School of Law, Policing & Social Sciences

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A contemporary insight into Islamist extremist radicalisation and an exploration of the effectiveness of prevention and reformative strategies

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Abstract

The threat of Islamist extremism has become a major concern for many countries, requiring the development and implementation of effective de-radicalisation strategies. The focus of this study is to provide a contemporary insight into the radicalisation process of Islamist extremists and the effectiveness of the Prevent strategy as a de-radicalisation approach. The research methodology involved conducting a survey with 46 Prevent practitioners throughout the UK regions of the Counter Terror Commands. The design of the survey implemented a series of open-ended and closed-ended questions to gather first-hand experiences and insights. This created both qualitative and quantitative elements to the research with respondents being given the opportunity scale questions in order of their perceived importance and then elaborate on their answers with the free-text questions. The results of the study revealed several key themes and identified areas where the Prevent strategy could be improved. Specifically, the results identified prominent demographics of individuals being radicalised, the most significant locations being used to do so and new tactics employed by radicalisers and extremist groups. The study presents key findings regarding the sites of radicalisation and the platforms utilised by Islamist extremist recruiters to engage with and motivate individuals towards terrorism. It is noted that there has been a shift from traditional in-person interactions towards the online space, where new platforms, such as gaming, have emerged as a potential high level threat due to their difficulty to monitor. Recommendations are made to utilise new technologies to stay ahead of young, enterprising individuals. The findings suggest that the Prevent strategy is effective, but better communication is required to highlight successes and to gain the societal approval required due to being a voluntary service. Additional policy and procedural recommendations are made to enhance the program's efficiency and effectiveness. The limitations of this study are that it presented from a Prevent policing practitioner perspective only. Future research should consider surveying individuals who have been referred to the Channel program to provide a rounded perspective. The findings provide key discoveries and valuable information for policymakers and practitioners to assist in combating Islamist extremism and developing effective de-radicalisation strategies.

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Glossary of Terms

Caliphate:	A caliphate is an Islamic state. It's led by a caliph, who is a political and religious leader considered to be the successor of Prophet Muhammad.
Fatwa:	This is an Islamic legal ruling or edict.
Fitna:	Trials, tribulations, strife
Imam:	A religious leader or head of a local community, or a spiritually qualified leader. He also leads in community political affairs.
ISIS:	Islamic State Extremist group.
Jennah:	Paradise.
Jihad:	This is a struggle or effort in God's cause.
Jihadism:	Individual or political movements that focus on violent activities in the name of contemporary Islam.
Kuffar:	Unbelievers.
Masjid:	Arabic word translated as mosque, place of worship.
Mujahid/ Mujahideen:	Mujahid: Fighter engaged in jihad (singular). Mujahideen: Fighters engaged in jihad (plural).

Sharia:	Sharia is Islamic law, the way or divine path of obedience to God. It comprises the writings of the Qur'an and hadith and serves as the guide for worship and ethical living.
Shiite:	One of two major branches of Islam, a Shiite believes that leadership should come from descendants of Muhammad's family. The plural is *Shia*.
Sunni:	The other major branch of Islam, Sunnites comprise ninety percent of Muslims. This name is derived from *sunna* (tradition) for one who follows the tradition of Muhammad (who did not designate a successor). It is the belief that leadership should come from among the *Quraish Arabs* (Muhammad's tribe). The plural is Sunnites.
Shaheed:	Martyr.
Quran:	Holy book or sacred scripture.

Abbreviations

ACPO:	Association of Chief Police officers.
CPS:	Crown Prosecution Service.
CT:	Counter terrorism, as in CT Police.
ERG:	Extremist Risk Guidance.
FIMU:	Fixed Intelligence Management Unit. They manage and assess all CT Intelligence to decide which pillar of CONTEST to forward to for onward progression.
HMIC:	Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary.
HMP:	Her Majesty's Prison as in HMP Whitemoor.
HMPPS:	Her Majesty's Prisons and Probation Service.
MOJ:	Ministry of Justice.
NMT:	Nominal Management Teams. Tasked to manage individuals who have been convicted of TACT offences and released back into the community.
NOMS:	National Offender Management Service.
PACE:	Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984.

PCM:	Prevent Case Management. Any case currently or previously managed by Prevent.
PGA:	Police Gateway Assessment. Following an FIMU approved referral to Prevent, the PGA identifies specific vulnerabilities and who is best to manage them.
TACT:	Terrorism Act 2000.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The United Kingdom (UK) National Threat Level is currently set to 'substantial' (Home Office, 2023), meaning that it is likely that there will be a further terrorist attack in the UK. According to MI5 Director General Ken McCallum,

> Since the start of 2017, MI5 and the police have together disrupted 37 late-stage attack plots. Islamist Terrorism remains the larger problem – about three quarters of our terrorist caseload. Another problem which endures is the risk of sophisticated plots directed against the UK from Islamist terrorist groups based overseas. But MI5, SIS, GCHQ and other partners are still operating globally, every day, to penetrate and disrupt transnational terrorist groups, who absolutely still aspire to attack us (MI5, 2022).

Terrorism has existed within the UK for decades and the level of impact associated with such attacks can be devastating to the individuals directly involved and also significant to the wider community (North & Pfefferbaum, 2002; Danieli, Brom & Sills, 2005; Echebarria-Echabe & Fernández-Guede, 2006; Bux, & Coyne, 2009). In recent years the UK government has dramatically increased spending on National Security, with the 2021/2022 Counter Terrorism (CT) budget estimated at £1,041.9 million, a 9.6% increase on the previous year (Home Office, 2021) which had increased by 14% on the year before (Home Office, 2021b). The presented data shows an escalation in resources allocated towards the advancement of scientific and technological domains, exemplified by the establishment of a recently commissioned Counter Terrorism Operations Centre. This development was implemented to address the surging numbers of 'Channel' referrals and TACT arrests (Home Office in 2021). Various agencies responsible for dealing with the threat from terrorism have claimed responsibility for numerous foiled terrorist plots during this this time (HM Government, 2018; BBC News, 2021b). Nonetheless, the threat remains high and the risk of radicalisation is significant (Salman & Gill, 2020; Home Office, 2023). The Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre (JTAC) undertakes the crucial task of conducting threat analyses in the realm of counter-terrorism (CT) efforts. This process entails a periodic assessment of available intelligence, comparative evaluation with other countries, consideration of extant terrorist capabilities and intentions, and exploration of the

timescales of potential threats (MI5, 2023). However, consideration must be given to potential negative aspects of increased enforcement and ensure that actions are fair and transparent. Perceptions of unjust and discriminatory CT measures are associated with increased likelihood of supporting violent actions and holding extreme beliefs. Equally, excessive use of force in CT efforts can exacerbate feelings of victimisation and injustice, potentially fuelling desires for retaliation and radicalisation. Therefore, an increase in enforcement and intervention may have equipped extremists with a vigorously renewed motivation to radicalise, capitalising on increased vulnerabilities and utilising non-traditional avenues to reinforce their call to arms to fight for their cause (Ong & Azman, 2020; Reed & Aryaeinejad, 2021). Although it is acknowledged that there are many motivations associated with terrorism ranging from far right organisations to animal welfare groups (Home Office, 2020), it is not within the scope of this paper to provide oversight to all. This paper focusses explicitly on Islamic Extremism (IE) providing a contemporary insight into radicalisation and de-radicalisation. Additionally, the study endeavours to assess the efficacy of Prevent and its collaborating agencies, comprising governmental institutions, private organisations, and non-profit entities, with respect to their intervention and rehabilitation practices.

In the 2011 revision of the Prevent strategy, the UK government defined extremism as any 'vocal or active opposition to fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (HM Government, 2011). The concept of IE constitutes an expansion and refinement of the UK government's definition of extremism and is a term that is intrinsically linked to the Islamic faith. IE has been the subject of varying interpretations and connotations within academic circles, reflecting the complex and multifaceted nature of extremist ideologies associated with Islam. Kenny (2008) contends that there is a common tendency among Western observers to erroneously conflate important terms such as 'Islamists', 'Activists', 'Militants' and 'Terrorists' leading to a lack of appreciation for the nuanced distinctions within the Muslim community. It is important to note that not all Muslims are Islamic activists, not all Islamic activists are Islamists, not all Islamists

are militants or jihadists, and not all militants or jihadists is a terrorists. For instance, the Salafi movement, often referred to as modern Islam, may espouse extreme conservative views, however, the Salafi community in itself is broken down in to subsets, with many following the strict doctrine of seeking peaceful redress for their grievances (Wiktorowicz, 2006; Hamid, 2008; Brown, 2011; Wagemakers, 2016). Equally as pointed out by Isaacson & Rubenstein, (1999), 'just because one is an Islamic fundamentalist it does not inevitably mean that one is also a holy warrior and prepared to die to further a religious vision'. Therefore, it is worthwhile acknowledging that certain terminology may possess diverse connotations, which can provide a valuable perspective when analysing situations. However, some view IE as a belief that all other ideologies have failed and demonstrated their bankruptcy (Cook, 2015). Some individuals interpret Islamic ideology in an extreme manner, advocating violent tactics like suicide bombing and assassinations to achieve perceived Islamic objectives (Baran, 2008). This concept is often referred to as Jihadism, an extremist ideology associated with radical interpretations of Islam that aims to establish a global Islamic state under strict Sharia Law. It advocates violence, including terrorism, to achieve political and religious goals, and has been the motivation behind numerous terrorist attacks worldwide (Hegghammer, 2017). UK High Courts have provided further clarity by defining IE during a detailed ruling (Shakeel Begg v BBC, 2016). According to Hon Haddon-Cave, (2016) IE can be summarised as a Manichean view of the world, creating a clear division between themselves and those they perceive to be unblessed Muslims including all Shia, moderate Sunni Muslims and non-Muslim unbelievers (Kuffar). Islamist extremists believe they can kill individuals to further their agenda of overthrowing democratic states to impose Sharia Law. Some individuals associate Jihad solely with violence and disregard established Islamic doctrinal conditions for armed combat, resulting in abuse of process such as civilian attacks, torture, indiscriminate suicide, and murder of prisoners, all of which violate Quranic stipulations. This includes promoting religiously motivated rhetoric that urges Muslims to commit violence or terrorism in the name of Allah. Furthermore, master narratives within Muslim cultures are often exploited for the creation of IE through propaganda and rhetoric (Halverson, Corman & Goodall, 2011).

So far Chapter 1 has offered insights and concepts that will be further developed in this paper. Chapter 2 provides an exhaustive review literature that consists of four sections: the origins of IE, the evolution of the terrorist threat landscape, the UK government's de-radicalisation strategy and community-led de-radicalisation projects. This chapter provides a detailed analysis of these areas, highlighting the need for further in-depth research. In Chapter 3, the study's methodological design is presented, which involved administering a practitioner survey to Prevent operatives to obtain their current knowledge. Chapters 4 and 5 provide the analysis from the practitioner survey. Chapter 4 focuses on the first part of the analysis, exploring who is being radicalised, where it is occurring, and by what means. In contrast, Chapter 5 examines the second part of the analysis, exploring the effectiveness of Prevent from a practitioner's perspective, contextualising the strategy's strengths and weaknesses. Chapter 6 presents the conclusion, summarising the key findings, making recommendations, and highlighting future research based on the discoveries.

The literature review highlights a research gap in the evolution of Islamist radicalisation and de-radicalisation processes in recent times. Currently there limited empirical investigations in relation to the effects of advanced technology that has facilitated a transition from in-person radicalisation to online radicalisation. The analysis of practitioner responses to relevant questions help to evaluate the level of impact of current interventions tailored to the CT working practices within the online environment. This can aid in assessing the effectiveness of these interventions and identifying areas for improvement. There is limited knowledge surrounding the associated impact of enhanced socioeconomic factors, including the 'cost of living' crisis and Covid-19 restrictions, and the extent to which these issues effected existing vulnerabilities or created renewed motivations. With the implementation of lockdowns and subsequent restrictive measures, it is likely to have increased individual vulnerabilities and grievances (Ackerman & Peterson, 2020; Van Dunem & Cabrita, 2021; Herrington, 2022). UNITAR (2023), suggest that violent extremists across the ideological spectrum have viewed the pandemic as an opportunity for expansion, especially in the online space (Van Dunem &

Cabrita, 2021). It has been suggested that as the public began to work from home, extremists groups were increasing their presence in the online space (Van Dunem & Cabrita, 2021) to spread propaganda (Ackerman & Peterson, 2020), using private and secure platforms (Davies, Wu & Frank, 2021) to radicalise vulnerable individuals. Cox et al (2021) highlight the risks, particularly in young people who consumed increased online content during lockdown, potentially exposing them to harmful material. In times of uncertainty, extremists capitalise by spreading unrest (Ackerman & Peterson, 2020), one aspect of this was witnessed with the spread of conspiracy theories (Grossman, 2021). The contemporary environment has given rise to the propagation of erroneous information, which can serve as a catalyst for the dissemination of extremist and bigoted perspectives. The proliferation of extremist ideologies is facilitated by the creation of echo chambers through the implementation of extremist narratives. Such narratives are utilised by recruiters to target susceptible individuals which make them problematic (Cox et al, 2021). Survey responses can ascertain first-hand accounts of how these external issues may have affected CT policing. It is unclear whether the emergence of new platforms and perceived grievances has led to the creation of an enlarged pool of easily impressionable individuals. The impact of encryption on the ease of undetected manoeuvring across diverse online platforms and the possibility of reaching wider audiences than would have been feasible in physical locations remains uncertain. The concept of online radicalisation is intricate and raises several questions, bringing to light several areas of concern that have been under researched. Therefore, by interrogating professionals who actively engage in de-radicalisation, crucial insights into contemporary trends and perceived threats can be obtained, ultimately enriching the existing understanding of this subject.

This research is crucial for assessing the present threat to the UK, and determining whether extremist groups have capitalised on challenging economic circumstances to intensify their endeavours in radicalising individuals. Finally, even if this information was known, it is important to consider whether the UK's current CT strategy is sufficient to dissuade individuals from engaging in extremism following intervention. Specific lines of inquiry pertaining to the

practice of Prevent have been delineated. Through a critical examination of extant policy and procedures, this analysis identifies inefficiencies in current CT processes and provides recommendations to ameliorate the void. The proposed recommendations aim to bridge identified gaps in research and practice in order to effectively address the threat of extremism in the UK. Additionally, gaps in the research have come to light, particularly in relation to how society has evolved and how the advancements of technology has impacted the way people live. These new trends, attitudes and behaviours are insufficiently explored. Therefore, further understanding regarding the way in which individuals communicate is key to identifying the means, platforms and arenas in which extremist recruiters may operate.

The purpose of this investigation was to shed light on the aforementioned theories by engaging with Prevent practitioners to develop a contemporary comprehension of radicalisation. The study collected up-to-date primary data, and through analysis, identified shared patterns, contrasts, and emerging trends. The results of this study may contribute to combatting terrorism or to shaping future de-radicalisation techniques. Likewise, the intelligence received from the survey will be crucial to enhancing the knowledge of radicalisation in a contemporary setting and will contribute significantly to the existing body of literature.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Radicalisation and extremism in the UK

This section of the thesis aims to provide an overview of IE by scrutinising historical incidents and identifying prominent groups involved, with a view to underscoring the continued threat it poses. Moreover, the section will allude to fundamental concepts of radicalisation and examine the literature to establish the specific connections between IE and the process of radicalisation.

According to Reynire (2021) between 1979 and May 2021, there have been at least 48,035 worldwide Islamist terror attacks, which have caused the deaths of at least 210,138 people. Whilst ISIS and the Taliban have been recorded as being the deadliest groups throughout this period, employing a variety of methods to carry out their acts, there are various other prominent IE groups that have contributed to this toll (see Appendix 2, Figure 2.10). Additionally, these attacks have been carried out in 81 different countries (see Appendix 2, Figure 11) with the prominence of IE groups being determined by region. For example Boko Haram are responsible for 96.9% of deaths resulting from claimed terrorist attacks in Nigeria, whilst Al-Shabaab are responsible for 87.5% of deaths resulting from claimed terrorist attacks in Somalia (Reynire, 2021). By volume and violent nature, terrorism associated with IE groups historically dwarfed other ideologies, such as far right and far left and still poses the greatest threat to society (Europol, 2022). It can be argued that without the continued recruitment and radicalisation of individuals the level impact illustrated above would have not been possible. Therefore, it is important carry out a detailed exploration into the specific pull factors that compel individuals to connect with IE groups and commit some of the most serious, globally recognised crimes. Firstly it is worth reflecting on the works of Lewis and Marsden (2021) to contextualise the terms of push and pull factors and understand their meaning within the context of radicalisation. They discuss the pull factors as being influences drawing individuals into extremism such as personal vulnerabilities or grievances, but they describe the push factors as entities that cause an individual to disengage, such as frustration or disillusionment of the group or cause. There are numerous academic works and government reports that review radicalisation, but there is a lack of empirical discoveries, in part due to extremists being difficult to locate and study and when individuals are identified they are often uncooperative (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2008; Veldhuis & Staun, 2009). However, Abu Muntasir a founding father of British Jihad and former mujahid in Afghanistan, Kashmir and Burma, opened the way for British people to join terror groups, working tirelessly to radicalise thousands of western Muslims preaching that the Quran is our constitution and Jihad is our way, to seek death or martyrdom in the path of Allah is our highest ambition' (Khan

& Muntasir, 2015). He further stated that the world is divided between Muslims and non-Muslims and everything that constitutes unbelief in their systems and education is dishonourable, defective or corrupt (Khan & Muntasir, 2015). Many radicalised individuals are often well educated, with good jobs, have families and are active members of their local communities, although significant risk factors emanate from socially and economically deprived segments of society (Precht, 2007). This notion was further supported by the Clingendael study from 2001-2006 of 242 European IE individuals, with the data revealing that they were mainly single males, born and raised in Europe of varying ages, predominantly forming part of the lower echelons of society. Many of them have a criminal record, 40 percent of subjects were born in Europe with an additional 55 percent having been raised or long-term residents, thus, placing emphasis on the label of 'home-grown' (Bakker, 2007). Lloyd & Dean (2015) identify key recurring risk factors that have contributed to people becoming extremists. Their study of 32 UK convicted TACT offenders identified 22 prominent risk factors, this informed UK government policy and was ultimately developed into the Extremist Risk Guidance (ERG22+) (see Appendix 1). The ERG22+ has been a mainstream model featuring prominently within the Prevent agenda and used throughout the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) since 2011, influencing decision making around intervention, sentence planning, relocation, reintegration, parole and release. However, this research has attracted significant criticism as reported in The Guardian (2016), with attention being drawn towards an open letter signed by more than 140 academics and experts opposing the findings due to a 'lack of transparency and scrutiny of the science'. Further, the report was reviewed by 19 academics attached to the advocacy group CAGE, who raised concerns regarding their methodology, specifically whether their small-scale study could be attributed to the wider populous. Additionally, they questioned the lack of input from the wider psychological community or peer-review process (Ross, 2016). Nonetheless, whilst there may be grounds for criticism there is insufficient context provided in the report to make it conclusive. The Ministry of Justice completed a follow up study of the ERG22+ in 2019 using an increased sample size of 171. Following multidimensional scaling (MDS) analysis, it indicated a relatively

good fit (CoA = .23), although two factors did not cluster well with other aspects. Instead of clustering with specific items, the aspect of 'Excitement, comradeship and adventure' was located in the centre. Additionally, 'Mental Health' was spatially located apart from other items, although the authors infer that this is not a surprise as 'Mental Health' ought to be deemed as a specific entity and reviewed independently (Powis, Randhawa-Horne, & Bishopp, 2019).

It has been suggested that the extremism risk emanates from a collection of social characteristics, behavioural and psychological disorders, specifically psychiatric disorders, psychopathy, social, emotional and communication difficulties (Dein & Woodbury-Smith, 2010; Allely et al, 2014; Alexander et al, 2016; Girardi et al, 2019 & Higham et al, 2021). Psychological factors such as trauma may also contribute to the radicalisation process (Gielen, 2008; Wali, 2016). This concept can especially be seen in young people who suffer trauma from being ostracised from their familial unit, whilst searching for their own individual identity, ultimately gravitating to a more accommodating setting, providing a sense of belonging (Gielen, 2008). When discussing the connection between trauma and radicalisation, Wiktorwicz (2005) describes the concept as 'cognitive openings'. He states that 'cognitive openings' can mature following an emotional or psychological crisis, such as a family bereavement, causing the individual to question the world and seek new understanding, which may involve gravitating towards extreme ideology. Further psychological disorders such as intellectual impairment or developmental delays have been identified as contributory risk factors towards the vulnerabilities making such individuals susceptible (Faccini, 2016; Zmigrod et al, 2019; Al-Attar, 2021 & Little, Ford & Girardi, 2021). However, Taylor et al (2018) argue that this concept is also comparable to other forms of general exploitation and therefore connected to the wider safeguarding issues. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail when focussing on the UK specific risks surrounding 'Channel' referrals. Nevertheless, there are no specific psychological characteristics that make certain individuals more receptive to radicalisation (Simcox et al, 2010; Sageman, 2004, 2008).

Whilst there are varying reasons as to why people become radicalised, common themes, including excitement, self-esteem, feelings of wanting to belong and being placed under pressure from peers, family and the community are apparent. These issues can often present themselves in reverse, with individuals seeking escape from societal and familial control, strain and expectation, to create a perceived independent identity (Coppock & McGovern, 2014; Sabouni, Cullen & Armitage, 2017; Vergani et al, 2020). Van San et al (2013) believes that certain IE groups deliberately aggravate familial tensions and provoke conflict in order to increase alignment between the group and the individual. Furthermore, vulnerability due to demographic reasons, experiences, values and social norms can become a relevant factor in the radicalisation process (Bakker, 2011). Therefore, personal characteristics, socioeconomic status, societal unfairness or hardship may all become drivers in embracing extremist ideologies. Prominent reasons, such as defending Islam and protecting their homeland, fighting for a cause, feelings of isolation, immersion in ideology and ritual, feature commonly, however, for many a full awareness and understanding as to the extent of what they are getting involved in is often absent, having been miss-sold a vision and enticed through empty promises and propaganda (Horgan, 2014; Quantum, 2015; Kendall & Khan, 2016; El-Said and Barratt, 2017; Kruglover, 2020).

2.2. Threat landscape in the UK

This section will discuss the changing landscape of terrorism, with focus being given to the post 9.11 situation and what that meant for IE. It will explore the transition of power and threat posed by extremist groups whilst investigating how attitudes and behaviours have evolved. It will then present a current overview reflecting on contemporary issues that have impacted radicalisation and new challenges to CT policing.

2.2.1 The changing threat

The Al-Qaeda terrorist attacks of 9.11 were among the most catastrophic terrorist acts ever recorded and this was met with a robust global military response, leading to a prolonged, bloody conflict, as part of the War on Terror (WOT) (Silke, 2008). To provide clarity for the purpose of this paper, terrorist attacks are characterised by their intent to spread fear and panic in a population through the use of violence, often for political or ideological reasons. Extremist attacks, on the other hand, involve the use of violence by individuals or groups who hold extreme views on a particular issue, but may not necessarily aim to instil fear or intimidate a wider audience. While the two types of attacks may share some characteristics, such as the use of violence, their underlying motivations and goals may differ. As stated by Gerges (2011), the operations carried out by coalition forces in Afghanistan resulted in a significant blow to Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, nearly leading to their destruction. Global efforts led to the apprehension of numerous former operatives of Al-Qaeda who had fled to neighbouring countries, however, its founder Osama Bin Laden and other key leaders went into hiding in the Tora Bora complex of caves and tunnels located in the mountainous region of eastern Afghanistan. Despite a bombardment from elite U.S. military forces, missed opportunities and the daunting terrain enabled Bin Laden to evade capture and flee to Pakistan's unregulated tribal area (Kerry, 2009). Terrorism became a crucial chapter of international politics for the decade following 9.11 (Silke, 2008), but despite overwhelming support globally and goodwill within the wider Muslim community in the immediate wake of those tragic events, the decision to invade Iraq in 2003 was not as well received, causing negative discourse (Gerges, 2011). This invasion reduced the focus on Al-Qaeda, allowing them time to recuperate and galvanise their organisation (Gerges, 2011). However, Osama Bin Laden was eventually located in Abbottabad, Pakistan in 2011 and President Obama (2011) reported that he had been executed by Special Forces.

Around this time saw the emergence and expansion of ISIS, an affiliate of Al-Qaeda and splinter group from Al-Qaeda in Iraq. According to Global Terrorism Index (2020) local

militants in Iraq began to form the initial foundations of ISIS in early 2000's, but it was not until 2010 that surviving members of Al-Qaeda and disaffected members of the former US aligned, Sons of Iraq, came together to form the Islamic State in Iraq. The organisation gained further momentum and in 2014 and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, formally creating the ISIS group as it is known today. By the end of 2014 ISIS had reached the peak of its power having seized major cities in both Iraq and Syria including Mosul and Raqqa, holding territories of approximately 100,000km2 and ruling over more than 11 million people across the regions. Between 2010-2020, ISIS were responsible for 17 percent of all terrorism related deaths totalling 31,516 fatalities, making them the deadliest terrorist organisation in the world (Global Terrorism Index, 2020). However, due to sustained international military pressure, ISIS lost the remains of their territory over Iraq and Syria by early 2019 (Global Terrorism Index, 2022). Nonetheless, the organisation continues to operate, concentrating their insurrections elsewhere, specifically the Sahel region of sub-Saharan Africa (Berrada, 2019). From 2020 to 2021 fatal attacks attributed to ISIS and affiliated groups had reduced by approximately 2 percent although still account for 29 percent of the overall civilian death toll related to global terrorism (Global Terrorism Index, 2022).

It is well documented that ISIS still presents a significant terrorism threat globally and have dominated the headlines in Europe in recent years (Hannigan, 2018; Specia, 2019; Financial Times, 2020). ISIS rely on not only unjust socio-economic and political issues, but they also carefully select and disproportionately manipulate teachings and passages from the Quran to fit their contemporary interpretations to successfully recruit their followers (Mahood & Rane, 2017). According to Benmelech & Klor (2020) by the end of 2015 approximately 30,000 people from at least 85 countries had joined ISIS to fight in Syria and Iraq. Although the majority of foreign fighters came from the Middle East, many recruits had come from Russia and Asia. Furthermore, significant numbers joined the fight from Western nations, including most states of the European Union in addition to the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, indicating that the issue had become a global phenomenon. Worryingly, it is estimated that

thousands of foreign fighters had unchecked movement into Syria and back to their home countries following combat, leaving them unaccounted for (Zammit, 2017; Malet, 2018; Pokalova, 2020). Having been fully trained in terrorist methods with relevant connections, means and an enhanced radicalised mind-set (Hegghammer, 2013) the threat is potentially exponential. An example was Abdelhamid Abaaoud who returned from Syria, recruited a team of accomplices, before carrying out the tragic attacks in Paris 2015 (The Telegraph, 2015). In 2014 chief ISIS spokesman, Monhammed al-Adnani made the call to Western sympathisers to avoid travelling to the Middle East, but instead to attack the 'unbelievers' specifically police or military. He stated, 'If you are not able to find a bomb or bullet then smash his head with a rock, or slaughter him with a knife, or run him over with your car, or throw him down from a high place, or choke him, or poison him' (Burke, 2017). This reach has been demonstrated by the horrendous marauding gunman attacks of Paris in 2015, the vehicle ramming at the Bastille Day parade, Nice in 2016, the vehicle ramming at the Berlin Christmas Market in 2016, as well as the Westminster Bridge attack Manchester Arena Bombing, London Bridge and Borough Market attack and La Rambla Bacelona attacks, all happening in 2017.

Since 9.11 there has been a horrifically violent stigma attached to the religion of Islam with a negative perception of Muslim people being shared widely across media, labelling them as dangerous class (Bail, 2012). Despite losing territorial control, the geographical influence of ISIS has expanded as the group has shifted towards an ideological movement (Global Terrorism Index, 2022). The primary threat was initially centred on the MENA region during the period when ISIS was more territorially focused, but this changed with the emergence of affiliates in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Asia-Pacific, Russia, and Eurasia. With a renewed focus on inspiring lone actors (Shehabat, Mitew, & Alzoubi, 2017; Egger, Magni-Berton, & Varaine, 2020), the true extent of the potential threat posed by ISIS and the source of this threat remain largely unknown. This presents a significant risk for authorities as self-radicalised actors, aim to perpetrate attacks with limited sophistication. Despite the simplicity of these operations, they can still result in devastating harm, as exemplified by the tragic

murder of Sir David Amess MP in 2021. In a society that values freedom, the detection of self-initiated terrorists (SIT), who tend to act alone and conceal their intentions, presents a formidable task. This challenge is further exacerbated by the intricate interplay between extremist ideology, personal discontent, and personal vulnerabilities, such as mental illness (MI5, 2022).

2.2.2 Current issues

Having identified some of the historical and conventional issues related to IE, this section introduces several key contemporary themes which will be introduced two stages. Firstly, the literature related to traditional 'in-person' radicalisation will be examined to identify the current significance of traditional platforms. The second stage will explore current methods of 'online' radicalisation.

To have any chance of combatting radicalisation it is crucial to identify where this recruitment is taking place. Traditional recruitment has occurred in places where gatherings of people with similar radical beliefs congregate creating opportunity for enhanced communication such as, schools, youth clubs, places of worship, sporting clubs and prisons (Precht, 2007). Prisons, present themselves as ideal ecosystems for radicalisation owing to the nature of the environment, with the threat extended to both Muslim and non-Muslim inmates incarcerated for a full range of offences in addition to terrorism (Williams et al, 2017; Yaacoub, 2018; Rushchenko, J., 2019). An example was the case of Usman Khan who, having been released from prison went on to commit the London Bridge terrorist attack in 2019 (BBC News, 2021). According to the QC Hall (2022) review of terrorism in prisons, specific emphasis was made to Khan's behaviour during his eight-year incarceration across several UK prisons. Within the sensitive intelligence logs a number of radical acts throughout this period were recorded. These included attacking prisoners whilst shouting Allah Akbar, reciting poems including the words 'Cut off the kuffar's head', stockpiling material relating to terrorist activity such as bomb making manuals and involvement in a plot to kill a staff member. Khan was suspected of covert

IE recruitment as he encouraged inmates to adopt Muslim names, wear traditional dress and threatened those who questioned him. He is said to have become the leader of a bullying gang and regularly preached, forming close relationships and inspiring others to commit terrorist offences. Sadly, Khan was not an isolated incident with many similarities witnessed in the case of Sudesh Amman who refused to engage with de-radicalisation programs (Weeks, 2021) and then went on to commit the Streatham attacks BBC News, 2021d).

There are a number of issues that make prisons problematic. One example is that in the UK prisoners are not segregated, potentially feeding into the significant gang culture that exists within the prison network. It has also been documented that many prisoners convert to Islam as weaknesses are exploited and individuals seek protection, belonging to a group and other perks and privileges such as prayer time away from their cells, ultimately being drawn towards extremist groups (Spalek & El-Hassan, 2007; Hamm, 2009; Liebling et al, 2011; Phillips, 2012). According to the Ministry of Justice (2016) review, IE within British prisons is a mounting concern, contributed to in part by a change in legislation criminalising the glorification of terrorism following the 7/7 bombings. Not only did this create an increase in convictions but also a surge IE activity generating further custodial sentences, further supporting Renard's (2020) notion that prisons are a 'breeding ground' for terrorists. Furthermore, the data indicated that Muslims were disproportionately represented in the criminal justice system, thus, enabling perpetuation of ill-treatment and injustice narratives to persuade new recruits (Ministry of Justice, 2015). Several alarming revelations arose from the review including no segregation between terror offenders and the wider prison population. Segregation of prisoners can have negative impacts, including an increase in violence and aggression among prisoners and a stressful and hostile environment for staff (Prison Reform Trust, 2015). The UK adopts a policy of non-segregation, with exceptions for high-risk or vulnerable prisoners, and focuses on rehabilitation and addressing the underlying causes of criminal behaviour (Ministry of Justice, 2016). Segregation can negatively affect prisoner mental health and increase the risk of violence and aggression, while non-segregation can lead to the

exploitation of vulnerable prisoners (Prison Reform Trust, 2015). Therefore, despite potential for harm caused by segregating prisoners, it is also noted that terror offenders present a significant risk to staff and other prisoners and segregation presents opportunities to influence or radicalise inmates. The studies conducted by Liebling et al (2011) and Powis et al (2019) reveal that when staff and prisoners operate in high-fear environments, extremist prisoners may gain greater influence and power within the prison setting. This highlights a Muslim gang culture operating throughout the prison system and as suggested by Gooch and Treadwell (2021), there is some evidence to support the notion that these Islamic gangs are well organised and structured.

Understanding organised crime in prison is a key consideration to preventing terrorist activity within prisons. Many prison environments present opportunity for extremists, such as under supervised faith meetings whereby like most prison staff, chaplains have been proven to be ineffective and not qualified to manage challenging scenarios or control access to certain extremist material and literature. Therefore, effectively controlling the prison setting appears to be tricky, but crucial if dangerous and infamous offenders are allowed to blend with mainstream prisoners with impunity, as they may pose a significant risk to the vulnerable and impressionable due to their perceived valour. According to Awan (2013), UK prisons have become integral institutions when considering the concept of terrorism. Therefore, focus must be attributed to rehabilitation and resettlement programs in order to successfully change ideology and perception. Nonetheless, prison de-radicalisations programs are not often well received as they are perceived as intelligence gathering exercises creating unnecessary surveillance over all Muslim prisoners regardless of their accused crime type. To establish a successful intervention strategy, relevant prison personnel must build trust with Muslim prisoners and it is essential that programs incorporate religion as a means of addressing the problem amongst inmates.

