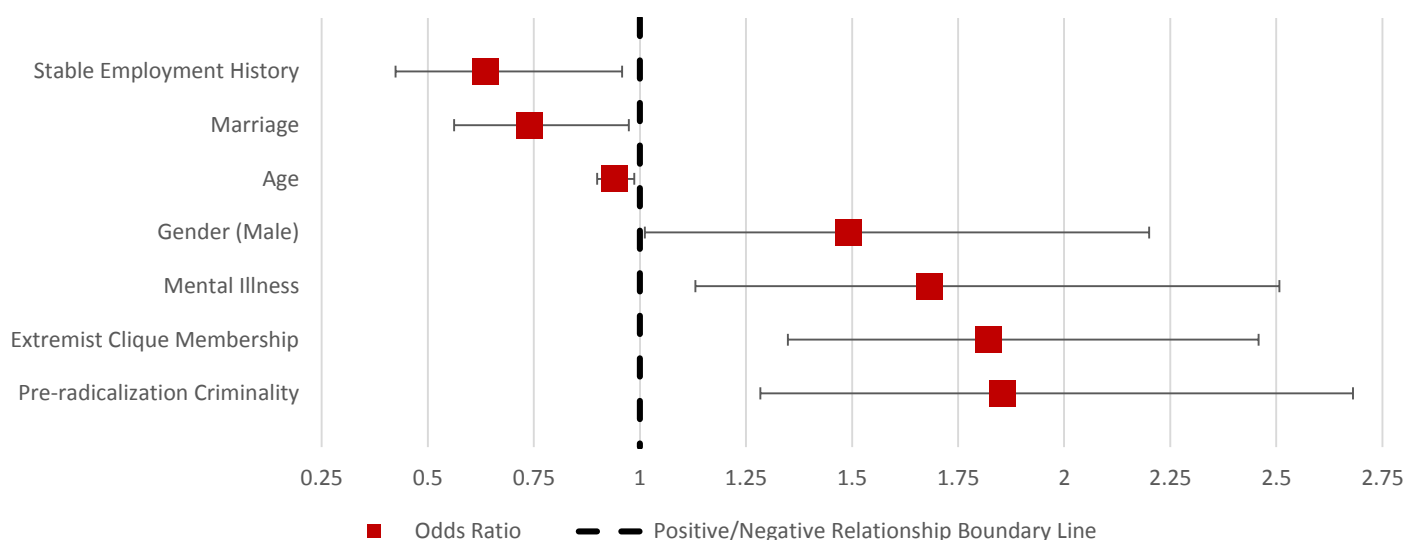


Pre-Radicalization Criminal Activity of United States Extremists

Previous research (Jensen et al. 2016, 2017; LaFree et al. 2018) based on the Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) dataset shows that U.S.-based extremists who engage in criminal acts prior to radicalizing are at an increased risk of engaging in ideologically motivated violence once they have adopted extremist beliefs. This research brief explores this finding further by using expanded data on the 397 extremists in the PIRUS dataset who engaged in criminal acts prior to radicalizing. This includes an analysis of the likelihood of pre-radicalization criminality for U.S. extremists, a look at the pre-radicalization criminal behaviors that are most prevalent amongst extremists with criminal histories, and information on the average age of earliest criminal activity for non-violent and violent extremists.

Correlates of Violent Extremist Outcomes



All correlates in the above chart are significant at the $p < .05$ level or better. Bars surrounding the odds ratios represent the 95% confidence intervals for each correlate.

