

An analysis of the Commission for Countering Extremism's call for evidence

Report 2: Tactics and harms



Executive summary

The Policy Institute at King's College London was asked by the Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism, Sara Khan, to conduct an analysis of data derived through the Commission's online call for evidence which ran from November 2018 to January 2019. The call for evidence produced 2,835 responses – including 278 responses submitted by those who identified as practitioners or who responded on behalf of an organisation.

This report contains findings from our analysis of these responses relating to the tactics viewed by practitioners to be extremist as well as the harms that emerge from those tactics. Specifically, it seeks to answer two questions:

1. What tactics do extremists use to achieve their objectives?
2. What are the harms caused by extremist incidents?

Key findings

Extremism is a highly contested and debated subject in the United Kingdom and one with numerous facets, themes and intricacies. Bearing this in mind, perhaps the most notable finding in our analysis was the consistency and coherence that emerged as a core feature in many practitioner responses to the call for evidence. We saw recurrent patterns emerging when practitioners discussed the wider harms that extremism and extremists produce. We also found significant degrees of consensus in the activities that practitioners saw to be extremist, as well as over the tactics viewed by practitioners to be extremist.

Our key messages from the study are:

- 1. Practitioners witnessed many types of extremism.** Far Right extremism was witnessed more often than any other form of extremism, including Muslim / Islamist extremism. Animal Rights extremism and Far Left extremism are emerging as concerns for practitioners.
- 2. Practitioners witnessed a huge range of activity that they classified as extremist,** describing more than 250 activities witnessed in their roles. These activities fall into five broad categories:
 - a. Forms of protest;
 - b. Hate and intimidation;
 - c. Restriction of rights and opportunities;
 - d. Strategies for building support;
 - e. Violence and criminal activities.

3. Practitioners witnessed more than 150 harms arising from extremism and extremists; these fall into six categories:

- a. Censorship and restriction of freedoms
- b. Crime, violence and harassment
- c. Delegitimising authority and undermining democracy
- d. Economic harms
- e. Harms to mental health and wellbeing
- f. Social divisions and intolerance

4. Practitioners appear to see the harms of extremism having a “whole of society” effect. We found considerable consistency across types of extremism when it came to where practitioners had witnessed extremism happening, and what activities practitioners had witnessed happening, suggesting that extremists exploit similar environments and pursue similar sets of tactics. Equally, we found that practitioners saw harms affecting different groups and permeating different settings in equal measure.

5. Practitioners are witnessing extremism primarily in the digital/media domain; other locations such as educational establishments are also of concern, but religious settings and prisons were mentioned less frequently.

6. Some forms of extremism seem to be targeting particular groups and types of individual, according to practitioners; for instance, there was a strong correlation between Animal Rights extremism and actions targeting private sector companies.

Introduction

In April 2019, the Lead Commissioner for Countering Extremism, Sara Khan, asked the Policy Institute at King's College London to analyse data the Commission had collected through the publicly available call for evidence which was run online from November 2018 to January 2019. 2,835 people responded to the questionnaire on the online form or offline (by email and post), 278 which identified themselves as practitioners or who responded on behalf of an organisation.

The Policy Institute was commissioned to conduct two pieces of analysis on the dataset: first, an analysis of the public's understanding of extremism. Second, an analysis of the tactics viewed by practitioners to be extremist, as well as the harms that emerge from those tactics.¹

This report contains the findings of our analysis of the responses of the 278 practitioner responses to the call for evidence. The Commission set two specific research questions to guide the research:

1. What tactics do extremists use to achieve their objectives?
2. What are the harms caused by extremist incidents?

We worked with Ipsos MORI to code the free text comments and responses provided by each practitioner in the call for evidence. In practice, this meant identifying a series of core themes ("codes") and tagging responses with these where themes were similar or creating new codes where new themes emerged. The process continued iteratively until all responses had been read; these codes were subsequently categorised, and quality assured by other members of the research team. A fuller description of the methodology can be found in the technical annex at the end of this report.

About the sample

244 practitioners responded online and 34 via email. Demographic information was only available for the group of 244 practitioners who responded online. These were dispersed fairly evenly across the country (see Figure 1) and came from a relatively wide range of age groups and demographics. The majority of respondents identified as White (about 80 per cent), with one in ten identifying as Asian-British, and small proportions of identifying as Mixed Ethnic, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British or Other Ethnic.

Practitioners responded from a broad range of sectors, with significant groups from faith-based workplaces (about four in five), education contexts (two thirds), civil society (about half); somewhat smaller numbers associated their work as being predominantly about countering extremism and terrorism (just under half), and very few came from local government (1 in 10), justice and law enforcement (less than 1 in 20).

¹ See *An analysis of the Commission for Countering Extremism's call for evidence – Report 1: Public understanding of extremism*

FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF PRACTITIONER RESPONDENTS ENGLAND, WALES AND NORTHERN IRELAND

- 0–10 respondents
- 11–20 respondents
- 21–30 respondents
- 31+ respondents

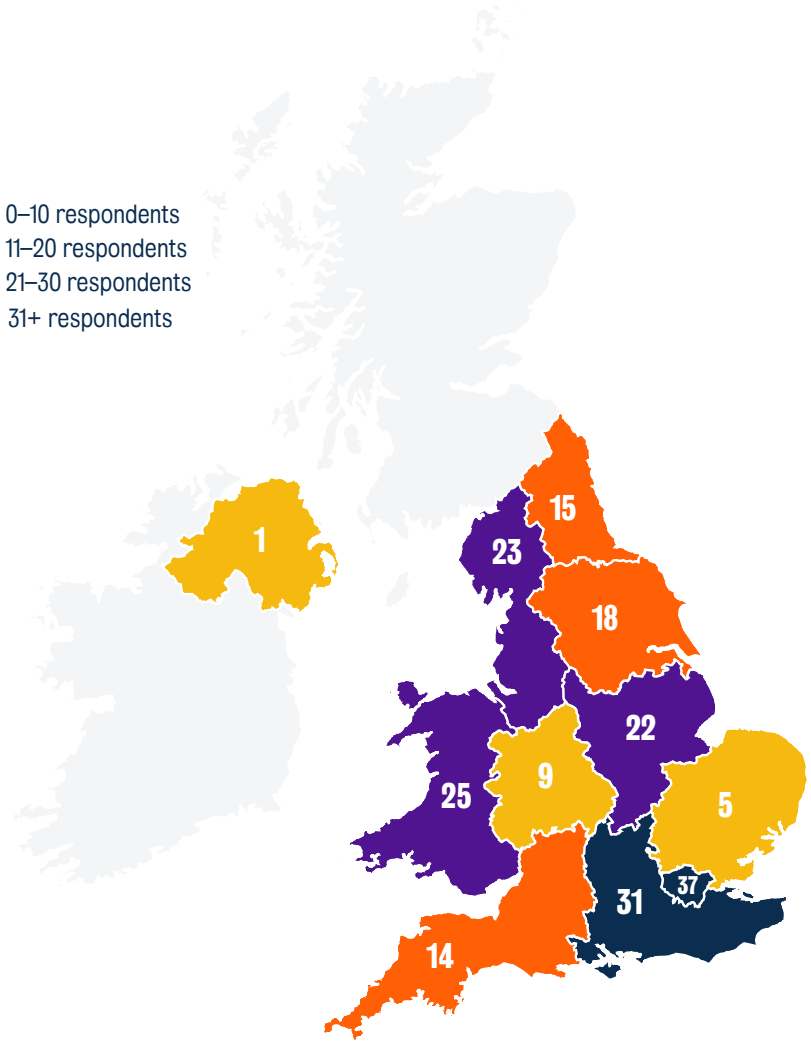
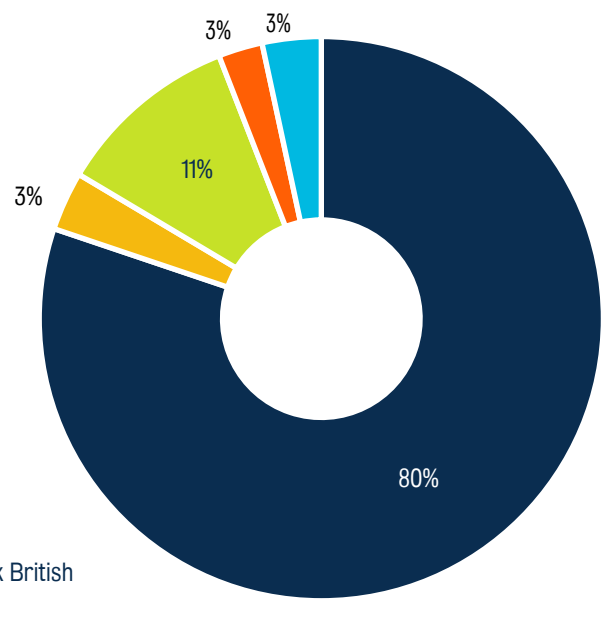


