

FROM CRIMINALS TO TERRORISTS AND BACK

QUARTERLY REPORT 2018 GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND



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Quarterly Report: Great Britain and Ireland

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The most well-known ISIS terrorist atrocities in Europe, including the 2015 Paris and 2016 Brussels attacks, saw individuals who in the past had been involved in organized crime and illegal trade graduate into the ranks of the world's most successful terrorist organisation. **It is now widely assumed that Europe's terrorists are no longer radicals first and foremost but criminals who turned to political violence at some stage throughout their ordinary crime careers.** Thus, a threat emanating from the "crime-terror nexus" hangs over Europe. GLOBSEC, an independent, non-partisan, non-governmental organisation which aims to shape the global debate on foreign and security policy, responded to this threat by developing a research and advocacy project aimed at addressing the "crime-terror nexus" in Europe. **Our project titled *From Criminals to Terrorists and Back?* will:**³

1. **collect, collate and analyse data on terrorism convicts from 11 EU countries (Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK)** with the highest number of arrests for terrorism offences. We will investigate whether these individuals had prior criminal connections, and if so, whether a specific connection to illegal trade is a precursor to terrorism, and to what extent this trade funds terrorism. In short, we will check whether crime-terror nexus exists and how strong it truly is.
2. **disseminate project findings at high profile GLOBSEC Strategic Forums (GLOBSEC Bratislava Forum, TATRA Summit, Chateau Bela conferences) and other internationally acclaimed gatherings** which attract decision makers, experts, private sector and law enforcement representatives, while also incorporating their expert level feedback into our work.
3. **help shape and strengthen the European counter-terrorism efforts by providing tailor made solutions on combating crime-terror nexus and terrorist financing via education and awareness, and advocacy efforts involving decision makers and security stakeholders in the 11 targeted countries.** This line of activity directly links the project to the widely acclaimed work of the GLOBSEC Intelligence Reform Initiative (GIRI), led by Sec. Michael Chertoff, which is involved in developing and promoting more effective transatlantic counter-terrorism solutions.

1. Introduction

This quarterly report refers to data collected⁴ in relation to the island of Ireland and Great Britain. Throughout the report, the islands of Ireland and Britain will be treated as separate entities, with data from each described separately.

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³ The project is funded under PMI IMPACT, a global grant initiative of Philip Morris International to support projects against illegal trade. GLOBSEC is fully independent in implementing the project and has editorial responsibility for all views and opinions expressed herein.

⁴ Much of the data collection for this report was carried out by Aleksandra Lojek.

Ireland

Based on the profiles, there is evidence of the participants being involved in both terrorism and (non-political) crime. A key issue in the analysis is how these activities are linked both qualitatively and chronologically. **An interesting finding in one of the Republic of Ireland cases is the progression that appears to have occurred from non-political crime to violent extremism.** Whether this can be evidentially linked is unknown, but the individual in question recalls his experience of ideological transition as occurring based on the consequences of engaging in crime. Retrospectively, this forms a coherent narrative for the individual.

Petty crime also features in the life history of the individuals coded in the Republic of Ireland case. In two instances, the offences do not lead to convictions and evidence of such occurrences was gleaned from official (but unverified) sources. In both instances, **social welfare fraud** was the issue in question.

On the question of how strong the link is, so far 100% of the participants have a record of (non-political) criminal offending. However, how this relates to their later extremist activities is difficult to gauge. **There is no evidence of criminal activity carried out with a view to funding extremism or terrorism, nor is there evidence of a coordinated effort to engage in criminal activity** (i.e., group/gang activity). It appears that the individuals coded so far **have engaged in both extremist activity** (including violence and excluding violence) **and ordinary crime, but there is no evidence of a deliberate/planned link between the two.**

Great Britain

To date, 16 individual cases have been analysed for the British section of the research. This includes 10 men and six women. The data analysed for Great Britain to date relates to 15 people with an Islamist/jihadi ideology, and one individual with a nationalistic ideology. This nationalist ideology refers to support for the PKK. **The mean age of the members of this sample is 29.375 and the median age is 25. The mean age of female members of the sample is 28.8 and the median age is 25. The mean age of male members of the sample is 30.33 and the median age is 24.**

