



The ISIS Impact on the Domestic Islamic Extremist Threat

Homegrown Islamic Extremism
2009–2015

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Overview

- In 2015, 80 U.S. residents were linked to terror plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremism, the most ever recorded, and up 180% from 2014. The vast majority acted in support of ISIS.
- In 2015, for the first time, nearly as many Americans were killed by domestic Islamic extremists as by white supremacists.
- Women are increasingly implicated in activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology.
- By adapting their messages to new technology, terrorist groups that justify and sanction violence have intensified their efforts to reach, recruit and motivate a new generation of homegrown extremists who live in the communities they seek to target.

Introduction

In 2015, 80 U.S. residents were linked to terror plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology. They were either arrested, charged or otherwise publicly identified for their involvement in crimes ranging from providing support, attempting to fund or traveling to join terrorist groups abroad, or planning or assisting in plots here at home.

This is a level of activity by U.S. residents inspired by foreign terrorist organizations never before seen. [The 2015 numbers](#) – up 180% from 2014 – are a result of a confluence of global trends, technological advances and the constant tide of terrorist messages and propaganda.

And the spike in arrests does not seem to be confined to 2015. In the first month of 2016, at least 6 U.S. residents were linked to criminal activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideologies. Following on the heels of the record-breaking number of terror related arrests in 2015, [these new arrests](#) further underscore the persistent nature of the threat.

Ongoing unrest in the Middle East, particularly in relation to the ongoing Syrian civil war, continued to provide opportunities for terrorist organizations to operate and gain strength. As in 2014, the majority of the U.S. residents

linked to terror in 2015 supported the [Islamic State of Iraq and Syria](#) (ISIS, also known as IS or ISIL), which is based in Syria and Iraq and has affiliates in a number of other countries including Egypt, Libya and Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, ISIS and other terrorist groups continue to take advantage of technology to mobilize followers, spread their messages and expand their influence worldwide. The internet and social media sites in particular, remain a pivotal element of the modern radicalization process. Online social interactions facilitate the spread of extremist messages – making them available to almost anyone, virtually anywhere – and create a climate where susceptible individuals are simultaneously targeted by recruiters and are able to develop remote networks that reinforce their burgeoning extremist allegiances.

Organizations from ISIS to Hamas have posted propaganda videos, statements and images on a wide variety of sites, from conventional social media outlets like Twitter and Facebook to platforms with vaguer terms of service, including WordPress and, until a recent change in its service terms, the encrypted smartphone application Telegram. As new applications arise, terrorist groups and their supporters move almost immediately to exploit them for propaganda and recruiting purposes. Content is designed to be downloadable and disseminated quickly by the terrorist groups' supporters.

Traditional themes in terrorist propaganda, including violence, revenge and [anti-Semitism](#), are increasingly combined with messages touting utopia, justice and truth. At the same time, messages contain more depictions of graphic violence and bloody footage of battles. This combination attracts individuals with a propensity for violence, idealists and alienated individuals alike, continuously expanding the pool of individuals who may be open to radicalization and recruitment.

Serious losses in Iraq and Syria may dissuade ISIS supporters from traveling, and could prompt them to attempt attacks in their home countries; in the past, ISIS, Al Qaeda and other groups have increased encouragement for attacks against the West and against Israel and Jews at times they deem strategically advantageous, including when they are concerned about reports of their losses.

Minor changes on the international front are unlikely to affect the number of Americans who have already been radicalized by Islamic extremist ideology. In October 2015, FBI Director James Comey reported that there were 900 open investigations of suspected homegrown extremists in all fifty states, the majority of which were ISIS related.

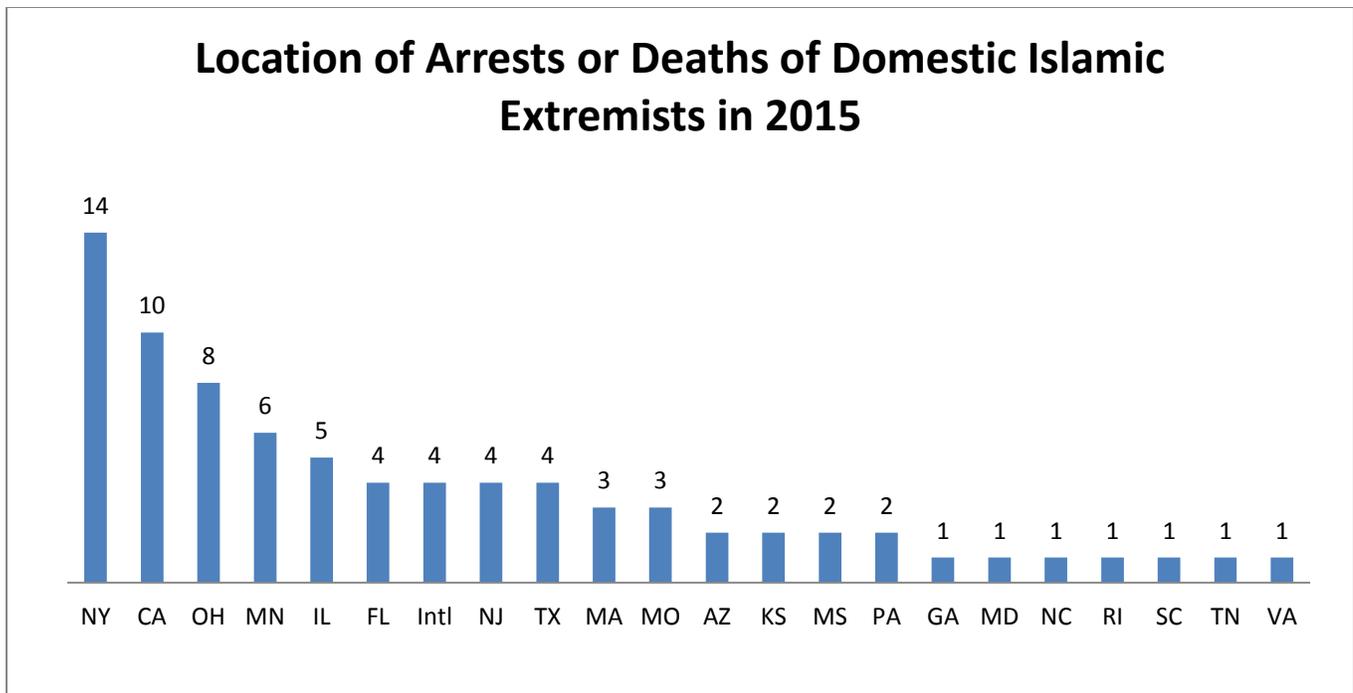
Understanding the progression of U.S. residents engaged in activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology can provide valuable insights into future security challenges.

Demographics

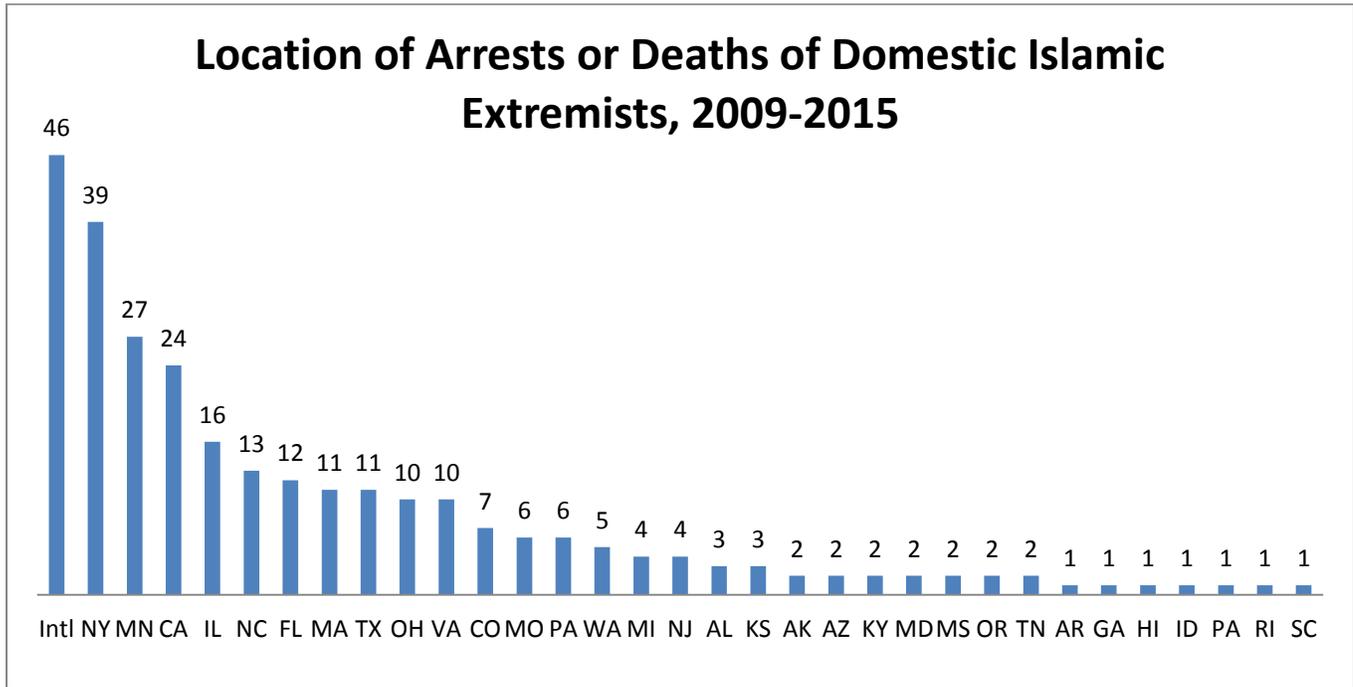
Location

The 80 U.S. residents linked to terror plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in 2015 lived in 22 states when they were arrested or charged. As in previous years, the states with the highest number of arrests were New York, Minnesota, and California. This can be explained in part by the large populations in those states and, in the case of Minnesota, by established recruiting networks in the Twin Cities area. With regard to the number of Ohioans, it is worth noting that four Ohio residents were charged in 2015 for material support activity that had allegedly taken place between 2002 and 2012.