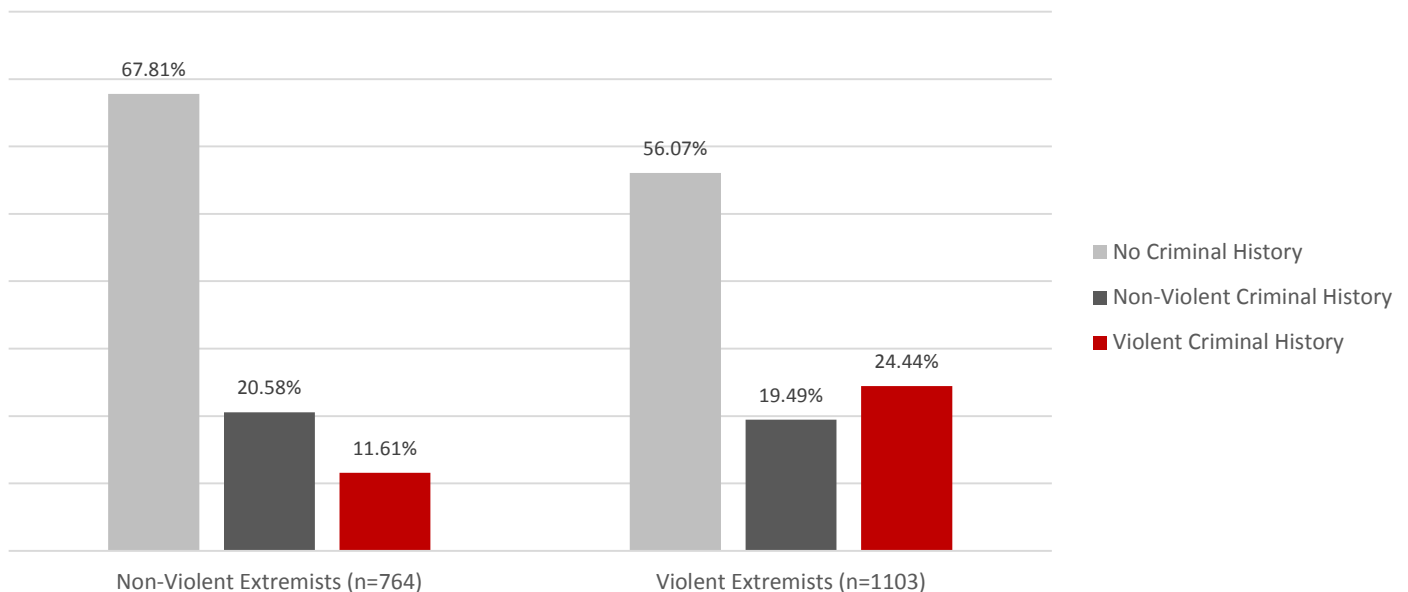
- The above chart shows the results of a multivariate analysis using the PIRUS data that explores which factors are most strongly associated with violent or potentially violent extremist outcomes (as opposed to non-violent criminality) when controlling for ideology. The results indicate that pre-radicalization criminal activity, violent or non-violent, is the single strongest predictor of post-radicalization violent extremism when controlling for ideology.
- In the above analysis, individuals who engaged in non-violent or violent crime prior to radicalizing were 1.85 times more likely to engage in acts of violent extremism after radicalizing than were extremists without criminal histories.
- The effect of pre-radicalization criminal behavior on post-radicalization violence was the strongest for extremists whose criminal histories included acts of violent crime (e.g., homicide, assault, forcible rape, etc.). Individuals with violent criminal histories were 2.44 times more likely to engage in acts of violent extremism once they had radicalized.
- In addition to criminal history, individuals with a documented or suspected mental illness, those who were members of extremist cliques, and men were significantly more likely to engage in acts of violent extremism.
- Conversely, individuals with stable employment histories were nearly 35% less likely to engage in acts of violent extremism than individuals who were long-term unemployed. Extremists who were older and married were also less likely to engage in acts of violent extremism.

LIKELIHOOD OF PRE-RADICALIZATION CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

While the above analysis shows that extremists with criminal histories are at an increased risk of engaging in violence after radicalizing, the PIRUS data also suggest that U.S.-based extremists engage in pre-radicalization crime at varying rates.

- The majority (60%) of extremists in the PIRUS data did not engage in criminal acts prior to radicalizing. However, when analyzed only for violent extremists, the data show greater parity between those with and without criminal histories. Nearly 44% of violent extremists in the database engaged in criminal acts prior to radicalizing.
- Violent extremists also display significantly higher rates of pre-radicalization violent crime than their non-violent extremist counterparts. Of violent extremists with criminal histories, 55.6% engaged in acts of violent crime prior to radicalizing.
- Conversely, non-violent extremists with criminal histories displayed much lower rates of violent crime. Approximately 36% of non-violent extremists engaged in violent criminal acts prior to radicalizing.