From this sample, exactly a quarter have a history prior to 2015 of involvement in non-political criminality. This is significantly lower than the 57% recorded in the ICSR Report looking into this issue.⁵ Of the current sample, one was arrested for burglary, one for violent disorder, one for armed robbery, and the fourth individual for possession of cannabis and a firearm. While there is the presence of a criminal past for these four individuals, the data do not demonstrate that these criminal pasts were precipitating factors for their future involvement in terrorism. Only one individual was involved in any form of fraud that, potentially, contributed to their involvement in terrorism. **For the four individuals with non-political criminal pasts, their sentences ranged from 18 months to 10 years.**

Two members of the sample had previous military experience. Both individuals were in the army; one in the United Kingdom and the other in Iraqi Kurdistan. In addition, **three other individuals had attempted to join the military, but their applications were rejected.** The former member of the UK Army is also classified in the sample with a non-political criminal past.

In the Kick-Off Report for this project,⁶ it was stated that there are significant traces of the crime-terror nexus in the UK, and that also peer-to-peer recruitment into jihadism plays a significant role for those individuals with criminal pasts. **The data collected to date suggests that at least five members of the sample were recruited and/or radicalised as a result of peer-to-peer influences.** Three of these instances relate to the influence of a family member's relationship with the radicalised and/or recruited individual. At this point, it is believed there will be no significant change in these findings as the project continues.

⁵ R. Basra, P. R. Neumann, and C. Brunner, Criminal Past, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New CrimeTerror Nexus, The International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, <http://icsr.info/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Criminal-Pasts-Terrorist-Futures.pdf> (accessed 5.5.2018).

⁶ K. Rekawek, S. Matejka, M. Babikova, T. Nagy and J. Rafay, *From Criminals to Terrorists and back? Kick-Off Report*, <https://www.globsec.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Crime-Crime-Terror-Nexus-update.pdf> (accessed 9.5.2018).

2. What's Coming Next?

Ireland

The data so far are compiled from jihadi arrests in the Republic of Ireland. Given that Jihadi arrestees in Northern Ireland as well as Troubles-related (republican and loyalist) arrestees have yet to be addressed, it is expected that there will be significant changes to the overall findings; however, these findings cannot be assessed as a unified cohort, and so in terms of the jihadi arrests in the ROI, the findings so far are reasonably reflective of the situation as a whole. The only significant change we envisage from the first report is a change in the figures reported, due to the inclusion of new data gleaned from official sources, personal interviews with security contacts, freedom of information requests, and court documents. These changes are visible here:

Arrests under the relevant legislation in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

The data that inform the figures 1 below was collated from open official sources, including freedom of information requests in Northern Ireland, annual government statistics (Republic of Ireland), police reports, and media reporting across jurisdictions. One methodological issue encountered is that reported convictions/arrests in NI are based on the financial year as opposed to the calendar year (e.g., April 2014-March 2015). To deal with this issue, an estimate was made based on the official figures from both years, weighted per quarter.

To date, these are the figures for **Northern Ireland** relevant to our study:

In the 2015-2016 financial year (1 April to 31 March):

- 149 persons were detained under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and 10 applications for an extension of detention, all of which were granted.
- Of the 149 persons detained under section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000, 141 (95%) were held for 48 hours or less. Eighteen persons were charged and 131 were released.
- The 18 persons detained under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 were charged with 36 offences, including three offences of attempted murder, eight explosives offences, and six firearms offences.

- There **was a total of four persons convicted** under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Terrorism Act 2006, or the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 during 2015-16.

In the 2016-2017 financial year:

- 137 persons were detained under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 and nine applications for an extension of detention, all of which were granted.
- A **total of five persons were** convicted under the Terrorism Act 2000, the Terrorism Act 2006, or the Counter-Terrorism Act 2008 during 2016-17.

Fig. 1. Persons convicted in Northern Ireland under Terrorism legislation.