The below chart shows the state in which these individuals were arrested or, where applicable, killed. Several individuals were not residents of the states in which they were arrested. The four individuals listed as “international” were Muhanad Mahmoud Al Farakh, a former Texas resident arrested in Pakistan; Reza Niknejad, a former Virginia resident charged in absentia while in Syria; Nader Saadeh, a New Jersey resident arrested in Jordan, and Maalik Alim Jones, a Maryland resident charged when he was in Somalia. Some additional individuals had traveled between states in the U.S.; Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi, for example, were killed in Texas in an attempt to commit an attack but had been residents of Arizona. They are included in the Texas group in the below chart.



The 2015 data is comparable to that of previous years. Between 2009 and 2015, U.S. residents linked to terrorist activity motivated by Islamic extremism were residents of 34 states:



Many of those listed in the international column were members or alleged members of Al Shabaab and were either charged in absentia or died fighting abroad.

Age

In 2015, the average age of the 80 U.S. residents linked to terror plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology was 27.

Among those individuals were 4 minors:

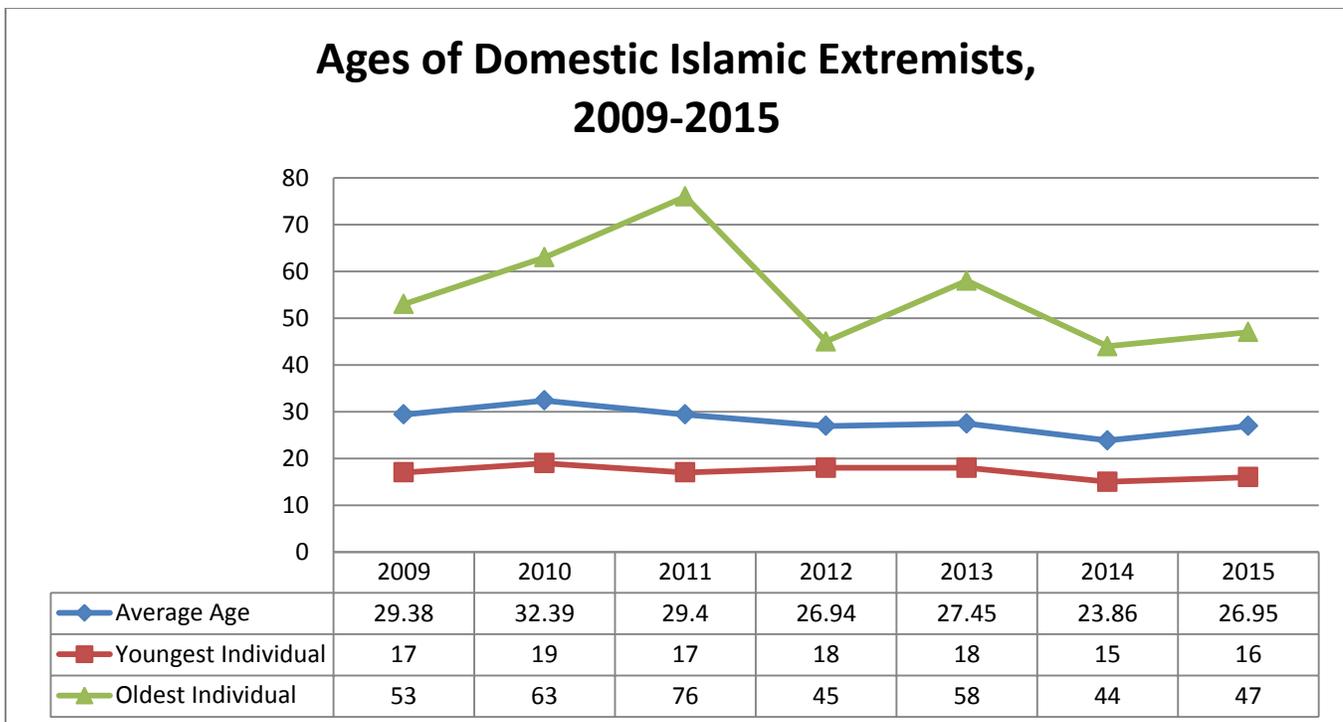
- 17-year-old Ali Shukri Amin of Virginia allegedly provided instructions on how to mask the provision of funds to ISIS. He is also accused of having facilitated travel to ISIS for ISIS supporters seeking to travel to Syria to fight, including U.S. resident Reza Niknejad.
- An unnamed 16-year-old South Carolina minor allegedly plotted an attack against a military base.
- An unnamed minor arrested in New York together with Munther Omar Saleh, who had allegedly plotted to attack a New York City landmark

- An unnamed 15-year-old New Jersey resident who allegedly plotted to assassinate the Pope.

Including those minors, there were a total of 25 people aged 21 and younger linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology. Reports have indicated that additional minors have been linked to terror by law enforcement but, due to their age, they are often not charged and they are not identified publicly.

In 2014, the average age of U.S. residents linked to terrorist activity motivated by Islamic extremism was 23.9. This number was particularly low, in part due to 5 uncharged minors who allegedly attempted to travel to join ISIS that year.

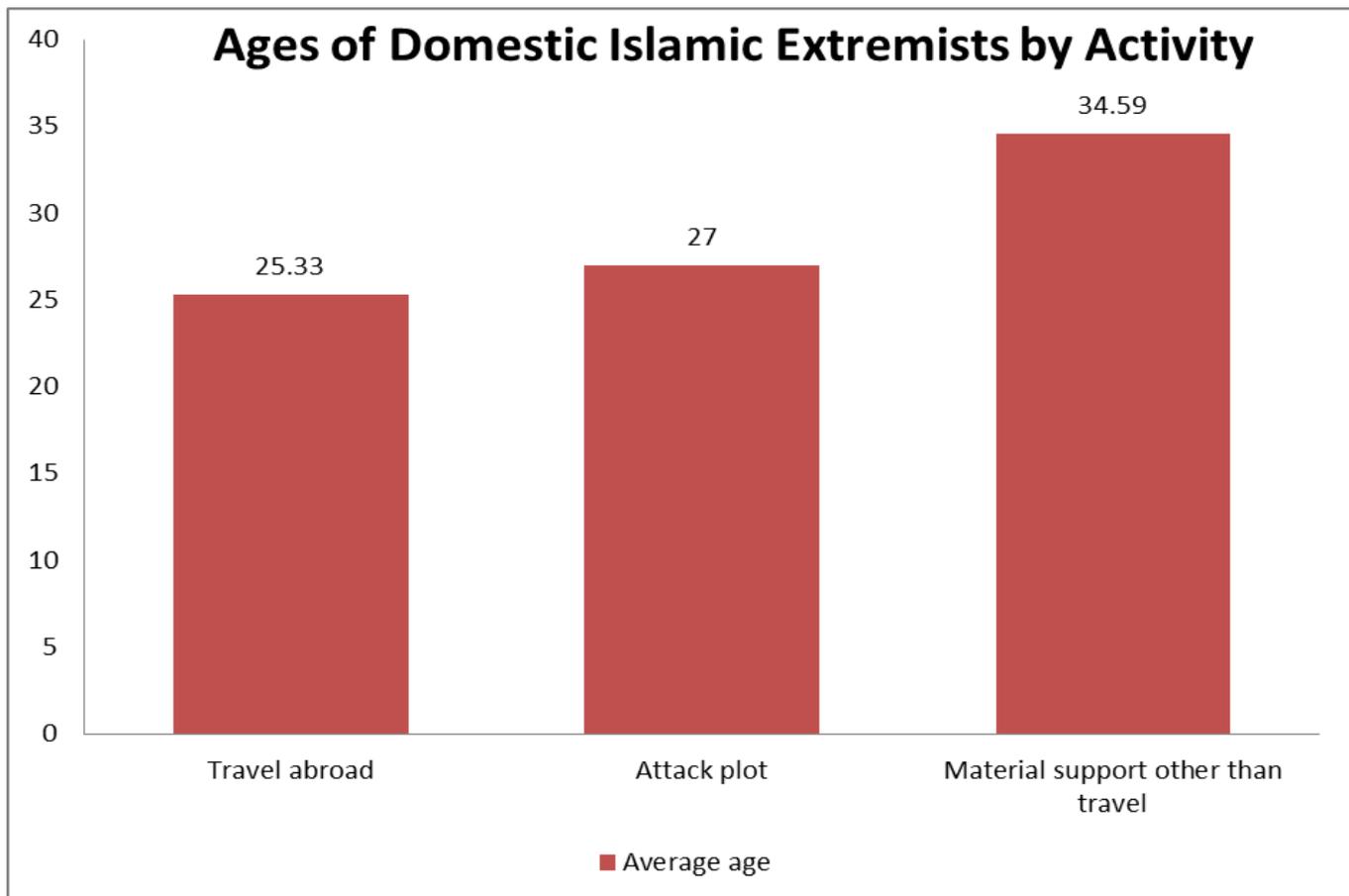
In the years 2009-2015 inclusive, the average age of these individuals was 28.3.