When considering the level of influence prominent leaders can command, it is worth exploring Mosques as being potential fertile ground, whereby the message conveyed from positions of power and trust may have a meaningful impact over listener's attitudes. Mosques have been described as ideal environments for recruiters to spot talent (Rushchenko, 2019; Kanol, 2022). This was demonstrated in the case of Umar Haque, who had used Leyton Mosque East London as a platform to groom 110 children between the ages of 11 and 14 during after-school classes and attempted to radicalise them by showing violent ISIS propaganda videos leaving the children traumatised (Silke, 2017; The Independent, 2018). Further, notorious radical preachers such as Iman Abu Hamza al-Masri continued the phenomenon by sermonising strict interpretations of Islam, encouraging terrorism and advocating the need for Jihad (Horswill, 2017), turning the Finsbury Park Mosque into a meeting point for many radical Muslims (Barling, 2017). Post al-Masri's leadership, the Finsbury Park Mosque has undergone significant reform receiving honours for the 'Best outreach programme' at the British Beacon Mosque Awards in 2018 (Minab, 2018) and the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2018 as a member of the Islington Faith Forum (Islington Tribune, 2018). Furthermore, former counterterrorism operative Robert Lambert states that such prominent cornerstones of the Muslim community are no longer using their vast platform and influence to radicalise, but to repel IE ideologies, as demonstrated by the Brixton Mosque (Lambert, 2011). While mosques are still viable places for radicalisation, their increased awareness and community involvement could make them less attractive to extremists. This potentially may cause extremists to operate elsewhere. This view is supported by criminological theory on displacement (Reppetto, 1976; Hesseling, 1994; Enders & Sandler 2004; Guerette & Bowers, 2009), which suggests that prevention measures can shift activity to other locations without addressing the root cause.

In addition to conventional methods of radicalisation it is important to acknowledge the increase in academic research and prevalence of online radicalisation (Ahmed, 2019; Home Office, 2020; Basu, 2021; Caton & Landman, 2022; Yunus, 2022). The internet has

significantly transformed the way in which humans communicate and streamlined the process for networking (von Behr et al, 2013). Edwards & Gribbon, (2013) conducted research into internet radicalisation by interviewing 15 individuals closely linked to terrorism, nine of whom had been convicted in the UK under the Terrorism Act 2000. These first-hand accounts revealed that the radicalisation process has become progressively covert with people failing to attend mosques in favour of seeking extremist information online. The results of the study are concerning, as a number of the participants admitted to engaging in behaviours such as viewing and sharing violent and extremist content, including footage of beheadings, and some confessed to purchasing materials for bomb making. Similarly, the primary evidence from the von Behr et al (2013) study confirmed that the internet had proved to be a vital resource in obtaining information, communicating and sharing extremist propaganda. Likewise, the study supported the hypothesis that the internet may enhance the opportunity for radicalisation, becoming an echo chamber free from opposing thought or challenge. There have been many reports of individuals travelling to Syria to fight for ISIS having been seduced by Social Media publications and encrypted messaging apps such as Telegram, attracting them to join the cause (Clifford, 2020). This was supported by Hall's (2015) study of Canadian ISIS recruits that revealed sympathisers were being tempted by using the ISIS sponsored online magazine 'Dabiq'. Its rhetoric provided enhanced legitimacy to the caliphate and their actions, further highlighting how advanced ISIS had become at online radicalisation. Correspondingly, this was echoed by Winter (2015) during a systematic study of ISIS broadcasts from their Central Media Command, revealing that the bulk of their matter associated the caliphate with apparent paradise.

This was taken further by Rowe & Saif's (2016) study of Twitter which sought to detect signals of pro-ISIS radicalisation, identifying sub-communities within the network from which extremist content was shared with individuals starting out as common users, acting as bridges before becoming activated. Berger (2015) went further and identified ISIS' methods of online radicalisation specifying the following four key phases. Firstly, 'First contact': by ISIS seeking

targets and responding to those that sought ISIS with a view to potentially grooming recruits and recruiting using a variety of tactics including interacting with Muslim-oriented Social Media accounts. Secondly, ‘Create micro-community’: encouraging the recruit to isolate themselves from external influences whilst maintaining continual communication, with the author claiming that some recruiters would send over 250 tweets per day including links, news stories, images and videos. Thirdly, ‘Shift to private communications’: once the relationship develops further, the subject is encouraged to communicate via encrypted applications and Social Media messaging platforms, among the most favoured being Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Kik, Surespot, and Telegram. Finally, ‘Identify and encourage pro-Islamic State action suitable for target’: whether that be Social Media crusading, traveling to ISIS controlled regions or to engage in an act of terror, that would be determined by the handler having considered the suitability of the subject. However, Whittaker’s (2021) empirical study into terrorists’ use of the Internet, from 231 IE terrorists based in the United States (US), provided contrasting results. The key findings were that subjects used the internet greatly to facilitate networking with other ideologists sharing knowledge regarding their proposed endeavours, but the evidence suggested that despite countering arguments, face-to-face interactions had not been substituted for online activity as IE functioned in both spaces. Additionally, they found reason to believe that using the Internet may be a barrier to IE achieving their aims. Nonetheless, it is important to recognise that this was a US study whereby varying lockdown measures may have been in place. Therefore, considering the UK perspective, the reduction in physical interactions must be factored in. The Pandemic may have intensified this issue, as new social networking apps and overall internet usage have increased (Ofcom, 2020).

In order to understand the effect of Covid-19 on terrorist activity, it is necessary to examine the consequences of global restrictions and their relationship to both 'in person' and 'online' radicalisation. The global restrictions enforced during the pandemic resulted in the closure of bars, restaurants, concerts, and sporting events, reducing an individual’s exposure to negative peer groups and lessening the window of opportunity for significant terrorist attacks (Davies,

Wu & Frank, 2021; Herrington, 2022). Similarly, chances of detection increased due to lower public population density, and extremists may have avoided gatherings for fear of contracting the virus (Stubley, 2020). However, anti-lockdown protests (see Haddad, 2021) created potential opportunities for high-impact attacks, and essential services' offices and stores became prospective targets (Ackerman & Peterson, 2020), as pointed out by Freilich, & LaFree, (2015), who discussed the possibility of displacement. As noted by Herrington (2022), CT policing had to adapt during the pandemic, which may have caused distractions and impacted normal practices. Additionally, Covid-19 caused negative societal effects that may increase vulnerability to radicalisation (The British Academy, 2021). The stress suffered by some due to loss of contact, freedom, bereavements, unemployment, financial difficulties, and abnormal social functioning can cause negative influences on mental health (Holmes et al., 2020). The pandemic-induced furloughs and job losses have created a noteworthy consideration, as financial hardship and unemployment have been identified as motivating factors for individuals to join terrorist organisations previously (Medhurst, 2000; Bjørgo, 2004). Moreover, the closure of schools and disruptions to education may have impeded teachers' capacity to identify concerning behaviour and intervene, possibly resulting in some individuals slipping through the cracks (Timmins, 2021). Finally, domestic abuse increased during Covid-19 lockdowns, with family-related abuse rising by 17.1% in the UK (Ivandic, Kirchmaier & Linton, 2020; Taub, 2020; Ravichandran, Shah, & Ravichandran, 2020; Piquero et al., 2021). Although dysfunction within the family home is a key contributing pull factor towards radicalisation (Copeland & Marsden, 2020), increased positive contact with family may lead to desistence (Marsden, 2016). Nonetheless, restricting freedom and in-person meetings due to the pandemic increased online communications, providing an opportunity for extremist groups to exploit and increase the risk of online radicalisation (Salman & Gill, 2020). Another consideration is noted by Far-right groups threatening to infect minority communities with the virus which may have fuelled extremist recruitment (Commission for Countering Extremism, 2020), as grievances can be a formidable marshalling mechanism in joining extremist organisations (Schmid, 2012).

Online radicalisation is a crucial priority in counterterrorism, particularly given the heightened internet use and potential issues resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. The online space has emerged as a prominent platform for seeking contact and airing grievances, potentially highlighting personal vulnerabilities. Social media, in particular, facilitates the expression of extremist views, with easy access to specific hashtags or references enabling interaction with like-minded individuals more readily than in face-to-face encounters (Mahmood, 2012). UK government officials have acknowledged the threat of radicalisation, particularly among the youth, and the possibility that they may have already been exposed to it (BBC News, 2020). Similarly, extremist groups actively seek and identify potential recruits based on specific characteristics and disseminate propaganda to promote their ideological narratives (Mahmood, 2012). The internet has evolved from open source websites to password-encrypted forums, encoded messaging applications and Social Media (Winter et al, 2020). These social network approaches have the ability to rapidly transmit radical information, ideas and behaviours and they can be expanded through actors to a wider audience (Sagman, 2004). This becomes an attractive prospect when considering the scale in which information can be accessed and level of anonymity the internet can provide. (Bayerl et al, 2014). Bayerl, Sahar & Akhgar (2020) went some way to identifying the specific issues of online radicalisation, having developed their 'radicalisation-factor model' (RFM) which proposed a systematic framework from which to base investigations, with a view to providing an analytical model to methodically explore patterns and trends.

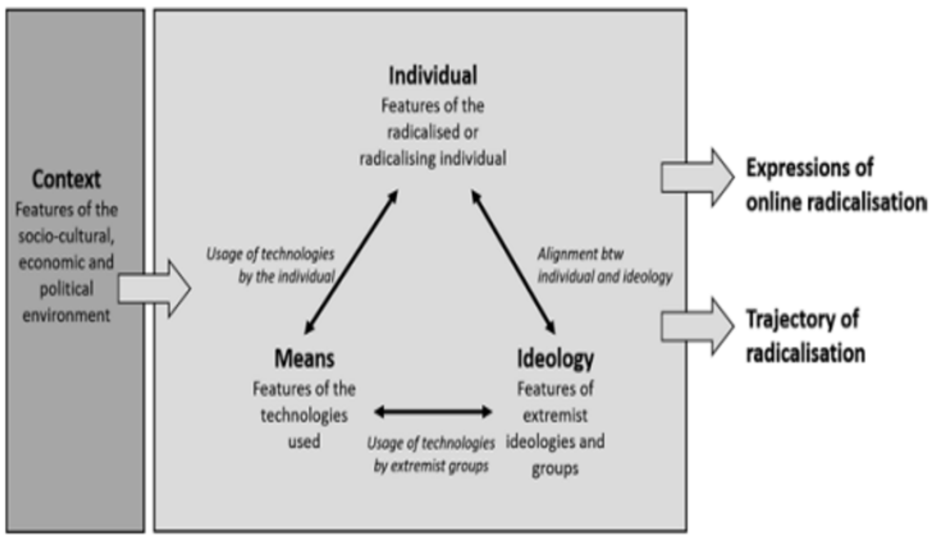


Figure 2.1. Radicalisation-factor model (RFM)

Identification of the specific genre of radicalisation and the modus operandi is crucial, given the diverse typologies of terrorism, ranging from state-sponsored to lone wolf (Blakemore, 2016). This knowledge is likely to be advantageous in the decision-making process concerning the most effective countermeasures to deploy. These updated typologies may be useful, given the contemporary issues associated with socio-economic factors that have been discussed.

When reviewing the existing literature relating to contemporary places of IE radicalisation, several key themes emerge. Although traditional forms of radicalisation such as recruitment through Mosques and Prisons still pose a risk, the research alludes to the philosophy of radicalisation migrating towards the internet. The heightened reliance on the internet since the onset of the global pandemic is a salient phenomenon that has had significant implications for various segments of society, especially in light of Covid-19 related restrictions (Home Office, 2021). Of particular concern is the impact on vulnerable groups such as children, as evidenced by recent research (Del Rio, Collins & Malani, 2020; Liu et al, 2020; Iqbal, 2020). Consequently, the concept under examination assumes a critical role, necessitating closer exploration and evaluation. Worthy of consideration is the notion of long-term behavioural changes, potentially owing to modifications to society, familial bonds and the wider

implications to economy. Moreover, how these variations may specifically relate to terrorism, rather the way in which recruitment is conducted, new emerging narratives or increased vulnerability of targets. Although officials appear inclined to separate online and face-to-face IE, academics largely agree that the two concepts are intertwined, thus any attempt to combat online extremism as a single entity would be futile, unless there is recognition of the wider issues and subsequent manifestations (Winter et al, 2020). Further research may obtain particular detail surrounding contemporary methods of radicalisation with focus on the extent that IE organisations are operating online and the specifics of any hate speech or propaganda being used. The efficacy of online radicalisation in comparison to in-person radicalisation remains a subject of considerable uncertainty and requires further investigation. A greater understanding of new online platforms, encrypted applications and other contemporary methods of extremist recruitment will be invaluable to providing successful intervention.

2.3 De-radicalisation in the UK, the government's strategy

This section will summarise the UK government's counter-terrorism strategy, 'CONTEST' as well as the specific development of the Prevent work stream, which focuses on de-radicalisation. The UK government's integrated CT strategy, 'CONTEST', is a multi-faceted approach to tackling the threat of terrorism in the UK (HM Government, 2018). The strategy was first implemented in 2003 in the aftermath of 9.11 with specific attention being given to Al-Qaeda and affiliated groups. It has been argued that early interpretations of the policy were relatively lenient towards UK extremists, especial when comparing to the stance of the French and other European countries (Foley, 2013; Nesser, 2018). However, since then the policy had been revised in 2006, 2009, 2011 and 2018 to reflect the evolving nature of the threat (HM Government, 2018). The approach is based on four key principles, 'Prevent', to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism, 'Pursue', to stop terrorist attacks, 'Protect', to strengthen the protection against a terrorist attack and 'Prepare' to mitigate the impact of an attack (HM Government, 2018). The revisions included renewed focus on the prevention

of radicalisation and recruitment by terrorist organisations. Additionally, the revised strategy also sought to strengthen the UK's resilience to terrorism by improving the flow of information between government departments, developing better civil contingencies and increasing public awareness of the risks posed by terrorism (Home Office, 2015). The latest iterations have placed a notable emphasis on the bolstering of community resilience and reinforcement of the criminal justice system's reaction to potential threats. This has been coupled with a heightened focus on enhancing aviation security measures and promoting greater levels of coordination and collaboration among different security services (Home Office, 2018). The efficacy of the CONTEST strategy has been widely debated in the literature with some arguing (HM Government, 2018; Basu, 2021) that the strategy has been effective in disrupting terrorist activity. This has been evidenced in the Protect pillar of the strategy by enhancing target hardening techniques, including the installation of additional CCTV cameras and the implementation of a 'ring of steel' to protect vulnerable locations. This has resulted in a reduction in opportunities to engage in criminal activities (Basu, 2021). It has also been successful in prosecuting those who have committed terrorist offences with the Pursue pillar of the strategy demonstrating the capture and conviction of many offenders (CPS, 2022; Home Office, 2022). Moreover, according to Pettinger's (2020) assessment, the CONTEST strategy has demonstrated effectiveness in deterring individuals from radicalisation and preventing their involvement in terrorist activities. The Prevent pillar of the CONTEST strategy, which strives to manage prevention, de-radicalisation, and early intervention to counter the threat (HM Government, 2018), is arguably the most critical aspect of this approach. This strand will be thoroughly explored below, as it represents a key focus area. Given the multifaceted nature of the CONTEST mechanism, encompassing various functions and components, it is challenging to ascertain its level of success with precision. Notwithstanding the complexity of the CONTEST framework, the existing literature reveals several successful elements. Therefore, it can be postulated that without the implementation of these measures, the magnitude of the resulting danger remains unclear. Nevertheless, the CONTEST strategy has been criticised for prioritising security measures, such as surveillance and prosecuting terrorist

offences, at the expense of prevention and support for individuals susceptible to radicalisation (Phillips et al, 2011; Mohammed & Siddiqui, 2013; Thomas, 2020). It has been argued (Gearson & Rosemont, 2015; Hardy, 2015) that the strategy exhibits a broad and unfocused approach, which ultimately fails to effectively address the intricate causes of radicalisation. Accordingly, the deployment of the policy's multifarious functions may entail unfavourable trade-offs (see Qurashi, 2018), which as identified by Foley (2013) is a problematic issue associated with CT policy.

The Prevent pillar of the CT strategy, aims to prevent the threat of terrorism by addressing the root causes of radicalisation. Prevent employs intervention and de-radicalisation measures to safeguard vulnerable individuals from extremist narratives and combat the risk of radicalisation and terrorist activities. Practically, the objectives are delivered through a variety of activities including community engagement and the ‘Channel’ program, a multi-agency initiative focussed on crime prevention that employs a partnership approach across several force areas and local authorities nationally. Support services and institutions, including, prisons, schools, and charities provide safeguarding to vulnerable at-risk individuals and rehabilitation to those already engaged (Home Office, 2019). Shawcross (2023), asserts that the strategy has a noble ambition, is effective in countering violent extremism, has been successful in saving lives and assists individuals in disengaging from extremist ideologies. Importantly, UK Government's Prevent Duty, which has been discussed broadly, legally requires those in education, healthcare, public and social service sectors to actively seek signs of radicalisation and report incidents (HM Government, 2011; Department for Education, 2015; Qurashi, 2018; Heath-Kelly & Strausz, 2019; Home Office, 2021e; Busher, Choudhury, & Thomas, 2022). The Home Office (2019) reports that this requirement, coupled with increased training, has been effective in improving interactions. Shawcross (2023) notes that the Statutory Prevent Duty has successfully ensured public agencies consider radicalisation risks and implement CT measures, especially in schools where safeguarding practices now integrate awareness of these risks. The Prevent multi-agency Channel panels are credited for

this success due to their dedication and handling of complex cases featuring diverse risks, supporting individuals and communities in addressing radicalisation, and contributing to a safer society.

However, it has been argued widely (Mythen, Walklate & Khan, 2009; Pantazis and Pemberton, 2009; Innes et al, 2011; Awan, 2012; Thomas, 2017; Qureshi, 2017; Holmwood, & Aitlhadj, 2022) that the Prevent strategy is heavy-handed and intrusive, disproportionately targeting Muslim communities. The authors contend that the Prevent strategy is predicated on subjective indicators of radicalisation, including expressions of criticism of foreign policy and interest in religious and political matters, thus engendering widespread surveillance, stigmatisation, and discrimination against Muslim communities. Busher, Choudhury & Thomas (2019) explored this theory further in a practitioner study, but these findings were only borne out in part and previous debate appears to overlook the significant modifications that Prevent has undergone in recent years. However, Qurashi (2018), claims that due recent attacks attributed to IE, the 'terror threat' has been labelled as an 'Islamic threat', which has created the apparent justification to implant robust surveillance structures within the Muslim community. Ultimately leading to a perception of Islamophobia being closely connected to the core of the Prevent strategy. Pantazis and Pemberton (2009) and Mythen et al. (2009) suggest that the Prevent program has contributed to the creation of a Muslim suspect community, while Githens-Mazer and Lambert (2010) argue that the modern concept of radicalisation is being used by the government to control this community. The concern over the impact on civil liberties and individual rights is significant, as the broad definitions of extremism used to target individuals can implicate legitimate political activism and free speech. Additionally, heightened surveillance measures, such as increased use of CCTV, can infringe upon privacy and freedom of expression.

Holmwood, & Aitlhadj (2022) assert that the Prevent policy is inconsistent with other ideologies such as far-right extremism, which is more targeted towards individual actors rather than the

entire community. However, Basu's (2021) claims that the strategy is not to persecute but to safeguard and protect individuals through early intervention. Nonetheless, some (Barrett, 2016; Blackwood et al, 2016; Qurashi, 2018) suggest that the programme has been ineffective in tackling the root causes of radicalisation. Pettinger (2020) interviewed 17 Channel and Prevent practitioners, including mentors, co-ordinators, trainers, and former police officers, to gain insights into the program's functioning. The study found concerning features, such as subjective interventions based on worst-case scenarios, resulting in some young individuals receiving anti-terror support despite having no intention to harm others. Although, on the other hand, some subjects were released after demonstrating improved critical thinking skills, which may be a vague criterion for assessing violent extremism. The study also highlighted the practitioners' acknowledgement of the risk of individual biases influencing decision-making when relying on subjective interventions. Additionally, practitioners tend to adopt a risk-orientated approach and over-police non-violent individuals to avoid subsequent criticism, even if the risk is low (see Ewald, 2002; Aradau & van Munster, 2005). Shawcross (2023) argued an alternative perspective on the matter, contending that the current Prevent strategy fails to address non-violent IE ideologies operating below the threshold of terrorism. The review highlights that non-violent IE can create an environment conducive to terrorism, necessitating the same level of scrutiny as violent extremists. The review highlights that Prevent has a narrower approach towards Islamism and mainly focuses on proscribed organisations, while adopting a more expansive approach towards right-wing extremism. Shawcross (2023) recommends a more consistent approach to address all forms of extremist ideologies, including non-violent Islamist narratives and networks, to heighten legitimacy, reduce risk and avoid creating a grievance narrative for far-right extremists. This requires a nuanced understanding of the diverse range of extremist ideologies and a willingness to challenge all forms of extremism.

The effectiveness of crime prevention policies are difficult to measure as if the intervention was successful then the incident would not occur (Hughes, 1998). Similarly, without clear

guidelines determining what is deemed to be successful and due to a lack of empirical studies and academic framework, the true measure of the effectiveness of the UK CT policy remains unknown (Brady, 2016). However, the Prevent strategy is an essential component of the UK government's CT policy, and has demonstrated significant success in preventing radicalisation, promoting community resilience, and saving lives (Basu, 2021; Shawcross, 2023). According to the Home Office (2019), there is now a widespread acceptance of Prevent, with many countries across the world developing CT programs inspired by this strategy. While it is not without its criticisms, the Statutory Prevent Duty, in particular, has been effective in embedding awareness of the risk of radicalisation within safeguarding practices, and highlights the dedication and diligence of the multi-agency Channel panels in supporting complex cases. Despite legitimate intentions, some methods used by Prevent may have been counterintuitive and created those feelings of unfairness, which can be key motivating factors in the radicalisation process. Therefore, it is important for the government to continue to evaluate and reform the strategy to ensure its effectiveness, by exploring dynamic approaches towards de-radicalisation, while also addressing concerns regarding the potential negative impacts to maintain legitimacy.

De-radicalisation is a recognised strategy in countering extremism and terrorism (Elshimi, 2015). However, its implementation is complex and requires careful consideration of various factors. According to El-Said (2017), de-radicalisation programs began in Egypt and Algeria in the late 1900's. However, surprisingly it was not until 2005 that the first European countries including the UK, Denmark and the Netherlands began to roll out similar procedures. There is a gap in research regarding de-radicalisation programs notwithstanding the significance placed upon them. The design, method of implementation and lack of autonomous evaluation has resulted in their effectiveness being open to debate. There are numerous models of radicalisation, created to assist with identifying the various stages of the process (Veldhuis & Staun, 2009; Barkindo, 2016). Borum (2003), introduced an early model that pinpointed four

specific stages following a perceived unjust incident and then seeking blame as shown in the diagram below.

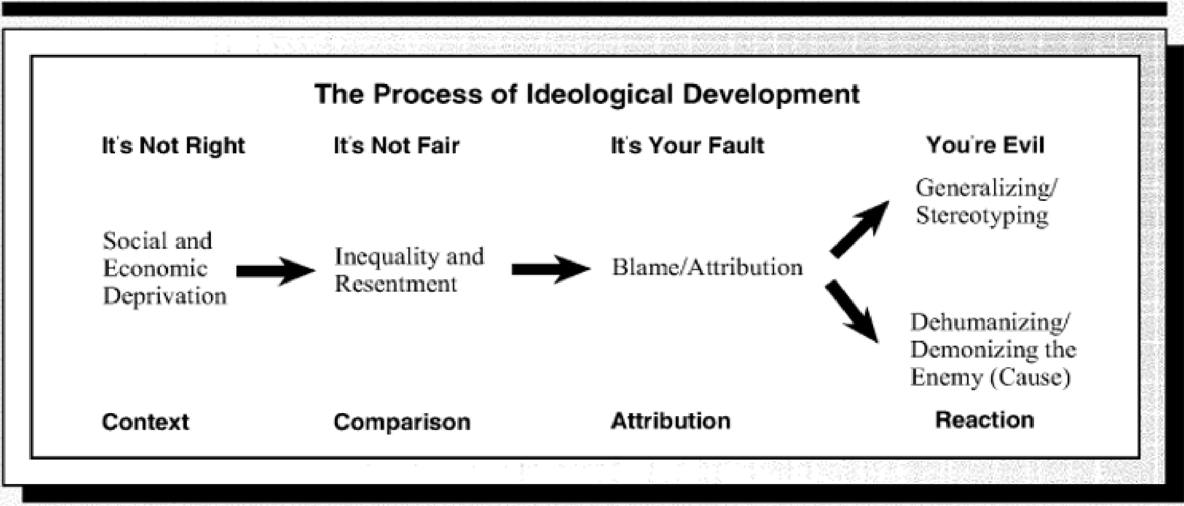


Figure 2.2. Borum's (2003) Ideological Development Model*.*

Borum's (2003) model emphasises the importance of early intervention and prevention strategies that focus on the pre-radicalisation stages, which are considered critical points of intervention. By addressing the underlying grievances and providing alternative means of addressing them, it may be possible to prevent individuals from progressing through the stages of ideological development and ultimately engaging in extremist behaviour. Dalgaard-Nielsen's (2008; 2010) model was similar, but with greater emphasis on the psychological aspects relating to displacing responsibility and self-justifying acts by comparing them to perceived worse atrocities. Wiktorowicz (2005) introduced the theory of an individual, independent realisation, described as a 'cognitive opening' which was expanded further by, Sinai's (2012) three key phases: firstly 'Radicalisation', which included a wide variety of pull factors; secondly 'Mobilisation', being described as the seizing of opportunity, training, or the readiness to carry out an act; and lastly 'Action', identifying and attacking a target.

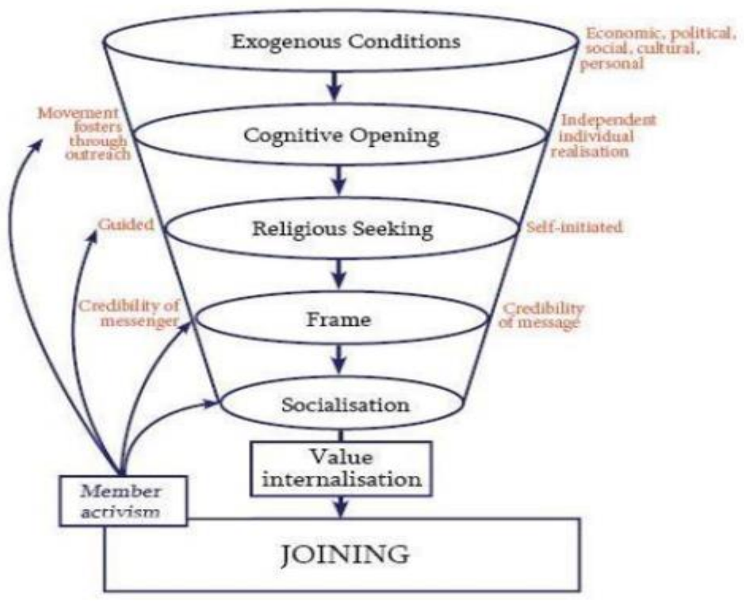


Figure 2.3. Wiktorowicz's (2005) diagram for joining extremist or terrorist groups.

The theory of a 'cognitive opening' by Wiktorowicz (2005) presents a valuable framework for comprehending the process of radicalisation. The theory accentuates the role of psychological and cognitive processes in the individual's radicalisation, thereby providing an excellent point of reference for identifying early signs of radicalisation. These signs include behavioural and worldview alterations that could be noticeable to the individuals' acquaintances, family members, or community members. Therefore, the cognitive opening theory could aid in developing effective strategies for countering radicalisation. Sinai's (2012) expansion of the theory from radicalisation to action can help practitioners develop more targeted interventions aimed at preventing individuals from progressing through the various stages of Extremism. However, it could be argued that it oversimplifies the complex process of radicalisation and fails to account for the diversity of factors that may contribute to extremist behaviour.

Moghaddam's (2009) staircase system is considered to be one of the most advanced radicalisation models (Young, Rooze & Holsappel, 2015), where they define the steps from the ground to the fifth floor, representing each stage of a progressive climb describing them in thorough detail.

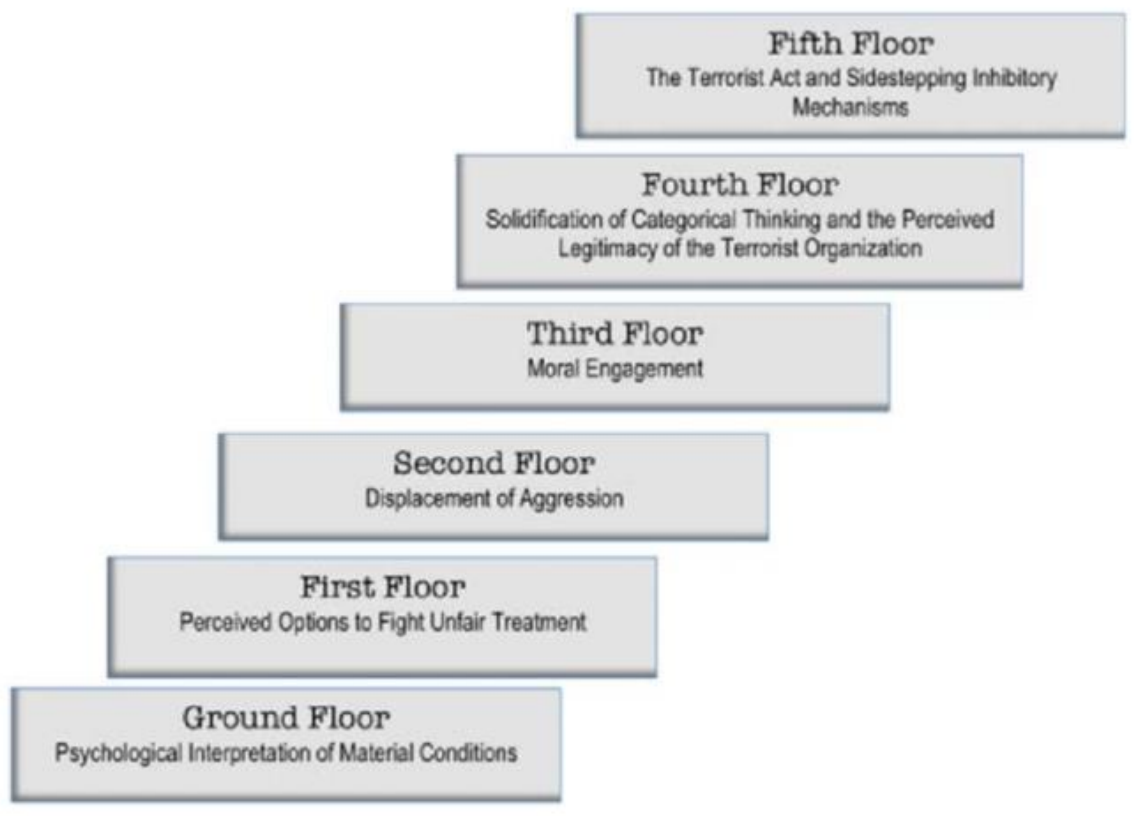


Figure 2.4. Moghaddam's (2009) staircase to terrorism system.

One of the notable strengths of Moghaddam's (2009) staircase model is its recognition of the intricate interplay between individual, social, and environmental factors that drive the radicalisation process. The model underscores the crucial role of socialisation, whereby individuals are influenced by the ideas and beliefs of their communities, which can lead to misdirected feelings of anger due to perceived injustices. Nonetheless, despite there being a vast amount of empirical research pertaining to radicalisation models, with authors professing to understand the detailed inner workings of the process, surprisingly there is little quantifiable data to support or enhance them with limited data relating to the psychology of radicalised persons (King & Taylor, 2011). Therefore, the problem with phased methods of this nature is that they were often built on relatively few case studies, whereby the subject went through all the stages of the model up to a terrorist act, dismissing all those subjects that did not, although to a degree, Moghaddam's process solves the situation (Schmid, 2013).

De-radicalisation is a complex concept that requires adaptable and context-dependent approaches to achieve success. Since 2005 Prevent has enlisted the services of numerous external organisations to identify and intervene where necessary with vulnerable at-risk individuals and those already convicted of extremist offences, in response to the threat of terrorism. The key aim of these organisations is to de-radicalise, using a variety of methods and to reintegrate individuals back into normal society (Weeks, 2018). Therefore, despite the criticisms aimed at Prevent, the concept of prevention is intrinsically difficult to measure, with the effectiveness of Prevent intervention being the subject of extensive debate. However, it is important recognise the complex nature of Prevent as an entity and explore the associated wider funding mechanisms and its employment of support organisations. Although there are only limited and anecdotal success stories directly linked to Prevent in terms of preventing acts of terrorism, any potential indirect involvement must also be considered.

2.4 De-radicalisation in the UK: at a community level

According to Elshimi (2017), there have been numerous successful interactions made by government funded external organisations, who had been tasked to deliver their interventions through Prevent. This highlights the positive contribution administered by Prevent, potentially emphasising an element of success in preventing UK terrorism overall. Several charities, public figures and private organisations in the UK have been focused on the de-radicalisation of individuals, using a variety of methods. For example, the award winning Active Change Foundation (ACF) led by a group of individuals, with previous involvement in extremism, claim responsibility for numerous positive interventions, which are supported by case studies (Puigvert et al, 2020). Their approach is to have direct contact with disaffected youths, to manage extremist views in a non-violent manor (Butt & Tuck, 2014). During an interview, 'ACF' leader Hanif Qadir provided some examples of typical intervention methods they would use. These tactics involved acknowledging and agreeing with wider Muslim grievances, such as

the occupation of Palestine, Iraq or Afghanistan, but emphasising that the response should be by non-violent means and using appropriate religious interpretations to explain why. Additionally, as a former extremist fighter in Afghanistan, Qadir would often draw from his own experiences, citing the hypocrisy and his disillusionment of the cause to denounce any perceived glamorisation of the holy war, and repel support (Rabasa et al, 2010). However, in contrast Jaffer (2018), directs criticism towards the 'ACF', suggesting that programs that simply challenge the ideology do not go far enough to address the underlying principal issues of marginalisation and lowly future prospects. Their research study went further to highlight a specific case study whereby 'ACF' involvement made the situation worse, exacerbating the individual's extremist views. It was only following the full withdrawal from the 'ACF' project and subsequent intervention that the subject's social needs were addressed, which subsequently provided them with purpose, resulting in the rebuttal of the behavior. The author infers that in this instance, it was not the peaceful interpretations of the Islamic religion that appealed to the subject, but more the promise of a utopian life.

