

FROM CRIMINALS TO TERRORISTS AND BACK?

Quarterly Report Vol.2: Great Britain and Ireland



FROM CRIMINALS TO TERRORISTS AND BACK?

INTRODUCTION

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This quarterly report refers to data collected in relation to the island of Ireland and Great Britain. Throughout the report, the island of Ireland and Great Britain are treated as separate entities, with data from each described separately. The aim of this study is to identify individuals who were arrested in 2015 for terrorism and terrorism-related offences in both the UK and Ireland and who were prosecuted prior to the end of 2018.³ The study examines the demographic profiles of these individuals with a particular focus on previous non-political offending.

METHODOLOGY UK AND IRELAND

In order to collate information on individuals arrested in 2015 and subsequently successfully prosecuted by year-end 2018, data were gathered from a range of sources. These sources included media archives (Irish, UK, and Northern Irish newspapers), online news sites (Sky, BBC, RTE, UTV), online newspaper sites (UK, Ireland, NI), statistics office publications (UK, NI, Ireland) online databases (LexisNexis), court reports, police reports (PSNI, An Garda Síochána, UK forces) and interviews with police, department of justice personnel, and academic experts (island of Ireland only).

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GREAT BRITAIN RESULTS

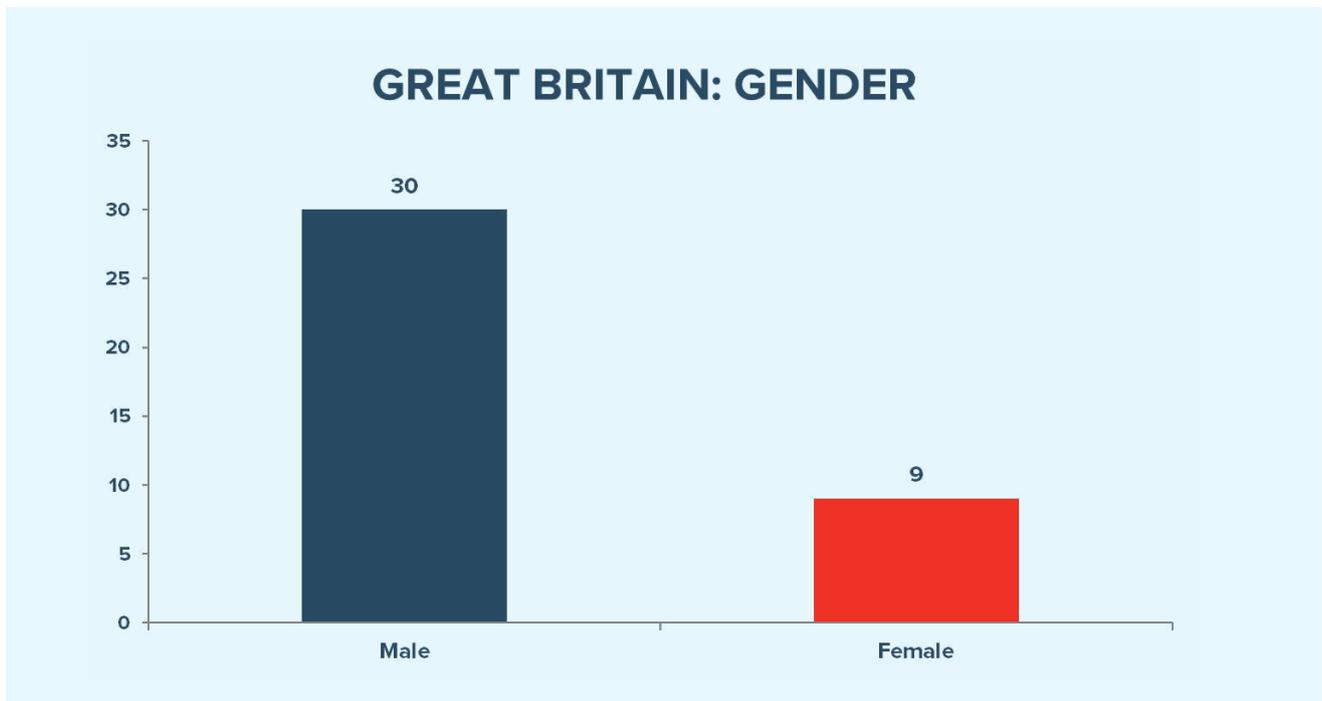
GREAT BRITAIN

The data analysed to date predominantly covers jihadi-related convictions and arrests. According to the TE-SAT 2016 report, a total of 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 report. At the time of writing, it is believed that about 50 individuals will be analysed in total within the British case. To date, a total of 39 individuals have been analysed. 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 Great Britain to report on terrorism-related cases, not just those that may be considered ‘high profile.’ With many of the court cases connected to the 2015 arrests taking place in 2017 and later, this window of time provides significant opportunities for data collection. Therefore, the availability of open-source data has risen. What follows is a breakdown of some of the key findings to date.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

As expected, the majority of individuals identified during data collection were affiliated with or supported Islamist terrorist groups and/or ideologies. In total, 36 individuals adhered to and/or supported this ideology or groups such as ISIS. These results reflect not only the heightened threat posed by Islamist terrorism but also the facilitating effect this can and does have on surveillance and investigations. Of the remaining three individuals identified to date, there was one far-right extremist, one individual convicted of attempting to join the Kurdish nationalist paramilitaries, and a final person convicted of fighting in Ukraine with pro-Russian forces.