Year	Number of persons convicted of an offence under Terrorism legislation		
	Crown Court	Magistrates' Court	Total
2007	6	1	7
2008	8	1	9
2009	2	1	3
2009/10	4	1	5
2010/11	2	1	3
2011/12	3	4	7
2012/13	7	3	10
2013/14	17	1	18
2014/15	11	4	15
2015/16	4	0	4
2016/17 ⁽²⁾	5	0	5
Apr - Jun	2	0	2
Jul - Sep	2	0	2
Oct - Dec	1	0	1
Jan - Mar	0	0	0

Fig. 1 Source: Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals Service (<https://www.justice-ni.gov.uk/topics/courts-and-tribunals>).

According to the TE-SAT 2016 report⁷, there were 41 terrorism-related arrests in 2015, all related to the security situation in Northern Ireland. TE-SAT recorded no jihadi related arrests in 2015. This report also indicated that there were no convictions in **the Republic of Ireland** for terrorism offences (related) in 2015. However, media reports indicate that two named individuals were arrested and charged with a terrorist financing offence in

⁷ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016*, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2016> (accessed 7.5.2018).

2015, one of whom has been sent forward for trial.⁸ Further media reports indicate that two men (one Irish and one Eastern European) were arrested in 2015 for offences related to terrorism *outside* the state.⁹ Finally, based on Garda (Republic of Ireland police) source information, a single male was detained by AGS (An Garda Siochana) related to ISIS activity and travel issues.

Official AGS statistics¹⁰ report that in 2015 there were 30 persons arrested under Section 30 Offences against the State Act 1939/98 and 20 persons were charged before the Special Criminal Court with offences under the Offences Against the State Act 1939-98. The breakdown is as follows (note these are the number of charges not individuals):

- Persons charged with IRA membership = 16
- Persons charged with explosives offences = 3
- Persons charged with firearms offences = 4
- Persons charged with assisting an unlawful organisation = 2
- Persons charged with directing the activities of an unlawful organisation = 1

According to the TE-SAT 2017¹¹ report, **the Republic of Ireland** reported that there were 16 separatist arrests and one jihadi arrest in the region in 2016. The arrests are categorized as terrorism-related, which is a different categorization to that used in Northern Ireland. The An Garda Siochana annual report indicates that in 2016 a total of 17 suspects were arrested and 12 were charged as a result of anti-terrorist operations.¹²

1. Another key issue in the case of the island of Ireland is the jurisdictional divide that exists given the NI border. To clarify the parameters for the inclusion of data, the following criteria have been applied: Counter

⁸ Roche, B. (2017) Waterford man charged with funding Islamic terrorism. *The Irish Times*, 28 April, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/waterford-man-charged-with-funding-islamic-terrorism-1.3064814> (accessed 7.5.2018).

⁹ Scally, D. (2017) Germany convict IRA man of attempted murder over barracks attack *The Irish Times*, 25 October, <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/germany-convict-ira-man-of-attempted-murder-over-barracks-attack-1.3268280> (accessed 9.5.2018).

¹⁰ An Garda Siochana, *Annual Report 2015*, <https://www.garda.ie/en/About-Us/Publications/Annual%20Reports/2015-Annual-report.pdf> (accessed 6.5.2018).

¹¹ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017*, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat/2017/index.html> (accessed 4.5.2018).

¹² An Garda Siochana, *Annual Report 2016*, <https://www.garda.ie/en/About-Us/Publications/Annual%20Reports/Annual-Report-2016.pdf> (accessed 8.5.2018).