Despite the prominence of individuals in their 20s, the overall age range is actually quite broad: In 2015, the oldest individual linked to terror was 47-year-old Tairod Pugh from New Jersey, who allegedly attempted to travel abroad to join ISIS. The youngest was an unnamed 15 year old, who allegedly plotted to assassinate the Pope on behalf of ISIS when the Pope visited Philadelphia.

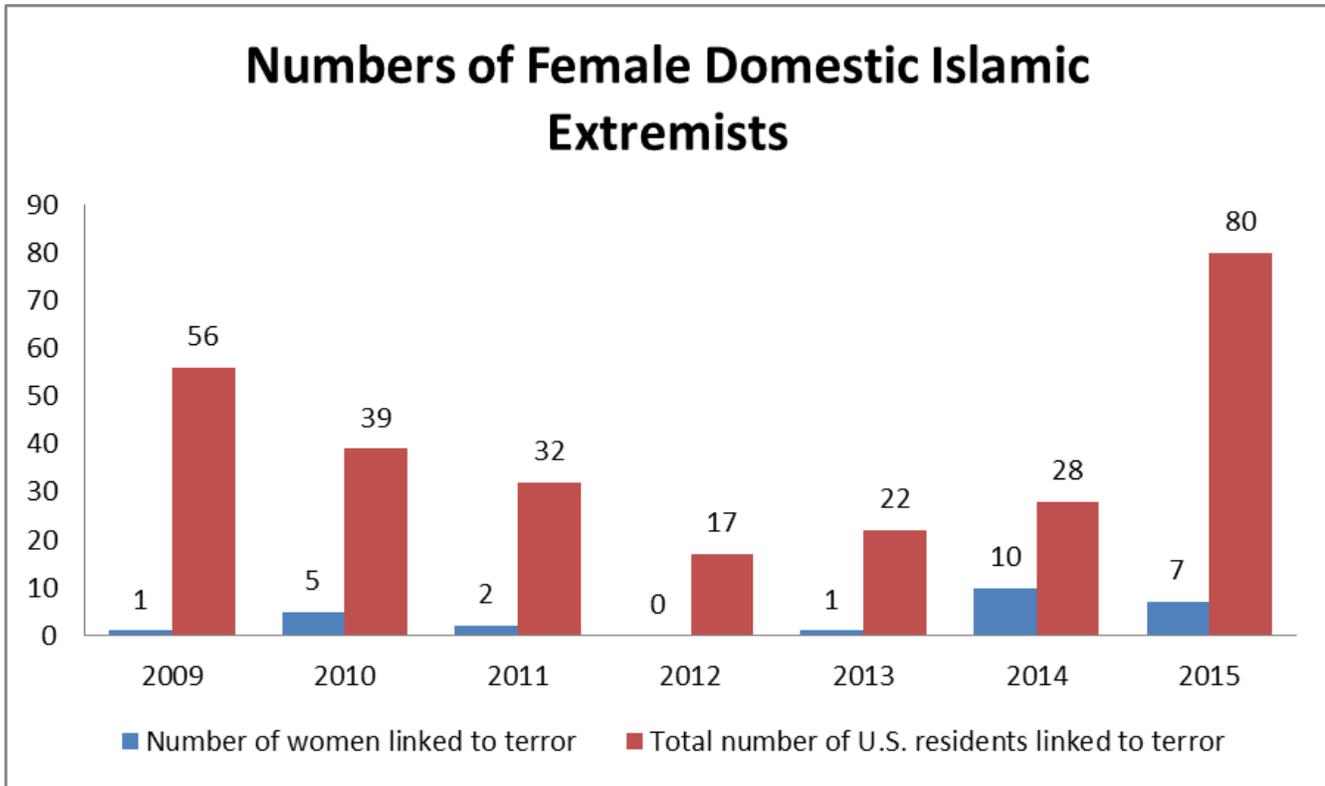
Since 2009, the oldest individual linked to terror was 76-year-old Hafiz Khan of Florida, who was arrested in 2011 for providing material support in the form of funds and support to the Pakistani Taliban. The youngest age of U.S. residents known to have been linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremism is 15.

There are some differences in the ages of individuals engaged in different types of terrorist activity. Those planning to travel abroad tend to be a little younger than those plotting attacks in the U.S.; those attempting to fund or otherwise aid foreign terrorist organizations without traveling tend to be considerably older, as demonstrated in the chart below.

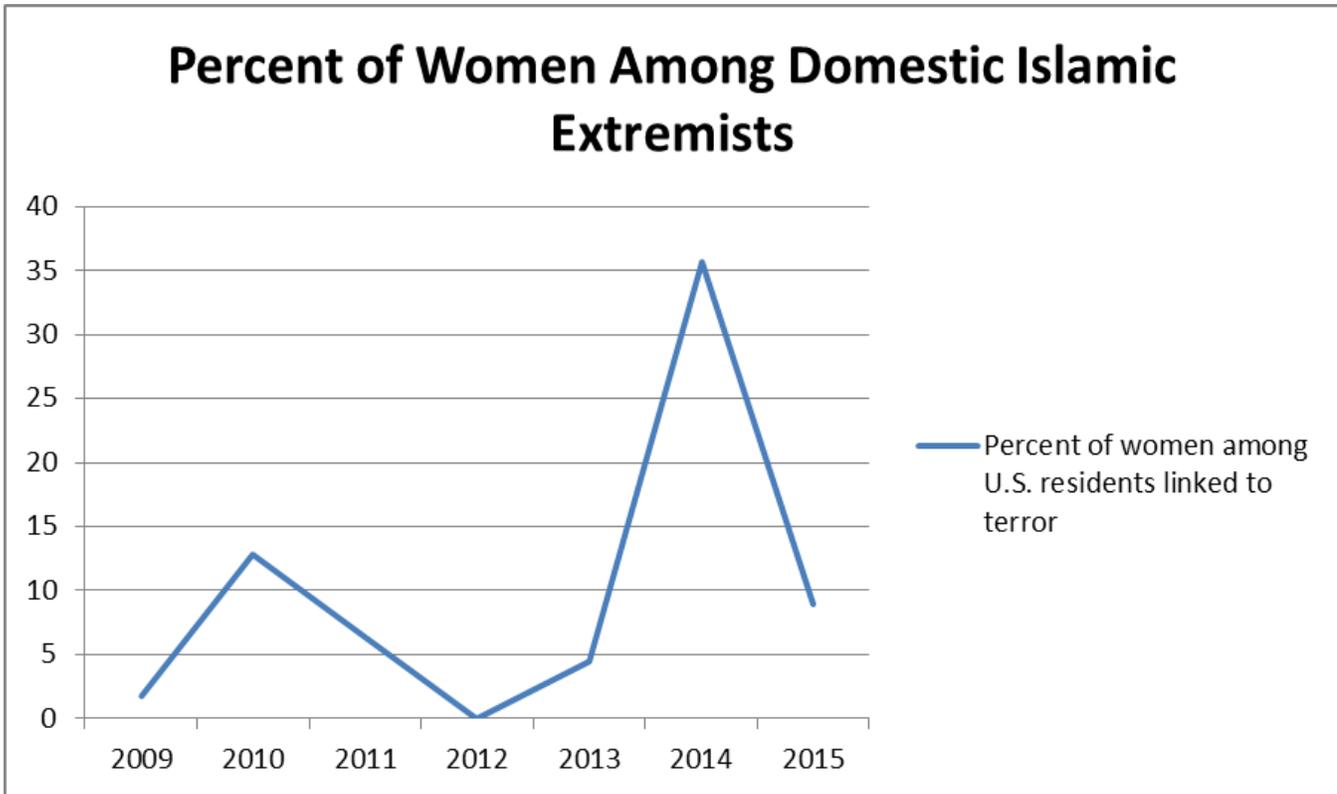


Gender

[Women engaged in activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology](#) at lower rates than men. Since 2014, however, the number of women has increased substantially. Seven female U.S. residents were linked to terror in 2015 and 10 in 2014; by comparison, ADL documented only 12 U.S. women in total linked to terror in the 11 years between 2002 and 2013.