Rates of Pre-Radicalization Crime in the PIRUS Database



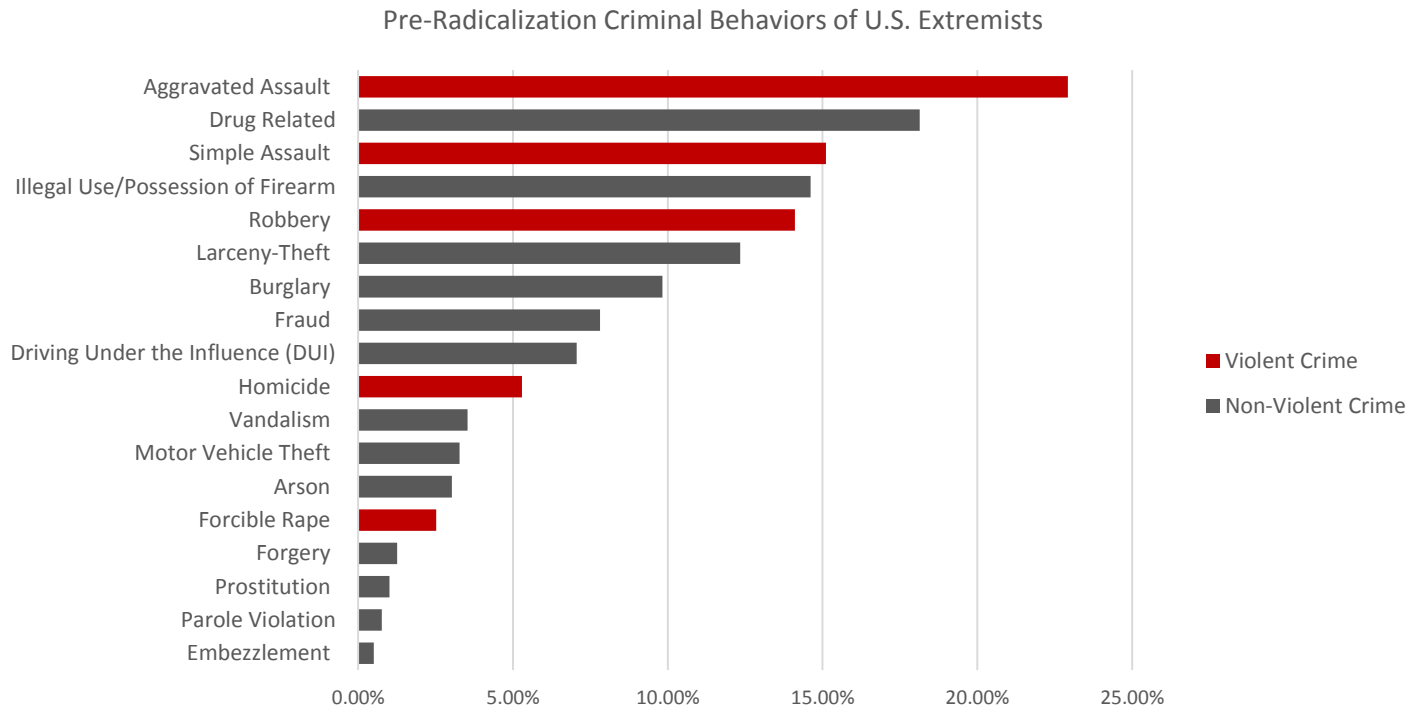
IDEOLOGICAL COMPARISON OF PREVIOUS CRIMINALITY

	Far-right	Far-left	Islamist
No Criminal History	45.76%	71.93%	65.96%
History of Misdemeanor Non-Violent Crime	13.28%	8.77%	9.42%
History of Felony Non-Violent Crime	14.12%	4.09%	7.60%
History of Violent Crime	26.84%	15.20%	17.02%