Terrorism Legislation on the island of Ireland is not uniform given the jurisdictional issues created by the land border between the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland and the six counties of Northern Ireland (UK).¹³

2. Within the Republic of Ireland counter-terrorism legislation in the form of the Offences Against the State Acts (1939–1998) was and is the primary means used to address political violence linked to the conflict in Northern Ireland between the various factions of the Irish Republican Army (e.g., the PIRA, CIRA, INLA, RIRA, IRA etc) and Loyalist paramilitary groups (e.g., the UVF, IDA, UFF etc).
3. In response to the changing nature of terrorism, in particular international terrorism and in response to various commitments to the European Commission and the United Nations, the Republic of Ireland introduced the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act in 2005. Additional acts relevant for addressing both domestic and international terrorism include the Criminal Procedure Act (2010), the Criminal Justice Act (2011), the Criminal Justice (Financing) Bill (2013) and the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences Amendment) (2015).
4. Within the UK, counter-terrorism legislation emerged, like in the Republic of Ireland, as a result of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. At the peak of the political violence in the North, specific legislation such as the Northern Ireland Emergency Provisions Act of 1973 was applied to NI only. However, other legislation also existed and was applied to the UK as a whole, but again mostly serving to address the threat from Troubles-related (primarily the PIRA) paramilitary groups. In recent times in the UK, the security and Justice (NI) Acts 2007 and 2013 were introduced as NI-specific legislation to address the (albeit it reduced) security situation in the north of Ireland.

¹³ For a review of relevant legislation in the Republic of Ireland see <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1939/act/13/enacted/en/html> and in the case of Northern Ireland see https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/199879/Final_Version_-_NI_Terrorism_Legislation_Annual_Statistics_2011_12.PDF and for mainland UK see <http://www.legislation.gov.uk>.

5. Over the past 18 years, as a reaction to the changing nature of terrorism, particularly the emergence of international terrorism (along with the decline of terrorism in Northern Ireland), UK counter-terrorism legislation was amended and expanded and now includes the Terrorism Act (2000), the Anti-terrorism Crime and Security Act 2001, the Criminal Justice Act (2003), the Prevention of Terrorism Act 2005, the Terrorism Act 2006 (including United Nations measures), the Counter Terrorism Act (2008) and the Coroners and Justice Act (2009), Terrorist Financing (asset freezing) (2010), the Justice and Security Act (2013) and the Counter Terrorism and Security Act (2015).

While this list of counter-terrorism legislation may seem extremely comprehensive and complex, there is another issue to consider when attempting to understand how we might come to know about terrorist incidences and terrorist individuals on the island of Ireland; **the issue of terrorism-related activity.**

In many instances of political violence, **prosecutions are achieved using non-terrorism-related legislation.** In addition, **offences that are tangential to the preparation, commission and support of terrorism are often charged under non-terrorism-specific legislation. This creates difficulties for: 1. Documenting the number of attacks, 2. Categorising individuals as terrorist offenders and 3. Understanding the linkages between terrorism and general criminal behaviour.**

For the purpose of this research, it is essential to ensure that there is clarity around how we conceive of terrorism (as it relates to the relevant legislation) and relatedly how we choose to include individuals in our data. In this study, all individuals arrested and convicted under specific counter-terrorism legislation will be included in the data. In addition, cases of arrest and conviction of individuals with verifiable connections to terrorist organisations and previous convictions for terrorist offences will be examined to ascertain if their 2015 arrest was related to terrorist activity (to include the commission of and support of). Finally, evidence regarding their detention (e.g., which prison/wing) will reveal if the authorities consider their conviction to be terrorism-related.

In total it is predicated that 35 profiles will be developed across the case of Ireland. The key challenges to data collection relate to access to data, prosecution under (non-

political) criminal code, recognising arrests as being terrorism-related. **In relation to peculiarities and particularities, it has been identified that there is little to no overlap between jihadi and Troubles-related arrestees. Jihadi arrestees appear to be sole actors or appearing in dyads while Troubles-related arrestees are part of a larger, more organised group. Anecdotally, the type of crime committed by jihadi and Troubles-related individuals vary widely** (the former, social welfare fraud, illegal alcohol distillation, and the latter, fuel smuggling, drug dealing, transnational smuggling, etc).