FIGURE 2: RESPONDENTS' ETHNICITY



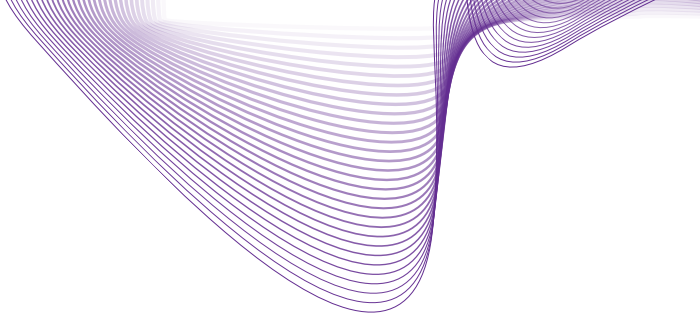


FIGURE 3: RESPONDENTS' AGE

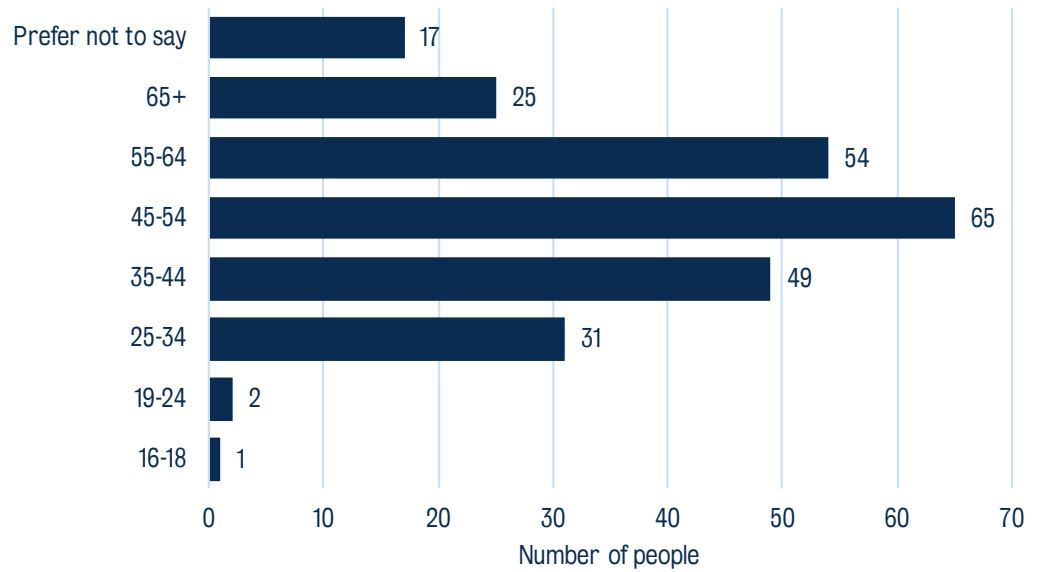


FIGURE 4: RESPONDENTS' GENDER

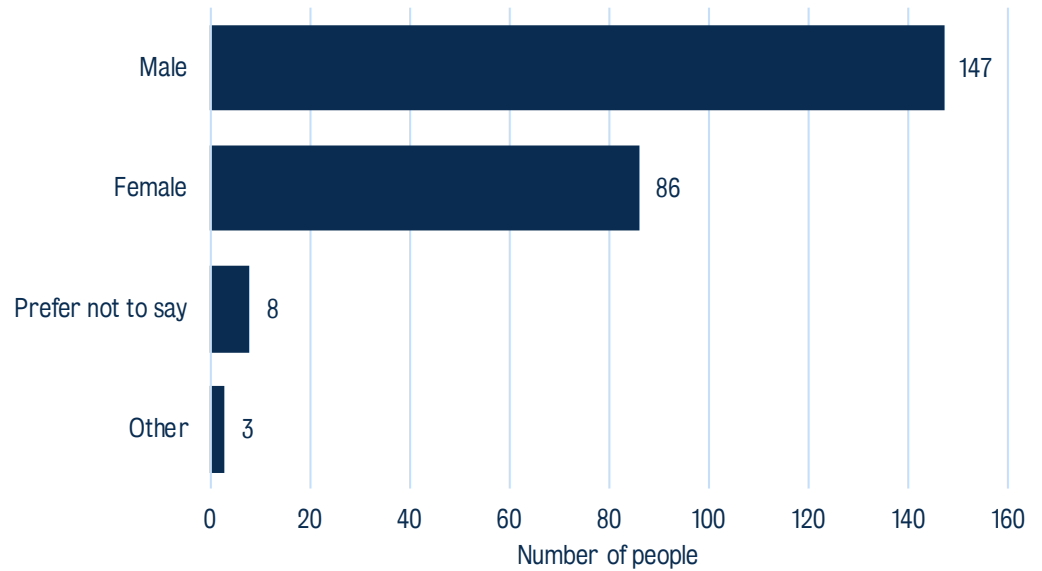
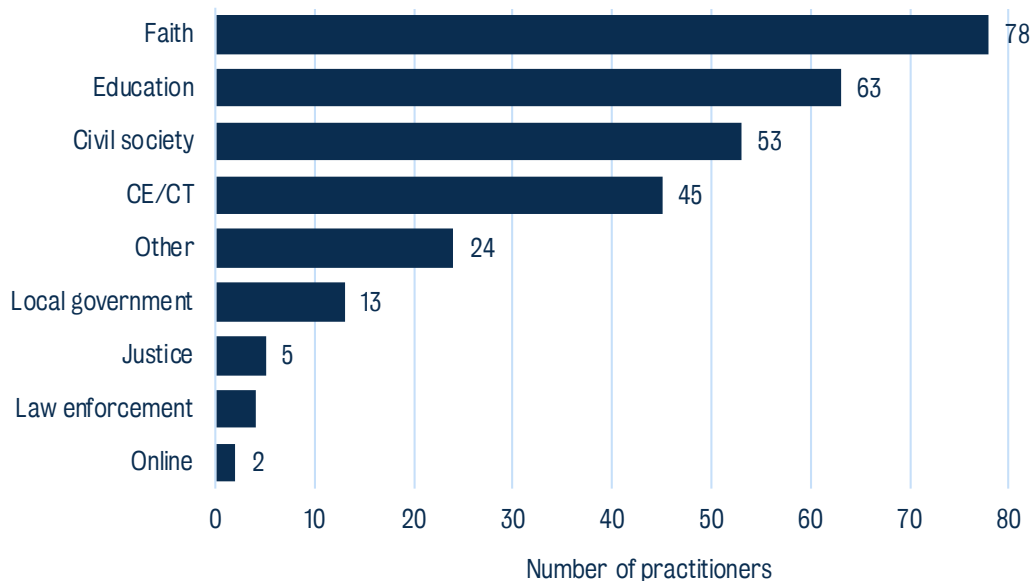


FIGURE 5: MAIN FOCUSES OF PRACTITIONERS' ROLES



While we see the findings of this work as robust, it is important to recognise that the call for evidence was voluntary, and that respondents self-identified as practitioners. Samples of this kind are often self-selecting – and it is important to recognise the potential effects this may have in terms of skewing results and findings. In particular, this kind of selection bias could have the effect of producing greater consensus and coherence across responses than would be found in a more representative or comprehensive sample.

Types of extremism

Practitioners were asked whether they had witnessed some or all of the following eleven types of extremism:

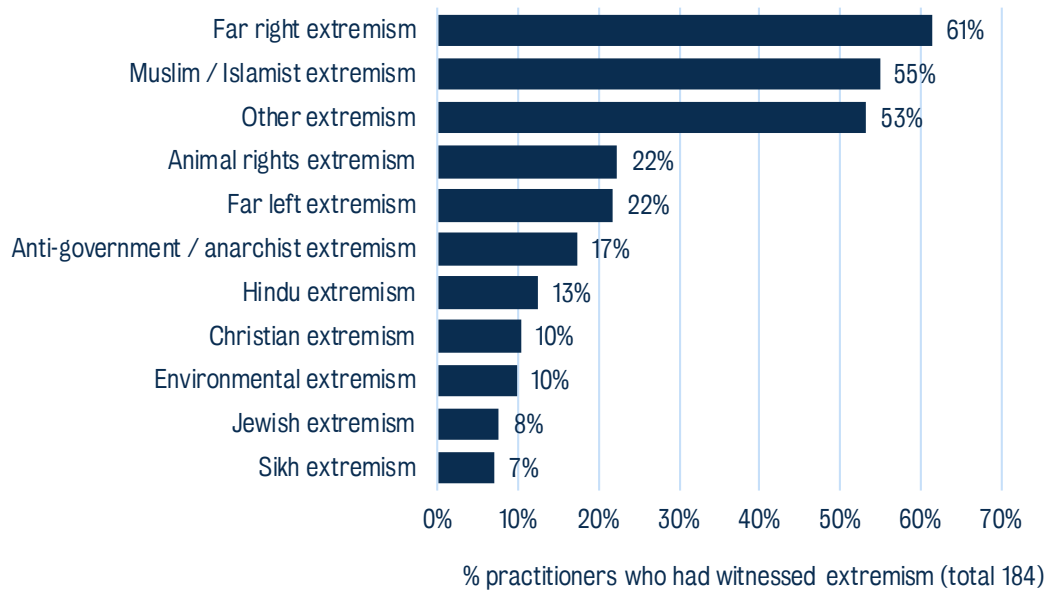
1. Animal Rights extremism
2. Anti-government / Anarchist extremism
3. Christian extremism
4. Environmental extremism
5. Far Right extremism
6. Far Left extremism
7. Hindu extremism
8. Jewish extremism
9. Muslim/Islamist extremism
10. Sikh extremism
11. Other extremism

As Figure 6 (over page) shows, despite the provenance of recent attacks in the UK, more practitioners witnessed Far Right extremism (6 in 10) than any other form of extremism, including Muslim / Islamist extremism (55 per cent). Animal Rights extremism, Far Left extremism (both 22 per cent) and Anti-government/Anarchist extremism (17 per cent) follow. Some forms of religious extremism were less widely witnessed: Hindu extremism (13 per cent), Christian extremism (10 per cent),

Environmental extremism (10 per cent), Jewish extremism (8 per cent) and Sikh extremism (7 per cent). About half of practitioners also witnessed extremism that fell outside these forms, and which they categorised under the more generic “Other forms of extremism” (such as honour based abuse, FGM, legalisation of abortion, forced marriage).