Gender: In total, there are 30 male members and 9 female members. None of the female members in the dataset was identified as having participated in any direct forms of terrorism-related violence. However, one of the women identified was convicted of preparing a terrorist attack. The lack of violent activities by female participants should not be viewed in isolation, as only one male member of the dataset was identified as having committed a direct act of terrorist violence.



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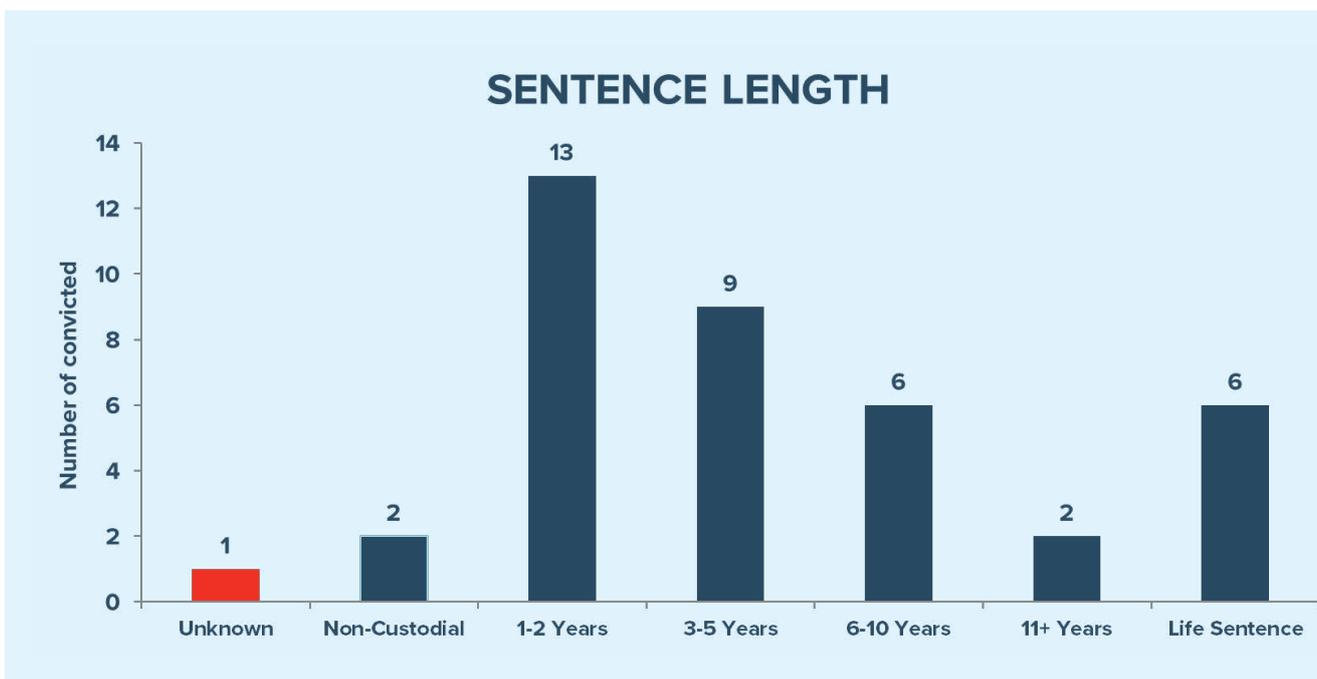
Of the female participants, 3 were convicted of membership or of attempting to join a terrorist group. A further 2 were convicted of crimes related to terrorist financing and 1 of encouraging terrorism. The remaining

as well. Therefore, we need to consider that it may, in some instances, be more of a reflection on the judicial convictions than the totality of an individual's terrorist involvement.

Offence Type	Male ⁴	Female	Total
Membership of a terrorist org.	1	2	3
Attempted Membership	8	1	9
Financing	3	2	5
Terrorist Violence	1	0	1
Possessing Illegal Documents	1	1	2
Preparing for Terrorist attack	5	1	6
Facilitating Terrorism	4	0	4
Encouraging Terrorism	2	1	3
Encouraging Support of Terrorism	6	0	6
Breaching Terrorism Act	1	0	1
Dissemination of Terrorist Literature	2	0	2
Non-Terrorism Related Conviction	0	1	1

2 women identified at this stage of the data collection were convicted of possession of illegal documents and the non-terrorism-specific offence of child abduction. This small sample is not enough to draw any conclusions relating to the wider role of women within terrorist activity and organisations. What it does do is indicate the largely supportive and facilitative role of these 9 women. This facilitative role is similarly reflected in the convictions of the men within our data

