



Canadian Security
Intelligence Service

Service canadien du
renseignement de sécurité

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Protecting National Security in Partnership with All Canadians

/ A safe, secure and prosperous Canada through trusted intelligence, advice and action.
Des renseignements, des conseils et des interventions fiables pour un Canada sûr et prospère.

Canada 

WHAT IS THE THREAT?

- CSIS has seen a rise in the threat posed by extremism, particularly Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism (IMVE). This includes the use of online platforms by extremists for recruitment, proselytizing, fundraising, dissemination of hate speech and disinformation, harassment, and incitement of violent extremism.
- Extremist narratives are rapidly growing transnationally, both in resonance and reach. Canada is no exception to this trend. In fact, Canadians are active producers and consumers of these narratives.
- Violent extremists of all motivations exploit crisis situations, capitalizing on public fear, distrust and unrest to boost radicalization efforts and incite acts of violence. Social media and global connectivity have accelerated the speed and reach of extremist narratives, amplifying false and misleading messages.
- Violent extremist entities have adopted conspiracy theories about the pandemic in an attempt to rationalize and justify violence. These narratives have contributed to efforts to undermine trust in the integrity of government and confidence in scientific expertise. While aspects of conspiracy theory rhetoric are a legitimate exercise in free expression, online rhetoric that is increasingly violent and calls for the arrest and execution of specific individuals is of increasing concern.
- The threat is multi-faceted with security, economic, political, social, and technological aspects, requiring a similarly integrated response.

TYPES OF EXTREMISM

Ideologically Motivated Violent Extremism

Proponents of ideologically motivated violent extremism (IMVE) are driven by a range of influences rather than a singular belief system. IMVE radicalization is more often caused by a combination of ideas and grievances resulting in a personalized worldview that is inspired by a variety of sources. IMVE includes gender-driven, xenophobic, anti-authority, and other grievance-driven violence.

Politically Motivated Violent Extremism

Politically motivated violent extremism (PMVE) encourages the use of violence to establish new political systems, or new structures and norms within existing systems.

Religiously Motivated Violent Extremism

Religiously motivated violent extremism (RMVE) encourages the use of violence as part of a spiritual struggle against a perceived immoral system. Followers believe that salvation can only be achieved through violence.

*None of these categories are necessarily mutually exclusive, as extremist narratives often derive from the personal grievances of the individual. These classifications are derived from the definitions of violent extremism in S. 83.01 of the *Canadian Criminal Code* as well as S.2(c) of the *CSIS Act*.

SPOTLIGHT ON IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENT EXTREMISM (IMVE)

- Proponents of IMVE are driven by a range of influences rather than a singular belief system. IMVE radicalization is more often caused by a combination of ideas and grievances resulting in a personalized worldview that is inspired by a variety of sources including books, videos, online discussions, and conversations. The resulting worldview often centres on the willingness to incite, enable or mobilize to violence.
- Especially during the pandemic, the IMVE threat escalated as white supremacist and anti-government groups exploited peoples' anxieties about public safety lockdown measures and vaccine mandates to foment hate, discord, and violence. While individuals using violent or extremist rhetoric might not consider conducting violent acts personally, they may knowingly or unknowingly influence other individuals susceptible to violent narratives to take such action.
- A common theme with both individuals and small cells (online and in real life) is the belief that the success or survival of society/civilization necessitates violence. There are often overlaps between xenophobic, racist, gender-driven, anti-authority, and other grievance-driven violence. For example, anti-Asian racism and violence have disproportionately targeted women of Asian descent. IMVE proponents can galvanize around any number of issues such as public health measures, the environment or conflicts abroad.
- IMVE is also a symptom of a much larger trend of fragmentation and polarization in Canada, rooted in socioeconomic grievances and exacerbated by key drivers: online "echo chambers" reinforcing distorted worldviews; general fatigue and frustration with Covid-19's socio-economic collateral, such as loss of income and social isolation; and divisive political rhetoric and discourse.
- Since 2014, IMVE-related attacks have resulted in 26 deaths and more than 40 injured on Canadian soil.



HOW IS IT IMPACTING COMMUNITIES?

- Extremism in all forms poses a threat to the safety and security of Canadians and to the fabric of our society. Violent extremism and terrorism are, fundamentally, repudiations of the democratic values of tolerance, respect, inclusion, and diversity. The impact of these threats is often felt most acutely by those in communities of colour and other traditionally marginalized groups.
- The spread of violent rhetoric and the manipulation and propagation of information can erode trust and confidence in our democratic systems and institutions, and polarize communities.
- In recent years, there has been a normalization or mainstreaming of the use of this kind of rhetoric, undermining societal resilience and cohesion. The rising threat posed to our communities and the fabric of our society and institutions makes it increasingly urgent to forge connections between government and impacted communities to facilitate a collective response.
- Violent extremist actions also have both an immediate and longer-term economic impact. The longer-term economic disruptions of extremism can impact individuals, communities and societies.

WORDS MATTER

- CSIS recognizes the importance of terminology when discussing threats to national security. CSIS took a leading role in developing new terminology to replace “right-wing” and “left-wing” extremism that more accurately depicts the broad range of violent ideological threats facing Canada. The new terminology – as defined here – better captures the complex landscape of this threat.
- One of the reasons that this terminology has changed is to provide a basis for dialogue with communities negatively affected by previous language. CSIS is mandated to protect the safety and security of all Canadians, and recognizes that dialogue, partnership and trust with Canadian communities is essential in achieving our operational objectives.
- These changes also avoid stigmatizing any particular community or group and reflect CSIS commitment to applying an intersectional lens to operational and policy decisions to identify and mitigate unintended impacts.