UK

The data analysed to date relates predominantly to jihadi-related convictions and arrests. According to the TE-SAT 2016 report,¹⁴ in total 134 people were arrested in the UK for terrorism-related offences. However, this also relates to violent dissident republican arrests in Northern Ireland. This was previously discussed in reference to the case of the island of Ireland. This figure rose to 149 in 2016, according to the TE-SAT 2017 report¹⁵. At the time of writing, it is believed that about 35 individuals will be analysed in total within the British case. As with any data collection of this nature there are significant challenges faced, as identified above in the Irish case. These include challenges related to access, reliability of data, and identification of cases. However, opportunities also arise. With the surge in terrorist activity in 2017, there has been a concerted media effort across the UK to report on terrorism-related cases, not just those which may be considered “high profile”. With many of the court cases related to the 2015 arrests taking place in 2017 and after, this provides significant opportunities for data collection. Therefore, the availability of open-source data has risen. With reference to peculiarities and particularities, it is noted that of the 16 members of this sample, it appears that seven were radicalised in relation to their interaction with videos, images, or broad grievances, rather than as a result of direct interactions with peers, as was predicted in the *Kick-Off Report*.¹⁶

¹⁴ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2016*, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/activities-services/main-reports/european-union-terrorism-situation-and-trend-report-te-sat-2016> (accessed 4.5.2018).

¹⁵ Europol, *European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017*, <https://www.europol.europa.eu/tesat/2017/index.html> (accessed 4.5.2018).

¹⁶ Rekawek et al, op.cit.

3. Thematic Analysis

Ireland

Education: Conclusions cannot be drawn at this point regarding education levels.

Conversion: One instance of conversion recorded; this took place in prison.

Radicalisation: No common feature.

Foreign Fighters: No evidence of foreign-fighter experience among those arrested for terrorism in 2015.

Lone Actors: The individuals who could be classed as lone wolves (individuals or dyads) were operating in a support role and did not engage in violence.

Financing Terrorism: It is unknown if individuals are financing terrorism-related activities on their own.

Convictions: To date, the data reveals that one individual was killed in theatre, another was convicted on “providing funding for [the] terrorist grouping Islamic State and attempting to collect or receive funding for the group”. In another, the individual was indicted in the US on charges of “conspiracy to provide material support to terrorists and one count of attempted identity theft to facilitate an act of international terrorism”. He was extradited to the US to face these charges. There will be further information on the charges brought against individuals when the data from the Troubles-related arrests is analysed.

UK

As has been stated throughout this paper, the British data is based on a sample of 16 to date.

Gender: In total, there are 10 male members of the sample and six female members (see Fig 2.).

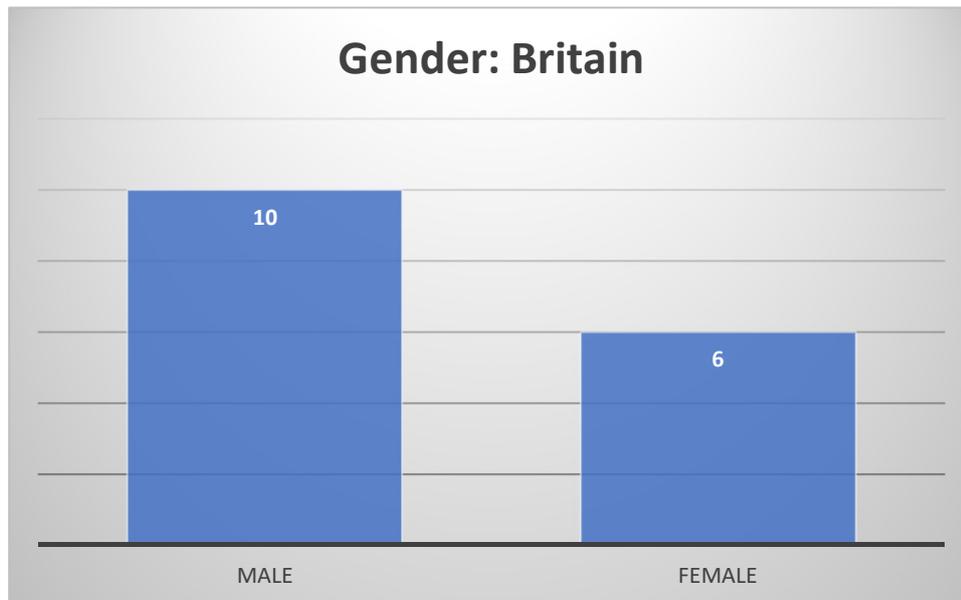


Fig 2. Gender breakdown of British Sample.

