremism.pdf>

"The stuff that really matters is the stuff that doesn't get noticed by anybody. I mean, at 6 o'clock in the morning, I'm getting up and going to a school assembly to speak to a group of naughty kids."

- Hate crime officer

However, during the course of our field-work, we heard time and again that community policing has been hollowed out, which has hampered the police's ability to identify and respond to extremism locally, with one officer saying that community policing was a "myth".

"The general consensus I get is that departments are better staffed than the frontline sometimes."

- Officer with Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit

There was a widely held perception that there were not enough officers and insufficient resources to make more of an impact in this arena. This poses challenges for law enforcement agencies unable to clearly identify networks of individuals, and unable to insulate people from risk. They are also likely to have been exacerbated by the degradation in policing intelligence that has occurred since 2010.

"I think there needs to be more proactive work really, in my opinion in going out there and educating the public and and being the voice out there about Prevent and trying to encourage referrals ... I think that needs to be done more."

- Neighbourhood police officer

The officers we spoke to were also keen to point out that the police cannot solve these problems alone - that other agencies will often be better placed to deliver effective interventions. In particular, many officers argued that schools and universities ought to form a key part of the response. Yet, currently, many argued that when it came to responding to hate crime and extremism, the overwhelming burden fell on the police.

"It's sort of a rock and a hard place really. I think, actually, we shouldn't be dealing with this, but if we didn't deal with it, then nobody's going to deal with it ... I think a lot of stuff comes into the force control room that isn't a police matter."

- Hate crime officer

"Our mission in Wales is to keep Wales safe in partnership ... we have to do this on a partnership level and it has to be community based as well. You will not defeat extremism or terrorism as a CTU."

- Officer with Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU)

However, partnership working was raised as an emerging area of good practice, including the co-location of support services and the police, allowing officers to signpost and refer individuals to the right services. Productive working relationships with partners, such as schools and local authorities, including sharing data, were identified as important in tackling extremism upstream.

"We might call immigration, we might call mental health services, adult services, children's services, education. We can call in what we need specific to that time."
- Hate crime officer

Counter extremism is not embedded into the work of Safer Neighbourhood Teams

Even where neighbourhood policing remains in place, senior police leaders recognise that there is more work to be done in order to embed counter extremism and counter terrorism within Safer Neighbourhood Teams.

"I still think there's a lot of work to do at the moment with engaging with the frontline officers and trying to encourage frontline officers to be more proactive at and speaking with us as Prevent officers for advice"
- Prevent police officer

Part of the problem is that counter-extremism appears to have very limited impact on a regular beat officer's workload. In some parts of the country this will be unsurprising, but in others — particularly higher risk areas — it is more concerning. As described below, training is patchy, limited and not mandatory, while there is a sense that counter-extremism and counter-terrorism work is perhaps someone else's responsibility.

"Beat officers are distant from counter-extremism; it's seen as the CTU's job, so they are left to get on with it."
- Senior Police Officer

Responding effectively to extremism relies on good community intelligence, but too often, officers are having to rely on anecdote and gut instinct. We did find some examples of good practice. For example, in one of the forces we visited, local officers responsible for community cohesion were regularly providing Community Tension Summaries to the Counter Terrorism Unit. However, there was often not a two-way flow of information between frontline officers and those tasked with countering extremism and terrorism. Consideration should be given to a more integrated system response to tackling hate crime and extremism.

"The structures between hate crime and BCUs and counter terrorism can feel like a big divide."
- Officer with Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU)

Lack of specialist skills and capabilities

A number of the officers we spoke to expressed concern that frontline policing lacked the knowledge and capability to spot extremism. One aspect is the lack of contextual awareness of how national and internal extremism presents itself in the community, especially in forces where hate crime and counter terrorism do not present the same demand pressures on the police.