While the margins are fine, these results could have a variety of implications. They could suggest that Far Right extremism is genuinely on the rise in the UK and beyond, or, more simply, that more instances of Far Right extremism are being witnessed by practitioners. It may simply be that Far Right extremism is more visible than other forms of extremism, and that practitioners have therefore witnessed it more frequently. There may be a cognitive element to responses too, with Far Right extremism at the forefront of practitioners’ thinking and therefore eliciting more responses. In the absence of more data, this would be a fertile area for future analysis.

FIGURE 6: TYPES OF EXTREMISM AS SEEN BY PRACTITIONERS



Practitioner perceptions of extremism: harms

From the outset, the Commission emphasised their interest in understanding the wider set of social “harms” that extremism engenders. Their interest was to look beyond the obvious (but no less worrying) route through extremism to terrorism, and explore the wider damage that extremism causes to society.

We coded all practitioner responses to the following questions:

Q78. Can you describe the harms caused by extremism?

Q79. If you said “yes” or “not sure”, how would you describe these harms?

Q83. Have you seen evidence of extremism online causing harm?

Q87. Does extremism cause harm to society and its institutions more widely e.g. to democracy?

In this sample of responses, we identified more than 150 individual harms, ranging from abuse and exploitation, through misogyny and mistrust to cyber-crime, violence and terrorism. We found practitioners mentioning quite specific harms of extremism on individuals and groups of individuals (e.g. abuse, segregation and isolation of ethnic groups, and physical harm), as well as wider and more indirect harms of extremism (e.g. undermining democracy, undermining values, discrimination, and fear mongering). Questions were split between general harms, harms caused online and harms in society. Responding to these questions, practitioners focused on the online environment, discussing the spread of misinformation, the polarisation of discourse, radicalisation, cyber-bulling and grooming.

From these multiple harms and themes, we worked to aggregate these into simpler typology of harms caused by extremists and extremism. As with the discussion of activities seen to be extremist, we are not saying that anyone of these is tantamount to being an extremist; rather we are saying that practitioners see the extremism as engendering some or all of the following harms.

Most pervasive (almost 9 in 10) were those practitioners who saw extremism driving social divisions, intolerance and radicalisation. As one practitioner described it:

“Extremism stops people thinking rationally and encourages them to ignore the views of others. Extremism can also encourage people to take action that is illegal and hate filled and lead them to discard rule of law and the principles of democracy that underpin our society.”

A large number of practitioners (nearly 8 in 10) also saw extremism as generating different forms of crime, including harassment, violence and ultimately terrorism. Respondents said, for instance, that “extremism can also encourage people to take action that is illegal and hate-filled and lead them to discard rule of law and the principles of democracy that underpin our society”. Equally, violence acts as a deterrent too, according to another practitioner: “this abuse of our elected representatives can threaten to deter others from standing for elected roles and

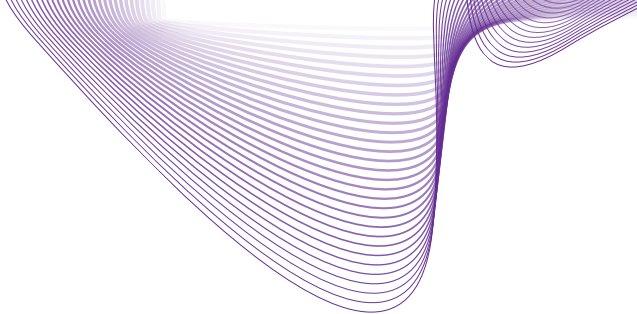


FIGURE 7: TYPOLOGY OF HARMS CAUSED BY EXTREMISM

1. Social divisions and intolerance	2. Crime, violence and harassment	3. Mental health and wellbeing	4. Censorship and restriction of freedom	5. Delegitimising authority & undermining democracy	6. Economic harms
Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Brainwashing – Radicalisation – Dehumanising – Hatred, eg towards other faiths and communities – Breeding ignorance/ignorant attitudes – Othering people – Growth in misogyny and racism – Mistrust of others 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Experience of abuse, harassment, threats – Increase in criminal activity, hate speech – Exploitation – Grooming – Physical harm and injuries to individuals – Terrorism – Cyber crime – Greater threat of violence 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Impact of bullying on individuals – Emotional harm and distress – Mental and psychological harm – Loss of wellbeing – Effects of intimidation and fear – Physical harms and injuries – Loss of self-worth 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Breakdown of debate and communication – Censorship – Loss or restriction of education – Spreading/acceptance of misinformation/conspiracy theories – Restricted availability of information – Uptake of fake news, lies, disinformation 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Influencing actions of government – Spreading mistrust of institutions – Political disengagement – Undermining government, democracy and rule of law – Undermining the reputation/influence of the UK 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Damage to businesses – Loss of employment or employment prospects – Damage to personal finances – Undermining the economy – Loss of revenue from tax

therefore derail the democratic process. This escalation of violence has increased recently”.

There was considerable concern (nearly half of practitioners) about the negative mental health effects of extremism, both at a social level and an individual level, such as the “intimidation of a group or individuals within society”.

For some practitioners (about 4 in 10) who responded to the call for evidence, extremism brings about censorship, the attenuation of political space and restriction of rights. One respondent said that the harms caused by extremism include: “a reluctance to engage in meaningful discussion or challenge with those who do not share their extremist views”.

A smaller proportion of practitioners (about 1 in 3) focused on the wider negative effects of extremism on the democratic system, saying that “social media posts from extremists have put a wedge between communities and fuelled mistrust in government”. This is a complex theme which runs through the responses. For some respondents, extremism fundamentally challenges the moral and political authority of government and through this challenges democracy.

At the heart of these responses was the idea that extremism can present very difficult moral choices on the political class, and through this risk key tenets of democracy such as free speech. Others also saw hatred and the threat of violence as a direct harm on politicians and politics. One respondent for instance, said:

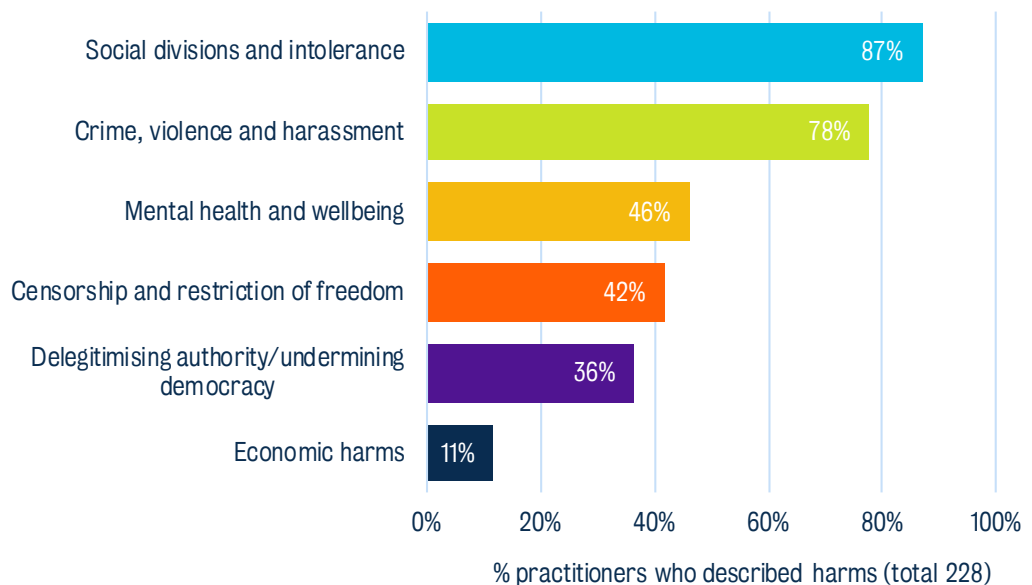
“Hateful abuse, death threats, and threats of violence towards public figures are increasingly common, as partisans seek to intimidate those who they believe oppose their own views. This is true on the far-left, far-right, and on both sides of the Brexit divide. Analysis of far-left Twitter accounts shows journalists and

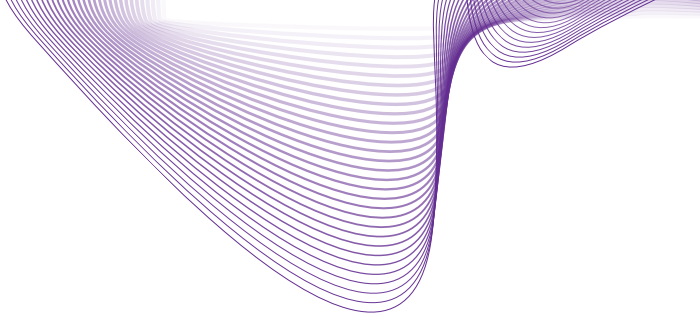
MPs who criticise Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, especially on the issue of antisemitism, are targeted for abuse. Harriet Harman MP has admitted that this online abuse affects the actions of MPs, while journalists have told us privately that it's deterred them from writing stories which could trigger further abuse."

The smallest section of practitioners (about 1 in 10) saw extremism causing economic harms, including affecting business, "economic harm can also be caused through disruption to business during for example marches/ terrorist event [sic]". Another practitioner described economic harms as effecting the employment prospects of a particular group:

"Boys may receive no secular education past the age of 13 (in theory, home-schooling, but this will be extremely limited or non-existent). Girls will be prevented or discouraged from taking A-Levels. In many communities, it would be unthinkable to attend university, and attempting this will result in shunning and expulsion, and often from the family. Lost family status results in loss of marriage prospects for other children, if one child dissents. No proper education may result in limited autonomy, illiteracy and innumeracy, and consequent poor job prospects or a lifetime of benefit dependency. This undermines the community's sustainability."