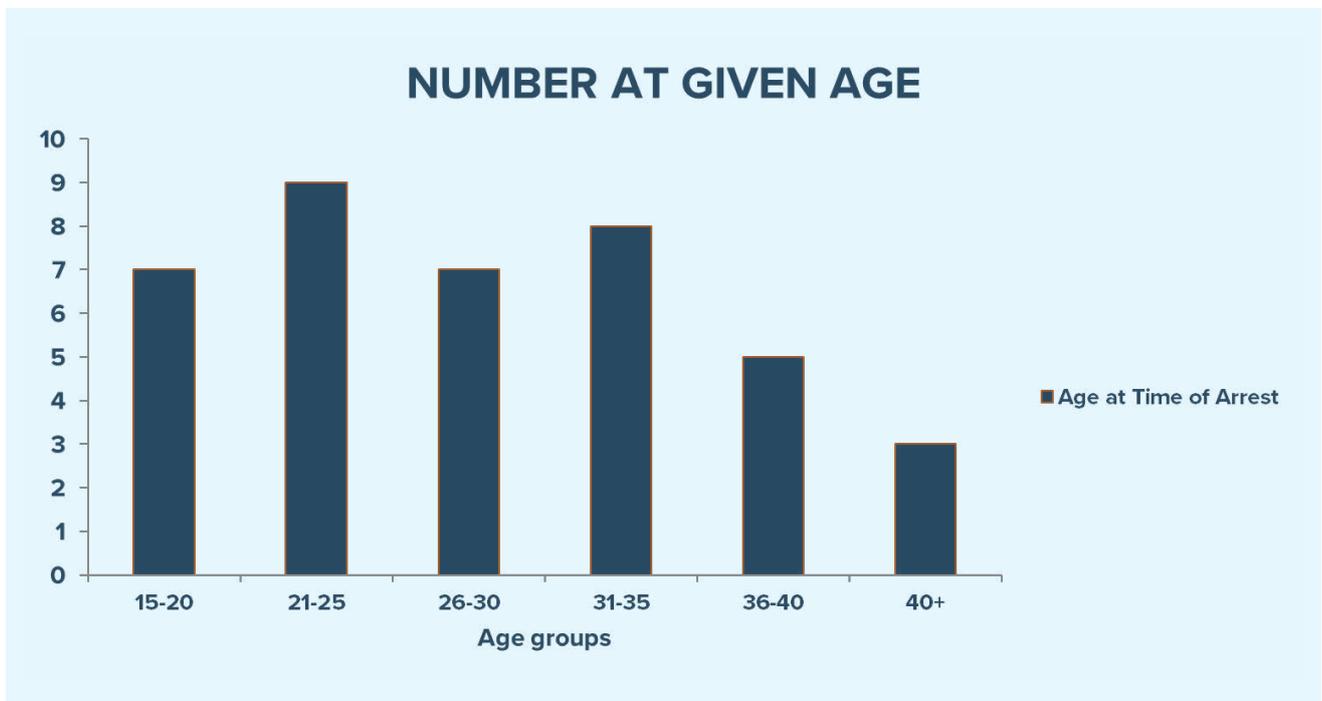
As would be expected with this variety of offences there is a similar heterogeneity of sentences. Of them, 13 individuals received a custodial sentence of 1-2 years, with 2 people receiving a non-custodial sentence and a further 9 receiving a 3-5 year custodial sentence. Only 6 people were given life sentences. With these short sentences in place, there needs to be serious consideration given to post-release reintegration. Evidence-based reintegration practices will benefit the



individuals themselves, as well as the wider society.

Age: Across the terrorism literature, it is regularly proposed that individuals initially become involved in terrorist activity at a young age, generally in their teens or twenties (see, for example, Reinares, 2004). Within our data analysis, it was difficult to identify the age at the point of initial engagement. However, a more reliable measure was the age at the point of arrest. There is a relatively even spread across the age groups, from 15 to 40 years old. As recorded earlier in the report, a large proportion of the individuals identified in this dataset were convicted of a facilitative role rather than membership or direct engagement in terrorist violence. This, therefore, may go some way to explaining the wider age spread than is normally seen.

London and Birmingham. Both cities have a history of various terrorist actors residing there. Yet, terrorism is not isolated to these metropolises. Small ‘cells’ were identified in smaller cities, towns, and regions including Luton, Reading, Walsall, and Bradford. While significantly smaller than London and Birmingham, each of these urban areas has a population of over 200,000 people. Across the dataset, the majority of the individuals identified to date were resident in large urban areas, with two exceptions. These exceptions are connected to a 26-year-old male far-right extremist from Mold in Wales who was convicted of attempted murder, and a 55-year-old woman from Batley, West-Yorkshire, who was convicted of encouraging terrorism after retweeting a speech by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