"The fundamental thing is that the police are not trained from the start on the notion of extremism"

- Neighbourhood police officer

Another aspect is the ability of frontline officers to identify signs of extremism. Whilst it would be unrealistic to expect every officer to understand the nuances of extremist ideology, there was a suggestion that the type of training officers receive is relatively unsophisticated and left them under-equipped to spot groups operating on the margins between legality and illegality. One element of good practice identified was a work-in-progress media library and repository of right-wing extremism that was being trialled for use by police officers. There is scope to provide frontline officers with practical tools to assist them in identifying extremism in the community.

"I think we need more training on every specific ideology. We have general training, where they do a powerpoint about the different types of right wing, left wing, Islamist groups and the symbols that you have to look out for. I just don't feel that there's enough training about individual groups."

- Neighbourhood police officer

Through the lens of terrorism, the role of the police in extremism is narrowly focused and has promoted a siloed and specialist police response. However, the police officer 'on the beat' is situationally placed to tackle extremism locally, but does not always have adequate training or appropriate tools to join the dots. Many officers in our 'deep-dive' areas suggested extremism should be brought within the core duties of policing, including the Prevent programme. In any case, there should be a more joined up approach between frontline officers and officers with specialist roles and knowledge dealing with hate crime, extremism, Prevent and terrorism.

Inadequate resources to respond to changing face of extremism

An important question mark concerning the police response has been whether they have the appropriate resources and tools to keep up with the evolution of extremism. One feature of contemporary extremism has been the "looser, more decentralised" model that has moved online, with social media connecting individuals with extremists and extremist ideas across the country and around the world. There is a pessimism within the police that they can be effective in tackling online extremism. This challenge, which some would call "unmanageable", means that individuals of concern, including lone actors, may not be picked up by the police until much further downstream. The growth of online extremism strengthens the case for a multi-agency response to spread the likelihood of picking up potentially harmful behaviour in the community.

“The internet has given people the platform to voice their concerns and opinions. The internet is far different from a street corner.”

- Frontline officer and Prevent Champion

“The internet is not only used more, but it is used in a more sophisticated way. This is deeply worrying.”

- Frontline officer

No national framework for the policing of protests and demonstrations

A key dimension of policing extremism is public order policing, which requires a complex balancing of rights and protections. On the one hand, the police have a duty to facilitate free assembly and legitimate political protest. On the other hand, those rights need to be weighed against the need to protect the public from harm, for example, arising from the risk of violent protest and hate crime.

Many of the senior officers we spoke to felt that there was little clarity for Police Chiefs when it came to the policing of extremist protests. Inevitably this has led to variation in how different forces have attempted to approach these trade-offs.¹¹² For example, South Yorkshire Police responded to a growth in Far Right protests in Rotherham in 2014 by seeking to establish an ‘Advisory Panel’, to act as a mechanism for community consultation on public order policing. The Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) - who played a prominent role in the decision - argued that the panel would be able to offer independent and objective input on the policing of assemblies and processions in Rotherham, though it would have no statutory powers and would not itself be able to prohibit marching routes.

Around the same time, the then Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police took advantage of civil injunction powers contained in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 to prevent Paul Golding and Jayda Fransen of Britain First from entering and filming inside mosques within Luton in 2015. The court agreed injunctions against so-called ‘mosque invasions’; against distributing materials likely to stir up racial hatred; against causing harassment, alarm or distress to any person through the use of threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour; and an injunction, lastly, against the carrying of banners or signs worded ‘No more Mosques’ or similarly in Luton on the day of the protest. But there were no injunctions against the leadership of Britain First from entering Luton and taking part in the protest they had organised.¹¹³ The outcome of this case stretched beyond Bedfordshire - disrupting a major source of extremist content and advertising online and arguably contributing to Britain First’s demise. The Chief Constable in question made clear that the decision to seek such a legal remedy was taken by him alone.