And while the percentage of women among those linked to terror was higher in 2014 than in 2015, the 2015 number is nonetheless considerably higher than average. Since 2009, approximately 26, or 9.5% of the total number of U.S. residents linked to terror motivated by Islamic extremism, have been women.



The increased involvement of women in 2014 and 2015 may be due in part to [direct recruitment of women by ISIS](#), as well as ISIS’s propaganda messaging that seems to be targeting women, which conveys a romanticized, utopian vision of life in its territory. Social media engagement also provides women in traditional, gender-segregated religions greater opportunity for involvement: Pro-ISIS women and men may choose not to interact with members of the opposite gender online, but on the internet, women and men nonetheless have equal opportunities to obtain and share extremist propaganda and to become leaders and activists promoting extremist world views.

Notably, women are far more likely to attempt to provide material support to terrorist organizations than to express interest in carrying out an attack on U.S. soil. Since 2009, 19 women have allegedly engaged in providing material support to terror and only 5 were allegedly engaged in plots; in 2015, however, that trend did not hold, with 4 women accused of providing material support to terror and 3 involved in plots.

Three of the women linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in 2015 were part of domestic plots.

[Asia Siddiqui](#), a 31-year-old U.S. citizen from Brooklyn, New York and [Noelle Velentzas](#), a 28-year-old U.S. citizen from New York, were arrested on April 2, 2015 and charged with plotting to undertake a domestic bomb plot. Together with an undercover informant whom they believed was a co-conspirator, the two had utilized a variety of online and print materials in an attempt to learn how to make bombs, and had gone so far as to scour a local Home Depot for the appropriate equipment. Although court documents do not indicate that they had chosen a target, they expressed a preference for attacking law enforcement and U.S. government and military facilities. Siddiqui had an extensive history of engaging with radical extremism online. In 2006, according to court documents, Siddiqui “became close with [Samir Khan](#),” who went on to join [AQAP](#) and, together with AQAP propagandist [Anwar al-Awlaki](#), founded [Inspire magazine](#), the group’s primary English-language magazine. In 2009, Siddiqui wrote a poem that was published in *Jihad Recollections*, an earlier magazine that Khan produced. The two also allegedly watched ISIS propaganda videos online and Velentzas was friends on Facebook with Tairod Pugh, arrested in New Jersey in March for attempting to join ISIS. Velentzas and Siddiqui made a number of statements that may shine light on their interest with terrorism; for example, court documents indicated that, at one point, Velentzas even pulled a knife from her bra and told Siddiqui, “Why can’t we be some real bad bitches?”



Asia Siddiqui and Noelle Velentzas

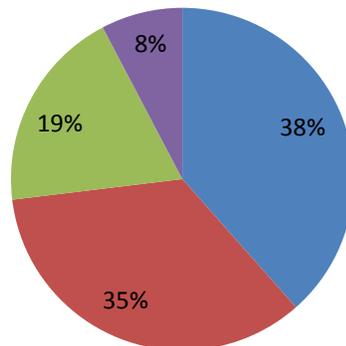
Tafsheen Malik was a 29-year-old California resident. Originally from Pakistan, Malik had immigrated to the U.S. on an K-1 visa to marry her fiancé, 28-year-old U.S. citizen Syed Rizwan Farook. Farook is believed to have radicalized in the U.S., while Malik is believed to have been radicalized in Pakistan. It appears that both believed in Islamic extremist ideology before meeting each other online. Malik joined Farook in attacking Farook’s colleagues at a holiday party on December 2, 2015. She allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS on her Facebook page on the day of the attack.



Tafsheen Malik

Activities of Female Domestic Islamic Extremists, 2009-2015

■ Travel abroad ■ Non-travel material support ■ Attack plots ■ Other



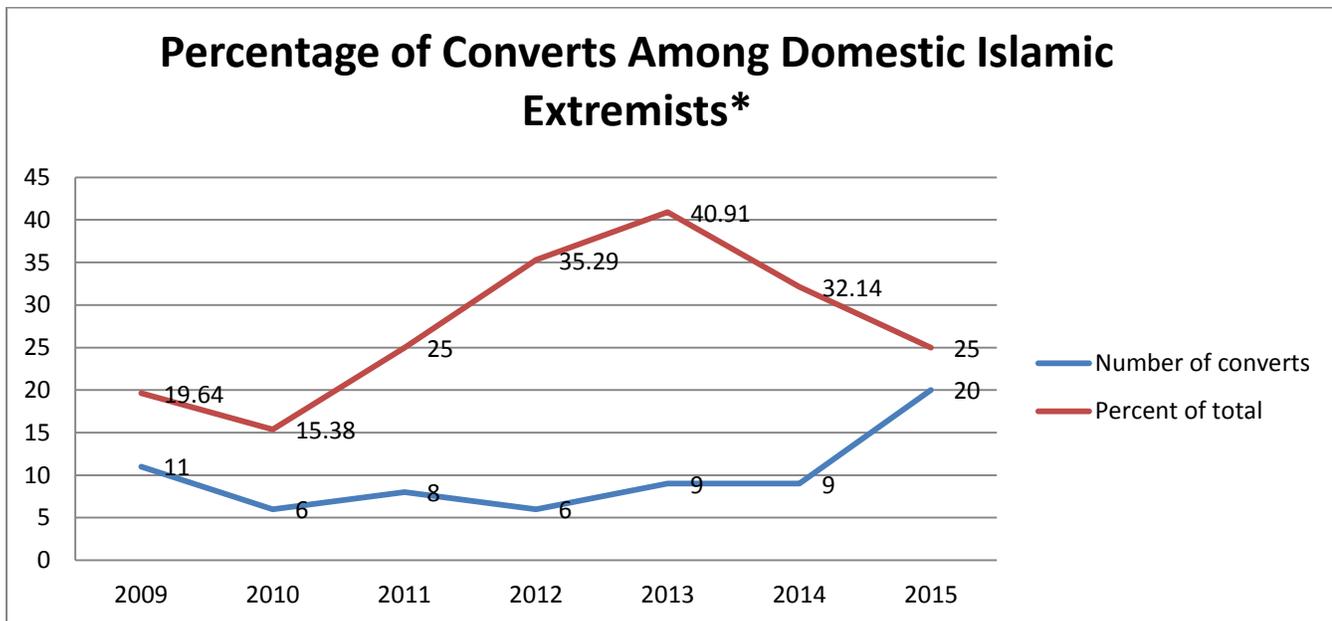
In contrast, many individuals in the general population of U.S residents linked to terror motivated by Islamic extremist ideology engaged in plots than engaged in non-travel material support. Between 2012 and 2015, 41% of U.S. residents linked to terror motivated by Islamic extremist ideology traveled or attempted to travel abroad to join foreign terrorist organizations, 27% considered domestic plots, 21% engaged in non-travel material support and 11% were linked to other activities.

The average age of women is also higher than the overall average age of implicated U.S. residents, which squares with the previously noted findings that individuals engaged in non-travel material support are typically older than those attempting to travel.

Converts

At least 20 – or one quarter -- of the U.S. residents linked to terror plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in 2015 were not raised identifying as Muslims but rather converted or claimed to have converted to Islam, at least nominally. Importantly, these conversions do not necessarily mean they are accepted as Muslims by the mainstream American Muslim community, nor does it mean that they have been particularly observant.

As with other individuals linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology, these converts embraced radical interpretations of Islam.



*There are seven cases in which it is unclear whether the individuals were converts; these have not been included in the number of converts.

In fact, some never identified as Muslims at all. For example, in 2015, Joshua Ryne Goldberg, who is of Jewish descent, was charged with sharing information on building a bomb which was to be used to attack a 9/11 memorial service; Goldberg reportedly told investigators that he planned to call authorities before the attack was carried out.

[Alexander Ciccolo](#), a 23-year-old U.S. citizen and a convert to Islam, was arrested on July 4, 2015 and charged as a felon in possession of a weapon. Ciccolo had allegedly planned an attack against a popular bar frequented by university students and a college cafeteria. According to court documents, Ciccolo had initially considered an attack on civilians, military and law enforcement, for which he also allegedly considered using pressure cooker bombs. Ciccolo reportedly had a history of mental illness; his father, a Boston police captain, had alerted authorities about his son's suspicious behavior.