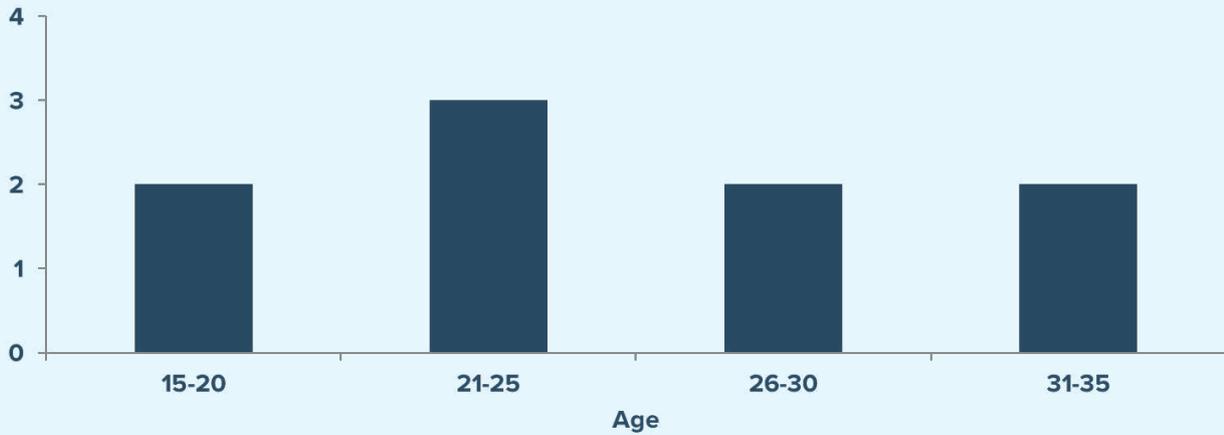


The closest the data get to identifying the age at which an individual joined or attempted to join a terrorist organisation is by analysing the age of people who were convicted of attempting to join a terrorist organisation. When assessing the cases of individuals convicted of this offence in our dataset, this invariably refers to individuals attempting to travel to Syria to try and join the Islamic State. Those who were convicted of this offence were within the younger cohort of the individuals identified, with only 2 individuals being older than 30 at the time of arrest. This, therefore, supports the extant literature on this topic.

Location: As would be expected, purely as a result of population size, the majority of the individuals identified were resident in Britain’s two largest cities,

These cases have been identified to highlight that those convicted invariably come from densely populated urban areas, with a few exceptions. However, they also act as a perfect illustration of the heterogeneity of terrorist involvement. As mentioned above, those convicted of terrorism-related offences include people not only with direct involvement in terrorist violence but also those facilitating and supporting terrorist violence or disseminating terrorist literature and documentation. Therefore, when comparing within the country, as well as across countries, we need to be aware of these differences. This awareness must include an understanding as to what terrorist offences individuals can be charged for across jurisdictions and which offences are unique to certain jurisdictions.

NUMBER ATTEMPTING TO JOIN A TERRORIST ORGANISATION



Town/City	Number Convicted
London	15
Birmingham	7
Bradford	3
Luton	3
Reading	2
Walsall	2
Batley	1
Blackburn	1
Edinburgh	1
Mold	1
Oldham	1
Preston	1
Sunderland	1

Across the dataset, the vast majority of individuals were born in the UK, with only 9 born elsewhere. This

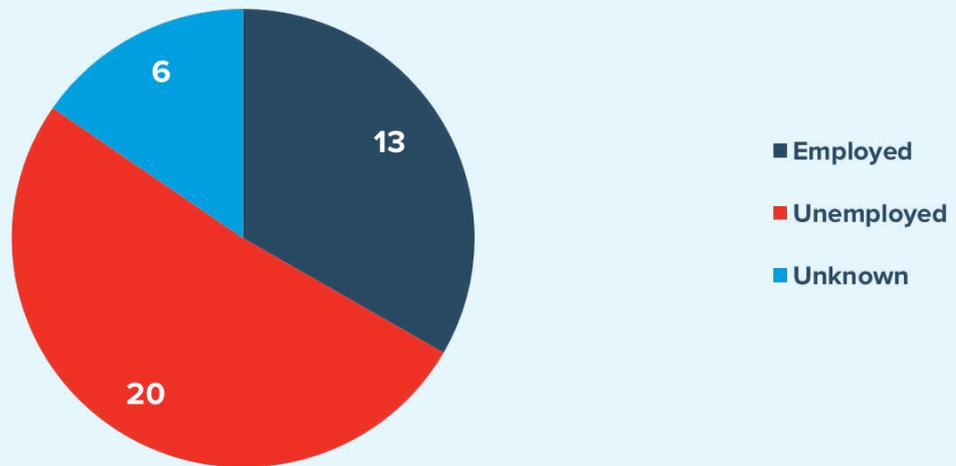
supports the belief that the most significant threat to the UK comes from homegrown domestic terrorists.

Country of Birth	Number of Individuals From That Country
United Kingdom	30
Somalia	3
Turkey	2
Mauritius	1
Iraq	1
Algeria	1
Bangladesh	1

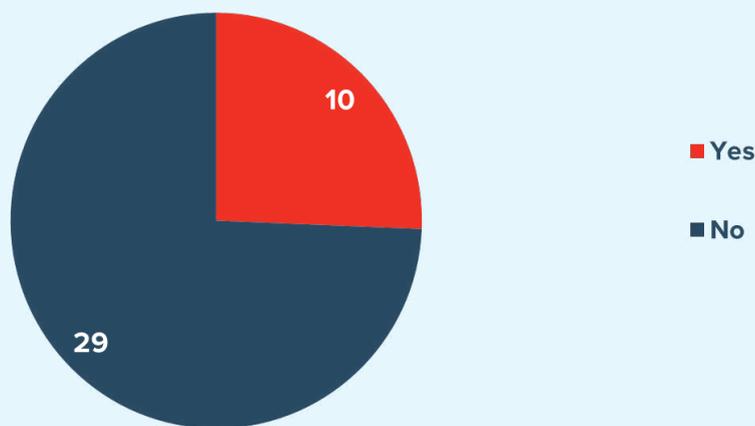
Employment: In total, 51% of the individuals identified were unemployed at the time of arrest. This was about 10 times higher than the unemployment rates within the UK in 2015 (Office of National Statistics). These heightened unemployment rates amongst this sample do not necessarily indicate that involvement in terrorism is caused by unemployment. The exact nature of the relationship needs to be more closely analysed. These findings are supportive of those presented by Thomas Hegghammer in his keynote address at the 2016 international conference of the Society for Terrorism Research, in Leiden. In his address, Hegghammer identified five possible mechanisms that could lead to this correlation. These are objective suffering, lack of