Education: There is information on the education background on eight members of the sample. In total, three have completed degrees and another five have some form of university experience.

Occupation: As is shown in Fig 3., seven members of the sample were employed at the point of arrest and a further nine were unemployed. This is a significantly higher rate than the unemployment rates in the UK for that year, which, on average was at 5.0%.¹⁷

¹⁷ Office for National Statistics. *UK Labour Market: December 2015*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/uklabourmarket/december2015#unemployment> (accessed 4.5. 2018)

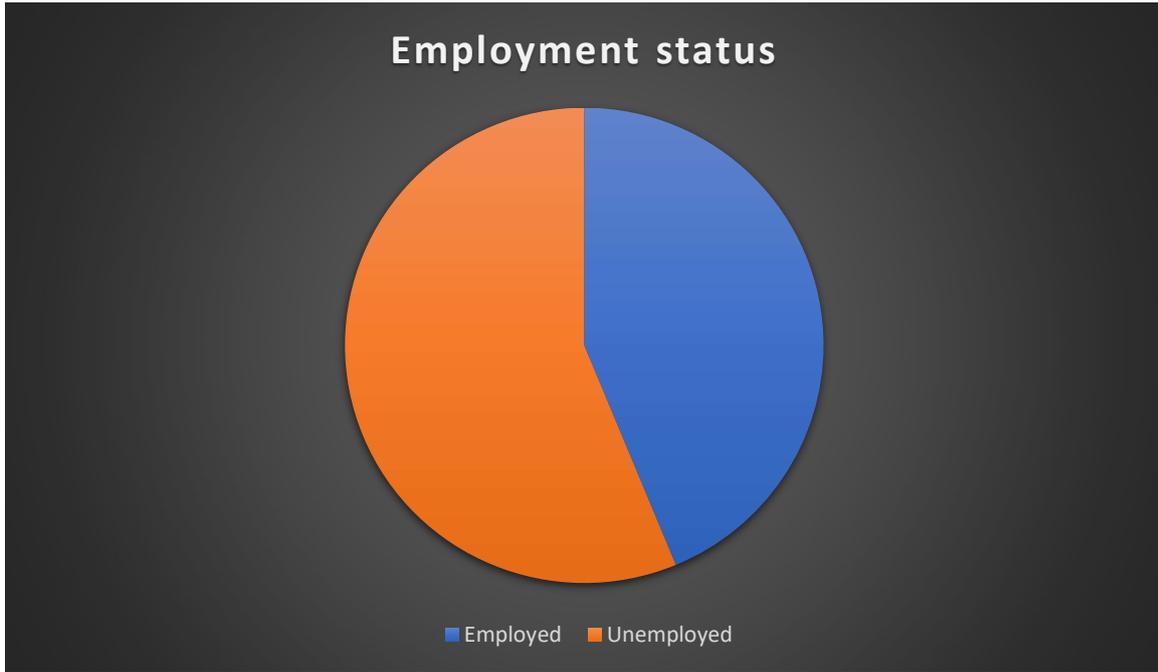


Fig 3. Employment status (Britain).

Town Size: As shown in Fig 4., each individual in the British sample lived in a town with a population higher than 10,000; 87% were from areas with more than 100,000 people; and, 56% lived in cities with a population of more than 500,000.