[Harlem Suarez](#), a 23-year-old U.S. citizen from Florida was arrested on July 28, 2015 for allegedly plotting to bomb a Florida beach in support of ISIS. Court documents indicate Suarez also allegedly discussed placing bombs in front of the houses and under the vehicles of police officers. Suarez had moved to the U.S. with his parents when he was a child as a refugee from Cuba. He apparently converted to Islam and radicalized while living in the U.S.



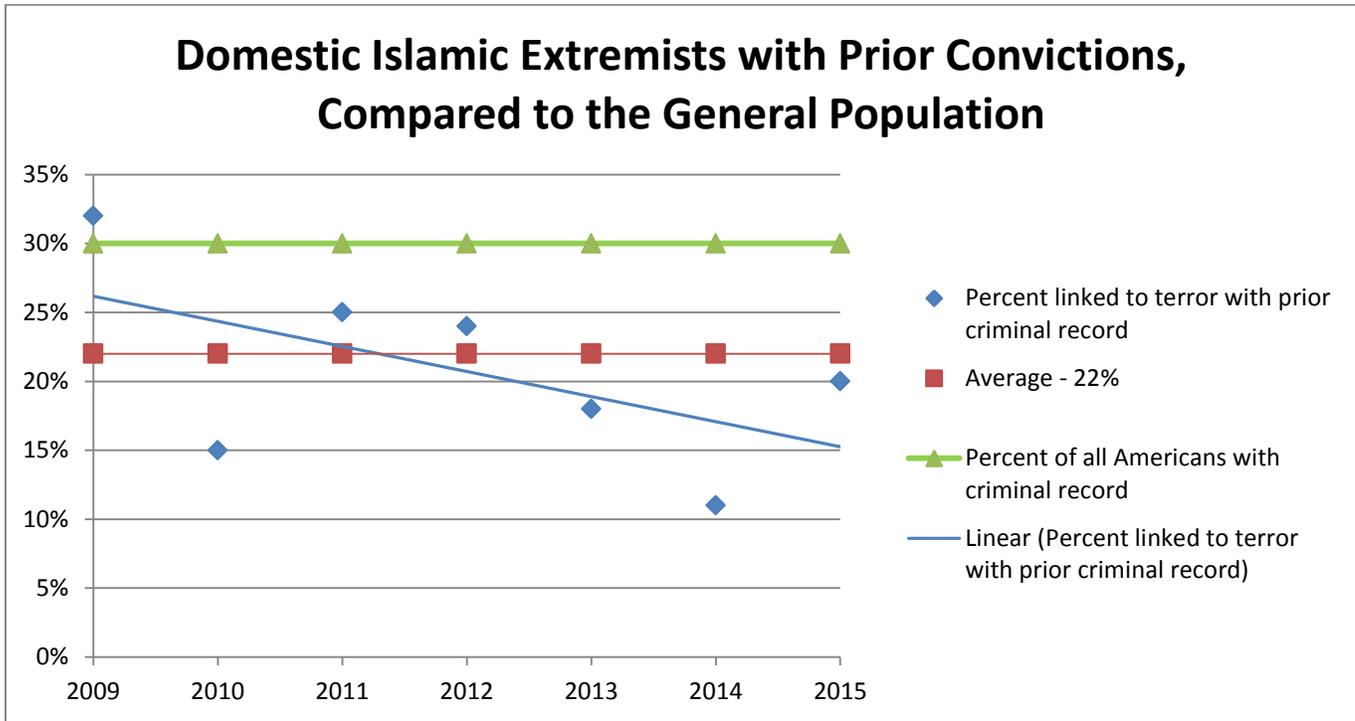
Alexander Ciccolo



Harlem Suarez

Past Criminal Record

At least 16 (or about 20%) of the 80 U.S. residents linked to terror plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in 2015 were known to have had prior criminal records. The majority of these past convictions is not terror-related, and run the gamut of offenses: robbery, driving under the influence, drug trafficking, domestic violence and sex offenses. As noted previously, the small and variable numbers of individuals linked to terror each year make definitive analysis difficult. The available information suggests a downward trend since 2009 in the number of individuals linked to terror who have prior criminal backgrounds. The 2015 number of 20%, however, is fairly consistent with the average. Since 2009, approximately 22% of U.S. residents linked to terror had prior convictions.

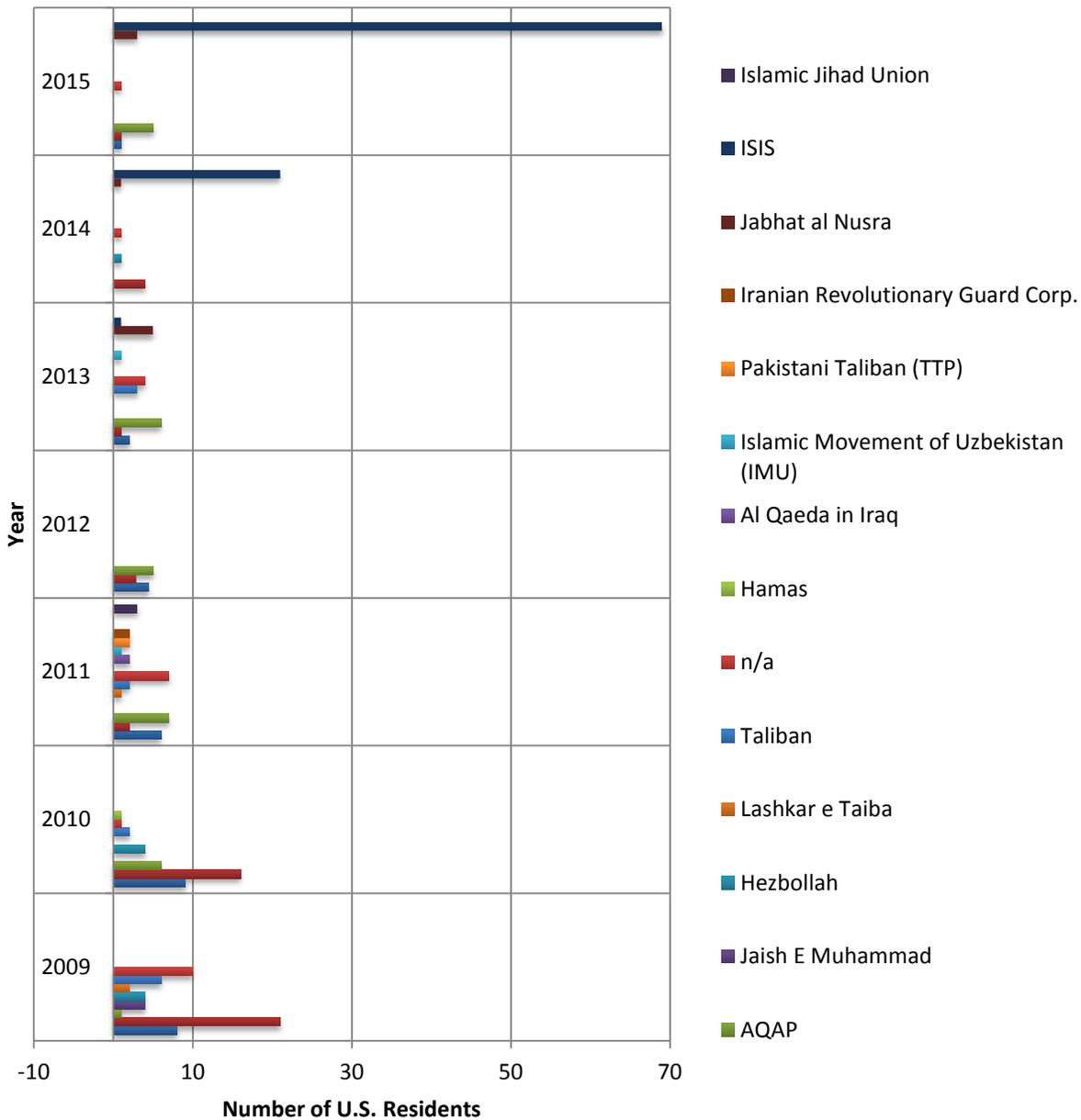


Interestingly, this number appears to be lower than that of the general population. [According to the National Employment Law Project](#), approximately 30% of Americans have a criminal history. This suggests that the primary motivator for terrorist activity is ideological, rather than a propensity for criminal behavior. It also demonstrates that there is no real link between support for terrorism and criminal history. The number may also be different when those implicated in nonviolent crimes – lying to investigators in terror cases or non-travel material support -- are removed from the equation.