social mobility, horizontal inequality, opportunity cost, and neighbourhood effects (Hegghammer, 2016). His untested hypotheses need to be examined much more closely in light of the British data presented here. In their 2018 paper, Gouda and Marktanner propose that youth unemployment, rather than overall unemployment, can act as a significant determinant of foreign fighters joining IS. Within their analysis they found strong support for the hypothesis that Muslim youth unemployment was a push factor in ‘expat jihadism’ globally, not just in Muslim-majority countries. This was found when controlling for a variety of variables including GDP per capita (Gouda and Marktanner, 2018).

EMPLOYMENT STATUS AT TIME OF ARREST

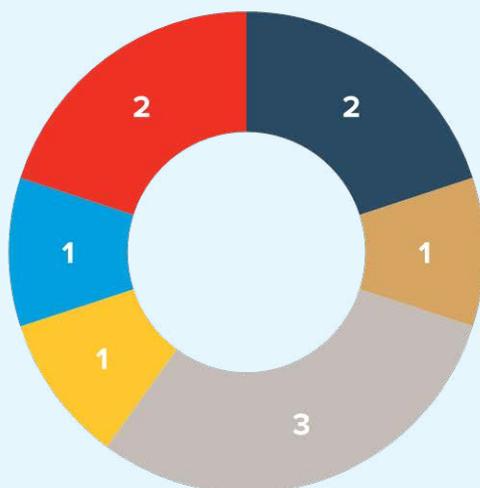


PRIOR (NON-POLITICAL) CRIMINAL CONVICTION



Prior Non-Political Criminality: The nominal aim of this project is to investigate where the individuals identified during data collection had any prior criminal convictions, and if so what forms this prior criminality took. Within the British sample, only 10 people, or about one-quarter of the 39 individuals identified to date, had prior non-political convictions.

As the figure below reveals, there is no single type of crime dominant across the histories of the 10 people identified. Of them, 3 had prior convictions for property crime, 2 for drug-related offences, and 2 for minor financial crime. The majority of the 10 individuals identified were convicted of relatively minor offences, with only 1 individual convicted of anything related to violent crime, namely weapons possession.



- Drug Offences
- Criminal Damage
- Property Crime
- Perverting Justice
- Weapons Possession
- Financial Crime

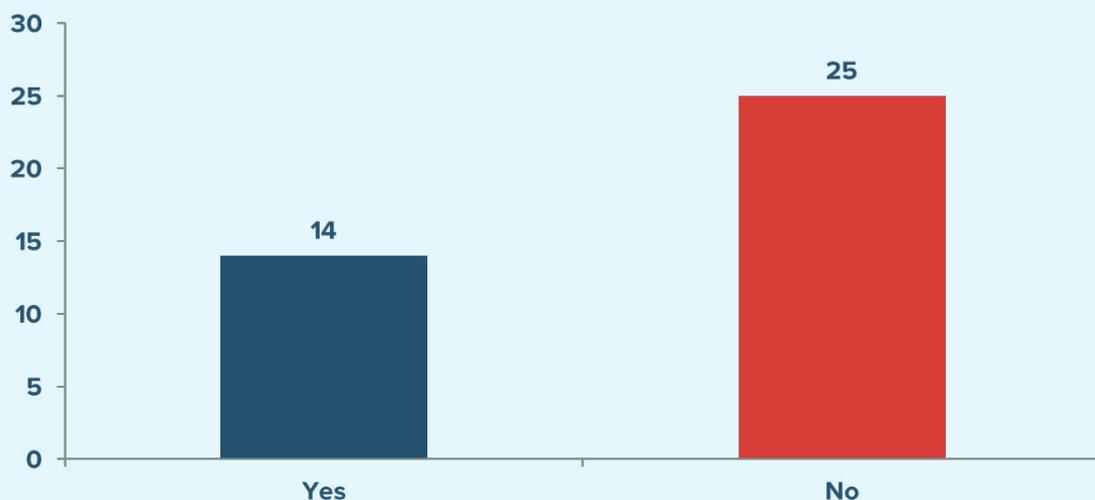
THE ISLAND OF IRELAND

Radicalisation: Across the terrorism literature there are ongoing debates relating to ‘radicalisation’. Within these debates, questions are constantly asked about the role and existence of online radicalisation (see, for example, Bermingham et al, 2009). There are significant restrictions caused by the data-collection techniques adopted in this study to reliably identify whether, first, the individuals can be considered ‘radicalised’ and, second, if this radicalisation included an online aspect. With these restrictions taken into consideration, there are a total of 14 cases in which there was an identified online aspect to the individual’s ‘radicalisation’ or involvement in terrorism. One of the other main radicalisation debates centres on the possibility of radicalisation of prison inmates (see, for example, Mulcahy, Merrington and Bell, 2013). Within this research to date, only 1 individual was identified where there is the possibility of in-prison radicalisation having taken place.