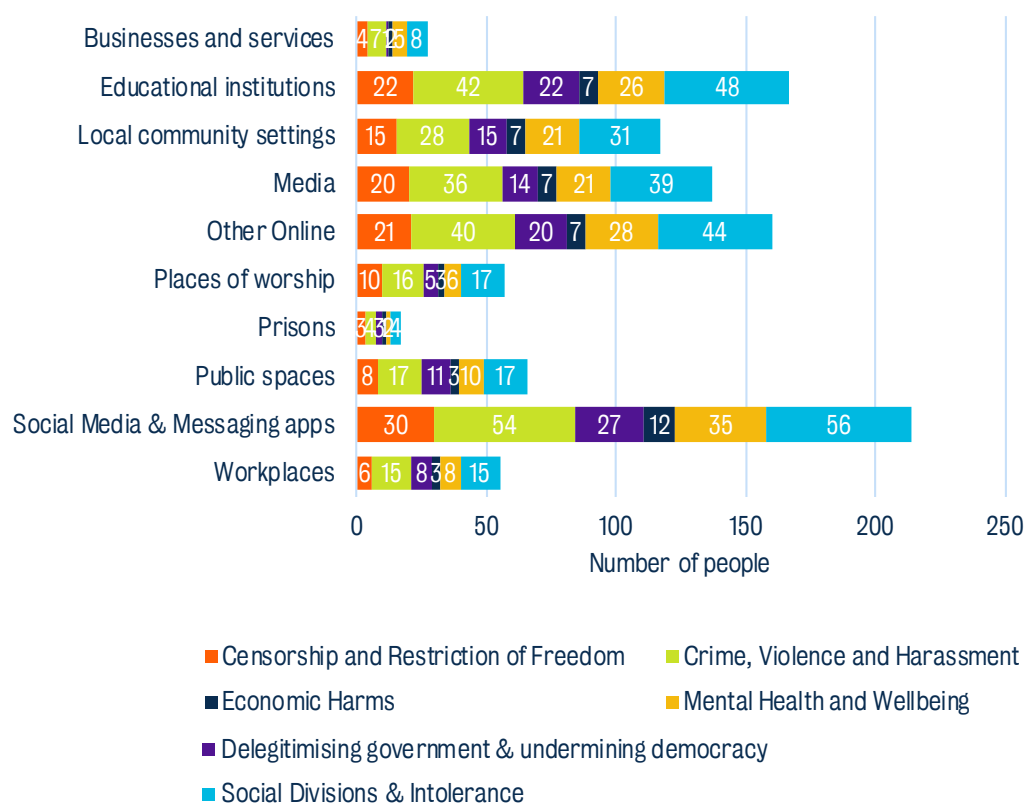
FIGURE 8: HARMS MOST WITNESSED BY PRACTITIONERS





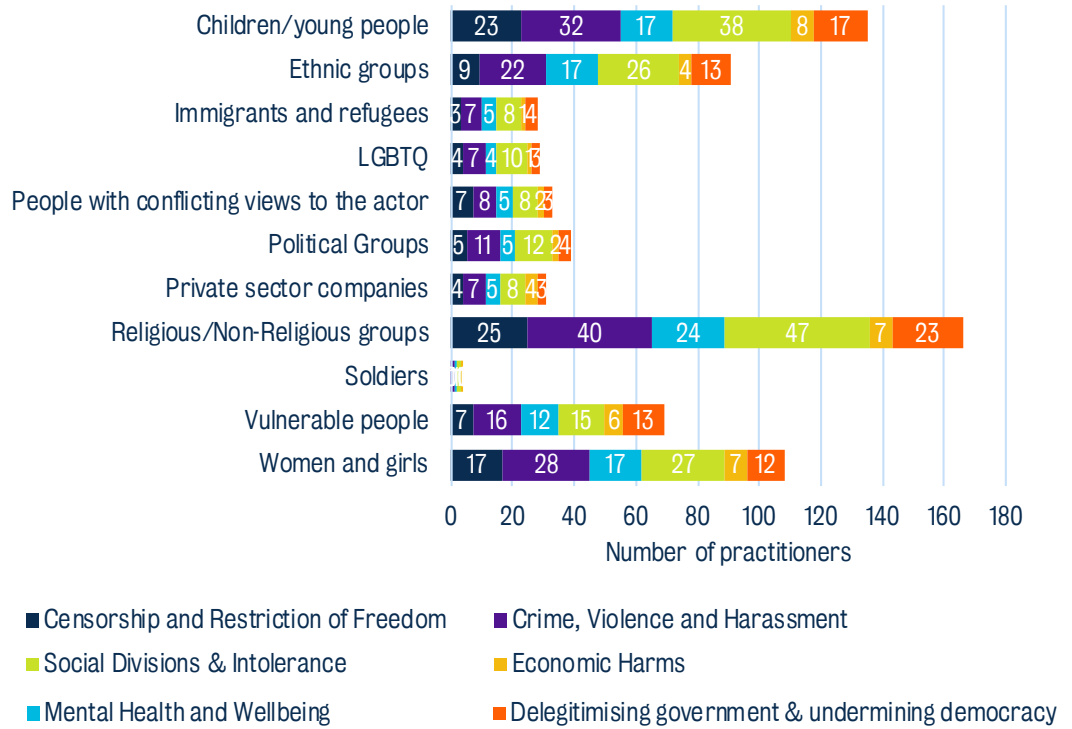
We were also interested in testing whether practitioners associated particular harms of extremism with specific locations and environments. For instance, whether there were particular harms to mental health and wellbeing in educational institutions or on social media. In practice, we found there to be a notable consistency of harms across the different environments. Although the sample size is small, and further work will be needed to establish this reliably, this may suggest that the harms of extremism pervade institutions and environments uniformly. To put it another way, it might suggest that there is a “whole of society” effect from extremism – one that permeates different locations equally regardless of how “open” or “closed” they are.

FIGURE 9: HARMS ACCORDING TO ENVIRONMENT



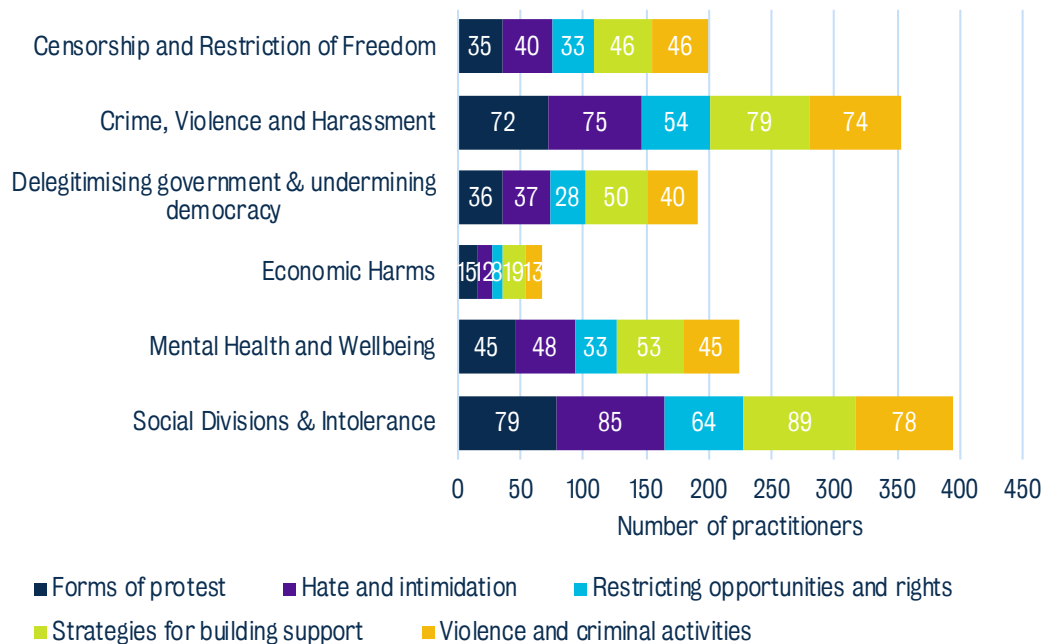
We were also interested in whether specific effects of extremism harmed target groups in quite specific ways. For instance, whether practitioners strongly associated the social divisions caused by extremism with effects on ethnic groups, or harms to mental health and wellbeing with effects on vulnerable people. To ascertain this, we explored the associations that practitioners made between particular targets and specific harms of extremism. Again, the sample size is too small to produce reliable findings and further work is needed, but there seems to be some uniformity of harms across targets, suggesting that the harms of extremism effect different groups in very similar ways. In other words, that the harms of extremism have a “whole of society” effect.

FIGURE 10: TARGETS ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICULAR HARMS



We also wanted to test whether the practitioners associated the activities they saw as extremist with specific harms from our typology. Our analysis allowed us to explore the associations between harms and activities and we found a relatively uniform association across all activities. Again, the sample size is too small to provide reliable results and further work will be needed, but this suggests that despite a variety of different activities, practitioners see the harms of extremism as being evenly generated by extremist activity.

FIGURE 11: HARMS ASSOCIATED WITH ACTIVITIES



Practitioner perceptions of extremism: activities



We were asked by the Commission to analyse the dataset to ascertain practitioner experiences of the wider set of activities in which extremists engage. We also looked at the different locations in which extremists were operating, as well as the targets of their activities.

The purpose of these intersecting elements of the analysis was to give us the fullest picture of extremism as practitioners witness it in the UK. We were interested in answering questions about the kinds of activities that practitioners saw as extremist, against whom these activities were targeted and where they took place. We were also keen to break this down by extremist type, to see whether practitioners associated particular types of extremism with specific locations, targets or activities.