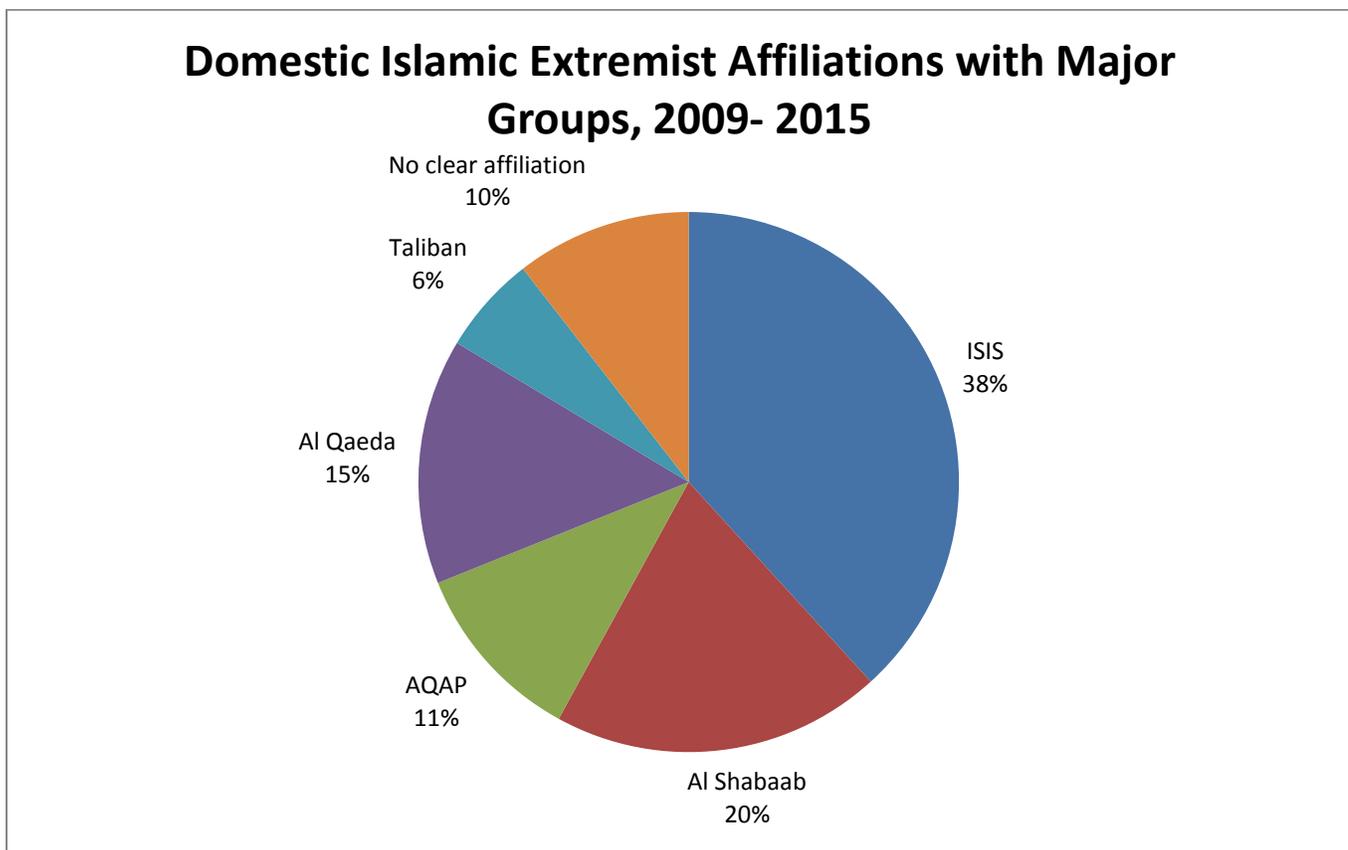
Group Affiliation

The vast majority of U.S. residents linked to terror plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in 2015 acted in support of ISIS. This is part of a broader trend of the growth of [extremist groups acting in the Syrian civil war](#). The brutality and lawlessness of that conflict provided a backdrop against which extremist groups including the Al Qaeda affiliate Jabhat al Nusra flourished and attracted adherents, while the rise of ISIS at the end of 2013 – with its territorial ambitions and far-reaching propaganda – provided an ideal, neatly packaged narrative to those susceptible to radicalization.

Domestic Islamic Extremist Affiliations with Foreign Terrorist Organizaitons



Before ISIS became the most prevalent terrorist organization, there was a wave of Americans seeking to join [Al Shabaab](#), Al Qaeda’s affiliate in Somalia, followed by [Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula](#) (AQAP). These two groups continue to attract adherents, and, alongside ISIS, often influence potential extremists. Propaganda by [Anwar Al Awlaki](#), AQAP’s deceased English-language spokesman, for example, is circulated among supporters of ISIS. There are also instances of [Al Shabaab members even encouraging Americans](#) and other Westerners to join ISIS or to undertake attacks on its behalf. These methods appear to be working: support for ISIS among U.S. residents has surpassed support for any other extremist group, as demonstrated in the chart below, which compares groups with the most followers among U.S. residents since 2002:



Notably, the chart demonstrates that the number of U.S. residents linked to terror who have supported ISIS – all of whom have been clustered in 2014 and 2015 (with one in 2013) is approaching the total number of U.S. residents who have supported Al Qaeda or the major Al Qaeda affiliates AQAP and Al Shabaab since 2009. Between 2009 and 2013,

there were 91 U.S. residents linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremism who supported ISIS and 108 who supported Al Qaeda, AQAP and Al Shabaab.

Activity

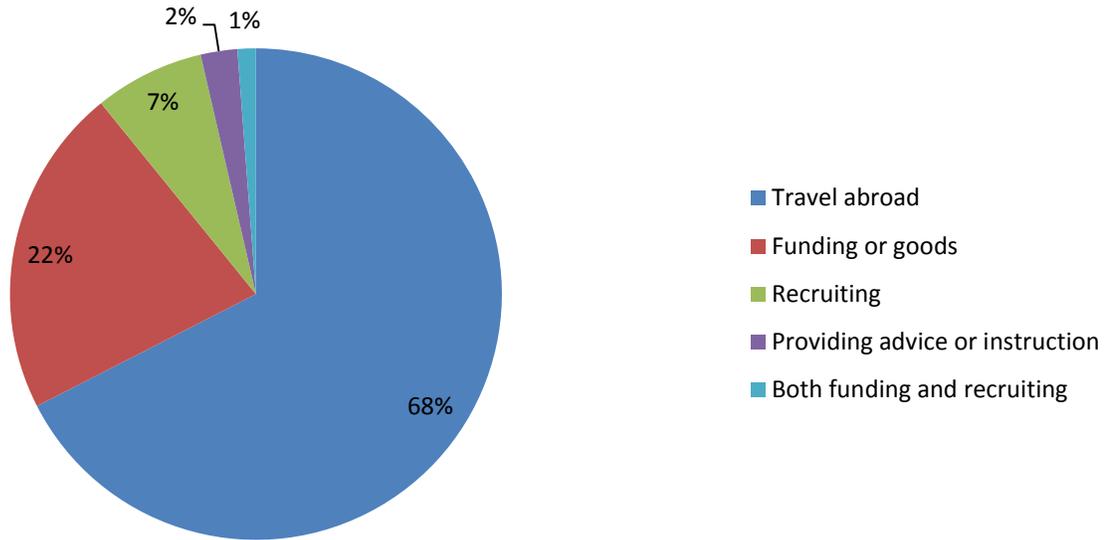
Material Support

Individuals charged with material support represent the vast majority of U.S. residents linked to foreign terrorist organizations. The charge can refer to any type of support, from sending goods or money and attempted travel to join the group, and is sometimes also one of several charges levied against individuals attempting plots or other violent activity on behalf of the group.

Of the 80 U.S. residents linked to terror motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015, 56 were charged with providing material support or died abroad in the process of doing so. Eight of these people also expressed interest in carrying out a domestic attack. Two additional individuals allegedly engaged in or attempted activity that could be described as material support but were charged on other counts: Texas resident Bilal Abood, charged with lying in a federal investigation, had allegedly fought with a terrorist organization in Syria, and Minnesota resident Hamza Ahmed, charged with lying to a federal agent in a terror investigation and with student loan fraud, had allegedly intended to use money from student loans to travel to join ISIS. A third individual, Terrence Joseph McNeil of Ohio, was charged with solicitation of a crime of violence for posting information supporting terrorism and encouraging attacks on the internet. The inclusion of these three instances raises the number of U.S. residents accused of providing material support to terror groups in 2015 to 59 – 74% of the total.