According to Lambert (2011), these types of community-led, grassroots projects were the future of successful CT programs. Included in this theory was the Strategy to Reach, Empower and Educate Teenagers (STREET) initiative (Barclay, 2011). There have been several positive case studies of de-radicalisation attributed to 'STREET' (Baker, 2015), which make it worthy of further exploration. Equally, 'STREET' had previously been used by Prevent as an intervention group, although it must be noted that 'STREET' is no longer in receipt of government funding. The project was founded by Dr Abdul Haqq Baker, known for his work within the Muslim community, who honed his focus towards young British Muslims and the convert community. Originally operated from Brixton Mosque, 'STREET' was responsible for supporting thousands of young Muslims through training, mentoring and counseling. In a practical sense, 'STREET' staff, who had often experienced similar past challenges and held the same societal grievances, counseled their subjects on troubling issues, such as watching extremist propaganda videos together and identifying the misconceptions regarding its

interpretation of Islam (Rosenberg, 2011b). Consequently, this approach may be more effective than government-led projects due to the subjects being more able to relate to the mentors as they have lived through similar life experiences and ultimately more likely to listen to the message. According to Brady and Marsden (2021), when examining the crucial 'push' and 'pull' factors that contribute to IE, such as the 'Opportunity to address grievances arising from Western country's foreign policies', a 'Sense of religious obligation to live under Sharia law', and the 'Perceived economic opportunities and apparent independence and empowerment', it can be hypothesised that providing alternative perspectives and creating a sense of belonging through these techniques, it may satisfy the needs of individuals who are susceptible to extremism. Therefore, it can be suggested that joining the 'STREET' group gives individuals a sense of becoming part of a 'good gang' whereby individuals are given a platform from which to air their grievances in a controlled environment, with stewardship from mentors. This theory was discussed by Rosenberg (2011) who hypothesised that the gang concept and being part of a team is the overriding factor when enlisting in terrorist organisations.

Although 'STREET' argued that their methods were most effective, their fundamentalist approach had attracted controversy and negative opinions from peer groups. Former terrorism think tank 'Quilliam' suggested that 'STREET' promoted a conservative, harsher view of Islam, described by them as a 'wahhabist' view, which may be connected to terrorist activity and in contrast to their organisation's pro-West, liberal values (Quilliam, 2010). Others have taken the point further suggesting organisations like 'STRRET' are a support mechanism for terrorism (Phillips, 2006; 2011). It was perhaps these concerns that caused UK government to remove 'STREET's' funding (BBC News, 2011; Purtill, 2014) as they perceived it to be a risk to have a similar philosophy and harbor many of the same grievances as terrorists. Specifically, as a result of the 2011 evaluation of the Prevent strategy (HM Government, 2011), it was determined to reassess the engagement and allocation of resources to individuals and organisations that were classified as exhibiting "radical" tendencies. This encompassed

members of Salafi communities within the UK (Wallner, 2021). Nonetheless, Quilliam has since received criticism regarding their practices (Johnson, 2019) and following their closure in 2021, the organisation has garnered substantial critique for its prolonged advocacy of oppressive CT policies and for reinforcing the notion that Muslims are a suspect community (Bouattia, 2021).

The UK government may prioritise funding and supporting groups that share liberal principles rather than those perceived as discontent with society. However, this may not be a significant concern given the historical atrocities committed against the Muslim community, resulting in widespread resentment and grievance, despite a relatively low incidence of violent extremism (Belkin & Blanchard, 2011; Borum, 2011; Rosenberg, 2011b; Kruglanski et al, 2014). Parvez (2017) suggests that terrorism is not caused by conservatism but by a history of criminal activity and social exclusion. McCants et al.'s (2006) research is also relevant to this topic as it identifies ways to leverage respected leaders within communities to reach vulnerable individuals. Their recommendations are for governments to target the Jihadi movement directly rather than the Salafi or wider Muslim communities, by publicising statements from influential Salafi clerics in Saudi Arabia, denouncing Jihadi terrorism. This is expected to encourage influential academics to disavow violent methods and to show the harmful effects of Jihadi rule, citing examples of atrocities committed by groups such as the Taliban. The 'STREET' approach, which engages troubled young Muslims from a Salafi perspective, helps to address these issues at a grassroots level. This approach has gained international recognition and has been endorsed by probation officers, former offenders, and government officials in Vancouver and Los Angeles, who have expressed interest in replicating the 'STREET' system (Rosenberg, 2011b).

Baker (2017) argues that relying on external perspectives to combat radicalisation and violent extremism is ineffective without credible, likeminded practitioners guiding grassroots groups. He highlights that religious conservatism, such as Salafism, is not synonymous with terrorism,

but it is societal inequalities that contribute to the transition. The case studies of Zacarius Moussaoui (9/1 bomber) and Richard Reid (Shoe bomber) illustrate a gradual transition towards the Jihadi community, as they struggled to find acceptance within the mainstream Salafi community, which had an apolitical and 'anti-jihad' stance. Baker criticises the top-down, intelligence gathering-focused government strategies, that create suspect communities and polarisation. He suggests that young, marginalised Muslims are falling under the radar of mainstream and government intervention, following the gravitational pull towards extremism, as demonstrated by the UK terror attacks of 2017. This was illustrated in Baker's (2009) vacuum radar (see Appendix 2, Figure. 2.5) and his initiative positioning diagram (see Appendix 2, Figure. 2.6)

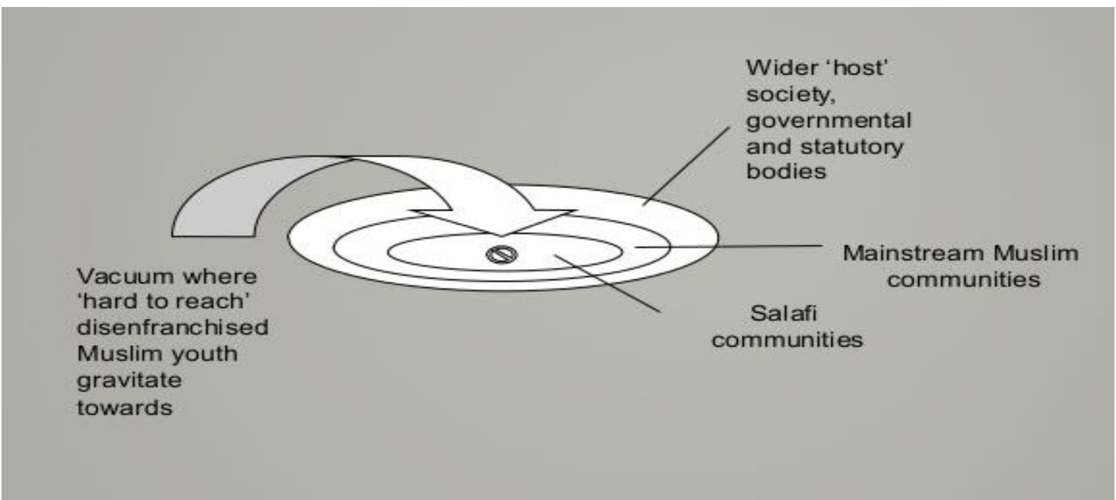


Figure 2.5: Baker's (2009) vacuum radar.

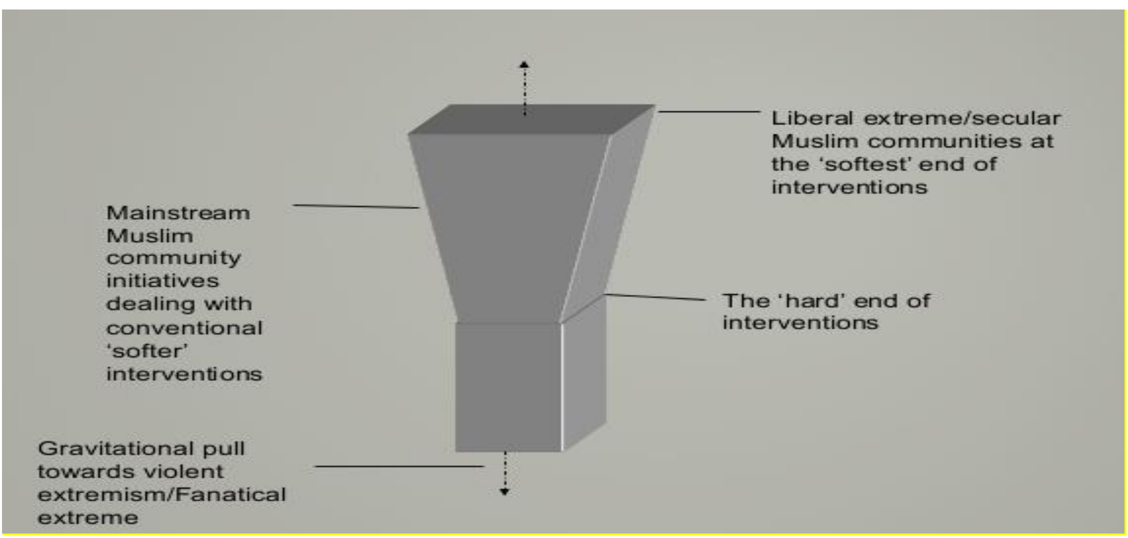


Figure 2.6: Baker's (2009) positioning of Muslims and grassroots initiatives funnel model.

Baker highlights the need for effective programs that understand the subject's interpretation of religion, recognise stages of development, and draw from established frameworks to combat vulnerabilities among young Muslims. Without this knowledge, intervention groups may unwittingly expose subjects to political teachings during the founding or cognitive phases, leading to counterproductive outcomes. A more rounded social scientific method is necessary to understand young Muslims' evolving interpretations of Islam across different phases of life (see Appendix 2, Figure. 2.7).

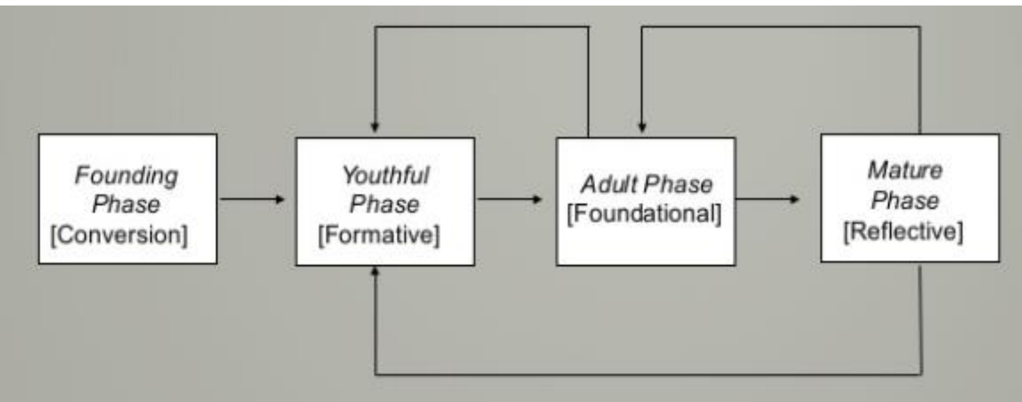


Figure 2.7. Baker's (2009) cycle of the cognitive process.

Baker proposes a 'continuum of understanding model' (see Appendix 2, Figure. 2.8) to elucidate an individual's religious development. This model depicts data's progression into wisdom, which represents the highest level of knowledge. Sharing knowledge and experiences is crucial in cultivating and absorbing additional wisdom.

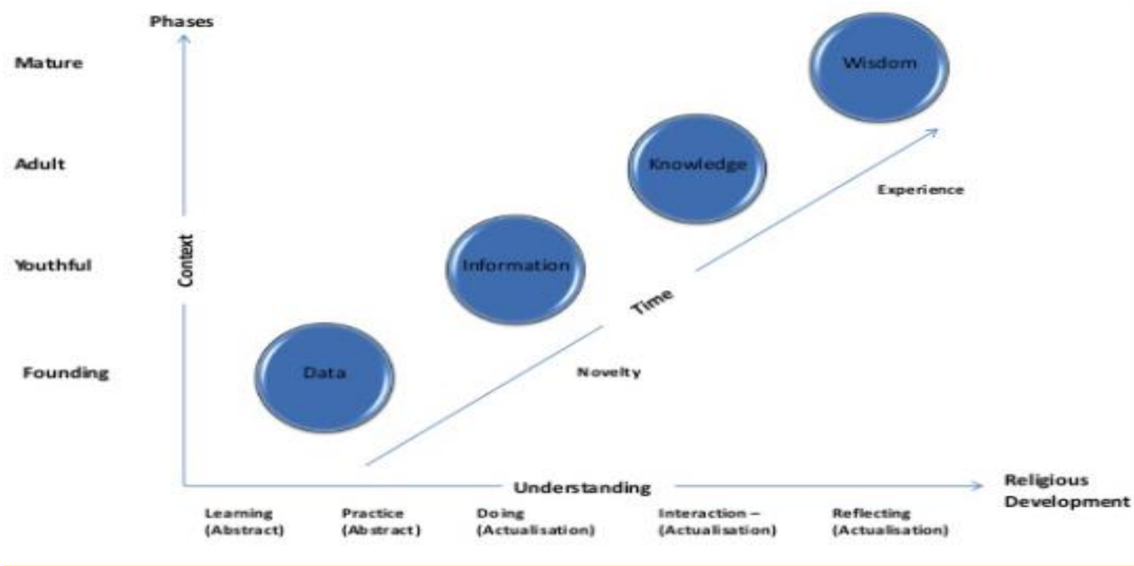


Figure 2.8. Baker's (2009) continuum of understanding model.

Arguably, grassroots engagement through reliable community projects with knowledgeable, likeminded practitioners, such as 'STREET', may be more effective in addressing IE compared to top-down, coercive de-radicalisation approaches.

This literature review on the radicalisation and de-radicalisation process has highlighted gaps in the existing research, specifically in relation to the evolution of society and the impact of technological advancements on people's lives. As a result the emergence of new trends, attitudes and behaviours have arisen, which remain largely unexplored. Equally, the radicalisation process may have been influenced by political and economic factors, including the Covid-19 pandemic and the 'cost of living' crisis, potentially exacerbating existing vulnerabilities and leading to the emergence of new trends, specifically relating to the increased use of the internet. The ability of terrorist organisations to exploit vulnerable individuals during periods of uncertainty is well-documented, and it is probable that extremist groups have rapidly adapted their tactics to focus their efforts online. Therefore, a deeper understanding of how individuals communicate both in person and within the online space is essential for identifying the means, platforms, and arenas in which modern extremist recruiters operate. After examining the Prevent mechanism and the broader UK CT strategy, there are both positive and negative implications, as well as areas that require improvement. As a result,

it is critical for Prevent to continually assess and revise the strategy to maintain its effectiveness.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Methodology used and why

The methodology section of this thesis outlines the approaches and strategies adopted to conduct the research and achieve the objectives set forth in the study. This section provides a detailed description of the research design, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and any limitations or ethical considerations involved in the study. The methodology used in this research was intended to provide a systematic and rigorous framework for conducting the study and generating reliable and valid results. Through the methodology section, the reader is able to understand the processes and steps taken to arrive at the results and conclusions presented in this thesis.

It must also be acknowledged that this research has been conducted by a serving police practitioner from within England and Wales. The researcher is in no way attached to any UK CT command unit or affiliated organisation and therefore presents from an outsider insider perspective.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current concept of IE radicalisation and the effectiveness of Prevent as a de-radicalisation strategy. In order to achieve this, the sample population was selected from current serving operatives based across all UK CT districts, working within the Prevent pillar of the strategy. This was deemed a logical choice to obtain the most up-to-date and relevant experience and knowledge about the about the strategy and its implementation. This approach facilitated a thorough understanding of how those working within Prevent perceived and approached their work. Moreover, gathering data from

operatives across all UK CT districts ensured a diverse and representative sample, which was significant in generalising findings to the wider population of Prevent operatives.

It was set out as a workplace assessment study (Morrel-Samuels, 2002), whereby current information was gathered from practitioners based on their recent experiences in the field. Data was collated by way of survey using a cross-sectional design The cross-sectional design is a research method that allows for the examination of a group of individuals at a specific point in time, collecting data on a particular variable or set of variables to enable comparisons to be made (Rindfleisch et al, 2008). The survey included questions about demographics, socio-economic status, and various psychological and social factors that may have been associated with radicalisation. Further, there were questions about their experiences, challenges, and satisfaction with their current working practices. By gathering this information directly from the practitioners, valuable insight into the realities of the front-line can be gained, subsequently informing efforts to improve practice and support those operatives in their work.

The survey utilised in the study comprised of a combination of quantitative and qualitative components, demonstrated through a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended questions. There were 18 closed-ended questions, whereby the participants were asked to either select an answer from a list of options or provide an answer based on a scale, for example 'most prominent, somewhat prominent, least prominent, unknown'. This typical quantitative design is a common way of collating numerical data and by using mathematical techniques this can provide robust statistical analysis (Creswell, 2003), a method often used in social sciences research to explain the phenomena of observations (Sukamolson, 2007). Further, according to Cohen et al, (2007), this type of social research employs empirical methods and statements, which is particularly useful in this study in order to describe what 'is' the case in the 'real world' rather than what 'ought' to be the case.

When considering specific aspects of the questionnaire design, it is worth noting the introduction of the 'Likert' scale, one of the most fundamental and commonly used psychometric tools in educational and social sciences research (Joshi et al, 2015). Although 'Likert' is not suited to every research study, it does meet the objectives in this instance. It allows for responses to be clubbed together in order to generate a composite index for measuring the attitudes of the participants, to create a collective stance towards the phenomenon being studied (Joshi et al, 2015). It is therefore important to recognise the relevance of the quantitative element of this study as qualitative research does not include the statistical or empirical calculations (Brink, 1993) that have been analysed and presented in the findings. According to Ochieng (2009), quantitative data is typically comprised of numbers as opposed to qualitative data that usually consists of words, thus the two can be combined to create enhanced synchronisation and enriched results. This is because the qualitative data can be quantitatively coded and assigned numerical values that can be manipulated to attain heightened understanding. This highlights that quantitative and qualitative methods are intrinsically linked, and by integrating both methods into this research it provides a strong foundation to the outcome of the study. The survey included 11 open-ended questions, ultimately benefitting from the advantages of qualitative data (Mohajan, 2018). The questions avoided pre-determined response options and aimed to capture detailed responses in the respondents' own words, similar to an interview format, allowing respondents to express their priorities without researcher bias (Choi, 2014). The meticulously designed survey questions aimed to elicit comprehensive responses from participants, including understanding the locations where radicalisation occurs. A comprehensive list of key locations, both online and in-person, was included in the question based on the literature review findings. Respondents were requested to rank their answers in order of prominence, providing detailed statistics on the most high-risk locations. Similarly, a question was designed to gather up-to-date information on how recent economic and political challenges, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the cost of living crisis, have impacted Prevent working practices. The aim was to determine the extent to which these issues affected the radicalisation landscape. The

questions were followed by open-ended prompts that asked respondents to elaborate and provide context, capturing nuanced answers and enabling the identification of new trends or categories that respondents deemed pertinent to their answers. The data obtained from these questions was valuable in achieving the research goals.

This form of mixed methods research appeared to be well suited to this study as it increases the validity of the findings, assists with knowledge creation (Hurmerinta-Peltomaki & Nummela, 2006) and combines the strengths of each methodology, minimising the weaknesses (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). By combining qualitative research methods, such as open-ended questions, with quantitative closed-ended questions the study sought to yield detailed information about participants' experiences, perspectives, and opinions. The aim was to identify patterns and generate hypotheses or theories, while also providing statistical data to test them. Triangulating these findings would create a more complete and accurate picture of the research question. By gaining both personalised and standardised responses, the study could capture the richness and complexity of participants' views and identify commonalities and differences. Researchers also state that using this methodology is the only sure way to certify the discoveries (Coyle & Williams, 2000; Sieber, 1973) and ensure they are interpreted correctly (Morse & Chung, 2003; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). This methodology and sample was deemed suitable and compatible with the proposed research study, gaining the necessary approval from the ethics committee.

3.2. Limitations and future research

Having received authority to proceed, a series of unique and unforeseen barriers became apparent. Moreover, despite being able to identify the sample group with relative ease due to the researcher's position within policing, it was discovered that gaining access to those specific individuals was problematic. The wider UK CT command is made up from 12 regions and those regions have several UK police forces grouped within them. Therefore, the request for

access had to go through several layers of governance and relied upon the cooperation of numerous departments to gain the necessary approvals and facilitate the delivery. Given the sensitive nature of the request, all information had to be sent via a secure network so as not to compromise participants who operate within the covert arena of CT. Additionally, the questionnaire went through several stages of testing to ensure general comprehension and compatibility with regards to the design. Furthermore, specific questions and wordings were discussed in detail directly with senior Prevent practitioners, with a view to achieving a higher response rate by being precise, whilst remaining conscious of certain contentions that may restrict participant's responses.

Although this study is considered robust by this researcher due to the first-hand practitioner experiences, its main limitation is that it only presents the case from one side as there was no sample involving the actual subjects. Further limitations arise when considering the specific information used to form the associated cases, which is often derived from third party observations regarding the referral and intervention stage. This is unlikely to account for the full picture in relation to the radicalisation section of the survey, as subjects may not have been willing to divulge the true extent of their thoughts and feelings to the professionals. Consideration must be given to the section attributed to the effectiveness of Prevent, as practitioners may have invested interest in outcomes or may form biases.

This study overcomes its limitations by presenting findings based on practitioner perspectives, ensuring data reliability within the context of the objectives. However, future research can strengthen findings by including input from subjects referred to Prevent. This further study could be administered using a mixed methods approach, administering a large survey and a smaller series of semi-structured interviews, with individuals who had recently engaged with the Prevent programme. The objectives of this study would be similar, albeit from a referee perspective. The aim would be to identify common themes that may have contributed to pushing subjects towards a path of radicalisation and to explore the specific means employed

to radicalise the individuals. Subjects could provide anonymous feedback on the effectiveness of Prevent interventions, highlighting specific strengths and weaknesses. The hypothesis is that the study would not only identify new trends but also provide detailed insights into existing trends, highlighting unique intricacies of different cases. This supplementary investigation would complement the present practitioner-focused study by providing a means for comparisons and inferences to be drawn from both internal and external perspectives, thereby enhancing the impartiality and validity of the results. This could, in turn, shape future education and provide practitioners with a deeper understanding of positive interactions in the workplace. The full data relating to this study is available on request.

Chapter 4: Who where and how?

The data from the survey will be presented in two chapters. This chapter comprises a thematic analysis in four parts. Firstly, it examines the gender and age range of individuals being radicalised. Secondly, it explores the methods, platforms, and locations used for radicalisation, including online and in-person methods. Thirdly, it investigates the identity of those responsible for radicalising individuals and the methods they use. Finally, the chapter concludes by summarising the overall perspective of frontline practitioners, linking current themes and identifying new trends. The survey was conducted anonymously, and a 1-46 coding system was used to ensure simplicity (see Appendix 7).

4.1 Individuals radicalised

Chapter 2 discussed various models and theories regarding individuals with a higher risk of radicalisation. However, conflicting views were presented, and the demographics have evolved with the changing landscape of IE over time. According to respondents in this study, young males under the age of 18 and those in the 18-25 age range are the most commonly radicalised groups, accounting for over 75% of selections (see Figure 4.1). To ensure accurate results, respondents were allowed to select multiple categories if deemed necessary.

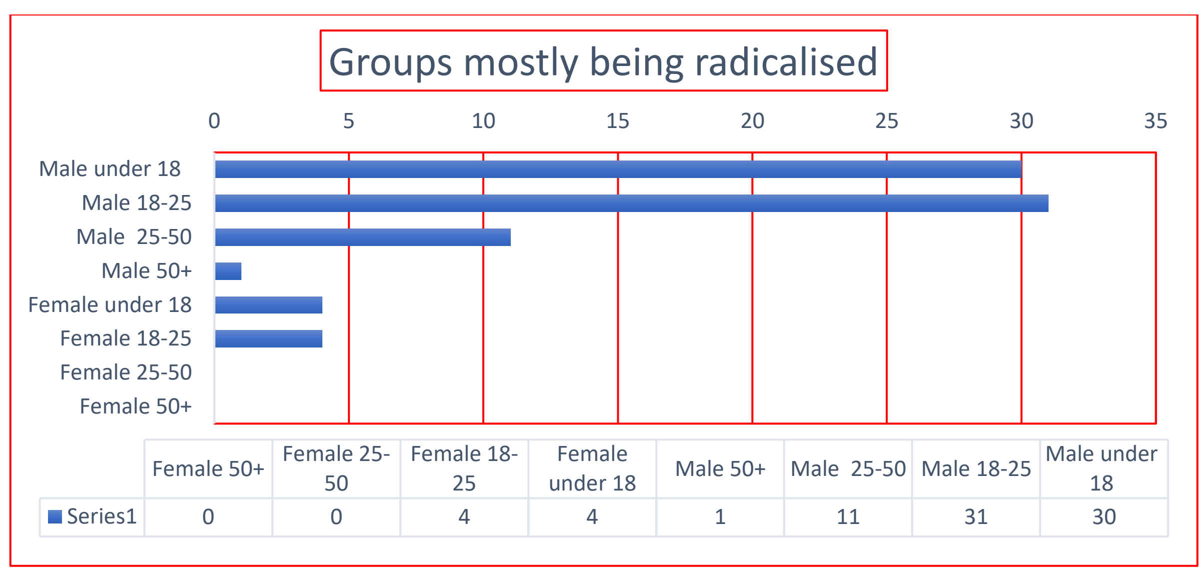


Figure 4.1. Demographic of individuals mostly being radicalised today.

The graph indicates that other groups had significantly lower scores. However, approximately 10% of respondents identified young females under 18 and those aged 18-25 as the most prominent groups. This selection was not region-specific and was made by operatives across London, the Midlands, and the North. This indicates that while young females are being radicalised, they account for a smaller proportion of the overall demographic. Furthermore, only 50% of respondents believed that this demographic had not changed over time, with approximately 30% believing that it had and 20% being unsure. Interestingly, these responses were again not region-specific, as contrasting viewpoints were observed across all force areas.

Further insights into these findings can be obtained by examining the responses to the open-ended question (Q.11), where respondents were asked to provide more details on their answers. Some respondents based their answers on internal statistics and the majority Prevent referrals being for young males, while others provided more nuanced responses with additional context. Respondents suggested that this could be due to younger individuals being more impressionable and vulnerable to exploitation, compared to mature individuals. Furthermore, this age group is highly engaged with social media, making them more

susceptible to exposure to concerning and offensive material. Respondent 24 noted that most referrals come from schools, which explains the younger age group. Respondent 29 shared a similar view but argued that despite the increase in under 18 referrals, radicalisation activism is more prevalent among the 18-25 age group. They believed that this group has greater independence from parental control and is less likely to be in a structured setting such as school, giving them the freedom and confidence to engage in extremism. Therefore, this age group is considered the most concerning.

Respondents had differing views on whether this demographic had changed over time. Newer practitioners either admitted they were unable to provide an accurate answer due to their limited experience or believed that the demographic had remained unchanged based on their time performing the role. According to Respondent 5, the Covid-19 pandemic played a significant role in the migration of younger demographics towards online platforms. This shift was driven by lockdown measures that prompted individuals to seek companionship and stimulation in the digital sphere, which was supported by Cox et al. (2021). Additionally, several respondents noted a recent rise in the radicalisation of young females, with Respondent 34 attributing this rise to the emergence of DAESH over the last decade. Equally, Respondent 33 believed it to be due to the 'rise of conflict zones, with professional terrorist media and promotion of Islamic brides online'. However, this view had limited support with some respondents rebutting the issue, claiming that cases involving females have typically been linked to male influencers, partners, and male family members (Respondent 3). Further investigation is needed to validate the notion that females who are radicalised are often influenced by male partners or family members. This exploration could enhance the understanding of the threat posed by females and guide the development of effective intervention strategies. If the majority of radicalised females are controlled by male influencers, solely targeting females may not be effective in addressing the underlying problem. Nonetheless, it should be noted that this viewpoint lacked corroboration among respondents, raising the possibility that it was an isolated perspective rather than a widely held belief across

the 11 regional command units. While the viewpoint that individuals are being radicalised at a younger age seems to have gained traction, Respondent 12 provided some insight. They suggested that a heightened awareness regarding extremist indicators have resulted in increased focus on early intervention. In comparison to previous iterations of the program, Prevent now operates 'further upstream' by addressing concerns at an earlier stage, thereby ensuring that potential extremist behaviour is addressed at earlier points in time. Consequently, it raises questions about whether the demographic is indeed getting younger or if adjustments to Prevent procedures have brought previously overlooked concerns or behaviours to light.

This was supported by Respondent 19 who went further to suggest that the average age was now 12-14, due to 'online connectivity and movements influenced by real world perceived grievances'. Respondent 20 stated that the online environment provides an ideal environment for 12-14 year olds to use platforms such as 'Gaming' and 'Discord' to 'self-radicalise and converse openly with like-minded individuals domestically and internationally'. This view was supported by Respondent 42 who concurred that young people are so ahead of the curve in terms of their understanding and use of technology and Social Media platforms and this is being exploited by recruiters. They went on to suggest that it is easier now more than ever, for recruiters to target young people using 'online gaming platforms', which are just so 'immense in their size', that they are 'almost impossible to track'. Furthermore, Respondent 38 suggested that, based on their experience in Intelligence, four years ago there was more of a threat of older people, in more established networks, but now that threat has shifted to younger people, with the potential of being radicalised or becoming lone actors. Nonetheless, the majority of respondents have seen a shift in demographics and most agreeing that the principal threat is presently coming from younger individuals. This is by no means conclusive and the contrasting views from some justifies further exploration. Respondent 46 did not differentiate between age groups regarding the incidence of extremism. However, they posited that younger individuals may be drawn to extremist ideologies due to underlying

vulnerabilities, while older individuals may be more likely to become involved due to political motivations. As per the literature review, those who feel isolated, disenchanted, or lack a sense of belonging are more susceptible to extremist ideologies. Conversely, older individuals may possess more rigid beliefs, making them less vulnerable to typical vulnerabilities of younger people, but potentially more prone to embracing extremist ideologies that coincide with their established convictions.

The findings of this section indicate that the demographic of individuals susceptible to radicalisation is varied, thus highlighting the potential for threat to originate from any source. Nonetheless, the vast majority of respondents believe that young males pose the greatest risk. While some have suggested that young females are increasingly vulnerable to radicalisation, others have challenged this notion and posited that males still play a dominant role in influencing female extremist behaviour. Additionally, there is a consensus among respondents that the age range of individuals engaging in extremist behaviour is decreasing. However, alternative perspectives suggest that this phenomenon may be attributed to changes in working practices, which have resulted in early interventions with behaviours in younger individuals being exposed earlier. Controversially, according to Respondent 16, younger individuals are now less exposed to extremist activities due to reduced attraction towards travelling to Syria. The decrease in this allure has led to fewer opportunities for the dissemination of extremist propaganda, potentially reducing younger individuals' exposure to such content. Additionally, Respondent 16 posits that the age range of individuals susceptible to extremist radicalisation has expanded over time. This phenomenon being attributed to the prevalence of 'prison extremism', which mirrors the demographic makeup of the broader prison population.

4.2 Where the individuals are being radicalised

Findings indicate that a vast majority of radicalisation events, as reported by 91% of surveyed respondents, occur in a virtual setting. This overwhelming dominance may be due to several factors discussed in the literature review. This study has also shown an increase in younger individuals being radicalised, and as younger individuals are more familiar with technology and Social Media this may partly account for this dominance. Recent socio-economic factors have driven individuals to seek refuge in the online space, where radicalisation has become increasingly popular due to its scope, simplicity, and anonymity. However, physical, in-person settings still account for a significant portion of radicalisation. This study will examine both in-person and online radicalisation data thematically, analysing the relative prevalence of physical locations and scenarios while exploring the role of the online environment in the radicalisation process.

4.2.1 'In-Person' Radicalisation

Question 14 (see Appendix 6) requested the respondents to rate the prevalence of various popular radicalisation locations as highlighted in the literature review (Precht, 2007; Ministry of Justice, 2016; Rushchenko, 2019; Renard, 2020; Kanol, 2022). Respondents were asked to select options of either 'Most prominent', 'Somewhat prominent', 'Least prominent' or 'Unknown'. The data reveals significant variations between categories, with certain locations in the UK posing a greater risk of radicalisation than others in the current climate. For instance, the graph below depicts the results of a category on radicalisation in prisons.

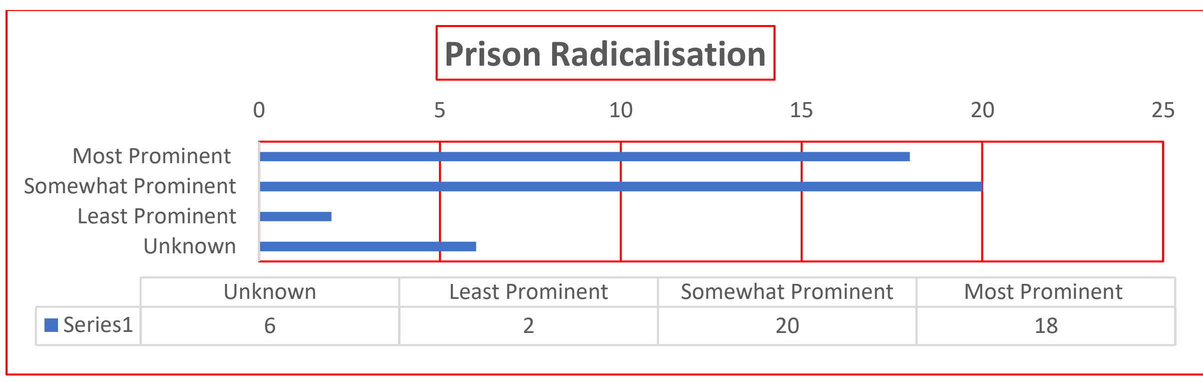


Figure 4.2. Prominence of Prison radicalisation.