- Far-right extremists in the PIRUS data display the highest rates of pre-radicalization criminal activity. Nearly 55% of far-right extremists in the PIRUS data engaged in criminal acts prior to radicalizing. Far-right extremists in PIRUS also show the highest rates of violent criminal histories. Approximately 27% of far-right extremists in the data have criminal histories that include acts of violent crime.
- Far-left extremists in the PIRUS data show substantially lower rates (28%) of pre-radicalization crime. However, of those individuals on the far-left with criminal histories, the majority engaged in acts of violent crime.
- Nearly 35% of the Islamist extremists in PIRUS engaged in criminal acts prior to radicalizing. Those with pre-radicalization criminal histories were evenly split between those whose criminal acts were limited to non-violent offenses and those whose crimes included acts of violence.

PRE-RADICALIZATION CRIME TYPES

Extremists in the PIRUS data engaged in a wide range of criminal activities prior to radicalizing. These behaviors included a number of violent offenses, such as homicide, assault, and sexual violence, and a long list of non-violent crimes, including drug offenses, theft, vandalism, and fraud.

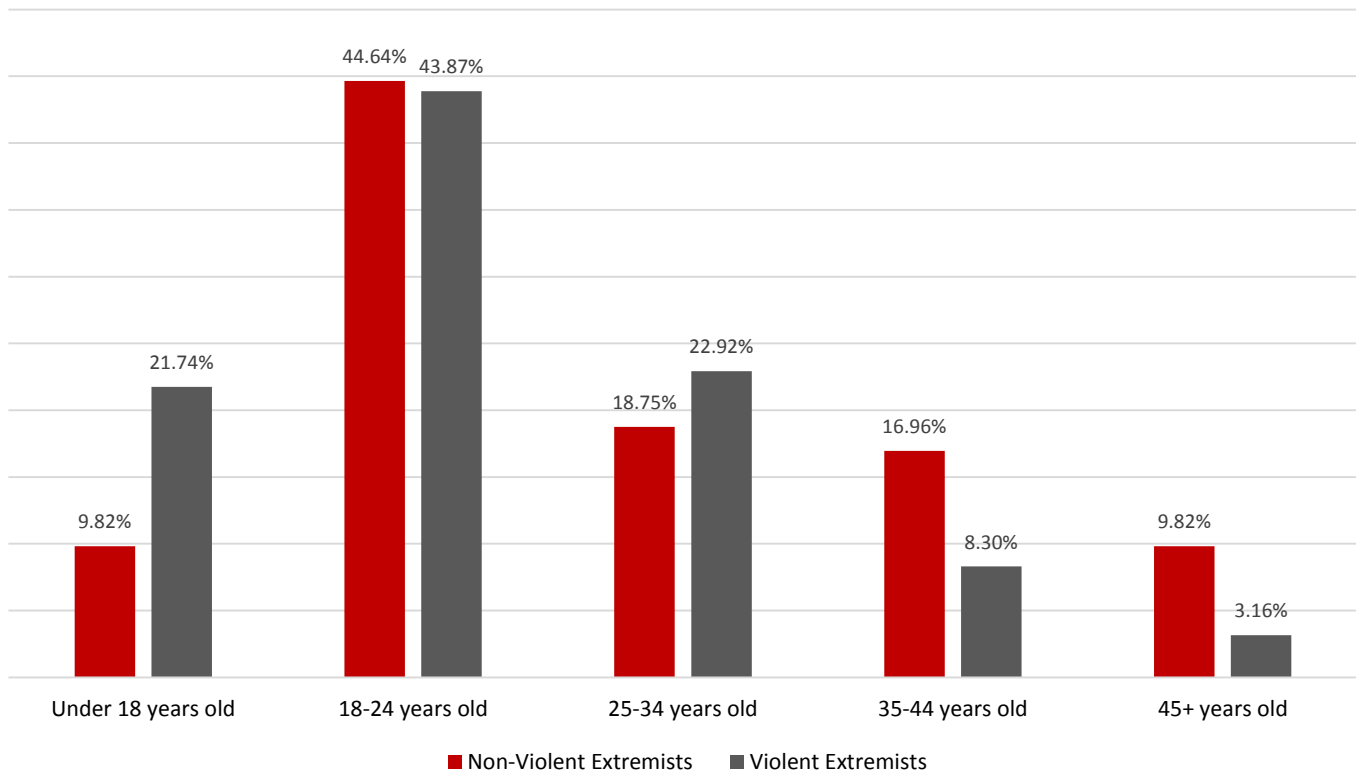


Note: Arson can be classified as either a violent or non violent crime depending on whether the intention of the act was to kill or injure

- Aggravated assault was the most common crime type for those in the PIRUS data who engaged in criminal acts prior to radicalizing. Nearly 23% of extremists with criminal histories in PIRUS committed at least one aggravated assault before radicalizing. Aggravated assaults were more common in the criminal histories of violent extremists, with nearly 27% engaging in the criminal act versus 14% for non-violent extremists. The rates of aggravated assault are fairly consistent when looking across ideological groups. Just over 22% of Islamists, 25% of far-right extremists, and 27% of far-left extremists with criminal histories committed at least one aggravated assault prior to radicalizing.
- Of the extremists in the PIRUS data who had a history of violent crime prior to radicalizing, at least 12.7% committed acts of domestic violence (although this may be a conservative estimate given that instances of domestic violence may appear in sentencing records only as assault and/or battery charges).
- The use, possession, or distribution of illicit drugs was the second most common pre-radicalization crime type for extremists in the PIRUS data with criminal histories. More than 18% of the extremists in the data with criminal histories engaged in an at least one illegal act involving illicit drugs prior to radicalizing. Drug offenses were relatively more common among violent extremists in the data. Over 20% of violent extremists with criminal histories had drug offenses on their criminal records compared to 13% for non-violent extremists.