¹¹² Grace, Jamie, “Balance of rights and protections in public order policing: A case study on Rotherham”, Sheffield Hallam University, 2018, <https://shura.shu.ac.uk/19069/3/Grace%20Balance%20of%20rights%20and%20protections%20in%20public%20order%20policing.pdf>

¹¹³ See Chief Constable of Bedfordshire v Golding [2015] EWHC 1875 (QB) at paras. 13 and 29-35, and Thirlaway, V., Case Comment: “Chief Constable of Bedfordshire v Golding [2015] EWHC 1875 (QB)”, (2016) 22(1) EJoCLI (online).

"Other forces were supportive in principle, but [the decision to seek a legal injunction] was very much my decision, made without reference to national guidelines"

- Former Chief Constable

The approaches taken by South Yorkshire and Bedfordshire are by no means typical. Other forces have chosen to take a more permissive approach to the policing of extremist protests. This speaks to a wider issue: there is currently no means of coordinating approaches to the policing of protest at force level and no repository of good practice from which Chief Constables can draw on.

PART THREE: THE WAY FORWARDS

6. Principles for reform and recommendations

The threat from extremism is real and growing. The UK has seen rises in hate incidents overall, with spikes following major events and continues to face a major challenge from terrorism. But, as this report has shown, the UK's ability to counter extremism has been hampered by:

- a lack of clarity and consensus over what extremism means;
- weak understanding of the nature and scale of extremism, the extremism of extremist ideologies and what interventions actually work;
- confusion over where counter-extremism sits, between integration on the one hand, and counter-terrorism, on the other, which in turn has left key delivery agencies, such as the police unsure about their remit and role;
- insufficient resources and powers in disrupting the activities of extremist groups and individuals that are increasingly skilled in staying the right side of incitement laws.

The government's 2015 Counter Extremism Strategy has recently expired. Meanwhile, integration has stalled and an independent review of Prevent is imminent. What is needed now is a clear vision, which brings clarity to an overly cluttered and confused landscape. This report argues that this ought to be based on the following four principles:

- Shared understanding of the problem
- Clear objectives
- Accountability
- The right tools

Shared understanding of the problem

A precondition for success is the ability to agree a common definition of the problem and build consensus around key priorities for action. In line with this principle, the most pressing priorities for government are to:

- **Agree a common definition:** the government's definition of extremism has been widely rejected as overly broad and of little practical use. We recommend that the government immediately adopts the Commission for Countering Extremism's definition of 'hateful extremism' and task the Commission with producing an annual 'state of extremism' report, which is presented to Parliament.
- **Strengthen the evidence base:** the Home Office should establish a research fund - into which universities and civil society organisations would be able to bid - to strengthen the evidence around what does and doesn't work in countering extremism.

Furthermore, in order to improve the quality of data, the Home Office should consult on:

- Commissioning an annual survey to understand the prevalence of support for extremist ideologies across the UK and track sentiment over time.
- Requiring the police to include an ‘extremism’ flag to hate crime (and other) incidents, where there is evidence that the offence has been motivated by extremist ideology.

Clear objectives

The government needs to set out what it wants to achieve in relation to counter-extremism, including the role it expects key agencies, such as the police, to play. We recommend that the government:

- **Urgently publish an update to the 2015 Counter Extremism Strategy**, which is now out of date and expired.
- Publishing an updated strategy is also an opportunity to **clarify that the primary goal of Counter Extremism policy is to reduce the number of people being radicalised into terrorism**. Accordingly, counter-extremism should sit clearly within the counter-terrorism sphere, as part of a (broadened) Prevent strategy, rather than seeking to sit separately and/or straddle integration and counter-terrorism.
- In parallel, **the College of Policing should publish and disseminate guidance on the police’s role in preventing and countering extremism**.

Accountability

It is vital that the different parts of government - and their respective delivery agencies - are clear about their own role in tackling extremism. We recommend:

- **A Cabinet Minister specifically focused on Counter Extremism:** the government should designate a cabinet minister with inter-departmental responsibility for counter-extremism to coordinate and drive progress across government.
- **A National Policing Lead for Counter-Extremism:** the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) should make clear that the national Prevent Lead is responsible for coordinating counter-extremism efforts across the 43 forces.