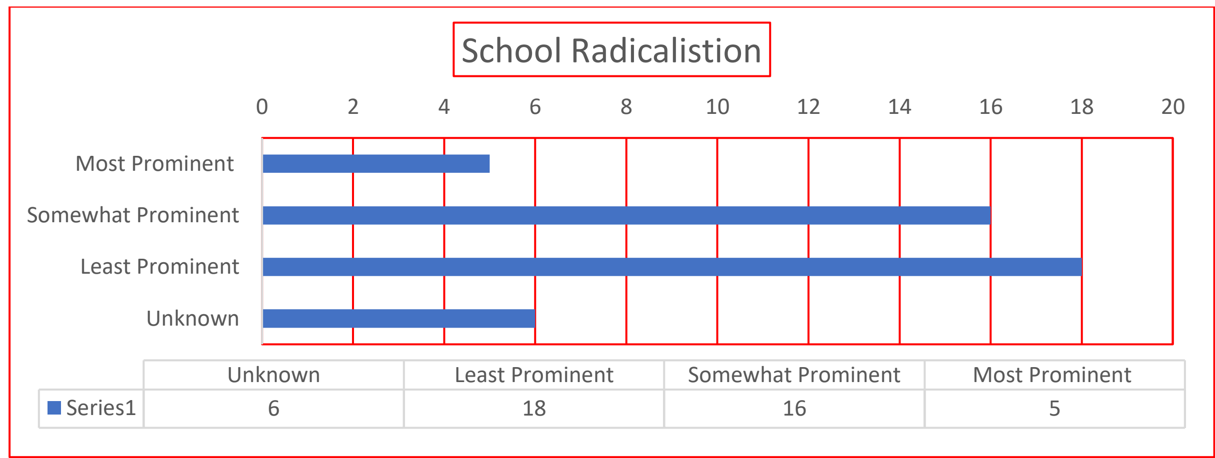
Compared to other locations, prisons scored the highest percentage of 'Most Prominent' (39.1%) and ranked higher than the closest comparison 'People's Homes' (19.6%). Combining 'Most Prominent' and 'Somewhat Prominent' categories, prisons accounted for 82.6% of respondents, underscoring their significance as a location for radicalisation. In addition, only 4.3% of respondents considered prisons as 'Least Prominent', which was significantly lower than other locations listed in the question, as depicted in the figure below.

Locations	Most prominent	Somewhat prominent	Least prominent	Unknown
Schools	5 (11.1%)	16 (35.6%)	18 (40%)	6 (13.3%)
Prisons	18 (39.1%)	20 (43.5)	2 (4.3%)	6 (13%)
Mosques	2 (4.3%)	15 (32.6%)	13 (28.3%)	16 (34.8%)
Pop-up Mosques	3 (6.7%)	8 (17.8%)	8 (17.8%)	26 (57.8%)
Prayer Groups	0 (0%)	7 (15.6%)	15 (33.3%)	23 (51.1%)
Dawah Stalls	1 (2.2%)	13 (28.9%)	11 (24.4%)	20 (44.4%)
Clubs (including social, sport, youth)	2 (4.3%)	6 (13%)	17 (37%)	21 (45.7%)
Social Gatherings (weddings, funerals, births, religious festivals etc.)	0 (0%)	2 (4.3%)	20 (43.5%)	24 (52.2%)
People's Homes (familial influence)	9 (19.6%)	20 (43.5%)	7 (15.2%)	10 (21.7%)
Specific towns	4 (8.7%)	17 (37%)	10 (21.7%)	15 (32.6%)

Figure 4.3. Table showing all answers in each category comparatively.

Interestingly the next lowest 'Least prominent' response was a figure of 15.2% again in the 'People's Homes' category making these two categories similarly weighted. The new data confirms that prisons still pose a significant risk, consistent with previous studies (see Precht, 2007; Ministry of Justice, 2016; Renard, 2020) and Respondent 16's viewpoint that prisons are the primary threat for radicalisation.

When examining the other categories, ‘Social Gatherings (weddings, funerals, births and religious festivals)’ featured very low for radicalisation with the vast majority of responses being attributed to the ‘Least prominent’ (43.5%) or ‘Unknown’ (52.2%) options. Likewise ‘Clubs (social, sport and youth)’ produced similar results with 37% and 45.7% respectively, as did ‘Prayer Groups’ (33.3% and 51.1%). Respondents were divided on the significance of ‘Schools’, ‘Mosques’, ‘Dawah Stools’ and ‘Specific Towns’ as locations for radicalisation. The responses were evenly split, with conflicting opinions on their prominence. For instance, the graph below shows the ‘Schools’ category and the number of respondents in each of the four sections.



	Unknown	Least Prominent	Somewhat Prominent	Most Prominent
Series1	6	18	16	5

Figure 4.4. Prominence of School radicalisation.

The chart illustrates that 46.7% of respondents considered ‘Schools’ as either 'Most prominent' or 'Somewhat prominent', while 40% regarded them as 'Least prominent' and 13.3% were ‘Unknown’. The increasing concern over radicalisation in schools has been highlighted in recent years, with the literature review indicating that the school environment can create vulnerabilities due to common pressures. Students who feel marginalised or excluded from mainstream society may be vulnerable to radicalisation (Precht, 2007). Students may be attracted to groups that provide a sense of belonging and purpose, even if these groups promote violent or extreme ideologies. Additionally, peer pressure and the need to conform to a particular group may contribute to radicalisation (Baker, 2012). In addition, students who have experienced trauma or crisis, such as conflict or displacement, may have increased

vulnerabilities (Gielen, 2008). They may be looking for a way to cope with their experiences or seek revenge for perceived injustices. It can also be suggested that students may have not yet developed strong critical thinking skills may be more susceptible to propaganda and extremist messaging (Wiktorwicz, 2005). Overall, these factors can create a fertile ground for radicalisation in schools and as shown in the data, a significant number of practitioners believe this is occurring. However, a significant proportion of respondents challenge the view that schools are a crucial location for radicalisation, which presents a discrepancy in the data. To interpret these findings, it is necessary to consider a lack of consensus among practitioners regarding the behaviours that constitute radicalisation. This discrepancy in categorisation may lead to differing views on the prevalence of radicalisation in schools. The demographic data suggests a rise in young individuals being referred to Prevent, possibly from schools. However, it is important to note that not all referrals necessarily imply radicalisation. Some practitioners may categorise certain behaviours as low-level, and deem them more appropriately classified as regular criminal activities, while others may not. Therefore, a nuanced but confident and consistent approach to identifying radicalisation is essential to accurately assess the prevalence of radicalisation in schools.

The data indicates that prisons are a significant area of concern, as supported by literature that depicts prisons as ideal ecosystems for radicalisation (Williams et al, 2017; Yaacoub, 2018; Rushchenko, 2019). The individual's home emerged as a key location for radicalisation, which may be attributed to familial influence. It is plausible that family members or close associates hold pre-existing extremist views that are imparted to impressionable individuals. Similarly to the vulnerabilities observed in schools, young individuals may seek inclusion and acceptance, which may be facilitated through online platforms, ultimately leading to radicalisation within the home environment. Social clubs, events or gatherings attained considerably low scores, whilst Mosques and Schools divided opinion. Although opinion was split, there were still a significant number of respondents that believed these other locations featured in radicalisation. As discussed, one theory for this discrepancy as mentioned when

discussing radicalisation in schools, could be a lack of consistency when defining what constitutes radicalisation. Hall's (2022) review of prison radicalisation, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a notable contribution to the literature. The review describes the extreme actions and behaviours of inmates such as Usman Khan and Sudesh Anman, which are likely to be less ambiguous and exceed practitioners' personal thresholds for identifying radicalisation. These findings underscore the need for clear and comprehensive definitions of radicalisation that can guide practitioners in their efforts to identify and prevent this complex phenomenon. Schools can serve as a counter-radicalisation tool by providing quality education, promoting critical thinking, and fostering inclusive environments that celebrate diversity and encourage dialogue. Educators and policymakers must recognise and address these issues to prevent radicalisation and promote a safe and inclusive learning environment.

4.2.2 'Online' Radicalisation

This section focuses on 'online' radicalisation, having evaluated data on 'In-person' radicalisation. Question 15 asked participants to grade the prevalence of popular Social Media platforms and online communication applications. 'Chat rooms' dominated the 'Most prominent' (50%) and 'Somewhat prominent' (39.1%) options, returning a combined result of 89.1% across all categories. Unsurprisingly, most people especially young individuals are familiar with the use of various online chat rooms, with the majority of mobile applications supporting this function. Thus, it could be argued that this type of facility would be an obvious starting point for grooming due to their simple and discreet communication functions. However, several key contemporary concepts emerged from the data, one example of which related to 'Online Gaming Platforms' as illustrated in the chart below.

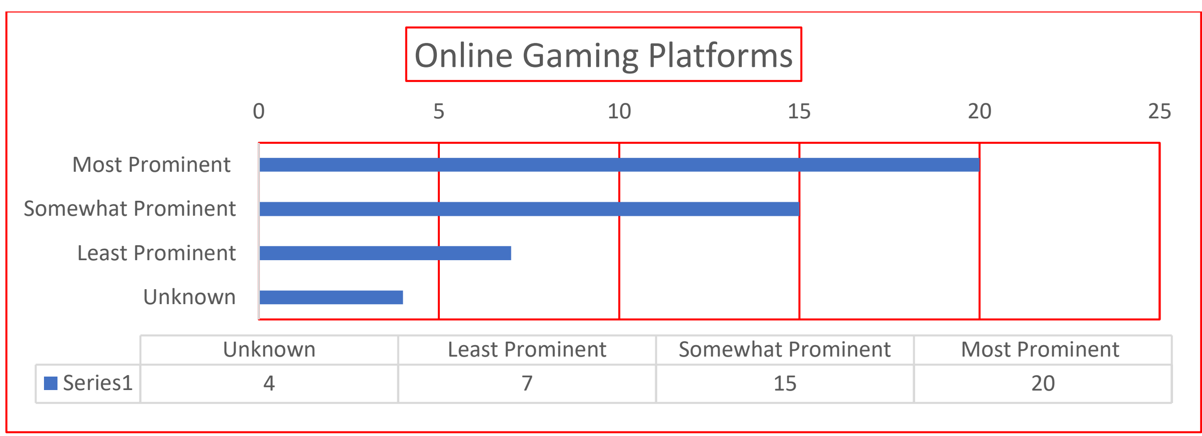


Figure 4.5. Online Gaming Platforms.

This option received the second highest number of 'Most prominent' responses at 43.5%, with an additional 32.6% for the 'Somewhat prominent' option. Gaming technology has advanced, and games have become increasingly more interactive offering in-game chat functions, enabling users to add friends, send/receive messages, and connect with others similarly to other communication devices. This also shows that there may be some connection and cross over between other categories such as 'Chat rooms' and 'Apps', as a significant number of games are played via mobile device applications and often incorporate traditional chat room functions. Like many online games, game chat actually forms part of the online game itself in terms of communicating or strategising with other teammates or players (Parentzone, 2022; The Bark Team, 2022; NSPCC, 2023). The notion of gaming has undergone significant evolution beyond the mere act of playing video games. This has resulted in the widespread implementation of advanced interactive functions and features, accompanied by an expanding community of gaming enthusiasts Mølmen (2020) establishes a direct correlation between gaming and the susceptibility to radicalisation. The author reinforces this claim by citing the case of Anders Breivik, who disengaged from society and immersed himself in online gaming as a means of seeking social interaction and affiliation within alternative virtual environments. This case study highlights the risks associated with excessive gaming or exposure to like-minded individuals. Safeguarding measures like enhanced parental controls and disabling

communication functions in game settings must be explored and shared to prevent exploitation (Parentzone, 2022; The Bark Team, 2022; NSPCC, 2023).

The ‘Dark Web’ (39.1%), also featured highly as did ‘Websites’ (34.8%) and ‘Social Media – Other’ (40%). Interestingly, conventional Social Media platforms like Facebook and Instagram have evoked contrasting viewpoints. While some maintain that these platforms continue to exert a significant influence, others argue that they have lost their prominence in the digital sphere. Scholarly articles regarding these particular platforms are scarce. Nonetheless, in 2016, Facebook, which also owns Instagram, launched the Online Civil Courage Initiative (OCCI) in response to political and public pressure. The OCCI sought to tackle pressing issues such as hate speech, fake news, and online echo chambers (Baldauf, Ebner & Guhl, 2019). As a result, this may have had a positive effective in curtailing the proliferation of harmful content. Conversely ‘Twitter’ was more heavily weighted towards the ‘Least prominent’ (51.1%) group. This is consistent with Conway’s (2019) study suggesting that Twitter was no longer conducive to IE accounts or allowing rhetoric to flourish, following a migration to more directed and secure platforms such as Telegram. Telegram was not assigned a distinct category in the survey question, but respondents were able to choose ‘Social Media – Other’ to indicate their preference for this platform. As previously noted, this option was selected by a significant proportion of respondents. In relation to the responses with the highest frequency of 'Unknown', the platform 'Tiktok' claimed the majority, accounting for 27.3% of the total. TikTok is a relatively new but widely popular Social Media platform, boasting an enormous audience of approximately 1.5 billion active users, predominantly comprised of children and adolescents. TikTok's lenient guidelines, inactivity, and recommendation algorithms possess the capacity to contribute to an individual's radicalisation trajectory (Boucher, 2022). According to Weiman and Masri (2020), extremist groups have recently been observed to have a growing presence on TikTok, yet academic investigations into this phenomenon remain limited. However, the authors highlight a dominance of ERW extremism on this platform, which may partially account for the indeterminate responses in this category. Boucher (2022) supports

this concept by inferring that that platform has been overwhelmed with anti-vaxxer material, hyper-masculinity and conspiracy theories. Nonetheless, it is crucial to enhance understanding of novel and emerging platforms, to ensure safety and security of the huge audiences they attract.

Although the ‘Dark Web’ received 39.1% of responses for ‘Most prominent’ it also received a similar figure for ‘Unknown’ (34.8%), but very few participants selected ‘Least prominent’ (9.1%). This would indicate that respondents feel that the dark web is either a significant or unknown risk to radicalisation. This may in part be due the underground nature of this platform, making it difficult to search, navigate and in turn regulate. However, given this high outcome, this is not something that can be ignored. Enhanced research into the inner workings of the dark web is necessary to attempt to counteract the data encryption and subsequent anonymity currently provided to users. There were a significant number of ‘Unknown’ responses for ‘Metaverse’ (65.9%). This may be due to the Metaverse being a relatively new concept, but worryingly, despite its infancy the Metaverse is already becoming a cause for concern amongst some practitioners, with 9.1% of respondents believing it is ‘Most prominent’ and 15.9% believing it is ‘Somewhat prominent’. As previously discussed when reviewing the literature, the Metaverse has the capability of becoming the ultimate interaction platform. If this concept continues to grow, this interconnected virtual space can be used for practically anything, becoming an extension of the physical world. Greater understanding of this technology and a clear strategy of how to police it is vital to remain ahead of the curve and safeguard vulnerable individuals.

4.3 Who radicalises individuals and how?

Having identified the groups and locations where radicalisation occurs, this section focuses on the factors and tactics used to influence individuals towards their objectives. Respondents were administered a combination of open-ended and closed-ended questions (see Appendix

6) to illicit insights into the current threat posed by specific extremist entities, the underlying factors driving such threats, and the strategies employed to target individuals during the radicalisation process.

4.3.1 Significant influences to radicalisation in the UK

Practitioners were asked to select an option from a list of IE entities that they perceived from their experience to pose the most significant threat to UK security. Overwhelmingly, 'Lone actors inspired by Islamist groups' received 100% of responses in favour of 'ISIS', 'Al-Qaeda' and others. This suggests that from a practitioner perspective, the foremost risk lies not with any specific IE organisation, but rather, ordinary disenfranchised individuals that are being enthused, stimulated and encouraged by IE entities. Respondents were asked to expand on their selections and offer further insight as to why they believed this to be the case. There was crossover, unity and significant corroboration amongst answers to this question, which were largely based on their individual referrals, internal publications and recent UK terror attacks. As pointed out by Respondent 19, the majority of UK terrorist atrocities since 2017 have been carried by self-initiated terrorists (SIT). Some key themes emerged regarding SIT, such as them being hard to identify and therefore difficult to stop (Respondent 1). Respondent 12, provided some further rationale by inferring that as SIT have lack of affiliation or communication with known extremist groups rendering them less likely to be caught. This notion is likely due to the fact that SIT operate in isolation from established extremist groups, underpinning the need for nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics and diverse range of actors involved in the radicalisation process. Respondent 5, claimed that SIT tend to operate more simplistically, are harder to detect and therefore pose the most significant future threat. This was emphasised by Respondent 40 who said, 'We have seen an increase in SIT incidents occurring across the UK. Individuals can act alone and act without much preparation, planning or finances and their methods of attack utilise resources which can be easily accessed'. The view is that SIT present the biggest challenge for the foreseeable future is consistent amongst practitioners. With their status being 'unknown' and their methods as simple as a knife attack,

they are harder to predict compared with an ISIS directed attack, by means of an improvised explosive device (IED) (Respondent 25). Due to these simple methods, it appears far easier and sensible for recruiters to 'sell the seed, call to arms and let an individual carry out an act' as mentioned by Respondent 3. The proposed method presents a more feasible and less risky alternative to orchestrating an attack to the magnitude of 9/11, which would entail substantial organisation, planning, and risk. Further, due to the less sophisticated nature of SIT, an attack can be achieved rapidly with minimal preparation. This point was widely supported, with Respondent 46 referring to them as 'Clean skins', emphasising that they are the fastest to direct action. In the context of SIT, the term 'Clean skins' refers to individuals who do not have a criminal record or any prior association with terrorist organisations, and who therefore do not raise any red flags or suspicion when conducting activities related to terrorism. Due to their anonymity, these individuals pose a significant challenge to authorities and intelligence agencies, as they may move freely and undetected within society. Clean skins may be self-radicalised, meaning that they independently develop extremist beliefs and carry out acts of terrorism without direction or recruitment by established organisations (Rosenzweig, P, 2009; Lyle, 2021).

A widely supported view based on referrals is that there tends not to be an allegiance to any one group or cause (Respondent 13). The sphere of influence from organisations such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda is diminishing (Respondent 10), with less engagement seen in part due to changes in the global political landscape (Respondent 16). Therefore, there is less emphasis on physical or direct contact with freedom fighters (Respondent 28). Additionally, these groups do not appeal as much to younger subjects, who are less invested in the specific objectives they set out to achieve (Respondent 38), although the ideology still remains (Respondent 16). Despite the diminishing appeal and in light of certain elements of the ideology espoused by these groups, they may continue to wield significant influence in the process. This point connects to the view of Respondent 12 who suggested that that SIT are inspired by and sometimes encouraged further by the likes of ISIS, Al-Qaeda or both. To that end, SIT may

adopt extremist group objectives to reinforce their beliefs or be motivated by extremist ideologies to progress further. Additionally, it is more feasible to be motivated by extremist ideologies than to join a specific extremist group, as these groups are mainly based overseas (Respondent 18). Furthermore, there is a significant likelihood of groups being compromised through infiltration and manipulation, rendering autonomous SIT operations a safer option (Respondent 33). These findings have notable implications for countering extremist activities and necessitate further scholarly inquiry in this domain.

Respondent 13 added further insight regarding the wider cause stating that, 'most of our referrals appear to be radicalised online in their own home with propaganda radicalising them to the greater cause of Islam in general, and in a fight back against the treatment of Muslims across the world in conjunction with their own personal grievance. As such they self-radicalise and become lone actors'. This view was supported amongst respondents who highlighted the vast amount of data and inspirational material available online, that when added to personal grievances, vulnerabilities or mental health issues can be a path to becoming a SIT (Respondent 18). Respondents suggest that since the breakdown of the caliphate (Respondent 28), terrorist organisations have evolved to become decentralised (Respondent 32), with ISIS and Al-Qaeda now having minimal involvement in directly recruiting or instructing followers (Respondent 29). As travel to locations such as Iraq and Syria has become less desirable, joining the cause by attacking their home country holds greater appeal (Respondent 28). Jones et al. (2017) have underscored the significance of this notion by emphasising the aggressive encouragement by ISIS for their sympathisers to execute violent attacks in Western territories. The plea to engage in acts of terror has been reiterated in contemporary ISIS publications, including the weekly newsletter Al-Naba. These publications have called upon supporters to take advantage of the challenging circumstances caused by the pandemic and to replicate previous terrorist attacks in major European cities (ICG, 2020). Inevitably, due to these circumstances the majority of extremist content has been driven online, which has included pre-recorded sermons and videos (Respondent 28). With an

abundance of resources and propaganda available to individuals the opportunity to self-radicalise is arguably substantial and often creates an individual ‘brand’ of Islamism (Respondent 29). Furthermore, when examining the scope and potential reach of the internet, allowing IE groups to connect virtually with followers, their level of influence is far greater than preaching to those already aligned to terrorist organisations (Respondent 32), potentially inspiring more SIT.

The study's findings demonstrate that the most significant threat does not originate from a particular extremist group. Rather, it’s from SIT who may draw inspiration from one or a combination of extremist groups. This distinction is crucial in identifying the source and nature of the threat. The respondents widely share this concern, emphasising the SIT ability to execute attacks rapidly and with a low level of sophistication. Given the reduced organisation and operational risk required, terrorist organisations are likely to prefer this option. Moreover, inspiring a large number of individuals could result in a surge of attacks at high-profile locations, amplifying the global fear impact. This risk could be intensified by the widespread use of the internet, as discussed in the section on online radicalisation, where extremist groups could potentially reach vast global audiences. This is particularly important as SIT are currently the most significant entity, difficult to detect, have clean records, and are often unknown to security services. Understanding the key influences and influencers that contribute to the radicalisation process is critical, as prevention is more effective than detention in the case of SIT.

4.3.2 Major Influences on Radicalisation Pathways.

Question 16 inquired about the influences that participants believed motivated vulnerable individuals towards radicalisation, with options to select 'Always', 'Sometimes', 'Never', or 'Don't know' (see Appendix 6). The highest scoring category was ‘Self-initiation’ and was presented in the context of personal complex needs issue or grievance narrative. As shown in the figure below, 50% selected ‘Always’ and a further 45.7% selected ‘Sometimes’.

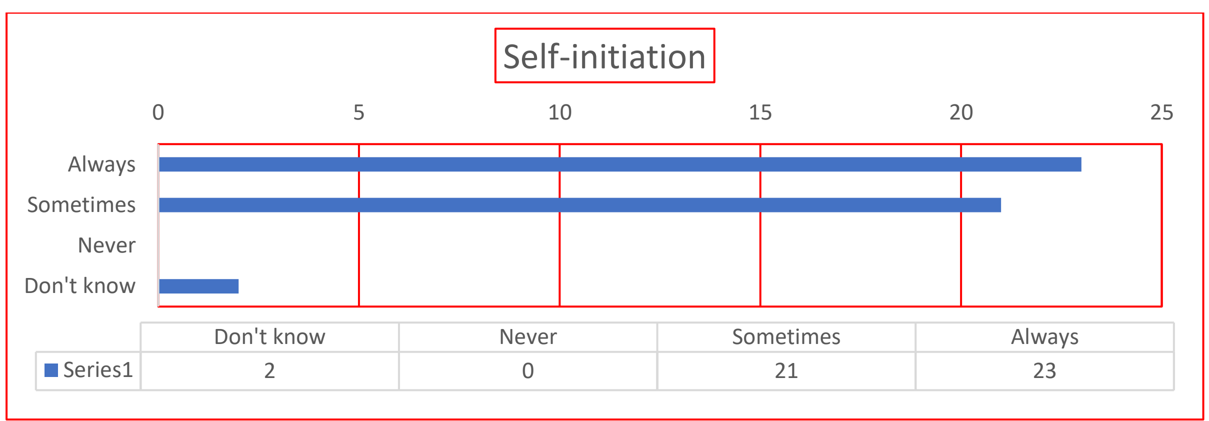


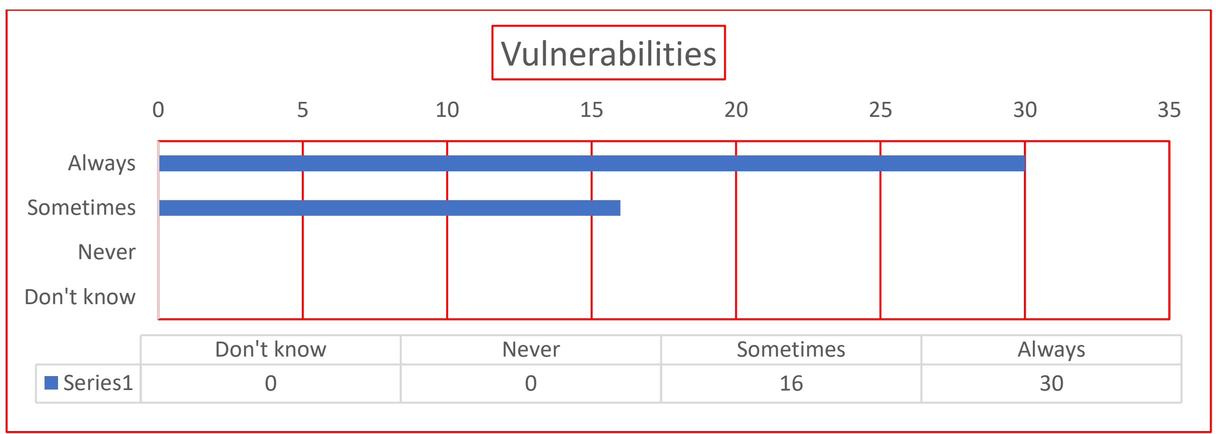
Figure 4.6. 'Self-initiation' personal complex needs issue or grievance narrative.

These results were consistent with, and created some crossover to the previous question as to why respondents believed inspired lone actors to be the most significant threat. It would seem that the biggest influence towards radicalisation is 'Self-initiation' with those individuals at risk of becoming SIT, which is the principal threat to the UK. No other category yielded comparable data indicating that this particular group was exceptional with regards to the frequency of 'Always' responses. This key discovery of this study requires further examination of the specific nuances associated with the concept to create greater understanding. Practitioners feel that the key driver in self-initiation that motivates vulnerable individuals towards radicalisation is likely to be related to a range of personal issues. Learning disabilities, special needs, psychological disorders, and perceived injustice can contribute to an individual's susceptibility to radicalisation (Schmid, 2012; Girardi et al, 2019; Little, Ford & Girardi, 2021; Higham et al, 2021). Subsequently, recognising the diverse vulnerabilities that can lead to self-initiation and radicalisation is crucial in developing effective strategies to address these issues.

In contrast, the 'Mentors' category, returned 37% of responses in 'Never' and 43.3% in 'Don't know'. This category included teachers, line managers, social/support workers, and social/sport club leaders to which respondents regarded as having low influence or did not

know. When analysing the remaining categories the data shows comparable outcomes. Most answers were attributed to the 'Sometimes' field regarding 'Family', (84.8%) 'Peers' (84.8%), 'Influential Preachers' (69.6%), and 'Previously unknown character' (67.4%) with minimal variation. When breaking it down, these prominent leaders refer to, but are not limited to, Imams, freedom fighters, parents, wider family members, friends, colleagues and even recent acquaintances, such as a Social Media interaction. The data indicates very few responses classified as 'Never,' indicating that these influencers likely play a role in the process, albeit inconsistently.

Having examined the key influences it is important to identify the physical tactics, methods and materials being used by extremists to recruit individuals into a path of radicalisation. Question 17 listed three options, 'Vulnerabilities', 'Propaganda' and 'Verses of Koran' and participants were asked to grade them from 'Always', 'Sometime', 'Never' or 'Don't know', in terms of the most likely means that recruiters would use to target vulnerable individuals. The 'Vulnerabilities' category related to identifying and exploiting negative personal and societal difficulties including their perceived status and struggles. The data in this category scored highly with all answers being attributed to either 'Always' (65.2%) or 'Sometimes' (34.8%) as detailed in the grid below.



	Don't know	Never	Sometimes	Always
Series1	0	0	16	30

Figure 4.7. Vulnerabilities (Identifying and exploiting personal negative societal difficulties/status/struggles).

‘Propaganda’ scored similarly with 54.3% selecting ‘Always’ and 43.5% selecting ‘Sometimes’. This category was aimed towards publications, Social Media posts and videos depicting global oppression and atrocities against Muslim people. ‘Verses of the Koran’, related to preaching misconstrued interpretations or readings, featured less prominently with only 11.1% of responses for ‘Always’. However, 68.9% selected ‘Sometimes’ suggesting that these teachings are still on occasion used to target vulnerable individuals. Additionally, this set differed from the other two categories within this section by producing a 20% ‘Don’t know’ response. This suggests that there is still an element of unknown surrounding this concept. Thus, it requires further exploration.

To provide greater context to the above two questions, participants were provided with a free text option and asked to expand on their answers in order to qualify their responses. The majority of responses were consistent with the quantitative questions and reinforced the results of the data with significant commonalities, such as sociological and general vulnerabilities being at the core of almost all cases of radicalisation. A clear contributing factor to young males relates to family, work, relationships or social problems (Respondent 31). Practitioners pointed out that this was based on their own experience and vulnerability assessment frameworks. The responses suggested that this is a two-stage process, with the personal issue or grievance either already present or provoked by radicalisers prior to the method being initiated (Respondent’s 12 & 10). This point was further highlighted by Respondent 31 who stated, ‘I have found that most subjects have some vulnerability and/or grievance present. Although propaganda and publications are used to assist someone in becoming radicalised, these come after a person has already been identified and targeted’. This view was repeated by several respondents and is more prevalent now that the lure to travel to Syria has been reduced (Respondent 16). An individual's ‘grievances’ (Respondent 23) or ‘personal situation’ (Respondent 12) play a key role in the radicalisation process. Respondent 3 offered an interesting perspective on the subject by presenting the following timeline of what they perceived to be the current process: ‘cases start with some form of self-

initiation and this is borne out of frustrations and isolation. Individuals often find themselves searching online for something, they buy into conspiracy theories and hateful messages as they look for others to blame for their unhappiness. Gaming, media and online becomes their friend and fills that void. It its then to do with their resilience or lack of it that hooks them down a path of extremism'. A consistent and undisputed view is that the online space presents a key recruiting ground for extremists, with the new trend of online gaming becoming a growing threat. Additionally, it is believed that the online forum 'Discord' is becoming an integral platform and one that IE groups specifically will exploit in the future (Respondent 28).

Referrals relating to online issues such as viewing extremist videos or content are becoming increasingly frequent (Respondent 41), with some displaying a degree of 'agency' by choosing to engage (Respondent 27). This presents several concerns, one of which is that individuals have an unprecedented opportunity to air grievances and seek answers in the privacy of their own homes, by using the online space. Respondent 27, supported this occurrence claiming, 'Many people are going down rabbit holes online'. The aforementioned colloquial phenomenon introduces an enigmatic risk that proves difficult to oversee or control. The danger lies in individuals becoming captivated by intricate and esoteric narratives, potentially succumbing to radicalisation, presenting a unique challenge for monitoring and mitigating radicalisation. As individuals spend more time online they are likely to be subjected to increased amounts of extreme propaganda, specifically designed to resonate with their own grievances and vulnerabilities (Respondent 13). These angers or frustrations can be exploited making those individuals receptive to 'simplistic narratives of blame or hate'. Moreover, radicalisers often tailor their narrative to align to the individual's complaint (Respondent 12), ultimately providing sustaining answers for one's plight. Therefore, it is this ideology that is the biggest motivating factor in Islamist extremism, which is often consistent with a rejection of British/Western values and an embracing of Islam, 'interpreted through the lens of Islamism' (Respondent 35). Respondent 25 claimed that this style of propaganda went beyond their Prevent referrals, having personally listened to specific hate speeches and seen first-hand how the extremists

provided false narratives. Sometimes these narratives can relate to negative portrayals of Muslims or Muslim culture within the media, creating an ‘us versus them’ story, providing someone to blame for their individual grievance (Respondent 19). According to the assertion made by Respondent 20, these unfavourable narratives are intentionally crafted to exploit various vulnerabilities, including issues related to identity, standard of living, apprehension regarding employment prospects, and access to enhanced future opportunities. Having supplied the narrative, extremists commonly use the Quran out of context to knowingly convey misconstrued messages to justify their actions in order to appear legitimate and divinely sanctioned (Respondent 12). This concept was supported by works of El-Badawy, Comerford and Welby (2015) who researched the utilisation of Quranic justifications by radical groups. They refer to the phenomena as cherry-picking, as IE groups present their interpretations without the appropriate contextualisation, extensively relying on scriptural references and citing the Quran. This observation highlights the significance of understanding the specific contexts and interpretations of Quranic verses that are exploited by extremist groups to propagate their ideologies. It is imperative that such value perceptions be countered with alternative responses grounded in broader Islamic values to undermine the sway of extremist factions.

In summary, vulnerabilities and propaganda are closely linked. Vulnerabilities may already exist or be provoked in individuals before they are exposed to propaganda. Addressing vulnerabilities at their root may be necessary to effectively address the issue. The importance of early intervention is supported amongst academics (Butt & Tuck, 2014; Feddes, 2015; Yayla, 2020; Koehler, 2021). To address vulnerabilities, tactics such as assessing complex needs and providing additional support and training for carers have been suggested. This could increase awareness of the signs of radicalisation and the online environments exploited by extremist recruiters to prevent corruption. Personal grievance was identified as a key vulnerability among respondents, which can be easily exploited by professional recruiters through a narrative that assigns blame, ‘using dog whistle tactics’ (Respondent 27) to

persuade and legitimise subsequent thoughts and actions. In order to counteract this ideology, increased education surrounding global political and economic issues is vital in order to contextualise the problems, with a view to providing positive ethos and innocuous ideals as supported by Baker (2012). Nonetheless, as recognised by Respondent 17, it can take several years to become expert enough on a specific subject matter to create the level of resistance required to reject false narrative.