Our purpose was to help the commission decide whether specific forms of extremism would require tailored responses that, for instance, focused on a specific set of locations or activities. In practice, our findings about specific extremism types are based on relatively small numbers and are therefore inconclusive, but they do suggest that this is a fertile and valuable area for further work.

Extremist activities and actions

Activities were largely captured in responses relating to different types of extremism. Respondents were asked:

“For X type of extremism [where X refers to one of the 11 extremism types shown in the previous section], what attitudes, activities or behaviours have you witnessed that you regard as extremist?”

Across these answers, we found more than 250 different activities and actions mentioned by practitioners. The wide variety of activities encompassed a whole variety of actions from holding conspiracy theories and marches, through hate speech FGM, enforced segregation all the way to crime, violence and terrorism.

From this multiplicity of actions, we identified five broad categories of activity that practitioners saw to be extremist. Practitioners witnessed, in different ways and of different types, a.) forms of protest; b.) hate and intimidation; c.) restricting opportunities and rights; d.) strategies for building support; and lastly, e.) violence and criminal activities.

FIGURE 12: CATEGORIES OF EXTREMIST ACTIVITIES WITNESSED BY PRACTITIONERS

1. Strategies for building support	2. Hate and intimidation	3. Forms of protest	4. Violence and criminal activities	5. Restricting opportunities and rights
<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Spreading disinformation, conspiracy theories, propaganda - Recruitment - Grooming - Building of networks - Establishing organisational infrastructure - Cultivating a shared group identity - Fundraising 	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hate speech and verbal abuse - Hate crimes - Intimidation - Bullying - Threatening words or behaviours - Emotional abuse - Harassment and trolling - Stalking 	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organised protests, marches and demonstrations - Complaints to authorities - Legal proceedings - Obstructions, such as boycotts, blockades, disruption - Actions taken against government and local authorities 	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acts of terrorism - Physical harm to individuals, including FGM - Illegal activities - Damage to property - Killings - Violence - Gang fights - Joining extremist movements abroad 	<p>Including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Forced segregation or division - Suppressing individual freedoms, eg through forced marriage, silencing, misgendering - Refusing to follow national curriculum - Refusing access to the internet - Systemic discrimination, eg through bias, unfair dismissals

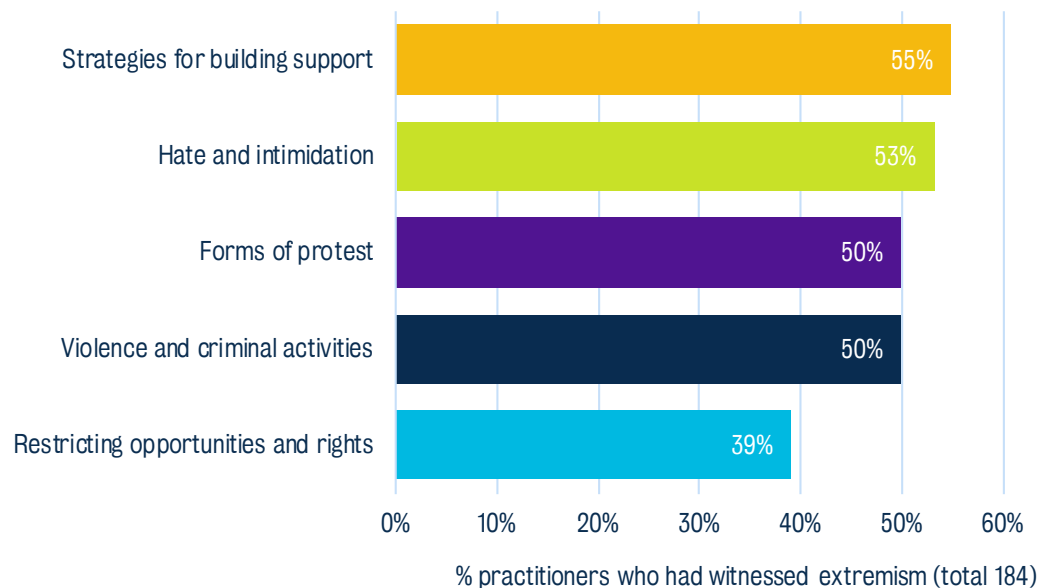
Clearly, some of these are not activities that extremists alone engage in. Indeed, some of these activities, such as those in Boxes 1 and 3 such as protests and demonstrations, are the mark of healthy democracies. However, in describing these activities, practitioners appear to be suggesting that extremists can co-opt democratic mechanisms for a variety of reasons, including to provide the veneer of legitimacy to their cause, not least in an effort to build support. For example, one practitioner summarised extremist activities in the UK as:

“The attempt... to recruit people to their cause. This includes media, community leaders, faith preachers and politicians. Some try to take over institutes and places of worship.”

For clarity, we are not suggesting that engaging in any one of these is tantamount to “being an extremist”; rather these are the constellation of activities that practitioners witness extremists engaging. Extremism may involve some, or all, of these activities, but they are not unique to extremism.

Indeed, not all these activities were witnessed equally. About half the sample of practitioners witnessed four categories of extremism, and a smaller proportion experienced extremists actively seeking to restrict rights and opportunities.

FIGURE 13: EXTREMIST ACTIVITIES PRACTITIONERS HAVE WITNESSED



Hate and intimidation was a common theme throughout practitioner responses. We saw numerous references to intimidating and abusing other groups, especially minorities. This involved the use of hate speech and hate crimes, as well as the use of threatening words and stalking. One practitioner stated that there is a:

“Rise in religiously or racially motivated hate crimes. But more worryingly I have spoken to many local Muslims (particularly females) who tell me that abusive comments are so commonplace that they simply don’t report them. It has become the norm.”

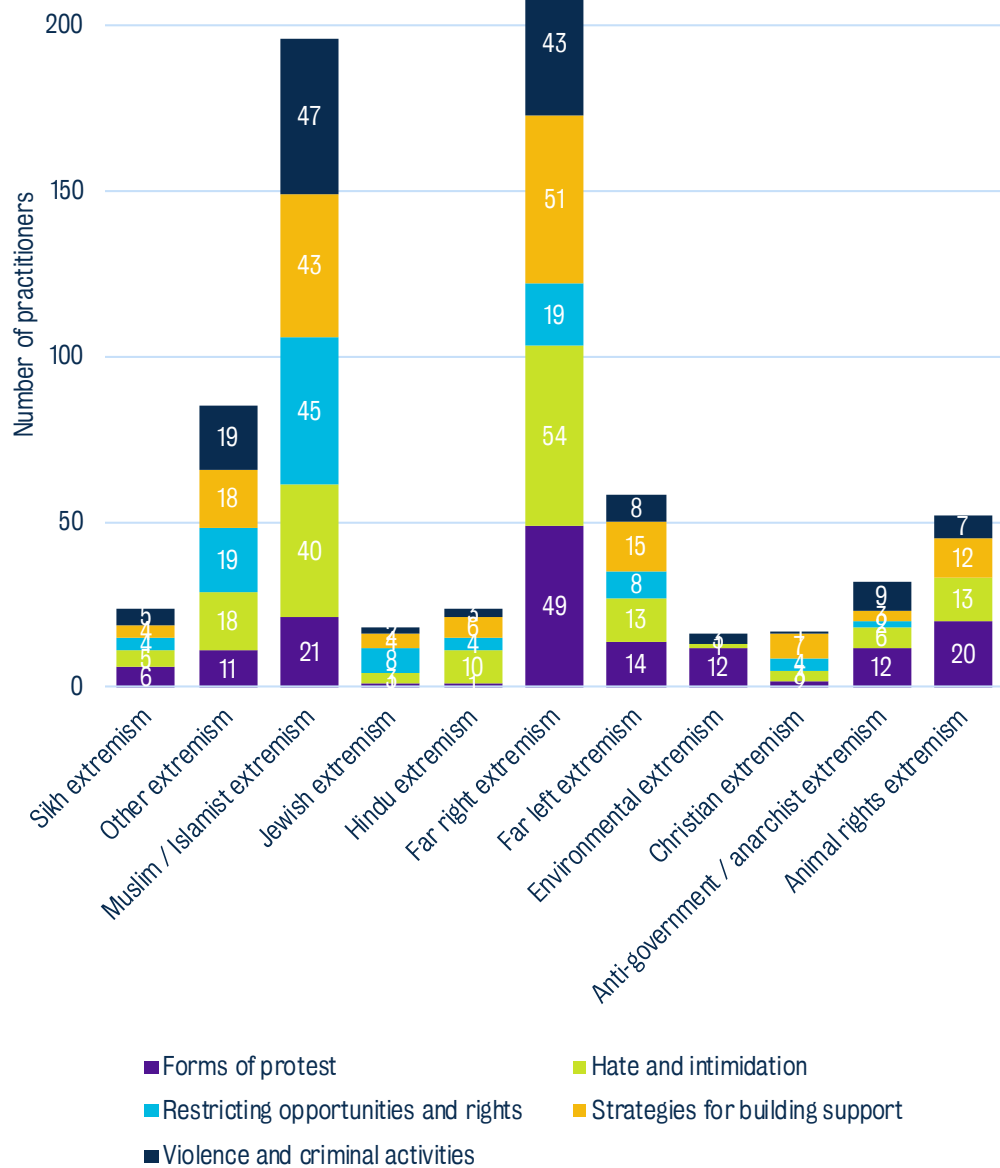
There was also a focus on violence and other criminal acts; practitioners saw many extremists engaging in illicit and illegal activities including gang warfare, damage to property and, ultimately, terrorist activity, but also discussed the dissemination of these acts through “TV news coverage of bombings and murder”.