The right tools

Our field-work has exposed a lack of knowledge and specialist training in identifying and responding to extremism, both offline and online. We recommend:

- **New specialist training programme for frontline officers:** the College of Policing should invest in a training programme for front-line police officers in identifying and responding to extremism within their communities.
- **Establish a national framework for the policing of extremist protests.** The government should ask HMIC undertake a thematic inspection of public order policing, with a view to establishing an agreed framework which balances the legitimate right to protest against the need to protect local communities from harm.

The police cannot solve this problem alone. Tackling extremism will also require a much broader societal effort, using all the tools at government's disposal. As a priority, this should include:

- **Expediting legislation to regulate internet platforms**, which makes clear companies - rather than the police- are responsible for taking robust action to counter illegal content and activity. A new regulatory framework will need to be overseen by an independent regulator, which will set clear safety standards, backed up by reporting requirements and effective enforcement powers.
- **A charter for civil discourse**: the Commission for Countering Extremism (CCE) should work to build a cross-party consensus behind a charter for civility within public discourse, to 'lower the temperature' of debate (including online) and reduce toxicity.
- **Re-energising the integration agenda**. Since the publication of the Integration Green Paper in 2018, this agenda has stalled - it ought to be re-energised and explicitly prioritised.

We do not yet think the case has been made to justify further legal powers to disrupt extremist activity, for example, to designate certain individuals or groups as 'extremist', outside of those that already exist to proscribed terrorist organisations and/ or incite violence. However, we recommend that government tasks the Commission for Countering Extremism with undertaking an:

- **Annual review of disruption and enforcement powers**. This should be led by the Commission for Countering Extremism, in consultation with the NPCC, College of Policing and Counter Terrorist Policing.

ANNEX

Methodology

This report is based on four phases of inquiry:

1. Desk-based research, including a structured literature review, analysis of publicly available data (hate crime, terrorism etc) and social media analysis.
2. Field research - two deep dives in police force areas (including focus groups with Prevent Champions, Safer Neighbourhood Teams and in-depth interviews with senior officers).
3. Expert input, including from national policy makers, senior police officers, academics, MPs and former extremists.
4. Primary research to capture community perspectives, including a public poll.

Desk-based research

Structured literature review

Drawing on a combination of academic and grey literature, the project team conducted a targeted review of literature focusing on the following thematic areas: (i) the definition of extremism (ii) the scale of extremism (iii) the changing nature of extremism.

Social media analysis

Analysis was based on an analysis of online toxicity in the days leading up to and following major terrorist incidents.

Data analysis

The project team analysed trends in hate crime, terrorism, Prevent and Channel referrals and other proxy indicators of extremism.

Field research

Deep dives in two force areas

The project team conducted two deep dives within forces identified with a challenging extremism profile. Each deep dive consisted of a range of structured interviews, focus groups and meeting observations. The team engaged with a range of stakeholders, including:

- Counter extremism and terrorism Officers
- Prevent Champions
- Hate Crime and Community Cohesion Officers
- Community engagement officers (police and/or local authority) and partners

Expert input

To steer the project and avoid duplication, Crest sought input from a range of national experts, including Sara Khan, Sir Mark Rowley, Dame Louise Casey, Jon Butcher and Mark Hamilton.

Community perspectives (primary research) polling and focus groups

Public poll

Crest commissioned YouGov to run a nationally representative poll of the general public to test people's experience of extremism in Britain. A full list of the questions asked is provided below.

Depth Interviews

Crest conducted a number of depth interviews with senior stakeholders including two former extremists (interviews conducted off the record to protect the anonymity of participants) and former MP Barron Mann in his role as Government Adviser on Anti-Semitism.