4.4 Discussion points

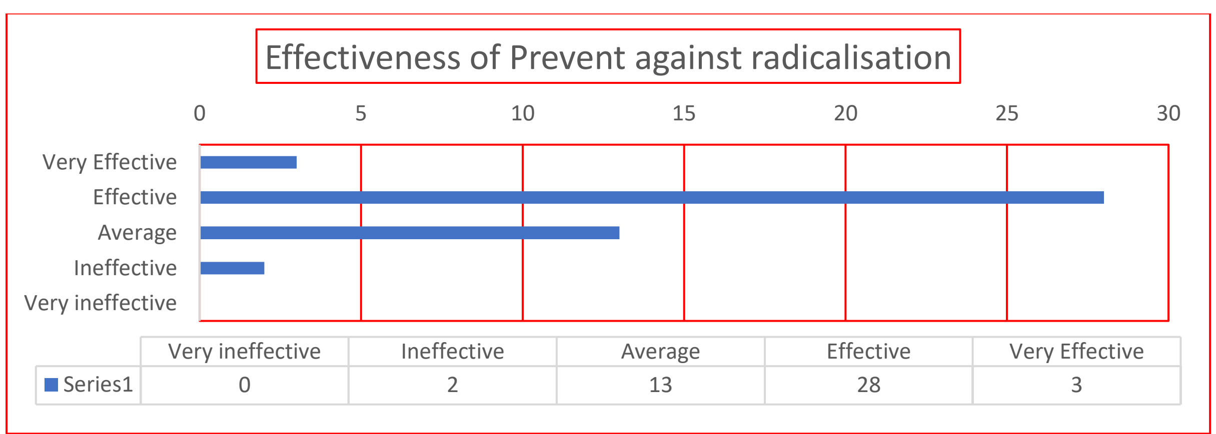
Following this section of the survey, respondents were asked to describe any related salient points that had not been addressed in the preceding open-ended and closed-ended questions. Practitioners were given the opportunity to address potential barriers, discrepancies, or unaddressed issues in the questions, promoting transparency and increasing the overall validity of the study. Some respondents used this section to provide greater distinction to the key themes that have been introduced. For instance, Respondent 12 stated that, 'It begins with subtle, divisive messages, stereotypes, false news. Mosques do this by speaking in a disrespectful way when referring to Shias or Ahmadiyyas for example'. Interestingly Respondent 16 raised the point that from a Prevent perspective: there has been a shift in referral type compared with five years ago. Specifically, they now see less subjects who possess a clear Islamist ideology as these cases tend to be processed by either the 'Pursue' wing of the CONTEST strategy or managed by newly formed teams such as NMT. Some respondents offered recommendations touching on those mentioned in the previous summary, including enhanced help to address those individuals with complex needs, as many Prevent referrals stem from failings from children/adult services (Respondent 17). Some of these failings were highlighted in a review of children and adult services (see Ofsted & The Care Quality Commission, 2013). As such, early and advanced assistance to address complex needs may reduce the likelihood of individuals developing signs of radicalisation and subsequently being referred to Prevent. Furthermore, it was suggested that vulnerable

individuals may benefit from a life coach or mentor and to be afforded more opportunities (Respondent 18). When reflecting back to the previous point, the implementation of this form of stewardship holds potential advantages for both children and parents. Specifically, it has the capacity to mitigate the effects of susceptibilities on children by supporting the parents simultaneously exerting a profound and immediate sway over their children.

When examining the aspect of religion, specifically young individuals converting to Islam, careful consideration must be given. A key point raised by respondents was that they had witnessed cases whereby parents would block their child from following Islam through fear of them being targeted by the Muslim community, become radicalised and then progress towards violent extremism. If a young individual expresses a desire to follow a religion, providing support to both the individual and their parents is crucial. Failing to provide support and removing an individual's freedom of choice increases the likelihood of seeking information from uncontrolled sources, putting them at risk of exposure to harmful extremist material (Respondent 23). IE is a complex and significant threat, arguably the most dangerous form of extremism today due to its intricate nature and difficulty to control. Respondent 35 emphasised the threat by saying, ‘A societal phenomenon - Islamist denialism, right wing alarmism - where there is a profound reluctance to accept the scale of the Islamist threat, and a misguided impulse to equate it with other less significant forms of extremism’. The perspective in question has been the subject of extensive discourse in the literature, and it has received validation from Shawcross (2023) following his recent assessment of the Prevent Strategy. Shawcross (2023) has identified it as a pivotal area for improvement and has advocated for greater uniformity across all ideological stances. He has highlighted that Prevent have an expansive approach towards right-wing extremism, while a narrower approach towards IE. If mishandled, this situation has the potential to undermine legitimacy and foster grievances. As a result, professionals must be empowered to carry out their duties without political interference or the apprehension of being accused of prejudice when dealing with cases pertaining to IE.

Chapter 5: An analysis of Prevent

This chapter analyses the data on the effectiveness of Prevent in challenging radicalisation and preventing terrorism. Insights will be drawn from both quantitative and open-ended questions (see Appendix 6) to identify practitioners' perceptions of the strategy's success and recommendations for improvement. Respondents were firstly asked to select an option from a scale ranging from 'Very effective' to 'Very ineffective' to best describe their thoughts of Prevent as a de-radicalisation tool, as demonstrated in the chart below.



	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Average	Effective	Very Effective
Series1	0	2	13	28	3

Figure 5.1. The effectiveness of Prevent against radicalisation.

Overall, operatives reported the strategy as mostly effective (60.9%) in challenging radicalisation with a small increase in 'Effective' (63%) and 'Very Effective' (8.7%) in preventing terrorism related activity, ratings in the latter. These data were qualified in the open-ended questions which highlighted several key themes.

5.1 Engagement with the programme

When considering the Prevent strategy as a counter radicalisation tool, the concepts of it being 'voluntary' and 'consensual' were spoken about widely and appeared to be a determining factor when evaluating its effectiveness. As such, several respondents graded the initiative as average, due to the nature of the process with the consent of the subject being an integral prerequisite to treatment. Respondent 6 stated, 'as it is a voluntary process, some vulnerable

people with very entrenched views who we could help have refused to engage in the process. When people engage, the support that can be offered is very good and targeted and often will process positive results'. This view formed the common standpoint with respondents believing that with the willingness of the subject, Prevent can launch an effective intervention through 'Channel', providing a holistic support plan to the individual, challenging harmful narratives, with a view to eliminating their vulnerabilities (Respondent's 7 & 20). The main objective of Prevent is to tackle the causes of radicalisation, whilst safeguarding and supporting those most at risk through early intervention, of which the principal barrier is consent (Respondent 24), as individuals cannot be forced. Drawing from experience, the practitioners refer to multiple occasions of positive engagements where subjects consented to intervention through 'Channel' and subsequently received sufficient support. As a result, individuals' concerns have been alleviated, ideologies assessed, and counter-narratives introduced, leading to a decreased risk of radicalisation (Respondent's 35 & 36) and prohibited extremism from developing into terrorism (Respondent 12). It is also consistent with the findings of Warrell (2019), who referred to numerous case studies, whereby 'Channel' had been successful in the de-radicalisation process. Respondent 19 commented further on this subject by stating, 'Upon commencing this work it has led to changing lives, supporting the vulnerable and a providing clear movement away from previous influences'. The Prevent strategy fosters positive dialogue with professionals, allowing for the discussion of disinformation in a healthy manner and providing alternative options and solutions to damaging notions. According to Respondent 25, 'Providing effective support at the right time has been proven to deter people from carrying out or supporting acts of terror'. Respondent 29 corroborated this notion by stating, 'My experience is that there have been a number of people that have genuinely had their trajectory changed by the Prevent programme away from potentially committing TACT offences'. The respondents did not provide any further clarification regarding this information. However, it can be reasonably inferred that their responses were based on personal experiences, as requested in the question. The remarks made by these respondents suggest that they have personally witnessed successful outcomes resulting from effective

interventions, leading to the de-radicalisation of individuals. Moreover, as the Prevent strategy has evolved from early variations recent focus has allowed interventions to be made early, which may have prevented deep negative ideological thoughts from developing. Conversely, under previous guidelines, unless there was a presence of a clear extremist ideology, those cases would have not been considered suitable for the program (Respondent 16). The Prevent strategy has undergone a transformation in its focus, moving away from solely targeting individuals who were considered a high risk of being involved in terrorism to encompass a wider range of people who may be vulnerable to radicalisation (Home Office, 2021e). The aim of this expansion was to ensure that individuals at risk of being drawn into any form of terrorism are identified and provided with appropriate support and intervention at an early stage.

It can be argued that estimating the success of Prevent, certainly as a method of de-radicalisation, is imbalanced and problematic as this measure is largely dependent on the subject's commitment to the programme. Nonetheless, there appears to be evidence to suggest that when a referred individual is open to constructive conversation, Prevent has been successful in deterring them from a path of extremism. Therefore, it can be argued that the programme can be indirectly effective against terrorism as highlighted by Respondent 12, 'every terrorist started somewhere - their hatred grew in a permissive environment or due to certain other factors being present'. This emphasises the relevance of early intervention, which aligns with aims of Prevent to counter these elements at an early stage. (HM Government, 2018). As already discussed, early intervention can provide multi-agency support to address the personal needs of the individual. This response aligns more suitably with personal grievances and highlights the importance instilling early counter-narrative before the hatred grows.

5.2 Criticisms of the strategy

It is difficult to conclude how successful any pre-emptive mechanism can really be, as is the case with Prevent (Heath-Kelly, 2012). It is impossible to know whether their referred subjects would have ever progressed to engaging in terrorist activity, were it not for their intervention. It is certainly the view that interactions with Prevent have proved to deter individuals based on first hand cases, as mentioned above. However this point is often overlooked by critics and the media (Respondent’s 10; 35; 34). Equally, the number of referrals received and then successfully closed suggests an amount of effectiveness (Respondent 8). However, the primary criticism of the strategy is that individuals who were previously reported to Prevent have been involved in terrorist attacks. It is widely known that most individuals involved in Islamist terrorism in the UK had come to the attention of the Prevent program (Respondent 15). Many practitioners expressed their discontentment with being branded as inadequate, predicated on the earlier mentioned notion of ‘consent’, concerning an individual's choice to participate, given the program's voluntary nature. This was mentioned by Respondent 36, ‘if someone does not wish to engage with Prevent but goes on to commit offences then that is not on the failures of Prevent, that is down to the choice of the individual’. It is perceived by practitioners that the media portray Prevent as a failure if a subject refuses to participate in the programme and also if the subject goes on to commit terror offences (Respondent 33). Further, those who do go on to commit acts of terrorism following an introduction to Prevent are an extremely small percentage of overall referrals (Respondent 10). Likewise, it has been mentioned that Prevent do get repeat referrals, but many cases, once closed, do not come back (Respondent 41). This highlights the low failure rate and although still devastating, due to the nature of these incidents no matter how infrequent they are, it does suggest a degree of success. Therefore, recognition of good work and positive interactions with referrals is required in order to provide balance, although it is likely that society will never hear about those interactions in the current landscape, owing to the sensitive nature of the matter. The potential disclosure of information relating to Prevent interventions can raise concerns

regarding the civil liberties of individuals who may not have committed any offences, but have displayed concerning thoughts and behaviours. Furthermore, certain information may pose a security risk given the necessary secrecy of certain cases and those involving joint partners such as the Intelligence Service (HM Government, 2018). Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that in the year ending 31 March 2022, Prevent received a total of 6,406 referrals (Home Office, 2023b), data that is not commensurate with the 190 TACT arrests indicated in the most recent yearly government statistics (Home Office, 2022). This observation suggests a certain level of successful interventions.

Conversely, some respondents acknowledged these incidents as failings of Prevent to a certain extent and as such scored the effectiveness level lower on the scale to reflect that. This suggests that owing to the cases that do slip through the net, albeit a small minority, this still equates to a degree ineffectiveness (Respondent's 8 & 22). Respondent 3 shared a controversial interpretation of this viewpoint, explaining that those Prevent referrals or subjects in the 'Channel' programme that go on to commit acts of terrorism, actually shows that the strategy works, as the correct individuals had been identified and their attentions had been directed to the right place. This then provokes questions surrounding the remit of Prevent and how to measure the success of the strategy as discussed in the literature review by Brady (2016). This point will be discussed later when addressing the concept of forced compliance. Nonetheless, on balance many identify that Prevent is not a perfect system and this was summarised concisely by Respondent 13, who offered further thought to the argument. They stated, 'given some of the high profile cases such as Fishmongers Hall and Parsons Green it would appear that there are clear flaws in the Prevent program with regards to missing opportunities and flat out not being able to recognise false compliance'. False compliance was a key theme throughout several comments, highlighting that is a principal component when evaluating the effectiveness of Prevent intervention. Essentially the concept of false compliance can be defined as disguised compliance or giving the appearance of cooperation. Where this becomes a concern for Prevent practitioners is when subjects engage with them,

but under a false pretence by doing and saying what the practitioners want to see and hear. This is done to circumnavigate the process, giving the professionals the impression that they are a lower risk than they really are, with a view to their case being closed. According to respondents, this tactic is often used, making the process tricky. Equally this behaviour can be extremely difficult to identify or detect (Respondent 7), ultimately raising questions as to what point can the word of a subject be trusted, if ever. Despite the criticisms there is little evidence to suggest that Prevent has caused an adverse effect or pushed a subject towards a path of terrorism (Respondent 29). Equally, in the absence of any alternative system, it can be argued that any amount of success is better than no success. In cases of clear ideology, Prevent become a robust and essential force, with the power to escalate cases and ensure that they are managed at MAPPA level (Respondent 1) where necessary, with a view to combatting terrorist related activity.

5.3 What could increase effectiveness?

Improving the effectiveness of Prevent is challenging, and new measures may have unintended negative consequences. In the previous sections it is apparent that the concepts of engagement and false compliance are the two most significant barriers to the scheme's success. In its current format the strategy remains a voluntary safeguarding mechanism, requiring genuine cooperation from the subject to deliver positive guidance and achieve progressive influence. Therefore, if the scheme is to maintain this structure of consent, it stands to reason that Prevent will inevitably have to increase its appeal in order to capture the hearts and minds of those individuals who demonstrate no interest in the programme. According to some respondents, Prevent is not fully achieving this objective at present, which raises the question of why. Some suggest that the programme is discredited through ignorance of the aim and the overall societal rebellion against law enforcement agencies (Respondent 46). Respondent 13 suggested that Prevent is disliked and heavily scrutinised by the Muslim community, who perceive that Prevent is a spying organisation that

discriminates and persecutes them. Conversations around how to alter this mind-set within the community are essential to achieving greater success. However, this is clearly a difficult situation and it could be argued that whatever methods are employed to enhance relations, it is unlikely that Prevent will ever get 100% compliance. According to CAGE (2016) the opposition to the Prevent program has proliferated since its statutory public sector obligation in 2015. In response to this development, numerous scholars and professors have endorsed declarations articulating their apprehension with regards to the program. There are multiple factors that can impact an individual's interpretation of the Prevent program, including socio-cultural and historical contexts, instances of discrimination or marginalisation, and differing understandings of religious or political beliefs. These determinants can be deeply ingrained, and may challenge efforts to cultivate universal compliance with the program. Given the complexity of these associated difficulties, it could be deemed necessary for Prevent to migrate to a mandatory and legislated safeguarding system. By amending the strategy in this way, subjects would be compelled, rather than encouraged, to positively interact with professionals, eradicating the prospect of disengagement during early intervention. However, respondents have concerns regarding this proposal and hypothesise that it could have an adverse effect, consequently damaging relationships further. Ultimately, Prevent would be actively forcing individuals to engage in a process despite the fact that they had not committed a crime (Respondent 13).

The subsequent ramifications of implementing such a system are unknown, but if it resulted in deeper division of communities, then the overall risk may become greater and outweigh the benefits. It may be difficult to simply sell the idea that it is for the good of ‘them’ and the community and instead perhaps a multifaceted approached is required to increase confidence and legitimacy (Respondent 13). Respondent 21 suggested one way of doing this could be by ensuring appropriate deleting and cloaking of cases relating to those subjects who did not go on to develop further concerns. As a consequence, this is likely to increase the confidence cycle, by demonstrating protection to the individuals with society placing greater trust in

service. However, worthy of consideration is the general concept of having personal details on any police systems and the detrimental effect that may have on the individual. The mere existence of personal information on police systems may generate fear and anxiety among individuals, especially those who have had negative interactions with law enforcement in the past. While the disclosure of personal information may lead to discrimination, harassment, or stigma, especially in cases where individuals are falsely accused or have their records wrongly classified. The aforementioned circumstance aligns with extensively documented criminological theories, specifically the classic labelling theory (Becker, 1963; Lemert, 2015; Cohen, 2017). According to this theoretical framework, an excessive amount of unnecessary information could lead to the emergence of a hazardous sub-group of individuals, who may be drawn towards extremism as a result of being labelled as such. This labelling process may occur even if these individuals had not previously not committed any crimes or shown any significant signs of progressing towards extremist behaviour.

In addition to identifying strategies to achieve enhanced engagement, professionals in the field have proposed a series of modifications to the existing process that have the potential to enhance its efficacy. It was mentioned that thorough peer reviews ought to take place after any significant event, whereby an individual had become involved in terrorist related activity, following a Prevent referral. As a result of this practice, the opportunity to identify key elements that went well and those that did not will likely be increased (Respondent 3). As with any operation, there is compelling research to suggest that sharing feedback and evidence of good practice is essential to continually develop and improve, thus this notion ought to be applied to the Prevent strategy in the same way. Similarly, respondents suggested that face-to-face visits with the subject should be a policy pre-requisite as opposed to being carried out on rare occasions (Respondent 18). It could be that an in-person interaction in the first instance may glean further essential information to inform the decision-making process. Likewise, low level Prevent referrals ought to be returned by FIMU's to avoid inappropriate or misguided cases being detailed on CT systems (Respondent 18). Some raised questions surrounding certain

aspects of policy, specifically the PGA process referring to it as a ‘pointless task’ (Respondent 18). It could be suggested that the PGA process should probably take place at the end of the information gathering stage, where the assessment can be carried out in greater detail.

Prevent is the principal component of CT policing and has a high level of influence over the majority of partner agencies (Respondent 16), as supported by Sliwinski (2013). Perhaps Prevent is considered to be a critical element in CT policing due to its focus on prevention and addressing the root causes of extremism, rather than solely responding to incidents after they have occurred. The efficacy of this approach potentially renders other components extraneous, given the potential to curtail future incidents, should the interventions be successful. Therefore Prevent is an integral entity to building awareness and relationships that encourage people to report concerns, as without trust in the process, partner agencies are more reluctant to involve the police. This increased awareness amongst partner agencies is also required for others outside of this arena as it is essential to enable better identification of individuals who are vulnerable to radicalisation, with the intended result of better quality referrals (Respondent 45). These observations imply that certain individuals are slipping through the net. It is plausible that there is a lack of awareness of the signs of radicalisation amongst both partners and the wider community. A greater degree of engagement with Prevent may result in an upsurge in referrals of individuals who desperately require additional support, enabling Prevent to intervene at an early stage and mitigate the escalation of potential risks. Equally, a multi-agency response to address all complex needs is required, as partner agencies appear to have competing priorities and agendas or simply do not see the risk in the same way (Respondent 17). Specifically, the challenge remains with individuals with significant mental health issues to determine whether their vulnerabilities are solely linked to their condition, or whether there is a presence of grievance or ideology beyond that in cases where they have the capacity (Respondent 16).

Concerns about reporting Islamist radicalisation were raised, emphasising the importance of partners and local authorities reporting such incidents confidently and without fear (Respondent 9). Respondent 42 claimed, ‘I feel there is most definitely a concern that they may be perceived as being racist if they report an Islamist concern’. Respondent 12 suggested that Prevent could do better, by ‘having the right people doing the right work, free from obstructions and the ever-changing fickle seasonal themes and yearly vanity projects’. It would appear that this view feeds back into the concepts of political influence that has been discussed previously, highlighting the importance of impartiality and allowing operatives to fully focus on the task at hand in a professional manor, without false direction or concern about how actions may be perceived.

5.4 Recent challenges to Prevent strategy and practice

This section evaluates various aspects of effective working practices in Prevent, using closed scaling questions and free text open questions. Respondents were asked to describe the impact of recent challenges on Prevent operations, including increased online activity, Covid-19 restrictions, political issues, and the cost of living crisis. Respondents were given closed-ended questions on several related topics, requiring them to select the appropriate option to describe the impact, ranging from ‘High impact’ to ‘Unknown’ (see Appendix 6). Subsequently, an open-ended question was posed, seeking explanation for their answers and personal barriers or influences experienced, providing greater context. This section yielded contrasting views with no clear consensus over any topic, as depicted in the graph below titled ‘Shift in working practices’.

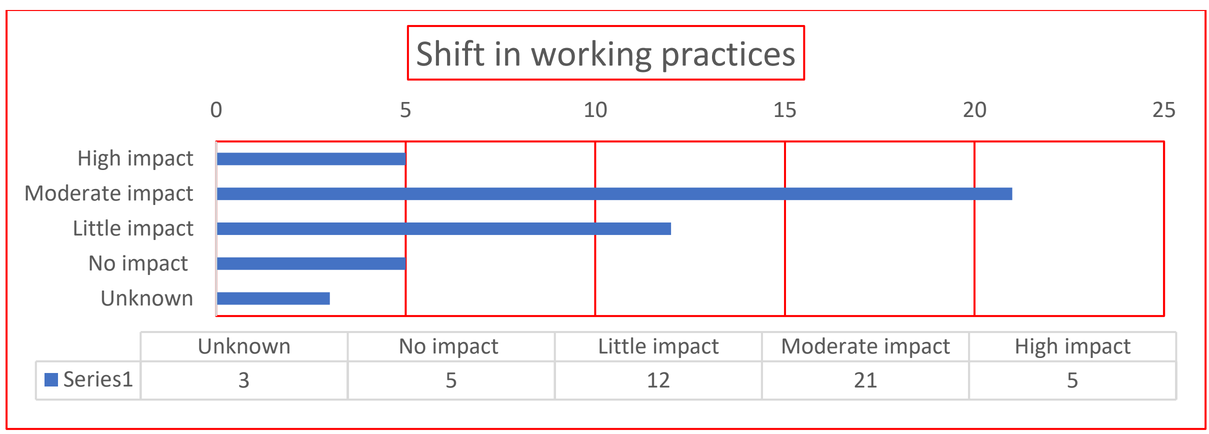


Figure 5.2. Shift in working practices.

The majority of respondents chose ‘Moderate impact’ (45.7%) with 26.1% selecting ‘Little impact’. Controversially, ‘High impact’ and ‘No impact’ scored the same 10.9% of selections, highlighting disparity. This was further reflected in the follow up open-ended question, which received numerous related comments to this topic. Some respondents simply stated that their work had not been negatively impacted by anything that was happening in the background, thus having no effect of their ability to function as normal (Respondent 36). Some argued that the current Prevent strategy is stronger than it has been in the past decade, with strong collaboration among statutory partners and third sector organisations. Equally, these organisations have a better understanding of their crucial role in safeguarding individuals from radicalisation (Respondent 34). However, some respondents felt that Covid-19 has been the most significant factor in recent times that has informed change, specifically surrounding the issues of lockdowns and the increase in online activity. Respondent 16 described what this meant for Prevent staff logistically with officers and partner agencies adopting an online process to hold meetings. This has been well received in the region of South-East, benefiting from many positive aspects, such as less time wasted driving to locations for in-person consultations. As this region covers a large land area, it seems logical that if unnecessary, prolonged travel times can be removed then that time can be diverted to important tasks, thus, increasing efficiency. This notion was supported by others who suggested that a shift towards

online working had created greater efficiency in many ways and enabled them to manage increased workloads owing to the new approach (Respondent 7).

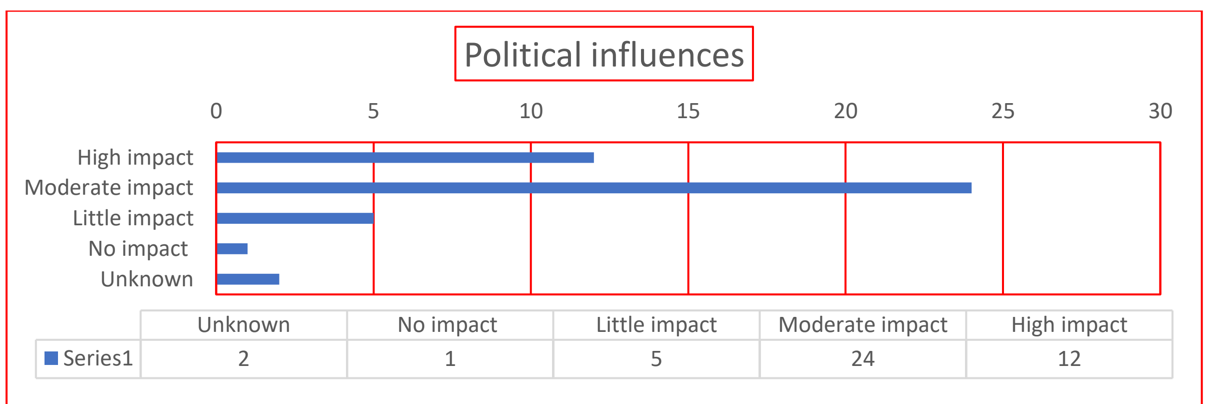
However, these views were challenged by some respondents who stressed that the introduction of virtual online meetings in place of face-to-face meetings may have had a negative impact on the close working relationships with partners that they were previously used to (Respondent 8). Multi-agency working has been affected with some experiencing difficulties arranging joint visits (Respondent 24) and some have found that local authorities have been slow to return to face-to-face Channel meetings (Respondent 22). Additionally, while remote platforms like Microsoft Teams allowed staff to attend meetings from home, Respondent 22 suggests that general distractions and the sensitive nature of discussed information were not ideal for remote communication. Face-to-face interaction is better suited for challenging issues more robustly. These notions connect to the category of 'Increased caseloads', which has already been alluded to by respondents when discussing how new ways of working have mitigated the impact. The results from the closed-ended question mimic those of 'Shift in working practices' with a slightly higher lean towards, 'High impact' (15.2%). Some key points arose from the open question regarding this data. Some respondents actually reported a temporary reduction in workloads for around three months due to Covid-19, before swiftly returning to pre-pandemic levels (Respondent 3). Several respondents reported a noticeable increase in ERW referrals in recent times, which may be consistent with the aforementioned issue. This aspect was widely remarked upon and as such will be discussed in more detail later when discussing the impact of 'Political influences'. Additionally, some respondents raised the issue of an increase in inappropriate referrals that would be more aligned to remit of alternative specialist departments. Respondent 7 clarified this point by expressing, 'Often I have found that local authorities advise Prevent referrals which are sometimes not for us - e.g. gangs referral may be more appropriate. Also, schools may send referrals which would be more suited to hate crimes. This results in increased caseloads and

over reporting'. Likewise, this subject will be expanded upon further when discussing the 'Over reporting/referring due to fear of repercussions' topic.

The categories of 'Ability to upskill' and 'Need to recruit externally' scored similarly with predominately 'Little impact' responses. 'Skills shortage' had a mixed response with 37% 'Little impact', 30.4% 'Moderate impact', 15.2% 'No impact and 6.5% 'High impact'. This was qualified by Respondent 30 by commenting on the huge increase in activity within the online space stating that, 'the subjects we deal with are more tech savvy than me and my colleagues'. This thought may also be applicable to the 'Need to recruit externally' category when considering skills possessed by IT or online specialists. This subject returned the most 'Unknown' responses (37.8%), but amongst the other options the results were mixed, similar to the other categories. It appears that certain factors have exerted a degree of influence, and there exists a shared concern regarding a perceived deficiency in skills among certain individuals. Maintaining a technical advantage over malevolent actors is of utmost significance. The College of Policing (2020) has reported an exponential increase in the quantity and complexity of false, misleading, or abusive information. The College of Policing further posits that this phenomenon will have far-reaching implications for CT policing. In relation to the concept of fake news and propaganda, the investigating officers will necessitate the acquisition of fresh technical skills, forensic expertise, and associated credentialing standards. Advanced digital forensics and image analysis will be integral to the determination of whether manipulation of video and audio content has occurred. According to Fishman (2019), terrorist organisations are employing a range of advanced tactics to communicate and promote terrorist activities through content hosting, audience development and financial mechanisms within the digital sphere. Moreover, they propose that CT professionals can potentially overcome these methods by identifying their focal points. They assert that the majority of advanced attempts to identify terrorist content rely on machine learning algorithms that evaluate diverse indicators to ascertain whether a particular piece of content promotes terrorism. Consequently, one potential resolution could entail collaborating with Social Media

and technology firms to determine the relevant and specific data required to train artificial intelligence (AI) models. This strategy could enhance the ability to identify harmful content more effectively. As online activity increases and the landscape evolves, some practitioners are observing individuals with advanced knowledge in this area. This highlights a potential risk that must be addressed. Additional training or relevant courses may remedy the issue, but given the pace of progression, there may be a need for specialist skill-sets to operate effectively in this field.

When examining the data related to 'Political influences' the patterns change and they display higher levels of proportionally towards 'High impact' (27.3%) and 'Moderate impact' (54.5%) with very few selecting little or no impact as shown in the graph below.



	Unknown	No impact	Little impact	Moderate impact	High impact
Series1	2	1	5	24	12

Figure 5.3. Political Influences.

The data shows that a significant proportion of practitioners believe recent political influences have impacted Prevent's operations. A thorough examination of open-ended responses is needed to determine the significance of this data and whether the impact has been positive or negative. One respondent mentioned that they had not experienced any such barriers, with multi-agency working and the decision-making process functioning positively, free from political bias (Respondent, 20). However, many peers suggested an opposite viewpoint. Respondent 13 delivered a concise summary of various concerns that had been raised by

colleagues in the survey. The summary can be dissected into several distinct parts, which encompass the ensuing observations:

> I think that many of our referrals and what we deal with in Prevent is heavily influenced by external political climates and media reporting. Many years ago there was a large amount of media reporting surrounding terrorists from the Muslim community and how this was perceived as a real danger. As such there was arguably an attitude of Islamophobia whereby the public would see potential Muslim terrorists everywhere and report them. Times have changed and there appears to be a much bigger emphasis and significantly increased media reporting on the Extreme Right Wing. Whilst this is a serious area that must never be ignored each referral requires to be treated on its own merits, and like all Prevent cases, the devil is the detail'. However it appears that given the significant increase in the media regarding Extreme Right Wing there has been an uptake in referrals for the Extreme Right Wing. Some of these referrals have resulted in people being referred for having mainstream right leaning conservative views.

One noteworthy factor that has contributed to the ERW referrals to Prevent has been the increase in cases related to Andrew Tate that have been referred by schools, as reported by Quinn (2023). While it could be contended that this behaviour may constitute misogyny, it unequivocally does not qualify as a terrorism concern and should not be ascribed to CT strategy, as asserted by Shawcross (2023). Respondent 13 continued:

> Whilst there are many who would understandably be offended by some of the views, they would not be considered extreme and are actually policies that some mainstream political parties would run elections on. I have experienced this first hand with some statutory partners referring people for having views they find distasteful arguing that the views could become more radical and so should be dealt with now before they do. In some respect this is almost trying to use Prevent as a political cudgel to force people to conform to a political view point.

It could be posited that the imposition of a uniformed political viewpoint upon individuals curtails their freedom of expression, thus affecting their civil liberties. This thesis has already scrutinised the possible ramifications of such an imposition, including the likelihood of fostering perceptions of discrimination and nurturing grievance narratives as previously identified within the Muslim community. Consequently, these principles and potential risks must also be extended to the realm of ERW threats. Failure to address this issue with due diligence and to

heed Shawcross' (2023) recommendations could potentially result in a significant problem of ERW terrorism. Finally, Respondent 13 contended that:

> There is also some fear of repercussions from some partner agencies as well who, regardless of the ideological affiliation, are referring individuals for very minor actions that would not be considered suitable for the Prevent space. This seems to be done as a safety exercise with the caveat of 'just in case it means we are covered' from the partner agency. A number of the referrals we receive are in relation to unruly school pupils who have acted out of order but could have been dealt with in an appropriate manner without a need to refer them to the Prevent program.

This issue is fundamentally related to the confidence of frontline personnel in fulfilling their duties, which can be bolstered by strong leadership support. Practitioners ought not to feel pressured to make decisions merely to appease management or out of fear. There are well established mechanisms in place such as criminal law and support services to manage crime and disorderly behaviour. While there is a need for some level of discretion and subjectivity in such matters, it is imperative to demarcate the line beyond which practitioners might be inclined to make judgments based solely on prevailing trends or fashionable concerns. Although there is some crossover here regarding the over reporting/referring topic, Respondent 13 addresses the scale of political influences and echoes the sentiments experienced by many respondents.

Further comments suggest that without downplaying the occurrence, the threat of ERW terrorism may have been over exaggerated (Respondent, 39) as supported by statistics relating to TACT offenders by ideology. Likewise, this view was supported by Shawcross (2023) in his recent review of Prevent, recommending greater consistency across all ideologies. Furthermore, ‘Brexit’ has been mentioned as having a significant impact on referrals, prompting the shift towards ERW, due to the increase in people expressing right-wing views around immigration (Respondent, 16). Lastly, some explanation was given as to why Islamist referrals may have reduced, highlighting the campaign against ISIS in Syria and Iraq, which has condensed the group's influence and ability to conduct organised attacks (Respondent, 16). Additional themes were raised regarding partner agencies, with difficulties

uniting with 'Channel' regarding the ownership of risk and to the extent of the threat (Respondent, 43). It was suggested that the priorities of several partners were not well aligned with Prevent, with the importance of identifying subjects and taking action through 'Channel' being dictated by their squeezed budgets and finances (Respondent, 38). Priorities appear out of sync within their own organisation, with Prevent referrals not aligning with 'Pursue' investigations, in terms of ideology. Nevertheless, it is crucial to contemplate the possibility of a delayed alignment. The fact that Pursue remains fixated on Islamist extremism does not necessarily preclude the occurrence of an upsurge in ERW activities at the Prevent end of the continuum based on their different functions. Respondent 27 claims, 'the ratio of ERW to Islamist is almost exactly opposite between Prevent and Pursue with the former recording lower levels of Islamist referrals. We suspect this is down to a number of factors including differences in observable behaviours, consensus of ERW and concerns for professional jeopardy for wrongly labelling a Muslim person as extremists'. This type of disconnect is cause for concern, again highlighting the political element in this field of work, with one branch of the strategy working towards one agenda and the other branch operating towards something different. Ultimately, by not working in partnership as a single entity to achieve mutually agreed goals, the risk of confusion and missed opportunities is increased. There seems to be a portion of local policy attributed to Prevent processes, which can again lead to confusion and inconsistencies amongst regions. As described by Respondent 35, 'There is also a tendency within Prevent to 'run with' cases where the CT vulnerability is peripheral and insignificant, but other vulnerabilities are present, such as mental health issues'.