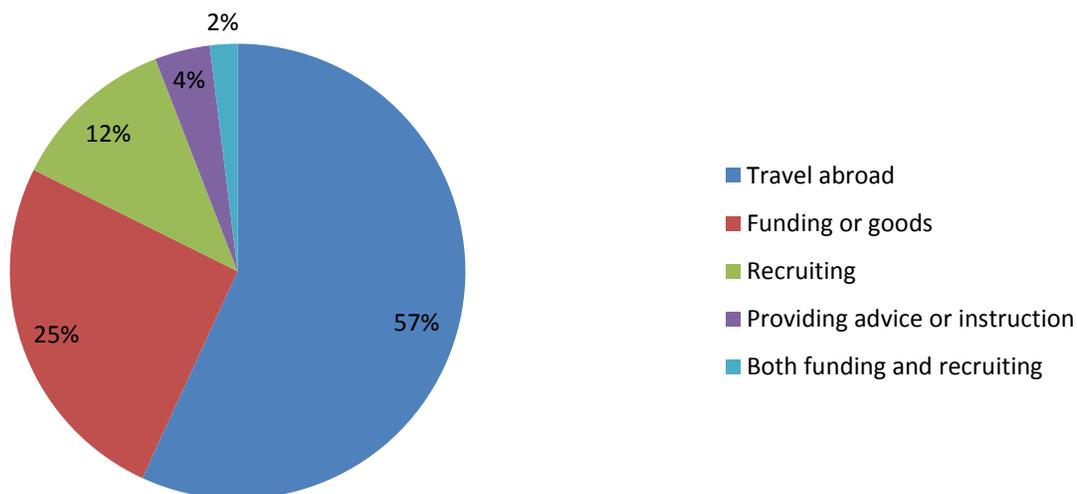
The majority (68%) of individuals who allegedly provided material support to terror groups had attempted to travel abroad to join terrorist organizations, while 22% attempted to provide money or goods and 7% attempted to recruit others to terrorist organizations. A breakdown of material support activity since 2012 is depicted in the following chart:

Breakdown of Material Support to Terror Since 2012



While most U.S. residents linked to terror activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology in 2015 traveled abroad, there are signs more people are opting to provide support from home, whether by attempting to send funds to aid a terrorist organization, recruit others to join the organization, or encourage or plan domestic attacks. This trend may be a result of increased scrutiny of any travel to conflict zones, especially Syria and Iraq.

Breakdown of Material Support to Terror in 2015



Domestic Plots

Twenty-four U.S. residents (including eight who were also charged with providing material support), allegedly carried out an attack or expressed an interest in carrying out an attack on U.S. soil in 2015. Several worked in tandem, resulting in a total of 19 plots for the year – a dramatic increase from previous years.

There were two attacks perpetrated that resulted in fatalities, (making 2015 the first year in American history when domestic Islamic extremism [resulted in almost as many murders as those by white supremacists](#)). A third attack resulted in the deaths of the shooters but no other fatalities.

- May 3, 2015: [Elton Simpson](#), a 30-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona and **Nadir Soofi**, a 34-year-old U.S. citizen from Arizona, were killed while attempting to undertake a shooting at a [Texas community center](#). There were no other fatalities.
- July 16, 2015: **Mohammad Youssuf Abdulazez**, a 24-year-old U.S. citizen from Tennessee, was killed after he opened fire at two military installations (a recruiting center and naval reserve center) in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Although the investigation into Abdulazez's motivation is ongoing, he was apparently influenced by Al Qaeda propaganda, including the writings of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula propagandist Anwar al-Awlaki. He reportedly also suffered from mental illness.

- December 2, 2015: [Syed Rizwan Farook](#), a 28-year-old U.S. citizen residing in California and **Tafsheen Malik**, a 29-year-old U.S. resident residing in California and Farook's wife, were killed by law enforcement after the two had perpetrated a shooting at a holiday party in San Bernardino, California, which resulted in 14 casualties. Farook is believed to have been in contact with members of terrorist organizations abroad prior to the attack. Malik allegedly pledged allegiance to ISIS on her Facebook page on the day of the attack.

2015 also marked the deadliest year in domestic extremist related killings since 1995, the year of the Oklahoma City bombings. (The attacks on September 11, 2001 are not included here because they were not carried out by domestic extremists).

Domestic Extremist-Related Killings in the U.S. by Perpetrator Affiliation, 2015

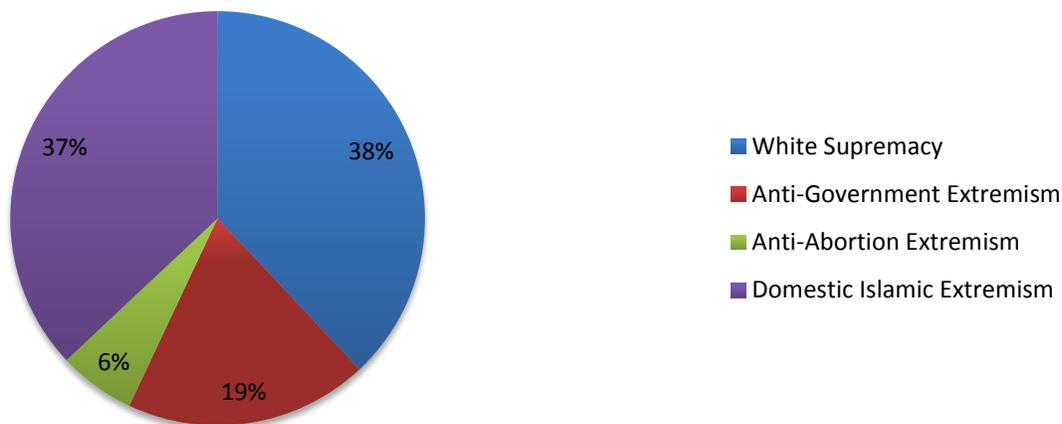
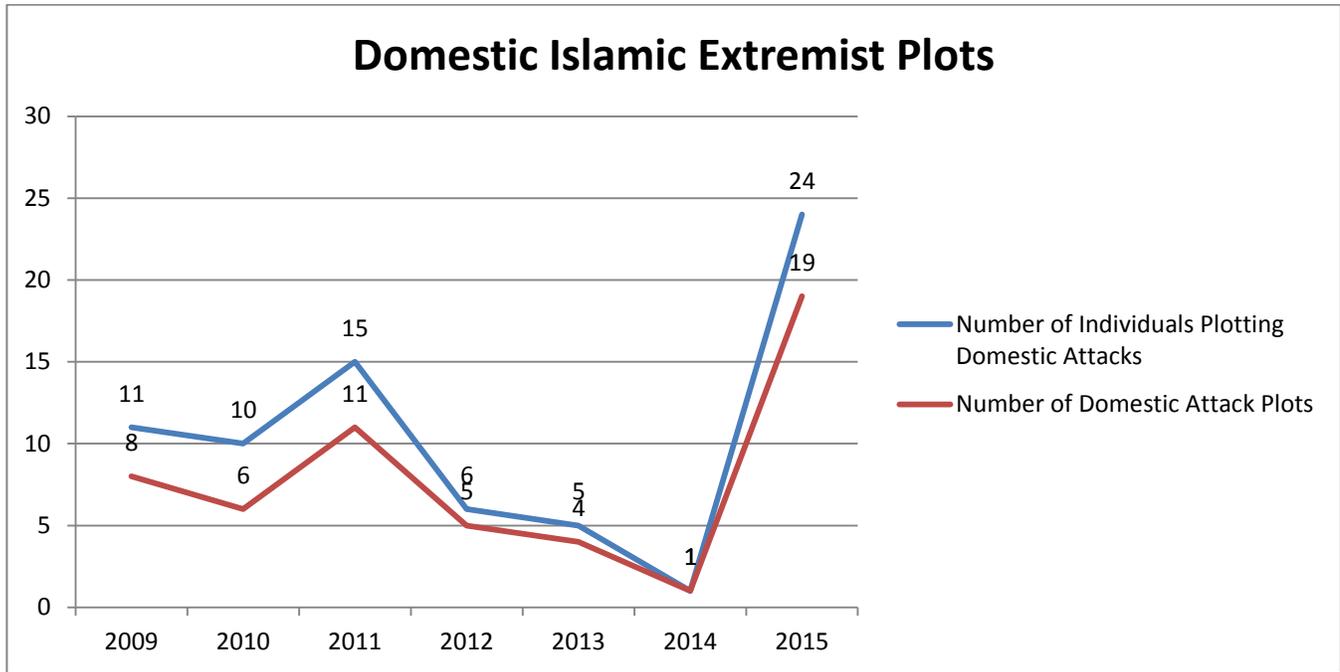


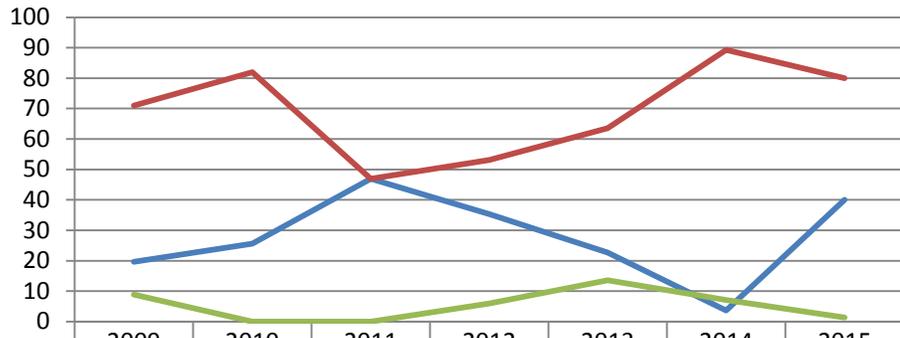
Chart via ADL report "[Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2015](#)"

The next chart illustrates the dramatic spike in plots in 2015. While it looks as if there was an uptick in lone wolf attacks, defined as attacks in which individuals acted alone and without assistance, from 2012 to 2014, many of them were undertaken by individuals who thought they were working with partners, but in fact were working with undercover informants (who are not counted in the data). As such, these individuals do not fit the profile of lone wolf terrorists.