What may be interesting for future researchers is to analyse the presence of the 3 individuals with previous military experience and the three other individuals who attempted to join the military but were rejected. As there were only 6 people identified as having prior military experience or attempted military experience, it does not indicate a pattern of military recruits into terrorist groups. But more in-depth analysis of their radicalisation processes and roles within the organisation could be enlightening.

Surveillance: Of the total sample, 22 were under surveillance prior to their 2015 arrest. For some, this surveillance immediately preceded their arrest. However, for others, the surveillance dated back a number of years. For 7 of the individuals, their surveillance was carried out by security services carrying out undercover investigations, either online or in person. The origins of the surveillance operations resulted from an individual’s affiliation with known ‘radicals’, a family member’s involvement in terrorist activity, or online statements of support for terrorist violence and/or ideology.

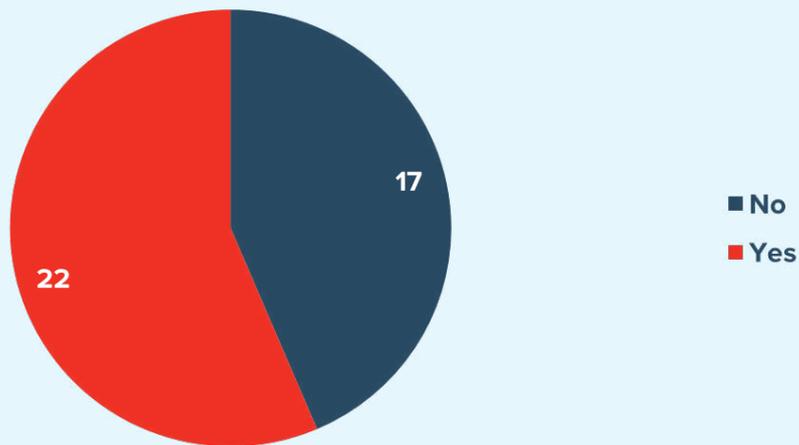
WAS THERE A KNOWN ONLINE ASPECT TO THEIR RADICALISATION?



The International Connection: In the aftermath of the Manchester bombing in 2017, there has been an understandable focus on the international connections of terrorist actors and actions. In this horrific attack that killed 23 people, the attacker, Salman Ramadan Abedi, had reportedly received terrorist training in Libya. It is proposed that the expertise gained in this training assisted in his abilities to successfully execute this attack (Dearden, 2017). Within our data, there is no indication of individuals who had received training from abroad to carry out attacks in Britain. Of the total, 13 were attempting to travel to Syria to engage in terrorist violence there but this does not necessarily equate to their desire to engage in similar violent activity in the UK upon their return. There was also 1 individual who

utilised his terrorist connections in Syria and elsewhere to facilitate the travel of others to Syria to fight for IS. As has been stated previously, these data are preliminary. The next phase of data collection will focus primarily on those British individuals killed while fighting for IS in Syria. With this international emphasis in the next phase, the final findings concerning the international connections of the identified individuals are likely to change.

UNDER SURVEILLANCE PRIOR TO ARREST?



RESULTS

Initial data gathered for this project estimated that about 30 cases of terrorism-related arrests and prosecutions would be identified across the island of Ireland for the 2015 calendar year. To date on the island of Ireland, researchers have verified 20 arrests/prosecutions: 3 related to Islamic-inspired violence and 17 related to what we might broadly call Troubles-related political violence. Not all of these individuals were arrested or charged under terrorism legislation.

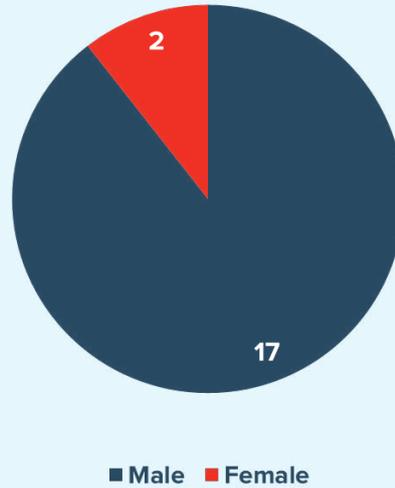
In Northern Ireland, of the 150 or so individuals detained under Section 41 of the Terrorism Act 2000 in the 2015 calendar year, only 5 were charged under the same act (PSNI, 2016) (extrapolated from financial to calendar year). Official AGS statistics reveal that in

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. Of these charges, only 19 are directly related to terrorism ('membership of a proscribed organisation', 'assisting an unlawful organisation', and 'directing an unlawful organisation'). Therefore, in the case of the island of Ireland for the 2015 calendar year, it appears that in this study we have accounted for 90% of the relevant cases. The data collection difficulties in the case of the island of Ireland relate primarily to the likelihood of having arrests/convictions documented as being terrorism or terrorism-related given the varied legislation available for prosecution purposes. This is primarily an issue for Troubles-related cases and not for Islamic-related cases.