It is imperative that Prevent is allowed to operate as free from political influences as possible. This will ensure that resources are not wasted, but directed appropriately and empowered to use their expertise and perform the role liberally. Therefore, making necessary interventions where required instead of managing cases that should have been dealt with previously along the chain by alternate means or having to handle cases just to tick boxes. Shawcross (2023) contends that individuals who are vulnerable due to their mental health, and who do not

necessarily present a terrorism risk, are being referred to Prevent in the absence of other essential forms of support, resulting in a significant misappropriation of resources. Prevent is seemingly misaligned with both the broader CT framework and the extant terrorism threat landscape in the UK, engendering a likelihood of diverting attention away from the principal threat posed by IE. Shawcross (2023) asserts that IE is the foremost terrorist threat confronting the country, constituting the primary underlying factor in the majority of terrorist attack plots. It is clear from the answers that there is a relationship between political influence and the topic of 'Over reporting/referring due to fear of repercussions', whereby one informs the other. However, this also appears to be an issue in its own right with the revelation of some additional key themes that had not been mentioned in previous sections. The results from the closed-ended question highlighted that the consensus was geared further towards 'Moderate impact' (34.8%) and 'High impact' (23.9%), but not as conclusive as the data revealed in 'Political influences', as there were a number of mixed responses. A running theme deduced from the relevant open-ended question answers is that certain individuals are being referred to Prevent, even though they should not be. This point was discussed above by Respondent 13, but essentially it would appear individuals who have displayed mild behaviours or committed minor violations that may be best suited to alternative treatment, are instead being referred to Prevent by partner agencies as a covering exercise. This appears to be the approach from schools whereby referrals are submitted in the first instance as default, without probing further by asking relevant questions (Respondent 25), suggesting that people have that fear of getting it wrong (Respondent 15). This level of over referring is also a worry, particularly in terms of compassion fatigue (Respondent 42). Compassion fatigue typically arises from the cumulative and prolonged exposure to others' suffering without adequate time or resources to recover from the emotional toll it takes. Over time, individuals may become numb to the suffering of others, and may even experience feelings of guilt, shame, or a sense of failure for being unable to help those they care for (Cocker & Joss, 2016). According to the study conducted by Burnett et al. (2020), compassion fatigue is prevalent throughout UK policing. To ensure staff welfare and intervention quality, it's crucial to ensure precise referrals and that individuals are directed

to suitable alternative support services where appropriate to alleviate the burden. Providing resiliency and mental toughness training to practitioners may also be beneficial.

Additionally, schools seem to present several unique challenges, one is a reluctance to confront Muslim pupils over trivial matters that could easily be resolved by the schools and parents, instead opting for a Prevent referral (Respondent 35). Another seems to be connected to local authorities, who are advising partners to send certain cases to Prevent, which would for example be more applicable to a gangs referral. Likewise, where specific behaviours are displayed, in certain circumstances, they may be more suited to being processed as hate crimes (Respondent 7). Moreover, there seems to be a train of thought that people believe they that have become experts at identifying terrorist behaviours, but often this is not the case, with racist activity being reported as terrorism rather than just crime (Respondent 33). Undoubtedly, this is a critical issue, and as posited earlier, there are certain parallels with instances of over-referral involving both mental health and ERW cases. It is imperative to manage cases of racism utilising the relevant legislative frameworks and criminal justice processes. The data shows that some practitioners view over-reporting as a negative factor in the Prevent program. Many referrals are being made that either do not meet the criteria or are being processed out of fear of error. It could be suggested that all partners would benefit from a clear set of guidelines including clearly defined thresholds for which cases become suitable for Prevent intervention. Enhanced training may assist in determining the appropriate action to take in certain scenarios and increased multi-agency support is essential when expecting partners to take ownership, exercise their discretion and manage low level cases without referral.

5.5 How success can be better communicated

This section concerns communicating Prevent's successes to the public. After discussing the program's effectiveness, respondents were asked to suggest ways to improve how its success is conveyed.

Most respondents agreed on the importance of communicating the positive efforts made behind the scenes, particularly in identifying vulnerable individuals. They also believed that it is necessary to provide a robust and honest rebuttal to unjust and damaging criticism (Respondent 3). The literature review extensively examines criticisms of the Prevent strategy. However, it can be argued that these criticisms are unwarranted as they stem from a misinterpretation of the strategy's intended goals. Respondent 12 elaborated on this point making reference to the Prevent National Communication Strategy. They stated, 'our national comms strategy has always been poor, too late or non-existent. It is not bold enough and is usually bland. We rarely offer a challenge to the likes of CAGE, Prevent Watch or The Guardian anti-Prevent 'news' stories. We do so much good work and it is almost never told to the public despite the examples being spoon-fed to the regional and national comms teams'. Effective communication builds and sustains relationships by fostering trust, credibility and support. To gain public approval, more must be done to communicate with the public, mediated through media outlets as exemplified by publications. Without alternative information, media outlets are likely to report only on negative events such as terrorist attacks and associated criticism. Unfortunately there appear to be several barriers to communicating the message effectively. Efforts to control anti-Prevent Islamist groups such as 'CAGE', 'MEND' and 'Prevent Watch' will assist with achieving objectives (Respondent 35). Respondent 35 added further significance to this issue, by highlighting the importance of recognising the real phenomenon of 'Islamic entryism'. Entryism is essentially a political strategy in which an individual or groups of individuals actively seeks to gain influence within an organisation, typically a political party, to promote their own agenda or ideology. In the

context of this response it can be assumed that the respondent is referring to these anti-Prevent organisations and suggesting that they are attempting to infiltrate the wider Muslim community to gain a position of power. The present argument suggests that these groups aspire to utilise their influence to manipulate the perception of the community, by instilling negative rhetoric and ultimately denigrating the Prevent strategy to further their own agenda (Sutton, 2016)

One way to dispel these theories could be to explain the role in more depth to the wider community, instead of simply referring to the role as safeguarding (Respondent 41) and convey this message frequently by direct face-to-face engagement (Respondent 22). The message could also be conveyed via TV, Social Media (Respondent 23), radio campaigns and through statutory partners/police websites (Respondent 24) and by making use of the newly implemented digital meeting technology (Respondent 46). Tailoring the message to address specific concerns and involving community leaders and influencers can enhance the effectiveness of the approach in reaching a wider audience. Community leaders and influencers are often viewed as trusted sources of information within their communities, and their endorsement of the message can lend additional credibility and legitimacy. Furthermore, using various communication channels can aid in reaching a more diverse audience, which can increase the likelihood of addressing misunderstandings across the community, rather than only certain segments. It was suggested that messages originate from higher authorities, such as the government, as they would carry more weight (Respondent 1). According to Cherry (2022), messages from higher authorities are seen as more credible and trustworthy due to perceived access to superior information and resources, resulting in greater attentiveness from individuals. This could address criticisms of the Prevent strategy suggesting that it targets Muslims based on profiling techniques, unfairly focuses on non-illegal behaviours and disproportionately targets children (Holmwood & Aitlhadj, 2022).

Unfortunately, most Prevent practitioners do not perceive there to be the public appetite to listen to positive narrative (Respondent 10), with this being a larger barrier within certain communities (Respondent 6). Specifically, the respondents make reference to the Muslim community as being cautious and dismissive of the Prevent strategy, resulting in fewer referrals. This issue reverts back to the previous discussion point of resetting the message, gaining trust and increasing relevance. One suggestion was that benefit could be derived from creating more surveys with particular reference towards Muslims, and promotion of them throughout mainstream media (Respondent 35). Perhaps opinion polls and online surveys could provide a useful overview of consensus, with the introduction of smaller focus groups to explore the detailed nuances. This may then create an updated and rounded view relating to issues of concern, allowing for reflection, promotion and mediation. What can be deduced from the responses is that there appears to be a significant amount of myth surrounding Prevent working practices and their objectives. A theme that is consistently referred to is the concept of 'spying' (Respondent's 3; 25 & 41), which appears to be more prevalent amongst Muslim communities as researched by Kundnani (2009, 2014), who highlights the unfair targeting of Muslims. Notwithstanding the fact that Prevent has directed substantial financial resources towards community-based initiatives at a local level since its inception, it has been postulated that such efforts have heightened fragmentation and incentivised the Muslim community to spy on one another (Abbas, 2019). The recent works by May (2023) support the theory that despite the extensive investment in local community projects, the program has yet to successfully divest itself from the overarching framework of securitisation. Respondent 13 added further clarity to this point by saying, 'I think there definitely needs to be some form of better communication and interaction with the Muslim community, to try and show that we are not a spying agency and that we are definitely not prejudice against them'. Should this perception within the Muslim community prove to be accurate, there would be scant deliberation concerning the necessity for further action, to dispel the notion of being a spying organisation. Nonetheless, this issue is convoluted and any prospective approach will necessitate meticulous examination.

Prevent is a proactive approach that aims to deter individuals from being drawn into terrorism by addressing the root causes of radicalisation, such as social isolation, feelings of injustice or discrimination and exposure to extremist ideologies. It is therefore unfair to suggest that it targets children as early intervention forms part of the strategy and the findings of this research have shown that safeguarding within schools is an integral element of the program. Equally, to contend that the strategy unfairly targets certain communities or religions, such as Muslims or people from minority ethnic backgrounds, by stigmatising them as potential terrorists is a flawed argument. The strategy aims to safeguard all individuals, irrespective of their background or beliefs, from the threat of terrorism. The Prevent strategy is founded on principles of safeguarding, promoting individual well-being, and social cohesion. Its design is to aid individuals who are susceptible to radicalisation by offering support and guidance to help them resist extremist narratives and ideologies. This could include mentoring, counselling, educational programs, and referrals to other services or agencies for additional assistance. In addition, the Prevent strategy has a robust system of checks and balances to ensure that it is being implemented in a fair and proportionate manner. However, it could be argued that this positive message is not being driven hard enough and is not being received by portions of society.

Effective communication strategies aimed at facilitating greater community engagement may prove to be advantageous. In support of these assertions government statistics (Home Office, 2022; 2023b) can demonstrate the successful outcomes of the Prevent program. Certainly, it is not possible to present simplistic and easily understandable data to determine how many successful Prevent cases would have gone on to engage in terrorist related activity had practitioners not intervened. Nonetheless, this is an essential element to creating balance as without it, the system will only be portrayed from one side. Further, there needs to be a stronger reaction towards misreporting, rather than Prevent always becoming the ‘fall guy’ for all CT problems. Basu (2021) acknowledges the concerns surrounding the toxic associations

that have been unfairly attributed to the Prevent program. He emphasises the necessity of disassociating the program from such detrimental labelling and also believes that this can be achieved by accentuating the successes of the program while underscoring the fact that the interventions are designed to protect and safeguard individuals. CT cases are often jointly managed with security services and other partners. Therefore, there is likely to be shared responsibility and multiple contributory factors and failings in the lead up to terrorist activity, thus the sole blame cannot be cemented in the fact that the subject was previously referred to Prevent (Respondent 16).

Another common theme was engagement with the public, to continually drive the positive message both in person and online (Respondent 43), through a variety of events and through the National communications platform (Respondent 45), as discussed above. One option mentioned was presentations at open days, providing meaningful conversation with a view to creating increased transparency (Respondent 25). The open days may be held by at diverse locations, including schools, community centres, town halls, and other public venues, contingent on the event's aim and scope, in order to enable communities to gain insight into the services and functions of Prevent. During these events, Prevent may exhibit novel schemes or initiatives, showcase their support mechanisms, furnish details about impending policies and regulations, or solicit feedback from the community. During these interactions, there ought to be reassurance that Prevent is a supportive programme, but highlight to the public that it is voluntary and therefore can only be helpful with the right level of cooperation (Respondent 7). This was supported by Respondent 43 who claimed that the key to achieving this is through education, whether that be delivered at academic level, community level or even by the work force. It was suggested that there should be more publicity around specific successful cases (Respondent 8) and as mentioned by Respondent 16, 'There needs to be a focus on encouraging people to speak out about their experiences and better media campaigns highlighting this'. The concept of speaking out was widely supported, although it could be argued that this may be exploited by hate groups and bring unwanted attention,

posing a safety risk to those concerned. However, it was suggested that successful anonymised examples could be used (Respondent 36), thus ensuring the security of the subjects, whilst at the same time showcasing the positive work that does take place. Therefore, the majority of respondents believe that enhanced communications with the public are essential to drive the message and this ought to be done using positive case studies through the media (Respondent 30). The details of lived experiences and the difficult journey of those subjects that have gone through the system (Respondent 10), may deliver a powerful message and gain increased public approval.

Overall, effective communication is seen as key to showcasing Prevent's success, particularly when engaging hard-to-reach communities with deep-rooted beliefs. The UK is widely viewed as a leader in CT policing, with Prevent at the forefront, supported by Innes, Roberts, & Lowe (2017), who noted its adoption in the EU and influence in the US. Despite limited access to specific details, practitioners have shared numerous anecdotal examples of successful work. Greater explanation of safeguarding within the Prevent framework is crucial in building trust and encouraging reporting by friends and family, as highlighted by Respondent 20, ultimately enhancing the program's effectiveness.

5.6 How failings can be addressed

This section will discuss several perceived Prevent failings. It will do so by drawing from the respondents' answers where they were asked to describe in their words how they believed that some of the failings could be addressed.

As already mentioned in the previous section, there appeared to be some crossover between this and the question mentioned above, with participants raising many of the same points. The correlation between successes and failures lies in the fact that ineffective communication of success can be regarded as a failure in its own right. This observation suggests that success

and failure are not entirely distinct, but rather interconnected phenomena. However, several new points were raised that were of specific relevance to Prevent's failures. There was appeal for slight modification of terminologies and the depiction of the role of Prevent. Respondent 21, claimed 'We need to embrace the easy challenges - for example the word 'Islamist' is a regularly hated word and we have to use a paragraph to explain the term. It's been suggested to use something like 'faith/religious based extremism' or similar'. This suggests that Prevent may not always listen effectively, and understanding should be a two-way process. Just as practitioners want their practices to be understood, Prevent should seek to understand community needs better. Therefore, making minor changes to potentially offensive terminology could increase acceptance and improve relationships. For instance, the concept of 'British Values' defined in the 2011 version of Prevent (HM Government, 2011) and referred to frequently in the recent Shawcross (2023) review of Prevent, may in itself be problematic. Questions could be raised as to whether Muslim communities necessarily subscribe to what is considered as mainstream British ideals, which may directly conflict with their own strongly held beliefs. Muslims may view democracy as incompatible with the concept of the sovereignty of God in Islam, or may view the concept of 'equality' as being insufficient in addressing historical and systemic discrimination and marginalisation of Muslim communities in the UK. Perceived conflicts may cause alienation and mistrust between Muslim communities and mainstream society, resulting in the proliferation of extremist ideologies that present a different social and political outlook. These adjustments appear to be more geared towards modernisation and adapting to accommodate an ever-evolving society as opposed to fundamental overhauls.

The issues cover a range of tasks attributed to the Prevent role such as, empowering staff to be more dynamic in the initial assessment/information gathering stage, prior to cases being sent to 'Channel' (Respondent 18) and to demonstrate consistency. Respondent 21 underscored the significance of consistency, positing that policies and procedures lack uniformity and contain a plethora of locally-derived variations intended to address worst-case

scenarios. Consistent policies and procedures are essential to provide confidence for practitioners when performing their duty without the potential for confusion. It also creates enhanced consistency among referred subjects, leading to greater legitimacy during intervention and case management. Another failing is in the online space and so requires increased engagement, emphasising some of the dangers observed by individuals becoming brainwashed and corrupted by disingenuous actors who operate within the space. This has been witnessed even on legitimate websites, such as YouTube (Respondent 13). Further points were raised around the online space with reference to requiring an uplift of skills, specifically 'more experts in modern IT/apps' within workforce (Respondent 30). As underscored in chapter four, technological advancements are poised to continue expanding, thereby emphasising the need to cultivate expertise in this arena, whether by means of training or recruitment, as a fundamental component of remaining abreast of contemporary society. Likewise, having discussed the potential hazards linked with the online environment, perhaps it is time to encourage websites, Social Media and gaming platforms to become more involved in the Prevent Duty (Respondent 32). As per Fishman's (2019) discourse, Social Media enterprises possess a plethora of resources, inclusive of machine learning techniques, that aid in the detection of terrorist-associated content. However, they have identified an indifferent disposition from some companies towards identifying such incidents, coupled with limited collaboration with CT professionals. In light of the escalating incidence of terrorism facilitated through online platforms, the cultivation of strong affiliations with Social Media and technology firms may prove to be pivotal in successful intervention.

As well as tweaks within Prevent system, further observations regarding external political matters and partner agency policy were highlighted as potential contributory factors in some of the failings. With regards to addressing some of the detrimental partner policies, several recommendations were made, including the way in which intelligence partners recruit staff. Respondent 18 made the following remarks when discussing the matter, 'Changes to IP (intelligence partners) recruitment, many not fit for purposes. Many are problem identifiers, not

problems solvers without the ability/charisma or experience to provide effective counter narrative'. These comments highlight a lack of symbiosis and may indicate competing agendas. It was mentioned that Prevent is spending more time managing low-level cases having become the agency of last resort. In other words, partners have tried everything else and so might as well put in a referral (Respondent, 6). It is reported widely that strong partnerships create better productivity and it is difficult to find a positive to having a disjointed approach in this scenario. Therefore, conversations surrounding remits, the introduction of better training (Respondent, 14) and guidance, is imperative to creating highly functioning working relationships and achieving quality results. Given the escalating complexity of contemporary challenges, which necessitate a multifaceted approach to arrive at efficacious solutions, the establishment of unambiguous and quantifiable objectives is of paramount importance. Through such objectives, stakeholders can collaborate in a concerted effort to harmonize their endeavours and harness their collective capacities, thereby engendering an environment that is favourable to achieving positive outcomes. Endeavours of this nature lay a solid foundations for future growth and innovation.

As previously analysed from the data, practitioners feel that there is a significant political influence bearing over their practices. However, Prevent is perceived by some as being no different to any other safeguarding programme, such as child protection or adult services and that it is only the political slant that sets them apart (Respondent 17). If the suggestion that political influences cause a negative impact and detracts from the overall aims of Prevent, then this issue needs to be addressed. Prevent staff must be empowered with the confidence to stay on course and avoid being politically led into a 'cycle of soft or hard-edged approaches' (Respondent 12). The concept of soft and hard approaches to counter terrorism was discussed by Bonino (2012). Soft-edged approaches are generally characterised by a preventative focus and an emphasis on community engagement and trust-building, which may include measures such as community outreach programs, education, awareness campaigns, and community policing initiatives. On the other hand, hard-edged approaches are typically

more reactive in nature and are focused on disrupting and prosecuting terrorist activity. These approaches may include measures such as increased surveillance, arrests and prosecutions. Therefore and as alluded to by Respondent 12 there appears to be a lack of consistency amongst policymakers with the strategic direction being swayed by political expedience.

Some respondents recommended adapting towards softer approaches, cementing their focus firmly within the safeguarding bracket rather than CT by treating low level TACT offenders as victims, subsequently managing cases with education (Respondent 18). This view was also supported by Bonino (2012), who inferred that soft approaches may attain greater cooperation and cohesion. Some recommended the introduction of more nuanced systems comparable to, 'right help, right time' in children's services, whereby large cohorts of individuals receive broad intervention and smaller groups are given intensive mediation (Respondent 38), ultimately giving more control to Prevent. However, after undergoing an OFSTED (2015) review to assess the effectiveness of Right Help, Right Time (RHRT), a combination of favourable and unfavourable outcomes were discovered, suggesting that that parts of RHRT may also present implications. In relation to the Prevent control over case direction and handling of information, another dimension was introduced by Respondent 21, who posited that the police, as a rule, exhibits an inclination towards amassing a vast amounts of information and they are possessive in retaining it. This practice may have an unfavourable impact on case management, inducing apprehension around cloaking or deleting cases within police systems and taking affirmative steps to close referrals when appropriate. The respondent went on to mention that there is a recent organisational movement to ensure that all PCM cases have a police footprint within frontline systems. Ultimately, this means that less controls are in place to manage information, which can be extremely damaging to subjects in the future, especially young individuals, when it may have been more appropriate to remove the details in certain cases. It could be suggested that information should be retained for intelligence purposes only within the secret CT systems, especially cases where no crime is committed. With regard to the diverse soft and hard approaches explored in the earlier in the

section, it may be proposed that for suitable cases, certain individuals could be designated as victims and granted comprehensive support and education. This approach is expected to garner a more favourable reception from the community, potentially fostering improved future cohesion, in contrast to creating profiles in frontline police systems for low-level incidents, which may exacerbate stigmatisation.

5.7 Discussion points

Participants were asked to add anything not already addressed that they felt would help contribute to the understanding of Prevent and the radicalisation landscape in the UK at this time. Several key themes that had already been raised, were repeated in this section, for example Respondent 12 used the space to say, ‘Community cohesion remains valuable - in the long term, diverse cultural and personal experiences are what gives the best resilience against extremist narratives’. Likewise, Respondent 17 commented, ‘Protect the vulnerable, stop exploitation and then hopefully reduce the risks’. There were many other themes raised, such as promoting good new stories, increasing transparency and ultimately raising the profile of Prevent (Respondent 20). The repetition of these key themes heightens their relevance and adds support and credibility to the overall analysis.

Some final points worthy of note relate to both the attitudes inside and outside of Prevent. Although the lack of understanding with the public has been discussed, it seems that some practitioners have also witnessed a lack of understanding within Prevent with reference to IE terrorism. Respondent 29 stated that, ‘I think there is still a significant lack of understanding among the general public and many police colleagues (including Prevent) about faith issues and the link to extremism. I have often seen referrals from professionals about tithing, pious behaviour and faith youth groups which are clearly being viewed with suspicion’. It is vital that resources are directed to where they need to be in order to be as efficient and effective as possible. If it is determined that such incidents are occurring and that they are indeed

inappropriate, then it is fair to say that enhanced training related to the topic is essential. Not only will this increase knowledge and save wasted time, it may help make better judgements, it may reduce the risk of capturing those other innocent individuals in the net, potentially harming them and wider relations.

Lastly, the subject mental health was discussed, with it being described as a significant problem that needs to be better understood within the context of radicalisation. Respondent 39 stated that, ‘Language remains important, so as not to demonise sections of the community, but this clearly needs to be balanced with fact-based conversations around the challenges to young people’. As alluded to previously, mental health issues by their very nature are complex and so cases where these vulnerabilities are present or are a contributory factor to the concerns, are complicated. Perhaps Prevent may benefit from the input of medically trained experts in the field to form a partnership approach to certain tricky cases, to collaborate and assess the issue from both angles. This notion has already garnered endorsement abroad, as evidenced by the efforts of certain countries to compel mental health experts to play an active role in screening and the de-radicalisation process (Dom et al, 2018).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Summary of findings

In conclusion, this thesis has provided an in-depth analysis of IE radicalisation and explored the effectiveness of prevention and reformative strategies in the UK. The literature review was split into four sections, providing a comprehensive overview of the landscape of radicalisation in the UK, including the government's strategy and the role of community-based de-radicalisation programmes. The research study conducted in this thesis aimed to elicit contemporary information regarding the radicalisation landscape, by gathering primary data from presently active UK Prevent practitioners through a meticulously designed survey. The

subsequent analysis of the data revealed key themes concerning the demographics of individuals being radicalised, the locations where radicalisation is occurring, and the methods by which radicalisation is being carried out. Additionally, the second part of the analysis focused on the effectiveness of Prevent, addressing the successes and failures from a practitioner perspective.

6.1.1 Demographics and influences

IE poses the foremost terrorism threat to the UK. The data obtained from the study indicates that a significant proportion of the respondents believe that the most substantial risk of radicalisation lies with young males and that the lower age limit for radicalisation has decreased in recent times. This trend is consistent with a rise in referrals of individuals under 18. The respondents were in unanimous agreement that no single IE organisation poses the most significant threat. Rather, the principal risk emanates from SIT inspired by one or multiple extremist ideologies or IE groups. A commonly held view is that SIT represent the most significant challenge for the foreseeable future. SIT can act alone with minimal preparation, planning or finances, and their methods of attack utilise resources that are readily accessible. These less sophisticated attacks are also more challenging to predict. The appeal of recruiting SIT has made it a preferred option amongst IE groups. The lower risk, wider sphere of impact, low level of sophistication, and the rapid implementation of potential attacks, make it an attractive option for IE groups. This underscores the significance of demographic factors as a significant challenge to CT policing and a threat to UK security.

6.1.2 Radicalisation locations

91% percent of respondents surveyed in the study agreed that the majority of radicalisation is occurring online. However, a few respondents still believed that in-person radicalisation is a critical factor, with respondents describing 'Prisons' and 'Peoples Homes' as the most prominent locations. Prisons remain a complex terrain for CT strategies. Previous research has posited that prisons serve as breeding grounds for radicalisation due to increased

exposure to vulnerabilities, inmate influences, and the propagation of grievance narratives (Williams et al, 2017; Yaacoub, 2018; Rushchenko, J., 2019). This was exemplified in the case of Usman Khan (Weeks, 2021). The respondents of this study have supported the notion that the threat of radicalisation within prisons is severe.

Notably, the concept of 'People's Homes' has been prominent, underscoring the well-established influence that family members can wield over individuals and emphasising why this remains a significant threat. It is noteworthy that the study has identified a key takeaway in the form of the growing use of the online space. This implies that individuals can now be radicalised within the confines of their own homes without any familial influence, solely with the aid of an online device. There is a widespread agreement amongst respondents that economic and political factors, such as the Covid-19 lockdowns, have compounded the issue at hand. This is particularly evident in the surge of online communication. The ensuing discussion will elaborate on this concept.

Respondents' opinions on the significance of ‘Schools’ were divided, with some indicating its prominent role, while others deemed it less relevant. Schools present well-known risks associated with radicalisation and continue to be a source of ongoing concern. However, the responses to the open-ended questions provided additional context. Among those who considered the location to be insignificant, it was explained that schools were often the main source of referrals for low-level behaviour, which some respondents believed did not constitute radicalisation or extremist behaviour and should be addressed through alternative means. This viewpoint was widely supported and highlights broader political and jurisdictional issues that will be further discussed below.

The shift towards online radicalisation is a significant cause for concern in contemporary times. The conventional Social Media platforms, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, have seemingly lost their appeal, partly due to heightened security measures (Baldauf, Ebner, &

Guhl, 2019) and awareness of these platforms. Moreover, the appeal of more secure and encrypted platforms has contributed to this trend (Conway, 2019). Most respondents were uncertain about the risks associated with TikTok. This could be due to the platform's novelty. However, it is noteworthy that TikTok has a substantial user base of 1.5 billion and allows for the creation of short, viral videos with limited scrutiny. Some have recognised the increasing popularity of this platform for disseminating extremist propaganda, particularly within the ERW community. As a result, the potential threat posed by TikTok warrants serious consideration.

Notably, ‘Online gaming’ emerged as the most significant platform susceptible to radicalisation within the online space, as emphasised by the practitioners. Gaming technology has advanced and games have become increasingly more interactive. Many games now feature an in-game chat function that allows users to add friends, send and receive messages, and connect with others, much like other communication devices. In fact, for several online games, game chat is an integral component of the game itself, enabling communication and strategy among teammates or players (Parentzone, 2022; The Bark Team, 2022; NSPCC, 2023). The concept of gaming has evolved significantly, extending beyond simply playing video games. This transformation has led to the widespread adoption of advanced interactive features and functions, accompanied by a growing community of gaming enthusiasts. The 'Dark Web' was widely perceived as a significant or uncertain risk. It was suggested that this platform is challenging to navigate and regulate due to its clandestine nature. Furthermore, the use of data encryption and consequent anonymity makes the dark web an ongoing hub for illicit or unlawful activities.

Lastly, attention is drawn towards the 'Metaverse', which received the highest number of responses as an unknown risk. The Metaverse has the potential to become the ultimate interaction platform, with the ability to connect individuals virtually and serve as an extension of the physical world. As this concept continues to grow, it may be utilised for various purposes and potentially migrating conventional daily functions into the virtual world. Therefore, it is

crucial to gain a better understanding of this technology and establish a clear strategy for regulating it to remain ahead of the curve and protect vulnerable individuals. Some respondents noted that their technical knowledge and online usage did not compare favourably with that of the younger generation. The proliferation of current and emerging virtual platforms poses a significant area of concern and is likely to attract extremist groups who perceive the online space as a fertile recruiting ground.

6.1.3 The effectiveness of Prevent

Practitioners generally perceive Prevent as a successful strategy, drawing from multiple positive experiences. Respondents further elaborated on their success, citing direct interventions that altered individuals' mind-sets and diverted them from the path of radicalisation. However, practitioners also acknowledge that the system is not flawless and recognise several areas where they perceive the strategy to be failing. Several respondents have highlighted the poor quality of Prevent's communication through national channels and other outlets, which lacks substance and undermines the program's credibility. The stated objective of increasing cooperation with the community and referred subjects is not advanced by the present approach. Prevent has seen a rise in low-level risk referrals, such as instances of misbehaviour among schoolchildren, cases of racist behaviour, or situations where individuals have complex personal needs. The handling of these cases adds to workloads and detracts from serious issues. It is recommended that partner support services be responsible for addressing these low-level cases or that existing legislation be utilised to treat them as criminal cases.

Political influence over the weighting of referrals has resulted in confusion and inconsistency, giving rise to perceptions of unfairness and reinforcing grievance narratives, thereby increasing vulnerabilities to radicalisation. Additionally, Prevent is often held as the scapegoat when terrorist attacks occur, if they were perpetrated by a previous Prevent referral. It is worth noting that Prevent is a voluntary service, and its effectiveness in supporting and intervening is dependent on the subject's willingness to engage. The fact that the terrorist was identified

before committing the attack suggests that the strategy was somewhat successful in identifying the correct individual. However, this also highlights a failure in itself, to effectively communicate the purpose and functionality of Prevent.

6.2 Recommendations, limitations, and future research

The present study aims to provide practical recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the Prevent intervention, taking into account both the wider community aspect and an internal practice perspective. One of the fundamental principles underpinning the Prevent strategy is the voluntary engagement of individuals. However, some sectors of the Muslim community still view the strategy as discriminatory and excessively geared towards securitisation. Therefore, to achieve success, it is imperative to establish stronger ties with the community, fostering greater legitimacy and trust in the program. This, in turn, will promote referrals and encourage greater participation of subjects referred to the Prevent initiative.

It is recommended that government officials issue a strong counter-narrative from the outset to rebut unfair or misrepresented criticism of the Prevent strategy. This counter-narrative should be communicated through various media outlets, online platforms, and open days, showcasing success stories, positive outcomes, and best practices. Simultaneously, it is essential to fully explain the strategy's functions and objectives. The key message should emphasise that Prevent is a safeguarding organisation with the primary aim of supporting vulnerable individuals and that it has a range of tools and means to do so effectively. Such efforts are expected to enhance trust and confidence in the Prevent strategy within the community.

The study revealed various challenges and barriers that affect the effectiveness of Prevent interventions, including conflicting priorities and political influences. Respondents, for the most part, believe that the Prevent strategy is subject to heavy political influence, with some

expressing concerns about the influx and over-referral of ERW cases. Conflicting agendas among partners were also identified as problematic. To address these issues, it is recommended that the Prevent remit and objectives are clearly defined, thus eliminating confusion and inconsistency. Prevent staff should be empowered to perform their roles confidently and with full support from leaders, handling cases based on their merits rather than their popularity. Similarly, partners should also have the same level of confidence during the referral decision-making process. Referrals to Prevent should only be made when necessary and appropriate, not out of fear of criticism or on a just-in-case basis.

The identification and response to new trends of radicalisation require attention. For instance, the data indicates a pressing need for increased research and resources devoted to online radicalisation. This area is of particular concern given the widespread use and reliance on the internet. To address this, there should be new training to enhance existing skills among staff, as well as the consideration of hiring technology professionals with specialist expertise. Additionally, fostering enhanced relationships with Social Media and technology companies is crucial to ensuring successful online interventions. Artificial intelligence represents the most current and sophisticated means of identifying extremist online content. A collaborative approach to harness and train machine learning algorithms is essential to keep pace with extremists in the virtual space, who use innovative methods to avoid detection (Fishman, 2019).

In conclusion, this thesis contributes to the current understanding of the individuals being radicalised, the locations of radicalisation, and the ongoing debate on the effectiveness of the UK's Prevent strategy in combating IE radicalisation. Despite the study's limitations, including the modest sample size and reliance on self-reported data, the findings offer valuable insights and several novel discoveries for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers. However, the study's practitioner perspective is a limitation, and an extension of the study to subjects who have been referred to Prevent could offer a more comprehensive perspective, identifying

further comparisons and disparities. By questioning the subjects, new key themes may emerge, assisting in shaping the strategy further to enhance effectiveness. Ultimately, combating IE radicalisation requires a multifaceted approach, involving collaboration and coordination among all stakeholders and the implementation of evidence-based prevention and reformative strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: ERG 22+ dimensions and factors

Engagement

1. Need to redress injustice and express grievance
2. Need to defend against threat
3. Need for identity, meaning, belonging
4. Need for status
5. Need for excitement, comradeship or adventure
6. Need for dominance
7. Susceptibility to indoctrination
8. Political/moral motivation
9. Opportunistic involvement
10. Family or friends support extremist offending
11. Transitional periods
12. Group influence and control
13. Mental health

Intent

1. Over-identification with a group or cause
2. Us and Them thinking
3. Dehumanisation of the enemy
4. Attitudes that justify offending
5. Harmful means to an end
6. Harmful end objectives

Capability

1. Individual knowledge, skills and competencies
2. Access to networks, funding and equipment
3. Criminal history

\+ Any other factor

Appendix 2: Graphics

Figure 2.1. Radicalisation-factor model (RFM).