- Of the violent extremists in PIRUS with criminal histories, 44.3% limited their criminal activities to non-violent offenses. Of these non-violent crimes, the most common were drug-related charges (30.3%), illegal firearms possession (20.4%), fraud (14.7%), theft (13.9%), and driving under the influence of alcohol (9%).
- Larceny-theft was the single most common pre-radicalization crime type for non-violent extremists in PIRUS. Nearly 15% of non-violent extremists in the database committed at least one theft offense prior to radicalizing. This outpaced other common crime types for non-violent extremists, including aggravated assault (14%), Drug offenses (13%), and simple assault (12%).
- The pre-radicalization criminal behaviors of a small percentage (14.1%) of the extremists in PIRUS were tied to their involvement in street gangs or criminal organizations. Of the individuals with past ties to criminal gangs, 80% went on to engage in acts of violent extremism after radicalizing.

AGE OF PREVIOUS CRIMINALITY

Average Age of Earliest Criminal Activity



- The PIRUS data show that on average, violent and non-violent extremists are well into adulthood when they first engage in ideologically motivated criminal acts (approximately 33 years old and 35 years, respectively).
- However, the individuals in PIRUS who engaged in non-ideological crime often did so when they were significantly younger. 44.6% of violent extremists and 43.9% percent of non-violent extremists with criminal histories first engaged in criminal acts when they were 18-24 years old.
- Violent extremists in the PIRUS data show significantly higher rates of juvenile crime than their non-violent counterparts. Nearly 22% of violent extremists with criminal histories began engaging in criminal acts when they were under the age of 18. In comparison, only 9.8% of non-violent extremists with criminal histories engaged criminal acts when they were juveniles.

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ABOUT THE DATASET

Profiles of Individual Radicalization in the United States (PIRUS) is a database of 1,867 Islamist, far-left, far-right, and single-issue extremists who radicalized to violent and non-violent extremism in the United States from 1948 through 2016. The PIRUS dataset is freely available for download on START's webpage or can be explored using the project's data visualization tool at <http://www.start.umd.edu/profiles-individual-radicalization-united-states-pirus-keshif>.

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