It's worth noting that the percentage of U.S. residents linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology who expressed interest in carrying out domestic attacks did not change significantly in 2015, but the actual number of plots rose significantly as part of the overall rise in U.S. residents linked to terror.

Activity of Domestic Islamic Extremists (Percent)



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Percent of Domestic Islamic Extremists in Plots*	19.6	25.6	46.9	35.3	22.7	3.6	40
Percent of Domestic Islamic Extremists Engaged in Material Support*	71	82	46.9	53.1	63.6	89.3	80
Percent of Domestic Islamic Extremists Engaged in Other Activity (Eg. Lying in Terror Investigation)	8.9	0	0	5.9	13.6	7.1	1.3

- Percent of Domestic Islamic Extremists in Plots*
- Percent of Domestic Islamic Extremists Engaged in Material Support*
- Percent of Domestic Islamic Extremists Engaged in Other Activity (Eg. Lying in Terror Investigation)

*Individuals who discussed plans for plots and material support are cross counted.

Interestingly, there were several cases in which individuals attempted to travel abroad to join foreign terrorist organizations but found themselves unable to do so— whether because law enforcement scrutiny had increased, for logistical reasons, or for other reasons – and began to plot domestic attacks instead. These individuals are cross counted in the above graph and typically acted in the year following dramatic spikes in attempts to travel abroad. In 2010, three individuals attempted to provide material support abroad, but eventually planned domestic attacks; in 2015, 8 U.S. residents allegedly sought to travel abroad to provide material support to ISIS but engaged in or discussed the possibility of attacks if and when they were unable to do so. [Jonas Edmonds](#) of Illinois, for example, allegedly intended to travel to join ISIS, but began plotting an attack against a U.S. National Guard base when it appeared he would be unable to acquire a passport. [Abdurasul Juraboev and Akhror Saidakhmetov](#) of New York also allegedly aspired to travel to join ISIS but allegedly discussed a plot against law enforcement officers in case they were not able to leave the country.

In all years, far more individuals provided material support to terror than expressed interest in carrying out domestic attacks.

Online Radicalization

The internet continues to play a prominent role in the radicalization process of U.S. residents engaged in plots and other activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology.

In the years 2007 through 2011, the rise of social media directly [correlated with a spike in U.S. residents attempting to aid or join Al Shabaab](#) in Somalia, many of whom were simultaneously recruited in-person and online.

ADL continued to document the role of the internet as it became ever more ubiquitous in our 2013 annual report on domestic Islamic extremist activity, [Homegrown Islamic Extremism in 2013: The Perils of Online Recruitment and Self-Radicalization](#), as well as in our 2014 annual report on the subject, [Homegrown Islamic Extremism in 2014: The Rise of ISIS and Sustained Online Recruitment](#). Both of those years saw continuously increased and sophisticated use of the online sphere by terror propagandists, recruiters and activists. Nearly all of the U.S. residents engaged in activity motivated by Islamic extremist ideology accessed propaganda materials, communicated with other extremists, or researched material support or plots online in those years.

In some cases, the internet appears to have been a strong element of the radicalization process. Individuals became more engaged in Islamic extremist ideology through reading and watching online propaganda and socializing online with like-minded peers. In other cases, online materials may have served as catalysts that encouraged individuals who were already fairly radicalized into action.

Examples of individuals linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015 who appear to have radicalized online include:

- Enrique Marquez, arrested in December for conspiring to provide material support to terrorists had initially aided Syed Rezwan Farook and Tafsheen Malik in acquiring some of the weapons they used in the San Bernardino shootings. He had also allegedly plotted an earlier attack with Farook that the two did not carry out. Reports and court documents indicate that Farook had played a primary role in Marquez's radicalization, using online propaganda materials to teach his associate extremist ideologies. Marquez allegedly watched accessed extensive online propaganda materials including videos, lectures by AQAP propagandist Anwar Al-Awlaki, and AQAP's English-language online propaganda magazine, *Inspire*.
- Joshua Ray Van Haftan, arrested in April for attempting to join ISIS, had allegedly consumed massive amounts of terrorist propaganda online including videos produced by ISIS and Jabhat al Nusra and ISIS's English-language online magazine, *Dabiq*. Van Haftan had also been active in extremist circles on Twitter and Facebook, where he was friends with known extremists. He had 'liked' the Facebook page for Ansar Beyt al Maqdis, which later

became the Islamic State affiliate in Egypt, and allegedly corresponded on Facebook with a Syrian member of ISIS on Facebook.

- Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi were killed in April for attempting to shoot attendees of a [Draw Mohammed cartoon contest](#) at a Texas community center. Simpson had [maintained at least 8 Twitter accounts](#), which he used to network with ISIS supporters and share extremist ideas. Among those Simpson interacted with on Twitter was [Mohamed Abdullahi Hassan](#), a former U.S. resident who was indicted in 2009 for traveling to Somalia to join Al Shabaab. Hassan had posted statements on Twitter encouraging an attack on the Texas event, and it is possible that these encouraged Simpson and Soofi to take action.

In other cases, U.S. residents were the ones encouraging others to radicalize online by acting as recruiters on social media. These individuals attempted to engage others in support of foreign terrorist organizations, encouraging travel abroad or domestic activity in support of those organizations.

Examples of individuals linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015 who used the internet to recruit others include:

- Ahmed Mohammed el Gammal, arrested in August for providing material support to terror, allegedly recruited another individual to join ISIS. El Gammal, an Arizona resident, used Facebook to encourage a NY college student to radicalize. El Gammal later met the student in person to reinforce their relationship and assisted the man in traveling to ISIS.
- Jalil Ibn Ameer Aziz, arrested in December for providing material support for terror and aiding individuals in pursuit of traveling overseas, allegedly had no fewer than 57 Twitter accounts on which he disseminated ISIS propaganda and advocated violence against the U.S. and its citizens. According to court documents, Aziz allegedly used his Twitter accounts and other electronic communication services to assist persons seeking to travel to and fight for ISIS on at least three occasions. He also allegedly posted a hyperlink containing the names, addresses and other identifying information of members of the U.S. military, together with calls for violence against them.

Individuals also used the internet to facilitate their terrorist activity. In these cases, the internet served as a resource to fundraise, channel money or goods, purchase weapons, surveil locations for domestic plots, and learn how to conduct attacks. In many cases, these same individuals also radicalized online, accessing online propaganda and extremist social networks as well.

One example of use of the internet to provide material support to terror is the activity of a group of U.S. residents who conspired to provide material support to ISIS:

- Six U.S. residents arrested in February in Illinois, Missouri and New York attempted to provide resources to ISIS. The group used Facebook and other social media sites to coordinate purchases, funds and supplies intended for ISIS. They also used the website PayPal to wire money transfers.

Examples of individuals linked to activity motivated by Islamic extremism in 2015 who used the internet to plot attacks include:

- Joshua Ryne Goldberg, arrested in September, used the internet both to radicalize and to engage in a plot. Goldberg, a self-described radical free speech advocate, maintained a very active pro-ISIS Twitter feed on which he claimed to have inspired the shooting at a Draw Mohammed contest in Garland, Texas in May 2015, and that he was developing a network of attackers worldwide. Using that Twitter account as well as a messaging application, Goldberg communicated almost daily with an individual in another state, sending him materials about committing an attack and building weapons for a plot to bomb a 9/11 memorial ceremony.
- Asia Siddiqui and Noelle Velentzas, arrested in February, engaged with online propaganda materials for years prior to using the internet to study bomb-making techniques. Siddiqui had corresponded with Samir Khan and published an article in his online propaganda magazine, *Jihad Recollections*. Velentzas was friends on Facebook with Tairod Pugh, arrested in February for providing material support to ISIS. Siddiqui had corresponded with Mohammed Osman Mohamed, who attempted to bomb a Christmas tree lighting ceremony in 2010. The two also watched videos by Anwar al-Awlaki and ISIS propaganda videos online and accessed bomb making instructions from *Inspire Magazine* and the online left-wing extremist publication *Anarchists Cookbook*.

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Anti-Defamation League
605 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10158-3560
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