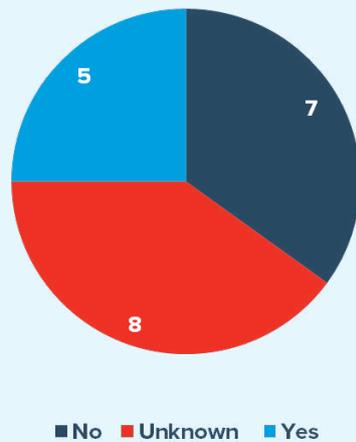
Subjects' Year of Birth*	
Individual	Year of Birth
Subject 1	1944
Subject 2	1947
Subject 3	1954
Subject 4	1958
Subject 5	1965
Subject 6	1967
Subject 7	1968
Subject 8	1971
Subject 9	1971
Subject 10	1974
Subject 11	1976
Subject 12	1977
Subject 13	1982
Subject 14	1991

*There are 3 cases with an unknown date not included

GENDER



HISTORY OF (NON-POLITICAL) OFFENDING



A significant issue for the collection of data across the island of Ireland is media coverage devoted to the Islamic type as opposed to Troubles-related cases. We know from the academic literature that in the US and UK, Islamic-linked terrorist attacks receive significantly more media coverage (375% more) than other cases (e.g., extreme right-wing) (Kearns, Betus and Lemieux, 2017). There is no documented evidence regarding media coverage of terrorism and political violence for the island of Ireland, however, the experience of the researchers in this study suggests that there is significantly greater coverage of Islamic-linked issues as opposed to Troubles-related arrests/convictions. We would even go so far as to say that Troubles-related arrests and convictions are relatively neglected in media and oftentimes the perpetrators are hardly

mentioned in the reports. In the case of ISIS/Al Qaeda linked arrests, the researchers were able to gather detailed personal information on the perpetrators from media sources because the profiles of the individuals were extensively researched and reported widely. For Troubles-related cases, though, very limited information was available on the perpetrators and the style and content of media reports were incomparable.

MAKING SENSE OF THE DATA

Trying to understand the offending profile of individuals involved in terrorism and political violence on the island of Ireland is complex. This is because in Ireland, in many cases of political violence, the individuals committing crime and the individuals conducting terrorism are one and the same—they are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, in order to understand the relationship and the reality of paramilitary activity on the island of Ireland, an understanding of organised crime is fundamental.

ORGANISED CRIME AND PARAMILITARY ACTIVITY ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

Ireland, an island with a shared land border with the UK, has a population of about 4.6 million people (CSO, 2019). Along with a unique socio-political history, given the extensive coastline of Ireland, there are a number of geographic factors that make it vulnerable to organised crime. Due to the legacy of the conflict in Northern Ireland, there is significant participation by terrorist groups in organised criminal activity and, as a result, Ireland/Northern Ireland experiences significant cross-border transportation of the physical proceeds of crime (Savon and Michele, 2015). Furthermore, Ireland's expansive and isolated western coastline makes the country vulnerable to criminal activities, as is often witnessed in the form of the importation of large amounts of illegal drugs via boat (Lally, 2007). During the Troubles (1969-1998), weapons smuggling was also common in this region. More recently, however, the most important markets for organised crime gangs operating in Ireland are linked to the trafficking of illicit drugs, illicit trade in tobacco products (ITTP), fuel laundering, and excise fraud (Savon and Michele, 2015)

There are a variety of organised criminal gangs in Ireland, both domestic (including terrorist groups linked to the situation in Northern Ireland) and international; for example, British, Eastern European, Vietnamese, and Chinese networks are known to be active in the jurisdiction. There is also evidence of the operation of African crime syndicates along with those from Bulgaria, Lithuania, Romania, Russia, and Georgia (Lally, 2016). In effect, there is a range of criminal actors involved in organised crime on the Island. There are some well-established groups involved in multiple criminal activities, some local loosely affiliated networks, local groups with foreign links, local groups affiliated with paramilitary groups and paramilitary groups active in their own right (Savon and Michele, 2015).

Cusack (2013) reports a wide pattern of organised criminal activity by groups with international connections; for example, Eastern European networks in Ireland are known to be involved in human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation as well as organised theft; Asian and European networks are involved in the importation and counterfeiting of tobacco products (Hourigan, et al, 2017: 129). In terms of geographical spread in 2018, nearly half (48 per cent) of the Criminal Asset Bureau (CAB) targets linked to gang crime were based in the Dublin area (Gallagher, 2018). Outside of Dublin, Co. Limerick is another significant region for gang and gang-related crime, and this relates primarily to the import and distribution of illegal drugs via the region's many unsecured ports and harbours (Hourigan et al, 2017); however, there is also a paramilitary element to organised crime in this region. In the remaining counties of the Republic of Ireland, organised and gang crime is relatively evenly distributed, with a greater prevalence seen in the major metropolitan areas (Gallagher, 2018).

While a small number of gangs dominate media coverage of gang and organised crime in Ireland, it is estimated that there are up to 40 crime gangs in the Republic with nine core groups dominating the field (Savon and Michele, 2015). These domestic groups also have significant international ties and the most likely collaborators come from the Netherlands, Spain and Great Britain (ibid). However, a dominant feature of the organised-crime landscape in Ireland is the cross-border cooperation between gangs and terrorism/paramilitary groups in the Republic and Northern Ireland, with smuggling, counterfeiting, and excise fraud being significant issues. These activities are led in large part by paramilitary groups linked to the conflict (known as the 'Troubles') (Savon and Michele, 2015), so it is often the case that there is no distinction to be made between 'ideologically' motivated paramilitary groups linked to the Troubles and organised criminal gangs—in fact, they are often one and the same organisation.