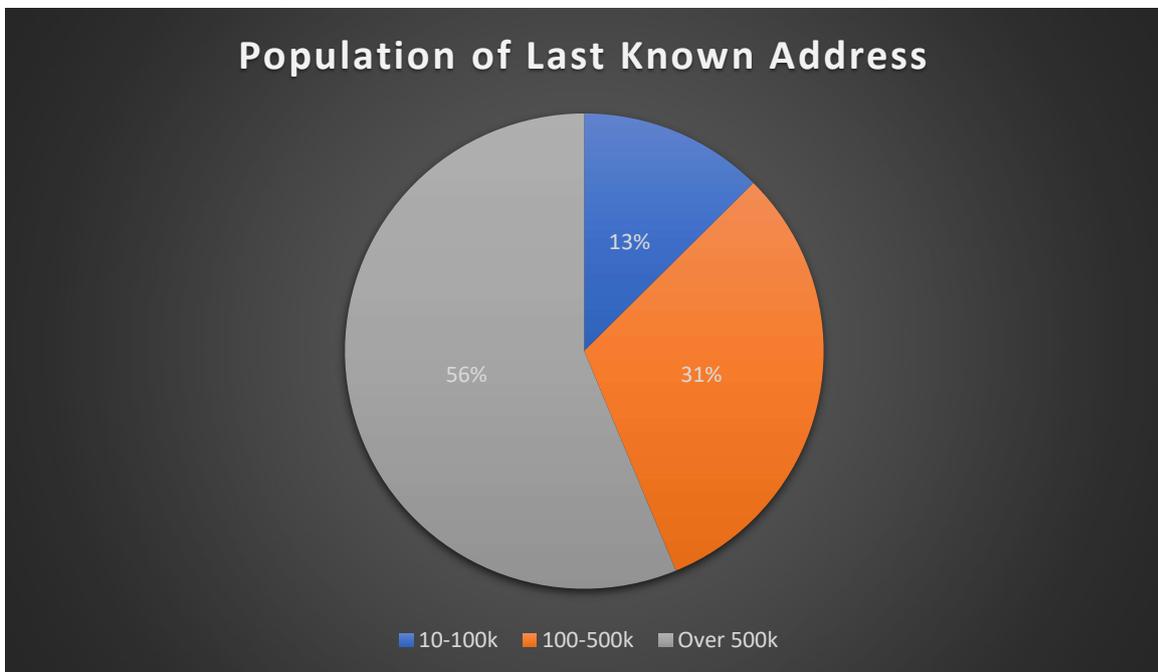


Fig 4: Population size of last known address.

Foreign Fighters: In total, nine members of the sample engaged in or attempted to engage in foreign travel linked to their terrorist activity. Five travelled or attempted to travel to Syria and four travelled to or attempted to travel to Turkey. Other countries visited, either as a final destination or a stop off point, include Morocco, Finland, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands. This demonstrates a significant attempt by most of the individuals in this sample to engage in foreign-fighting activities.

Surveillance: Ten members of the sample were known to be under surveillance prior to their 2015 arrest.

Conversion: There is a total of four religious conversions in our sample. Two of these individuals had a history of prior criminality, and a history of substance misuse. Both individuals were born in the early to mid-1980s and represent half of the overall sample with a criminal past prior to 2015, as well as half of the overall sample with known histories of substance misuse. From these individuals, there is one potential prison radicalisation.

Group Membership and Support: Twelve members of the sample were known to be members or supporters of IS. One individual shifted allegiance from Al Qaeda to IS. One individual supported the PKK.

Ideology: All, bar one, of the members of the sample were deemed to hold a religious ideology (Islam), and the final individual held a nationalist ideology.

Roles: From our sample to date, there are five known fundraisers or financiers. These individuals should not necessarily be treated as a homogenous group. They vary, from relatives sending relatively small amounts of money to their family members fighting in Syria to those who were consistently raising money for and financing terrorist campaigns.

Family Involvement: In total, seven members of our sample had family members who were involved in terrorism. Five members had a spouse involved, two members had a sibling involved, one had a brother in law and three members had a sibling involved in terrorism. Three members of our dataset overall had multiple family members involved in terrorism.

Convictions: When it comes to convictions, six individuals in the sample were sentenced under Section 5 of the 2006 Terrorism Act, “preparation of terrorism acts”. Three were sentenced for funding terrorism, four for membership of a terrorist group, one for attempting to join a terrorist group, and one for encouraging terrorism. There was also one member of the population sentenced for child abduction. The sentences ranged from a 12-month suspended sentence to life imprisonment, as represented in Fig 5. Four of this sample were previously convicted, at least once. These convictions related to burglary, violent disorder, armed robbery, cannabis possession, perverting the course of justice, and firearms possession. Sentences for these four, prior to 2015 ranged from 18 months to 10 years.