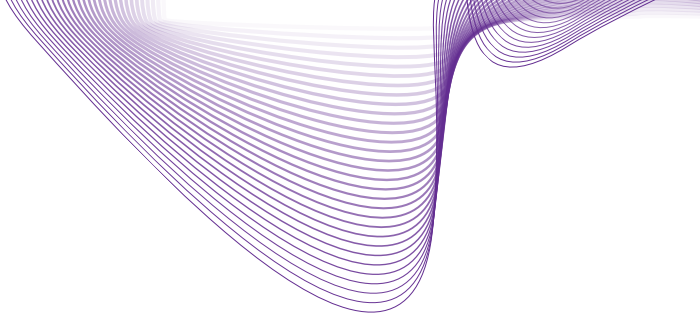
Many practitioners saw extremists attempting to recruit and mobilise existing and new supporters, doubtless to expand and grow their following. Practitioners spoke of a variety of strategies for building support, including the grooming of minors and dissemination of propaganda. In the context of Islamist extremism, one practitioner described this at universities, where “student societies where extremist ideas are presented/propagated”, for example. Practitioners also described the use of propaganda: “a lot of the propaganda is aimed at drawing on one’s support for religion”.

Finally, an important, but quite subtle, theme that emerged was extremist activities that sought to restrict the opportunities and rights available to others. These activities range from preventing women attending university, to refusing to follow a national curriculum on sex education. But it also included denying people access to information, for example as one practitioner described Jewish extremism:

“Ultra-orthodox Jewish media often contains biased/one-sided reporting, and is often censored to remove pictures of women’s faces. Adverts must also comply, so those wishing to advert in local news sheet publications (that are put through letter boxes) only photographs of men can be used. These religious publications are often the only permitted source of information (no internet access, no other publications, etc).”

FIGURE 14: ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH TYPES OF EXTREMISM





Our analysis allowed us to explore whether specific types of extremism engaged in specific activities. Although the numbers for each type of extremism are low and it is difficult to infer significant meaning from the results, we found minor differences between the activities within extremism. For example, activities that restricted opportunities and rights were slightly more associated more with Islamist extremism than with Far Right extremism. The latter, in turn, was seen to be using forms of protest slightly more frequently than Islamist extremism, as was Animal Rights extremism and Environmental extremism. Activities that involve hate and intimidation are particularly associated with Far Right extremism. To be clear, these are fine margins, but in our view, there is important further work to be done in understanding whether particular “types” of extremists engage in particular activities because if this is the case then in terms of countering extremism, it would suggest that different forms of extremism will require tailored and bespoke approaches.

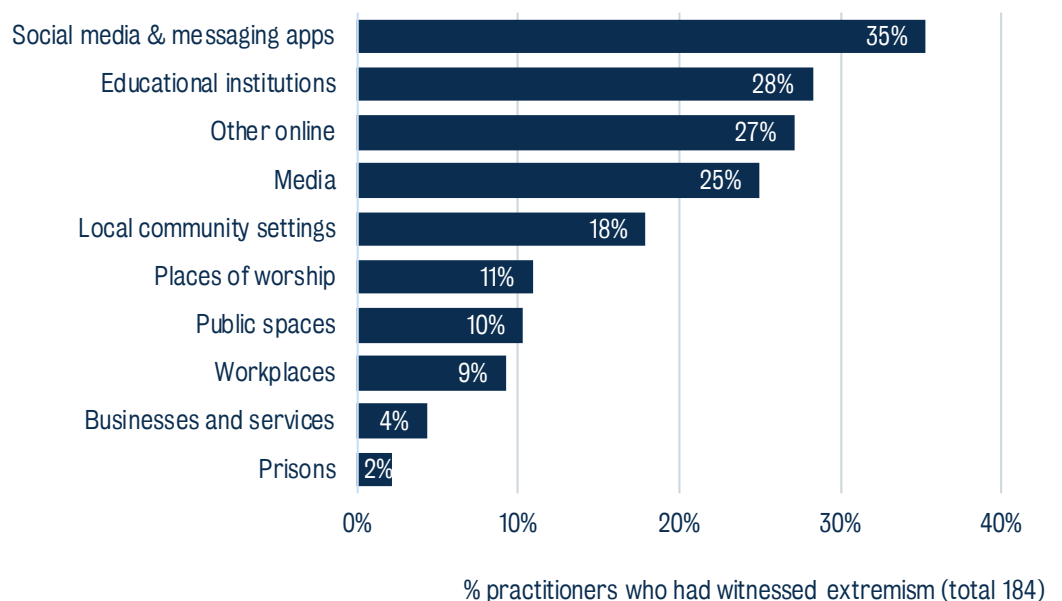
Locations of extremism

The research team coded for locations mentioned in each practitioner response to the “For X type of extremism [where X refers to one of the 11 extremism types shown in the previous section], what attitudes, activities or behaviours have you witnessed that you regard as extremist” question.

There were high levels of consistency in responses, even across extremism type. The primary space where extremism is witnessed by practitioners is in the digital domain, namely online spaces (a quarter of practitioners had witnessed extremism online) or through social media and other messaging apps (where more than one in three practitioners had witnessed extremism).

FIGURE 15: LOCATIONS OF EXTREMISM

Local Community Settings include respondents discussing events taking place “In the Community” generally, or in community centers. Businesses and Services includes locations such as restaurants, supermarkets, livestock markets and so on.



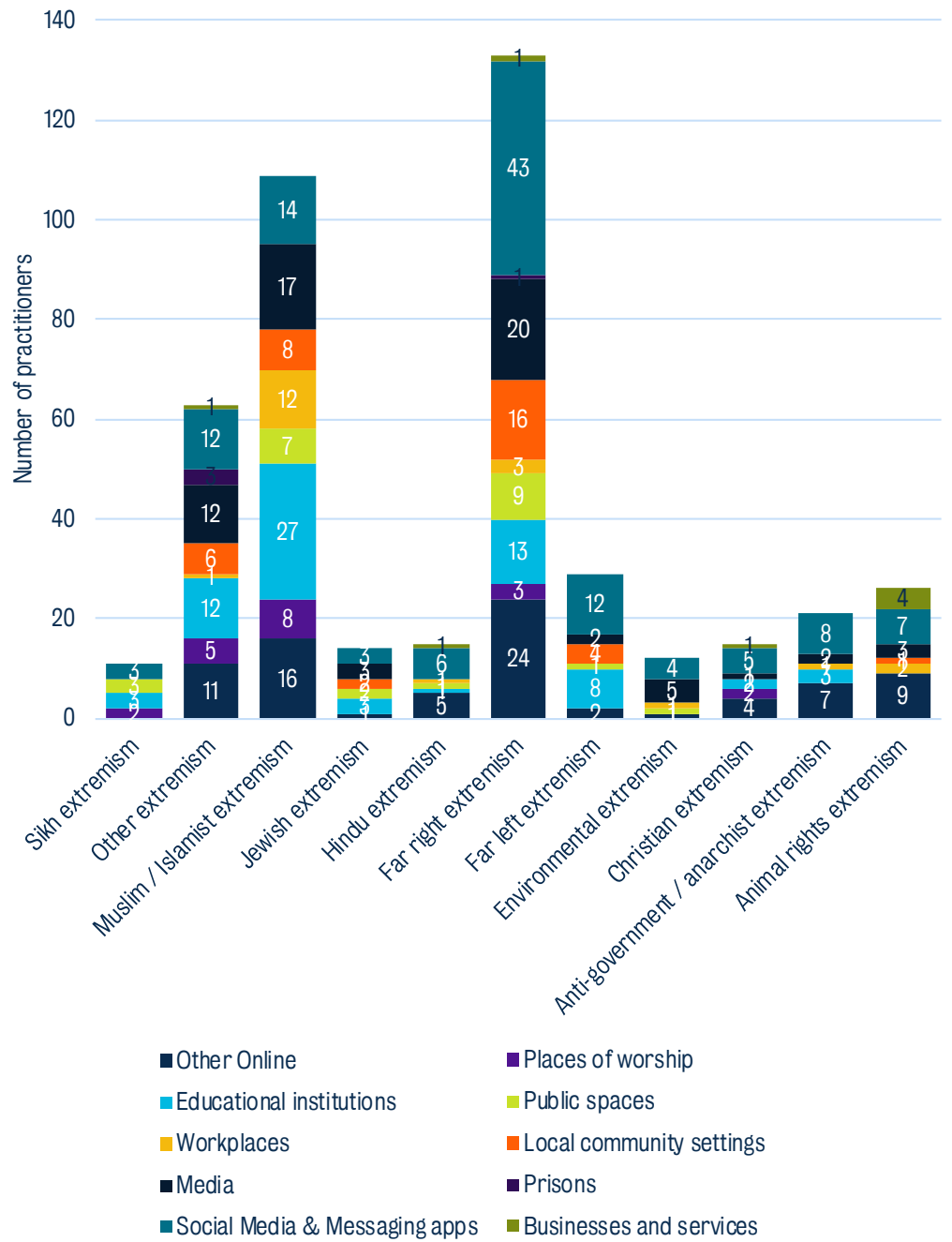
Offline, about a quarter of practitioners had witnessed extremism in educational institutions and in the media; other more generic spaces such as local community settings (one in five), public spaces (one in ten practitioners), workplaces (just under one in ten) also emerged in practitioner responses. Places of worship were also mentioned, but only one in ten practitioners had witnessed extremism in these settings.

Clearly, practitioners' experience of extremism will likely be limited to the areas in which they work, but it is notable that well over half (60 per cent) of practitioners had witnessed extremism in some form in the digital domain, such as social media and other online spaces. Again, it is not clear whether this indicates extremism is shifting from the physical to the digital, or whether this is how and where practitioners are looking for (and finding) extremism.