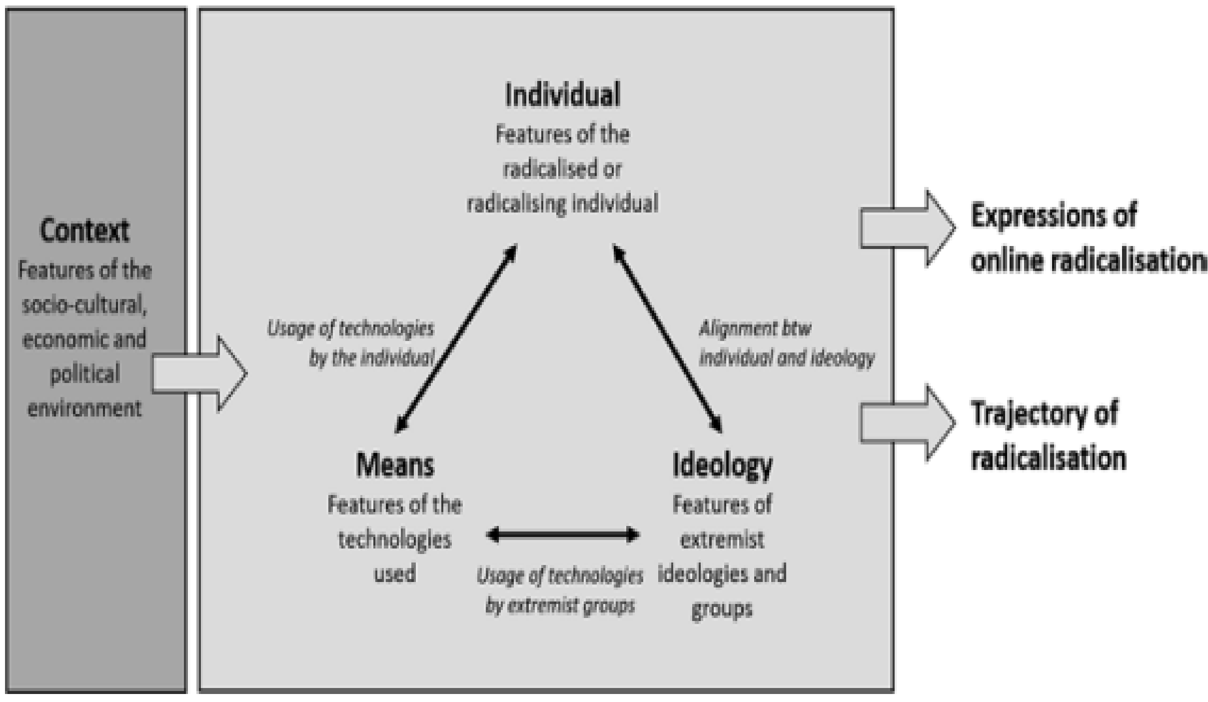


Figure 2.2. Borum's (2003) Ideological Development Model.

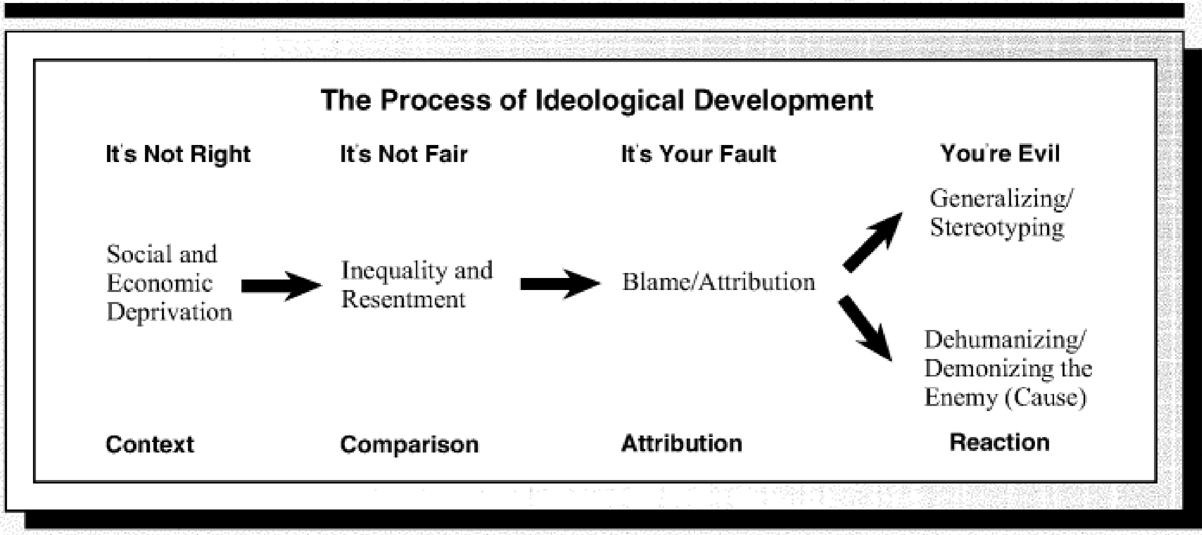


Figure 2.3. Wiktorowicz's (2005) diagram for joining extremist or terrorist groups.

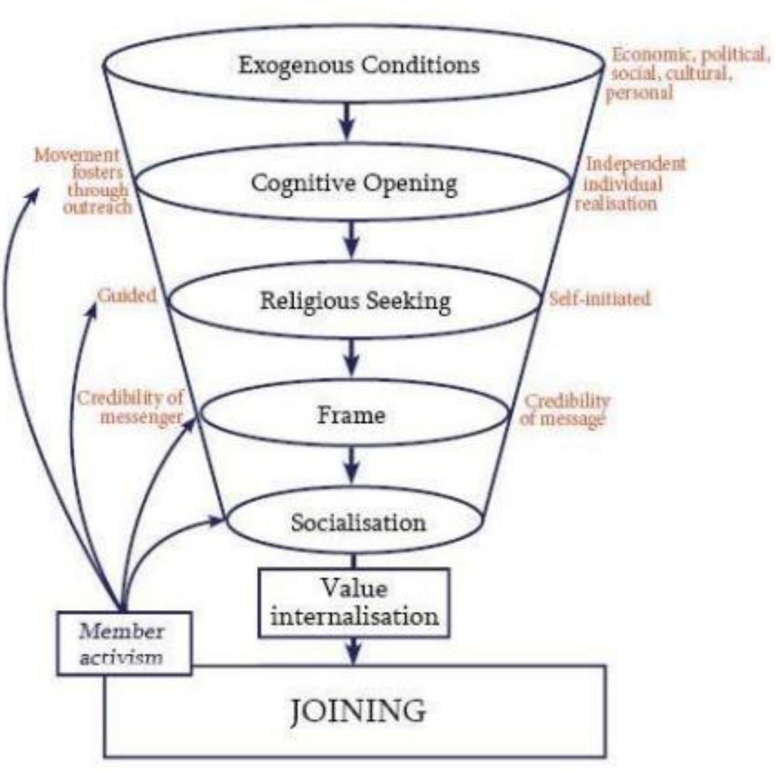


Figure 2.4. Moghaddam's (2009) staircase to terrorism system.

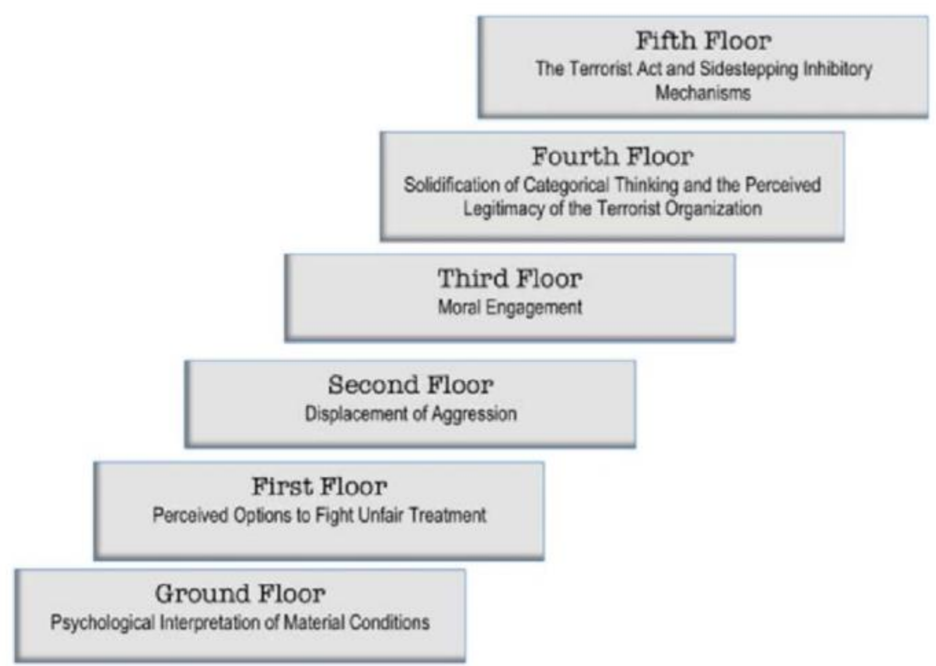


Figure 2.5. McCants et al Ideology Atlas.

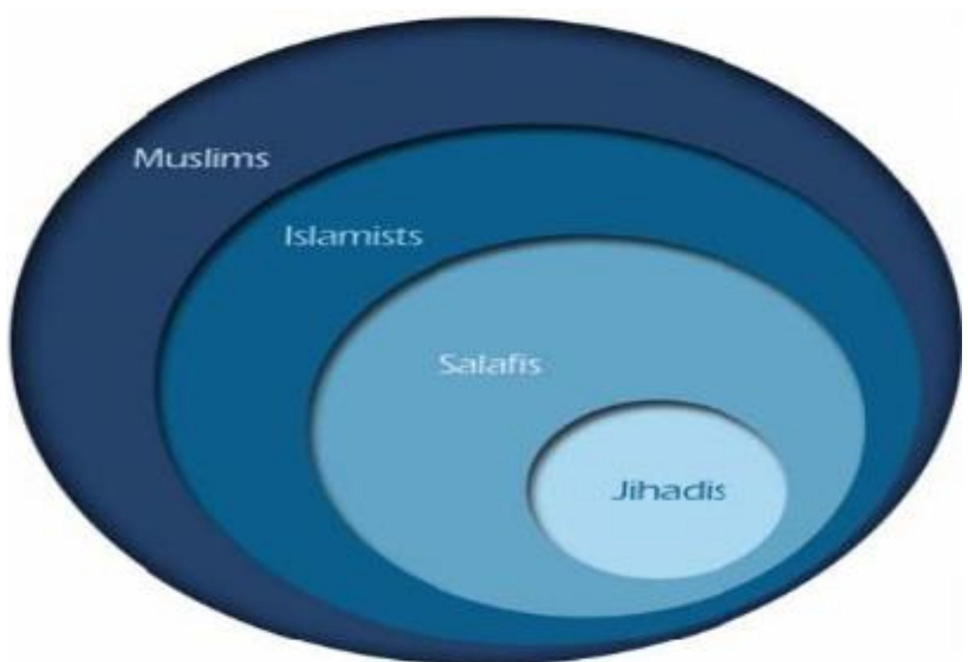


Figure 2.6. Baker's vacuum radar

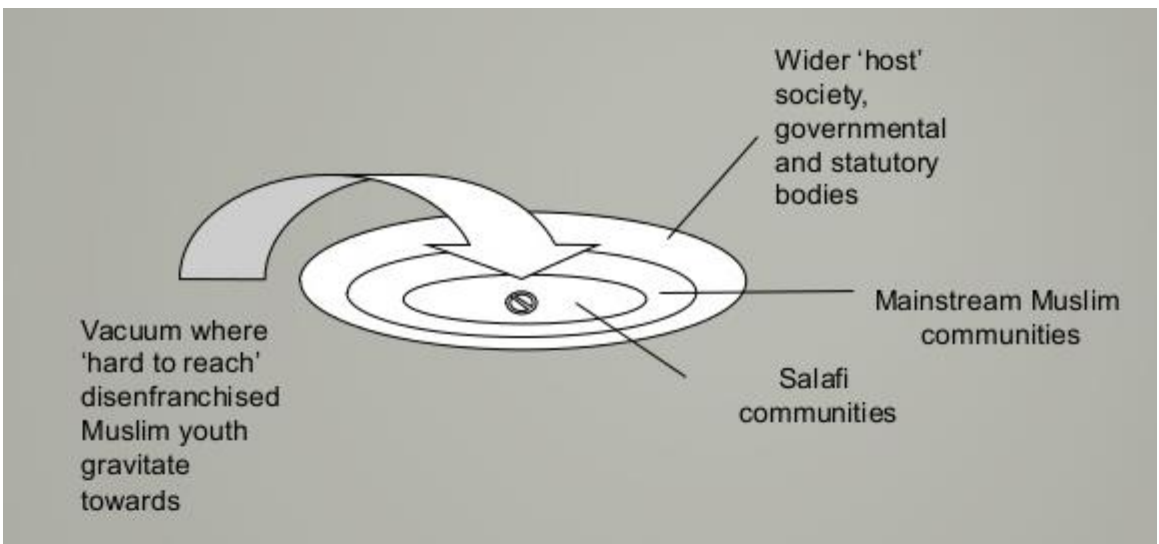


Figure 2.7. Baker's positioning of Muslims and grassroots initiatives funnel model.

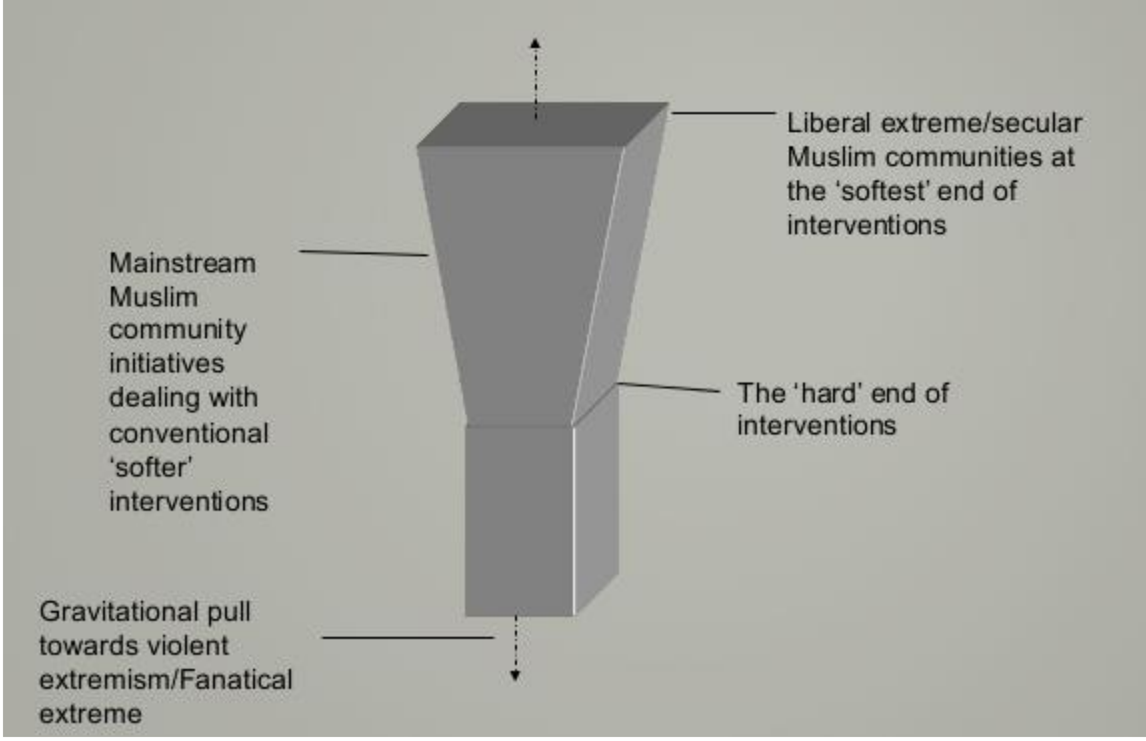


Figure 2.8. Baker's cycle of the cognitive process.

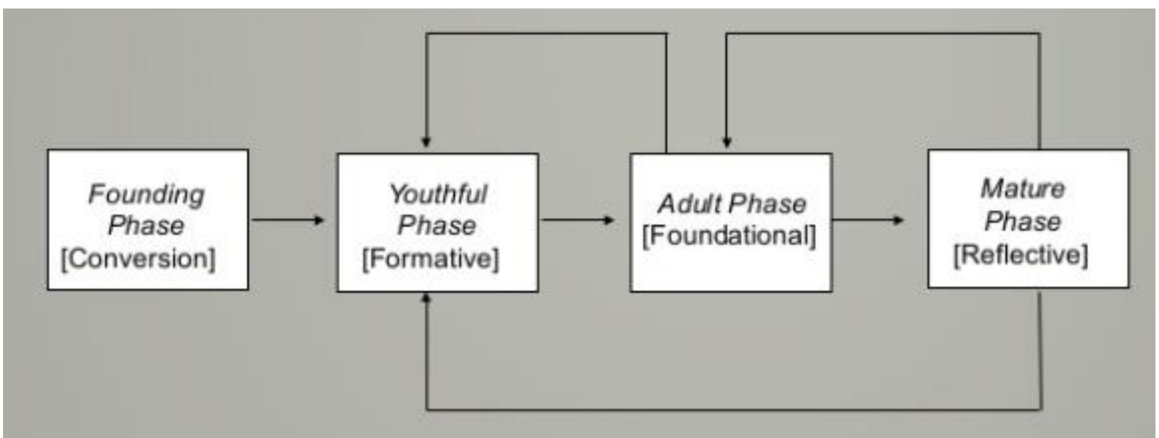


Figure 2.9. Baker's continuum of understanding model.

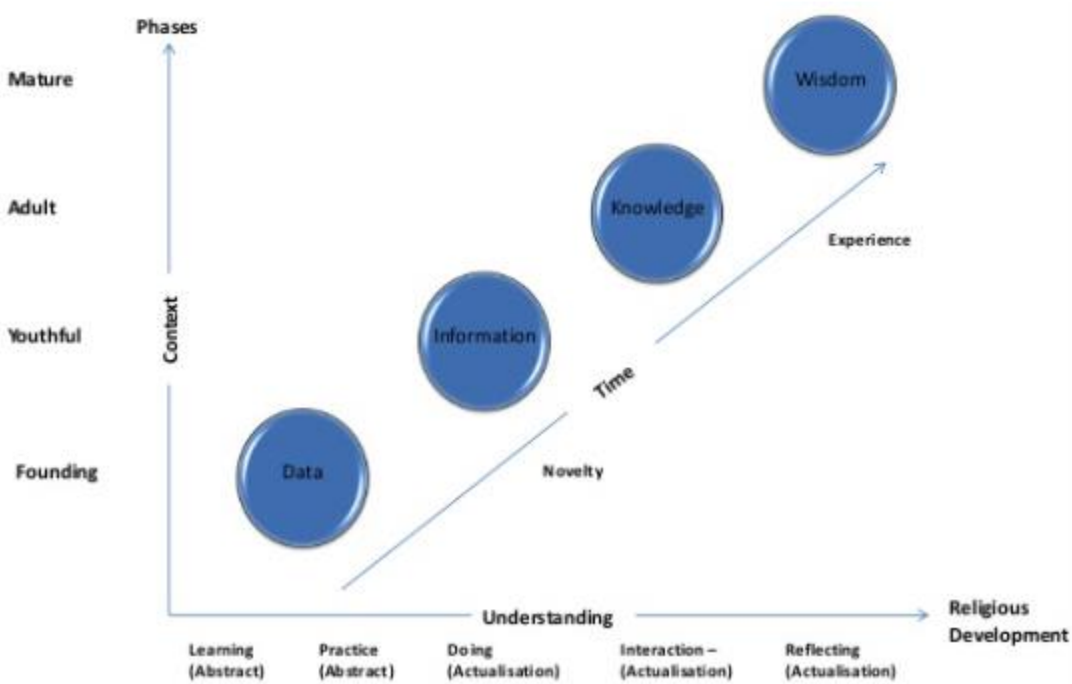
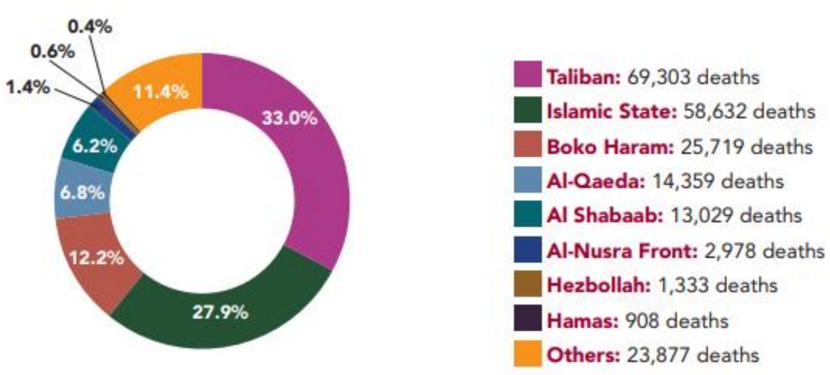


Figure 2.10. Deadliest terror groups in the world.

DEADLIEST TERRORIST GROUPS IN THE WORLD

As a% of the number of victims of attacks worldwide between 1979 and May 2021



Main targets	Number of attacks
Military	15,230
Civilians	12,021
Police	8,772
Government	3,495
Business	1,872
Terrorist groups and militias	1,243
Unknown	1,147
Religious institutions	993
Educational institutions	776
Transportation	657
Diplomacy	447
Journalists and Media	328

TYPE OF ATTACKS

39.9%
32.1%
8.9%
5.9%
Explosions (19,189)
Armed assaults (15,396)
Hostage takings/ Kidnappings (4,281)
Assassinations (2,838)

Figure 2.11. The 81 countries affected by Islamist Terrorism (1979 – May 2021).

The 81 countries affected by Islamist terrorism in the world (1979-May 2021)

Country	Number of attacks	Number of deaths	Average number of deaths per attack
Afghanistan	15,874	66,662	4.2
Iraq	7,469	42,790	5.7
Somalia	5,265	11,887	2.3
Nigeria	2,938	21,171	7.2
Pakistan	2,299	10,456	4.5
Syria	1,654	15,247	9.2
Algeria	1,386	4,790	3.5
Yemen	1,289	4,861	3.8
Egypt	1,211	3,315	2.7
Philippines	1,163	1,905	1.6
India	898	2,683	3.0
Libya	736	1,517	2.1
Cameroon	675	2,857	4.2
Kenya	576	1,432	2.5
Lebanon	514	1,107	2.2
Israel	510	793	1.6
Mali	418	1,514	3.6
Niger	377	2,530	6.7
West Bank and the Gaza strip	338	474	1.4
Thailand	327	173	0.5
Burkina Faso	299	864	2.9
Mozambique	286	1,027	3.6
Bangladesh	198	258	1.3
Democratic Republic of Congo	172	847	4.9
Indonesia	141	427	3.0
Turkey	116	584	5.0
Iran	111	336	3.0
Russia	85	844	9.9
Chad	83	973	11.7
France	82	332	4.0
Tunisia	74	280	3.8
Saudi Arabia	66	324	4.9
United States	58	3,121	53.8
Malaysia	31	13	0.4
United Kingdom	27	110	4.1
Germany	22	19	0.9
Kuwait	19	44	2.3
Jordan	18	97	5.4
Spain	16	232	14.5
Morocco	15	73	4.9
Bahrain	15	6	0.4
Tajikistan	13	91	7.0
Belgium	13	50	3.8
Mauritania	12	43	3.6
Tanzania	12	25	2.1
Ethiopia	10	120	12.0
Canada	10	9	0.9
Sri Lanka	9	266	29.6
Australia	9	11	1.2
South Africa	9	4	0.4
Cyprus	8	1	0.1
China	6	107	17.8
Uganda	6	77	12.8
Myanmar	6	29	4.8
Uzbekistan	5	10	2.0
Denmark	5	4	0.8
Sudan	4	24	6.0
Sweden	4	5	1.3
Austria	4	7	1.8
Italy	4	2	0.5
Kyrgyzstan	4	2	0.5
Argentina	3	115	38.3
Kazakhstan	3	1	0.3
Norway	3	0	0.0
South Sudan	2	84	42.0
Ivory Coast	2	37	18.5
Greece	2	11	5.5
Netherlands	2	4	2.0
United Arab Emirates	2	0	0.0
Bulgaria	1	7	7.0
Djibouti	1	5	5.0
Turkmenistan	1	3	3.0
Finland	1	2	2.0
Qatar	1	2	2.0
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1	1	1.0
Croatia	1	1	1.0
Georgia	1	1	1.0
Nepal	1	1	1.0
Switzerland	1	1	1.0
Azerbaijan	1	0	0.0
Benin	1	0	0.0

Figure 4.1. Demographic of individuals mostly being radicalised today.

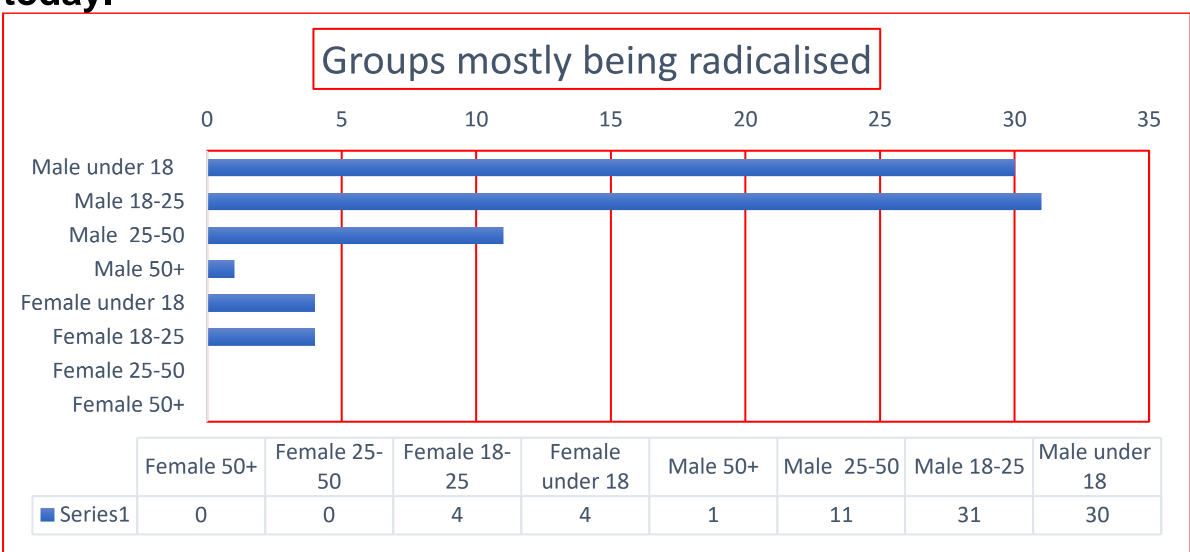


Figure 4.2. Prominence of Prison radicalisation.

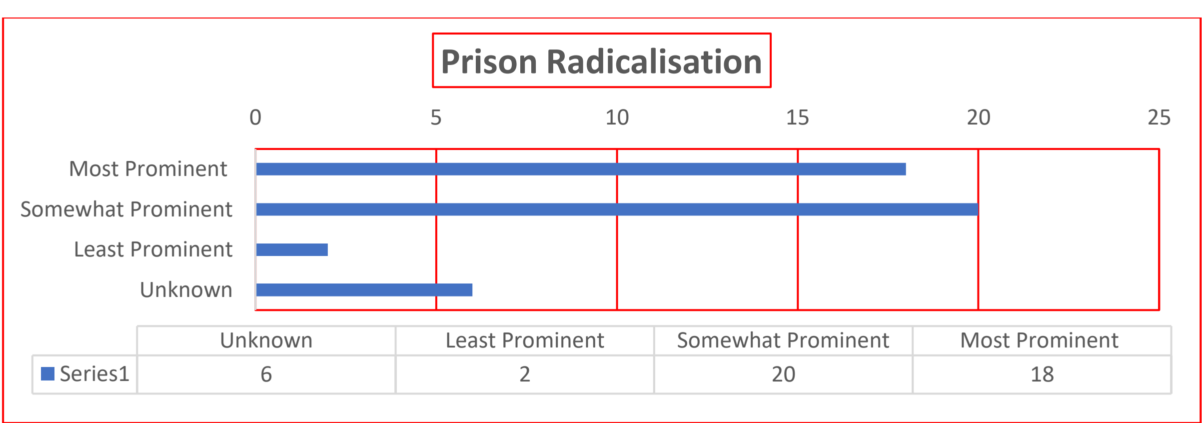
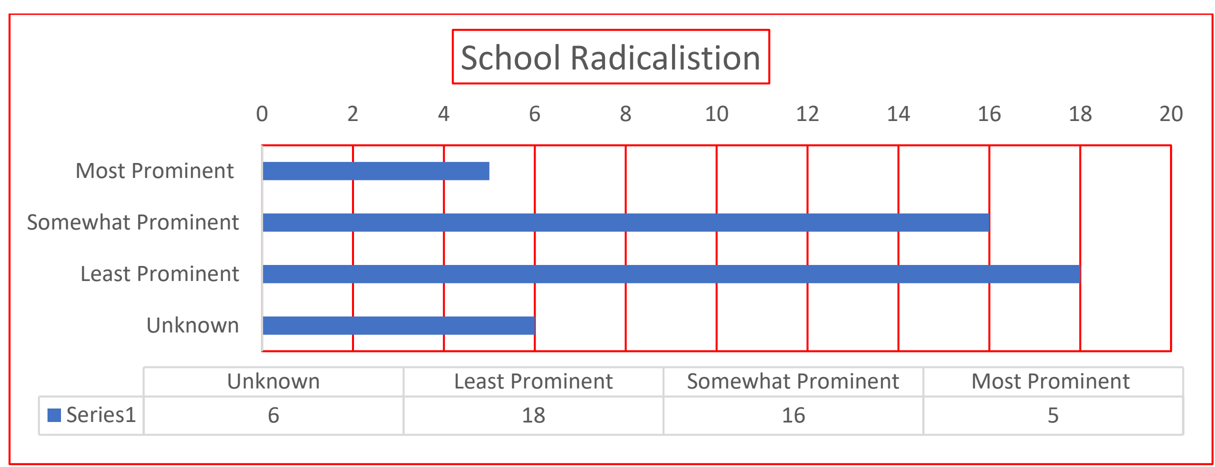


Figure 4.3. Table showing all answers in each category comparatively.

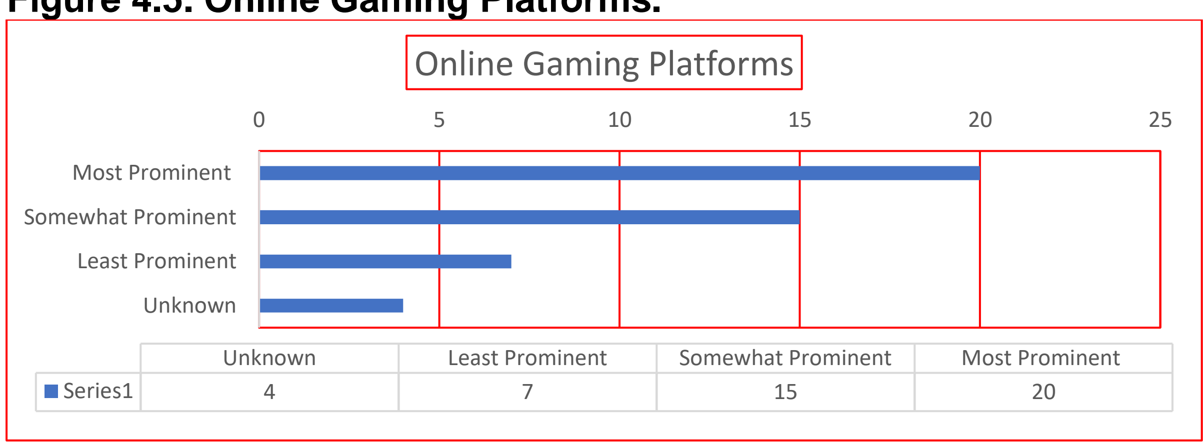
Locations	Most prominent	Somewhat prominent	Least prominent	Unknown
Schools	5 (11.1%)	16 (35.6%)	18 (40%)	6 (13.3%)
Prisons	18 (39.1%)	20 (43.5)	2 (4.3%)	6 (13%)
Mosques	2 (4.3%)	15 (32.6%)	13 (28.3%)	16 (34.8%)
Pop-up Mosques	3 (6.7%)	8 (17.8%)	8 (17.8%)	26 (57.8%)
Prayer Groups	0 (0%)	7 (15.6%)	15 (33.3%)	23 (51.1%)
Dawah Stalls	1 (2.2%)	13 (28.9%)	11 (24.4%)	20 (44.4%)
Clubs (including social, sport, youth)	2 (4.3%)	6 (13%)	17 (37%)	21 (45.7%)
Social Gatherings (weddings, funerals, births, religious festivals etc.)	0 (0%)	2 (4.3%)	20 (43.5%)	24 (52.2%)
People's Homes (familial influence)	9 (19.6%)	20 (43.5%)	7 (15.2%)	10 (21.7%)
Specific towns	4 (8.7%)	17 (37%)	10 (21.7%)	15 (32.6%)

Figure 4.4. Prominence of School radicalisation.



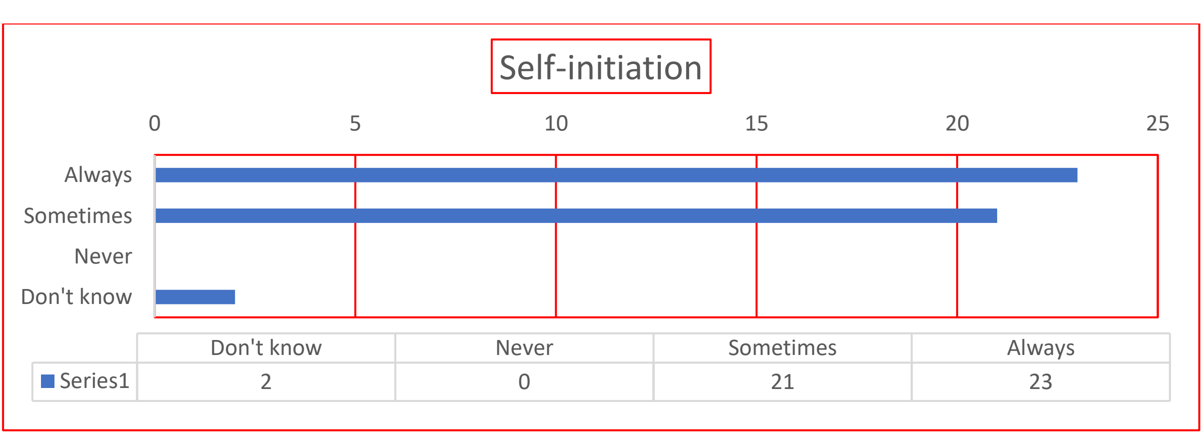
	Unknown	Least Prominent	Somewhat Prominent	Most Prominent
Series1	6	18	16	5

Figure 4.5. Online Gaming Platforms.