INDICATORS OF RADICALIZATION OR MOBILIZATION

Indicators of Radicalization:

- Association with people promoting a violent extremist ideology or movement, online or face-to-face.
- Statements supporting a terrorist ideology, movement or group.
- Hostility to opposition to violent extremist ideology, movement or groups.
- Extremist media consumption and or participation.
- Fascination with violence or past acts of terrorism

Indicators of Mobilization:

- Changes in baseline behaviour without context (whether activities or emotional state)
- Increasingly specific threats or planning activities
- Travel research and preparation
- Target reconnaissance or testing security at a target location

WHAT IS THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA DOING TO RESPOND?

The National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence outlines three priorities:

- 1. Building, sharing and using knowledge;**
- 2. Addressing radicalization to violence in the online space; and,**
- 3. Supporting interventions.**

- CSIS supports this strategy and the work of the [Canada Center for Community Engagement and Prevention of Violence](#) to promote coordination and collaboration with a range of actors to respond to local level realities and prevent radicalization. These partnerships include all levels of government, communities, community organizations, front-line workers and practitioners, academics, and law enforcement. These partnerships also serve to increase transparency and accountability.
- A strong democracy relies on Canadians having access to diverse and reliable sources of news and information so that they can form opinions, hold governments and individuals to account and participate in public debate.
- In response to the increase in false, misleading and inflammatory disinformation published online and through social media, the Government of Canada's Digital Citizen Initiative helps equip citizens with the tools and skills needed to critically assess online information – including extremist content.
- In addition to the above, the ***Criminal Code*** sets out a terrorist listings regime providing another tool for combatting terrorism and violent extremism. From 2020-2021 the Government listed six ideologically motivated violent extremist groups.

WHAT IS THE CSIS ROLE?

- CSIS continues to closely monitor the evolving threat posed by violent extremists and can employ a variety of national security tools as needed.
- CSIS investigates activities suspected of constituting threats to the security of Canada as defined in section 2 of the *CSIS Act*. With respect to IMVE threats specifically, CSIS seeks to determine whether: there is a threat of serious violence and the willingness to inspire others to kill; the actions are ideologically motivated; and those involved are attempting to affect societal change.
- CSIS works closely with its partners to understand the evolution of the extremist landscape and emerging threat environment so that it is positioned to provide assessments and advice to support action, including by law enforcement where appropriate.
- CSIS has a spectrum of response options available including:
 - o Awareness-raising and Engagement
 - o Analysis
 - o Investigation
 - o Threat Reduction
 - o Advice to Government
 - o Cooperation with Law Enforcement
- CSIS is committed to increasing dialogue with civil society and community organizations in order help develop national resilience and learn from the experiences of community groups who are deeply affected by the IMVE threat.



THE INTEGRATED TERRORISM ASSESSMENT CENTRE (ITAC)

ITAC is a federal organization responsible for assessing terrorism-related threats to Canada and Canadian interests. It is co-located with the headquarters of CSIS and operates under the provisions and authorities of the *CSIS Act*.

ITAC develops threat assessments at various classification levels that are based on classified and open-source information. These products are shared with both international and domestic partners, including law enforcement agencies. The assessments in turn support operational and strategic decision-making.

ITAC has three main lines of operation:

1. Reporting on terrorism threats to Canada;
2. Assessing and recommending the National Terrorism Threat Level (NTTL) for Canada; and,
3. Assessing and setting terrorism threat levels against Canadian interests worldwide.

WHAT CAN WE DO TOGETHER?

- The importance of involving civil society in a comprehensive and multidimensional response to the threat of terrorism and violent extremism has been underscored by leading researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners studying and countering this threat
- Experts have identified that two critical elements of a successful response to extremism include: education and resilient communities.
- Combatting this threat to Canada's national security requires a concerted and coordinated effort by intelligence services, law enforcement in cooperation and consultation with civic and community leaders. **We must work together with common purpose and a whole-of-society approach to protect our country and our communities against this insidious threat.**
- This complex issue is a societal and systemic problem that requires a holistic response involving all elements of civil society. This threat is eroding our social cohesion and threatening Canadian communities. Partnerships and dialogue will greatly enhance the effectiveness of our response to this threat and strengthen our collective resilience.
- CSIS is committed to working together with the public. Working closely with communities and our government partners across the country enables us to effectively fulfill our mandate and commitment to keep **all** Canadians safe.

CSIS AS A TRUSTED PARTNER

CSIS continues to take measures to improve diversity, equity and inclusion within the organization and to address systemic racism, bias and discrimination. Public disclosure of these measures and progress supports transparency, openness and accountability. CSIS is accountable to the public whose security we protect, and we are working to ensure our workforce reflects the diversity of Canada.

CSIS is committed to establishing itself as a trusted partner for Canadian communities and to building those partnerships through dialogue, mutual respect, and reciprocal action.



CONTACT US

To report non-immediate threat information related to national security, please contact CSIS by phone at **613-993-9620** 24/7 or visit our website: [Canadian Security Intelligence Service - Canada.ca](https://www.csis.gc.ca/canadian-security-intelligence-service-canada.ca)

CSIS is not a law enforcement agency. To report an **immediate threat** to national security, please call **911** or your local police department.

To discuss engagement, outreach and dialogue between your community or organization and CSIS, please contact the Academic Outreach & Stakeholder Engagement program at A0-LR@smtp.gc.ca or your local regional CSIS liaison team.

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