We also looked at the extent to which extremism took place in open environments (those that are completely accessible by others), closed environments (those that are completely closed to others) and semi-closed environments (those that are partially open and partially closed). Just over half of the mentions of locations referred to places that are closed or semi-closed environments, such as places of worship, educational institutions and local community settings. The remaining references to location referred to extremism taking place in open environments, such as online, in public spaces and in the media.

In contrast to the activities associated with specific types of extremism, there was no significant variation between various forms of extremism. Again, this might be a consequence of the small sample size, but it may suggest that extremism and extremists operate in relatively uniform settings.

FIGURE 16: FORMS OF EXTREMISM ASSOCIATED WITH PARTICULAR ENVIRONMENTS



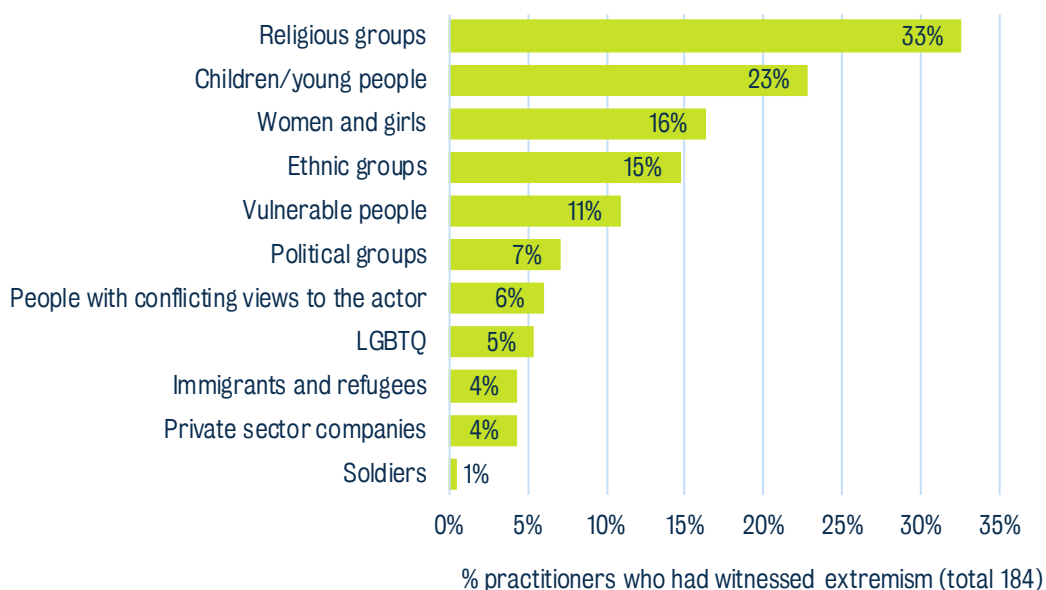
Targets of extremism

We coded these questions for the groups that are affected by extremists through their activities. Religious and ethnic groups were seen by practitioners to be most affected by extremism – indeed, these groups were often spoken of in terms of victim status. For example, one respondent said that:

“Whilst anyone can be targeted by extremism, the main harm and hate I see evidence of is Far Right and directed at minority communities - this is reported by minority communities across the board, is often in verbal abuse and incidents that would never be investigated as a crime but is causing real harm to people. The above needs to include Disability and also not forget Gypsy and Traveller (included in ethnic minorities but often not focused on.”

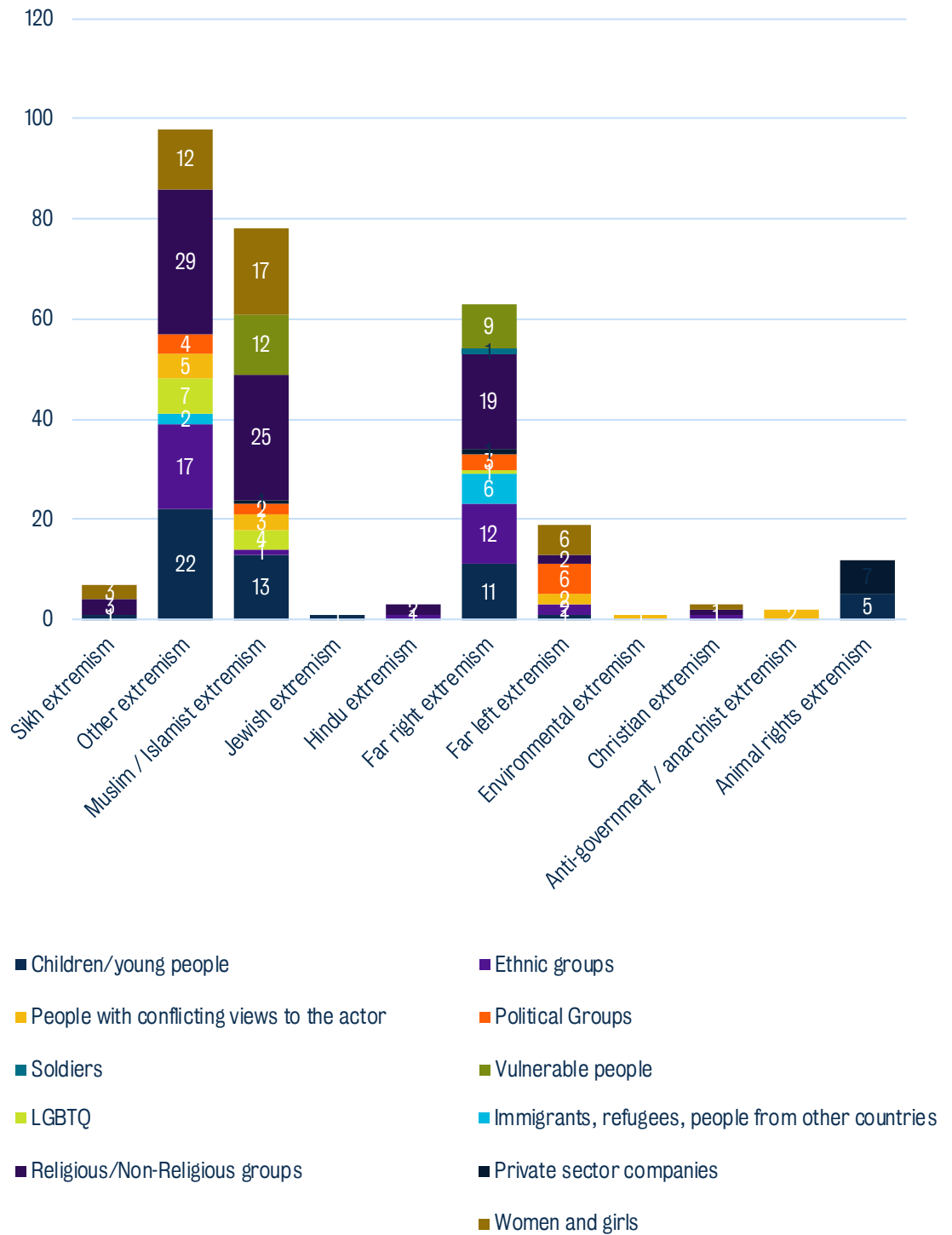
About half of practitioners (48 per cent) who had witnessed extremism saw it affecting a religious or ethnic group; other groups that were the target of extremist activity were children and young people (23 per cent) and women and girls (15 per cent).

FIGURE 17: TARGETS OF EXTREMISM



Although numbers are, again, small and it is difficult to infer significantly, practitioners seem to associate some forms of extremism with particular groups of targets. There seems to be, for instance, a correlation between Far Right extremism and Islamist extremism and the targeting of religious groups. Further research will be required to understand the full implications of this, but it suggests that practitioners see some forms of extremism as targeting specific groups.

FIGURE 18: FORMS OF EXTREMISM ASSOCIATED WITH TARGETS OF EXTREMISM



Practitioner perceptions of extremism: tactics

The Commission tasked us with using the dataset to explore the tactics that practitioners viewed as extremist. These perceptions were largely captured in responses to:

Q103. What tactics do extremists and their leaders use to achieve their objectives, including: to mainstream their views? to recruit people to their cause? to respond to those opposing them? If you are talking about a specific type of extremism, please specify. (750 word limit)

Although there is clear overlap with the activities that extremists engage in, this question focused specifically on the strategies and tactics that extremists conduct to achieve particular outcomes. Specifically, respondents were asked:

“What tactics do extremists and their leaders use to achieve their objectives, including: to mainstream their views? to recruit people to their cause? to respond to those opposing them?”

Our coding of this showed a broad range of different tactics viewed seen by practitioners to be extremist. For instance, some respondents discussed building institutional legitimacy by leveraging existing political infrastructure:

“Extremist groups never emerge out of nowhere – they take elements that are in the mainstream and then build on them. The violent forms of Salafi-jihadism developed out of the highly sectarian and dogmatic but non-violent forms of Salafism. Violent neo-Nazism grows similarly out of xenophobia and everyday racism that are present in mainstream discourse – the right-wing press and UKIP.”

