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## **Far-Right Attacks Increasingly Target Human Victims and Religious Sites**

*Researchers Find Rises in Unaffiliated Perpetrators and Violent Attacks by Militia Groups in Recent Years*

Bethesda, Md. — Domestic terror attacks by unaffiliated perpetrators in the United States have risen dramatically in recent years, according to a research brief by Eoin B. Healy of Development Services Group, Inc., and Hope LaFreniere of the University of Massachusetts (Lowell), and the researchers attribute most of the increase to “a societal disinhibition to act on racist and violent thoughts and ideation precipitated by the 2008 and 2016 elections.”

Their research brief, [\*Far-Right Extremist Tactics in the USA\*](#), summarizes the trends and changes in far-right extremist attack tactics, by both affiliated and unaffiliated perpetrators, over three decades.

Violent attacks on specific human beings increased in 2019 and 2020, and most of the antagonists have been unaffiliated far-right perpetrators. These unaffiliated attacks are between 5 and 6 times as likely to target religious or ethnic minorities or immigrants.

Using preliminary data gathered under a grant from the National Institute of Justice, the researchers examined more than 7,800 incidents motivated by far-right ideologies from 1990 through 2021. Over that period, the perpetrator groups have changed.

During the 1990s, the main perpetrators of attacks on property in the United States were anti-abortion groups. Since the millennium turned, racist groups including the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis, and white supremacists have been the primary perpetrators attacking property. And they have increased their attacks since 2018.

Healy and LaFreniere found that

- Attacks have increased significantly over time.
- Many attacks are acts of racist vandalism.
- Religious sites increasingly came under attack during the 2010s.
- 2020 saw 108 attacks occur at organized protests, with 87 of those at Black Lives Matter demonstrations.

Violence perpetrated by historical far-right extremist groups—skinheads and Christian identitarians, for example—has declined over the period of study. Meanwhile, alt-right groups including the Atomwaffen Division, the boogaloo bois, and the Proud Boys have risen in popularity in the past decade. These latter factions appear to be responsible for more recent violence and intimidation than the older groups.

Various far-right groups tend to use different tactics. Vandalism tends to be associated with neo-Nazis, the KKK, and unaffiliated perpetrators who adopt distinct symbols and use xenophobic slurs. Militia groups and the unaffiliated are the most likely groups to attack specific human targets. White supremacists tend to employ both violence and vandalism.



Ku Klux Klan parade, Sept. 13, 1926. *Credit:* Library of Congress.

Militia activity increased in 2020, an election year. However, militia groups' plots are nearly 15 times as likely to be foiled by law enforcement as the attack plans of other far-right extremists. Militias are 9 times as likely as nonmilitia groups to use violent tactics.

The research brief graphically presents 30-year trends of far-right tactics, racist groups' tactics, militia tactics, unaffiliated violent tactics, and tactics used against religious sites. See [https://dsgonline.com/2022/Healy\\_LaFreniere\\_FarRightTactics\\_March2022.pdf](https://dsgonline.com/2022/Healy_LaFreniere_FarRightTactics_March2022.pdf).