Along with the international connections of organised crime in Ireland, the local context on the island of Ireland has been important in the development of and nature of organised crime in this region. For example, the illegal trafficking of weapons was an ongoing issue over the past 40 years and is primarily linked to the conflict in the north of Ireland (see, for example, connections with Whitey Bulger in Boston (Swaine, 2018), government support from Libya (Duffy, 2018), UK assistance in the supply of weapons to loyalist groups (Cobain, 2012)); however, since the ceasefires and decommissioning, the nature of weapons trafficking has changed. It has been reported not only that paramilitary groups have traded weapons for illegal drugs post-peace process

but also that Ireland has become a transit country for weapons destined for United Kingdom crime gangs (Savon and Michele, 2015) rather than an endpoint for weapons imports.

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Given the nature of the border in Ireland and the history of the fundraising activities of the various paramilitary groups on the island, it is necessary to consider organised crime on the island of Ireland as a whole. One of the most significant organised criminal activities on the island is the illicit trade in tobacco products. There is extensive paramilitary involvement in this activity. At one point in the 2000s, IPPT overtook the cocaine market in terms of profitability (Savon and Michele, 2015). The trade in tobacco products is significant as a result of specific local factors; the tax differential between the two jurisdictions (the Republic and the North of Ireland) as well as the low levels of interdictions has made this an exceptionally widespread activity. While Irish groups are predominantly in control of the IPPT market, there is cooperation between indigenous and foreign organisations (e.g., Chinese) for the purpose of the import of raw materials (ibid).

The border in Ireland is also a central feature in excise fraud conducted by organised gangs across the island. The exploitation of the different tax systems in each jurisdiction is central to this activity. A similar situation exists with regard to fuel laundering where the different prices and tax levels on each side of the border ensure that such activities are profitable. This activity has long been associated with paramilitary groups both pre- and post-peace process and continues to be an issue today.

THE PROFILE OF ISIS/AL QAEDA-LINKED ARRESTS ON THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

An Garda Síochána (Irish Police) have had suspected Al Qaeda/ISIS suspects, sympathisers, fundraisers, recruiters, and foreign fighters on a watch list for well over a decade (Lally, 2019). However, the history of Islamic extremist activity (or at least support for it) follows that of the UK, going back as far as the 1980s and linked to the conflict in Afghanistan. Still, arrests in this domain are exceptionally low, mirroring the limited activity by ISIS/Al Qaeda on the island. In 2015, Hassan Bal, a 25 year old with an address in Waterford was arrested and charged with funding Islamic terrorism by attempting to collect funds for the benefit of international terrorist groups under Section 13 (2) of the Criminal Justice (Terrorist Offences) Act 2015 (Riegel, 2018).

Also, in May 2015, the High Court in Ireland refused to order the extradition of a 49-year-old Algerian-born Irish citizen, Ali Charaf Damache (The Black Flag), who is wanted in the United States on two alleged terrorism-related offences (RTE, 2018). He was initially targeted over his involvement in a plot to kill [Lars Vilks](#), the Swedish cartoonist who had depicted the prophet Muhammad with the body of a dog. On his release from prison in Ireland, Demache was arrested in [Spain](#) and then extradited to the US, where he is serving a 15-year sentence. The [Irish government](#) is trying to strip him of his Irish citizenship (Lally, 2019).

In addition, the Islamic State organisation in northern Iraq announced that a man called 'Abu Usama al-Irelandi' died while detonating an explosive-laden vehicle near Mosul. The man, also known as Khalid Kelly or Terence Kelly, was born and raised in inner-city Dublin. Kelly was born in 1967 and later in life trained as a nurse before moving to Saudi Arabia. He converted to Islam in 2002 while serving time in a Saudi prison for making and selling alcohol (O' Donnell, 2016). It is thought (unverified) that Kelly was detained by the AGS in 2015 (but not charged). Of the three individuals mentioned in this report, one was Irish-born, the two others became naturalised citizens after emigrating to Ireland.

CONCLUSION

Within Britain and on the island of Ireland, according to data gathered for this study, there are two dominant dimensions to the terrorist threat, namely paramilitary activity linked to the Troubles and Islamic-inspired terrorism. There are, of course, other threats, such as extreme right-wing activity, but this was not identified as being dominant within this 2015-related data. Both the Troubles-related and Islamic-type extremism have very different patterns in relation to the personal and experience levels of the individuals and manifest themselves in different ways.

In addition to the varying manifestations of terrorism, each threat type has a different profile when we consider its relationship to or history of non-political crime. In the case of Troubles-related groups on the island of Ireland, it is often the case that terrorist groups and organised criminal gangs are one and the same. In the case of jihadi suspects in Ireland, there is a likelihood of previous non-political offending, but in the small sample we have accessed, this is related to financial crime and fraud. In the case of the paramilitary groups, offending includes smuggling, drug dealing, weapons smuggling, excise fraud, and tax evasion. In Great Britain, there was not identified any significant connection to prior non-political criminality.

This is an interim report and so further data will be added before final conclusions are made. However, in the case of the UK and Ireland, it is important that we allow the context to inform the research question and thus consider how the relationship between terrorism and crime is imagined. While in other jurisdictions there may well be scope to examine the notion of a crime-terror nexus, in the UK and Ireland, the issue is more nuanced and convoluted.

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