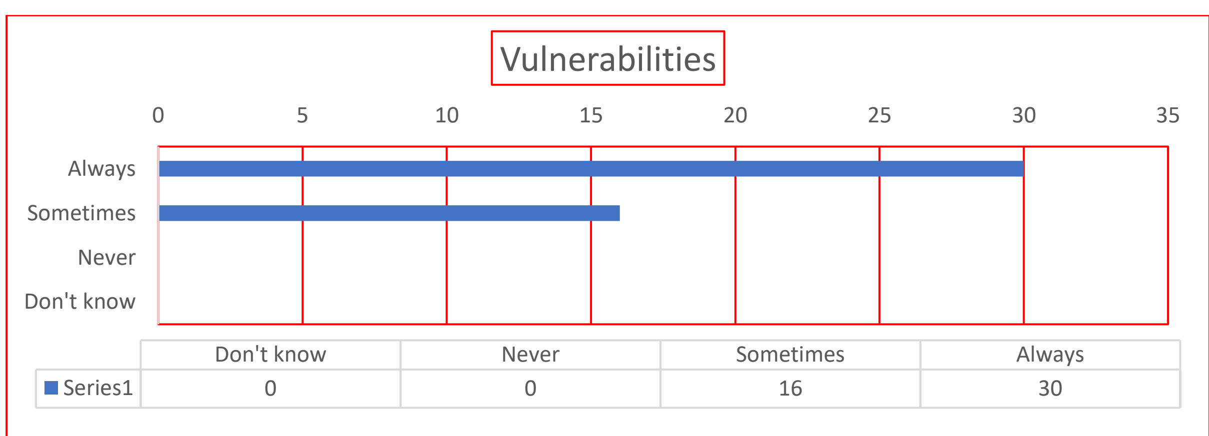
	Unknown	Least Prominent	Somewhat Prominent	Most Prominent
Series1	4	7	15	20

Figure 4.6. 'Self-initiation' personal complex needs issue or grievance narrative.



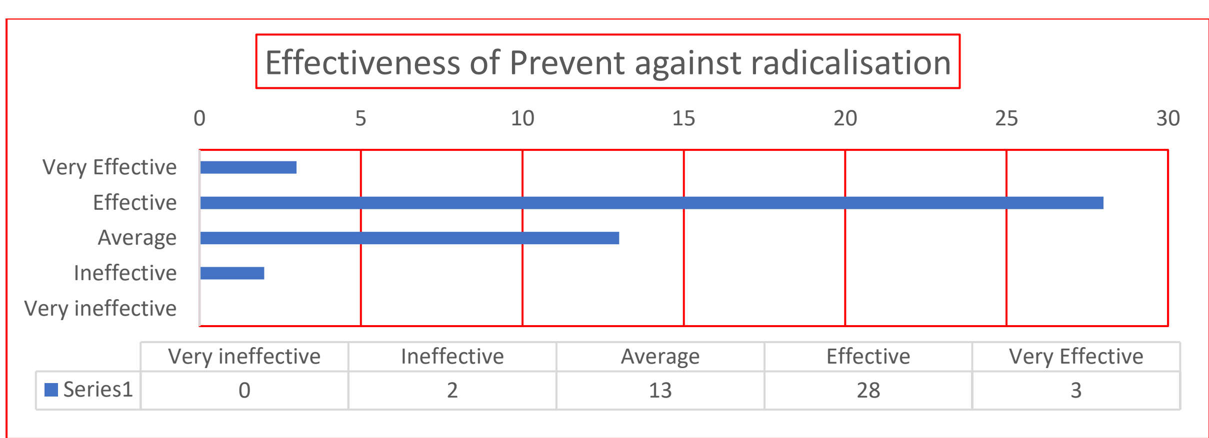
	Don't know	Never	Sometimes	Always
Series1	2	0	21	23

Figure 4.7. Vulnerabilities (Identifying and exploiting personal negative societal difficulties/status/struggles).



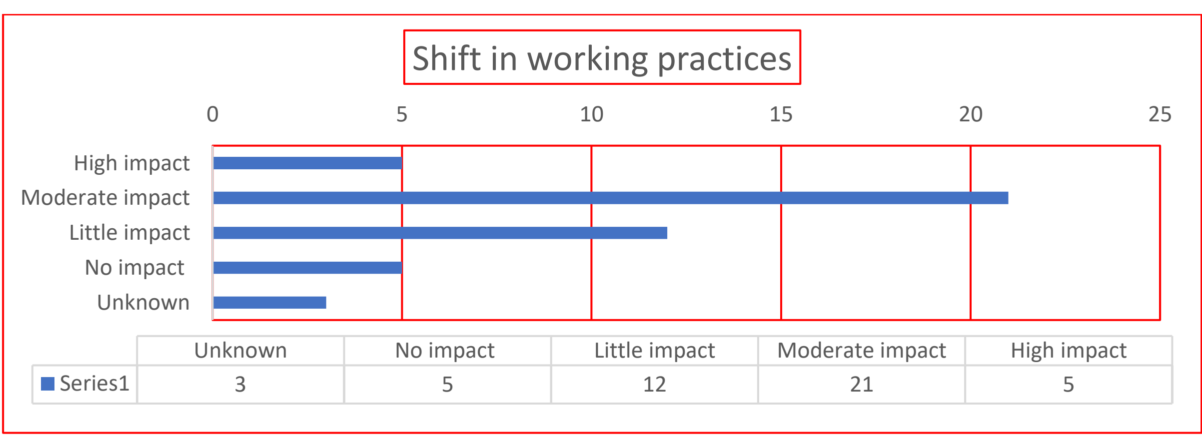
	Don't know	Never	Sometimes	Always
Series1	0	0	16	30

Figure 5.1. The effectiveness of Prevent against radicalisation.



	Very ineffective	Ineffective	Average	Effective	Very Effective
Series1	0	2	13	28	3

Figure 5.2. Shift in working practices.



	Unknown	No impact	Little impact	Moderate impact	High impact
Series1	3	5	12	21	5

Figure 5.3. Political Influences.

Political influences

	Unknown	No impact	Little impact	Moderate impact	High impact
Series1	2	1	5	24	12

Appendix 3: Ethics background information

TITLE: Islamist Extremism – a contemporary insight into the radicalisation process and the effectiveness of Prevent intervention

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Daniel Blanchfield. Please refer to our Research Privacy Notice for more information on how we will use and store your personal data.

Background

The aim of the study is to provide a contemporary insight into Islamist Extremism, specifically around the radicalisation process and the effectiveness of Prevent from a policing perspective. Society in general and social behaviours have evolved significantly in recent times and the recent global pandemic has likely added a further dimension to this issue given the intrusive restrictions placed upon the people and how they conduct their lives. Up-to-date research in this area will identify new key trends as the population have been forced to move towards an increased online lifestyle. As traditional methods of radicalisation become restrictive, it is anticipated that new innovative approaches will emerge in terms of rhetoric, the platforms being used to radicalise and the police response to combatting new trends in radicalisation. Accessing the insights, experiences and perspectives of policing practitioners working in the Prevent space will allow for a modern evaluation from the frontline, creating greater awareness so that processes can be further developed for the future. This research has been funded solely by the Metropolitan Police.

What will you be required to do?

You will be asked to complete a short survey consisting of 18 closed questions, requiring a yes or no response or to select the most suitable option from a list. 10 will be open text questions, where the participants are encouraged to provide insight in terms of what new trends they have witnessed and where new suggestions can be made that may improve effectiveness in the response from a policing perspective. All responses will be confidential and anonymous.

To participate in this research you must:

- Be a police officer or member of police staff working within the Counter Terrorism command.
- Have performed a role within Prevent

Feedback and dissemination of results

You will be notified when the thesis has been completed and received examiner feedback. Feedback can be provided on request following notification, and this may include a summary of findings and a link to where the thesis is accessible. This research will form part of a MA thesis and will be published in the CCCU library, and form the basis of a conference poster and journal article.

Data storage and confidentiality

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the GDPR and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by the research team, consisting of Daniel Blanchfield, Erika Brady and Sarah Lieberman. A unique participant number will be created for participants to be used rather than their names. Although summary findings and anonymised quotations will be used, specific accounts will not be attributed to any individual in accordance with the consent agreement below. Participation is voluntary.

Personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)), such as name, rank, current position, length of service, service in relevant role will be identified as part of the recruitment process however will not be published. The processing of information is necessary to perform the research for scientific purposes. These factors are imperative to the research, as analysis may lead to conclusions that can assist with police policy and procedure. Only the researcher will be able to access the data from within the Metropolitan Police in its raw form as well as the researcher's supervisor and examiner from CCCU. Data will not be shared with any third parties. The data will not be stored for longer than is needed for the research project and will be destroyed/deleted in accordance with University Confidential Waste Policy

The legal basis for processing personal data is under public interest. If you would like to obtain further information related to how your personal data is processed for this project please contact Daniel Blanchfield at d.blanchfield411@canterbury.ac.uk. You can read further information regarding how the University processes your personal data for research purposes at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact Daniel Blanchfield. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to

withdraw at any time before January 1st 2023 without having to give a reason. You may read further information on your rights relating to your personal data at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Any questions?

Please contact:

Researcher: Daniel Blanchfield from the School of Law, Policing and Social Sciences via email d.blanchfield411@@canterbury.ac.uk.

Supervisor: Erika Brady, Lecturer in Policing, School of law, Policing and Social Sciences, Canterbury Christ Church University, Glebe House, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU via email Erika.brady@canterbury.ac.uk.

Appendix 4: Ethics health and safety risk assessment form.

DATE of Assessment:	23 / 02 / 2022	RD ETHICS APPLICATION REFERENCE No:	ETH2122-0167	Canterbury Christ Church University **RESEARCH** **HEALTH AND SAFETY - RISK ASSESSMENT**
Assessed by :		SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT:	School of Law, Policing and Social Sciences	
NATURE OF ACTIVITY:	Radicalisation and De-radicalisation of Islamist Extremists. data collection via survey with serving Metropolitan Police Officers as participants.		DATE OF ACTIVITY: 30/05/2022-15/08/2022	
LOCATION:	Remote	NEXT H&S RISK REVIEW DATE:	18/07/2022	
REVIEWED BY*: (for students only)	Prof Steve Tong	REVIEW DATE*: (for students only)	23.02.22	
APPROVED BY**:	Dr Dominic Wood, HoS LPSS	APPROVAL DATE:	23.02.22	

*For students: Your Academic Supervisor should review this form with you before it is sent for approval

**Heads of School/Departments are ultimately responsible for Health and Safety Risk Assessments within their area, however, they may nominate senior members of staff (such as a manager or senior lecturer) who have undertaken the University Health & Safety Risk Assessment training to support them by approving risk assessments under their control.

Hazard/Risk	Persons at Risk & Nature of harm	Current Control Measures	Risk Rating (High /Medium /Low)	Additional Control Measures Required	Revised Risk Rating (High/ Medium /Low)	Action by who	Action by when	Date action complete
A hazard is anything that **may** cause physical or mental harm, e.g. lone working, travel (domestic and international), sensitive research topic etc.	State here who is at risk – this could be an individual or a group of people and the type of harm they are at risk of.	Describe the measure(s) that you have in place to reduce or remove the risk of the hazard occurring.	See table below.	Describe any other measure(s) that could be applied to further reduce or remove the risk of the hazard occurring. Additional measures are mandatory should the risk outcome be rated as medium or high.	See table below.	Who is responsible for the management of this risk	Date control measures need to be implemented by.	This should be completed once the risk has been managed.
For example: *Lone travel in unfamiliar area*	*Researcher personal safety*	• *Pre plan the route to be taken and print off a local map*	*Low*	• *Arrange a travel companion*	*Low*	*Researcher*	*Date(s) of research activity*	*After completion*

Risk rating	Likelihood of Harm				
Severity	1 Very unlikely	2 Unlikely	3 - 50 / 50 likelihood	4 - Likely	5 - Very likely / certainty
1 - Minor injury or illness	Low	Low	Low	Low	Medium
2- Moderate injury or illness	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High
3- "3 day injury" or illness	Low	Medium	Medium	High	High
4- Major injury or illness	Low	Medium	High	High	High
5- Fatality	Medium	High	High	High	High

Risk rating	Action to follow
Low	No additional actions. Ensure controls in place are maintained.
Medium	Improve risk reduction measures within specified timescale.
High	Stop or restrict activity and make appropriate improvements immediately

Hazard/Risk	Persons at Risk & Nature of harm	Current Control Measures	Risk Rating (High /Medium /Low)	Additional Control Measures Required	Revised Risk Rating (High/ Medium /Low)	Action by who	Action by when	Date action complete
		• *Inform a colleague and/or supervisor of planned travel itinerary* • *Inform a colleague and/or supervisor 1) when arrive at planned destination and 2) when the days activities have been safely completed* • *Arrange the activities to avoid travelling in the dark*					*involving lone travel*	*of lone travel*
Disclosure of sensitive material	Organisation, operations and others	• Obtain authority from both CCCU and the Met police prior to any publishing	Low	• Participants to be informed not to disclose any information that to their knowledge may undermine any ongoing or existing operations	Low	Researcher	TBA	Prior to survey taking place
Disclosing standards or behaviour falling below those expected by College of Policing Code of Ethics.	Participant or others	• Notify Professional Standards Department for relevant organisation and person's supervisor. • Notify tutor of breach of professional standards • Consult with supervisor before any decision regarding disclosure are made	Low	• Participants to be informed prior to survey that the College of Policing Code of Ethics will be used to determine whether professional standards have been breached and that researcher has a duty to report any breach of professional standards of behaviour in event of a disclosure.	Low	Researcher	TBA	Prior to survey taking place
Storage of completed surveys	All participants	Surveys will be conducted online via the secure internal met server, using registered Met Police email addresses. Researcher will be recording and securely storing all responses and it will not be accessed by third parties. The data will uploaded immediately onto the University secure computer systems or encrypted USB's and deleted from Met servers.	Low	None	Low		TBA	After surveys are completed
Control of Personal Data	All participants	Any data relating to this research project which is required to be stored, will be stored either on password protected devices (i.e. laptop, computer or encrypted memory stick). No research data will be stored on Police devices. Data will be disposed of in keeping with CCCU confidential waste policy.	Low	Encrypted memory stick has been changed from factory settings meaning pass code cannot be easily guessed.	Low		TBA	After surveys are complete
Confidential waste	Researcher	The data will not be stored for longer than is needed for the research project and will be destroyed/deleted in accordance with University Confidential Waste Policy.	Low	None	Low		TBA	After project is complete

Hazard/Risk	Persons at Risk & Nature of harm	Current Control Measures	Risk Rating (High /Medium /Low)	Additional Control Measures Required	Revised Risk Rating (High/ Medium /Low)	Action by who	Action by when	Date action complete

All members of staff and where relevant students affected by this risk assessment are to sign and date to confirm they have read and understood it and will abide by it.

NAME	SIGNATURE	DATE
Daniel Blanchfield	[signature]	23/02/2022
Prof Steve Tong	[signature]	23.02.22
Dr Erika Brady	[signature]	04/03/2022

GUIDANCE NOTES:

1. This risk assessment form is designed to capture health and safety risks **only**.
2. Research projects will potentially carry certain risks to the physical or mental health and safety of the researcher(s), participants and the general public. Your risk assessment should consider what in your project might cause harm, how it may cause harm and the people who might be affected. It should take into account any control measures which are already in place and identify what, if any, further controls are required.
3. The potential health and safety hazards in research are many and varied. Each research project is different but included in the list below are suggestions for some things that you may wish to consider. Please note that this is by no means an exhaustive list and you should review the available guidance materials (refer to point 6 below) and consider your own project carefully to determine the risks and appropriate control measures:

Risk area	**Potential hazards to consider**
International travel	• Researcher safety due to lone travel in an unfamiliar location • Loss of travel documents/money • Potential of extreme weather due to season e.g. monsoon/cyclones
Domestic travel	• Lone travel on public transport • Driving long distances
Lone working	• Potential emotional/physical harm to researcher from participants • Researcher fatigue due to intense research schedule over multiple locations
Research location/Fieldwork	• Site specific safety • Access to emergency services/health care due to remote location
Mental overload/Stress	• Harm to researcher wellbeing from overworking due to intense research schedule
Emotional harm/hurt	• Distress to participants due sensitive research topic • Distress to researcher due to participant/general public negative reactions

4. You should be able to show from your risk assessment that:
   - a proper check was made
   - all people who might be affected were considered
   - all significant risks have been assessed
   - the precautions/control measures are reasonable
   - the remaining risk is low
5. You **do not** need to include insignificant risks. You **do not** need to include risks from everyday life unless your research activities increase the risk.
6. For staff: Further guidance on Health and Safety Risk assessments can be found at the links below:
   a. University web pages - these include example risk assessment forms e.g. Travel
   b. Responsible research - Managing health and safety in research: guidance for the not-for-profit sector – this explores all aspects of Health & Safety within a range of research projects and includes case studies – for example 'Case Study 1 – A risk assessment of a social science research project' (p.18-19).
7. For students: Please seek further advice from your supervisor who will be able to access the guidance above.

Appendix 5: Ethics data sharing agreement form.

Information agreement and data protection statement between Daniel Blanchfield (MSc by Research Student, Canterbury Centre for Policing Research, Canterbury Christ Church University) and the Metropolitan Police Service.

The purpose of this document is to outline the roles and responsibilities of parties involved in this research and to outline the data protection and data security arrangements to protect the personal data of those participating in research with Canterbury Christ Church University.

Project Title:

Islamist Extremism – a contemporary insight into the radicalisation process and the effectiveness of Prevent intervention

Principle Researcher:

Daniel Blanchfield

Research Supervisor(s):

Dr Erika Brady
Professor Steve Tong

Data Subjects:

Police Officers and Police Staff from Metropolitan Police Service attached to the Counter Terrorism Command.

Data Controller:

Canterbury Christ Church University

Data Processor:

Daniel Blanchfield

Data Protection Officer:

Robert Melville
Assistant University Secretary
Canterbury Christ Church University
Rochester House
St George's Place
Canterbury
CT1 1UT

E-mail: dp.officer@canterbury.ac.uk
Telephone: 01227 767700

Legal Basis of data collection:

Legitimate Interest and consent of participants

Methodology:

Background

The aim of the study is to provide a contemporary insight into Islamist Extremism, specifically around the radicalisation process and the effectiveness of Prevent from a policing perspective. Society in general and social behaviours have evolved significantly in recent times and the recent global pandemic has likely added a further dimension to this issue given the intrusive restrictions placed upon the people and how they conduct their lives. Up-to-date research in this area will identify new key trends as the population have been forced to move towards an increased online lifestyle. As traditional methods of radicalisation become restrictive, it is anticipated that new innovative approaches will emerge in terms of rhetoric, the platforms being used to radicalise and the police response to combatting new trends in radicalisation. Accessing the insights, experiences and perspectives of policing practitioners working in the Prevent space will allow for a modern evaluation from the frontline, creating greater awareness so that processes can be further developed for the future. This research has been funded solely by the Metropolitan Police.

Participants

All participants will be adults over 18 and will be Police Officers and Police Staff within the Counter Terrorism Command Unit (CTCU). Approximately 100 candidates will be asked to complete a short survey consisting of 28 questions. Of those questions 18 will be closed, requiring a yes or no response or to select the most suitable option from a list. 10 will be open text questions, where the participants are encouraged to provide meaningful insight in terms of what new trends they have witnessed and where new suggestions can be made that may improve effectiveness from a policing perspective. All responses will be confidential and anonymous.

Data

The information being requested includes the personal practitioner perspectives of radicalisation based on the participants' experience within the CTCU. Views surrounding the types of individuals that are being radicalised, where and how the recruitment is taking place, new propaganda being used as motivation and by which groups will be contained within the collected data. Additionally, the police perspective as to what specific processes and intervention strategies have worked well and what more could be done will be explored.

Details of Data Security and Data Handling to ensure GDPR Compliance:

- Informed consent will be gained from all participants via an information sheet which participants can retain as well as the signed consent forms. No person will be allowed to participate in the survey unless they have signed and returned the consent form via e mail.
- Data Processor(s) is familiar with university GDPR policies.
- Force will be provided with details of Data Protection Policies on request

- CCCU will be the only agency outside of the Metropolitan Police to receive the information, and only the staff from within CCCU's School of Law, Policing & Social sciences actively involved in the research shall have access to the information.
- Information received will be stored directly onto the secure CCCU system and only cleansed data exported. No personal details will be gathered in relation to crime reports. If data is downloaded it will be immediately uploaded to the secure CCCU computer system, without the need for it to be in physical form.
- The data will not be stored for longer than is needed for the research project and will be destroyed/deleted in accordance with University Confidential Waste Policy.
- If electronic data needs to be physically transported between locations an encrypted USB stick will be used. This is unlikely to occur.
- Consent forms will be coded to allow any data subject to withdraw their data at any time. Consent forms will be uploaded onto the secure computer system at CCCU, but in a separate folder to the coded materials and the key code (GDPR requirement)
- An auditable log will be kept of data access and processing.
- University data protection policies will be strictly complied with.

Signed – Principle Researcher

Name: Daniel Blanchfield
Date: 25/02/2022

Appendix 6: Survey

Contemporary insight into Islamist Extremism and Prevent

Page 1: Introduction and background

TITLE: Islamist Extremism – a contemporary insight into the radicalisation process and the effectiveness of 'Prevent' intervention

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by Daniel Blanchfield. Please refer to our Research Privacy Notice for more information on how we will use and store your personal data.

Background

The aim of the study is to provide a contemporary insight into Islamist Extremism, specifically around the grooming/radicalisation process and the effectiveness of 'Prevent' from a policing perspective. Society in general and social behaviours have evolved significantly and the recent global pandemic has likely added a further dimension to this issue given the intrusive restrictions placed upon the people and how they conduct their lives. Up-to-date research in this field will identify new key trends as traditional methods of radicalisation may have become restrictive. It is anticipated that new innovative approaches will emerge in terms of rhetoric, the platforms being used to radicalise and the police response to combatting such radicalisation. Accessing the insights, experiences and perspectives of policing practitioners working in the Prevent space will allow for a modern evaluation from the frontline, creating greater awareness so that

processes can be further developed for the future. This research has been funded by the Metropolitan Police and Canterbury Christchurch University.

What will you be required to do?

You will be asked to complete a short survey consisting of 17 closed questions, requiring a yes or no response or to select the most suitable option from a list. A further 11 questions will be open text questions, where you are encouraged to provide insight in terms of what new trends you have witnessed and where new suggestions can be made that may improve effectiveness in the response from a policing perspective. All responses will be confidential and anonymous.

While participation in this research is voluntary, your views and experiences are an essential part of the project. With only a limited number of officers involved in this field across the UK, the more responses received the more impactful the research will be. As these surveys are a central part of the data on which the research will be based, your participation will have a particularly high impact on the outcome of the research. The survey should take no more than 20 minutes, and your time is greatly appreciated.

To participate in this research you must:

- Be a police officer or member of police staff working within the Counter Terrorism command.
- Have performed a role within 'Prevent'

Feedback and dissemination of results

You will be notified when the thesis has been completed. Following this notification, you are welcome to request feedback which may be provided to you in the form of a summary of the findings or link to the online location of the thesis. This research will form the basis of an MA thesis and will be published in the CCCU library. It is intended that this research will form the basis of a conference poster and journal article.

Data storage and confidentiality

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the GDPR and the University's own data protection requirements. Data can only be accessed by the research team, consisting of Daniel Blanchfield, Erika Brady and Sarah Lieberman. A unique participant number will be created for participants to be used rather than their names. Although summary findings and anonymised quotations will be used, specific accounts will not be attributed to any individual in accordance with the consent agreement below. Participation is voluntary.

Personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)), such as name, rank, current position, length of service, service in relevant role will be identified as part of the recruitment process however will not be published. The processing of information is necessary to perform the research for scientific purposes. These factors are imperative to the research, as analysis may lead to conclusions that can assist with police policy and procedure. Only the researcher will be able to access the data from within the Metropolitan Police in its raw form as well as the researcher's supervisor and examiner from CCCU. Data will not be shared with any third parties. The data will not be stored for longer than is needed for the research project and will be destroyed/deleted in accordance with University Confidential Waste Policy

The legal basis for processing personal data is under public interest. If you would like to obtain further information related to how your personal data is processed for this project please contact Daniel Blanchfield at d.blanchfield411@canterbury.ac.uk. You can read further information regarding how the University processes your personal data for research purposes at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Deciding whether to participate

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact Daniel Blanchfield. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time before January 1st 2023 without having to give a reason. You may read further information on your rights relating to your personal data at the following link: Research Privacy Notice - https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/university-solicitors-office/data-protection/privacy-notices/privacy-notices.aspx

Any questions?

Please contact:

Researcher: Daniel Blanchfield from the School of Law, Policing and Social Sciences via email d.blanchfield411@@canterbury.ac.uk.

Supervisor: Erika Brady, Lecturer in Policing, School of law, Policing and Social Sciences, Canterbury Christ Church University, Glebe House, North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU via email Erika.brady@canterbury.ac.uk.

1. I consent to participate in this survey. * *Required*

- Yes
- No

Page 2: Demographic Information

2. Please confirm what gender you identify as? ✱ *Required*

- Male
- Female
- Non-Binary
- Trans-Gender
- Other
- Prefer not to say

3. Please can you confirm your age.

4. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity. ✱ *Required*

- White
- Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Mixed/Multiple Ethnic groups
- Middle Eastern
- Asian/Asian British
- Other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

5. Which religion do you follow? ✱ *Required*

- Christianity
- Islam
- Buddhism
- Agnostic
- Atheist
- Other
- Prefer not to say

Page 3: Context regarding your role in Prevent

6. Please select the regional Counter Terrorism Unit which predominately relates to the area you cover. ✱ *Required*

- London, Counter Terrorism Command (SO15) (Metropolitan Police, City of London Police)
- Scotland (Police Scotland)
- North East (West Yorkshire West Yorkshire, Cleveland, Durham, Humberside, Northumbria, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire)
- North West (Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Cumbria, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside)
- Wales (South Wales, Dyfed Powys, Gwent, North Wales)
- West Midlands (West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia)
- South West (Avon & Somerset, Devon & Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire)
- East Midlands (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire)
- Eastern (Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk)
- South East (Thames Valley, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey, Sussex)
- Northern Ireland (Police Service of Northern Ireland)
- CPTHQ Prevent

7. How many years' experience do you have within Prevent/Counter terrorism? ✱ *Required*

- 0-12 months
- 1-3 years
- 3-5 years
- 5-10 years
- +10 years

8. When did you last have a referral/interaction/interview/case involving Islamist extremist radicalisation? * *Required*

- 0-3 months
- 3-6 months
- 6-12 months
- 1-3 years
- 3+ years

9. Please confirm from where that referral originated. * *Required*

- Statutory partners
- Intelligence partners
- Public
- Police

Page 4: Your experience with radicalisation and understanding of the Islamic extremism threat

10. In your experience, which of the following demographics are mostly being radicalised today? You can select multiple options. * Required

- [ ] Male under 18
- [ ] Male 18-25
- [ ] Male 25-50
- [ ] Male 50
- [ ] Female under 18
- [ ] Female 18-25
- [ ] Female 25-50
- [ ] Female 50

11. Has this changed over time, in your view? * Required

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) I don't know

12. Please explain your answers to questions 10 and 11, including the experience your answers are based on.

13. Where do you see most radicalisation taking place? ✱ *Required*

- In Person
- Online

14. In terms of 'in-person' radicalisation, which of the following locations best describes where this happening? ✱ *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 1 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 10 answer(s) in any single column.

	Most prominent	Somewhat prominent	Least prominent	Unknown
Schools	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prisons	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mosques	☐	☐	☐	☐
Pop-up Mosques	☐	☐	☐	☐
Prayer Groups	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dawah Stalls	☐	☐	☐	☐
Clubs (including social, sport, youth)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Gatherings (weddings, funerals, births, religious festivals etc)	☐	☐	☐	☐
People's Homes (familial influence)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Specific towns	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. In terms of 'online' radicalisation, which of the following options best describes

where this is happening? ✱ *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 1 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 11 answer(s) in any single column.

	Most prominent	Somewhat prominent	Least prominent	Unknown
Social Media – Facebook	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Media – Twitter	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Media – Instagram	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Media – Tik Tok	☐	☐	☐	☐
Social Media - Other	☐	☐	☐	☐
Chat rooms	☐	☐	☐	☐
Websites	☐	☐	☐	☐
Apps	☐	☐	☐	☐
Various Online Gaming Platforms	☐	☐	☐	☐
Metaverse	☐	☐	☐	☐
Dark Web	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. From your experience, which of the following are most likely to have the most influence over vulnerable individuals and motivate them towards a path of radicalisation? ✱ *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 1 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 6 answer(s) in any single column.

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Don't know

Self Initiation (Personal complex needs issue or grievance narrative)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Influential Preachers (influential prominent figures Imams /freedom fighters)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Family (Parents and wider family)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Peers (Friends, school friends, colleagues)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Mentors (Teachers, line managers, social/support workers, social/sports club leaders)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Previously unknown character (Recent acquaintance/social media interaction or follower)	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. From your experience, which of the following options are most likely to be used to target vulnerable individuals and motivate them towards a path of radicalisation? * *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 1 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 3 answer(s) in any single column.

	Always	Sometimes	Never	Don't know
Vulnerabilities (Identifying and exploiting personal negative societal difficulties/status/struggles)	☐	☐	☐	☐

e

Propaganda (Publications, social media posts, videos of perceived global oppression/atrocities against Muslim people)	☐	☐	☐	☐
Verses of the Koran (Preaching misconstrued interpretations or readings)	☐	☐	☐	☐

18. Please expand on the previous answer to questions 16 and 17.

19. Which of the following Islamist Extremist entities pose the most significant current threat to UK national security in your experience. Please select one option. ✱ *Required*

Please select exactly 1 answer(s).

- ☐ Al Qaeda
- ☐ IS/ISIS
- ☐ Lone actors inspired by Islamist Groups
- ☐ Other

19.a. If you selected Other, please specify:

20. Why do you believe this to be the case?

21. In your opinion, is there anything else, not already mentioned in this section that you feel is particularly noteworthy with regards to the grooming and radicalisation process?

Page 5: UK's Response to Islamist Radicalisation

22. Given the information you have provided above, how effective is the Prevent strategy in combatting radicalisation? ✱ *Required*

- Very Effect
- Effective
- Average
- Ineffective
- Very Ineffective

23. Given the information you have provided above, how effective is the Prevent strategy in preventing terrorism related activity? ✱ *Required*

- Very Effect
- Effective
- Average
- Ineffective
- Very Ineffective

24. Please elaborate on your answer using relevant examples where possible.

25. Please describe how recent challenges (e.g. increased online activity, COVID restrictions, political activity, funds and the cost of living crisis) have impacted operations

from a policing perspective. ✱ *Required*

Please don't select more than 1 answer(s) per row.

Please select at least 1 answer(s).

Please don't select more than 8 answer(s) in any single column.

	High Impact	Moderate Impact	Little Impact	No Impact	Unknown
Shift in working practices	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Skills shortage	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Ability to Upskill	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Need to recruit externally (online specialists)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Political influences	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Over reporting/referring due to fear of repercussions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased case loads	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Lenience of referred individuals and subsequent treatments due to political pressures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

26. Please elaborate on your answers above. As guidance, you could reflect on issues such as barriers experienced, your involvement in and associated challenges of multiagency working, to what extent decision making is prejudiced by external political influences or anything else that provides context for the answers you have provided.

27. If, in your experience, you think that Prevent is more or less a successful counter radicalisation program, please describe how you think this success can be better communicated to the public.

28. If, in your experience, you think that Prevent is not a particularly successful counter radicalisation program, please describe how you think that its failings can be addressed.

29. Please feel free to add anything not already addressed that you feel would contribute to the understanding of Prevent and the radicalisation landscape in the UK at this time.

Page 6: Final page

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this survey. With such a small target demograpic your responses are vitally important and much appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Daniel Blanchfield at d.blanchfield411@canterbury.ac.uk or daniel.blanchfield@met.police.uk.

Appendix 7: Table of respondent details

Respondent Number	CT Command Region	Experience in Role	Last intervention
Respondent 1	East Midlands	1-3 years	0-3 months
Respondent 2	South West	5-10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 3	East Midlands	5-10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 4	London	3-5 years	0-3 months
Respondent 5	East Midlands	3-5 years	0-3 months
Respondent 6	East Midlands	1-3 years	0-3 months
Respondent 7	South West	1-3 years	0-3 months
Respondent 8	East Midlands	0-12 months	6-12 months
Respondent 9	East Midlands	1-3 years	1-3 years
Respondent 10	North West	1-3 years	3-6 months
Respondent 11	North West	0-12 months	0-3 months
Respondent 12	West Midlands	+10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 13	Scotland	1-3 years	0-3 months
Respondent 14	East Midlands	3-5 years	6-12 months
Respondent 15	Scotland	1-3 years	6-12 months
Respondent 16	South East	5-10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 17	North West	+10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 18	North East	+10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 19	North East	3-5 years	0-3 months
Respondent 20	North East	+10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 21	East Midlands	3-5 years	3-6 months
Respondent 22	North East	3-5 years	1-3 years
Respondent 23	North East	1-3 years	6-12 months
Respondent 24	South East	+10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 25	West Midlands	5-10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 26	South East	3-5 years	0-3 months
Respondent 27	East Midlands	5-10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 28	North East	1-3 years	3-6 months
Respondent 29	Eastern	3-5 years	0-3 months
Respondent 30	North East	3-5 years	1-3 years
Respondent 31	North East	3-5 years	0-3 months
Respondent 32	Eastern	1-3 years	6-12 months
Respondent 33	London	+10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 34	East Midlands	+10 years	0-3 months

Respondent 35	London	5-10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 36	North East	1-3 years	3-6 months
Respondent 37	West Midlands	3-5 years	3-6 months
Respondent 38	West Midlands	1-3 years	0-3 months
Respondent 39	North West	+10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 40	North West	1-3 years	0-3 months
Respondent 41	North West	5-10 years	0-3 months
Respondent 42	North West	0-12 months	3-6 months
Respondent 43	North West	3-5 years	6-12 months
Respondent 44	North West	3-5 years	0-3 months
Respondent 45	Eastern	1-3 years	6-12 months
Respondent 46	North West	5-10 years	6-12 months

Regional Key

East Midlands	Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire
West Midlands	West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, West Mercia
London	Counter Terrorism Command (SO15), Metropolitan Police, City of London Police
North West	Greater Manchester, Cheshire, Cumbria, Isle of Man, Lancashire, Merseyside
North East	West Yorkshire West Yorkshire, Cleveland, Durham, Humberside, Northumbria, North Yorkshire, South Yorkshire
Eastern	Bedfordshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Norfolk, Cambridgeshire, Suffolk
South West	Avon & Somerset, Devon & Cornwall, Dorset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire
South East	Thames Valley, Hampshire, Kent, Surrey, Sussex
Scotland	Police Scotland

Region that respondent is attached to