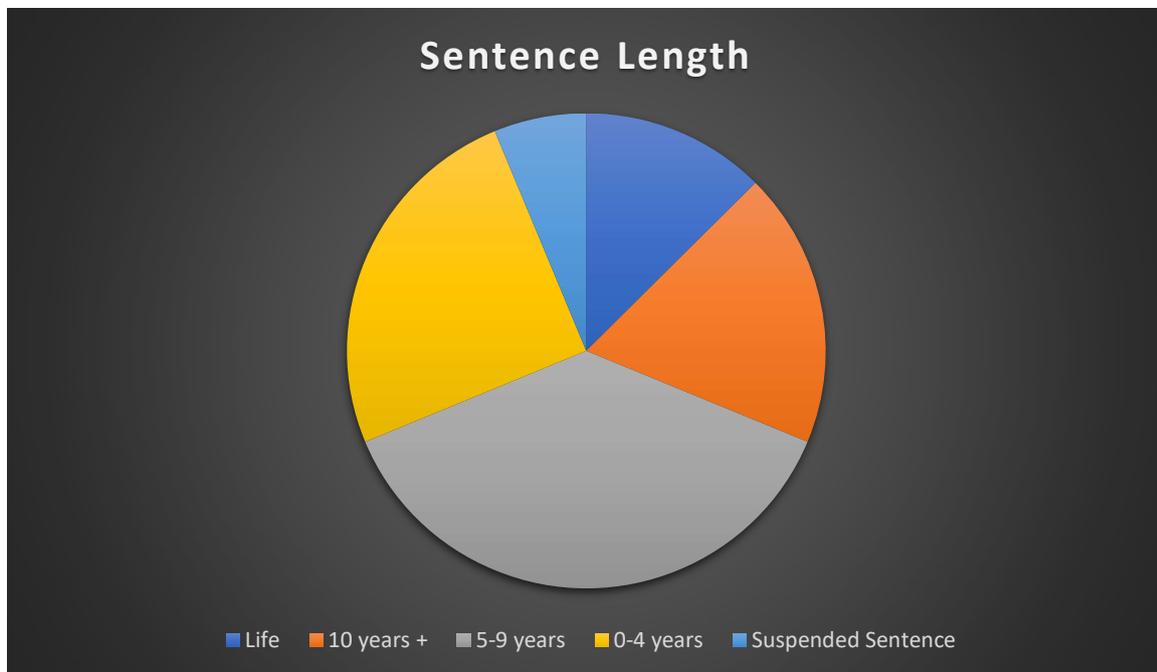


Fig 5: Sentence Length.

4. Conclusions

Within Britain and Ireland there are two clear terrorist threats, namely violent dissident Irish republicanism (VDR) and jihadist terrorism. Both threats have very different patterns in relation to personnel and experience levels. Those involved in VDR-related activity are more likely to be part of a larger organisation than those involved in jihadist-related activity. They are also more likely to have criminality as a cornerstone of their

organisational activity. This can include smuggling, non-political violence, and drug dealing. From the jihadi sample, this criminality is not as likely to play a dominant role.

At this point in time, it is too early to make any concrete recommendations from the analysis of 16 individual cases. However, **it appears to date that the crime-terror nexus for 2015 does not seem to be as significant in Britain as may have been first imagined.** However, as more data is collected, analysed, and audited, this and other findings may be subject to change. The sample collected to date does not fit with the dominant young male profile and includes female and older members from a variety of roles related to terrorist activity.

It may be worth considering how we see the relationship between crime and terrorism to be relevant or linked. This could be considered from a criminological perspective and data drawn from existing (non-political) studies of crime. Transnational relationships seem to be relevant in the case of the Republic of Ireland (jihadi), which is something that may be interesting to cross-check with the rest of the data.