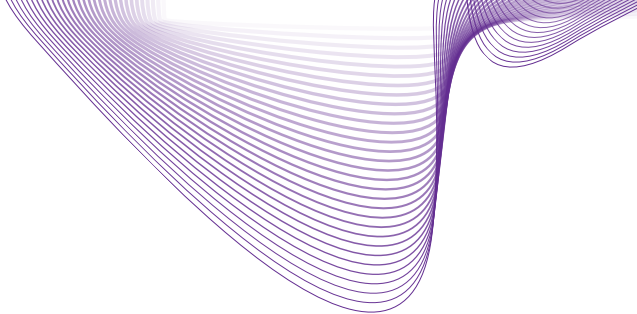
Other respondents discussed the influencing of people, in particular vulnerable people:

“I was recently at an event where a young man shared his story of being radicalised into believing extremist far-right views. He began talking to a friend of a friend online, which led to sharing extremist views on Facebook and creating a page supporting the EDL. Eventually he was supported to look deeper into these views and come to his own conclusions through a Channel mentor. Those who are vulnerable (identity crisis, needing to belong, troubles at home, etc) can be reached easily by those wishing to radicalise others to their cause.”

And others again discussed generating of support for ideas by distorting information:

“Extremists use gaps and conflation in evidence, half-truths and ‘fake news’, pre-existing fears and stigma, social and economic isolation and other factors in exploiting more vulnerable or more ignorant people around them or across the internet.”

Practitioners identified over 100 different tactics and mechanisms that they saw as extremist. We worked to group these into four broad categories of tactics and strategies witnessed by practitioners. These are a.) recruiting people; b.) generating



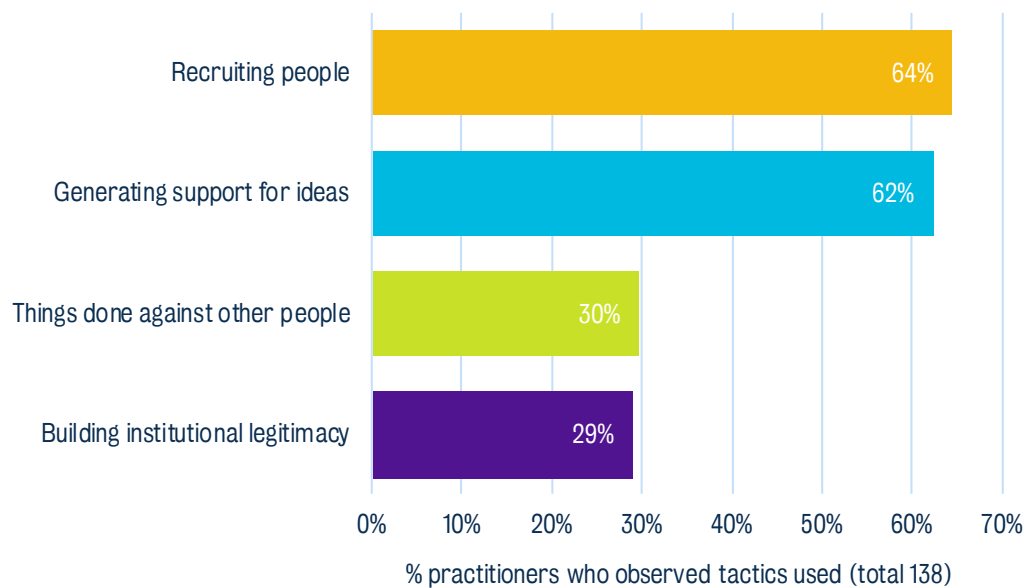
support for ideas; c.) things done against other people; and d.) building institutional legitimacy.

FIGURE 19: FOUR CATEGORIES OF TACTICS VIEWED AS EXTREMIST

1. Recruiting people	2. Generating support for ideas	3. Things done against other people	4. Building institutional legitimacy
Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Using personalised approaches to recruitment - Recruitment online - Offering guarantees of anonymity and secrecy - Radicalisation - Targeting vulnerable/marginalised people - Grooming - Adopting supportive, caring persona 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Distorting/restricting access to information or conflicting opinion - Aligning with topical or popular concerns - Grievance narratives - 'Us and them' - Campaigns and protests - Through segregation and division - Charismatic leaders 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hate speech/racism - Threats - Intimidation - Targeted harassment - Trolling - Fear mongering - Violence - Facilitating and funding attacks - Incitement to hate/violence 	Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leveraging existing infrastructures, eg entryism - Appealing visuals and branding - Endorsement from community leaders and influencers - Use of political infrastructure - Establishing organisational infrastructure, eg via meetings, legal support

According to practitioners, the main tactics used by extremists were generating support for ideas and recruiting people, with less focus on doing things against other people and building institutional legitimacy.

FIGURE 20: MOST-USED EXTREMIST TACTICS, ACCORDING TO PRACTITIONERS



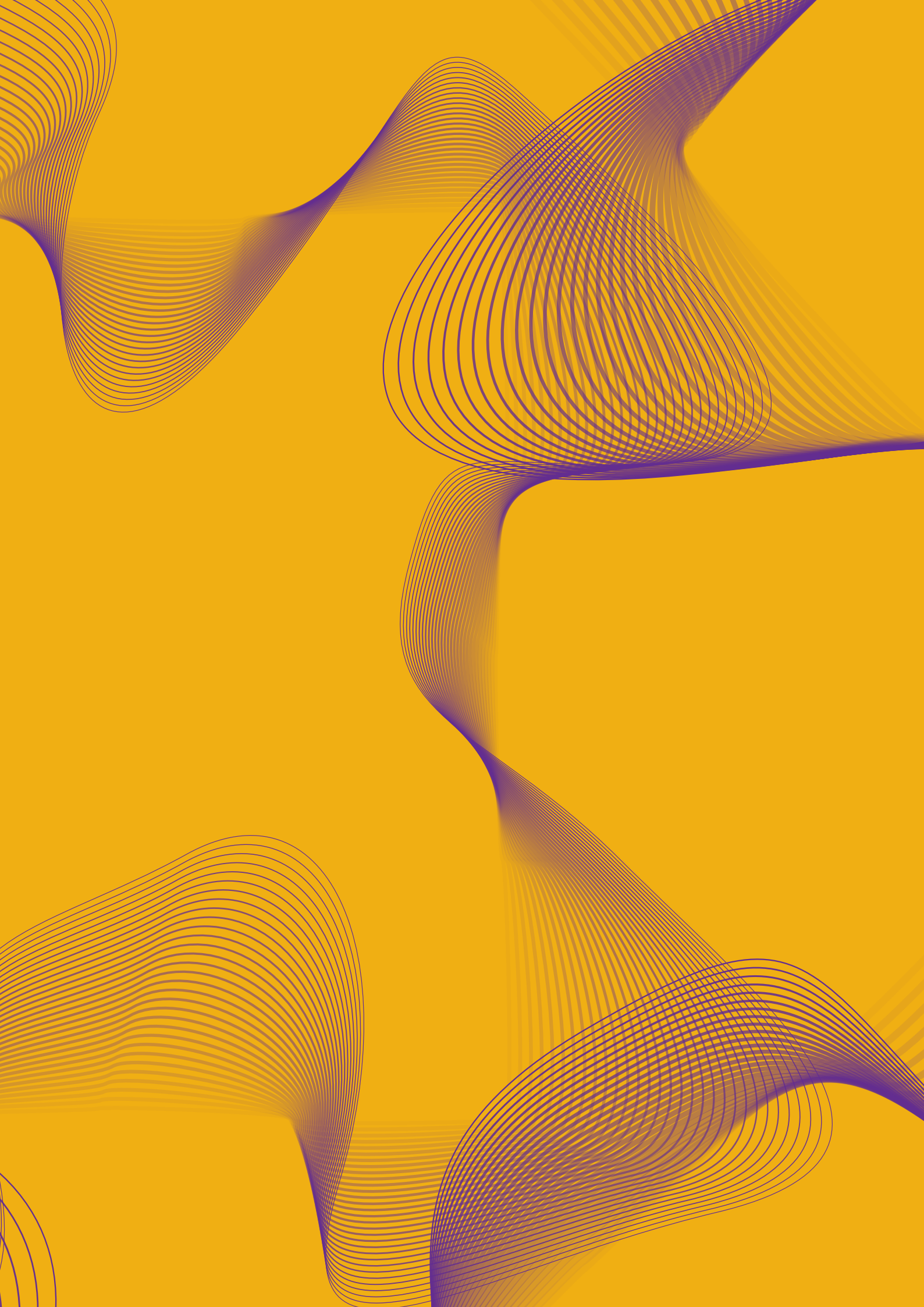
Conclusion

Extremism is a slippery, contested and emotive subject in the UK. Discussions of extremism arouse differing opinions, debates and, sometimes, disagreements. Our analysis certainly reflects the concepts contested nature. We found that practitioners recognised the many layers, intricacies and challenges within the concept.

But for all that, we also found areas of real consistency within practitioner responses. To a degree, that might be expected from a self-selected and self-identified sample of practitioners. But, in our view, the levels of consistency in responses when it came to the activities that extremists were engaging in, the tactics they were using to pursue their ambitions, and the harms that extremism causes to society should not be dismissed. We recognise that more work is needed to fully verify some of our findings – and would advocate that this work is undertaken in support of the Commission.

At the outset of our work, we were set two questions by the Commission. First, “what tactics do extremists use to achieve their objectives”. Practitioners, saw a variety of tactics as extremist – be it recruiting new members, building legitimacy, disseminating and mobilising people behind ideas, or doing things against others. Some of these activities are illegal, but many are legitimate and legal, even if their purpose makes them unpleasant or repugnant to many of us.

The Commission also asked us what harms are caused by extremist incidents. In producing our typology, we have attempted to show the myriad harms – many often overlooked or dismissed – that extremism causes to society. To be clear, this goes beyond the violence of terrorism; it includes the marginalisation of groups, it includes the economic effects created by the presence of extremists, and it includes the damage that extremism causes to core values held by most in the UK. The challenge, going forwards, will be ensuring that the UK can tackle not just the more obvious criminal and illegal harms of extremism, but those which are not illegal, but to which many are fundamentally opposed whilst still remaining mindful of human rights.





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